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Solidarity as Belonging-to and Dying-for
Martyrdom, Hope, and Ethical Harmonies of the Flesh

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An abstract of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the James T Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

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Abstract:

Solidarity as Belonging-to and Dying-for
Martyrdom, Hope, and Ethical Harmonies of the Flesh

By: Sarah Fayad

This dissertation is a phenomenology of solidarity: a relation I argue is central to any ethically sound, materially productive politics. Phenomenology as a method looks to experience itself, revealing its most elemental conditions of possibility. I uncover such a condition, perhaps invaluable to social philosophy (e.g. ethics, and political philosophy). I call this fundament of embodied experience 'belonging-to.' Belonging-to is the jarring truth that—counter to modern, liberal, intuitions—we are radically interdependent, mutually indebted. Using narratives offered by the captives who overthrew the Attica prison and Fanon's case studies--which provide first-person accounts of liberatory struggle--I argue that belonging-to is necessary for any viable conception of solidarity.

Solidarity is, therefore, an embodied relationship that demonstrates the possible scope of human intimacy and its power over that which illusorily divides us. I look to past-solidary movements, which through an intensity of interpersonal connectedness seek a better world for all who survive them. The work of solidarity is difficult, the ethics it entails make virtue scarce, and its relational character is one of deep, abiding, mutual sacrifice—it sheds light on the fundamental communality and selflessness that often silently shape our everyday conceptions of ethical behavior, while diverging from this everyday in its intensity, its acts, and its urgency.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Singing together, *a cappella* each voice tunes the other—each variation of tone introduced by a unique biological fact or by the personal-historical fact of training, each shortness of breath, each allergic reaction or sudden brightness of tone, informs the single notes of the chord—the solid and final tapestry of the song—every strength or weakness carried in by a particular singer contributes to a shared product.

The vocal cord, the mouth, the spine and lung of one imbues and informs the actions of another and takes on their character in its turn. An individual is changed, in body, in the habits of her body, as she takes on and gives to those of the others. As we work to produce the song, the individual is plural; and even the voice of a loved one, a voice we would know in any other circumstance, is composite when it is put to this work: when it serves the shared purpose of the song. That is to say that this shared purpose calls forth a *community*, a *sharing*, which demands the availability and distribution of one's body and intention to the others.

While this example seems unique, and I admit that it is not an example of an experience shared by all people, I will argue that the body enables us this mutual tuning, through the spontaneity of the flesh within the context of experiences familiar to each of us. Mutual tuning and the vulnerability of the body-subject to which it attests are not peculiar to the work of creating an unaccompanied song, and the extent of its demands—bodily and intentional—are not confined to the production of its chords. The ensemble requires an extreme availability and vulnerability of the body and a receptivity to the bodies of others, which we experience, unnoticed, and in spite of ourselves in more everyday communal experiences; even while the community of a busy city street seems to beckon the closure of my body, this is the call for the diminution of my inherent vulnerability and availability to the others. The ensemble requires as

well that this extraordinary reciprocity and openness be put in service of a relatively ephemeral product, a product which in its every part passes away, dissipates into soundless atmosphere, nearly as soon as it is made (and which, even when it is recorded only fills the air for the same quantum of moments).

Such an argument, I will acknowledge throughout this work, strikes us as counterintuitive, because we think of ourselves as individuals. In fact, this conception of the self as isolable and independent is a central and organizing heart, without which much of the structural reality we navigate begins to appear incoherent, inconsistent, and *unjust*. Although we spend every moment of our lives with others, in communities named and consciously acknowledged, we do not feel integrated into them—through the vulnerability of the body and the solicitation of the flesh—as the singer feels herself an organ-shared by the others. We feel we need to share little, in order to belong. But, what if this conception of the subject is mistaken? What if there is some collective amnesia involved in each of us taking ourselves and the others to be nothing more than individual agents? What if the body itself—without which I am impossible—demonstrates the impossibility of my independence?

I will argue that the kind of community that emerges from the unaccompanied song—the mutual reliance, the availability of each body to all others'—is not an incredibly high-bar for community, and that many palpable and meaningful structures of our intersubjectivity share with this example its spontaneity, ephemerality, and absolute mutuality…

The ensemble requires an extreme availability and vulnerability of the body and a receptivity to the bodies of others, which we hardly experience in any obvious way in more everyday communal experiences: the community of a busy city street seems to beckon the closure of my body, the diminution of my vulnerability and availability—that is, until another body, fallen

upon the concrete, calls upon me to act, until a child is freed from her mother's hand and the crowd carries her to mine, until something near me crumbles to rubble: until the demands upon me are elevated from mere staying out of the way, elevated to a call to help, to *responsibility*.

Phenomenology, and in this case, I look specifically to Merleau-Ponty's work, can help us make sense of the urgency of this call, of the way in which it tugs at the sinews of our person, throws us into action often in spite of ourselves, and demonstrates the connection, the congealing and almost seamless cooperation of what we have been convinced were isolated wills and fully autonomous individuals, only moments before. It is not the case, according to phenomenological analysis, that these connections between us simply *materialize* at the behest of a situation which we *surmise* is one requiring our collaboration with the others. Rather it is in these moments that I *notice* the animating nature of the flesh: a nature which has never and can never flee from its fundamental role in shaping, and making possible, my experiences, but which may nonetheless flee my conscious awareness when I am *functioning* as an individual. In these moments, the modern myth of the individual simply unravels.

I call this fundamental nature of the flesh, which makes me *responsible* for others 'belonging-*to.*' This nomenclature, I think, draws our attention to the absolute intimacy and proximity of each to each implied, and indeed demanded, by the *lived* body. It signifies the ways in which I become a pulsating organ of the others' bodies, the ways in which I might animate their world and shape their experiences and even forms of life (for better or for worse), and the ways in which they are indeed alienated in my own body, my own experience and my own form of life. In this sense, the body demands that I *give myself over* to the other: that I am always-already given-over to her: that I am *hers*.

It is from this central concept of belonging-*to* that I attempt to understand what seem to be unnoticed or at least under-appreciated facets of solidarity. In general, analyses of solidarity tend to conceive of it as a *social* phenomenon. Which is to say: it is conceived as a phenomenon which arises and takes shape within an interpersonal context, already imbued with explicit conceptual themes and consciously acknowledged values. The debate over what conditions are *necessary* for a politically and socially efficacious solidarity tends to focus, therefore, on whether persons need merely to recognize some shared struggle and mutual benefit or if they also need to share—as a core and explicitly recognized tenant of their self-concept—some robust identity. My argument will not deny the place, nor the importance, of either shared suffering/mutual benefit *or* identity, in the context of possibly efficacious solidarity. Rather, I will argue that these analyses miss an important necessary condition for the generation of such a feeling: the more primordial element of belonging-*to*. I argue that this felt, and indeed *carnal* seat of mutual responsibility—which imbeds in the very *organism* her duty to others—and diminished individuality accounts for the very kind of solidarity which has won victories against crushing power in our political past, and that nothing can rightfully be called 'solidarity' if it is missing this element.

We tune one another in order to sing in more perfect harmony the song of life. But none of us is born with a kind of moral perfect-pitch, and when we pull another up, we may be dragging her sharp. Not to mention the times when we simply drag her flat, pull her low. But in solidarity our goal is as much to sing the same song as it is to sing perfectly. Perhaps this aim in fact trumps any perfection. Indeed, things wholly undesirable in aesthetic or moral registers may be necessary for solidarity: but internal harmony remains indispensable. This is why risking one's own death or those of others becomes so necessary in for example these movements

In looking to past solidarity movements—such as the Algerian revolution and the rebellion at Attica prison—I make note of a particularly severe implication in solidary commitment, which arises, I argue, both from the risks imposed upon the oppressed, and from the absolute intimacy of belonging-*to*; in order to genuinely be in solidarity with another, we must be *willing* to sacrifice much for her. We should not right away two things 1) this willingness to sacrifice is by no means *guaranteed* to come to fruition or to be necessary, so someone might well honor the solidary bond merely by *risking* sacrifice, and 2) willingness to sacrifice is still a much stronger bond to the other than is something like sympathy or empathy: the act is implied within this *will*, always-already, and thus solidarity requires of us much more than a mere *feeling*.[1]

Willingness to sacrifice might mean, as we shall see, that we will to give up our own material comfort or security within the state the persecutes her (especially our comfort and security *relative and due* to her privation), it might also mean we subject our most deeply held commitments or identity to scrutiny or destruction, it may mean that we are willing give up our home or our identity. But tragically often in the history of political solidarity, this bond has meant a willingness to *die* for the other.

Dying-*for* is, as we know, a philosophical knot. And this knot is not in any way resolved or detangled by the phenomenon of solidarity. Rather, it is a central and necessary paradox, without which we could never really advocate for one another. In order to save you—when I can

[1] Arnsperger, Christian and Varoufakis, Yaniz, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity," in *Erkenntnis* Vol. 59, No. 2 (2003). 158

Arnsperger and Varoufakis note this "generous disposition," toward one's comrades as early as 1975, but it goes largely unremarked in the literature. Furthermore, Arnsperger's and Varoufakis's elaboration of this disposition does little justice to the phenomenological nature of such a disposition, its origins in our primordial bonds, or what it means for various ones of our political and ethical assumptions. This account of dying-*for* attempts to take all these lived dimensions of political solidarity seriously.

hear the dogs' claws ripping through the dirt, running boots, or firing guns, company bombs—I may have to choose to project onto your horizons, and foreclose in bloody and instant terror my own.

Beginning with our pre-reflective, bodily, enmeshment with one another—and the primordial bond of *death* we share through it—I look to analyze solidarity as a phenomenon of our being-together. What are the differences between the sense of community whereby a city and its inhabitants, acknowledged and unnoticed, mutually determine one another's actions, and that sense of community which binds persons together during a cataclysmic event, or between either of these senses of community and the one that connects us during more mundane collaboration and work? I suspect at this point that experience will elucidate some of the most important differences between these senses of community. I suspect also that the communities which we experience to a greater degree, in a more palpable way—communities which, if we lost our belonging, would leave us groundless—are more likely to motivate us to act than are those which, while perhaps important elements of our identity, remain sensually numb, covert, and vague. Nebulous associations with others, as they occur on more global levels—such as our essential enmeshment with factory workers abroad—hardly change our consumption behaviors, and they even more seldom give rise to any fervent activism on our parts.

In chapter one, I look to Merleau-Ponty, as well as some rather diverse sources on child-development, in order to better conceptualize the prescriptive valences and implications of this phenomenological insight into community and communion. I argue that the ways in which we are given to one another, and in which we compulsorily take one another up are best described as "belonging-*to*:" a conceptualization of primordial communion which acknowledges the diffusion and proliferation of the self, in others. If I do indeed come to constitute the experience of the

other—that world defined by the hue and tone of her *mineness*—then I am not solely *my own*. From here I motivate the idea that, insofar as I am *hers,* I have a special kind of responsibility to her, which—while it is not rightfully conceived as a kind of culpability—means I must take the shape of her life, the experiences she has, her sufferings and triumphs, as *my own*.

This constitutes a new contribution to the ethics of alterity, as an extended encounter with this literature demonstrates. It is a conception which leaves open the possibility of "living another's life," proposed by Merleau-Ponty, without proposing any monism or violent reduction of the other to the same. Indeed, as we shall see, this concept proliferates difference, without denigrating the *felt* and empirically proven necessity of community for the development and maintenance of any self.

In chapter two*,* I trace out the implications of belonging-*to* for the phenomenon of death. I argue that this most basic inevitability gains even greater importance when we conceive of our bond as belonging-*to*, and that the death of the other is indeed both a necessary condition and a *feature* of the world we share with her. As such mourning is present in love, as its constitutive negative space, as the relief from which it is borne. That vitality is shot through with death, I argue, is the reason deep love and devotion are joined so easily, so intuitively, to self-sacrifice: an observation that can also be made regarding the *risk* and indeed *suffering* undergone by many in the context of historical solidary movements (to which the third chapter is devoted).

In chapter three, I turn to first-person accounts of the incarcerated who bound together in what is now called the "Attica Prison rebellion," as well as to other contemporary solidary accounts such as *Soledad Brother*, in order to construct from solidary experiences a phenomenological account of solidarity itself. There is one conception of solidarity which argues that shared suffering is all that is necessary to give rise to a successful and potent

movement. While I discount shared suffering as neither necessary nor sufficient, I nonetheless note that prisoners in Attica share the condition of living proximally to their deaths. Those who rebelled certainly shared some suffering. And yet, once I've followed that spectral trace—that trace that is the presence of death in life, as the people we mourn, as the risk of reprisal and as antiauthoritarian hunger—I have to argue that the diffusion of the subject through mourning makes solidarity possible even for those who do not share our suffering. The solidary movement amplifies the call to empathy, to co-mourning, and collaboration. This call is inchoate in the presence of the other's corpse in the vital body of those who loved her but becomes audible and moves people all over the world in the guise of the cause. Those who do not share our fate may therefore sacrifice their comfort to take it on for us. They may sacrifice their riches to pull us up. They might voluntarily endure hunger with us until the world changes. They might even die to save us. Moved to sacrifice so much the legions of the privileged might well rise to solidary others and comrades without ever sharing our particular sufferings or status within an oppressive regime.

In chapter four I analyze two of Fanon's case studies from *Wretched of the Earth*. The first is the case of two Algerian school children who have killed their European friend. The case study helps lay bare the necessary *relationality, futurity,* and *functionality* of solidary sacrifices. One cannot merely condemn oneself to prison or death but must do so in such a way that her sacrifice leads in part to the inauguration of a new social order for those who follow her. Random violence as seen in this case in no meaningful way constitutes solidarity, and not all sacrifices constitute genuine martyrdom.

The second case is of an Algerian engineer who has left behind his affiliation with the liberation army and poured himself entire into his work. He lives a fairly happy life, aligned

almost entirely with colonial European values, and dissociated from many of his previous Algerian friends and family. He comes more and more to identify himself with his work, his education, and other such intellectual characteristics he was afforded by the presence of an oppressive colonial force. But this identity he constructs for himself begins to crack, and through these fissures leak all manner or auditory hallucinations and paranoid delusions. He is taunted everywhere—and in the fleshly material of mind and his sense organs—by judgement. He can hear it in the wind; he is a traitor; he has *betrayed* his friends and family. The case shows us that it is impossible to simply make oneself. The self is a communal accomplishment and might well deteriorate if we dare to affect sufficient separation from the others. This insight on betrayal, severance from the others, and the way it distorts the flesh of the world sets us up for a fuller discussion of betrayal as the other side of solidarity. It is after all only possible to betray those whom we love and those with whom we work, or fight.

In my conclusion, I turn briefly to *Invisible Man* and, maintaining my phenomenological and critical foci, argue that the text indeed chronicles the descent and eventual dissolution of the subject, by various failures of solidarity. That is, betrayal unravels the self and plunges its world into darkness.

Evicted by each community he finds, the Invisible Man eventually leaves even the world altogether, dissolving into indistinction, timelessness, and nonsense. Communities averse to risk banish this man, first from his own ambitious horizons: depriving him of intentionality, then from his own cognitive and emotional wellness and function: experimenting on him, contemplating castration (the removal of certain innate futural possibilities), constraining him as an organism, and last even from the realm of *things*. The invisible man, through a series of betrayals loses all faith in the world and can therefore no longer even move through it.

Betrayal of this kind is only possible within one of very few kinds of relationship. In this case, the final plunge into madness, darkness, and worldlessness occurs when he is betrayed by solidary others in pursuit of a political cause. He assumes because he might well be killed for his speech that this is a solidarity which is bound to death, and to mortal risk, *for* the other—*for him.* When they sell him out little remains. As a something, not even *perceived*, the invisible man is excised from the "flesh of the world."[2] Based on the work in the previous chapters, we know what comes of such a banishment is failure at the level of the organism. Finding no solidarity, the invisible man *is*-not. Betrayal undermines our faith in the world and therefore renders us impossible.

This work traces our connections to one another to their deepest, pre-reflective, and indeed primordial bases in our embodied being. As such it finds a place for the other has always been cleared in each of us and that we lack something when anything else comes to fill that place. I also find that there is a place cleared in us even for the dead, which makes possible an ethos of self-sacrifice without which any attempt to define solidarity is bound to fail—and without which any solidary other, if she was ever a solidary other, becomes a traitor.

[2] Carmen, Taylor. *Merleau-Ponty*. (Routlege: New York, 2008), 123.

A Prologue About the Normative Valences of this Project

I argue that our innate intertwining with one another implicates us, always-already, in the others' development. Thus, I find grounds to argue that we are *responsible* for how others turn out, for the futures they pursue, and for the people they are. This sense of responsibility is not, on its own, a normative one. I may be responsible for making a meal, for example, but the value of such an act can only be evaluated in light of other information (who is the meal for? Are they hungry? Do they have allergies? Etc.). Thus, whatever normative claims I make here are guided first by the phenomenological excavation of our deep and genuine power over one another and second by a commonsense and intuitive moral principle: if we all have the power to shape one another, we would do better if we committed ourselves to the thriving, welfare, and flourishing of these others. Conversely, we may do very poorly by them if we refuse to acknowledge—and to care—about the impact we have upon them and their horizons by virtue of our mere embodiment.

I do not put forward a robust ethical framework, therefore, but merely indicate an often-underappreciated means by which we become responsible for others. And, since this means is embodiment itself, I argue that this responsibility for all others is indeed and *inevitable* structure of experience, and a foundation of the social world. This much can be derived from phenomenological reflection without committing the naturalistic fallacy. Evaluating wether we have done one another any justice or injustice –whether we have honored our responsibility to her or abused our corporeal power over her—however, requires that we import values.

I do think that, where we have radical responsibility for another, we are often expected to act in accordance with her flourishing—doctors and teachers are attributed a special duty of benevolence, parents and pet-owners are perceived as exceptionally vicious if they somehow

prohibit their charges to thrive. I am importing only this common-currency, and very *bare* principle. As we shall see, the natural and neutral fact of our intercorporeal influence on one another can easily be used to devastating ends, if other values are made to intersect with it.

Chapter I

Belonging-*To* the Other's Flesh…

§ I. Phenomenology as Political Ground: Lives We Want to Live

The subject is for Merleau-Ponty no longer to be thought as a surging vitality, chained to a corpse; and thus, the body is not some mere matter, veiling the immaterial rational, intellectual, or spiritual source of this vitality, movement, and sense. He says:

> It will be impossible to establish a cleavage between what will be "natural" in the individual and what will be acquired from his social upbringing. In reality the two orders are not distinct; they are part and parcel of a single global phenomenon.[3]

The social is as natural, and as integrated into the body, as the gene.[4] The body is more than mere, dead, stuff, and as such, it is shot through with, animated by—at every turn expressive of—and genuinely coextensive with the surging vitality of the subject in even its most seemingly abstract or spiritual projects: the body composes history, flows through art, and indeed simultaneously breaches and takes in the *world* in its entirety. This means that there is strictly speaking no place *in* the world, which is off-limits to bodies. There is no human activity or truth which requires we purify ourselves of the flesh—as the rationalist demands—because there simply is nothing like *truth*, or beauty, or significance, without the flesh.

This means that the body also does not grant the subject a kind of full anonymity. It does not fully veil the secrets of the mind from the others, allowing us perfect deception. Nor can it seal us off from the world and its inhabitants, granting us the kind of immaterial nirvana of thought for which Socrates pined before his looming death and which Descartes thought he'd

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[3] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Physcology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*. J Wild and J. Edie, *eds.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 108.

[4] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 106-107.

won by doubt. This is because the subject could not in any sense, *think*, experience, or *be* anything at all without the world and its others, toward which the body grasps. The body most thinkers have seen as an enclosure around us which renders world and others dubitable and ourselves opaque, equally dubitable to them is, Merleau-Ponty argues, entwined with and a vital part of the "flesh of the world," the very medium of our openness, possibility, and experience:

> The primitive contact we have with the world in perception is something we are intimately familiar with throughout our lives. But it is neither open to full public scrutiny nor completely hidden and ineffable. It is neither an object of natural scientific inquiry nor the concealed source of concepts we can only subsequently analyze adequately in the transparent medium of reflection, as Descartes supposed.[5]

For Merleau-Ponty, the subject is corporeal, and the *body* is subjective (and indeed intersubjective); he argues therefore that, "we must abandon the fundamental prejudice according to which the psyche is that which is accessible only to myself and cannot be seen from outside."[67] But, why should we find ourselves convinced by such a subversion of philosophical tradition?[8]

I think one of the most compelling reasons is that this rethinking of the body, and of the inter-world—as *flesh*—meshes with contemporary research. While I will deal with this and other examples at greater length later in this chapter, I will note for the moment that the body *does* betray the seemingly private phenomena of mind. This is especially notable in the emergent

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[5] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 56-57.
[6] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 116.
[7] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 131.
[8] And indeed, it is a subversion of tradition, even as his claims grow older and better-explored with time. Further, it seems Merleau-Ponty might even provide for a subversion of our intuitions: one we will explore in its relevance to ethical and political thinking as this project unfolds.

studies of microexpressions, affective contagion, and explorations of *belonging* as a predictor of health, disease, and mortality (all of which will get some treatment throughout this work). In microexpressions, the flinching and twitching of the face, the slight folding of the brow, or the pulling-in of a dimple, the pulling down of a shoulder are all likely imperceptible in the moment of the conversation—revealed only in a world suspended by slow-motion—nonetheless they intimate the realities of the private subject. Unnoticed *as* signs, micro-expressions still speak and they may give rise in us to shame, or to happiness, even to distrust. What the subject *works* to hide—the secret and hidden knowledge, the content of her lie—seeps through the pores of her being, hangs in the air between her and the one she deceives, and at least fleetingly catches the light of their shared world. Thus, even in contemporary empirical fields:

> The unconscious is viewed increasingly less as a secret treasure casket hidden in the inner recesses of the mind… and more as a pervasive element seeping into all areas of human existence. The very distinctions between rational and non-rational activity, sanity and madness, perception and fantasy, get blurred in the process.[9]

This expressivity of the subject-body—often in spite of the subject's wishes—is not limited to the slow-motion analysis of micro-expressions. In fact, research has shown that domestic dogs scan human faces in much the same way human beings do, and that they also respond to these *unintended* signals of the body.[10] This means that dogs' enmeshment with the human world for tens of thousands of years, for example, has affected their embodiment and modes of perception;

Stawarska, Beata. "Psychoanalysis," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Acumen: Durham, 2011), 65.

[10] Siniscalchi, Marcello, d'Ingeo, Serenella, and Quaranta, Angelo "Orienting asymmetries and physiological reactivity in dogs' response to human emotional faces," in *Learning and Behavior* vol/ 46. (2018), 574. https://doi.org/10.3758/s13420-018-0325-2

they have *adapted* to human expression, and the benefits of their glimpsing the not-so-inner workings of the human subject are somewhat obvious. Belonging within the human community is something to which the domesticated animal strives, which she *must* attain in a sense, for her own good, (and such belonging has been proven absolutely vital for human beings as well).[11]

Merleau-Ponty conceives the body as coextensive with a power for communication and speech. He thinks the body as itself a sign, or a tale, or perhaps a song, which elaborates for the other a "certain view of the world," a certain style of being. And this is because the body is indeed always-already directed to the other, even *for* her. Thus, her own view of the world and style of being may become "pregnant" with my own, she may carry it with her and indeed does carry it within her (even unknowingly). This *pregnancy* by which we are imbued with the other, the fibers of our tissues entwined with hers, by which we carry her is a theme in *Primacy of Perception:*

> …the experience I have of my own body could be transferred to another much more easily than the synesthesia of classical psychology, giving rise to…a "postural impregnation" of my own body by the conducts I witness.[12]

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[11] Bonnie M.K. Hagerty, Judith Lynch-Sauer, Kathleen L. Patusky, Maria Bouwsema, and Peggy Collier, "Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept," 173-176.

In this paper, the authors argue that a concept of belonging, in which the subject feels she is generally *indispensable* due to her enmeshment with others is of *vital* importance for various kinds of health outcomes. Estrangement which leads to a diminution of her role in her social group will be indicative, the argue, of various kinds of mental and bodily deterioration. Such insights are borne out in Guenther's analyses, which are also considered here.

[12] See Merleau-Ponty*, The Primacy of Perception*, 118.

We here remember that—in "Primacy of Perception" "conduct" us Merleau-Ponty's short-hand for *consciousness* and conscious embodiment. We carry the other, then, as a conscious body, or as a *world* in Merleau-Ponty's terms. This is accomplished by the look for him, and the studies referenced herein support such a view.

Such studies as those on micro-expressions lend support to the phenomenological conception of the body applied here to solidarity, and importantly *dethrone* the cogito (or whatever pure and thinking substance philosophy has traditionally placed above the body). The body need not receive a command or any content from the sovereign seat of reason, in order to express its world and the state of the subject within it. Far from permitting and mobilizing the machine of the flesh to do its bidding, the body may betray the mind precisely because they are enmeshed, indiscernible from one another, and absolutely mutually impossible outside this intertwining. As we shall see, this observation throws into question any conception of solidarity which begins in something like the internal *motivations* or *reasons* a subject has to *join* the others—she is already joined to them, and her motivations are already outside her:

> A critical finding is that all participants showed at least one inconsistent emotional expression during deception, which suggests that emotional leakage in the face may be a ubiquitous perhaps innate, involuntary aspect of human behavior…[13]

These analyses are fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's early phenomenology, but they find more powerful expression in his later ontological work wherein *flesh* becomes a mode of *being*, a medium of the world itself, upon which all experience grows and feeds. The openness of the organism is a condition of possibility for the world, and this means our openness to one another at a fundamental level makes the world possible; the world that we *fight* in its brutal and unjust realities, in the unfair and painful experiences to which it subjects us, arises from this

[13] Stephan Porter and Leanne ten Brink, "Reading between the Lines: Identifying Concealed and Falsified Emotions in Universal Facial Expressions," in *Psychological Science*, Vol. 19. No. 5 (May 2008). 508.

vulnerability to its realities, and to the others alongside and against whom we struggle.[14] I bring these conceptions of embodiment—porosity/openness/*écart* and with it reversibility—to bear on the phenomenon of *solidarity* because they imply a radical mode of being-with—one in which an absolute responsibility to the other inheres, which I call 'belonging-*to*'. The body gives us over to the other: a kind of pledge always-already made, a gift given in the twitching impulses of the flesh, a debt owed and paid in the electric light of the synapses. I cannot even touch my own body, take hold of myself, except by means of expression, giving, and communion.[15]

Tommie Shelby notes that the kind of into-the-pot-boiling phenomenological approach will have us analyzing solidarity (and really any phenomenon to which we turn our focus) from within particular instantiations of the phenomena we analyze in this case particular instantiations of political movements. Put more simply, if we begin *within the experience* of solidarity, then we must begin within some actual movement or occurrence of solidarity which has *in fact* already materialized within the world. We know already that there have been morally better and morally worse solidary movements: that those who have fought against the world's greatest atrocities *and* those who have perpetrated them have indeed done so in solidarity with one another. For Shelby, this is reason to put aside an analysis of Black Nationalism. In *We Who Are Dark* he notes that:

> As with other, better- known political philosophies (such as conservatism, liberalism, and Marxism), not every self-described black nationalist or would-be black nationalist organization is faithful to the tradition's best ideals.[16]

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[14] …Or against whom we struggle, as this openness is reversible and may join us together or make out struggle possible.
[15] Marratto, Scott L. *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*. (State University of New York Press: New York, 2012). 138.
[16] Shelby, Tommie. *WE WHO ARE DARK*. (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 2005), 9.

Indeed, I can think of no movement, government, organization, body, or even individual who does not live and exist divided from her best ideals by a deep gulf. It is instead my contention that ideals—and perhaps *especially* our best ideals—are often incompatible with life and with the structures of experience, and that a politics which begins in the complexity and indeed the messiness of a phenomenology of solidarity—as an *embodied and lived phenomenon*—might well provide political and ethical direction to a group, *without* such a gulf. In fact, Merleau-Ponty agreed with this criticism of modern political structures and movements:

> His analyses of modern political regimes suggested that their limitations could be traced to the rationalist presuppositions that underpin their projects and undermine their understanding of the nature of politics. He therefore concluded that appreciating the role of contingency in collective life was the route to overcoming some fundamental prejudices and their violent effects, where more narrowly political changes would only repeat past failings.[17]

Merleau-Ponty saw as the foundation of the world-historic violence, oppression, and destruction of human life a faulty conception of the human subject. In particular, both western liberalism and emergent eastern communism shared unrealistic expectations of the powers of best-*ideals* to shape human experience and history. That is to say, those rational and reasonable pure bases and presuppositions that undergird a particular political program are in some ways impotent to genuinely constrain and confine without excess the absolute contingency and chaos at the existential heart of our intersubjective lives. As such, they must forcibly repress such natural and

[17] Diana Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Acumen: Durham, 2011), 85.

even desirable excesses for their survival. No political system should be viewed, then, solely on the content or intent of its theory for Merleau-Ponty "… his basic commitment remained consistent… his abiding aim was to judge political regimes existentially, that is, according to the kind of lived relationships—the "human bond" or existential signature—they actually support rather than according to their self-professed values."[18]

Merleau-Ponty observes that, "racism, exploitation and colonial violence are all endemic in liberal-democratic systems… Its humanist values serve as an alibi for unemployment and war; they do not 'filter down to the common man.'"[19] As a result these ideals do not foster the kinds of human connection Merleau-Ponty is interested to protect and which I hope to approach with this project's politics of the flesh.

But, he argues, "[Communist actors] too tried to impose their will on society rather than engaging with the contingencies of intersubjective life. In the process, revolutionary violence had been institutionalized as terror and justified by an appeal to the necessity of objective facts."[20] Thus we cannot begin within the theoretical and ideal frameworks of any ready-made politics. Our critical phenomenological project must instead look to experience, and to the life of a community, and build its generalizations from what it glimpses therein. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty's insight that "everything remains to be done or undone" holds for every generation of activist, so long as their struggle is one toward greater justice and diminished suffering and alienation in the world.

Thus, "Revitalizing the dialectic in light of contingency was central to the task," of creating a more egalitarian politics, free from the violence of extant orders on Merleau-Ponty's

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[18] See Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*.), 86.
[19] See Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*.), 86.
[20] See Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*.), 86 & 88.

account. "This would facilitate an alternative sense of the political and suggest an exemplary way of practicing politics."[21] In this work, I argue that such a politics and the solidarity necessary to enact it might be derived from just such an engagement with the contingency of our being: and I do so through an analysis of our being-with-in-solidarity. As a fundamental challenge to the modern conception of the self, belonging-*to*, and the absolute responsibility that characterizes an ethics of the flesh accomplish much of what Merleau-Ponty considers needful. This is to say that proper attention to that mutually-sacrificial, "belonging-*to*"—a concept I develop later in this chapter, and which I argue is a fundamental *structure* of embodiment and the flesh—which undergirds our experience of and with the other might well be both necessary and sufficient to conceive a politics and an activism which does not conflict with our lived praxis, but springs organically from it.

I do not think, at the end of the day that the resultant politics will be one whose "best ideals" are worse than those concocted from without the embodied messes and mass entanglements of intercorporeal experience: that they will be *ethically* inferior to those pure ideals, emerging from the single, shadowy, fold of reason. Rather, I suppose that they will capture exactly how it is *possible at all* for us to *live* ethically toward one another, to commit to praxis such best ideals: what this might mean and how our very bodies might ground it. We get some intimation of the ways in which individualist-intellectualist theories of the self cut one person off from the other, sever flesh from flesh, and ultimately legitimate and sanction violence in Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*.

> The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The "native" is declared impervious to ethics, representing

[21] See Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*.), 86 & 89.

> not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values. In other words, absolute evil.

The colonist disavows the colonized as a cite of ethical reasoning, as the intersection of flesh with flesh, and of self with world, which constitutes intercorporeal belonging for a couple of related reasons. First, she disavows this particular other as a *part of her*. The bigot does this with a kind of extreme urgency, as well as with ritualistic fervor, as the meaning-making machinery of her supposed superiority would jam up were it to encounter the reality of the flesh. Second, she disavows the *debt* that belonging-*to* exercises upon her, in order to maintain the world of her "superiority," and with it the world she buys with her relative wealth. George Yancy, in our contemporary context in the U.S. also notes that the gulf between us is one that must be sutured like flesh, that must be allowed to heal. Racist logics, however, propose this is a non-healing dehiscence, a difference in kind, which would rot away the stitches.

Shelby is *absolutely right*: we do not, in general, build movements nor institutions which embody the best ideals that serve as their origins, inspirations, and motivations. But I argue that this is because, when we *are* immeasurably, mysteriously, self-sacrificingly *good*, it is not because we intend to measure up to any *ideals* but because we feel the call of the flesh, as always-already a lived experience of the other—as the demand of the flesh, belonging-*to*. "It is the disruption within the heart of intersubjectivity that allows for the possibility of ethical communion and reciprocity…which... has the potential to maintain an openness to the other and to limit relations of domination."[22]

[22] Fischer, Sally. "Ethical Reciprocity at the Interstices of Communion and Disruption," in *Intertwinings: Interdisciplinary Encounters with Merleau-Ponty*. G. Weiss, ed. (Suny Press: New York, 2009). 154.

This is the more primordial ground that makes possible any reflection upon or theorization of solidarity and ethics, but it is too often merely *presupposed* and has yet to be acknowledged (or even better yet not covered-over, distorted, or genuinely fought-against for the sake of reason's supremacy, for the sake of reasonability) in the formulation of any politics, activism, or praxis that I have found in my review of this literature. In what follows I will consider that this *ur*-ethical dimension of flesh is always-already mortal. I will consider what this bond to death means for the living subject of ethics, and for the ethical communion it inhabits from its earliest days. Mortality is absolutely integral to the human community and to the ethics that emerge from it. As such, it will turn out to be just as fundamental to solidarity, as a communal, ethical relation.

§ II. The Ontogenesis of the Plural Subject: Embodied Porosity, Neonate Vulnerability, and Death

> The philosophical mystery that so impressed Merleau-Ponty and guided his work, then, has two sides—that we are open onto the world and that we are embedded in it.[23]

Merleau-Ponty looks to diverse resources on the human condition in order to arrive at the conclusion that subjectivity is always-already *plural*. This is, of course, in direct contrast with much of the philosophical tradition, which takes as a given that something like a pure subjectivity undergirds and makes possible the subject's tarrying with the world and with others: that something would remain, or even shine forth uncontaminated, if all the detritus of lived

[23] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 10.

experience, the contingencies of *this particular existence*, the accidents of history and of personal history, and the expectations, judgements, and influence of others were swept away.

One such resource is psychoanalytic literature, which posits that early relational experiences are *necessary* for subject-formation. While these methods of analysis are no longer the predominant psychological paradigm—the *mind* in some regards has been supplanted by the *brain*—this particular fundamental principle of psychoanalysis still finds empirical support.[24] In fact, Taylor Carmen cites recent studies, the results of which "…[include] facial mimicry in infants as little as 42 minutes old."[25] Clearly, nothing like objective observation or explicit analogical correlation between oneself and others, intuited or inferred, is going on in such cases: as a matter of common sense and simplicity, we might assume these infants are not making inferences in order to accept others as real, and to allow them to matter. Instead, the infant's body is attuned to others' in a kind of immediate sympathetic harmony.

Children deprived of these relations in the stage of their utter dependance do not grow into speaking subjects, and often they also lack the kind of bodily competence which would allow them full participation in the shared world: their development is not *toward* this world and others, because it did not occur within it and amongst them.[26] In other words, attaining the shared world—its significations, practices, relations, and *possibilities*—presupposes that one *already has* them: that one has been *formed* within them, has taken them up through the porosity and vulnerability of her earliest incarnate being. An isolable and fundamentally solitary mind meets these conditions about as adequately as the child who has found surrogates in wild beasts.

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[24] See Bonnie M.K. Hagerty, Judith Lynch-Sauer, Kathleen L. Patusky, Maria Bouwsema, and Peggy Collier, "Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept," 175.
[25] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 142.
[26]Spitz, Rene, *Emotional Deprivation in Infancy*, 1952.

Guenther finds also that deprivation of bodily proximity and everyday relationality has grave effects on prisoners confined—that the subject deteriorates as a possibility of taking up the world through locomotion, loses the futurity that inheres in her body, and may not be able to extend into the world through language and meaning. The vulnerability of childhood persists into adulthood, as evinced by this deterioration of the adult subject in isolation, and indeed Merleau-Ponty argues that our life-long corporeal interdependence is first instantiated during these tender years.[27] The mature subject cannot be adequately conceived without an eye to this natal foundation.

> But precisely because consciousness is more than just a blank slate upon which external objects impress themselves—because the world is essentially correlated to consciousness, while at the same time remaining irreducible to it—one cannot deprive individuals of their world without doing grievous damage to their beings as consciousness.[28]

The power of the subject, the "I can" that we *are* implies, as Merleau-Ponty argues, that, "the other exists."[29] If this were not so, it seems I *could*, even if she *was-not*: a possibility at the very least badly imperiled by the experiences of confined persons and so-called 'feral children.' Since, without the *actual presence* of the other, these subjectivities collapse into "I cannots."

> ..intentionality implies incorporation," an "intercourse" among body schemas that is a genuine "promiscuity of powers . . . and of others," an energetic and transindividual

[27] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 155.
Guenther, Lisa. *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives*. (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 24.
[29] See Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*.

> promiscuity among interiority and exteriority that accounts not only for the constitution of sense but also the displacement of force.[30]

In various psychoanalytic paradigms, the period of extreme vulnerability and reliance on others that characterizes my earliest development is necessary for my becoming *anyone at all*. This is not to say that all the peculiarities of my future self are due in some direct way to these neonate experiences—now hopelessly irrecoverable, engulfed by the shades of time, and only glimpsed as fleeting shadows across who I have become. Nor is it to say that, in order to understand who I am or the experiences I have, I must find some way (and nearly any way is dubious at best) to recover the primordial *events* of my becoming. Rather, this paradigmatic assumption denies the mind autopoietic omnipotence: the mind, in other words is *limited*, it cannot *bring itself into being. "*Lacan's [and others] psychoanalytic account[s], which highlight[s] the affectively charged and inherently ambiguous status of the mirror image for both the child and the adult, provides…a more accurate reading of human identity than a purely cognitive one."[31][32]

Among the structures of everyday subjectivity psychoanalytic paradigms attribute to neonate relationality are ethics, logos, and the intuitive *mineness* (to use Merleau-Ponty's terms) which casts itself over my experience, making it livable *for me,* lived *by me*. And this is borne out in more generally accepted contemporary modes of scientific enquiry. Cynthia Willett

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[30] See Whitney, "AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE: MERLEAU-PONTY AND FANON ON THE BODY SCHEMA AS A THEORY OF AFFECT," 503.
[31] See Stawarska, "Psychoanalysis," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 62.
[32] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 44.

> The psychoanalytic past of early childhood is actually the point of disjunction and discontinuity with the world, wherein impressions of others are taken up giving rise to a heterogenous self. This primordial self is carried forward into adult life and only becomes more complicated, less pure, more confused with others and the world: and yet it remains the necessary foundation of the subject' sense of herself and of the world.

reflects upon studies of the *fetus* which support the centrality of this reciprocity for the genesis of any *self* at all:

> Between the sensation of the fetal kick and the maternal caress, the mother and infant choreograph the boundaries of the real. The infant's first sense of the world—what Heidegger calls "fundamental ontology"—emerges under the direction of the maternal caress.[33]

This direction of the maternal caress encounters the resistance of her child as a burgeoning world, in some sense intercorporeality and social interdependence begin as soon as two bodies, through the thickness of any flesh, make contact.

This project's scope is such that I cannot explore each of these in their origins in neonate vulnerability, but it is important to note that I will trace "mineness" or lived personal identity and ethics to this origin and that it is where these converge—the indeterminate nature of my identity at this origin, the way the others affect this indeterminacy—that I ground my phenomenology of solidarity and with it a politics of the intercorporeal.

These simple foundations of psychoanalytic theory are in many senses more palatable—because more plausible—than theories of mind which take for-granted the possibility that mind might bring itself—through sheer force of will, in the purity of its isolation and authenticity—to *speak*, to think its impulses vicious or good, to create a world and populate it with chimeras or other men, or especially to differentiate itself and its experiences from others, paradoxically, from within the purity of the primordial severance rationalism grants it.

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[33] Willett, Cynthia. Willett, *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 32.

> The body unites us with the things through its own ontogenesis, by welding to one another the two outlines of which it is made, its two laps: the sensible mass it is and the mass of the sensible wherein it is born by segregation, and upon which, as seer it remains open.[34]

It is important, I think, to note that Merleau-Ponty undermines the bifurcation of subject and other, when he imperils the subject/object disjunct, "to see the world, we must already be in a kind of bodily communion with it."[35] While he renders this more explicit in concepts like the flesh, and the philosophy of communion to which this naturally gives rise, these are nascent even in Merleau-Ponty's analyses of mere *perception*…

Before Sartre's voyeur is caught, there is anxiety—an anticipation of the interruption—his crime is not committed in ignorance of this perpetual vulnerability. *I* feel *that I am being watched, even though I can see no one engaging in this act for quite a while, and when I finally find the gaze that is the source of this sensation—not localizable to any particular part of my body, but in them all, as though what is touched—I am nonetheless startled.* Some of my sensations seem like they must come from me alone, even this sensation of another watching me: but they rarely do...

Or perhaps I am among friends and family, in an environment of such comfort and security that people become bold with their language: that we each know each of the others will grant us the utmost charity, when an offensive joke is uttered. *The other manipulates the language we share, bends the air we are breathing, and reaches into the cavern of my chest—setting my breath to stutter and sputter, my lungs to sing, with the resonance of a laugh.* It is *my* body that moves

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[34] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. J. Wild and J. Edie, *eds.*(Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 136.
[35] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 124.

with this laugh, even if I wish it wouldn't. In some sense I do not have full motor control of this body, and its movement might come from someone other than me at times…

Or, again, my basic perception might well occur in the mode of an absence of the other. *The other body dies, and I feel this death in the painful slowing of my own heart, with this painful churning like plunging a well the water rises to stinging eyes that distort the world—like a dead thing I have no desire to eat, it is often hard to speak, pointless to speak. A world in which I do not speak looks different…* The other is in fact a necessary component of our perceptual reality, and I think phenomenological examples like these demonstrate the degree to which she dwells in our sinews and synapses, is written in the striations of our muscles and the time-worn expressions of our faces. Perception itself would not be possible if it weren't for the other, because the *body could not come into being*—welded as it is to the world—without her.

> …our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of the "object" and to the order of the "subject" reveal to us quite unexpected relations between the orders.[36]

The body anticipates the other, and the world. The hand anticipates feeling of the objects it will palpate, as well as the touch of the other; "Instead, the duality of exteroception and proprioception, of receptivity and spontaneity, is ubiquitous. My hand can touch only because it can be touched."[37] Every member of the body extends always-already into the world, but also takes it up. And, in the case of our relations with others, there is this paradox as well: that we feel

[36] See Merleau-Ponty. *The Visible and the Invisible*, 137.
[37] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 131.

ourselves being-felt, that we experience ourselves as being-seen. Our bodies encounter the sensory experiences of others. We are paradoxically objectified as-subjects. The end of the rift between subject and object means the end of the rift between me and the other. This is how, when we are working together, we feel the other's grip slip, or when we sing, we tune each other: how we reach into one another to elicit the laugh or the note, or the strength to continue on. This basic bodily communion accounts for much of the prereflective phenomena of cooperation with which we are all familiar, but which flee into almost paranormal absurdity when we attempt to bring them to analysis, concept, or reason.

> That a child perceives before he thinks that he begins by putting his dreams in the things, his thoughts in the others, forming with them, as it were, one block of common life wherein the perspectives of each are not yet distinguished—these genetic facts cannot be simply ignored by philosophy in the name of the exigencies of the intrinsic analysis. Thought cannot ignore its apparent history…[38]

The first of these carnal collaborations is of course our ontogenesis, as subjects formed in another's care. And, as common wisdom tells us, we think of parenting poorly if we think of it as the imposition of adult values and superior knowledge upon the *tabula raza* of the child. Indeed, the parent must respond to the unique contours of nascent subjectivity that seep into the world through her child, and the child is called upon to take up *this* body, *this* love, *this* care. Further, each distorts this other in taking her up.

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[38] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* 11-12.

For the child, this means that her parent is more powerful, more foreboding: a menacing myth whose power over life and death has *so far* been used to sustain her.[39] The vitality of her form—the electrification of her tissues, the movement of her gut, the heat that emanates from her cells—might all be brute facts of "flesh" as we mean it in everyday speech. But these are features of the body in its thingly valence—one of two leaves of the body—and there are possibilities of this very thingly body that haunt it, that threaten the neonate more than they do the adult: mortification, silent sinews, death. The child is more vulnerable because she cannot protect herself from her own death, because the other keeps her alive, because she is physically frail and easier to kill. As a thing, the body may be an "I can," or it may be a corpse. But, as *flesh*, it is

> …not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term 'element,' in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing,* midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea.[40]

As *flesh*, the body exceeds itself, is ensnared by the world and ensnares the world within its fibers: it is buzzing with others, with history, with possibilities.[41] As *flesh*, that is, the body is the *foundation* of many worlds—and of the interaction between them. But this means the foundations of these worlds are themselves *vulnerable*; just as the subject is forged at a greater proximity to her own demise, so too is the "I can" that allows us to take up the world in a

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[39] Freud's persecutory parent (imagined here in a somewhat phenomenological/experiential vein) is indeed an encrustment if the real parent into the flesh of the child, but she is of course not identical with the self the parent lives. While both child and parent share the project and the horizon of the welfare and flourishing of the child, and while they are co-constituted in bodily experience, difference proliferates at the site of contact with the other: not leveling.

[40] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 139.

[41] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 132.

meaningful way haunted by the dread certainty that our body can always be rendered a corpse: that we have only developed finite strength and resistance to death since our infancy.[42]

Hass argues that Merleau-Ponty elaborates three senses of *flesh*— "flesh as carnality, as the reversibility relation, and as a basic element of being"—which demonstrates the complexity of the concept, without rendering it useless, equivocal, or vacuous. I, however, do not see the usefulness or even the possibility of genuinely distinguishing these senses of flesh in the first place.[43] It seems to me that, if we focus in on lived phenomena (indeed the only phenomena we may focus on, as Hass here also asserts), the flesh must function in all three of these valences at once. We cannot give an account for instance, of the conversation, or of shaming, or of perception itself, without the flesh miring us in the brute and rough material of the world, without it reversing itself as it gives itself over into diffusion in the world and gives itself up to the inherent extimacy of its constitution, nor can we think these phenomena without experience elementally undergirding their possibility. This most basic element of the phenomena—the fire of experience—like all other elements touches the world, is touched by the world: just as fire may consume the body, the world, entire intelligibilities or be extinguished by a child's breath. Indeed, we might think that ontological elements are basic in the sense that they are necessary and fundamental but in reality, that each is genuinely complex as it enmeshes, inevitably, with beings in the world. It makes little sense to argue that fire is elaborated as a basic element of being, but also as light, also as heat, also a possibility and devastation. Nor to say that air is a condition of being, but that it is also change, also breath, and additionally the power to raze. As

[42] We need not look to Freud's now dubious theory on the genesis of the subject in order to acknowledge this proliferation. We need only remember, for example, the most normal adolescence in order to see that our development mat at times give rise incommensurate persecutory parents, teachers, stewards in general.
[43] Hass, Lawrence. *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 140.

such, flesh is a condition for the possibility of *the world*, characterized by reversibility and carnality: which are quite frankly co-extensive with its power to found a world at all.

Hass is, however, right I think to conclude that Merleau-Ponty's concept of the flesh must be thought as a multiplicity. While this project does not engage Deleuze and Guattari, its analyses *do* demonstrate that the flesh means the multiplicity of the subject: both as she experiences herself as a kind of proliferation of extimate echoes, as the demands and expectations of others' bodies, and the subcutaneous scurrying of their muscles the modulations of their voices : and also as her dispersal in the others as the subject she is when she is not herself, animating the world of another, approving and prohibiting certain experiences she may have, flexing and twitching in a living and vibrant vessel perhaps miles away from herself, speaking in her members through a face she may not even recognize. That reversibility and carnality are part and parcel of the elemental nature of the flesh does nothing to *reduce* this diffusion and multiplication of the self.

This is to say that the embodied subject is vulnerable to others in such a way that she may take them up, be constituted by them, and indeed finds herself inherently plural. In fact, Marratto argues that the very reflective processes through which some philosophers have proposed the existence— and even necessity—of a pure and isolated self are predicated on the enmeshment of "heteroaffection" with "autoaffection," and that therefore self-awareness is always already mixed with awareness of the other: or, rather, what we are aware of when we are aware of ourselves *is always also* the other. [44]

[44] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 128.

> …my sentient body, in its presence to me as my own body, attests to what can never be present to me. It prepares me to 'experience' the other because it attests to that which can never be presented *within* any experience. The sense of my own embodiment is also a sense of my own non-self-identity and thus a kind of opening to the presence of others.[45]

This porosity, and the power it has as a necessary condition of the genesis of the subject is merely most obvious (and in ways we shall discuss later this is because it is less refined) in the impoverished primordium of neonate dependence. Examples like those found in Guenther's work as well as the contemporary psychology here sited imply that embodied subjectivity is never *sealed*, that I am never wholly *independent*, and that I would utterly disintegrate in the vale of genuine exile.[46] In this sense, we are always responsible for one another: an uncomfortable insight missing from much of contemporary ethics and politics, and without which any discussion of solidarity inevitably fails. After all, within solidary movements momentum comes specifically from people taking up responsibility for one another: adopting the others' interests and acting in accord with their completion.

§ III. Belonging-*to*

In intercorporeality, each of us is given—however imperfectly—to the other, as a part of her experience. As something given over to the other, I am hers. As something given over to me, she is mine. We take one another up and incorporate each other into the weave of our world. The

[45] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 142-143.
[46] We will discuss Agambin's concept of the ban in later chapters, but here it suffices to note that genuine privation of proximity with others either prohibits the development of subjectivity or undermines its more mature constitution: such consequences will be very *grave* as we look to solidatistic movements.

tapestry of our behaviors and values is constituted by threads the other spun. In some way, the second I encounter the other I am given to her—as a *part of herself*—a part so important, an organ so vital, that without me (without all of us) she could not *begin to exist*. But I am *not* given-*up*. I am hers, but I remain mine; and that me that is encrusted upon her being, the one that is hers, is a diffusion of *mineness*, into the world far beyond the reach of my will, but also an oscillation of what is *hers* a site of her plurality. We belong-*to* one another.[47][48]

Here I find an irresolvable knot in my ethical relation with the other, which will allow for more than a few paradoxical interactions with her: givenness-over to her allows for me to treat

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[47] Rosalyn Diprose calls this primordial dispossession of the self in the other "generosity," rather than belonging-*to*. She argues—as I do—that it is a condition of possibility for any experience at all. But the conception of this givenness-over to the other as the *generosity* of embodied subjectivity strikes me as somewhat too agential, and too easy for the ethics I wish to develop. What is given is not merely a *gift*. In fact, the self I give over to the other is often a poor gift at best. Sometimes I give a toxic, damaging self to the other—which displaces some part of her, and constitutes her. We do not always *want* what is given. In this sense, I think that our givenness-over to the other implies a *debt*. In giving, we always owe. This is why I opt for the language of 'belonging' here, rather than the language of the gift; I think it is perhaps a revealing reversal to consider what it is that the other possesses when she possesses me, what power and influence that possession of her own composite soul has upon it, than to focus simply upon the diffusion through which I am devested of that self.

Diprose, Rosalyn, *Corporeal Generosity*, (New York: Suny University Press, 2002), 4.

[48] This tension between being another's and remaining my own can be edifying and mundane, as it is in everyday love relationships, friendships, and in this corporeal communion to which I draw our attention. But it may well instantiate as perverse and abusive relations. There are, of course, situations in which we might yearn above all else *not* to belong to the other: situations like slavery and trafficking, wherein the other has taken literal possession of us, has commodified us as something that can be *owned*.

I am here going to do two things 1) to disambiguate the sense of 'belonging' I am using here and 2) to distinguish between the sense of ownership we have over the members of our bodies, the experiences of our lives, and other vital detritus that accumulates upon us and the sense in which we own some commodity.

1) I mean 'belonging' as we belong to a community. This belonging is a primordial inclusion, communion, as opposed to a ban. Ordinarily we might avoid this tension by saying we belong 'with' one another (as does Heidegger), but I wanted to draw attention to the ways in which we come to constitute the other. I say we belong 'to' her because we are some of her parts/members.
2) It is important, when doing phenomenology, to note that we are not self-transparent and that we do not have dominion over our bodies and their parts. Unlike the mere *objects* we encounter—the things we *own*—we possess our bodies in such a way that they fight us, refuse our dominion. Enslaving another requires objectification and the always temporary delusion that she cannot and will not fight you. In the second half of this book, we shall see that the enslaved and incarcerated never actually belong to their slavers in the sense these oppressors think they do (that is, as commodities, objects). But as others, who resist through the media of mind and flesh and who influence their delusional captors in reciprocity.

her well or badly *at all.* The openness that I am is at best ambivalently good, and yet there is nothing without it. Such irresolvable knots are central to Merleau-Pontian phenomenology, as a genuine departure from the rationalist tradition in Western thought. They are the *mysteries* that account for our very possibility:

> Problems can be stated, we might say, whereas mysteries can only be named, gestured at, pondered…It is tempting to say that what makes problems and puzzles philosophical, as opposed to merely technical or scientific, is precisely the whiff of mystery that lingers about them, the aura of wonder, as opposed to sheer conceptual opacity or complexity.[49]

This knot starts with two valences of my plurality: 1) my dissemination throughout the world and the others, the way I am encrusted upon and indeed intwined with *their* lives, carried in *their* bodies, living with and within them even when I am physically remote and 2) their dissemination in me, the inevitably plural and extimate nature of my own subjectivity. In this sense, the self I experience—which colors all of my experiences and makes them mine—is composed, in innumerable and incalculable ways, by others. But there are also selves that, while they remain mine, are in the other and are therefore tinged by another's mineness, are not lived by me, and may well be unrecognizable to me. Another way "the ambiguities of human experience are interconnected and multiplied."[50] This bivalent proliferation of the self—by which a self is *given* to me by the others, and through which I *give* myself in order to make those other selves—is belonging-*to*.

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[49] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 7.
[50] Weiss, Gail. "Ambiguity," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds *eds*. (Acumen: Durham, 2011). 136.

Merleau-Ponty's evacuation of the mind-body dichotomy imperils also the subject-object dichotomy, and with it the supposed gulf between me and others. As such, his conception of embodied subjectivity is a conception of a body and a subject radically shared: woven into the world and into others' experiences in deeply complex and ethically significant ways. The other is absolutely necessary for our becoming anyone at all, on this account; and certainly, who precisely we become finds many of its conditions of possibility and the barriers of its greatest constraint, strewn about in the shimmering nebula of the others—of their expressions, their words, their embraces or flinching. These intertwinings and enmeshments of subjectivities—as body-subjects and subject-bodies—also find phenomenological and empirical support, as we have seen.

> The intervention of the other does not resolve the internal paradox of my perception: it adds to it this other enigma: of the propagation of my own most secret life in another—another enigma, but yet the same one, since from all the evidence it is only through the world that I can leave myself.[51]

Or, to put it another way, not even

> Our affects are…contained or confined under our skin but materialize in a shared world as embodied behavior that radiates affective force.[52]

Again:

[51] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 11.
[52] See Whitney, "AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE: MERLEAU-PONTY AND FANON ON THE BODY SCHEMA AS A THEORY OF AFFECT," 493.

> Continuous with the flesh, the body proper communicates with the world at large and is no longer rigidly circumscribed by the contours of the bodily form, Merleau-Ponty invokes "a logic of implication and promiscuity" … to capture this one-in-another of carnality and the undecidedness between the inside and the outside which testifies to the permissive nature of being we are immersed in prior to adopting the reflective stance of an observer.[53]

I am dispersed in her, she pervades me. This may provide grounds for a radical politics, because it allows us to rethink solidarity as stemming from a fundamental, carnal, bond—one which might account for willingness to take on the extreme *risks* often required by activism. Gadamer argues that "… It is worth it to make clear how we all share in both, in friendship and solidarity, and that we have to defend this inseparableness…in life our grouping of association lead to solidarity and, in the process, to obligations to one another," which is to say the basic phenomenological inseparability, the plurality of each subject, her dispersal in the other through the flesh of the world gives rise to solidarity.[54] [55]

Greg Johnson makes a similar argument regarding Merleau-Ponty's place in ethics:

> Merleau-Ponty…offers a way of understanding reversibility as that which simultaneously binds us to one another, something important both to ethics and politics,

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[53] See Stawarska, "Psychoanalysis," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 67.
[54] Gadamer, Hans-Georg, "Solidarity and Friendship, *Research," in Phenomenology*, Vol 39, 2009. pp. 5.
[55] As we shall see, this leads to another paradox: namely dying-*for*, suffering-*for*, which all might inhere in solidary movements that genuinely challenge power. If the other belongs-to me—by virtue of my taking up her world, of her being "encrusted" in my flesh, by virtue of her future permeating my own—and if I belong-to her in these same ways, another "enigma" arises from our intercorporeality, another "paradox" comes to pervade our being in the world: a paradox wherein my death might mean the life of another, wherein my death *works* in the world.

> and that which liberates ethics and politics from an old- style metaphysics of sameness and an ontology of full presence.[56]

But his analysis ultimately reconsiders our being-with—and with it our duties to one another and the possibilities of phenomenological ethics—in the register of the cognitive; he argues that reversibility provides us *tools* for taking on the other's perspective, for extending our *thought*, or even for *imagining* the effects of our actions in others. My analysis argues that the effects of our actions in others are accessible to us in the *pre-reflective*, and that ethics indeed begins in *feeling* this shared flesh, rather than in *conceiving* of possible feelings. This means ethics *inheres* in the flesh, as part and parcel of its extension into the world: making it an *element* of our very incarnation, rather than the constructive product of any calculus, symbolization, imaginary, etc...

In this sense, my ethics of the flesh *necessitates* the other—as *actually* existing, *actually* other—in a way that other ethical programs do not. In order to reason, *a priori* about how I should treat other people, I at least ostensibly do not need to have encountered any *actual* person who I might treat rightly or wrongly. To be a deontologist, I need only to conceive of non-contradictory maxims. To be a consequentialist or a utilitarian, I need only imagine suffering within a complex matrix of cause-and-effect. But, to act in accordance with belonging-*to* I must encounter the ethical debt, in the flesh, and as a condition of my own possibility.

Johnson argues further "…the reversibility of perspectives is essential both to moral reasoning and transformative politics."[57] And, while this may be true, a lack thereof is *not* the reason for immorality, violence, or for oppressive politics. In fact, our reversible relation with the

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[56] Johnson, Greg "Merleau-Ponty and the Reversibility of Perspectives," in *Intertwinings: Reflections on Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, G. Weiss *ed.* (New York: Suny Press, 2008), 169.
[57] See Johnson, "Merleau-Ponty and the Reversibility of Perspectives," in *Intertwinings: Reflections on Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, 170.

other makes possible violent or depraved relations with her: relations in which we exploit our mutual openness and do her violence and harm. What the other gives over to me, *organically* and compulsorily, I may make a tool to use against her just as easily as I might use it to help her. The most excellent torturer would be able to take on the other's *perspective*, to clothe herself in it, and in thus inhabiting her position induce in her the greatest suffering possible. After all, the torments I cannot endure are in some ways unique to me.

Furthermore, there may be many people incapable of this kind of projection into the other's perspective—for reasons of disability, or neuro-atypicality—who nonetheless avoid violent and tyrannical behaviors for *other* reasons. People, that is, who cannot *imagine* through any cognitive process, what it would be like to suffer *as* the other does, but who nonetheless heed the duties inchoate in their deep and bodily bonds with others (and who therefore use other means in order to do so).

I agree that intercorporeality is indeed fundamentally necessary for any such imaginative gestalt in our perspectives, but I do not see such a gestalt as fundamental to ethics. That is to say taking up the other's *perspective* is a second-order phenomenon because intercorporeality itself, means the other's suffering is always-already *my own*—that her pain is a phenomenon of my own flesh and a feature of my own world—before any hint of the "individual" emerges: "…atmospheric generality" … connects one to all other bodies, human and non-human, that are. co-present with one in the world."[58] This is why belonging-*to*, as I here conceive it, is I think a superior starting place for a Merleau-Pontian ethics/politics of the flesh: reversibility itself makes possible, at a fundamental level, all of our embodied interactions. It is therefore fundamental to our ethical relations more primordially than the kind of "thinking-as" Johnson proposes. In fact,

[58] See Weiss. "Ambiguity," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 133.

Merleau-Ponty's thought is especially attractive for re-thinking politics and ethics because he "radicalizes phenomenology by showing how the testimony of things emerges on a perceptual, bodily level prior to reflection," granting us possible access to a much deeper and indeed more open ground of the possibilities of our being-together.[59]

Belonging-*to* highlights the degree to which we are given to the other, dispersed throughout the worlds and lives of the others, the degree to which we are theirs—as components of the very perspectives we might attempt to adopt in order to do them justice. This is why, for instance, face-to-face meetings between perpetrators of crimes and their victims are so successful in the rehabilitation of the perpetrator.[60]

> …face-to-face interaction can break down pride, fear, pain, anxiety, and other barriers to accepting responsibility and thus pave the way for genuine repentance… The entire process can provide a starting point forgiveness and reintegration.[61]

The crime was likely committed under a bad-faith delusion, held by the perpetrator, that there existed some gulf, some distinction, between she and her victim: which would insulate the former from the effects of her acts.[62] The face, indeed the body and the flesh of the victim however, themselves undermine such a gulf—a gulf which is *necessary* for the very idea of a gestalt-switch between perspectives. The body of the other speaks into being, and sets up in my

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[59] Morris, David. "Body," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Acumen: Durham, 2011), 112.
[60] Bibas, Stephanos and Bierschbach, Richard. "Integrating Remorse and Apology into Criminal Procedure." in *the Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 114, No. 1. (Oct. 2004) 113-114.

I should note, here, that I have merely adopted the language of the research with which I am engaging, but do not wish to uncritically adopt the connotative and social valuations that come with "vicim/perpetrator" language. As with every phenomenon I engage in this project, I believe the ambiguities between these positions are in fact central to understanding them, and that any politics which emerges from the ethics of the flesh I put forth here would have to re-envision them in the light of their contingency, reversibility, and ambiguity in order to achieve or approximate justice.
[61] See Bibas and Bierschbach. "Integrating Remorse and Apology into Criminal Procedure." 115.
[62] See Bibas and Bierschbach. "Integrating Remorse and Apology into Criminal Procedure." 110.

own body, the truth of what she was owed, what I failed to provide her, denied her, or took from her. When face-to-face apologies work as part of the offender's restoration to her community, it is because this restoration is total; she is brought back into the flesh, and the exit wound her transgression left behind can finally heal.

Another example of the fundamental status of belonging-*to* comes again from the very organism we are. Belonging-*to* is in fact so fundamental to human experience that even our restoration to *health* requires it. In *Alienation and Freedom* Fanon recounts some frustrations he had engaging Muslim psychiatric patients in a kind of social therapy he had found rather successful for his European patients. The fact that clinicians did not share a culture, or its environing meanings and significations (much less the medium of its language) with the patients rendered it very difficult to provide them with the kind of cohesive social setting that would prove useful for therapy. That is a social setting wherein they become a "coherent group driven by collective preoccupations," rather than suffering the erosion of self that is isolation, individuality, and other kinds of medically induced solipsism natural to psychiatric confinement.[63]

So long as this communal life remained absent from the ward, Fanon notes that the "atmosphere remained oppressive, stifling," and that life for the patient became a "vicious circle—agitation, restraint, agitation—always keep up by a veritably concentration-camp mindset."[64] A robust communal life is, in short, *necessary* to avoid the kinds of pathological mental phenomena which served as an excuse for petite dictators in lab-coats to restrain these patients. It is likely, given the racial animus explored throughout Fanon's works that these

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[63] Fanon, Frantz. *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 358.
[64] See Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* 361.

doctors and nurses were anxiously awaiting such an excuse—but these episodes nonetheless remain uncomfortable and even dangerous for the patient, and her restraint may be even more so.

Since belonging-*to* is something like a structure of experience that inheres in the body as an extended thing—indeed inchoate in its very extension—and since this ethics of the flesh is coextensive with it, then indeed what I owe the other is ontologically primary even from this Merleau-Pontian phenomenological perspective. Or, put differently, phenomenology commits us to tangles, rather than the neat dichotomies and narratives provided by much of the history of philosophy. As a result, we find that flesh is not just the basic substance of *being*—of our being and of the world—but it is also the basic ethical substance. Its extension in space and time, toward the objects and the others, is at the same time and in no less important a sense the extension of an obligation and a duty to the other (and indeed one could argue, though I cannot here, to the *world*). Just as there could be no human *being* or world outside or without the flesh, neither can endure without belonging-*to*, an inherently ethical dimension of the flesh.

We should not, however, think that structures of experience shape experience in ossified of invariable ways. I owe the other myself, no matter which other she may be, but I do not necessarily hear or heed this call merely by being-embodied. Such a supposition would make immoral conduct regarding the other impossible and find each of us shared with equal potency and honesty with *all* others. This is of course patently false, counter to intuition, common sense, and the experiences which motivate the account itself.

While I cannot account for its origins, here, *partiality* is among the fundamental characters and features of experience and intercorporeal life that affect the ways in which our body pluralizes and the ethical relations we have with distinct others. Belonging-*to* instantiates and particularizes, just as being-with or being-toward-death, or any other more basic

phenomenological structure. My relations to some are closer than my relations to others, and this proximity seems to amplify the ethical call of belonging-*to* in my interactions with them: I more freely give up my things, my time, my comfort, and even my life for those closest to me and I do so almost reflexively.

In this sense belonging-*to* is made *noticeable*, excavated from the mere structural level of experience, by the instantiated relation: especially when that relation is materially and affectively proximal. Lived phenomena like proximity, affection, greater conditions of reliance/inter-reliance, etc., which imbue the relation with sentiment and affect make clearer the ethical relation that inheres in our intercorporeality. This will account, in part, for the fact that solidarity is a *partial* phenomenon, which we do not have equally with all people. The radical corporeal foundations may be there when we relate to *anyone*, but they are not raised to the level of a *felt* debt unless we are close to the other in some way or called by an emergency or something of the sort.

III. b. Belonging-*to* On the Way to Solidarity

Rethinking solidarity as fundamentally structured by belonging-*to* will require, as we shall see, rethinking the *suffering* and the *causes* behind solidary movements: conceiving them not fundamentally as "reasons" for solidarity if this means something like a conceptual or intellectual phenomenon, deliberated and shared primarily through the media of speech and argumentation (though these are undeniably integral to the success of any solidary movement), but rather as fundamentally phenomena of shared embodiment: as phenomena of the dispersal of my suffering in the other, in her members, her memory, her flesh, and her parallel dispersal in mine.[65] Phenomenology allows us to see, among other things, that 1) if we belong-*to* the other,

[65] Tommie Shelby argues that shared suffering is all that is required for solidarity, and he does so quite convincingly. In a sense, this is the other, complimentary, work to his argument. While I would argue with him that

we may undergo the most extreme risk for her and 2) my suffering can be a motivation for her to change the world, or 3) a flinching reflex, sewn into her flesh, which perpetuates her own oppression.[66] Each of these possibilities, illumined by a phenomenological analysis, requires we rethink solidarity, involvement, and inclusion in activism.

> Here there is a being-shared-by-two, and the other person is no longer for me a simple behavior in my transcendental field, nor for that matter am I a simple behavior in his. We are for each other collaborators in perfect reciprocity; our perspectives slide into each other; we coexist through a single world…[67]

Thus, if the other constitutes me, she constitutes my body. As with the psychoanalytic account, before I am anyone at all, someone else has entered my flesh, enmeshed herself in my habits. When I feel myself moving through the world—moving that is always *toward* or *away*, always intentionally—I *feel* her, *feel* them, as a weight on my muscles, or the sense with which my aims are imbued, even as the reverberating call of my own possibilities. My relation to the other is not, that is, a relation between me and something radically outside me. Rather, it is an "internal relation" on Merleau-Ponty's account: a kind of extimate proprioception, before any individuated perspective exists.

I will therefore argue it is paradoxically possible for me to suffer-*for* and even to die-*for* the other in solidarity. Such brutal and terrifying realities have been unfortunately necessary for many solidary movements (some of which, namely the Ludlow Massacre and police brutality

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there is not need for a thorough-going and rigid mutual identity in order for people to organize, and indeed take on the necessary risks of solidary entanglement, I think mutual suffering cannot be conceived as an *idea*: rather, genuine solidarity springs almost organically from belonging-*to*, and most of our institutions are designed to lead us off its trail.

[67] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald A. Landes *trans*. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 370.

during the Civil Rights Movement, I discuss in my third chapter), and indeed many have had to die for others, that these others may live a life of freedom and greater possibilities, relative to their own.

We should not forget however, what we have said before: that *vulnerability* itself is a *fact* of the flesh. As it instantiates in belonging-*to*, this vulnerability is fundamental to the very possibility of ethics. But there are other instantiations of the openness of the flesh, which possibilize just as radically the oppression that makes necessary solidarity and resistance in the first place. We cannot derive from such mere facts any moral prescription regarding how we should treat one another, because these mere facts are indeed usually ambivalent in exactly these ways. That which makes it possible for us to sacrifice deeply for others also gives us the capacity to wound them.

In fact, if I were *invulnerable* violence against me would be impossible. The openness of the flesh makes sympathy possible, to be sure, but it is also an openness to being-wounded, to being cut short, killed. The openness of my body may let in elixirs of life—air, water, the vibrations of the song—but it may just as well let in the jagged edges of the knife, harsh words that bind my members in shame, noxious gas, lead. While I find Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body useful for rethinking solidarity, I take issue with his avoidance of *death*—of this ultimate and unavoidable vulnerability of the embodied subject to the annihilation of her world.

This is not only because it is an existential aspect of vulnerability, another leaf of that vital openness, which makes its humming vitality possible *at all*. And it is also not only because this possibility, inchoate in our openness to the world must be thought through if we are ever to arrive at any ethics or politics of the flesh. This is also because, as history shows us, persons mired in solidary movements, especially *effective* ones, take up the possibility of death. And they

do so in a two-fold manner. For persons fighting their oppression and suffering, the conditions they fight draw them near to death: the gravity of this world-annihilator, death, anchors them to their particular world, makes of their world a kind of parallel universe to worldlessness, of life a kind of living-death.[68] The second fold is of course the possibility that fighting these conditions will indeed kill them: that the struggle to unchain their life-worlds from the wailing shadow of their own mourners will actually drag them fully under the soil. And, indeed, many people have died in attempting to win a livable world. No phenomenology of solidarity can therefore ignore death—especially as dying-*for*— nor can it ignore the way our bodies are wounded, the way they may be wounded, the enduring trauma of the flesh in the world. In using the concept of belonging-*to* to rethink solidarity, I gesture toward a politics of the flesh: one which pulsates with the *mortal dread* that belies activism and genuine work, and therefore takes seriously the *courage* resistance requires.

In particular, bodily belonging-*to* might well be the phenomenological scaffolding upon which a willingness to die-*for*—an apparent paradox which nonetheless undergirds so many solidary movements—is possible. “the theory of affect we find in Merleau-Ponty’s] theory of the body schema is not only one of affect as a unique kind of sense, but of affect as capacity, force, *motivation*, or *influence*: the energetic mobilization of sensory and motor possibility,” which operates “not only intracorporeally, but also intercorporeally.”[69] This chapter attempts to set up this paradox in as much clarity and honesty as possible, so that we might better analyze it as it shows up in solidary movements as the fleshly depths of solidary commitment.

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[68] See Guenther. *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives*.

[69] Whitney, Shiloh. "AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE: MERLEAU-PONTY AND FANON ON THE BODY SCHEMA AS A THEORY OF AFFECT,” in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Volume 56, Issue 4 December 2018.* 493.

§ IV. The Problem of Alterity: Phenomenology and Death

The problem of alterity is regularly cited as a particularly sticky one for Merleau-Ponty. And, since this Merleau-Pontian analysis now involves an argument that we can die-*for* another, it may be seen as again conceiving the other in too great and easy a proximity to me, potentially leveling her experience—even that of her own death—to my own. Some criticisms of phenomenology argue that this kind of leveling is unavoidable, if we begin in first-person experience—that is, if we do phenomenology—since I can only begin in experiences that are *mine*.[70]

For my part, I do not see co-constitution, or the dispersal of each in the others as effacing intractable alterity: rather, these phenomena are, on my view, impossible without alterity and in fact multiply difference. The fact that Merleau-Ponty's analysis is mired in psychoanalysis—where the extimate features of the burgeoning psyche are *mythologized*, despotic and potentially sadistic parents—indicates that the other we carry with us is likely, always-already distorted. In other words, this other is not identical with herself: she is her and yet she differs from herself. The other might be "encrusted" upon my being, or *live my life* with me, or our flesh might be intertwined as parts of a single system—all of which are psuedo-unities Merleau-Ponty variously invokes—but the mineness that pervades my experience cannot fully absorb her, cannot faithfully apprehend her. Just as the version of me someone else carries may very well be completely unrecognizable to me. I may not be able to recognize myself as I am there, in her

[70] See Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*. 140.

view of the world, because I am a non-identical self. Such distortions mean that we are never the *same* when we are "living" another's life.[71]

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty recognizes the fundamental necessity of alterity. We might well say that the otherness of the other is a condition of possibility for the intersubjective phenomena of reversibility, openness, and co-constitution (those elements of Merleau-Ponty's thought most vulnerable to this critique of leveling difference). Indeed, the perception the infant has of others is nothing but a kind of confusion, which leaves its imprint on the loving relations we form in our adulthood, but is ultimately necessarily outgrown.[72] Further, the very young infant does not even perceive *others,* in any meaningful sense:

> Insofar as others are felt only as a kind of state of well-being in the baby's organism because he is held more firmly or more tenderly in their arms, we cannot say that they are actually perceived.[73]

And, in fact, for most psychoanalyses, it is the case that the other is only perceived once some displeasure or frustration accompanies her presence or non-presence to the child: once the baby must *wait* to be fed, for instance. And here we see the unseen of Merleau-Ponty's thought, that spectral trace of what belies vitality, that unexamined, but rich and worm-filled *earth* from which the living world of his thought springs; this displeasure is in every way the very *real* possibility that the baby will die. The neonate—unable as she is to move herself, to find any kind of sustenance (in so many cases her only source of food is *in* another body), as incapable as she is of weathering even the slightest impact with the world—lives at the threshold of death, is

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[71] Maclaren, Kym. "Intimacy as Transgression and the Problem of Freedom." In *Puncta Journal of Critical Phenomenology*. 21.
[72] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 155.
[73] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 124.

haunted by it, and may easily be subjected to it by the other. The gravity of this shadow-realm tugs at the infant so much harder than it does adults, because she is so much nearer to it: and this is relatively evident in the fact that even slightly delayed satisfaction hurls the child into panic. But the other generally moves her away from death's pull, and this realization "the other exists, is *not me*, may help or harm me," is necessary for the baby to develop subjectivity *at all.*

The infant encapsulates the others and relegates them to self—she confuses the other with the sensations to which they give rise in her, a kind of metonymous experience, only possible for a subject not yet fully integrated into an intercorporeal real wherein some of what is hers is actually another's, some of what she carries originated elsewhere, and conversely some of what she *is* has been given over to the other. The infant *must* level in this way—at least on a more classically psychoanalytic view—because she is the only being in her world. The adult subject *cannot* level in this way, because there simply *is* nothing to her without the other.[74] [75]

As Marratto says "Merleau-Ponty has already altered us to the many ways in which our our experience is haunted, delayed, anonymous, 'out-of-sync' with itself."[76] The basic and fundamental porosity of embodiment disperses the subject, outside any unifying sense she may have made for herself: this dispersal should haunt her all the more, as a site of her absolute responsibility for the other.

But even where phenomenology puts us in such a meaningful kind of contact with the other—wherein our role in the quality of her life begins to shine forth—I question whether there is indeed any possibility that phenomenology levels difference. While I take the fundamental reversible openness of flesh, as a place to begin to see how we touch one another, I will not

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[75] See Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, 150.
[76] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 127.

valorize a kind of easy politics or ethics of empathy: which politics and ethics take switching perspectives as transparently veridical, as a kind of experiential epistemology, whereby my lived empathy is a faithful reproduction of the other. In other words, we will not be satisfied with any ethics that assumes the other is *knowable*. Rather, the phenomenological approach permits that we *experience* one another, imperfectly, indeed *mysteriously*: these experiences never rise to the level of empirical knowledge, and they can never be strictly speaking *true* in the sense to corresponding adequately to the other. I take the other up in such a way that she is genuinely a part of me—and that she experiences herself as such, in her experiences of responsibility to me in her felt proximity to me, in sudden realizations that we resemble one another more now than we did before, and various other mundane phenomena of friendship, kinship, and familiarity, even enmity—but she is not exhaustively or perfectly herself *as* I take her up.[77] The primordial place given contingency in Merleau-Ponty's thought troubles any concept of "same" or of "identical," "leveled."

I believe the application of *phenomenology* to the experiences of people who must struggle with their world, who are born nearer to death—whose inherent openness has meant privation and wounding—will demonstrate the insufficiency of any reduction-to-the-same. Phenomenology will uncover incommensurate experiences, which are nonetheless hung upon and woven within the shared flesh of the world. And, indeed, Merleau-Ponty sees reversibility as a site of the proliferation of difference:

[77] In fact, intercorporeal dispersion means she is not exhaustively and perfectly herself *in the world*: none of us are self-identical, even here. But the her encrusted upon me, is nonetheless *her*, just as she is in the world. And the her encrusted upon me can only be more or less similar to that contingent one in the world.

> I make [the other's conduct, i.e., consciousness] *mine*… Reciprocally I know that the gestures I make myself can be the objects of another's intention. It is this transfer of my intentions to the other's body and of his intentions to my own, my alienation of the other and his alienation of me, that makes possible the perception of others.[78]

Here, 'alienation' is indeed something like extimacy in the psychoanalytic paradigm: the other finds herself outside herself and finds something foreign within her. We live in a kind of tension with this fact that constantly rebuilds distance between us, even as it enmeshes us evermore with the other: a kind of double 'alienation' sets us up as individual persons by disavowing what persons *are*: sets me up as a central-me, to whom my life occurs uniquely, and yet who must constantly endure the fact that she is *plural and diffuse*. As we have said, even those aspects of the other's world and consciousness which I take from her and incorporate into my own body and life are not *identical* to their source. If we are genuinely concerned—when considering the problem of alterity—with not reducing the other to the same, we must also be vigilant in acknowledging that each person is radically plural: that the "same" to which the other could even conceivably be reduced is, in fact, no "same" at all:

> Others come to be mysterious and troubling for adults in a way they cannot be for children, for our mature conception of ourselves as subjects puts us in essential tension, often open conflict, with others, whom we necessarily experience asymmetrically, in the

[78] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 118.

> second and third person—not as I myself, but as you and he or she. "Like the gods of polytheism, I have to contend with other gods."[79]

We might very well make mistakes if we take something like empathy to be a feeling-*for* which feels precisely the same as feeling-*as* the other. If we take the *crossing* of my flesh with the other and the felt proximity and empathy to which it gives rise as an indication that we have successfully absorbed the other into the homogeneity of our *own* and *singular* experience—that we have essentially *translated* her—then we certainly make such a mistake.[80] After all, *I* am neither homogeneous nor singular; I am teeming with the vitality and energy of others, with the warmth of their skin or the slight dilation of their pupils, with their presence or absence on the earth, haunted by echoes of their words and worlds. Because I do not live as one, I cannot reduce the other to one (or, more to the point, I cannot reduce her to *this*-one, *me*). I live as a tapestry woven of diverse strands, colors and weights, which I did not choose, and which do not necessarily come from me. I live as a collection of others. So, even if I did grasp or *consume* the other in my embrace, I could never *reduce* her: I could only find her, likely accidentally (or certainly not by my sovereign choice) included in the tapestry of my *heterogenous* being.

> …the responsibility at the center of our lives, that is experienced "despite oneself," the binding of oneself to others, happens through what might be called our shared

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[79] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 146.

See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.* 412, 359, & 418.

[80] Merleau-Ponty's dense, mysterious, almost mystical late work, *The Chiasm: The Intertwining*, uses this biological imagery of the crossing. One *chiasm* of the body is that of the optic nerves, over and under one another, not touching, not merged, and almost *surprisingly* allowing the left side of the brain to render images captured by the right eye (and vice versa). The *chaism*, that is the *crossing*, allows opposites to collude and collaborate, and give rise to a single vision—a single *world*—while the parts crossed remain themselves, irreconcilably different, *opposites*. Such a choice in biological metaphors is, I think, a substantial hint regarding the place of alterity in Merleau-Ponty's writings.

> mortality. This sensible encounter, this "allegiance," Levinas argues, is less a "shock" than a *vulnerability:* an exposure of ourselves to the vulnerability of others, a wounding in the face of others 'wounds.[81]

Thus, intercorporeality provides for what Marratto calls "…an alterity *within* the interiority of the phenomenological subject," rather than granting us pure intimacy with the other through "confusion or substitutability," Merleau-Ponty develops a complex and tension-riddled *extimacy* of subjectivity which complicates or even renders impossible any genuine reduction-to-the-same—whether this is supposed to be accomplished by theory or affect.[82] For the phenomenologist:

> …this intersubjective milieu always outruns, constrains, forms and excites [our intentions] in a more or less anonymous way that eludes full understanding or control.[83]

Or, again, in a phenomenology of touch, wherein only one body is literally available to the hand, Willett nonetheless explores the intercorporeal ontogenesis of the subject through the maternal

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[81] See Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, 120.
[82] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 140-141.

Marratto notes another central problem regarding Levinas' critique, which is that he takes Merleau-Ponty to be giving a kind of epistemic account of our being-with. Thus, he takes issue with a claim it is not obvious Merleau-Ponty makes: that we are granted intimate, extensive, and perhaps even baffling *knowledge* of the other through our mutual embodiment and the flesh of the world. This is to say that the extraordinary brightness of *knowledge* illuminates that which genuine alterity, were it attended to, would obviously obscure or render opaque. But, it seems Levinas moves from the primordial and pre-reflective conception of intercorporeality Merleau-Ponty indeed gives to this epistemological one either too quickly, or at least not necessarily. Many of the analysis consulted for this project, as well as this project itself, have been capable of conceiving an intercorporeality which does not obliterate the otherness of the other in a white, psychic, light of epistemic certainty.
[83] Diana Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Acumen: Durham, 2011), 90.

touch and notes that any careful understanding of such mutual, *intercorporeal*, experiences fails in the even that it levels difference and reduces entities to one:

> … The caress does not aim to incorporate, it resists the fusion dynamics—including oceanic, symbiotic, and organic experiences of oneness—often projected onto the infant-mother relation. Fusion experiences assume that two individual subjects dissolve into a single identity, a sameness that again takes the pattern of an all too fluid assimilation or even final liquidation. But mother no more dissolves into child than child dissolves into mother.

Levinas' critique of phenomenological egoism, is foundational for understanding his project: a project which, like Merleau-Ponty's, begins in the abandonment of preceding philosophical tradition and the creation of a "first philosophy," which does not suffer from the tradition's usual, formal solipsism.

For Merleau-Ponty, this first philosophy is embodied experience: which does much to at least keep the ego a in kind of unavoidable and ontologically primitive *company* (even if the ego is transcendental in his thought—a question we might tarry with—it is not a solis-ipse, and it cannot stand alone). For Levinas, this first philosophy is *ethics*. And indeed, in belonging-*to,* my reading of Merleau-Ponty finds a dimension of the flesh to which he did not necessarily attend—or which he did not necessarily notice—which is inherently ethical. That is to say, belonging-*to* shows the degree to which the *debt*, what we owe others is inscribed on the flesh: and indeed, synonymous with myself, I *owe the other in order to be myself*. In this very small way, phenomenology might be reconciled with Levinas' project: though the fundamental

commandment is, for my analysis *martyrdom* or at the very least charity, rather than Levinasian non-violence.

> …an ethics that is founded on Merleau-Ponty's notion of decentered embodied intersubjectivity must be one that includes an "ethics of difference" as an ongoing check, a way to keep open a hermeneutic dialogue and to remain wary of falling into solipsism or into a dynamic of domination.[84]

This would mean that the ethical is indeed a phenomenon of the *flesh*. The fact that my body intermingles me with others—and truly with their futural horizons—means that the flesh itself is the conduit of our responsibility for other people. And, as we shall see in the following section, this is a necessary component of any "*critical* phenomenology," which approach I suggest our pursuit of solidarity requires.

IV. b. Other Problems with Alterity

Where critics do not deny that Merleau-Ponty *has* a conception of alterity *at all* (as Levinas does), they argue that his conception of the embodied, intersubjective self is so narrow and normative as to preclude other subjects from it altogether: that is, alterity is *too other*. Butler's and Iris Marion Young's critiques posit that the normative body Merleau-Ponty makes the heart of *human* experience is, for example, a *man's* body (and really, most likely, a cis-gendered man's body), and that phenomenology thus banishes women's experiences (for example) from the

[84] See Fischer, "Ethical Reciprocity at the Interstices of Communion and Disruption," 164.

realm of the *human*, from this existential heart, to the absolute alterity of pathology or barbarism.[85]

Such a bifurcation is of course on its face unacceptable due to its obvious falsity and grating bigotry. But it strikes me also as jarringly at-odds with Merleau-Ponty's project as a whole; even early on, he is very concerned to undermine and do away with these kinds of exclusive oppositions and dichotomies in philosophical thought. Indeed, this concern is as much *political* and *ethical* as it is philosophical.[86] These critiques therefore could reveal a significant problem for Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology: one that must be answered for reasons of both immanent and external import.

And, of course, this problem arises somewhat easily when we turn our attention to *Phenomenology of Perception* and the examples used therein. After all, the structures of experience, as a generality, Merleau-Ponty uncovers in this work are provided in-relief by the pathological behaviors of a brain-injured *man*. It is perhaps less obvious that examples in his later philosophy carry such a particularization—even if the hands he imagines in "Chiasm" are his own. But Sally Fischer also argues, rather convincingly, that there is no reason we must take even the normative body of *Phenomenology of Perception* to be the *sole* normative body. This is because we need not define different styles of taking up one's situation to be privative as long as the subject can take up her situation in terms of an intentional arc; the "how" of this intentional arc is sedimented in language, culture, and history.

> Because I am already from the start decentered from myself, and because from within the dialogical relation with the other I am disrupted, lifted out of the closure of my

[85] See Fischer, "Ethical Reciprocity at the Interstices of Communion and Disruption," 157.

> perspective by the other, there is no solipsistic, immanent, or interiorized "I." I am always already inside the dialogue and outside of myself, and this decentering and disruption helps keep the dialogical, hermeneutical circle open.[87]

Indeed, Merleau-Ponty himself argues that, "it is no more natural, and no less conventional, to shout out in anger or to kiss in love, than to call a table 'a table.' . . . Everything is both manufactured and natural in human beings."[88] Fischer concludes that the real problem is, therefore, in the interaction between many bodily styles, not in an evaluative comparison thereof.[89]

§ V. Conclusion: Belonging-*To*: What We Share in this Bond of Vitality

A thickness and a barrier which brings proximity: flesh is ultimately a paradox. It guarantees the absolute intimacy of the extimate—the incorporation of things into what the philosophical crucible had in a kind of desperation rendered pure thinking-substance. Merleau-Ponty's conception of the flesh—as carnality imbued with thought and spirit, as thought and spirit incarnate—neither renders the subject thingly nor subjectifies the things, casting them under the sovereign and productive power of mind. Rather, he accounts for the perceived world in terms of a more holistic picture of its conditions:

> …my body . . . is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an

[87] See Fischer, "Ethical Reciprocity at the Interstices of Communion and Disruption," 160.
[88] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 189.
[89] See Fischer, "Ethical Reciprocity at the Interstices of Communion and Disruption," 158.

> annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrusted into its flesh; they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body.[90]

We have good reason, if we reflect upon experience, to favor Merleau-Ponty's account of the flesh… *I am walking a familiar path through my neighborhood, a path where I have at some point perceived most of the tree-torn cracks in the sidewalk, where I have navigated the treacherous embankments gum-ball seedpods on the ground, where I know the rise and fall of the curbs and the places where my dog will likely stop to sniff. I do not remember taking all these obstacles into myself, rather my body moves through them, repositions itself, steps over unseen chasms that would trip me, allows my face to remain high, to look forward. It is only when something new trips me, slashes my jeans on the pavement, and loses my grip from the dog's leash, and in anger I say, "I never noticed* that *hole before!" That I realize all of these inanimate* things*: the roots and seeds of trees, the cracks in the sidewalk, the potholes and curbs between me and my home, were* part *of my walk—or rather of my walk*ing*—were built into my muscles and nerves, and* this thing *that tripped me, was not*… These things, so utterly different from the subject are in fact engraved on the sinews of her body, carried forth in the life of her mind, and potentially even intertwined with her affective life and the future to which she aims.[91] If inert and inanimate things that seem to exist outside us are in fact so easily demonstrated to be enmeshed with the pulsating vitality of our seemingly intimate experience, through the medium of flesh,

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[90]See Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, 125.
[91] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 122.

I focus, in this project, on the ways in which I am outside myself in being-with others, but it is worth noting that convincing work has been done on the existential centrality of this alienation in time and amongst the physical things of the world, as well.

what does this mean for our proximity to the other? Does the paradox of the flesh draw her into the same kind of extimacy with me?

> Psychiatric nurses hear similar statements regularly from clients who are psychotic, depressed, anxious, or suicidal: "I don't fit in anywhere . . . I feel so unimportant to anyone . . . I'm not a part of anything. . ."[92]

Indeed, in order to function, in order to be healthy, I *need* to be a *part* of the other: a member of her body, or an encrustment upon it. The flesh also enmeshes others with the sensory, emotional, and even *reasoning* core of a person which might seem most intimate, most her own, for Merleau-Ponty. And, here, we might feel more resistance to his account than before; it is, perhaps, somewhat more intuitive to us that—as a kind of absolute necessity—we have *learned* and taken up the demands of the physical world in order to *act upon it*. But this observation does not imperil the subject as an agent the way taking up and living, haunted or included with the other does. After all, even the most sophomoric interest in authenticity tells us to reject these kinds of influence. We fret about the possibility of freedom if the other is absorbed into our members, or echoes through our being. If, like the sidewalk rent by tree-roots she guides our feet in any way, then what becomes of concepts like "the individual," or "culpability," "merit" or "achievement": concepts that serve as shared values to persons in our place on the globe and in history? These concerns arise, even though we cannot recall a moment when we *chose* as sovereign agents, to participate in our society or to share these values. Even though these concerns are, in some demonstrable way *not our own*. That is, these concerns themselves exemplify the ultimate ambivalence and indistinction of the social and the personal, of the other

[92] See Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier, "Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept."

and the self. These concerns arise as *moral* or *ethical*, when they are precisely historically contingent. I think we can no longer allow the ethics of the flesh—of belonging-*to*—to go unconsidered, precisely *because* it will not presuppose values contrary to the flesh, as the paradox it is the busy hum of a private life.

These ethical implications of Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology find unique expression in the phenomenon of solidarity, which I have intimated has a special relation to suffering and death whereby the seemingly private pulses of the nerves of one might be radically shared with the other, and through which even their opposite, even life might be given. In the coming chapter, I therefore analyze death in light of intercorporeality and the radially shared nature of the flesh and of bodies through it. I find that there are mundane phenomena which challenge our presuppositions regarding death Namely everyday encounters with the phenomena of death throw into question the presupposition that 1) death stands somehow outside of life and 2) death is perhaps the only site of radically solitary experience. The shared nature of death is often veiled, and the coming chapter merely attempts to excavate it to such a degree that we might conceive of one's death as 1) a meaningful figure in *ethical* and *political* shared life rather than one's own possession and 2) having a kind of futurity and sense which integrates it seamlessly into life itself, rather than lacking such a temporality and being therefore irrevocably divided from vitality.

These observations around our mundane experiences of death will evince its ethical and political import and draw us closer to understanding solidarity, as a certain oscillation of our belonging-*to*--one which often calls from the hum of vitality for our suffering and even for the silence of our death.

Chapter II

…But Not Without the Other's Body

§ I. The Ontogenesis of the Subject as Flesh That Will Putrefy

> …every determination of a 'ground' of sense always leaves behind some residue of the spectral, of the anarchic beginning of movement, which continues to haunt the consciousness with a sense of its contingency.[93]

The extreme vulnerability of our earliest infancy is due to our absolute dependence on others. These others might be little more than barely differentiated impressions, shadows to our unformed eyes, sounds signifying nothing in the meaningless din of a world without language—and even this differentiation comes only after the catastrophic epiphany, the primordial amputation: they are *not me*. And yet, I cannot *live* without their care. In a very literal sense *my* existence is, and has always been, contingent upon others: independence is a death sentence for the infant, and the infant is not-*yet* a subject, much less any particular subject. In a sense, then, I become a subject, *at all* in perhaps the greatest proximity possible to *death*.[94]

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls death our own most possibility, and conceives of it as the only genuinely *authentic* experience—that is, an experience we have without the influence of others, the world, or our projects and investments outside ourselves. I will leave for later a discussion of the significance of this conception of authenticity-in-death for the purposes of this project (and it is significant, given that the focus here is on group action and group belonging, motivation, proximity and affect). But for now, it is important to note that, in this important discussion of death, Heidegger only briefly mentions the corpse and mourning: hardly mentions, that is, those things which remain in the wake of death. This is because for him we *are* never a

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[93] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 124.

[94] Merleau-Ponty argues that we cannot ignore the origins of the (inter)subject, if we genuinely strive to understand experience. Surely, we transcend the kind of absolute dependence and helplessness of infancy through our growth and maturation, but that dependence was a *condition of the possibility* of our maturing, and it casts a long shadow on the adult subject. Interdependence is, so to speak, always-already "set up" in us, in this fundamental beginning.

corpse; our experience can only be of *becoming* dead, it ends with death. While dying is our sole individual experience it recedes from the world that no longer contains us, leaves behind the world in which we a*re not.*

But, if our dispersal amongst others—as an animating, world securing, body inhabiting, subject generative and shared—is to be taken seriously, I do in fact dwell in the world, at least in a sense, after I have died. I do so as versions of myself incommensurate with the one I lived: those encrusted upon the flesh of the others, with whom they are pregnant in their intentions and acts. It is in this sense that Heidegger's philosophy of human being-as-potential—as potential *projects*—maintains in spite of itself a vestige the modern conception of human being-as-mind or being-without-body, no matter the degree to which our projects are always- already embodied. Given his account of death, that is, Heidegger argues that biological death—the permanent cessation of consciousness—is indeed the *annihilation* of the embodied subject, is nothing other than her actual eradication from embodied life. This perspective takes for granted self-consciousness as the seat of subjectivity and does not take seriously the ways in which the intersubjective/intercorporeal foundations of our being genuinely displace or disperse us. That is, Heidegger's conception of authenticity-in-death does not acknowledge that we really do exist *outside* ourselves in being-with the other; instead, he relegates this *ekstasis* to death.[95] Such a conception of death must ignore the primacy of embodiment—especially as intercorporeality—central to this project and to Merleau-Ponty's thought:

> The phenomenal field is not just a bundle of sensory facts, but instead constitutes a "transcendental field" … a space of abiding perceptual possibilities, impossibilities, and

[95] Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. J. Macquerrie & E. Robinson, *eds.* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1962), 285-289.

> necessities. That space of possibilities is articulated by what Merleau-Ponty calls the body schema (schéma corporel).[96]

The other's body opens up a field in which I might be felt and encountered, taken up, and this means the other's body in concert with the world itself anticipates me. That this possibility is abiding indeed means the world and the other might anticipate me long after I am gone. We know that mourners in fact become convinced they've seen the deceased, that the world of the dream resurrects them ceaselessly, and in this sense that the world-producing capacity of the embodied subject makes the deceased available to our senses. That these possibilities of what we might sense anticipate and abide or, as Husserl calls it 'portend' and 'retain'—that is that they both precede and survive the moment of perception—means that they are indeed open to us even when the object of that perception—that taking-up—is absent to us.

Here we glimpse both the possibility and the seat of genuine existential significance for human being-as-memory, and even human being-as-corpse. Such possibility and significance seem generally to have evaded the philosophical eye. After all, Merleau-Ponty—for all his philosophy does to tether experience to its ephemeral, corporeal soil—does not dwell on the violent, pulseless, edge of vulnerability that defines the *mortal* body and its possible experiences. I think Levinas rightly critiques him on this point.[97]

But human-being-as memory and as-corpse are just as fundamental, as primordially meaningful, as our being-as-projects, as "I cans," or living-beings; should we forget the vibrant

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[96] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 105.

Death is not only among these possibilities: it is the very possibility that organizes and makes sense of all the others.Because the phenomenal field is coextensive with these possibilities, and because it contains, and is even radically organized by death the dead person still has a body schema, and still integrates with others'.

[97] See Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*. 140.

potency of martyrs, the unshakable influence of our first glimpse in a coffin, the way a dead ancestor's impossible judgement holds back our hands, that executions are in some places still public but everywhere viewed by the supposed victims of crimes, that we broadcast the corpses of those we label despots, or should we forget the macabre warnings to pirates and other criminals swinging in the breeze outside village gates? Should we forget the intractable echo of a more superstitious past that tells the most reasonable among us that things are haunted?

> Since neither myself nor the other are psyches, locked within ourselves, the other: offers himself to my motor intentions and to that "intentional transgression" (Husserl) by which I animate and pervade him.[98]

And it is in this sense that many versions of me—which were once very much a part of my breathing body—survive me. Furthermore, because these versions of myself were organs and members of my inherently *diffuse* breathing body we must wonder in which sense they are no longer of this body now that I have died. Indeed, it is only one part of this diffuse body that has died: the one where my first personal experience of my own diffusion and world is elaborated *in the present*. The versions of me encrusted upon the others no doubt maintain my protension and retention, they maintain past first personal experiences and can even speculate as to what my future ones would have been, were I not dead. So, the sense in which these multiplied versions of myself no longer belong to my body is rather limited: and troublingly so, since we presuppose, I am cut off from the world in death *only because* I no longer have first-personal experiences of the present. This is, of course, contrary to the many other ways I find myself in the world

[98] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 118

through phenomenological reflection: for example, as an encrusted second person, as a part of the other's body and world, and as a diffuse non-centralized and ambiguous recipient of my own first personal experience.

The fact that the other may feel the impulses of my body and the specific gravities of my world—which seep into her body from mine and enmesh with her flesh, inform her possibilities, and imbue her future with me—does not mean that she feels them exactly *as* I do. In this sense she can only ever partially revive me, only imperfectly approximate my having first personal, present, experience. A relation between us has always been necessary precisely because one can never absorb the other exhaustively. The process is lossy, rife with distortions.

My face, even if it expresses a world, must confront the specific gravity of her world the second she apprehends it. The disapproval written upon my face, for example, may inscribe her flesh with me, entwine me with the fibers of her muscles. But she does not feel this as *disapproval* of herself (at least, perhaps, not at first) but as *shame*: it may allow her body to take on a similar character, may animate it with similar habits as my own, but what she will *feel* of my disapproval will always be to some degree incommensurate with it.[99] This is a version of me, which is not identical with me. In being-with her, I am proliferated and distorted, multiplied and perfected, *in her*. Merleau-Ponty's undoing of a sharp distinction between internal and external phenomena, has ramifications for my mortality.[100] Since she and I do not share a death, then if she survives me so does this other me, nestled in the muscle of her being; in fact, this me still effects a *body* and the *flesh of the world* after I die.

[99] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 118.
[100] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 127.

> To begin, the late writings reveal one clear sense of "flesh" as the obvious one: Merleau-Ponty uses the word to refer to the carnality and physicality of ourselves and our relations in the world. However different I am as a living being from inanimate things, we are still intimately related through our carnality.[101]

And this carnality, for the human being and for animal others who participate in our world is *fundamentally* mortal: it is extension into the elements, into whipping wind and scorching sun, into the fronds and blades of the world, and into a well of billons of invisible corrosions and deteriorations, tugging at the ragged corners of our being. We are related by that which extends us, and which allows the world, things, and others to extend into us: that which enmeshes us with experience and the luminous vitality of the world so thoroughly that we cannot be distinguished. But, this breathing, twitching, writing and reaching medium of the flesh—which is the medium through which we come into being—is also haunted by its own death, decomposing, sagging, written upon us by our personal history, pains caused by others, disappointments and joys etched in the ridges and valleys of the brow, the depleted collagen near our mouth.[102]

Merleau-Ponty does little justice and pays little mind to this fact: that the vital flesh which opens us to the other in the hum and light of life is bound just as closely to the inevitability of its death. Shared *life* is necessary for everyone. Where it is completely lacking, we see the disintegration of the whole human being: whether we conceive of her (erroneously of course) as mind or as organism.[103] And this is because the human being's arms presuppose the

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[101] See Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*, 138
[102] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 123.
[103] See Guenther. *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives*.

embrace, her mouth presupposes the conversation, face presupposes greeting the other, sympathizing with her.[104] Our being is not human, is perhaps not even possible, without community. But this does not fully exhaust what it is to take on another, and to give ourselves up through the flesh. For as much as my arms presuppose the embrace, they are themselves braced for struggle, while my mouth anticipates the conversation it also anticipates arguing or wailing, and my face may light up when I see her, but it is certainly prepared just as well to swell and redden as I mourn her.

> By manifesting itself in a body, perception establishes forms constitutive of all human experience and understanding, namely, finite perspectival orientation and a contrast between figure and background, focus and horizon. We have a perceptual perspective on the world, but we also have intellectual, social, personal, cultural, and historical perspectives, which are themselves no less anchored in our bodies than sense experience itself.[105]

For Merleau-Ponty, as we have seen, this vulnerability is in fact an intersubjective and intercorporeal porosity—the *écart*—and it fundamentally characterizes embodied subjectivity as a basic structure of experience. But it shows up in his writing, too often, as mere openness to the world, the *ability* to flow out toward the things, and to take them up as inclusions and encrustments as the subject forms around them.[106] *Écart*, which ensures that we get a world at all, and might take up the things and interact with the others is certainly a neutral fact of the

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[105] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 9.
[106] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 131.

flesh, without which we could have no experiences: but this neutrality means that it does not ensure the benevolence of the world we take up, it does not ensure that the others will aid in the production of a healthy subject, or that they will even allow us to live.

The increased vulnerability of infancy, which expedites the ontogenesis of human subjectivity and gives it its shape, is greater than the vulnerability of the adult body to the world *specifically because* the infant body dwells nearer the precipice of death and can do little—crying in the night—to secure her own survival. In the openness of the flesh is the world, to be sure, but there also always stands the specter of death. And, as we shall see, oppression and domination might easily place us in greater proximity to this specter: infancy is not the only condition of our experience which increases precarity, it is merely developmentally necessary.

If we take reversibility seriously, then, this means that the *écart* that fundamentally defines flesh is not only haunted by the possibility of my *own* impossibility, my own death, but also that of the others. After all, the child is also vulnerable to the death of her parents, to those who love her, and this vulnerability is as we have seen a condition of the possibility of the emergence of the adult subject which fundamentally shapes and informs it. Even in very recent history—recent enough that the effects are documented in *film*—orphaned children have been left to realities that stunt or prohibit the ontogenesis of everyday human subjectivity. The openness through which they might have accomplished expression, speech—a reaching out to and acquisition of others that completes the "system" of their flesh, because it is an openness to others who love them and care for them—became instead an openness to the irretrievable absence of these others (or competent surrogates for them):

> In the third month of separation the withdrawal of the child becomes complete, the infant assumes the pathognomonic position, its expression becomes increasingly rigid, the developmental level regresses.[107]

This "position" which is described merely as symptomatic of the disease of neglect, is a kind of slumping, a binding of the child to herself, and of her eyes and mouth to her bed, such that the world, the filmmaker, the doctor in the room cannot make eye contact with her. The child is balled-up, against the world.

> Infants deprived of their mothers [or another affectively responsive/loving caretaker] during the first year of life for more than five months deteriorate progressively. They become lethargic, their motility retarded, their weight and growth arrested. Their face becomes vacuous; their activity is restricted to atypical, bizarre finger movements. They are unable to sit, stand, walk, or talk.[108]

If nothing else, this study (and others like it: the Romanian orphanage system has more recently been a source of rich information on the subject) demonstrates the degree to which the "I can" and "the other exists" are reversibly related.[109] The "I can" is *directed* to others and seeks in them its completion: to such a degree that nothing I do is without some shared or communal sense. And, as a reversal of this fact, if the other does not exist for me, *I cannot*: I do not approach the world as a set of possibilities or of meaning-making potentialities, but instead fail

[107] See Spitz. "Emotional Deprivation in Infancy," 1952.
[108] See Spitz. "Emotional Deprivation in Infancy," 1952.

to develop these capacities for engaging the world. If Guenther's work shows us the degree to which isolation might erode an *extant* adult subject—one already capable of taking up the world and tarrying with others—these studies demonstrate that the ontogenesis of such a human being is also a social phenomenon, rendered often completely impossible by isolation:

> In 37.3% of the cases observed the progressive deterioration of the total personality led eventually to marasmus and death by the end of the second year of life.[110]

While all of these children suffer the "deterioration" of their "total personalities," the "I *cannot*" which rushes into the void of their isolation renders a third of them genuinely *impossible*. Of course, some basic level of care is necessary for every one of us to have survived the extreme vulnerability of our infancies: we needed to be fed, cleaned, given medicine, kept warm during the winter, etc. But love and affection, themselves, as more immaterial manifestations of care, might be necessary for the survival of the *organism*. Love and affection are therefore, even at the moment of our births, haunted by death. And this bivalence, this haunting, these "two leaves" of our loved and loving body are the foundations of our being, the conditions for the ontogenesis of "subjectivity."[111]

When we work with one another toward the attainment of a shared political goal, as we do in solidary movements, we need similar kinds of care. When another attends to our future, when she takes up our horizons as her own (or at least as coextensive with her own), she cannot do so callously. It is upon her actual, concernful, connection with us that our plans for the better life hang, and upon her capacity for duplicitousness that our possible betrayal and ruin hang also.

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[110] See Spitz. "Emotional Deprivation in Infancy," 1952.
[111] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 137.

Like the caretaker in early infancy, the solidary other is more responsible for the intelligibility of our current world, in its orientation to the future, than we would readily like to admit. In solidarity, we are as precarious as we have ever been.

§ II. Belonging-*To*: Hands, Dying

Heidegger argues that one cannot die *for* another: that it is impossible to take from the other the *experience* of her own death.[112] And, of course this is true. When I die-*for* another—as we might say the martyr does, or the hero—*I die*, I experience the extinguishing of my own world, the darkening of my own horizons, the narrowing of the once nebulous, small-infinity of my *own* futural possibilities. In fact, *I die* so that she may *live*: her death remains on her horizon, an inevitability, a *not-yet*. In saving her, I died my death, leaving her to die her own *someday*.

For this reason, Heidegger calls my death my "ownmost possibility"; everything in the lifeworld is shared, and it is only in the total breakdown of our projects and significations that something like authenticity is possible.

In this sense, we can see a kinship between Merleau-Ponty's carnal phenomenology, and ontology, and the phenomenology laid out in *Being and Time*: to live is to be absolutely bound up with the others, to aim at no future untouched (or perhaps, within the language of authenticity, untainted) by her, and to take on no project not completely bounded by shared sense and significance. Which is to say, *life* is incompatible with absolute and free individuality. *Life* is incompatible with solitude. And indeed, such solitude is likely incompatible *with life*, as well. Guenther analyses solitude of significantly lesser magnitude than the utter isolation of *death* (in

[112] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*. 284.

this case thought genuinely as the complete evacuation of the world, the stripping away of all others).[113]

She argues that solitary confinement, as it is practiced in adult prisons interrupts the mind and the body in such a way that the prisoner may unravel at the level of the organism. She looks to the observations of Charles Dickens, as he witnessed a prisoner released from a term of absolute isolation: among the first U.S. prisons were those which kept prisoners in absolute solitude for the entirety of their sentence (often decades.) Dickens recounts, in the passage that follows, the dire effects of what Guenther calls a form of "social death." It is a death not just because one is extracted from the community, no longer functions there as the deceased, but also because it interrupts the human being at the level of the organism.

> "Well, it's not so much a trembling," was the answer—"though they do quiver—as a complete derangement of the nervous system. They can't sign their names to the book; sometimes can't even hold the pen; look about 'em without appearing to know why, or where they are; and sometimes get up and sit down again, twenty times in a minute. This is when they're in the office, where they are taken with the hood on, as they were brought in. When they get outside the gate, they stop, and look first one way and then the other: not knowing which to take. Sometimes they stagger as if they were drunk, and sometimes are forced to lean against the fence, they're so bad:—but they clear off in course of time…"

[113] I say that this is a lesser magnitude of solitude because 1) even longing for the presence of others is significantly more intersubjective than Heidegger's conception of death and 2) we shall see that confined individuals have nonetheless been able to enact strikes, forge solidary bonds, and genuinely be-with one another: something the absolute recession of the world precludes.

> Dickens notes that even prior to their release, the sensory awareness of prisoners, their very capacity to see and hear clearly and to make sense of their perceptions, was radically diminished by solitary confinement.[114]

While those in the early Pennsylvania System were *utterly* isolated from others in a way not replicated by contemporary solitary confinement, and while we are not presently speaking of solitary confinement at all, this account tells us something about the *needs*, and therefore the *precarity* and interdependence of the human organism. The body itself cannot endure long periods without seeing others, without speaking to them or hearing them. If functions accomplished in infancy may atrophy in the absolute absence of community, then these basic functions—the ability to speak and walk, to tell the time or endure the summer's sun— are *conditional* upon our being-with others: upon our having a proximal and spoken community. The lesser diminution of communal involvement—and especially the senses of *belonging* and *proximity* to those closest to us—which are part and parcel of the *experience* of incarceration might well have important ramifications for the structures of our subjectivity and corporeality.

This is why I must *die* in order to be alone, according to Heidegger—being-alone is incompatible with *life*, it *kills*, and life itself intervenes in every way with my being-alone. And, on this point, I think this phenomenological investigation has found Heidegger is absolutely right: solitude is indeed incompatible with life—1) in that it might *end* life and 2) in that life itself in its very vitality intervenes upon and contaminates, always-already, any vestige of pure-self, rendering it an illusion at best or a specious, world-historical, ego-fabrication at worst. But I wonder if Heidegger nonetheless maintains a kind of faith in this illusion of the pure-self—an illusion directly incompatible with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, and which we have already

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[114] See Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives*.

demonstrated to be dubious—in that he calls what remains, when death strips me of a world, '*authentic'*.

> …the authentic Being-come-to-an-end of the deceased is precisely the sort of thing which we [those left behind/the living] do *not* experience.[115]

There is a degree to which this seems obvious, but within the context of the conception of the self we're fleshing out here there is nothing obvious about it. *Who* dies, when the other dies? *How* can the casualties total to *one* if the self is indeed diffuse and plural? Indeed, if authenticity requires the *solis ipse* my analysis thus far seems to imply authenticity is unlikely if not impossible. Rather, even the radically individuating power of death seems to be incapable of genuinely isolating us: we find instead that we each die innumerable deaths—as parts of the others' bodies spread throughout the world and also as a din of others once lived in the first-person, taken up, encrusted upon, and indeed constitutive of our particular self. We are in some sense, therefore, alone for not a single one of these deaths. Further, contra Heidegger, the others *experience* my "loss-of-Being" in a million ways. The phenomenon of mourning writes my absence on smallest details of everyday life, where I once shared it, but may also arise as a genuine catastrophe for the other significant enough even to raze *her* horizons.

There is some self-same, Heidegger argues, which endures the absolute absence of others and of things, and of the dimension of time, of the future in all its complexity and plurality, to which my very being has been oriented since its birth. For Heidegger, only my death can arrest the other at the threshold of my body—only the death rattle can evacuate her voice from my lungs, the chill of my flesh can still her movement in my members, the darkening of my eyes the

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[115] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*. 282.

animating and even demanding folds of her face. And to be clear, what remains once my stiffening form has finally banished her is *me*: for the first time, what I experience is *myself*. For Merleau-Ponty, as for myself, it is not entirely clear that any experience occurs in this isolation *at all*, much less that something like a particular self or subjectivity can be thought to even survive it.

> If my left hand can touch my right hand while it palpates the tangibles, can touch it touching, can turn its palpation back upon it, why, when touching the hand of another, would I not touch in it the same power to espouse the things that I have touched in my own?[116]

Death leaves me to myself for perhaps the only time, on Heidegger's account, but on my own (Merleau-Pontian but also first-personal, as a mourner), there is in fact no such time. We are never left to ourselves, because there is no self-same, without the others; "...there is no self-contact, or even self-anticipation, that would not presuppose movement, and thus an *exteriorization* and a *temporization*."[117] *I am with the other as he lies dying. My father's father, a man who has been with me all my life, makes the loudest noise I've ever heard him make—he's always been so very old—in the death-rattle of his last few breaths. The nurse says he can still hear us, so we all speak to him when we can manage. We hold his hands, though she never told us he can still* feel *us. The weakened pulse in his fingers renders the hand something alien; I realize in a grief muddled instant that my hand reaches for the other's body, for her hand, as for another world—humming with vitality, with the things a hand can* do*, with the significations*

[116] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 140.
[117] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 137.

carnality accomplishes. Touching this hand—the one without a future, without any more significations to accomplish or projects to undertake—stills something at the level of my body, adds weight and sloth to my own heart, and fills my eyes with tears.

> ...why would this generality (é*cart)*, which constitutes the unity of my body, not open it to other bodies? The handshake too is reversible; I can feel myself touched as well and at the same time as touching.[118]

If I am, indeed, a plurality—included and encrusted with alterity, composed of others, and directed by the animating forces of others and things—then when the other dies, I am genuinely altered.[119] The dying person is, indeed, dispersed in the bodies of her mourners. It is, for instance, no longer a possibility that she will bear witness to what I do, and perhaps I find myself spinning without direction because she will not be there to still my shameful acts—in the very carnality of her being, the folds of her face, the tension of her shoulders. Perhaps I find myself somehow freer (no matter how hard it would be to make such an admission) because she is no longer there to ward off certain futures I may want to beckon. With the foreclosure of her future goes the foreclosure of some of my possibilities.

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[118] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 142.
[119] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 124.

According to Marratto, Merleau-Ponty "repeats several times"…the claim…concerning sensation, that it is each time, the birth and *the death* of the subject.

For Merleau-Ponty, therefore, there is a mundane sense in which life is shot through with death. The ebbing and flowing tides of our motor activities and projects, as they press upon us and us upon them represent small births and deaths, openings of attention and closings of fleeting completion.

This particular example of sensation, wherein we sense the *dying* of the other—her finally leaving us—as a painful phenomenon of our flesh is, I think, a significant example of the boundedness of our vital senses to the inevitability of our death.

Then there is the palpability of her absence: felt like an aching in the chest, a certain recollection my body has of death even though it has never finally endured it, the slow and labored beating of my heart shallow and more sporadic breaths. In the pain of mourning, my body reaches out to her own most possibility, attempts even to make this most marginal, most taboo, feature of her supposedly private world its own: just as it spontaneously included her in all her vitality when she shared the world.

But I too, am dispersed. I am included in *her* dying flesh. Perhaps I am a deepening of the smile-lines, I hope, or a synapse fused around my name making immediate our relation and its significance. As part of her carnality, I dwell in her—whether I take up any space in her final thoughts—even as the hum of her own vitality decrescendos. If she does still hear, she hears a voice that is part of her own ear, her own body. If she does feel my hand, it is less alien than her own is in mine: it is filled with the sad pulse of life as she leaves it.

And, above all perhaps, she is not alone—this future wherein she is no longer with us is not hers alone—because I love her. Where she died-*for* me, this is perhaps even more true. Perhaps I would have no life at all if it weren't for her sacrifice. The future she has won me with her death is not mine alone—because she loved me. The dead indeed endure.

III. The Possibility of Being-Separated from One's Body

Eran Dorfman in her essay "Overwriting the Body: Saint-Exupery, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," examines Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology alongside Saint-Exupery's autobiography: the source with which the former chooses to close *Phenomenology of Perception*.[120] Because this piece focuses almost solely on the conception of the body presented in *Phenomenology of Perception*,

[120] Dorfman, Eran. "Overwriting the body: Saint-Exupe´ry, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," in the *Continental Philosophy Review*. Vol. 49 (2016). pp. 299.

many of the questions raised within it go without the answers provided by Merleau-Ponty's later ontological conception of the flesh. Dorfman ends up arguing that the organic nature of the body veils itself from us in everyday experience (to as great a degree as possible) because we are made anxious by its perpetual *lack.* But her analysis cannot adequately attend to the intersubjective sources of this lack. The moth-eaten subjectivity, of our existential incompletion—accomplished by intercorporeal self-alienation, the incorporation of opaque others—is central to Merleau-Ponty's later thought, but difficult to glimpse in *Phenomenology of Perception*. If Dorfman had looked here rather than motivating her account from within this body-without-flesh of the early Merleau-Ponty, perhaps his phenomenology would not seem to be in such fatal tension with Saint-Exupery's narrative of near-death experience.[121]

This does not mean that she cannot at least partially account for these fleshly sources of our existential lack. *Phenomenology of Perception*, in its conceptions of co-constitution and analyses of psychoanalytic literature absolutely provides at least the scaffolding upon which a conception of incompletion, self-opacity, impotence, and lack will be phenomena of the communal and worldly flesh in his later work. Dorfman says:

> *... both the repression of the organic aspect of the body and the obsession with being stem from the inability to admit the body as deficient.*[122]

On her analysis, a kind of juvenile megalomania pervades human experience, unable and unwilling to have any kind of genuine encounter with the limits—that is, the *morality*—of the body. And, certainly, there is much evidence for an innate, human, incapacity to genuinely

[121] See Dorfman,"Overwriting the body: Saint-Exupe´ry, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," 299.
[122] See Dorfman, "Overwriting the body: Saint-Exupe´ry, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," pp. 299.

conceive mortality or to be willing to contemplate death. There is much to recommend an account that sees pursuits of "being" whether they be in the form of artistic and philosophical truth or of the laws of the physical sciences, as rejections of the inescapable truth of our ephemerality.

But, Merleau-Ponty gives, even in *Phenomenology of Perception,* an account of the *other* reasons the body evades conscious consideration in everyday experience: reasons which seem to be more of affirmation than of denial, which attach themselves to *meaning* to be sure, but not to eternity, which are grounded in the *capacities* of the body, rather than its annihilation. Put more simply, we do not notice the body—as the primary axis of our precarity and incompletion—because we are *using* it.[123] The tasks to which we direct it and the world these tasks make up occupy our consciousness, while the body through its pre-reflective sense navigates the world largely unnoticed. Merely approaching the world and others for Merleau-Ponty gives sufficient sense to our activities that the body enmeshes with this sense, and with the others and the world.[124] This early analysis, again, provides the scaffold upon which his conception of the flesh will be built in his later thought. This is important, I will argue, because communal sense, shared horizons and the call of the world are so enmeshed with the body that each is accomplished through the other. Such enmeshment might make it possible to *choose* death rather than having it befall us. In solidarity, this choice will be no deficiency, no existentially threatening lack of sense, but a genuine power: the power to choose the others' lives, freedom, and welfare at the expense of our own. This power has often affected deep and enduring change.

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[123] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 101-102.

Thus, I think it is important to respond to Dorfman's account by providing the perspective of the flesh, which answer is at least hopefully approximated in the coming sections of this chapter. Such an exercise accomplishes much. 1) It draws together Heidegger's account of death and dying with Merleau-Ponty's conception of the indelibility of community, regardless of that tensions there might seem to be between them; 2) It demonstrates that death and community are in fact enmeshed inextricably. This opens the possibility of dying-*for* the other, and 3) It demonstrates the absolute centrality of belonging-*to* for solidarity.

> One mistakenly identifies with one's body, and the illusion of this ''boasted solidarity'' collapses in moments of anger, love or hatred, that is, feelings that call into question one's attachment to the world and to others.[125]

This is, of course, not a misidentification with the body as part of the *flesh* of the world. Rather, identifying with the body I groom, and feed, and bathe—with my body as some kind of particular as Saint-Exupery says—is the mistake.

> Merleau-Ponty's emphasis upon the co-constitutive relationships among the body, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, the situation and the world anticipate and helps to explain the later Merleau-Ponty's transition away from the terminology of the body (which privileges a particular body-subject) to the more ambiguous notion of the flesh of the world.[126]

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[125] See Dorfman, "Overwriting the body: Saint-Exupe´ry, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," 295.
[126] See Weiss. "Ambiguity," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 136.

To genuinely identify with my body as a flesh, solidarity with something greater than my own organism appears: solidarity with *others*. And, indeed, extreme affect seems to bring this out; the sacrificial nature of my own, particular body and view of the world concretizes before me within the emergency, when the other is threatened, or in solidary struggle, just to name a few examples.[127]

Dorfman asks an important question, here: is it really possible that, during extreme affect I am genuinely separated from my body? And how would something like this even be possible? What Saint-Exupery calls a distance or separation from one's body in the face of the emergency is likely not really a break or a gulf, but a realization that that body which *I am*—and am, according to Merleau-Ponty never without—is not *this* body, is not *my* body: is not particular or properly *owned*. What these emotions reveal is the *reversibility* and *vulnerability* that ground experience and make my love, hatred, concern, sacrifice, and anger possible in the first place. Indeed, the sense in which I assume I have my body—this taken-for-granted sense in which my body *is* mine—breaks down in the emergency or mourning, in extreme affect or solidary sacrifice, revealing that I belong-*to* the other just as well as I belong to myself. Saint-Exupery's observation is, therefore, consonant with Merleau-Ponty's observation in *Primacy of Perception*, that the absolute ambiguity and confusion of infancy grips us always in love.[128]

§ IV. Love, Mourning: The Corpse

Merleau-Ponty says that the ambiguity of relations that characterizes early infancy—that relation-complete, which makes indistinguishable the other and myself, my life and hers, the

[127] See Stawarska, "Psychoanalysis," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 67.
[128] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 155.

world of my own perceptions and perspectives and the one reflected by her own eyes and in her own members, that version of myself I live and the one she carries with her—remains with us in our "affective life".[129] In particular, he says that it is in *love* where my life becomes indistinguishable from the other: wherein I genuinely *live* the other's life. If this is indeed the case, the *felt*, bodily connection that I have with all other people is altered by my loving them. After all, the mere structure of experience that is our basic fleshly connection with one another is that of an intersection—a crossing, a knotting of two strands into a single tangle. Each strand, therefore, maintains its own beginning and end (its own ends). I am pregnant with *every* other, but this does not mean I live their lives.

> …my body has already responded, even *participated* in the self-exteriorization of the other's sentient body (which is, after all, sentient only insofar as it moved expressively in responding to otherness, including the otherness of my own moving body).[130]

Put another way, love—and perhaps various (as we shall see in chapter three) kinds of affectively charged relations with others—alter the carnal truth of our communion by allowing us to share, or at least to take up, the other's *ends*. To live another's life means much, and of course it is a paradox for Merleau-Ponty. After all, it is impossible for us to experience the other's life from her own perspective, or to live the version of herself from which she experiences the world. It is impossible for us to experience *her* as anything other than that inclusion bound in our flesh, as anything other than a *you*—opaque and stubborn, incommensurate with the self that is the medium of her being and world. And yet, on his account, love affects something like this possibility. Merleau-Ponty excavates many such

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[129] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 155.
[130] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 145.

paradoxes at the foundations of our experience: elemental truths, obscure and genuinely Mysterious, without which living any life at all might be impossible. In love we find that the possibility of living another's life has been bound up, always-already, with the possibility of living my own. And this is because the (ideal) neonate world—of shadow and Being, of the power of love to blend all notes to one, of utter indistinction—was necessary for our growth, individuation and subjectification, and for our eventual attainment of a world.

We will recall, however, that this primordium of the "subject," while ideally loving, of course, is not itself unambiguous; love, support, and care, are haunted by *death*. While I previously discussed the child's special precarity—the extreme weakness and vulnerability of this new body to the corrosive elements of our earth and to the relative strength of other bodies, etc.—I left till now the task of unpacking another vulnerability opened up by this primal neonate need for love: a vulnerability I will argue is opened up by love itself, even where it is abundant, and the primal need is adequately met.

Love multiplies horizons, casts extimate and alien silhouettes upon their skies, proliferates the figures of the loved-other's future upon our own future: and most importantly allows the stabbing, devastating, and morose colors of countless sunsets to permeate our own-most day's end, as the painful foreclosure of mourning. In love we are allowed to live, but also carry with us each loved one's eventual absence.

The pall passes me, in the pews of a church I've never attended. I do not fully understand the rites. I do not have in me anything I would call a spiritual inclination. But I feel its presence, this body I once embraced, this hand whose pulse I felt weakening in my own, those breathless lungs, the stilled harp of his throat, the silence of a place where almost a hundred years of echoes and

pains once played. I feel it approaching from behind me, like a living person, like an embrace or a startling: chilling, anticipated. And begin to feel the disappointment, a new and lasting one, only once they lay the box before me. Each time this happens, I am rendered more alone *than I have ever been.*

Belonging-*to* is a reversible phenomenon of our being "pregnant" with a human plurality as well as our dispersal amongst others as selves incommensurate with the one we live. As such, it is a phenomenon which harbors also the inevitability of our touching the other's horizons, and of the other inhabiting horizons which extend in time well past her own death:

> …being by porosity, pregnancy, or generality, and he before whom the horizon opens is caught up, included within it. His body and the distances participate in one same corporeity or visibility in general, which reigns between them and it, and even beyond the horizon, beneath his skin, unto the depths of being.[131]

Elsewhere I have considered this possibility in the light of the intercorporeal dimensions of the phenomenon of shame. Shame—whether it is the result of the sanctions put on neonate love and pleasure or of the face apprehended in the full light and wisdom of the adult world—can narrow one's possibilities. [132] For better or worse, we appear as a part of the other's body, and as such we help to demarcate the horizons to which she looks: just as the atrophy of a muscle may preclude some future, or a particular strength may open others.

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[131] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 149.
[132] Maclaren, Kym. "Intimacy as Transgression and the Problem of Freedom." In *Puncta Journal of Critical Phenomenology*. 19.

> What distinguishes empowering or emancipating situations from oppressive ones, then, is not the presence or absence of transgressive normative social forces; it is rather the particular character of these transgressive forces. Some transgressions and configuration of experience—some forms of "unfreedom"—will tend to promote freedom; others will tend to hinder it.[133]

Shame is one way in which we entwine with the other's possibilities we take up residence in the other's body, constraining its movements, the objects and future to which it comports itself: in the way we belong-*to* her, along with her *own* memories, her own acts, her own aims. We become integrated with the complex of her motor intentionality, which Carmen argues is "worthy of [its] name… precisely" due to "its normativity, the felt rightness and wrong ness of the various bodily attitudes we unthinkingly assume and maintain throughout our waking (and sleeping) lives."[134] In this sense, the phenomenon of shame demonstrates that we are radically responsible for the other—and in particular in the acts she denies herself, in the futures she forecloses when she feels us there, enmeshed in her flesh:

> Merleau-Ponty repeatedly invokes Heidegger's concept of the ek-stase, of the ecstatic ('outside of itself') character of temporality. It is because the future, as I live it, is not a *real* feature of the objective world, but a function of my being-ahead of-myself, as an 'I can' that we must say that the subject exists temporally, and that time is mode of being of subjectivity.[135]

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[133] See Maclaren, "Intimacy as Transgression and the Problem of Freedom," 20.
[134] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 110.
[135] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 122.

Because my future is already outside of me, my death might well be a fecund site of my possibility, rather than a kind of senseless void of isolation in which my possibilities are finally extinguished. The fact that the dead beloved is dispersed in many others as a *loss*—as a set of possibilities that *we* may no longer take up because *she* cannot not take up possibilities any longer—mourning demonstrates the ways that love and investment open us up to the future of the other, such that her horizons meaningfully overlap with and even interject through our own.[136] Just as we might still another from taking a particular course of action or from pursuing a particular set of possibilities by shaming her, we might also render certain courses of action completely incoherent or even impossible for her when we die.[137]

If we acknowledge what is evident to us when we are not doing philosophy—that the futures to which we direct ourselves, our projects and our aims, are not in any sense solely *our own*, that they belong to the world and are only possible on the condition that the others exist—then it follows that we do indeed share futures and horizons with one another: a fact that will be of extreme importance as we move on to a phenomenology of solidarity and solidary movements in the next chapter. This also means that, while we cannot die for another in the sense Heidegger

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[136] It should also not be ignored that mourning is itself a *cultural* phenomenon. Of course, the unique rituals of oppressed peoples are denied them by their oppressors. And, with them go the unique meanings of life and mortality, *themselves.* In oppressive regimes, any resource for meaning-making outside the dialectic of their subjection is repressed.

Looking forward, this is why it is important that thinker like Fanon insist upon the power of such modes of expression to *genuinely* and indeed *radically* create intelligibilities that break completely with a historical and indeed universal intelligibility of dominion.

See Marriott, "Judging Fanon."

[137] See Willett, "Solidary Empathy and a Prison Roast with Jeff Ross"

Willet argues that a kind of transcendent humor can alleviate the pain of unalterable situations (like imprisonment, but also perhaps oppression). And, indeed we can here see a kind of miring of the dead in everyday life through what is commonly referred to as "gallows humor." To joke at the expense of the deceased draws us nearer to her, as did this kind of teasing, when she was alive: and this alleviates the pain of her loss.

argues we can't, we are also in no sense alone when we die: our deaths permeate the world, and the world permeates our dying. In this sense, we always die-*for* another: our death forecloses some of the possibilities that once cast themselves on her horizon, her future now shot-through with the morbid colors of our sunset. My more focused analysis of solidarity in chapters three and four will make clearer another sense of the possibility of dying-*for* another: one bound up with the responsibility inchoate in belonging-*to* her.

§ IV. b. Love, Mourning, The Corpse: And Radical Forms of Oppression

Dorfman says of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the primal and unreflective basis of human experience that:

> …it is in everyday life that the body escapes and it is in emergency that one can rejoin it. Paradoxically, it is precisely when it is threatened and undone (se de´fait), that the body is revealed as what it really is: one's own body (corps propre) rather than an object-body. But as we have seen above, Saint-Exupe´ry explicitly affirms the contrary: For him, it is rather in the everyday that one feels united with or even identical to one's own body, and the experience of emergency comes to remove this illusionary feeling, making the body emerge as an instrument of no importance aside from its utilitarian function.[138]

Indeed this first-personal account seems to lend weight to Heidegger's *Being and Time* analyses of break-down; Saint-Exupery says that the eruption of the emergency through the fabric of the mundane shakes off the patina of the familiar, the ordinary, the taken-for-granted of one's

[138] See Dorfman, "Overwriting the body: Saint-Exupe´ry, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," 297.

body, rendering one's own members "tools," one's own body "mechanical," or as Heidegger would say "present at hand."[139] [140] This would, again, seem to be at tension with the Merleau-Pontian account by which we might expect primordial takens-for-granted to evince themselves through love and duress. That is, this would seem to be in tension with such an account *if* the body were *this* body, *my* body, a *particular* body. But, since even *my* members are always-already alienated in their tasks and in the others, for Merleau-Ponty, this primordium of the others, of significance, and world appears—perhaps especially—in the mechanistic body. That is to say, the primordial body *is* whatever beckons forth the mechanical body in the emergency and indeed is what is revealed when our body emerges as-tool: the meanings that drive us to preserve ourselves, the world, and sometimes with the greatest urgency, the other.

Dorfman says, "...the experience of emergency presents a certain solution to the repression of the body, but this solution, as we have seen, is soon revealed to be short and partial, maintaining unresolved the complicated relationship between the habitual and the actual body," meaning that the innate denial of the body's lack and mortality which props up everyday experience may be briefly overcome, when death is immanent.[141] But, what each of these conceptions of the emergency seem to take for granted is that death is generally *very far* from most of us, or at least from most of us writing philosophy. That is, we write from a perspective wherein death is in fact remote in *any situation that does not constitute an emergency*. We know that this is not true for many people: that marginalization, systemic violence, and various other kinds of privation force a great number of people to settle in the wilderness, on the banks of the River Styx. Fanon argues compellingly that the colonized are forced to take up residence with

[139] See Dorfman, "Overwriting the body: Saint-Exupe´ry, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," 297.

[141] See Dorfman, "Overwriting the body: Saint-Exupe´ry, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy," 301.

their own deaths, that even the smallest mistake is rendered potentially fatal, even a crying child might present a real and mortal danger to her neighbors, her parents.[142]

> Exposed daily to incitement to murder resulting from famine, eviction from his room for unpaid rent, a mother's withered breast, children who are nothing but skin and bone, the closure of a worksite and the jobless who hang around the foreman like crows, the colonized subject come to see his fellow man as a relentless enemy. If he stubs his bare feet on a large stone in his path it is a fellow countryman who has put it there, and the meager olives he was about to pick, here are X's children [all Algerian] who have eaten them during the night. Yes, during the colonial period in Algeria and elsewhere a lot of things can be committed for a few pounds of semolina. One can kill.[143]

When death itself is made so everyday, so mundane—when a population is so thoroughly *devitalized* by their oppression as are colonized subjects—their dehumanization and unmournability become constitutive of their intelligibility. Killing is, of course, more acceptable to us when there is no capacity for anyone to mourn the death. Killing is more acceptable to us when it appears as mere self-preservation. The colonial context genuinely *devitalizes* the colonized subject, drawing her death so near to her that it invades her, pervades her, and reaches out through her limbs into the world of her acts. This means that 1) the colonized are regarded through their oppression as less-alive/dead adjacent, cushioning the impact of their somatic demise, 2) the colonized feel each beat of their hearts as though it may be the last, they act in self-defense and violence against their kin and neighbors seems reasonable, and 3) because the dead cannot die and so many deaths are justified by the evolutionary and wild conditions to

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[142] Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, *trans*. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 230.
[143] *Ibid*, 231.

which they have been subjected by the colonist, there is much in the way of genuine *mourning* for the colonized dead. We shall return to these consequences of devitalization throughout this work since dying-*for* while it literally snuffs out the soma nonetheless reverses so much of devitalization.

> ...Without family, without love, without communion with the group, the first encounter with himself will occur in a neurotic mode, in a pathological mode; he will feel himself emptied, without life, in a bodily struggle with death, a death on this side of death, a death in life.[144]

The colonized have stopped seeing the resources stolen by the colonists as their own. Thus, they have for a time *only* this enmity with their countrymen. That is to say, until they realize that the colonists' zone is filled with plunder and that they could reclaim it, the colonized have only their shared devitalization and the struggle for mere survival. In *The highest Poverty*, Agamben puts forth the argument that the community which has abandoned the concept of ownership *by choice* instantiates radical political potential against any consumerist status quo (whether ancient or contemporary). We see in liberatory movements, as well, an eventual releasement of the concept of individual property and the hierarchies amongst people that such a concept always-already implies. We might say, therefore, that even though the oppressed have lived outside these concepts of property involuntarily, they have nonetheless gone through a significant alteration in the way they approach the world. As such they embody the possibility of bringing forth a *radically* different form of society, which does not (as Fanon warns) simply reinscribe the world with the hegemonies of privation that preceded and precipitated it.

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[144] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 13.

The revolutionary cause— in eventually granting the oppressed renewed access to the fruits of their land and labor—joins colonized subject with colonized subject, once again. But it might do so in an *originally and unprecedentedly* non-violent, equitable, and unalienated way. If the revolutionary is fulfilled in full, its cause and people heal the open wounds of hierarchy that marked even the flesh of the precolonial community and separated the not-yet-colonized from one another.[145]

But, even more, it draws into tighter intimacy those parts who might have perhaps been alienated from one another in the social hierarchies that preceded colonial oppression. The class divides and family feuds, professional, spiritual, and educational elitism that might have made up the pre-colonial social hierarchy have been broken down in the colony, anyway. For the most part, each colonized subject is debased. And even those who aren't debased in homogeneity with their national brethren (persons like Fanon who were educated by the Europeans), no longer fulfill a precolonial role. Everything is shot through with European domination, and the past that preceded it has been rendered unintelligible. After all, no being on this Earth had known genuine freedom, complete equity, or agape compassion and love.

> [Decolonial] violence receives extremely various contours and expressions, but one thing seems certain: the moment of invention is an event without sense or content; consequently, its appearance always exceeds the representational forms of the political. As a tabula rasa, violence has nothing to do with either right nor justice: in a sense it only

[145] This is indeed a great wound to heal, however, and the revolutionary cure will leave many other wounds besides. Which is to say that, while there is perhaps a salvific other-side to oppression, inchoate in the solidary bond and the horizons it holds in its sights, this is of course no justification for oppression itself. Afterall, I have *nowhere* argued that solidary acts of revolutionary sacrifice are the *only* routes to an intimacy that might render the world more ethical. They just tend to emerge given the unjustifiably violent patterns of domination and subjugation that have characterized human history to this point.

> takes place as a case, but this is a case that falls without order or meaning, through which the colonized is only able express itself disarticulately.

The colonized have, therefore, a genuine opportunity to seize an unprecedentedly *free* and *equal* horizon: free of both colonial and precolonial cites of oppression, differential evaluation, and hegemony. [146]

Indeed, there is a degree to which people who are very near their own deaths—when communities have their yet empty graves as foundations—cannot even sensibly mourn for this proximity.

> ...failure to afford the weight of intentionality to the emotions of members of a social group can be one of the structural conditions of their oppression, and it produces uniquely affective varieties of injustice.[147]

Not only do we bear the pall of our every dead loved one as we navigate the world, such that a smell or a sound, or a memory dancing across the blank screen of the mundane might bring them before us—alight our own bodies with their presence, or at least call to our attention that *weight* on our shoulders—but we might be placed so near this nihilation that navigating around it is, indeed, part of *mundane* experience. Such examples do not prove that we can live in a state of constant *emergency*—such an idea waters down the concept of an emergency to the point that it is somewhat meaningless—but rather that death is a part of our belonging to the world, and of

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[146] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 34.
[147] (Whitney, Shiloh. "AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE: MERLEAU-PONTY AND FANON ON THE BODY SCHEMA AS A THEORY OF AFFECT," in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Volume 56, Issue 4 December 2018.* pp. 489)

our belonging-*to* one another: not merely the ultimate limitation of the body but perhaps even one of its capacities. After all, in these examples, death—the supposed ultimate *'I cannot'*—moves and motivates the experience of the '*I can*.'

But we must be attentive to what Fanon here demonstrates: when our own death is rendered ever-present and mundane, a genuine and deep injustice is done. Violence and ill-fate are guaranteed a particular group. Those who should fight together are forced first and foremost to preserve themselves against their would-be comrades. The world is shrunken so small that any striking out against encroaching death can only find another oppressed body, another death-bound, enslaved, body.[148] The colonized are stripped of every sense of the *'I can'*, every sense of their vitality, and in some sense only the dead are left to mourn the dead. When oppression is this total, the oppressors exsanguinate affective and communal life: the drain even the sadness from murder.

Shiloh Whitney echoes this analysis in her conception of "affective injustice". Her account demonstrates that we might even be deprived of mourning here as well, another existential violence. This is not the same as the everyday proximity of the dead to those uncolonized or living in comfort: buffered from their own deaths by shelter, nourishment, and medicine, for example. But, as we shall see in increasing detail, this proximity of death—which *is* in essence oppression, exploitation, systemic violence—reveals, though tragically, death as a power of our belonging-*to*, and of the absolute responsibility that comes with it. Thus, whether we deny or affirm death may hinge on the emergence of an emergency, but it may also hinge on the emergence of various other historical realities or even *opportunities.* In solidarity, we may embrace death because we take on the *horizon* of the other, we take on the *future* of our

[148] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 231.

communities, in place of our own.[149] But this is only possible if my death is a *power*, in such a situation, rather than a mere limitation. As Whitney says:

> ...affective injustices...are not limited to the *marginalizing* reduction of the person's affects to nonsense or to "mere" affect. They also involve the displacement of affective force in *exploitative* and *violent* ways.[150]

Denying mourning its power, or the fear of death its sense is one way in which this oppression is affected. Fanon's analysis therefore exemplifies both of these affective injustices, which involve the dislocation of death from its communal existential center. In the first sense, any mourning seems to lose its sense, because it is mourning the mundane and everyday, (in fact, have we not heard a callous reply "people die every day," precisely when someone wants to quell our outrage, silence our mourning?). In the second sense, the force of mourning and fear of one's own death serves, for a while, in the colony to drive the labor, exploitation and suffering of the colonized unchecked.[151] In dying for one another, oftentimes, the oppressed find subversive means to reclaim the meaning of their own death, and therefore to resacrelize the *lives* of their brethren.

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[149] See Willett, *Maternal Ethics*, 37.

When Willett here mentions her hope for a greater role for father-identitfied-nurture, she alludes to the real possibility that such a change in our social expectations would mean two things for human social reality 1) that children will be shaped and guided as much by masculine-identified care takers, and 2) that masculine caretakers—perhaps even the masculine identity itself—will be *shaped by the destiny of the child*. When we acknowledge, even through the rudiments of the senses, belonging-*to* and its attendant ethical demands upon us, we take on the other's destiny: as a feature of our *personality*, or even of our identity.

[150] See Whitney, "AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE: MERLEAU-PONTY AND FANON ON THE BODY SCHEMA AS A THEORY OF AFFECT," 495.

[151] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 24-25.

§ V. Ratcliffe and Fuchs: The Roots of Petrified Trees Extend Through Living Soil

> …persons do not exist as such without a world to which they belong; they are not solitary individuals but rather selves among others, where those others are both encountered within the world and co-constitutive of that world's objective reality.[152]

If there is not a solitary subject that radically founds and pre-exists the bonds to others and to the world which define its experiential field—as Merleau-Ponty argues, I think rightly—then the death of the other strikes us as another kind of paradox. If we are constituted by and shot through with the others, what is left *of* us, when the other leaves us? In fact, Merleau-Ponty says that even those modern philosophical abstractions which completely decimate the world, leaving a post-nuclear desert around the subject, do not genuinely give us a *solus ipse*: that is to say that no thought experiment can truly *isolate* the subject.[153] The last man remaining would indeed be intersubjective to his core: irrevocably constituted by the noise and vibration of everything and everyone the abstraction (or even an actual extinction event) killed off. He would still be *constituted* by the others, incapable even of looking over the new arid landscape.

But I argue further that the subject is constituted as much by—and only a subject *because of*—the nuclear shadows, the corpses, and other artifacts of the others' impossibility, as she is by their vital bodies, projects, and inter-world. Indeed, if death was always the other's "own-most possibility" then any intention I shared with her, any future to which we were both directed in the "we intentionality" of shared projects and experiences, was haunted by—or perhaps even predicated *on*— the possibility of death. The presence of the other is haunted by her inevitable absence.

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[152] See Guenther, *Solitary Confinement, Solcial Death and Its Afterlives*, 25.
[153] See Merleau-Ponty, *Signs,* 173-174.

> Thus, it is essential…that they be "veiled with shadows" appear "under a disguise." They give us the assurance that the "great unpenetrated and discouraging night of our soul" is not empty, is not "nothingness"; but these entities, these domains, these worlds that like it, people it, and whose presence it feels like the presence of someone in the dark, have been acquired only through its commerce with the visible, to which they remain attached. As the secret blackness of milk, of which Valéry spoke, is accessible only through its whiteness, the idea of light or the musical idea doubles up the lights and sounds from beneath, is the other side or their depth. The carnal texture presents to us what is absent from all flesh; it is a furrow that traces itself out magically under our eyes without a tracer…a certain absence, a negativity that is nothing, being limited very precisely to *these* five notes between which it is instituted, to that family of sensibles we call lights.[154]

This is the relation between faith and doubt, and between the vitality of flesh and *death*. A constitutive relation, a relation of extreme interdependence: a relation whereby in viewing one phenomenon we cannot help but see the contours of its constitutive "opposite." This relation—which is reversibility—means that, in being constituted by the other, and living her life, we are guaranteed some participation in her death: that the vitality of love is always-already shot through with death, that the handshake by which she passes into me—a warm, five-fingered, world humming with electric life—is always-already one grown cold, stiff, skeletal, cast outside the world by her demise. I think it is in this sense that my argument differs from at least a few prominent—and I think generally correct—phenomenological analyses of death and mourning.

[154] See Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 151.

Where I see death as a phenomenon coextensive with life in such a way that the other's death meaningfully shapes the world for us, *even while she is alive*, these analyses see death—and the grief to which it gives rise—as radical breaks with—indeed different worlds from—the shared and loving world we once inhabited with the living other.

Fuchs argues that, "In grief, the subject experiences a fundamental ambiguity between presence and absence of the deceased, between the present and the past, indeed between two worlds he lives in."[155] Which is to say—as Merleau-Ponty's thought might lead us to—that the other, as a living body, sharing futural intentions with us, opens a world irrevocably closed when this vibrant body is replaced by the corpse. A new world offers itself up to us, wherein there is a foreclosure of a small infinity of possibilities that we might have taken up with this other, of the futures we might have pursued with her: a world wherein our experiences with her are rendered *finite*, because we cannot, again, connect with that body. "The world of the bereaved person has changed profoundly: It appears darkened, homeless, alienated, even permeated by death."[156]

Phenomenological insights like this one permeate this paper and give shape to the *lived experience* of grief. But they too easily remove life from the living world—if the world was not completely dark and alienating *before the other died*, this does not mean it was not permeated by death, that the reaper did not cast its shadow in our flinching, or that he did not motivate some of our devotion to what we lost. These *worlds*, then, are not opposites—they are not even distinct. Rather, they are two sides of the one world that emerges when our eyes meet, our hands touch: when we together look to the horizon, and we cannot tell whether it is dawn or dusk, whether the sun is setting or rising, but we nonetheless see the contours of the world and of one another in its

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[155] Fuchs, Thomas "Presence in absence. The ambiguous phenomenology of grief" 2017 (Published online: 11 April 2017 #Springer Science and Business Media Dordrecht, 2017), 43.
[156] See Fuchs, "Presence in absence. The ambiguous phenomenology of grief," 44.

amber glow. The fundamental ambiguity between the presence and the absence of the other is, on my analysis, a fundamental fact of our embodiment. It is constitutive of our experience. And it explains why feelings of love are intertwined with feelings of devotion, of protectiveness, and even of self-sacrifice: the possibility of the other's death, like all of her possibilities, is something we take up, we bear the pall even before she dies. Heidegger says:

> This something [the corpse] which is just present-at-hand-and-no-more is 'more' than a *lifeless* material Thing. In it we encounter something *unalive*, which has lost its life… In tarrying alongside him in their mourning and commemoration, those who have remained behind *are with him*, in a mode of respectful solicitude. Thus, the relationship-of-Being which one has toward the dead is not to be taken as *concernful* Being-alongside…[157]

Contra Heidegger, my analysis finds that there are in fact many ways in which we have a concernful intentionality regarding the corpse. While Heidegger is right that the corpse has lost *its* vitality, the animating vitality it dispersed amongst the others in life nonetheless survives it, as do the lives and bodies that animated it extimately, those that originated in the others. Carrie Hamilton notes that this is particularly true within the revolutionary context she studied.

> …death and the dead occupy a privileged position in the public language of the radical Basque nationalist movement. In ...interviews with women whose partners or other family members had been killed by police or far-right paramilitary squads, the dead

[157] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

> occupied a central place in the narrators' life stories, to the point where in some cases memories of the dead relative structured the narrative itself.[158]

This survival means it is absolutely possible to tarry concernfully with the dead—and indeed, even the corpse. For instance, some of us spend our lives safeguarding the reputations or acting in accordance with the preferences or the moral attitudes of those who have passed. Many people have endangered themselves in acts of vengeance for the dead, and some cannot—for their grief—ever again orient themselves toward a future. And these acts of postmortem devotion were already present, in relief, in the devotion we had to her when she was alive. The commemoration of the corpse was inchoate in the care we took of her living body: whether we embraced her or harmed her, fed her or deprived her.

But Carmen argues, "...there is nothing that could in principle count as occupying the perspective of another, just as there is nothing that could count as escaping one's own body, inhabiting the body of another, stepping outside of space or time, or surviving one's own death."[159] And, indeed, my analysis does seem to be in tension with a kind of common sense, and especially with first-personal experience as a point of departure for phenomenology. After all, how could I *experience* anything beyond my own death? At the very most, it might seem, I have stumbled upon a fist personal experience for those who survive me: an experience perhaps of mourning me.

And, indeed there is nothing that counts as these things for *a subject*—that is in first personal experience. But, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology raises our awareness of the

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[158] Carrie Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History," *Oral History*, Vol. 36, No. 2, (2008), 38.

[159] See Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*, 149.

importance of other kinds of experience, "…I live my body in the first person, that is, subjectively, yet at the same time my bodily experience outruns my subjective awareness. Thus, I inhabit an impersonal generality that links me to other bodies that function very similarly to my own."[160] Namely intercorporeality whispers ceaselessly the possibility of a kind of second-personal experience—the experience I have of *being-a-you* for the other, which I have argued is of some radical ethical import: evinced in a phenomenon I call belonging-*to*. There's nothing that counts as a subject herself doing any of these things: but as a subject diffuse, through the flesh of the world, there is of course an inhabiting the body of the other (and animating it, as Merleau-Ponty says) as well as a sense of surviving one's death, which we will later see is central to understanding solidarity.

Intercorporeality, and the shared world and horizons to which it gives rise, are actually always-already haunted by the possibility of death. The body announces itself to me, simultaneously, as a humming vitality—a rife and living world—and as a corpse. It is this possibility of the other's impossibility, the specter of death shifting within her—pulling at her bones, her sinews, the elastic of her skin—that makes it possible for me to reach her at all: it is, after all, a fundamental condition of the possibility of the emergence of her subjectivity from the vagueness of infancy. It is even more necessary if I want to love her—since love always entails a sacrifice, a desire to protect, an investment in the other's horizons—or if I am otherwise responsible for her.[161] The fundamental openness that accounts for our encountering the other *at all*, is not merely the positive and thrilling capacity to take up and inhabit a world: it is also the

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[160] See Weiss. "Ambiguity," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 133.
[161] See Gadamer "Solidarity and Friendship, *Research,"* 11.

Gadamer argues that sacrificing self-interest is a basic feature of solidarity, a phenomenon I track through multiple solidary movements in the following chapter.

inescapable fact that we are always vulnerable to death. This is why, Fuchs makes a mistake when he argues that:

> The very impression of the dead body reveals an unsettling ambivalence between presence and absence of the person. The transformation of the hitherto warm, animated, living body into the rigid, impermeable and repelling corpse creates a feeling of oppression and dismay. The familiar intercorporeal and affective intentions bounce off the pure materiality of the corpse. And yet the impression may also waver in an uncanny way, for at the same time the dead body is still the deceased person.[162]

Fuchs refers to this as "uncanniness", arising not from threat but from ambiguity. I argue, however, that this encounter with the corpse is somehow *canny*: that is, we are *at home* in it because our bodies have always been oriented with the other toward a horizon in which we are dead, in which we are corpses. It is our amnesia regarding intercorporeity—an amnesia induced by the modern ego-subject, which does not have to die with the body, and which is isolable, singular, and sole—that renders the corpse uncanny, *not* our bodies-as-shared. Within the context of intercorporeality, the corpse is a component and has a home, the dead-other animates the shared world.

> Similarly, vacant clothing or familiar belongings evoke the loved one's presence, while in the next moment painfully reminding their absence.[163]

Does this painful ambiguity not inhere in *love*, in the first place? Is it not, rather, a necessary condition for the phenomenon of love? I would argue it is: this is why extreme self-sacrifice is a

[162] See Fuchs, "Presence in absence. The ambiguous phenomenology of grief," 52.
[163] See Fuchs, "Presence in absence. The ambiguous phenomenology of grief,"53.

hallmark of this kind of bond! This is why martyrdom is an unquestioned act of the most extreme kind of love, the deepest kind of bond. (even in Aristotle!!!) This is to say that this reminder *is* the body, when the person is *still alive*: artifacts of her life have to suffice after her death, and this is a genuine source of grief. The *body* itself spoke her ambivalent present-absence into being for us, made sacrifice and love possible for each when she was alive, and now is spoken from its other side (as absence interrupted by the possibility of presence).

Fuchs argues the "ontological ambiguity" between the presence and the absence of the deceased is part and parcel of the "juxtaposition of worlds" he argues is fundamental to grief. Contrary to this analysis, I find that such an ambiguity inheres in our affective entanglement with others, even while they are alive—bonds like love, enmity, and solidarity as we will see next chapter, exemplify this haunting, wherein the vitality of the flesh is shot-through with the inevitable putrefaction of each being. But then, what gives grieving its special character? Why do we grieve at all? In answer to this, I say Fuchs' analysis is in part right: when the final foreclosure of a future together occurs through death, an *amputation* does occur. We no longer encounter is other body, this other world, as possibilities with which we are "pregnant," to use Merleau-Ponty's language: and this includes even the possibility of her dying. But this amputation is itself ambivalent/bivalent, since it is the death of something *in* me, but also the petrification of something that was once alive—something to which I could once reach, lift, now impossibly remote, grown terribly heavy.

While I take issue with the idea that the death other genuinely renders distinct worlds—and rather argue that the specter of death gives life a great deal of its meaning and vitality—I think that Fuchs and Ratcliffe are right to compare bereavement with the loss of a limb.

> Since the loss of the shared world concerns the core identity of the bereaved person, the death of the loved one also means a contraction or even a partial loss of self. [164]
>
> To a certain extent, bereavement may thus be regarded as analogous to a bodily mutilation or even amputation. This may be expressed in statements of bereaved individuals such as: as if my inside had been torn out and left a terrible wound; the lost one has been cut off, as if half of myself was missing…[165]

And, indeed, my death is my own-most possibility: I am, in all that I do, haunted by the possibility of my death, in some sense *because* it is a necessary condition for anything I do while I am alive. So too, the death of the other—in killing me, or some part of me—is a necessary condition for my having been with her at all: and therefore, again, for my having *lived* at all. Indeed, there is something akin to a "continuing bonds" analysis here that says—since we are phenomenally nothing but these bonds—any and all continuation of our experience is an extension of the other past the horizon of her death. But the notion of continuing bonds in the psychological literature will not jive with this one. This is mostly because of the evolutionary psychological perspective on which it is built. It takes the bond as a source of nothing but comfort, which ameliorates the ills of the world: rather than as a fundamental constituting force of subjectivity, without which it is difficult to say to whom the world poses a threat. This perspective takes the world as a source of threats—the treacherous primordium within which evolution forged us—from which we merely flee into the attachment. The threat is, therefore, more primordial than the bond. And, indeed, this is what children's bonds look like. I argue, however, that the threat and the bond—or, really, existence and impossibility, life and death—

[164] See Fuchs, "Presence in absence. The ambiguous phenomenology of grief," 48.
[165] See Fuchs, "Presence in absence. The ambiguous phenomenology of grief," 46.

are *equiprimordial* phenomena, which stand in a relation of mutual constitution and necessity. After all, once we grow and become aware of the mortality of each and of all, the bond itself is under constant threat, is itself a promise of pain… very little is more distressing than the pains and fears love, alone, makes possible.

> …both bereavement and limb loss, the correlate of an enduring system of practical meanings is a continuing sense of presence. But this does not involve an entity appearing to be *here, now* when it is actually not. Rather, it consists in a variably specific set of practical dispositions, which are implicated in how the surrounding world appears. Experience continues to be permeated by possibilities that depend on having specific bodily capacities or on being able to relate to and interact with a particular individual.[166]

This all leads, I think, to a question; are phantoms, in the case of the loss of a limb, or sightings and communications from the dead, in the case of grief, genuinely *delusional*? It is true that, if the world *is* different once one has lost a limb or a beloved, that feeling the limb and seeing her are both incompatible with reality, even delusional. But, if it is the case that the body *itself* harbors these within it, and even further—always-already harbored the possibility of their *loss*, even while they were present—then, again, there is a sense in which neither is genuinely *gone*: or at least a sense in which they are present enough that perceiving them is *inevitable*, a possibility offered up by the *world itself*, and in some senses *very real*. I draw our attention to this tension not because I doubt the genuine harm that phantom pain and sightings of the dead may do us (I

[166] See Ratcliffe, "Grief and Phantom Limbs: a Phenomenological Comparison," 5.

am familiar with the pain of the latter). Rather, as phenomenologists of illness have compellingly argued, assessing these medical phenomena from a phenomenologically salient standpoint might have therapeutic as well as theoretical benefits. This is do say that there may be some benefit in treating the hallucinations of extreme grief and phantom pains as reflections of world, rather than as fictions obscuring its reality.

> …grief is not a finite process that ends with "letting go". And adjusting to a world without the deceased need not involve ultimately losing all those habitual ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting that involved her. The deceased can continue to be experienced as present in various ways, and the relationship is reconfigured rather than altogether abandoned.[167]

Even while she is here, her death runs through me; and once she is gone, her life will still run through me. Intercorporeality ensures the other is carried by my pulse.

§VI. The Living Place the Dead in the Depths of the Earth: Violence at the Origins of Worlds in Nancy and Agamben

Fanon, Agamben, and Nancy all give accounts of the violent origins of community—of the death, bondage, and exile through which a group becomes *a* people, and of the indeed deathlike, mortified flesh of the "I cannot, but they may" left to those that compose *a* people's margins; *a* people, a society, a history is formed upon this juxtaposition between the necrosis of liminality

[167] See Ratcliffe, "Grief and Phantom Limbs: a Phenomenological Comparison," 21.

and the vitality of historical inclusion.[168,169, 170]The livable body and the unlivable one are separated from one another as though by a gulf of dark and hardened soil. Looking forward to the second half of this work—wherein the origins, necessary conditions, and foundations of the solidary community will be our object—I want only to note this similarity between these diverse perspectives. That is to say, we should reflect, however briefly, upon the immanence of violence to the formation of groups: the specter of death, and indeed the constitutive negative space of the un-living/un-livable, the shadow of the senseless, all build in relief that positive proposition, that living and breathing sense that we might call 'community,' 'society,' 'geist,' or 'history.'

Given the phenomenological reflections upon death and its constitution of *living* embodiment with which we have been occupied this chapter, we should not be surprised that the community, whatever shape it takes has at its origin this trace of the flesh-that-will-die. Indeed, as Nancy argues, we see this trace in a kind of universal denial of the truth of the flesh—that is of banal and decadent mortality—at the origins of all communities which take themselves to be "a people."[171] Perhaps some were destined to their place on the earth by the wills of the immortals. The earliest mythic communities, which Nancy conceives in this work, create their limits and sense on the basis of such a myth. Such groups are as they are, live as they live, and are bound to one another and their otherwise contingent earthly homes by something non-contingent, something that exceeds bloody bodily truth, something eternal.

But even the supposedly rationalist civilizations—like, for instance the United States—conceive of themselves as constituting "*a* people" on the basis of a mythological appeal to the

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[168] This original violence is not dissimilar to the fundamental vulnerability central to both Merleau-Ponty's and Levinas' conceptions of inter-subjective contact, though the radical presence of *violence* is much more profoundly expressed through Levinas' work.
[169] Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford :Stanford University Press, 1995).
[170] Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Inoperative Community*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
[171] See Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*.

divine, immutable, and enduring. Namely, the United States asserts that it is the home of *a* people by separating itself from the colonial authority, and it makes this distinction with an appeal to *justice*, to *liberty*, and to *rights* which exceed the contingent facticity of the colonists or their particular needs: *immutable and eternal reason* found, justify, and distinguish "Americans" as *a* people. Nancy calls this "mythologization:" the necessarily ephemeral and death-bound fundaments of the community, in a world of threat, faced with the savage winds of time, makes of itself something eternally justified, divinely ordained, and indelibly inscribed upon the earth.[172]

We can see quite readily that the mere process of becoming *a* people is a kind of mythologization which allows the individual organism to exceed its own death by taking on a more enduring identity. Any and all mythologization is necessitated by and arises because of the urgent, ever present, and *undeniable* specter of our deaths and of our dead, the possibility of our impossibility. The immortal beginnings of the community, of *a* people, stands out against and is constituted by the negative space ultimate and primordial truth of our flesh: our utter ephemerality, and the others' as well.

But, if death and violence/vulnerability haunt the positive proposition of the mythic community, their literal, physical presences have been necessary conditions for the material creation of most modern societies. The colonial project, for example, has inflicted such extreme violence that the myths have, indeed, begun to wear incredibly thin; myths like white supremacy are moth-eaten muslin veils, through which the horrors of modern statehood—murder, exploitation, and slavery—have begun ever more to show through.[173]

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[172] See Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*

[173] Of course there are those for whom the veil remains more opaque, and those for whom the violence and death eternal myths mask might actually bolster or prove the content of the myth itself (the dominating whites *are* superior

In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon reflects on the genesis of colonized and colonizer identities, which genesis can only occur in the colonial context inaugurated at first contact. This is to say, Fanon argues that neither the colonized, nor their colonizers are strictly speaking *a* people—or at least not *this* people—until this inaugural violence. Colonization occurs in a fairly predictable order from this moment of initial bifurcation: the natural world, this burgeoning heterogenous civilization, and even space itself are forced into conformity with violent Manicheanism.[174] And, indeed segregation is always-already a kind of violence; "…[Merleau-Ponty] describes space as an interconnecting tissue of sensitivities, and he names this tissue 'flesh.'"[175] Oppression is often accomplished through the disruption of this flesh, through its fissures and tearing, its ragged edges.

The colonized are presented to themselves as the inherently violent, "dark" side of this natural*ized, immortalized, mythologized* divide. Thus, their material condition—readily observable to them—is used to justify and substantiate this characterization. The colonized come to accept the omnipresence of violence in their geographical sectors as evidence of their inherent, almost physiological, propensities for violence: that is, they take on the myth.[176] But, this internalization of environing aggression—this punishing and chastising superego—does not

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because of the terror they've inflicted… a kind of Nietzschean mythologization which raises the contingent and mundane to the level of the immortal and the eternal through revalutaion).

And, indeed, this is why the questions of effective activism and solidarity are so important to me. Reality itself progressively and incrementally comes to reveal the mortal truths our myths were made to cover: and these truths genuinely undermine the myths themselves. And yet, oppression persists.

Strides made at the level of knowledge and ideology are, perhaps, never going to suffice… So I am looking to the *body*.

[174] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

[175] See Willett, "The Social Element: A phenomenology of Racialized Space and the Limits of Liberalism"

[176] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 231.

manage, in the case of the colonized, to eradicate or even diminish her violent acts (as the psychologist of the time might have expected).

> Exposed to daily incitement to murder resulting from famine, eviction from his room for unpaid rent, a mother's withered breast, children who are nothing but skin and bone… the colonized subject comes to see his fellow man as a relentless enemy. Yes, during the colonial period in Algeria and elsewhere a lot of things can be committed for a few pounds of semolina. One can kill.[177]

Fanon here describes the phenomenon through which colonial *space* becomes violent. Colonized neighborhoods are zones of extreme scarcity and privation, environments that by starvation and overwork draw death nearer to them. This proximity of death changes the stakes of ordinary inconveniences and discomforts. What would for the European—safe in her zone of relative opulence and comfort—be fodder for nothing more than a mere squabble, become matters of life and death for the colonized. Theft, in these conditions of scarcity is nothing less than attempted murder. Even a crying baby, in the right night, might pose a kind of mortal danger to the colonized worker, deprived of rest.

Further, this violence—unlike the violent revolution necessary for decolonization—is specifically self-destructive. The colonized, because they are segregated from their oppressors, act on this amplified death drive by fighting and even killing *one another*. When scarcity and privation finally compel a limb to swing out, it cannot help but make contact with the body of another colonized subject: with the body of a possible comrade.[178] Colonialism amplifies the call

[177] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 231.
[178]See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.

of death in the annals of the colonized, while muffling it in a myth of supremacy in the space given the colonizers.

In other words, the specter of death—even if it does inhere in the human mind, and all civilizations—is more visible to some, because it is nearer them at all moments: the visibility of inaugural violence is conditioned by the social and political status of the subject. And this will be of extreme importance as we turn with ever sharper focus to solidarity because, in many solidary movements, there are both 1) staving-off of immanent and violent death-by-privation-or-status, and 2) vigorous embrace of death-*for*-the-other/our cause. According to Fanon, it is *because* the colonized are to some degree "*more mortal"*—at any moment more likely to die than the colonizers—that violence may come to characterize colonized culture as a whole. But, while Fanon's focus is on the violence the oppressed often must *commit* in order to throw off their shackles, our focus will be more upon this second fold: the willingness to endure great violence and harm, to *risk* life and limb that characterizes solidary resistance cultures, and the roles of proximity and partiality in raising belonging-*to* to its utter fulfillment.

In *Homo Sacer* Agamben says that civilizations arise from an originary ban: communities are created when *one* individual is exiled to the constitutive limits of that people, banned from proper participation in a society, which she nonetheless possiblizes and holds together. The character of this originary ban is, of course, violence; we have seen that the embodied subject depends on a deep and felt sense of her own belonging—on a feeling of being indispensable to her community—for her coherence as a subject, a mind, and a body.[179] Guenther calls the effects of such a ban "social death" and we have seen the degree to which the degradation of the subject

[179] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford :Stanford University Press, 1995), 56.

to which this isolation gives rise is genuinely a form of death: a disfigurement of a world, its sense, and the "I can" that radically underpins experience.

But violence plays an even more central role in the originary than this obvious and analytic violence inherent in all kinds of exile. Namely, the ban of *homo sacer* robs her of even the bare possibility that her death might *mean* something. She might be killed in any way, without her killing constituting a murder, or an injustice. And more importantly, she may not be sacrificed. What this means in dialog with Fanon's analysis is that the colonized may not die-*for* one another in the heroic and sacred senses they indeed do: that a central injustice of the colonized community is indeed its inability to grant this power to their deaths.

This point of Agamben's analysis will inform much of the work going forward, because it means that the structures solidary movements hope to change are not—or at least have not historically been—possible without the creation of a class of people whose deaths are denied the capacity for *meaning*.[180] We will be asking, as phenomenologists, what it's like to be the constitutive outside of your social intelligibility, and what it's like to transcend it (even unto death).

The sacrifice dies in service of something greater than herself, and in serving the god she perpetuates the welfare and status of *her* people. *Homo sacer* dies as does a wild but innocuous animal, outside the fold of human utility and meaning. Indeed, he is nothing but the limit of this meaning, his body is the cite at which it unravels, becomes un-meaning. The world he defines

[180] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford :Stanford University Press, 1995), 47.

strips itself into a void over him. His life is: "…situated at the intersection of a capacity to be killed and yet not sacrificed, outside both human and divine law[.]"[181]

We will remember from Fanon the degree to which the colonized are forced outside of the meaning-making and productive components of their societies: their relegation to nihilation, meaninglessness, violence and absurdity. And Fanon does argue that their deaths come to count for less, come to *mean* less, in the instant of first contact. The constitutive outside of the social order are these killable, and indeed unlivable, liminal identities, and the colonial context demonstrates this well. [182]

These analyses also elucidate the cite at which activism and solidarity become *absolutely necessary*. It is those whose deaths have been rendered meaningless because they are in some sense already dead, already too near the specter of their own demise, who most *need* the solidary movement and its world-altering ambitions. And, as we shall see, belonging-*to*, as a central foundation of solidarity allows *homo sacer* to reprise the meaningfulness of her own death; "…I am constitutively open to unforeseeable transformations. As a sentient body, I am, in a certain sense, open to my own continuous birth," since we are pregnant with the others according to Merleau-Ponty, we are also open to their continuous rebirth, to their fecund possibilities. If we live or even die for them in such a way that their lives and deaths again become meaningful, our own possibilities are fecund beyond the limitations of our particular bodies.[183] In belonging-*to*, we might suffer-*for* or even die-*for* and arise again to the level of a sacrifice.

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[181] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), 48, 52.

[182] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), 19-20.

[183] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*, 159.

DuBois writes, in his memoir, in a story of his *life, "*Teach us, Forever Dead, there is no Dream but Deed, there is no Deed but Memory," in order to emphasize this attachment of the dead to the living; of the world about which we know and think, with which we tinker and toy, in which we plan various futures to those which have fled or faded from it; of life itself to death.[184] He speaks, of course, from the heightened proximity to death which did and does characterize Blackness in every class in the U.S., but also from the inevitable ontological ground of all human experience, which mixes the dead with the living. Such that death is indeed *something for us*. The dead are *someone to us*. Indeed, *we are the dead*.

Willett writes, "Freedom for the liberal means first of all noninterference."[185] Acknowledging the nature of the flesh is already counter to dominant modes of thinking our being, and our sociality, in part because it means we must acknowledge we are always-already interfered with and intervened upon. As such, if we want to *experience* anything like *freedom* if that desire means anything at all (and certainly it must if people are willing to risk life and limb so others might have it) then it must mean something that the current system itself can never account for (and which it can never grant). This is because absolute non-interference is the absolute devastation and dissolution of the human being. Even those who struggle for freedom must therefore do more than merely struggling to be assimilated as thoroughly as possible into the protections and relative comfort of the status quo: since the status quo defines freedom in terms of an untenable, and perhaps undesirable fiction. Instead, in feeling the ethics of the flesh through their solidary commitment, they must inaugurate a new reality, and with it a new conception of freedom. Fanon argues along these same lines: urging liberated peoples that their

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[184] WEB Du Bois, *A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century.* quoted by Lewis Gordon in "De Bois's Humanistic Philosophy," 279.
[185] See Willett, "The Social Element: A phenomenology of Racialized Space and the Limits of Liberalism,"

liberation is always incomplete, or impossible if they merely create upon their ancestral lands another Europe.[186]

Both *Homo Sacer* and *Inoperative Community* find satisfactory origins for contemporary social and political structures, like the state, within logos: myth for Nancy and primordial decision making for Agamben. Far from the classic liberal justifications of the state—on the grounds of an inescapable and always just barely subcutaneous corruption called human nature—we glimpse here a humanity that might be otherwise organized, the very flesh of which does not necessarily call for the very hierarchies to which it has historically been submitted. Alongside Fanon, then, we see the bonds of necessity slip from human history in the works of these thinkers: and perhaps see the necessity they have been attributed as nothing more than a myth. Just as early archaeologists saw in Lucy a world dominating hunter of giant cats, Darwinism has become yet another myth which naturalizes the social structures of the contemporary age, etching them on the human genome, as necessary products of our most material being. Biopolitics fully mythologizes. Activism must fully unwrite the reason of the myth: whether it is the divine right of men over the earth, the primacy of light over dark, or the kill-ability and un-livability of certain flesh.

Each of these thinkers—Fanon, Agamben, and Nancy—will play a major role in the critical phenomenological analyses of historical solidarity movements in which I engage in chapter three, but it is nonetheless important to see the degree to which death is absolutely and irrevocably implicated in the production of any community. In this sense there is not too keen a distinction to be made, perhaps, between the suffering that gives rise to a solidarity-movement, and emergent solidary identities. Each fights its proximity to a particular kind of death—the one

[186] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.

that clings always to the oppressed, the death of privation—and embraces another—the mythological and enduring death, the death that dwells in and perhaps saves the life of another: the *meaningful death*.

§VII. Conclusion

> …the phenomenologist traces the hazardous appearing of agent-oriented capacities—capacities for meaning, reflexivity, expression, improvisation, communication—that emerge contingently within the inter world, where they only sometimes acquire the kind of singularity that brings political efficacy. Such capacities are not properties of an ontological subject, but expressions of immanently generative flesh.[187]

Mourning demonstrates that belonging-*to* implicates us in the other's future, and in this sense, we are radically responsible for her; this opens us both, primordially, to risk. If it is through the contact of our bodies in a world of significance, that we receive the other—as the *completion* of a subjectivity *unlivable* in isolation—then, it would seem that we complete her subjectivity through this same bodily contact. In other words, as the other emigrates into our intimate, subjective, experience, providing contingencies for which we cannot account, we *immigrate* from our subjectivity, into hers: we become some unaccountable part of her most intimate experience of the world.

In phenomena like our body language and micro-expressions, we see concrete examples of our emigration into the subjectivity of the other, the way our own bodies might signal—below

[187] Diana Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Acumen: Durham, 2011), 91.

the level of consciousness, intent, or even mood—intersubjective demands.[188] Even if we might not like or even *recognize* the version of ourself which animates the experience of another—and it is in this way that I belong-*to* her as much as I belong to myself— it seems we might be compelled to take some responsibility for it. After all, it is a power to help draw her experiential and futural horizons.

In moving toward praxis, I will for now only gesture at an intuition that this conception of being-with means we must institute communal thinking wherein, as Dostoyevsky says through a dying child "… you must know that verily each of us is guilty before everyone, for everyone and everything."[189] Mere empathy will not here do, since it relies upon a making-similar. Rather, we must see ourselves as responsible for the incommensurate phenomena to which we give rise to in the other, for alien experiences in which we are embedded: for the way that she, compelled as she is, takes me up, and makes me hers.

[188] Stephan Porter and Leanne ten Brink, "Reading between the Lines: Identifying Concealed and Falsified Emotions in Universal Facial Expressions," in *Psychological Science*, Vol. 19. No. 5 (May 2008). pp. 508.
[189] Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *The Brothers Karamazov*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990). p. 289.

Introduction to the Second Part (Chapters III and IV)

> …It would seem all the problems which man faces on the subject of man can be reduced to this one question:
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> "Have I not because of what I have done or failed to do, contributed to an impoverishment of human reality?"[190]

Amplifying the voices of those who lived through or died by solidary movements—Decolonization in Algeria and the Attica prison rebellion—I find that solidarity is a particular vibration of a primordial ethical debt, which I call belonging-*to*. Solidary struggle heightens the pitch of this everyday bond into willingness to sacrifice-for, even to die-for the other. The phenomenological method I employ therefore accounts for solidarity quite differently than does current literature, wherein solidarity is either a function of shared identity or of shared suffering. I find instead that *sharing* itself is fundamentally altered within the solidary relation, that this more intense bond makes possible solidarity and its world-transformative power. Current literature misses this altered bond because it is dangerous and cannot be easily or cleanly endorsed, even where we want to endorse solidary acts. This painful and generous communion nonetheless more genuinely characterizes solidarity and must be reckoned with, because without it there are neither sufficient identarian bases for solidary action, nor sufficiently shared sufferings for revolutionary risk.

[190] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 3.

> …the flesh as "an ultimate notion", accomplishes this gathering together of all the disparate aspects of experience into a unified, ambiguous, spontaneous and stylized whole.[191]

Weiss says that the relationship between the subjective and the intersubjective dimensions of human life is in fact a "source of ambiguity," in Merleau-Ponty's work, which is to say that what we take as subjective and first personal cannot be neatly separated or even done conceptual justice without the context and influence of the interworld, nor can the intersubjective, the communal, or the social be conceived without some conception of the subject which thoroughly permeates it.[192] So, before moving on to describe what solidarity is, and how it differs from other social realities I should likely ask; what is the conception of the subject that will permeate my account?

As we have seen, becoming a person at all is accomplished 1) at the brink of our own death and 2) only with the help of others. We cannot therefore hope ever to become anything other than precarious, contingent, and plural selves. The ever-looming possibility of our annihilation, of our impossibility, is implicated always-already in each act we commit as an 'I can'. And even this 'I can' is not some simple. singular 'I' but rather also a 'we' and a 'you'. This ambiguous and precarious self is the subject of political and ethical life: it can only be this kind of self—who is a self-in-communion-alone—who suffers oppression, or oppresses, who liberates or enslaves, who makes or fulfills ethical and social demands, or who acts *in solidarity*.

In Part Two (chapters three and four), I will focus upon solidarity as a lived phenomenon, arguing that 1) precarity and death—or, more finely, that proximity to death and privation and willingness to be deprived, even to die—are absolutely necessary, fundamental, features of

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[191] See Weiss. "Ambiguity," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 141.
[192] See Weiss. "Ambiguity," in *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*, 134.

solidary movements: distinguishing both the movements and the persons they represent from those characterizing other forms of working-together and 2) that willingness to die—or at the very least to sacrifice much *for* the other—can only come from the more primordial existential feature of the flesh I have called 'belonging-*to*'. It is my contention that neither of these dynamics of the flesh have been well-understood or adequately engaged in the literature and that this is to our detriment if we want to understand and especially if we wish to enact, solidarity.

The reasons something like willingness to die-*for* might not emerge as an attractive subject for many contemporary thinkers are, I think, fairly obvious given the contemporary landscape. In particular, many on the left are averse to any presupposition that *violence* inheres in political systems. Even greater is our general cultural aversion to the idea that fighting such systems might require force: though we *are* more willing to accept that pacifistic martyrdom to state-forces which characterized Dr. Martin Luther King's movement (which martyrdom of course necessitates violence).

I will demonstrate at great length that this aversion to violence is somewhat suspect and seems to originate outside any concern for the liberation of peoples. While I agree that the best possible revolution would be bloodless, we all know revolutions seldom are. Furthermore, I feel it is imperative to read the theory and epistemological work that has come out of situations of oppression, that was forged by hands fighting for liberation—or on rare occasions by hands that had won their freedom. *These vital hands are inhabited by countless, lost, pulses, chilled and bloodless fingers, they write of the vitality their dead brethren won*. The works crafted by the oppressed are not monolithic or homogenous in their treatment of violence, and so I cannot justify such a stance.[193]

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[193] Lewis Gordon, "Through The Hellish Zone of Non-Being," in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Blemont: Head Publishing House, 2007), 6.

We are in general, in this place in history and on the globe, faithful in most cases to a rationalist conception of the political, which sees few of its laws or structures as *violent*—they are *abstract, changeable, and the product of reason.* This can make it difficult for us to sense in the suffering of those harmed by the laws anything like an *injustice*. How often do we hear an argument such as this;

1) x is the law.

2) Without the law (and even without this particular law) y or z bad things might happen.

3) x protects us from y and z.

4) x *causes* p and q bad things to happen to marginal groups.

5) p and q happening to marginal groups is better than y or z happening.

6) x is a good law

Such an argument, of course, concludes that the *reasons* a law was drafted *justify* the law—the link between rationality and morality appears indelible. Counterfactuals do not appear as logical challenges when they are the suffering of marginal groups, a fact already presupposed by the rationale of the law, and yet no link is made between rationalism and violence, here.[194] Dying of this privation is irrational (and this is, to be sure, negatively valuated); dying to *end it* is anathema to reason. And, as we shall see, this is one of the many ways affective and epistemic

[194] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford :Stanford University Press, 1995), 102.
But we know from Agamben that the fundamental conditions under which laws emerge are anything but reasonable. The law instead emerges from vicious bans, violence, and privation. The law is bad because its sole condition of possibility is the creation of such marginalized groups, yet it obscures this origin with myths (in the case of founding the US as it exists today, this is a contractual mythos, rather than the history of war, displacement and enslavement that materially accomplished it, others have obscured the violence of the ban with divine logics).

injustice in colonies (for example) has kept people enslaved.[195] It is for this reason that, as I turn ever more to historical solidary movements in the coming section contemporary analysis will not serve me well. Instead, we will attempt a phenomenology of these extreme situations—situations of privation, exploitation, slavery, dehumanization, and violence the author can hardly imagine—from narrative, psychological, and historical accounts, bearing in mind the foregoing analysis.

> Capacities for political agency emerge within the for field of collective life and the task of the phenomenologist (or political actor) is to seek signs of potentially transgressive or transformative capacities within the ambiguities and complexities of this field. Although Merleau-Ponty did not live to explore the implications of his ontology, it suggests the basis from [*sic*] a radically new understanding of politics and the political.[196]

We shall find that historical solidary movements materialize this kind of potentially transformative capacity of fleshly belonging-*to*, in *various kinds of self-sacrifice*, including dying-*for*: a truly transgressive phenomenon, whereby the oppressed wrest the meaningfulness of their own deaths from power. A prisoner at Attica recounts:

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[195] *Black Skin White Masks.*
Diana Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Durham: Acumen, 2011), 91.

> So, we got a lot of support on this. Then we moved on it. Everyone was not in favor of signing their names to it though, because they didn't want to spotlight themselves. So, five of us did.[197]

An important part of solidarity not necessarily noticed by many analyses shows itself here. These five decided to take the brunt of punishment for those to anxious or afraid to be publicly attributed a certain level of involvement. There will be, in any solidary group, those who are at greater risk, who are in more danger, for their association with the group and with its liberatory aims. While solidarity is fundamentally a willingness to sacrifice—one which has often had to be quite extreme due to the nihilating force at the center of state and corporate power—it also requires a sensitivity to these fears, to elevated vulnerability in some persons. Solidary groups often accommodate these differences, rather than demanding *identical* sacrifices from members.

Willett argues that, "the awareness of tactile sensations precedes and conditions the emerging dialectic of Self and Other, carrying with it the possibility of transformed notions of subjectivity and sociality—notions that… are neither modern nor postmodern."[198] With Merleau-Ponty we may add that these notions are also neither liberal, nor communist. That they throw into question and imperil any extant and developed politics: as history has shown none have fostered optimal relations between human beings, their worlds.

Sensation is not even necessarily localizable to our own bodies and our awareness is always of being haunted by some other. Thus, even the caress that finds our bodies even in the isolation of the womb, diffuses us throughout the flesh of the world, and contaminates

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[197] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 22.
[198] See Willett, *Maternal Ethics*, 36.

our nascent tissues with others. Indeed, neither modernity nor postmodernity can account for or even conceptualize the utter dependance and confusion that characterizes individual ontogenesis. Neither can any extant ethics or politics, which does not have the flesh of the world as its express foundation.[199]

This section marks a somewhat sharp turn in my analysis, as well, that I would be remiss not to mark; the primordial phenomenon of belonging-*to*, which I have located within the ontologically elemental flesh of the world is genuinely ambivalent, can give rise to cooperation and communion just as easily and just as naturally as it might resistance or toxicity. *Solidarity*, however, requires a *struggle*, and one whom we struggle against. The communion of those in solidarity is organized around this struggle.

The ethics of the flesh I found inchoate in phenomenological reflection requires that we *attend* to the effects that we have on one another: the extreme power and responsibility that our mutual embodiment entails. Any politics of the flesh will have to evaluate human experiences, choose those we would prefer to foster, and it will have to do so using criteria outside the purely descriptive power of classical phenomenology. But this means exercising extreme care with the accounts we are given; it means blending our voices with them: it means finding the account that harmonizes with and supports the attestations of the "wretched" of this Earth.

> Often, the interpreter "interprets" in his own way the patient's thinking according to some stereotyped formula, depriving it of all its richness: "He says that hears djnoun"—indeed, one no longer knows if the delusion is real or inferred. [200]

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[199] Diana Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Durham: Acumen, 2011), 91.
[200] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 368.

If we interpret from our biases—if we try to lead a completely foreign experience down the familiar paths of *our* own commonsense, our particular intelligible, our quirky little truths—we will no longer be able to see the truth of the account. This is, perhaps, the inevitable delusion of supremacy. And we must avoid it. Any account we give that reduces the attestations of the struggling oppressed should be regarded as a djinn—no matter how comfortable it makes us.

It is important that we, as interpreters of the following artifacts, accounts, and attestations do them justice. It is important we assume their truth (even the truth of their delusions, in one instance). Because these experiences are *not ours*, or at least they are not *mine*. I am analyzing them because I believe they are *true*, of course. But even more, I should bear in mind that I am analyzing them because I think they are *particularly revelatory*. I believe they can tell anyone, with any kind of experience at all, something deeply important, invariable and fundamental about the nature of solidarity, the nature of human relationships, and indeed they can illumine the path we might all walk in some way toward a more humane future, toward a freer future.

For many theorists, it doesn't seem that the ontological field of enduring struggle can ever resolve peacefully: and this may well be true, since the flesh is not inherently kind.[201][202] But, I suspect solidary movements at least give us some intimation of what that phenomenologico-political goal—shared by Merleau-Ponty, Guenther, and myself at the very least—might be: a reality of absolute collaboration, of utter responsibility toward the other, and a

[201] Diana Coole, "Politics and the Political," in, *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Acumen: Durham, 2011), 91.
[202] Sally Scholz

community that fosters the best bonds between us. This is another reason such an analysis is, I think, pressing.

Chapter III, Part 1
A Wilderness with Walls: Attica Interviews

(Phenomenological Artifacts and Revolutionary Solidarity as One Oscillation of Belonging-*to)*

§ I. For Some, We Build a Wilderness: Exile of Those Who Nonetheless Belong

One reason solidarity cannot be fully explained with reference to shared suffering is that empowered, and even oppressive groups often build movements, which strive toward a common goal: wherein loyalty is absolute, betrayal is *possible*, and a deep sense of fraternity makes each willing to risk much from the other. When we are not doing philosophy, it would be obvious to talk about the "solidarity" between members of such groups. But, having always-already nominated solidarity as a *good thing* the contemporary discourse is reticent to ascribe solidarity to the relationships between oppressors. Instead, it is ascribed to exiled, labeled killable by the State, the oppressed. The reasons for this are good and themselves rather obvious; the political solidarity of the oppressed is the cite of solidarity's ultimate promise—we shall see in the present discussion of Attica and Algerian decolonization that this promise is a new, freer, world, the *invention* of an unprecedented equitable intelligibility. As a futural phenomenon which is always directed toward changing the world, no theoretician can help but be most interested in this promise.

But, in not looking at the similarities between the solidarity of, say, emergent fascism—the retrograde ambitions of which make it the ultimate vanguard of the status quo power, against all revolutions—and the liberatory solidarity of those under its heel, we tacitly propose that solidary power only emerges from the good, and thus can only be *used* for good. Not only does this mean we dangerously underestimate nefarious political organizations, proposing that they are bound together by some other, lesser, force (reserving the intense bond of solidarity for the good); it also means we miss the essence of the solidary phenomenon—that is, the willingness to sacrifice much, or even die, for others—and instead mistake it for its parts, its historical accidents, or the features it has when we approve of its use.

Solidarity between politically abhorrent actors really shouldn't surprise is, insofar as solidarity is a relationship between human beings predicated on the mutual permeability of the flesh and the body. In fact, the moral standing and political activities of persons rarely *if ever* present any real boundaries for empathetic, reciprocal, relations of belonging. Carrie Hamilton writes that these relationships even crop up between informants and their most virulently critical interviewers with *disturbing* ease.[203] That is to say that even those most revolted by us can find themselves empathizing with us, seeing with our damned eyes, and taking up our very own bloodied hands—by a kind of accident of the flesh, in spite of their own *values* and other cogitations. This is, no doubt, because belonging crops up with the spontaneity of the flesh, through the basic ontological givenness of our intercorporeality and because of the debt the flesh implies. Even when we resist the other, we belong-*to* her.

Agamben notes that the figure of the werewolf—monstrous, destructive, incapable of controlling its carnivorous urges—emerges precisely from the attempt to deny belonging-*to*.[204] The community as State places the "criminal," or the "evil," the "terrorist," outside the community. They wall her off from themselves. They claim, against all reason, that they can hear the primal howling of their captives over the walls. In Attica, false reports by the police that guards had their throats slashed permeated the media. They could not but surmise, against all evidence, that werewolf had disfigured human beings. All hostages died from police bullets.

This ban can never be complete. The banished can never fully be made an animal. She remains human and what animality they might see in her comes from the wilderness they have

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[203] See Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History," 34-43. Obviously all of this should prompt us to consider who it is we find politically and ethically abhorrent and why…

[204] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995). 63.

made her. Oppression has made her hybrid, at most, and they can never fully excise her from the flesh of the community. Furthermore, what they *fear* in her is in fact their own creation. The wilderness they built her is the constitutive outside of their civilization. Her howls are the noise upon which their domestic peace and quiet rest.

We are disturbed then, precisely by the fact that those we think are base and evil constitute us—the same impulse, of course, which segregates the "criminal" in the prison divides shades of humanity in the colony, and otherwise banishes and kills the "bad" in every kind of oppression. As we shall see, when looking to Fanon's case-studies, the only means of overcoming this logic of exile—or really this logic of *excision*, through which we mutilate the flesh by removing the "other" from it—is radical forgiveness.[205] Absolution leaves behind only the *ur*-debt, belonging-*to* and frees us to live in accordance with an ethics of the flesh.

Unlike much of the literature on the subject, I seek solidarity's essence neither in common oppression nor in the nobility of the liberatory ideal because "[b]y torturing, [the colonial soldier] manifests an exemplary loyalty to the system."[206]

The assumption that solidarity is some kind of inherent good also gives rise to a certain kind of uncomfortable trend in the literature around solidarity and rebellion whereby our immediate and well-justified empathy with the oppressed—when she is powerless against her oppression—gives way to an intolerance for her when she triumphs against it.[207] This intolerance for the triumphant victim is coextensive with a kind of borderline fetishization of her sufferings;

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[205] See Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History," 38.
Even to understand one another we must occasionally abandon the ideology and artifice of our political commitments, and simply open ourselves to the other. If we are to include her or to build anything with her, it seems we must at a minimum do what is necessary to understand her. (38)

[206] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 71.

[207] See Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History."
Carrie Hamilton demonstrates such a distain for her "terroristic" interview subjects because the means by which they resist their oppression are (perhaps unavoidably) violent.

much of the literature expends little of its attention on the freed or triumphant people. In fact, much of the literature averts its gaze from solidary *work* (historically violence,) in order to focus all the more upon suffering itself.[208]

We have to be careful as we turn to the experiences of the institutionally oppressed. It is too easy to reduce their oppression to a mere experience, to some kind of *feeling*.[209] This reduction is dangerous. It is dangerous because, as Lewis Gordon argues, it misses the fact that *intellectual activity* accompanies the somatic spasms and affective torture—the *feelings*—of oppression. But it is doubly dangerous, I here argue, because it gives would-be allies and those of us writing books on liberation something to "take part in." We do not want to *feel like a villain*, and so we project into the experiences of the victim[210]. We do not want to *feel the impulse to violence*, so we reject it out of hand and superimpose pacifism. We insist this pacifism takes the place of experientially informed and sufficiently rigorous politics of subjection and liberation theoreticians from the ranks of the oppressed have *already written*—especially when these writings justify liberatory violence (as does Fanon). The liberated subject generally only accomplishes her freedom through violence and thus her intellectual projects often break the spell of her subjection, and with it goes the empathetic bond between the suffering oppressed and her Western academic advocates.[211]

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[208] C. Arnsperger and Y. Varoufakis, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity," in *Erkenntnis* Vol. 59, No. 2 (2003). 180.

[209] Lewis Gordon, "Through The Hellish Zone of Non-Being," in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Head Publishing House: Belmont, 2007), 6.

[210] We are tempted to empathize by a kind of lay-morality. But this morality deludes us with regard to the power of the empathetic faculty (is my empathetic experience of incarceration anything like incarceration? Almost certainly not!).

But it is distasteful to empathize with certain people and certain actions.

[211] While these people may still ultimately support her and her cause, they no longer speculate what it is like to be in her body. To hold the knife, to pull the trigger…

Part of being careful is to evaluate what these experiences reveal about the world. That is, part of *caring for* someone's experience (rather than merely *using* it), comes from attenuating its connections to the *real*, and the particular way in which it speaks the real. Treating the others' experiences with care means that we do not write them off as delusions or fleeting subjective phenomena, but that we *do the phenomenology*. Her experience is the testimony of the real. The world is what is real. Her experience is, indeed, the world. We cannot use her experience to bolster or "apply" theory. Just as we should not use it merely to empathize, to take up the position of victimization, and *absolve ourselves* as the victim is blameless. Anti-oppressive thought cannot consist in attributing suffering as an enduring moral virtue, that inheres in some persons. If we prefer experiential and narrative accounts of the oppressed to her theoretical reflections on her experiences, we effectively reduce all activities of her consciousness to sensuous, affective, mundanity.[212] We must work against the impulse to enshrine suffering. And part of this is to accept the often-brutal means liberation demands. To accept the oppressed even after she has succeeded. The fetishization of suffering demands that there be some enduring, deified, sufferer, who never betrays naive and privileged moralities by casting off her chains.

The oppressed's suffering comes from *without*. It can and *should* be otherwise. If theorization has not made this obvious—if her liberation (once it's won) brings us no joy, if we miss the victim because we cannot bear the liberator—then we have *buried* the truth by thinking, rather than revealing it.

> Our acceptance of the lie [that Black people are the problem] is consciously based on the supposition that peace can and must be preserved at any price. Blacks here in the U.S.

[212] Lewis Gordon, "Through The Hellish Zone of Non-Being," in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Head Publishing House: Belmont, 2007), 6.

> apparently do not care how well they live, but are only concerned with how long they are able to live… One has to be shown the fruits and feel the rewards of a new or different thing, before perceiving its merits.[213]

But, if freedom is never won for oppressed people, then these fruits can never be tasted. The acceptable means of liberation left to the oppressed by academic moralizing and speculative empathy have been in many historical contexts too few and too impotent to completely change an oppressive culture. Our inclination to render unacceptable and even incomprehensible any act of rebellion which damages bodies and property, bespeaks a tacit exaltation of all victimhood by our speculative empathy. And on the other side we denigrate, as degenerate, immoral, or impermissible, those movements which have *actually* liberated people.[214] We even ignore the State violence upon which nonviolent resistance relies, as its medium of social motility.

This particular obscurity of the triumphant and the freed arises because the oppressed *have* historically only been liberated through force. The oppressive forces of the colony, the penal system, and of chattel slavery are each so strong, so *comprehensive*, that they are not easily broken and certainly they are not broken within the *laws* they themselves prescribe. The incarcerated at Attica did not violently rebel first, but they worked to learn the law and to chisel away their chains with the so-called "masters-tools," arguing for early parole etc. Colonized in Algeria (and throughout the world) first demonstrated peacefully marching in the streets, until they realized in the wake of a historically bloody French retaliation that the colonizer would not simply be persuaded by reasonable (lawful) argumentation to loosen her grip. U.S. slavery was only abolished after one of the nation's bloodiest conflicts. Indeed, even the modest requests of

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[213] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann), 33.
[214] See Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History."

U.S. coal miners for more limited hours, fairer pay, and the opportunity to patronize businesses not owned by the mine, were met with hired militias and the charred remains of whole families.[215] Non-violent resistance provokes, by design, the violence of the State. In each of these cases, the oppressed followed sanctioned methods which failed, and the State pursued a path of historic retaliatory bloodletting, in order to silence them.

> …in the identification with 'pure victimhood' one can detect a 'Manichean certainty concerning the spaces occupied by and distinctions between the "good" and the "bad". The victim is, of course, on this count synonymous with the 'good', and thus judgement falls upon those who attain their freedom, especially if it required violent means. But even where it doesn't the empowerment of the victim sullies her 'pure victimhood', or put otherwise, renders her impure: if not *bad*, worse than she was.[216]

The desire to ameliorate oppression gives rise to empathetic speculation and phenomenologies of experiences of oppression. But our disquiet with the means history has necessitated for freedom renders the discourse all but empty of phenomenologies of victory, success, and freedom. We exalt the suffering person of color, poor person, the enslaved and incarcerated. We wince in disgust at that same person of color, that same poor person, if she must use any force to rend her chains or to elevate herself above the conditions of pain and privation that have made her a "noble victim".

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[215] *Killing for Coal*
[216] See Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History," 40.

And this is because—and there can be no doubt—liberatory violence is still violence. There is nothing desirable in the shedding of any blood. Oppressive force wounds, even in its dissolution, because it often will only dissolve within the blood of its privileged.[217] It calls on the colonized to kill the colonizer, if they desire freedom. It calls upon the enslaved to take up arms against the slavers. It calls upon the miner to fire upon the mine owner. The incarcerated to knock unconscious the petty and violent guard. And no doubt the trauma of this force grips generations of supposedly liberated people, weakening their freedom.

Yet, we can never be justified in empathizing with these peoples' oppression (and wielding it theoretically), while disavowing their victories. Such a practice says that the suffering of the oppressed is a good: a good I reconstruct and live in my imagination, which can render truths for us all in phenomenology, and which we should praise in ethics. It also says that the amelioration of some peoples' suffering is bad. Or at least that I don't want to reconstruct the experience of liberation in the empathetic speculation of phenomenology (that I don't want to take up *that* first person experience). At best current literature refuses to evaluate liberatory practices ethically. We must, therefore, discuss liberatory violence when we talk about political solidarity—or when we do any work in the interest of the politically oppressed. As Fanon argues Successful rebellion might emerge from any of the thousands of man-made wildernesses that hold peoples abject. And this occurs by a "mutation of the instinct of self-preservation into value and truth," that is into a new intelligibility, a free horizon, won by "heroic struggle."[218]

A communally written statement of the material and ideological principles which drove the Attica prison rebellion was broadcast on national television, rupturing the concrete and rock of carceral exile, and forcing the humanization of the "criminal" on an absolutely unwilling and

[217] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 655.
[218] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 655.

unwitting public. These men, through only moderate violence, overtook the material structure of oppression within which they'd been held. And through moderate violence and *solidary acts*, they exalted themselves: no longer as suffering animals to be "beaten and driven," but as men who would not except the horror of this carceral wilderness. These men abandoned the eternal-present of their oppression and—with the fearlessness and strength that wilderness had given them—took aim for freer horizons *for all incarcerated persons.*

> …It happens…that in certain enslaved regions the violence of the colonized becomes quite simply a manifestation of his strictly animal existence. I say animal and I speak as a biologist for such reactions are, after all, only defensive reactions reflecting a quite banal instinct of self-preservation…
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> In 1954, the Algerian people finally took up arms because…finally, it was longer a question for the Algerian of giving meaning to his life but rather of giving one to his death.[219]

Though the incarcerated at Attica only overtook their captors for a brief time, they made enduring demands, and changed the way many people view the incarcerated, the "criminal." and all other facets of so-called "justice." Some of their demands were eventually met with changes in policy, as well.

We have many accounts of how people suffer. And, while these are important, they are not sufficient for a phenomenology of solidarity. We have already demonstrated that shared suffering—or any subjective feeling of suffering—is neither necessary nor sufficient for solidarity. But, further, to focus only upon the *suffering* against which political solidarity fights

[219] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 655.

forgets that 1) solidarity is *for* something, it has a very distinct futural intentionality and requires a very specific kind of mutual *work*, and 2) that the attainment of such a goal renders the solidary actor triumphant in a new world receptive to her will, that solidarity—where it succeeds—means the transmutation of the abject and miserable into the author of her world. When we avoid talking about revolution and revolt (even if it is because of the *objective* horrors they entail), we create an inflated demand for images and accounts of starvation, privation, fear, and pain; and we begin to populate the (very new) field of critical phenomenology with such images and accounts. We cannot allow ourselves to *prefer* a struggling people, when they are suffering (and thus, when they are in no way morally ambiguous for us). We have to tolerate the victories of the oppressed, otherwise there is no meaningful solidarity, no meaningful allyship. If we are too enamored with the other's suffering, we are saboteurs.

What is needful, therefore, is an account of how some people have reclaimed the meaningfulness of their lives, the mournability of their deaths, and worked to procure a horizon of lessened suffering *for all*.[220] What is needful is an account of how such victories are won by genuine *solidarity* since, after all, violence is merely one expression among others of the willingness to risk *everything* for the other.

§II. A Wilderness with Walls

> Now we try to get along because we live here together, and by living here, we want the best conditions for ourselves. Any form of togetherness that is tried to be brought about by the inmates as a whole, no one excluded, the institution doesn't want this. When you see black and white associated together, hanging out, first things that will

[220] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 655.

> happen, a rumor will start, is that they have a homosexual relationship. You know, it just can't be a straight up relationship, they have to be engaged in some kind of sex act.[221]

According to Jones, the association of homosexual conduct and incarceration was actually a means of shaming inmates for solidary love and mutual support. Homosexuality was predicated of relationships which were actually heterosexual bonds of friendship and solidarity. Power, Jones insinuates, made this attribution of homosexuality any time race failed to intervene upon our natural embodied enmeshment and affective attachment. That is, any time the violent severance of each from the other through racism and segregation—which constituted the order of power outside prison walls—failed to characterize the relations between inmates.[222] What this demonstrates to us is that 1) the prison environment constitutes a subversion of the norms on the outside, which is actually rather obvious (there exist distinct prison economies, and certainly distinct laws and even ethics, which arise within the carceral state), 2) that this subversion of norms might well mean the decay of ideologies and even ways of seeing which radically shape the world outside. Beliefs like racism might find themselves suspended within certain solidary relations between prisoners. Because such beliefs limit the bodies with which we might come into contact, reduce the possibilities into which we might project, and render inhuman, unintelligible or even impossible countless human experiences of segregated Others, their suspension opens up many possibilities for co-constitution. We might actually come to incorporate that which was once impossible for us in such a way.

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[221] [221] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 22.

[222] I use the word 'segregation' here in order to denote both *legal* segregation, as it existed in the Southern U.S. as well as other institutional structures which exclude persons from spaces on the basis of their identity.

By separating us from the other in such a thorough way, racism renders experience utterly anemic: but it also renders reality intolerant of what *it should have always included,* 3) that this means that power must constantly reassert and reconstitute itself amongst the oppressed—at least where they have been banished to the wildernesses power built them—lest completely new values and norms take its place. [223] For Fanon, revolution means inventing a radically new social reality and in so doing clearing the way for the rebirth of humanity in its essence, outside the norms of any historical or contemporary intelligibility. Where social institutions like racism and norms of severance lose their grip on the banished, solidarity and cooperation might thrive.

> The affect whose sense and force has been disjointed or disintegrated persists and poses unique risks to the marginalized subject precisely through persisting in this disjointed form, and through the byproducts it yields.[224]

The carceral environment at Attica, in other words, demonstrated the degree to which the norms outside the prison are detrimental, abnormal, alien, or even *sick*. Racism and segregation, wherever they are, force each of us to deny some part of our selves, or even worse to live without some part of ourselves, without part of our own bodies. These others do, after all, belong-to us just as radically as someone with the same general amount of melanin. Supremacy of various

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[223] What George Yancy's evocative analysis of race and the locking of doors shows us, again, is that this separation is an injury, it is not the natural order of things but a disruption of that order. The primordial state of human affairs is, after all, the concept-less pre-reflective communion of the flesh.

[224] Whitney, Shiloh. "AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE: MERLEAU-PONTY AND FANON ON THE BODY SCHEMA AS A THEORY OF AFFECT," in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Volume 56, Issue 4 December 2018.* 500.

kinds deprives even the powerful of their *completion*. Solidarity in Attica, therefore, is a genuine opportunity for *healing*--that is for *suturing* the cut which has separated us from one another, or rather, which has allowed this intercorporeal bond which constitutes each of us to atrophy between those of us who are different colors.[225][226] The reaction of prison guards to solidary bonds between white and Black inmates indicates that institutional power within the prison relies upon the *importation* of certain social norms. Namely the ideological and phenomenal world that fosters this severance of the white inmate from the Black inmate—the historical atrophy of the intercorporeal bonds between them—are necessary for the coherence and perpetuation of carceral power….

But the necessary practices of the carceral State actually inspire genuinely surprising forms of communion. Without their ordinary communities, the incarcerated might find themselves with Others. Facing common and brutal enemies (the guards, the hole, etc.), they might occasionally rediscover their fleshly bond, that primordial debt through which they are given-over. Rediscovering their belonging-to means communion between the dominant and the abject, between the saved and the damned, between the white and the Black. The guards attempt to rend again this powerful suturing, the still angry scar between prisoners from different races—so that prison social life resembles the alienation of the outside world. They feel compelled to intervene upon such friendships because belonging-to is very near effective, productive, *solidarity*.

As Martin Luther King Jr. says, "When the external of man's nature subjugates the internal, dark storm clouds begin to form."[227] That is to say, when humanity's relation to power,

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[225] Axelle Karera, "The Racial Epidermal Schema," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon *eds.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 291.
[226] Yancy, George. *Black Skin*
[227] King, "Beloved Community: The World House," 5.

resources, and various other social artifices subjugate our more primordial, communal (and indeed, for King, *loving)* nature, our shared human future is bleak, ruinous. This is how King characterizes the mundane social landscape of all supposedly free people in the Southern U.S. What interracial solidarity in Attica shows us is that this Manichean and oppressive intelligibility is rather easily subverted (even if we do not prefer the means, would prefer to abolish prisons). Indeed, this is what proliferation of solidarity everywhere shows us.

The incarcerated of Attica were not all naive to what genuinely motivated the guards' homophobic accusations. They were meant—yes in part by means of one's own unfortunate prejudice—to separate one friend from the other, to diminish and destroy bonds of camaraderie where they evolved, and to prevent the evolution of further such bonds and *especially* their proliferation throughout the prison community.

> We must look to each other and destroy the barriers placed between us with trust, and love. I am committed to you and will do what I have to.[228]

> "Brother," sister," "comrade," are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie because in their thinking my brother is my wallet and my comrade, my scheming. In a kind of auto-da-fé, the colonized intellectual witnesses the destruction of all his idols: egoism, arrogant recrimination, and the idiotic, childish need to have the last word…[229]

The individual is, of course, the foundation of European values and has remained the nucleus of Western thought since at least Descartes. It is unsurprising, then, that where it these values encounter any communitarian thinking they encounter it as a deep, philosophical, political,

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[228] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann), 39.
[229] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 11.

metaphysical, and even moral *mistake*. The colonists' dehumanization of indigenous peoples is well attested by the history of colonization and imperialism. But this dehumanization is, as Fanon argues, not merely some thoughtless, haphazard, metaphor through which denizens of Europe attempted to cope with a life bereft of certain modern luxuries. In other words, colonialists do not liken the subjects of their abjection, their *enslaved* to animals merely because they do not have indoor plumbing or something of the sort. Rather, they liken them to animals *precisely* to disavow *indigenous* values.

We do not and should not expect animals to act in accord with our own values. Although, of course, they often do; they help one another in a way that transcends taxonomical difference, they aid human beings as they live and die, they honor their closest relationships with a kind of moral partiality.[230] Nonetheless, we are unlikely to take any behavior of animals as a serious challenge to what we do. Although they participate in an ethos—even in *our* ethos—we do not often see their differences as aspirational. And things would likely be much worse if we behaved as nonhuman animals do, in a variety of contexts; from a long life with pets, I can attest that they do not see your food as your own, they simply see whether it's accessible, they do not empathize with a wealth of human needs such as the need for personal space or consent, and they will nip and bark at their young when they get annoying.

If our unwillingness to take nonhuman animals as possible moral examples is potentially condescending to them, as Willett argues, it is all the moreso condescending for our fellow human beings: a racist conception of the other's animality places her below the animal since, of course, the concept of animality itself underestimates animals.[231]

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[230] Willett *Interspecies Ethics* 131.
[231] Willett, *Interspecies Ethics*, 67.

The urgency with which colonists, for example, bestialize persons from different cultures comes from the fact that they have *obvious* cultural complexes, which might well challenge the supremacy of their own. A religion which fulfills many of the same roles as my own, a science which predicts the phenomena of the world as well as mine, a language which expresses the power and poetry of a new place better than mine: all of these produce a sense of unease in the colonialist, the slaver, and various other kinds of racist. Afterall, what is left to justify the replacement of indigenous intelligibility with her own? Since we ordinarily feel we do not have to trouble ourselves with right and wrong, as the animals conceive it, with the way they interpret the world, or with any other artifacts of their culture, it is easy to animalize those we wish to oppress and rid ourselves of such unease. That is to say, when we subordinate another by force, it is much easier to accomplish if we assume we need not trouble ourselves with her perspective on the world as well.

And thus, as the colonialist succeeds in averting her eyes from communitarian modes of ethical thinking and political being, so too does the prison guard who must elevate her own frail ego against those she beats. The colonist and the guard, the racist, the sexist, the dictator, etc., all avoid the truth of the flesh in order to enrich themselves and increase their dominion, at least for a time. That is, at least until the colonized, bound together in the soaring harmony of solidary action, come to her towering and glittering stolen city.

Willett here engages with the way an interspecies context altered the path of human evolution and social development. No doubt, there has been some mutual effect upon the development of humans and their nonhuman compatriots, which endures in the forms of life we currently have (and indeed consider "natural"). There is no human nature, outside the influences of the animal world. And, while the genome attests to the imprint human will and manipulation has made on a variety of species on this earth, it seems that the expansiveness and varieties of our ethical impulses certainly attest to their impact upon us. As children, we rapidly surpass our canine friends. They age to death while remaining toddlers. But, although we share no real horizon with them, although their emotions are constrained by an alien temporality, and although their disappointments and joys cannot really be replicated in us, we learn right away to feel for them. Human ethical impulses arise developmentally and, Willett demonstrates evolutionarily/historically, from our tender contact with these animal alterities. In this sense empathy can transcend compulsory, metaphoric thinking and leveling similitude.

> ...[the colonized intellectual] will discover the strength of village assemblies, the power of the people's commissions, and the extraordinary productiveness of neighborhood and section committee meetings. Personal interests are now the collective interest because in reality *everyone* will be discovered by the French legionnaires and consequently massacred or else *everyone* will be saved. In such a context, the "every man for himself" concept, the atheist's form of salvation, is prohibited.[232]

The prisoners at Attica would therefore not relent and relinquish control of the prison until *all* were safe from the viscousness, the *deadliness* of State reprisals—or at the very least until the State took the prison back by force, potentially punishing each and every one with an extrajudicial execution.[233]

The carceral institution is threatened by cross-racial solidarity, friendship, and kinship, because racism is a fundamental structural support for power and hegemony. We should not applaud the attitudes reflected here, which regard homosexuality as shameful but rather note that these attitudes themselves similar structural supports of this same hegemony—in fact, they are here *used* as such, to maintain the oppressive racist, heterosexist paradigm which enslaves and settles these prisoners so near their own deaths.

> The administration creates a racial problem in all of these concentration camps. They create the racial problem because if a white and a black have a relationship such as

[232] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 12.
[233] Due to the oppressive nature of State-violence, of course, Attica was overtaken by force. The State initiated bedlam and the wholesale destruction of human life, rather than grant any immunity. This of course protected a status quo of violence, as do all monumental acts of oppressive force. But so frail is the system that it cannot withstand even the momentary acknowledgement of the captives' humanity.

> friends, being buddies, they gonna put it in a derogatory manner or degenerate manner or in some type of form where that relationship will no longer exist.[234]

Such aversions, however we assess them in terms of their bigotry, were nonetheless somewhat effective in trampling down any solidarity that crossed racial divisions, and their deployment by institutional officials betrays a clear motive and a clear understanding of the world-transformative power of such an *agape solidarity*. They knew to destroy that solidarity instituted by the flesh, set up in us at the level of the organism. When solidarity is an impulse of the flesh of the world, rather than the mere coherence of a group, it has the power to *redefine groups,* and with that power it imperils the stratified scaffold of institutional hegemony. After all, white prisoners in Attica could—at least to some degree—look forward to a more comfortable life upon release than their Black counterparts; they could more or less rejoin the ranks of their skin-privilege. For the white prisoner to join in solidarity with Black prisoners—who would upon their release remain to some degree *homo sacer*, excluded, killable—is crucially to give up this release into the fold of a group more beneficial to him. The white prisoner subverts the toxic, the *deadly*, order of groups ordained by hegemonic power, and in solidarity *sacrifices* himself, lowers himself to the killable ranks. And this is why power—even in the lowly form of the guards—must fight agape solidarity, even while it might leave intact various solitary group-bonds in the forms of white and Black gangs, families, etc. As we shall see when we evaluate our second case-study from Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* solidarity has the power to invent peoples. This is a radical power with real transformative potential.

> In prison we're all discriminated against because we're prisoners. But there are certain groups that are discriminated against more. For instance the blacks are discriminated

[234] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 25.

> against more because of the official racism. They are discriminated against more. But the whites are discriminated against too... They hate when you mix...Divide and conquer. And they stand on top and laugh.[235]

Indeed, solitary diversity and diffusion are such major threats to power that the very techniques used to divide inmates from one another—in spite of their shared interests—are used also to "brainwash the public," according to inmate Rosenburg, whose legal documents were seized by prison authorities when he was found helping other inmates.[236] Prison administrators sought to frustrate any attempts at emancipation these men sought through studying the law. This is because their emancipation from Attica might allow them to join with the ranks of "human beings" (those, in this case, outside prison walls). Likewise, the carceral state institutes and and disseminates a *theory of criminality*—through which transgression and nature, norm and being, are fused. The "criminal" is dehumanized as a matter ontological truth, because her, nature, her *being*—like the being of all the damned—is coextensive with the supposed "reasons" for her exile.

Thus, as we can derive from Rosenburg's observations here, the incarcerated are doubly alienated from the outside world, from the world of self-actualization and fecund communal futurity, and from those others who might otherwise join them in their fight against the abuses of the carceral state by likewise refusing to eat. In order for oppressive power to obtain, it must disavow the natural, immediate and emanent bond of the flesh between those who suffer at its hands and those who in their arbitrary privilege might amplify the urgency of their call for freedom. The public, Rosenburg says, is brainwashed to take no interest in the incarcerated. But

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[235] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 26.
[236] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 26.

the sinews that do *in fact* bind the free public to the moving solidary flesh of these men nonetheless remained. Guenther notes that the public has, in other situations, undergone hunger strikes alongside those confined. Inchoate in the *very ideas* of advocacy and allyship, and of solidarity with those who suffer the hardships we do not is the possibility that the flesh might awaken tingling with the noise of disused nerves, from the fiction, the mythic othering, which has like an anesthetic allowed it to endure the oppression and suffering of its members.

> People outside should awaken themselves to the facts of what are going on now in our system, in our country. People have to unite. There must be unity. In prison we have unity. We have unity in Attica. There's strong unity and solidarity. They can not stop that anymore. No matter what they do, they can not break our unity or solidarity.[237]

This anesthesia, which inures me to the others' suffering accounts for much oppression, and for the infinite facets and manifestations of our daily complicity in oppressive structures.

§ III: Sharing a Dying Body

> I just live… I whisper to the great majority: To the Almighty dead, into whose pale approaching faces I stand and stare… Teach living men to jeer at this last civilization which seeks to build heaven on Want and Ill of most men and vainly builds on color and hair rather than on decency of hand and heart…Our dreams seek Heaven, our deeds plumb Hell.[238]

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[237]Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 30.

[238] W.E.B DuBois, *A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century,* quoted by Lewis Gordon in "Du Bois's Humanistic Philosophy." 267

On August 27, 1971 the hundreds of men confined to Attica maximum security prison underwent a hunger strike, which left only thirteen men at breakfast and only seven at lunch. The men refused their somatic needs in order to mourn and to draw attention to the death of activist George Jackson, who had died six days prior in a violent attempt to escape San Quentin prison. But what can possibly be accomplished as far as the dead man's plight and cause in the hunger of these bodies, locked away in another facility? In what sense can their hunger be *for* something, *for* anything at all? How can my privation and pain be *given over* to a *dead man*? And in what sense does his cause survive him?

We will remember that, "to a certain extent, bereavement may thus be regarded as analogous to a bodily mutilation or even amputation." Attica's prisoners gave no nourishment to bodies that had been mutilated by the death of the comrade.[239] The full effects of this mutilation would not dawn on them for years, and would do so periodically. The events which followed the hunger strike meant for them that their lives would be punctuated with the *experience* of the other's death: as an "I can," an intentional thrust into the world—even if this thrust was, for Jackson, forever frustrated.

> We only understand the absence or the death of a friend in the moment in which we expect a response from him and feel....that there will no longer be one.[240]

This mourning is a recurrent and *lived* site of our devitalization, of the devitalization each of us suffer merely for having-loved, for having been in a community which made for us a world of

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[239] Thomas Fuchs, "Presence in absence. The ambiguous phenomenology of grief" 2017 (Published online: 11 April 2017 # Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2017). pp. 46.
[240] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald A. Landes *trans*. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 82-83.

sense and a supporting stratum of faith. But, Merleau-Ponty reminds us, embracing our loss through genuine mourning, confronting absence and impossibility as such, these attitudes require a period of denial, wherein we project into what is lost. We take up our dismembered limb and strike out with it, according to Merleau-Ponty, because we have not yet accepted that our devitalized body now forever incorporates an absence.

> At first we avoid asking the question in order not to have to perceive this silence and we turn away from regions of our life where we could encounter this nothingness, but this is to say that we discern them. The anosognosic patient likewise puts his paralyzed arm out of play in order not to have to sense its degeneration, but this is to say that he has a preconscious knowledge of it.[241]

This is perhaps obviously Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reformulation of *denial*, which is a familiar concept in the psychology of grief. I think, however, that this concept presupposes the closed and individual nature of a death, inherited from Heidegger. Such a presupposition is common but does not hold up to the scrutiny of our previous reflections on mourning, the vitality of the dead in the flesh of the world and in each of our experiences, nor does it mesh with the foregoing analysis of why solidary dying-*for* is possible. In short, this phase of mourning can only be called "denial" if the truth of the matter is that the dead *leave us*. There is nothing delusional or otherwise pathological in *merely* continuing to perceive the dead, if they remain among us in any meaningful sense. Of course some things we may be perceiving them to do—tarrying about the world—that are certainly impossible and as such constitute serious

[241] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald A. Landes *trans*. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 82-83.

misperceptions and even delusions. But to say that we *feel* the dead, that they continue to move us, and that they are reflected in our acts after they've passed—even to say to some degree that our acts are theirs—these are not delusions. We might hear their voices. It is not obvious that there is anything pathological or para-pathological—that there is anything to be transcended, treated, or remediated—in embodied, sensory, and normative communion with the dead.

In Attica, sharing hunger was a means of overcoming the boundaries prison officials had placed between the imprisoned. Mutual privation and suffering—the denial of the *vital* soma—allowed bonds severed through authoritarian violence, racist and homophobic sanction, and the suppression of speech and information to heal. Only seven men were willing to eat.

But, why food? Why do prisoners so frequently resort to sharing *hunger* in particular? Of course, there are mere practical considerations: there is little an imprisoned person has to leverage against power and authority. Indeed, in most ways the incarcerated have only their bodies—as the organismal, mortal, cite of State responsibility and as an instrument of labor on behalf of the State—to leverage against their captors. As such, the incarcerated may pose a threat to power either by the slowing or stilling of their bodies' labor, or by the threat of their bodies' literal destruction; the starvations deaths of prisoners *en masse*, would certainly pose a major problem for carceral institutions, and reveal their inhumanity. This is certainly why hunger strikes are so frequently met with torturous forced feeding; as Fanon reminds us, the more likely some act is to liberate the oppressed and garner them esteem outside their ranks, the more violently and spectacularly oppressive force crushes it.

But, beyond these practical considerations, the shared nature of the body, of struggle, and of the proximity of death our analysis has thus far laid bare might well explain the particular potency of shared hunger in solidary contexts. That is to say that the oppressed, breathing as she

does the air of her own tomb, of the tombs of all her people borrows strength from her own corpse. She is capable of depriving herself of those things which sustain life because she has been for her entire life devitalized. The constant threat of eradication places her near enough to her death to seize its power, and to wield it: as the incomparable asceticism of the bodiless, the blessed martyrs' willingness die, an almost supernatural selflessness. In sharing hunger, prisoners resurrect that which the "justice" system has entombed as a terrifying mortal power:

> ...the George Jackson Memorial. They started moving people from one block to another block cause that really came out boss. People really showed solidarity. We had complete silence in the mess hall. We decided that we were going to fast that day and we were going to wear black armbands. We had about a 90% turnout. Only a few people ate, nobody talked and everyone wore black armbands.[242]

This incredible demonstration of unity meant that the guards tried again to break people up and move them between cell-blocks, and root out the communicative source of any organizing.[243] But we should here again notice that the guards are running opposition to a kind of *mourning* which is not sanctioned by power and its culture. George Jackson was a man who wove in and out of institutions throughout his life. He was convicted of, and according to his own autobiography committed many "crimes," he found himself "antisocial," and did not feel in

[242] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 4.
[243] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 4.

many capacities much of a sense of belonging, outside the solidary relations fostered at the limits of culture and society.[244]

This liminal being had, to the detriment of his own beating heart and living body, gained some attention as an activist. He was killed, but the State hardly treated it as murder. His liminality had always-already marked him killable. Power could not tolerate the incarcerated men of Attica elevating him to the level of a *sacrifice*. Power could not sanction that is, their taking back the meaning of his death—of *prisoners'* deaths, their own deaths.

Jackson, the captives of Attica surmised, had died-*for* them, and thus he was part of a freer future they would continue to fight for with him. The dead man remained on their horizon:

> The amputee senses his leg, as I can sense vividly the existence of a friend who is, nevertheless, not here before my eyes. He has not lost his leg because he continues to allow for it, just as Proust can certainly recognize the death of his grandmother without yet losing her to the extent that he keeps her on the horizon of his life.[245]

George Jackson's incarceration began with a similar, solidary, sacrifice: and with it, enduring loss. His brother, Jonathan, died trying to free him from prison. Of the armed raid upon the courtroom wherein this seventeen-year-old boy risked and indeed lost his life for the others George said, "He was free for a while. I guess that's more than most of us can expect."[246] Jonathan was not only "free" insofar as he behaved violently, uninhibited momentarily by law or by order—this is, after all, nothing like the freedom Jackson or the Black Panther Party had in

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[244] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann).
[245] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald A. Landes *trans*. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 83.
[246] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann), 3.

mind and is at most a pale and insidious caricature of the demands of many revolutionary groups. Rather, Jonathan was free because he was able for a moment to abandon himself fully to a future wherein the others were free. He was able to fully diffuse his self-interest into the interest of his kin, his friends, and especially of his *people*—a people who have not yet, in the history of their oppression in this country been able to realize the fecund possibility of their genuine and actualized freedom. This freedom has yet to come.

Jonathan died in a truly futural and hopeful bodily intentionality which makes him a denizen of the free horizon—vibrant there, even in death—he lived in his bother's work from prison, in their associates' work in politics, the world, the academy, and indeed in their work overtaking the Attica prison. A meaningful death can vitalize us, as we are taken up in the bodies of the living. [247]

The hunger of the Attica prisoner's bodies was accompanied also by utter silence. Air so still in an environment like a prison could not have been anything but eerie, surreal. They sang only the rests, but there are many tones and shades of silence and theirs was the somber shade of mourning, of having lost a possible liberator, of having seen where a deep avarice and ambition for one's own freedom might get you. One torch beyond them, one that had shined so brightly, could not dispel the dark. Refusing voice and body is, of course, one way of refusing the master your work and compliance. But it is also a way of refusing yourself, of mortifying yourself for the moment. In concert, these men embraced a grave like stillness, embraced their proximity to their own deaths, and lived-*for* the dead other in their midst—by dying-*to* the everyday. Inchoate in this presence of the dead, and of *their deaths* to the oppressed is the possibility of their liberation, of a kind of exorcism. These hungry men will resurrect and nourish their bodies.

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[247] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann), 3.

These silent men are only singing the rests that make up a song. They took over their prison, incarcerated their captors, and battled power for about a month, all the while exemplifying the courage, mortality, and mortifying risk required of solidary actors.

> They would break classes up, but, we were persistent. We would get back out there and do it again. Especially with the law. They'd overlook the other subjects, but they didn't want you helping nobody with his law. You know, you're sup-posed to get yourself out of this situation. You can't help no one else.[248]

There is something shockingly cruel in the expectation that each inmate should be solely responsible for his own liberation. The precarceral habits of each inmate will always be unique. With these habits vary his degree of education, mental acuity, and possession of whatever background knowledge will be necessary for him to understand his own appeal, to develop realistic expectations and a viable path forward. As is the case anywhere, the diversity of human experiences—and human pasts—makes each of us better suited to some tasks than to others, and there are a good many of us, in any situation, who are ill-suited to thinking through our own legal defense, to avoiding confirmation bias and wishful thinking on the way to reasoning out our own appeal, etc.. Given the structural oppression and violence that has fed the U.S. prison system at least since the abolition of slavery, it is safe to assume that some of those confined to Attica were—and likely still are—largely from backgrounds that did not and do not provide them educational opportunities adequate to the task of liberating them from Attica. The deep and indeed ironic cruelty of Attica's guards around the time of the rebellion is, therefore, that those

[248] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 6.

who most need help in order to seek their liberation—those incarcerated in part because they have been denied those things which might have kept them free—were systematically and methodically denied this help, even when this help came from within their own ranks.

…Or, perhaps*, especially* if it came from within their own ranks. After all, no lawyer would encourage the kind of liberatory activity these prisoners undertook. And, should a public defender help me escape my confinement, it would be the effect of a contract between us, of the nature of her job, and of the security of her employment. I might be grateful to her, but am unlikely to sacrifice very much for her, or even to pursue any kind of friendship with her upon my release. In other words, the lawyer would neither elicit nor encourage in me any trace of the solidary bond. The lawyer, in fact, encourages me to focus on my own case, on my own behavior—even sometimes to the point of betraying the others (arguing my behavior has been exemplary, by contrast to theirs)—in order to attain my *own* freedom. In other words, as an agent of the status quo, my lawyer can benefit *me* without forcing the prisons to change, and without liberating anyone else. And, indeed, this is what she does. What she does relies on the stability of the laws, and of structures of power for its very coherence. The fact that we are joined to one another through mutual obligation, that the body opens for us the possibility of projecting into the other's horizons and in so doing means we owe it to her to take risks on her behalf—that the body makes the freedom of the other coextensive with my own freedom—this is something power cannot abide. The most effective remedy against our radical connection to one another is the physical amputation accomplished here.

The creation of homos sacer could really be seen as the elemental version of this amputation. Without it, societies as we know them would not exist, and any discussion of secondary social phenomena would look quite different were we not perched upon the

fundamental drawing of boundaries and margins—bounding the livable life from living death, the viable body from the walking corpse, the murderable and the mournable from bare life. Perhaps such a founding wouldn't lead to any discussion of prisons, at all. The logic of such a world would not be, after all, our separation and amputation. Our current order and coherence—perhaps, really, our everyday ontology—comes at a steep cost: severance from what is innately attached (the other, no matter how abject, suffering, afflicted, or incoherent). Certainly, the prison system boasts that it maintains order, by enchaining embodied chaos within its walls.

We see in Fanon that the colony likewise boasts both the *creatio*n of order—as an export it has brought with it from remote but unwaiveringly ordered "civilization"—and its maintenance in the control, quarantine, isolation and enslavement of native peoples (whom it argues are chaos-wearing-flesh, beasts who must be given a wilderness and driven to it). The foundational scission between the intelligible and the wilderness, between humanity and beasts, is also between those persons who might live within an intelligible order, contribute to it, and *mean* something within its history: and those who cannot even mean something *in death* to their contemporaries. And, indeed, Fanon demonstrates that the colonized subject (like the inmate), is denied a meaningful death.

> Each prevents his neighbor from seeing the national enemy. And when exhausted after a sixteen-hour day of hard work the colonized subject collapses on his mat and the child on the other side of the canvas partition ties and prevents him from keeping, it just also happens it's a little Algerian. When he goes to beg for a little semolina or a little oil fro the shopkeeper to whim he already owes several hundred francs and his request is turned down, he is overwhelmed by an immense hatred and desire to kill—and the shopkeeper happens to be an Algerian. When, after weeks of keeping a low profile, he

> finds himself cornered on day by the *kaid*, demanding "his taxes," e is not even allowed the opportunity to direct his hatred against the European administrator; before him stands the *kaid* who excites his hatred—and he happens to be an Algerian.[249]

Devitalization robs the oppressed of a truly *living* shared flesh. Instead each regards it as a benefit to kill the other, and therefore to harm that intercorporeal and shared body in which she is given over—the body in which she harbors in her own, as extimate yet fundamental, as the foreign pulse of absolutely vital electricity which courses through her own nerves and lights up her own eyes. Mournability is not merely incomprehensible within the eyes of a hegemonic overseer who estimates the value of oppressed life as less than her own (as equal with, or less than, the value of the life that once animated the beasts she makes her food). That is to say, the perspective of active, oppressive, dehumanization is not the only devitalization the grips the oppressed within the colonial/oppressive intelligibility. Devitalization as unmournability convinces the oppressed of her own and her countrypersons' *killabilities* as well. The deathliness of the oppressed sanctions murder, gives rise to it as desire, as self-preserving.

Mourning within the colonized zone is always-already rendered a political and subversive act within the fundamental devitalization of the colonial context. This act is, as we see in Attica the usurpation of the power to draw death near to the oppressed. It becomes the power to embrace death. And indeed this power is at the very least the power to disrupt, derail, and lead away from an order which maintains its lawful rigidity with the threat of death into an unintelligibility burgeoning with possible meanings. Mourning reclaims the meaningful death

[249] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 231.

from the oppressor, reasserting the intelligible value of "bare-lives," and indeed demonstrating that the intelligible has room for them, that they do not belong in the wilderness of privation and suffering the white iconoclast, burner of their towns and homes, leaves to them. For the frail system of values—the papier mache world of white hegemony and shining mineral fetishes—to grasp the world as strongly as it does, the death of the liminal subject, of the subaltern, must remain—like the deaths of *wild t*hings—unmournable, insensible.

In particular, when mourning reveals our deep connections to one another, it undermines so many modern, liberal ideologies. Delusions of independence, various other mystical credos that wound us and leave us incomplete—and weaken us to be conquered—do not hold up well, when we see that the other constitutes us even *in spite* of the distance power foists upon us. When solidarity makes possible radical and risky mourning, disregarding the limits of race, educational level, class, and even carceral status—as it did in Attica—power fails with its most entrenched and universal social forces to sever one body from the other: to obfuscate, that is, that we began belonging-to one another.

And this is why power sees any outward evidence of the most primordial fact of belonging-to as a direct (and it can't help but posit intentional) threat. It posits as an absolute value—and even as *law*—individual accomplishment and achievement, demotivating and even violently sanctioning collaboration and collective actualization, *because* the odds of liberation through individual and solitary activity are worse, the chances of failure greater. Liberation is a challenge to all power but that solidary power generated in the struggle to liberate all persons.

§IV. The Solidary Body: A Body-Dispersed and *Working*

> What has been banned is delivered over to its own separateness and, at the same time, consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons it—at once excluded and included, removed and at the same time captured.[250]

The Attica prison riot begins in the dispersal of the body in brotherhood and belonging. The hunger of one invades the other, and might seep as well outside the walls.[251] Shared suffering is here *chosen* as a means to affect a change, that is to do solidary work.[252] Hunger—which is perhaps one of the first, most primordial, causes of death, locked in our shared species-history—did more than bind the living prisoners of Attica to one another, in one laboring solidary body. Hunger also presenced the missed, the absent, dead to the living: bore the pall as it were, to the community of mourning.

The rebellion's first pulse is indeed a morbid silence, its first signs of life funerary. These men had no doubt weathered extreme privation, at the hands of power and had attempted to organize themselves against it in various ways—through the productive and creative power of *education* for example. But such attempts at solidarity were always frustrated: whether through the destruction of books and the isolation of prisoner-teachers, or in the dissolution of the pedagogical bond into the solvent of default racism and interracial mistrust that so characterized life outside the penitentiary. Isolation and segregation worked here, for quite some time, to muffle demands for change, to distract the incarcerated from their shared and more meaningful struggle, and to render impossible the solidarity necessary to fight that fight. This is in no small

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[250] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995). 65.

[251] See Maclaren, "Intimacy as Transgression and the Problem of Freedom," 27.

[252] This solidary force, which allows each man to work through the other and vice versa, has a kind of intentionality (which we will explore in greater detail in this section). In this case, *justice* orients the suffering, communal, body and its labors to its tasks, *itself*, and the world. But more on the schemata of shared, solidary, bodies later.

part because the bodily and intellectual severance of one body from the other lends doubt of belonging-*to*, of the *ur* ethical debt. And, where we doubt that we share anything with others, where we doubt we *owe* them anything, we can justify quite easily avoiding risk for their sake. Where we doubt we belong-*to* them, we may even feel they are inferior, that *their* suffering can be justified by *our* comfort: such a disavowal of our connections with one another is readily to be seen in racial, imperial, and class bigotries to name only a few.

It is the presence of a slain Black activist, George Jackson, dead within the walls of another prison, which finally overcomes the weapons of power—that is the severance of body from body, of race from race, and of the person from her people—and launches the vital, indeed *muscular* font of solidary action known as the Attica prison rebellion. A composite body, imbued with and running on blood from every continent, grabbed hold of the Attica prison, subverted the normal operation of power, and sang on a single vocal fold the demands of the many: sang, that is, the harmony of solidarity. But why does mourning Jackson's death lead to such solidary action? Why is this pursuit of justice entwined with *death*?

First and foremost, we have to consider alternatives which seem not too likely to harm anyone, which do not necessitate murder or wounding. These would be somewhat commonsense alternatives, like legislative action. There are various nonviolent, *legal*, means through which the incarcerated may appeal to *authority*, and none of these is (at least on its face) *inherently violent*, nor necessarily violence-causing in any obvious way. It is always, of course, possible that hierarchical power structures like prisons—which punish, isolate, and inhibit those already most vulnerable and deprived by society outside their walls—weave unwritten, illegal, or accidental and unintended consequences into such legal opportunities. Authorities may seek retribution against prisoners who make such an appeal, as an example of both an unwritten or illegal violent

consequence. Other prisoners may suffer, and therefore retaliate, as an unintended result of such an appeal as well. And any of these consequences seems more likely as a result of the fact that the extant apperati leave in tact and unquestioned the authority-*structure* in which the incarcerated are bound. This includes, importantly, the singular and solitary conception of the *individual* prisoner—as the *author* of his (criminal) deeds, and of his future freedom.

Through such means of appeal prisoners had made their needs known, long before the Attica rebellion, or Jacksons attempted escape. But legal means had not led to conditions of greater justice, or even to conditions of an acceptable degree of *humanity* for Attica's carceral body:

> They have promised us many things and they are giving us nothing except more of what we've already got: brutalization and murder inside this penitentiary.[253]

Trust is a minimum requirement of working together and therefore of solitary action. Legal means had managed to do nothing other than prove to the incarcerated that authority was incapable of *working* with them, that power could not take on the same goal of j*ustice*: does not share the same bodily intention, is not oriented to the same world. What power does is demonstrate the impossibility of trust with regard to its own workings: the fact that it depends for its very existence upon the continued oppression of the oppressed. This necessitates the creation of trust outside its reach, in a solidary counter-culture.

The power structure upon which the so-called justice system is built allows itself to be reached and utilized by the marginal individual, and has no ability to acknowledge or cope with

[253] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 1.

the activities or demands of groups. As we have seen, in fact, this is true to the extreme; both guards and and administrators cannot tolerate solidary relations, or even mundane friendships between inmates. Power attempts to alienate the oppressed from one another—by relegating them to social realities wherein they experience violence more immediately at the hands of their brethren, by breaking up families through the use of prison and confinement, by relegating each to various artificial wildernesses, wherein as Fanon notes even a baby, crying because she shares you plight, might pose a mortal threat. The evolutionary strain oppression affects leads ironically to often deadly atomization of the oppressed. It is only until they reunify that they might disrupt power:

> The entire incident that has erupted here at Attica is not a result of the dastardly bushwhacking of the two prisoners, Sept. 8, 1971, but of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administrative network of this prison throughout the year. We are men. We are not beasts and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such.[254]

We see here that the riot could never have been solely authored by individuals. Indeed, it is not only those who overtook the prison and captured its guards who stand culpable. The system that atomizes them (and will see each stand trial or die as individuals—in the Heideggerian sense), and with it the captured guards, fickle press, and stubborn state government, stand in mutual culpability. If it weren't for their ceaseless callousness and brutality, perhaps, the prisoners would have had little inspiration to depose them, even if only momentarily. Indeed the decision to overtake a prison can never belong to one person it doesn't even belong solely to the class of

[254] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 1.

the prisoners. Rather, incarceration itself can only come about if belonging-*to* the world and the human community is a condition of our birth. Incarceration as a punishment for aberrent behavior presupposes communion as the norm. Severance and amputation are enacted through incarceration.[255]

Indeed, this this true even for those marginalized through oppression, racism, and violence; after all the margins belong to the whole. The form cannot take shape without its margins, its "constitutive outside." In other words, a State apparatus—which is almost nothing considered apart from its policies, norms, and modes of enforcement—requires for its very existence the persecuted other, at least, that is, where said State's policies are persecutory. It is not by coincidence that Barkley mentions in the ranks of the marginalized "beasts." That is the beasts men beat and drive: the animal laborers upon whose backs modernity and its values were built.[256] When the margins of the shared and intelligible world are drawn, they are always teeming, vital, and only illusorily outside.

But this quote exemplifies belonging-*to* in what I would call its "special" solidary oscillation, as well. Solidarity is a phenomenon made possible because the walls between self and other are more porous than rationalist accounts would suggest. Solidarity should therefore place out of play many of our egoist modern intuitions.[257] As we saw in the first chapter,

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[256] Thomas Andrews, *Killing For Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 129-135.

At the margins of all human industry are animal counterparts, doing much of the labor. Coal mining and modern energy with it were made possible by the help of mules and the sacrifice of a good many birds, the friendship of mice.

Modern medical science and germ theory were sped along by our urban cohabitation with working animals. Horses and mules used as modes of conveyance left their traces in the streets, to be carried by flies and dresses into homes and shops. Flies and horses gave us our first glimpse of the motility of disease.

[257] See C. Arnsperger and Y. Varoufakis, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity," in *Erkenntnis* Vol. 59, No. 2 (2003). 181.

belonging-*to i*s a fundamental condition of human embodiment, from which aberrations like incarceration can even be conceived aberrations (punishments) at all. This means, of course, that it is a necessary fundament of all discrete communal proximities and phenomena of togetherness we might observe in the world, including solidarity. The goal is, therefore, to excavate the solidary movement, its testimonies and theoretical works, to see what makes solidarity just what it is. Here, Barkley importantly distributes the responsibility for discrete body-movements and the intent and planning behind them, amongst all the striking prisoners; the extension and pronation of one man's limb is the same as the extensions and pronations of all the others. And with this diffusion of embodied acts comes of course the diffusion of responsibility, the infusion of guilt and deadly risk into each.

The general principle of indistinction between persons and bodies, which I have called belonging-*to*, demonstrates a primordial ethical debt. But the special characters of love and of solidarity, imply an even greater debt, an even deeper sense of belonging.[258] What one owes the other in the communion of solidarity is *the willingness to risk much*. This just so happens to include loyalty, since being disloyal would be to break with the other in order to benefit oneself, to reduce individual risk.

This principle of indistinction accounts also for the global reach and scope of solidary movements. Fanon repeatedly notes the ability of solidarity to cross the vast expanses of the Earth to involve one oppressed or colonized people in the plight of another, one liberated people in the ongoing liberation of another, etc.. Guenther also puzzles over the phenomenon's capacity to permeate and even perforate social boundaries of identity, organizational belonging (gang affiliation) and experience. Even the Attica rebellion was, in part, a reaction to the sudden and

[258] This is why we find this analysis of *belonging itself* needful.

violent absence of one who had never physically been within its walls.[259] If belonging-to is coextensive with a primordial ethical debt to *all others*, it is not surprising that its special solidary instantiations give rise to expansive and diffuse ethical communities:

> The entire prison populace, that means each and everyone of us here, have set forth to change forever the ruthless brutalization and disregard for the lives of the prisoners here and throughout the United States.[260]

What perhaps remains surprising, however, is the fact that the global community for whom the solidary actor acts maintains each of its members in the almost unmatched proximity of the extended body: through which one may take on the pain and punishment of another and die-*for* her. No matter how large, the genuine solidary group—where willingness to risk, to lose, to suffer and sometimes even to die are fundamental—remains a flesh of unsurpassed and intense love. Many in Attica died, in the hopes that they might improve the horizons of other captives.

Both Shelby and Guenther attempt to make sense of this capacity of solidarity, through which it seems to stretch and extend the body and to allow the solidary acts of one ripple out to each solidary-other, heedless of normal social boundaries and of geographic distance.[261]

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[259] See Maclaren, "Intimacy as Transgression and the Problem of Freedom," 27.

Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 26.

[261] Guenther Hunger-Strike

Guenther focuses on supposed boundaries between persons, which persist in the face of our various social media and other technologies of proximity, such as race and gang affiliation. These boundaries persist precisely because they are generators of *distance*, which have always successfully confronted and undermined real world geographical and even phenomenological proximities. Fanon repeatedly reminds us that racism has such an integral role in the maintenance of imperialism and of the colony, where geographical proximity and a shared way of life might otherwise confuse the colony's strict social hierarchies. In other words, persons in proximity might more naturally come to form communities than hegemony. Group belonging at its various, individuated, and particular oscillations,

This is indeed a special power of solidarity, not necessarily replicated in other social phenomena. As Fanon noted, during the Algerian conflict and its attendant political solidarity, "an Algerian cannot be really Algerian if he does not feel in his innermost self the indescribably horrible drama that is unfolding in Rhodesia or in Angola."[262]

Not even interpersonal phenomena like romantic love—which do nonetheless often call upon us to sacrifice—stretch the body nearly so far, even if all social phenomena extend the body in its intentions and reflexes, etc.. Neither does romantic love render absurd the very idea that individual acts belong to individual agents. This is of course not surprising, the scope of eros is almost analytically less than that of solidarity. It is also more particular. Eros condenses around the features of some particular beloved (even if through our lives there are many), settles into her voice, imbues almost too much of what she does and thinks with significance. Eros does not flow forward, heedless of the beloved's attributes, or of her place within our greater social existence. It can avoid only some of the barriers solidarity easily overcomes.

But the fact that its global and universal reach distinguishes solidarity from many other social phenomena does not make it necessarily so puzzling. Flesh extended and conjoined through work, and a shared futural goal is not really such a new or counterintuitive concept. We might all recall the extension and power of the labor body, as explicated by Marx, for instance. Here the force of shared work and the soil of shared material conditions stitch one worker to the other, over countless hours. Indeed this conjunction of man-to-man, flesh-to-flesh is the obvious prelude to labor-union solidary logic. The shared goal becomes better working conditions, longer lives, and better lives, supplanting for a time the manufacturing product, or the rare-earth-

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fights the gravity of bodily belonging-*to*, in real-world situations (We have said: solidarity, friendship, family, etc. are *particular* relations, made possible by belonging-*to*, but doing much more than merely expressing fleshly agapic givenness-over-via-debt).

[262] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 634.

mineral. Human beings conjoined through their work are in no small way conjoined through their very conditions of possibility—by that which sustains them and their families.[263] Joined together, that is, through a *shared death*, which lurks in every hour worked, which may be summoned without warning by management. It is no surprise that some Colorado miners were willing to snowshoe through hundreds of miles of the Rocky Mountains in order to risk their own toxic or firey deaths: merely to retrieve their comrades' bodies.[264]

The statement provided collectively by Attica's incarcerated refers to the U.S. carceral state as a "situation that threatens the lives of not only us, but each and every one of you as well."[265] The quote calls us to imagine how easily we might end up incarcerated, and thus how easily we might be subjected to the sadism of state power. It calls up our empathy and asks us whether we genuinely desire to live at the very edge of this kind of chasm: if we want our everyday life to be held stable and reliable by the ever-present threat of this kind of reprisal. After all, we are all capable of slipping up—or of being falsely accused—and therefore of being amputated, torn from our communities of support, exploited and brutalized in such institutions.[266] But it does more than merely ask for a comradely and empathetic imagination. It points beyond affective speculation to something very *real*: to the constitution of the real under which so many phenomenologies have been forged. That the power which makes the possible carceral state constitutes its subjects by banishing others. It constitutes these others, also, through their banishment. It constitutes and fortifies *itself* through their banishment.

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[263] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.
[264] Thomas Andrews, *Killing For Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 150.
[265] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 3.
[266] Of course, statistics show that these "possibilities" in the broadest sense of the word are more *likely* to befall persons of color (specifically Black and Hispanic persons), in spite of their perpetrating crimes with the same frequency as their white counterparts.

This kind of power severs us from others who should be here with us. The carceral logic that places one person within prison walls and leaves another outside structures our subjectivity—regardless of which side of these walls we find ourselves on. Our decisions are always made within a calculus that takes the relative harshness, brutality, and permanence of punishments into account. The Attica strikers therefore recognized that power—especially in this punitive and controlling appendage—has the capacity to transform the world, to render incarcerated, to im-prison, to make of any body—of all bodies—a body under seizure and sanction.[267] Socially, we justify this severance as an amputation. In order to arrest the spread of some disease we remove this part of our shared body some disease. But the amputation can never be a clean cut; what is removed we need, is therefore never actually removed. And this ragged, torn, scar therefore putrifies. A kind of gangrene spreads from it. This is no cure.

> People outside should awaken themselves to the facts of what are going on now in our system, in our country. People have to unite. There must be unity. In prison we have unity. We have unity in Attica. There's strong unity and solidarity. They cannot stop that anymore. No matter what they do, they cannot break our unity or solidarity.[268]

This quotation implies a deep analysis of power, provided by someone living under its most muscular influences (anti-Black racism and incarceration). If *any* public institution tortures, deprives, and enslaves its citizens then the *public itself* is implicated. The country in which such violence occurs fundamentally nothing other than the power to subjugate. Even the "free, and law-abiding" are always-already subjugated, in such an arrangement. And, as these captives

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[267] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 2.

[268] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 30.

point out, our time outside prison walls can end, swiftly and arbitrarily. The method by which the carceral state supposedly preserves our freedom by protecting us from crime and "criminality" *undermines itself*. As a monument to the State's power to break its people, it is not surprising prisons don't make anyone freer

In it we also hear again that solidary call, which amplifies that ur-ethical-debt of belonging-*to* across the world. Indeed, I am responsible for anyone brutalized and beaten, "driven" like a "beast" within the walls of a prison, insofar as my life outside its walls is constituted by violence: insofar as we belong to one another, constitute one another, and are part of the flesh of the world. And there has always been something those of us outside could do. Perhaps I cannot single-handedly reform the prison-system, or undo any of the systemic oppression and violence I see around me daily. Perhaps I can't. But, I am not terribly justified in saying I can't. I have tried *nothing.* I have done *nothing.* I have instead thrived in my way off the state of the world, failing to acknowledge that the suffering of others is a cancer, slowly but surely degrading me in soul and body.

§V. Racist Amputation: Phantom Limbs Tingle With Life, Severed Limbs Decay

It should come as no surprise that the empirically racist prison system in this country affects this kind of severance. Nor should it be surprising that activists must wrest a meaningful death from its grip—even, indeed, if it means they "die trying," as one Attica activist said. Racism itself renders some persons deathlike, more mortal than others: less mournable because their untimely deaths have been engineered reliable, since the dawn of this particular social experiment[269].

[269] Cinda Firestone, *ATTICA*, (New York: Attica Films, 1973).

bell hooks repeatedly intimates the dissection of the raced body, by the raced body in her memoir *Bone Black*. In particular, this coming-to-oneself in parts is clear in her discussion of "good hair." hooks gives us a phenomenological reflection upon some single part of the body deemed worth the time, effort, and burns of a hot iron. She intimates knowledge of other women's desires—not merely a desire to be beautiful, but a desire to be *white* and with it to have so much more of the world—placed at the feet of a hot comb.[270] Even today, hair is classified by its texture. I know the number and letter of my curl, it dictates a daily routine. It is a kind of science where one's proximity to a kind of ideal—to white hair, to straight hair—is estimated, demands particular actions. One part—a *dead part*—of an entire body comes under extreme scrutiny, is mired in valuations: is the good, the bad.

> Here there is a being-shared-by-two, and the other person is no longer for me a simple behavior in my transcendental field, nor for that matter am I a simple behavior in his. We are for each other collaborators in perfect reciprocity; our perspectives slide into each other, we coexist through a single world...[271]

Within white supremacist ontology, we are aware—all of us—at an early age which ontic phenomena, at the level of mere individual phenotypes remove us from the taken-for-granted realm of the *who.*[272] And to be sure these phenotypes, as soon as we learn them are imbued with

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[270] bell hooks. *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996.) p. 91-93.
[271]Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald A. Landes *trans*. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 370.
[272] Yancy, George. *Look a White!,* ((Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012.) p. 22.

Yancy discusses the case of Carla, a young white girl who refused to have any bodily contact with a Black classmate because of stereotypes about the other child's race: stereotypes in which she need not have been instructed, but rather learned from the bodily movements of her parents, the ebbing and flowing of a racially coded world in which she had been mired all her life. The other child *looked* a particular way and this meant she *was* a particular way: the body of the other child was imbued with negative valuations, and the child need not know from where these valuations came, what purposes they serve, or their constructed nature, in order to terry within them and secure for

value, with meaning and significance. Merleau-Ponty describes the body as a habit body, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the parts of which are enmeshed with the world, with past and future. The functioning of this body, that is to say the body that we *are* deals in significance and meaning in its every function—from the flash of chemical lightening across a neuron or the twitch of a muscle fiber, to the obviously communicative folding of our faces into smiles or

lamentations. We do not apprehend the other by any other means than this body, engorged at the level of the cell with all the trappings of a world.[273] And our gaze is in no way neutral: it is forceful in the way it takes her up, into itself, as its part and completion, perceiving the other rennovates me, and makes me possible, and being apprehended is likewise meaningful in her body.[274] Bodily contact, like exposure to a world rife with other entities, is simultaneously an extreme vulnerability and a condition of our possibility.

> There is, between my consciousness and my body such as I live it, and between this phenomenal body and the other person's phenomenal body such as I see it from the outside, an internal relation that makes the other person appear as the completion of the system. [275]

The racial phenotype is apprehended as imbued with meaning and significance because it is the *only* way our bodies might apprehend anything: perception is imbued with significance and betrays a world. But it is the world we share that decides *which* meanings and *what* significance

herself a personhood purchased at the cost of another's humanity (attained by the other child's reduction to the *whats* of her body.)

[273] See Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception.* p. 368-340.
[274] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 370.
[275] See Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 368.

the factical differences between fleshly beings will have.[276]White supremacy as an ontologically fundamental structure of the world means that white supremacist values saturate the sepia pallette of human flesh. Racist values tell us how to navigate a racist world. But they do so first Merleau-Ponty talks about the ways significations and meanings may shift and change, even in so intimate a relation as a friendship, saying, "When I say I know someone or that I like him, I am aiming at an inexhaustible background beyond his qualities that indeed might one day shatter the image I adopt of him."

The problem of racist valuations is precisely that they prohibit the kind of intimacy whereby changes in signification and meaning might be made. The segregation of Fanon's colony, the clicking doors of Yancy's darkened streets, the criminalization of Ahmed's young body in her neighborhood—these are all means by which the body's inherent vulnerability, and *power* of the body to reach, and to *surpass and surprise* the other are diminished. And it certainly seems this perpetuates racism and white supremacy.

By telling the white body which others it must sever from itself, with whom it cannot risk a relation of co-constitution, the default-subject restricts itself in one of its most fundamental powers as a body, and in drawing its boundaries thus diminishes the possibilities of the other bodies. Consider, for instance, Yancy's discussion of car-doors locking as his black body passes them on the sidewalk. This *click*, which sets a rhythm for his walk—a tempo as he moves through *space*—designates the interior of the car as white, safe, impermeable to the black body. But the car is *meant* to be closed off to the outside world, and its being sealed in the sort of innate factical way it is—its being a closed space when it comes off the factory floor—is not

[276] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 379.

itself, could never itself *be* a racist affront. Rather, it is the white bodies within, denying the nature of their own bodies—denying their availability, their vulnerability, their power to touch and be touched—by *certain others* which shows itself as a racist affront.[277]

> Whites have cut themselves off from the possibility of fellow- ship, of expanding their identities, of reaping the rewards of being genuinely *touched* by black people... The clicks are white nation-building micro-events. In short, they imprison the human spirit and cripple the lives of whites.[278]

This is illustrative of the way that intersubjectivity morphs within white supremacist ontologies, removing some subjects from the spaces of interaction in order to replace them with their parts—to extricate them from the intersubjective flesh and render them mere phenotypical objects—analyzable with reference to a white norm. "What gets near is both shaped by what bodies do, and in turn affects what bodies can do."[279]In this way, raced relations dissect some bodies—render them as parts, things with dead pasts, removed from living subjectivity—and reify the white subject as whole, as default. Those rendered up in parts are in no way whole when they enter the intersubjective relation, because the whole that they are is, after all, the eternal challenge to white supremacy. Such a whole is a *subject* a *world*. Only the dead are usually dissected.

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[277] See Yancy, George. *Look A White!* p. 30.
[278] See Yancy, *Look A White!,* p. 32.
[279] Ahmed, Sara. "Phenomenology of Whiteness" in *Feminist Theory*. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2007.) p. 152.

> ...to "amputate" others from social circulation of affect, charging them instead with a surplus of burdensome, immobilizing, and even violent affective force.[280]

All this is to say that one way in which white supremacy categorically denies the equality of persons of color is to deny them their subjectivities by a process of metonymy, which takes some *part* as the whole of their identities. Parts of beings, isolated from their wholes, are dead: they decay. Another way in which subjects-of-color are denied entrance into an intelligibility which would otherwise *have* to heed their call for equality is their bad-faith identification with heritage. Again, the dead and inert stand in the place of a vibrant and living subject—those with

In *Living a Feminist Life*, Sarah Ahmed interprets such a moment when her body was singled out as marked by race, and immediately criminalized. Her body was deemed inappropriate to the space it occupied at the time, he presence a threat, the subject of suspicion. And this is because her attributes were *tells*, betrayed a more remote origin—or at least a non-European one—and therefore rendered her ineligible to dwell *among* white officers.

Such an experience again demonstrates the absolutely basic natures of these co-foundations of white supremacist ontology: the purification of the body by the purification of space. the denial of the prereflective intercorporeal power of the body in the service of values always already written upon the shared world. No social claims stand in for those with many. And, here, the *parts* to which the subject of color is reduced prompt the exhuming of her forebears.[281]

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[280] Whitney, Shiloh. "AFFECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND AFFECTIVE INJUSTICE: MERLEAU-PONTY AND FANON ON THE BODY SCHEMA AS A THEORY OF AFFECT," in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Volume 56, Issue 4 December 2018.* 496.
[281] See Yancy, Look a White!, p. 40-43.

The splitting at the metaphysical foundations of our social intelligibility—white supremacy as white or non-white—is therefore mirrored in fracturings, slicings, cuttings, schisms of everyday ontic phenomena—of bodies—which have a great amount of importance, are components of the factical pain of racialization in this environing intelligibility. The way some bodies break and disintegrate within this intelligibility while others remain whole also seems to pose a kind of challenge to the universalizing aims of phenomenology. If we trace back the embodied perceptual experience of a default subject—a subject who rarely if ever sees himself as parts—we might take as the barest, necessary conditions for embodied experience, conditions not present in the embodied perceptual experience of the fragmented subject, the dissected body.[282]

I come across those moments in my memory when I clutched the scalpel that had cut me. "What are you?" they ask. "Where are you from?" they threaten. What I saw then—my body as parts—is what the asker always-already saw… *A slight glint of desert in my skin, or more likely my eyes, or maybe they're asking about my hair*…My ancestors 'story. This calls to mind Yancy's discussion of witnessing black male stereotypes in film; and yet, I think that there is something of a distinction to be made here as well. While we both provide accounts of having ourselves returned to ourselves, after our absorption in the white gaze, as something impoverished, flattened, and without a meaningful connection to our own lives, we nonetheless describe different effects of the white gaze.

In part this is likely because the films Yancy discusses designed their characters with certain racial stereotypes in mind, and therefore present these instead of persons: as their

[282] Axelle Karera, "The Racial Epidermal Schema," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon *eds*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 291.

representatives, perhaps even as their core. The result is that the black male is given a dead *version of himself*, incapable of the kinds of projects and concerns that animate a life.

> If classical phenomenology is about 'motility', expressed in the hopefulness of the utterance 'I can', Fanon's phenomenology of the black body would be better described in terms of the bodily and social experience of restriction, uncertainty and blockage, or perhaps even in terms of the despair of the utterance 'I cannot'.[283]

"What are you?" There is no fact-of-the-matter-undergirding our interaction. In handing me the scalpel so that I might see myself as he does—as his immediate perception presents me to him—the white default subject has made me mutilate myself, has succeeded in getting me to answer him: in getting me to admit that I am thousands of years of echoing, dead, *whats*.

§V. Conclusion

The carceral state is a transformative power for the production of *homos sacer and it is a rather voracious one.*[284] *As such, it uses its own institutional walls and visible divisions to ensure those outside their privileged position in relation to its nihilating grip, but it actually guarantees them no such safety. This very structure, which "serve(s) no useful purpose to the people of America, but to those who would enslave and exploit the people of America," remains only because it maintains the illusion that safety and even thriving requires some dangerous human element be cast outside, cast aside, rendered unmournable, unliving, always-already necrotized and*

[283] Sara Ahmed, "Phenomenology of Whiteness," in *Feminist Theory*, vol. 8(2), (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2007). 161.
[284] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann), 19.

unbelonging flesh: that is, that the dangerous other be cast to the limits of human life as the "prisoner," so that the vital rhythm of human community might remain upon the air.

The solidary call—which transcended prison-walls and is meant to be read by those who take themselves as free—emphasizes the degree to which we are all implicated in one another's lives. Inchoate in these words is an acknowledgement of fleshly enmeshment which should ally each of us with each other, against power: yielding a countercultural coalition that includes even those least likely to be harmed by dominant values and practices. Indeed, there is no reason to assume these values and practices will not change, in order to make of different bodies, bodies-pre-necrotized, unkillable, unmournable, in the liminal corridors of the carceral state.

Today solidarity means, more than ever, that we must place our mundane mechanisms of meaning-making and truth sharing under scrutiny. As Agamben demonstrates, we have allowed the mere preservation of somatic, bioelectrical, material life to eclipse all other considerations in our conception of justice.[285] Nowhere is this more obvious than in the American carceral State, which preserves bare life at the expense of meaning-making, community, and the futural nature of the human being. Afterall, the enduring trauma that haunts those who have been incarcerated makes unjustly difficult the pursuit of most free horizons. The prisoners of Attica saw that this preservation of their bare lives was in fact something inflicted upon them, and therefore risked their deaths to rejoin the ebbing and flowing waters of human meaning, of human communion.

To suffer, be deprived, or die *for* the freedom of the others is make one's suffering, privation, and death meaningful. This is because such sacrifices do as Agamben argues all contemporary activism must; they insist that the relevant value of human life transcends its electrochemical impulses, the enclosure of its fluids within sinews and skin, the rhythm of its

[285] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), 76.

pulse, or the activity of its brain. "Humanitarian organizations…" he tells us are so hopelessly absorbed in the intelligibility of the contemporary world that they, "can only grasp human life in the figure of bare life, and therefore despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight."[286] Willingness to sacrifice-*for* the other, or to die-f*or* her demonstrates the eternal value of my death as mournable and even heroic, to be sure. But it also realizes the eternal, fecund, and communal value of my life as it fosters promise for generations and inscribes meaning upon the lives of those free people to come.

Solidarity is a recognition of our belonging-*to* one another and in one and the same world as one another, a recognition of mutual vulnerability to the elements, the dangers and threats such a world places upon the flesh. And this means in solidarity an embrace of the ethics of the flesh of the world is, therefore, not far behind: no one is free so long as any man is enslaved/incarcerated. It is upon this air of mutual vulnerability, co-constitution, and interdependence, that the solidary call sets itself to harmonize and resonate between us. The agapic ethics of the lived flesh bares itself as the only useful ethics, the second persons realize—and really this always means also to *feel*—our mutual implication in the world and its suffering… especially when persons aim to change that world for the better.

This is why these Attica inmates remind us that we are in danger, so that we might feel the quickening of our own pulse—due and indebted to the quickening of theirs—in response to the beast that in this moment feigns to protect us from them, while never removing its claws from our backs, our reflections from its eyes.

Such a connection between us renders absolutely anathema something like capital punishment, which aims at a meaningless death (and attributes to the life that preceded it only

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[286] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), 78.

the significance of a crime). Or to the even less ceremonious deaths that happen in prisons: deaths from fights, from abuse, from withheld medications and care. These deaths are neither anticipated nor watched. They are often mourned by very few. They are not the topic of perennial public debates. They haunt the corridors of the prison, ever present in its bricks and echoes. But if we listen, the death-rattle can never fully be contained and confined. If we listen, we get an opportunity to weep.

Chapter III, Part 2
The Violence of Oppressors vs. the Violence of Liberators: Considering the Bloodless Alternative is a Necessary Heartbreak

Interlude: Considering the Present World

I began writing this before the United States erupted in protests and riots over the 2020 killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. The supposed free-world is punctuated through and through by the constant and necessary struggle of its Black population for some modicum of respect, equality, and peace. I will not evaluate the so-called "riots," here, nor will I attempt to distinguish them from "legitimate protest" (I put these words in scare quotes because, while they are the only descriptors left to me by our language, they nonetheless carry with them the burden of an entire politics and ethos, which I am not really examining). Rather, I will note here that my analysis has to differentiate between acts of reprisal (even when they are motivated by absolutely legitimate grievance, and well-earned rage), and those that meaningfully *do the work* of liberation. At the time of this writing, we have yet to see whether these current "riots" are of the latter kind, or if the energy of oppression and outrage will be permanently wrested from the oppressed by usurpers. But if they do this work, they instantiate liberatory violence.

> Enlightened by violence, the people's consciousness rebels against any pacification. The demagogues, the opportunists and the magicians now have a difficult task. The praxis which pitched them into desperate man-to-man struggle has given the masses a ravenous taste for the tangible.[287]

Violence, according to Fanon, *enlightens* the oppressed. The colonized subject has come to regard the hegemony and suffering of colonized life as a genuine world. The colonized subject sees herself as always-already suffering, as *necessarily suffering.* For the subject so derided, so degraded, her suffering is the light through which all the world, its events (past and present), and its entities and others are rendered visible. Colonized suffering's is an intelligibility for her: both

[287] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 58.

theological and ontological, it consumes the past present and future, it totalizes the space around her, it begins to give her soul its character. Fanon regularly reminds us that dehumanization is not some mere ideology, contained within the colonist's immaterial mind, not necessarily touching the earth. Rather dehumanization is a *material* and highly effective process, which relegates the subject of abjection and oppression to the wilderness—to conditions of privation and daily brutality which can obscure even from her, her noble human nature and rightful space-temporal and existential horizons.

What violence does is to demonstrate that the hegemony under which the oppressed have lived is *contingent*. Suddenly enlightened, the promise of *freedom* as it is conceived in the existentialist tradition after Heidegger—as *possibility*—appears before the colonized subject. In finally striking out into the world with the frustrated muscularity of the body and the mind confined, the colonized subject sees glimmering on the horizon something more than her unmarked grave, her unmourned, deathless, death.

This is the only kind of force this analysis finds which can be *quelled by peace.* Retribution and vengeance are insatiable. And oppressive violence *by design* replicates itself eternally, battering anyone who resists or will resist.[288] I hope that the horizon burns with a different light than our cities do now; it is time that we were drawn finally to the other's light, to the spark of her creativity, and the fire of her passion, to the rays that cascade off her unfettered hands. We have for too long abided a horizon that is, always-already, *without her*. We have too

[288] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 654.

Indeed, peaceful resistance does nothing to end oppressive violence—which is often *monumental* in its response to any and all challenge. Rather peaceful resistance depends upon oppressive violence in a way violent resistance does not. Peaceful protest by design provokes the State to show itself in its constitutive violence. Liberatory violence simply attempts to annihilate the maintenance violence of the regime.

long abided a present makes her grave her habitation. After all, when the state takes aim at you (through a panoptic scope), you can be no more proximal to your death.

§I. Not Every Wound Comes from the Same Fall: Liberatory Violence is Different Than Banal Oppressive Violence and Mere Retribution

Sally Scholz's "Political Solidarity and Violent Resistance" makes the argument that communities which engage in or are fundamentally founded by (revolutionary) violence may not qualify as solidary communities. This casts many historical or mythic peoples and most revolutionary communities outside the purview of the solidary relation: a finding which should strike us as *at the very least* odd. After all, when we hear the word 'solidarity 'it almost immediately recalls peoples and nations, revolutionaries and subversives, and indeed genuine embodied, often brutal and bloody struggle.

I argue that while such an analysis is likely unavoidable in our particular political climate and given our particular political history (the veneration of non-violent resistance is a liberal dogma, it relies upon some serious misconceptions about solidarity. Chiefly that it is good in itself (I see the phenomenon as morally neutral). If we think solidarity is good, then our intuition will be not to attribute it to violent revolutionary groups since violence is to be avoided in itself.

But, if our analyses of solidarity cast labor agitator and strikers, the rebellious enslaved, the liberators of colonized nations, and those who materially challenge and strain, wear thin the carceral state or the labor of children, unjust war or police brutality out of the solidary relation, we should certainly be suspicious that we are wrong. After all what could solidarity be *at all* if it doesn't characterize the relationship between these historical comrades-in-arms, as they fought

and fight for the future we now inhabit? How can we pursue solidarity today, if we cannot find it even in what seem to be landmark exemplars of the depth and intensity of this bond?[289]

It is likely that reasons *outside* the solidary relation—a genuine consideration of its nature—are actually undergirding such an account: reasons to prefer non-violence which have little to do with *solidarity*, but which nonetheless require the attention of any revolutionary politics. That is to say: in what follows, I argue that the solidary bond can absolutely survive liberatory violence, in fact it might *demand* such violence. But this does not mean that non-violent means aren't preferable, or ideal: there is still something from an ethical and aesthetic standpoint that might cause us to reasonably lament even the most necessary acts of violence, but that reason has nothing to do with the nature of the solidary bond.[290]

> Regardless of the diversity of commitments between individual members and the power of the bond of the collective, political solidarity makes certain requirements on the participants. Political solidarity aims to effect social change. The content of the social movement will, of course, provide many of the specifics of these requirements, but the

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[289] There are, of course, also nonviolent landmarks of the solidary relationship. Martin Luther King is one such shining example and I do not mean to diminish his work or his thought. I *do* however acknowledge he and his antiracist coalition risked extreme bodily harm through the solidary relation, and that this very real risk culminated in the Dr.'s *death*.

I also acknowledge that the pacifism of these activist could only really mean something against a worldly tapestry of racist violence. For example, I am making no political statement at this very moment by not striking anyone as I write. Violence and risk are entwined with liberatory resistance, and even our pacifism is shot-through with the violence of oppression, the very real threat of bodily harm and death, and the urgent and palpable call to sacrifice much for others, for their free future.

[290] And, again, I do not argue that all instances of solidarity fight to instantiate good politics. Nor do I argue that solidarity is in itself some ethical or political good. It is an oscillation of that fundamental debt that *makes ethics possible at all*. There are plenty of bad people who share an indefatigable solidary spirit and plumb the depths of that bond.

There were Nazis who sacrificed themselves for their comrades, no doubt. And, in honoring their bond perhaps they even did the "right thing." But in forging that bond around hatred, fear, and a sense of their own superiority they committed unarguably "evil" act. The same might be said of the solidarity amongst gang members or members of cartels. The

> structure and purpose of political solidarity itself reveal the outlines of the moral relationships and obligations that will be filled within the context of a particular injustice.[291]

Scholz here argues that liberatory violence is incompatible with the duties entailed by the solidary relation. This is because, at the very least, the solidary relation requires that each member stand in opposition to the oppressor or, more specifically, uphold, defend, and embody *values* counter to her values. Violence, she argues, constitutes a *value* of the oppressor in a kind of two-fold way. First, it is a primary instrument of oppression, which affects the hierarchy that is its ultimate aim. But second, and perhaps more importantly, oppression is in fact almost co-extensive with violence. This is to say, oppression materializes and appears in the world as privation, loss, indignity, and suffering inflicted upon the oppressed: without these lived experiences we might well wonder if there is indeed any oppression at all. Thus, oppression *is* violence, and the oppressor—as-oppressor—upholds and embodies violence (even if unwittingly, as a beneficiary of this violence).

Scholz argues, therefore, that violence in the service of liberation is a morally blameworthy transgression of mutual and communal solidary commitments; the violent liberator takes on both the ideology and the praxis of the oppressor, and in so doing ceases to uphold *or to embody* a vision of the world sufficiently different from the one against which she fights.[292]

I am unconvinced. And, moving forward, I will consult a number of historical sources that reflect the nature of community and of the connections between people that lead to solidary and other devotional attitudes. Many if not most solidary movements which have in fact existed

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[291] Sally Scholz, "Political Solidarity and Violent Resistance," in *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Special issue: Solidarity, Carol Gould and Sally Scholz, *eds.* (2007), 40.
[292]Sally Scholz, "Political Solidarity and Violent Resistance," in *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Special issue: Solidarity, Carol Gould and Sally Scholz, *eds.* (2007), 43-44.

in the world are born of a kind of inaugural violence. Furthermore, even where nonviolent means are taken, it seems the solidary ethic is parasitic on oppressive violence: requiring members of the solidary community to risk the wrath of an unjust State, to be beaten in the streets, starved of force-fed, to propel the cause with the mortification of their bodies. While Scholz considers *Wretched of the Earth*, I think she but its argument justifying violence little justice. Because she sees only the undesirability of violence, she fails to see what Fanon quite convincingly argues: that there often is no liberated future for the oppressed without violence, but this unfortunate origin does not doom the oppressed to eternally recurring cycles of oppressive hegemony. Rather, Fanon argues throughout his work that there is in liberation a truly unique promise—however freedom comes. Oppressive violence maintains an unjustifiable status quo. Liberation—even as violence—promises a *new free world*, comprised of new peoples, and inhabited by new subjects.

I think it is important that we contend with Scholz's pacifistic view. This is important because of the role I have given mortality in the solidary relation: thus far, primarily as dying-*for.* Scholz's analysis, like so many that advocate for non-violent political resistance leaves open a place for the martyrdom inchoate in our shared flesh. Indeed, much of what makes non-violent resistance so admirable is the palpable, nearly measurable, willingness of political actors to put themselves in harm's way—and remain there—in order to change the world. Her analysis also leaves open the possibility that violence in self-defense or for the defense of others is at the very least unavoidable: even if it means we have transgressed the norms of the solidary relation, we are not necessarily blameworthy to have done so. In sum, Scholz acknowledges the necessity of something like state-violence for the solidary relation, and at least tacitly notes the potency of

solidary self-sacrifice. And she does so without going to such an extreme that she renders self-defense and other-defense morally impermissible.

And yet she seems to miss the centrality of death, its proximity, to the solidary relation, and as such she misses many differences *in kind* that inhere between violent acts and violent ideologies. Such differences in kind are illuminated by my phenomenological approach to these questions and avoid some of the pitfalls of a definition of solidarity which precludes violent action and makes moral mud of other-defense.

Violence itself is not the ideology of the oppressor class. After all violence *against* the oppressor is likely to be met with annihilation rather than acceptance into her ranks. Globally, we treat assassinations as worse crimes than murders. Thus, regime changes are affected by *wars*—the casualties of which may be hundreds of thousands—rather than surgical strikes against leaders. Such a global policy means thousands of civilian casualties are the price that must be paid if you wish to harm a single ruler. We may look to domestic law, as well, and see the disproportionate penalties our oppressed suffer under the current carceral state, for disruptions—both violent and non-violent—of the oppressors' peace.

The oppressor does not deify violence in-itself, rather she believes in "Violence Against Them." The oppressor is interested and invested only in the violence that maintains the current order: the violence that *keeps the oppressed under her heal*. And, indeed, this maintenance of the status quo, as seemingly banal as it is, has ascended to ideology—world-view, intelligibility, or faith—throughout human history, in the naturalization of oppression (for example, as due to the inherent inferiority of the oppressed, in the various metaphysical and scientific justifications for social strata—in blood, brute human nature, origin myths.[293] If this is the oppressor ideology

[293] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.

then it is somewhat obvious that liberatory violence has nothing in common with it. Liberatory violence does not (yet) make the liberator sufficiently like her oppressor, and thus does not obviously constitute a transgression of the norms of solidary commitment as Scholz sees them.

Oppressive violence aims to stabilize the *world* in is *status quo* stratification. It is the *banal*, maintenance, violence which fortifies, mends, and even ossifies the oppressive intelligibility both perpetrator and victim share.[294] Bare violence is neither the aim nor the "theology" of this world (if we might use a phenomenological frame through which the world is what is and what matters). That is, violence itself is a mere *tool* in the hands of the oppressors. Banal violence maintains the fundamental values of the present world, and these values are their ideology. Manachean, differential, measures of human beings, the constitutive exile of some identity, the killability of *homos sacer,* these fundamental oppressive ideologies all remain possible *because of* maintenance violence.

The maintenance of such a world requires violence for one extremely obvious reason: given *any opportunity at all*, the oppressed would opt to change her lot. Liberators—violent and non-violent—look to break apart oppressive worlds, undermine and expose their mistaken ideologies, and inaugurate new worlds free of theologies of naturalized hatred; When the liberators are violent, they also have *no ideology of violence*. Their ideology is horizonal, futural, and violence is for them also merely a tool, but one put to very different ends, and circumscribed differently in time. Liberatory violence aims to undermine the structures that perpetuate violence *as a necessity*. Thus it is a violence that ends violence. A violence that inaugurates a peaceful world. A violence that brings forth a reality which does not need to be enforced through pain and

[294] Lewis Gordon, "Through The Hellish Zone of Non-Being," in *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* (Head Publishing House: Belmont, 2007), 8.

privation, through the perversion of the human being and her communities.[295] This violence does not intend or *necessarily* affect its own interminable perpetuation as does banal oppressive violence, but has at least the hope and the drive to instead replace it with peace-generating structures of greater equality, freedom, and community.[296]

It is at least somewhat obvious that *violence itself* does not constitute this ideology. With Fanon's help, we can see that it is the stratification of society—like layers of hell and orders of angels—that constitutes oppressive violence's ideology and faith:

> Exposed to daily incitement to murder resulting from famine, eviction from his room for unpaid rent, a mother's withered breast, children who are nothing but skin and bone… the colonized subject comes to see his fellow man as a relentless enemy. Yes, during the colonial period in Algeria and elsewhere a lot of things can be committed for a few pounds of semolina. One can kill.[297]

Fanon here describes the phenomenon through which the Manichean segregation of the colonies begets violence and crime *among the colonized*. Their neighborhoods are zones of extreme scarcity and privation, environments that by starvation and overwork draw death nearer to them. This proximity of death changes the stakes of ordinary inconveniences and discomforts. What would for the European—safe in her zone of relative opulence and comfort—be fodder for nothing more than a mere squabble, become matters of life and death for the colonized. Theft, in these conditions of scarcity is nothing less than attempted murder. Even a crying baby, in the

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[295] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 3.
[296] Although, sometimes liberators become oppressors.
[297] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 231.

right night, might pose a kind of mortal danger to the colonized worker deprived of rest. Privation of this kind renders the colonized violent; as death encroaches upon them, it resonates, sets in motion their unconscious instruments of destruction, amplifies the chords of their death drives.

Further, this violence—unlike the violent revolution necessary for decolonization—is specifically self-destructive. The colonized, because they are segregated from the colonists, act on this amplified death drive by fighting and even killing *one another*. When scarcity and privation finally compel a limb to swing out, it cannot help but make contact with the body of another colonized subject: with a possible comrade.

The colonizer finds in these nihilistic and self-immolating deaths of desperation another use for the colonized. He moves through the badly fatigued and battered body of his "subject," strikes out with another's arm, to maintain the colony. After all, the maintenance of the colony consists to a large degree in the maintenance of banal violence, of everyday oppression and demoralization of the colonized. Of course we remember that Malcom X said, "The victim is accused of violence," and we can only hear this as a kind of contradiction, an absurdity, difficult to reconcile even when a *factical* instance of violence has emanated from an oppressed human being (a beaten neighbor, a dead guard, a bloody revolution). Acts of liberation and self defense are not *violent* acts, on this view, because *violence* is a thicker concept than "that which wounds the body of another, and which does so intentionally." Violence is an oppressive tool, as Scholz readily admits—it could never be used to liberate anyone. And yet, wounding persons has historically affected a number of liberations.

What is particularly insidious, however, is the degree to which the victim becomes convinced that she has perpetrated violence.[298] Fanon reminds us that the colonized person has heard she is "an animal" often enough, has been relegated to a man-made wilderness long enough, and has been put in borderline primal enough evolutionary conditions of privation that she embraces this animality.[299] When the oppressed lose sight of their oppression, when they come to view the only means of their liberation as "violence," then they have much to overcome before they will be free. Indeed, colonial States have historically ensured that liberatory insurrections are put down with absolute and grotesque prejudice. 45,000 or 90,000 dead in a day because they dared to ask for equality of any kind.[300] The oppressor *thrives* when he can punish the oppressed for daring to challenge the everyday violence of his relegation: that is, when he can treat the mere desire for liberation as an absolute *crime*— as a transgression of biblical proportions, warranting the eradication of the oppressed.[301]

Revealed by the *lived* dynamics of historical colonial oppression and liberatory action are three prevalent instantiations of "violence," one of which we can argue—alongside Fanon—is different *in kind*, along the very moral vertices Scholz indicates. That is to say, empire, hegemony and systemic oppression rely upon their own violence for their very existence, they

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[298] Lewis Gordon writes that even W.E.B Du Bois was used as a tool for the perpetuation of this myth—that the fault lies with Black and oppressed populations for their suffering and privation. The state of Pennsylvania hired him because they acknowledged the power of having a Black intellectual deliver such a message, which power is indeed manifold. The best possible findings of the best possible advocate for Black people was meant to find the situation of Black people intractable, a function of their Blackness *alone*. Power has always tried to compel Black voices to utter such a confession.

DuBois frustrated these expectations, throughout his life's work. But not everyone is as equipped as he was to see beyond the theodicy Power prefers.

Gordon, "Du Bois's Humanistic Philosophy of the Human Sciences," in *The Annals of the American Academy and Social Science*, vol. 568, (Los Angeles, SAGE Publishing, 2000), 269.

[299] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.

[300] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 657.

[301] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 656.

rely also upon infecting their broken subjects (both colonized and colonizing, Black and white) with this banal maintenance violence so that—in acts of individual ego or acts of desperation—they wound one another to keep up the hegemony of empire.[302] But these instantiations are undone, and often *only* can be undone, by acts of liberatory violence.

Another way of putting this difference is that the banal violence that maintains hegemony and empire has an *ontological* character, begets a radical *world* of violence and ossifies itself through the proliferation of that violence. It makes the subjects of the colony into its enforcers. Thus banal violence is *totalizing* and admits of no future outside its constant self-reproduction. Genuine liberatory violence is inherently ephemeral, futural, and guided by aspirations for a radically non-violent horizon; Decolonial violence "…is engaged in a detoxification that is radically reinventive, since it implies that decolonialism cannot be identified with a politics, even in a progressive form, but with a language *yet to be written*."[303] As such, liberators embrace a kind of paradoxical thinking; reduced to violence they struggle for a peace which has not yet been known on the face of this earth, or in the lives of any of its peoples.

This is no doubt evinced by the final death tolls at Attica. The incarcerated themselves claimed only four lives in the course of taking control of the prison, but the State—in order to return the prison to its *status quo* hegemony—killed 39. Attica rioters felt that *force* was the only option left to them, but did not partake in *wanton violence*. Their insurrection aimed at a horizon where they would not *need* the knives with which they threatened hostages: at reforms which would have made the carceral state a less violence place: when oppressive violence diminishes,

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[302] In the chapter that follows, I will examine two case studies from *Wretched of the Earth* which demonstrate the dissemination of this violence through every part of society. Non-revolutionary workers and even children feel the way banal, consistent, violence strains the communities to which they belong, perverts friendship and family bonds. And, as we shall see, revolutionary solidarity is one very *natural* response (even where it is not necessarily appropriate).

[303] David Marriott, "Judging Fanon," in *Rhisomes,* vol. 29, (2016), http://www.rhizomes.net/issue29/marriott.html.

so too does the violence of resistance. Fanon notes that the banal violence of structural oppression is not only more indelible and self reproducing than liberatory violence; it is also *more violent*.

> The colonist in Algeria says that Algeria belongs to him. We, Algerians, we say: "We agree, Algeria belongs to all of us, let us build it on democratic bases and together build an Algeria that is commensurate with our ambition and our love." The colonists reply that…what they want is an Algeria that perpetuates its current state eternally….each tentative attempt to change the colonial status provokes extremely murderous reactions from the colonist.[304]

All talk of equality is met with decimation by the oppressor. Because, for him equality is an existential threat. For the oppressed, it is not.

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[304]Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 656.

It is important here to note that Fanon is not describing a trauma-bond, through which the oppressed somehow fail to escape their abusers. This is particularly important as I develop a concept of forgiveness, later. Such a concept might be viewed, in terms of individual psychology and interpersonal relationships, as apologetics for abuse and for the perpetuation of violence. I will not argue that individual people need to do anything in particular as regards their relationships with particular abusers.

What Fanon says here, and what I take from it as I move onto my later conclusions, is that whatever new world is born out of successful social movements must inevitably include those who have been removed from power. To some degree defanged and without their ruling-class identity, these former oppressors will be a part of the new state, will live among the victorious liberated, and will need to be incorporated into daily life in a practical and peaceable way. This is, I think, necessary if the genuinely novel, inventive, future for all humanity Fanon seems to envision is to ever come into being. In this sense, forgiveness is a step along the way to mending the communion State violence and oppressive norms disrupted, and that freedom fighting—no matter how necessary—must also place on its backburners. The promise here is that we can live through and honor this primordial communion.

I will also note that this might well be desirable in the context of abusive interpersonal relationships. But there is often no incentive in the part of the abuser to share the goal of restoring communion with the abused. There is often no real insight in the abuser as regards her abuse. If these hallmarks of abusers are in her insurmountable, then liberation from her means absence… But I think many who have had to flee an intimate other would admit that a healed relationship with her in communion and belonging which causes each to flourish would be the *ideal*.

We must therefore consider that forgiveness and nonviolent cohabitation—an ethics and politics of the flesh which has yet to *be*—is at the very least a regulative ideal in both the microcosm of our interpersonal affairs and the macrocosm of the political and communal world.

Fanon goes on to describe the numbers dead by French hands in the struggle to maintain this "colonial status": which is, to be clear, the superiority of white settlers over their Black and Arab subjects, and a background of banal violence which deprives, tortures, binds and starves them. They laid waste to entire villages like Rivet. 45,000 died *in a single day* as a response to a mere march, protesting the incarceration of their fellows.[305] Oppressive violence is more violent than liberatory violence could ever be, because the oppressor *has everything* and the liberator *almost nothing*. So again, we see that solidarity requires of persons in these situations quite *extreme* risk: risk which faces such a dense blackhole of human despair that it must regard one's own death or at least her mourning and trauma, inevitable.

If liberatory violence is different in kind from banal violence in all of its reproductions, then revolution does not *necessarily* constitute a betrayal. I think I have provided sufficient evidence that this is the case, and Fanon's accounts of the lived and living tapestry of struggle and liberation will provide more phenomenological support. While I do in fact share Scholz's and Fanon's reticence with regard to violence, I think it is important to note that that fear does not emanate from its constituting a betrayal.[306] Rather, it emanates from a premise not explicitly stated by either (perhaps because it is so basic even obvious): namely that *violence is bad,* that it is to be avoided, independent of any consideration of the solidary relation. We can admit that a revolution affected bloodlessly is preferable to and nobler than the one that required violent insurrection, without labeling liberatory violence a betrayal of the solidary relation.

Indeed, Fanon's writings in *Wretched of the Earth*, which do not shy away from violence, where it is necessary for freedom, in part emerge from his work as a psychologist. Among the

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[305] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 657.
[306] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
Fanon describes violence as a last resort, left to liberators by the *ontological character* of banal violence!

French settlers as well as Algerians he finds a plethora of disorders and neuroses: the banal violence of the colony haunts them all, but liberatory violence leaves the revolutionary no more easily.[307] There is something traumatizing about violence, and participation in violence. It is perhaps bad for the soul. It might harm many innocent people, and possible allies (which Scholz mentions). Engagement in a violent revolution puts you at risk of physical demise and injury, of course. But it also almost *ensures* psychological ill-health, irrevocable guilt, and a lifetime of increased vulnerability. This is not because in killing to liberate your people you became a turn coat: these consequences inhere in violence itself.

But the solidary bond is nonetheless unquestionable here. The risks involved are manifold and prismatic. The body and individual future is at risk but so too is one's very *mind*. But also the solidary actor in engaging in the (perhaps necessary) evil of violence demonstrates an incredible bond to the others, risking moral transgression, risking countless moral transgressions in order to procure for them a future which she will inhabit (if she makes it there) as a person haunted by her own evil, and in *great need* of help from the world-to-come. The solidary relation might *require* you to do terrible things, to make yourself a terrible thing: after all, oppressors have solidarity with one another. And thus, as I have argued elsewhere, it is a morally neutral phenomenon, which nonetheless circumscribes the norms we are here discovering.[308]

Fanon's case studies confirm that extreme and enduring trauma that might be a natural consequence of much effective liberatory action. And this puts a demand on the free, society to-come to sacrifice its resources and care for those traumatized by revolutionary violence: the

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[308] See Cureton, "Solidarity and Social Moral Rules," in *Ethical Theory Moral Practice*, Vol 15 (2012). 697. 701.

solidary bond becomes more global, more enduring, and more agapic,, in this sense. A solidarity of each citizen to each other, and of each citizen perhaps even to her deposed oppressor.[309]

The inevitability of such traumas is of course an indication that there is something inherently wrong with violence. Indeed oppressive regimes, in providing the oppressed with no alternatives, in driving them to desperation to homes at their own gravesite, ensure the wounds of oppression last long after liberation. This protracted period of suffering emerges as post-traumatic-stress and psychological delusion in Fanon. But it surfaces also as something of which we are continually deprived. The oppressor ensures we do not get the opportunity to experience forgiveness. That we remain forever severed from the other *to whom* we belong and who belongs *to us*.[310] We are never allowed to build a future with her. Because, systems of oppression will only allow *us* to build a future in her absence: over her dead body.[311] [312] Along with trauma and delusion, there is the lack, the lesion, the ghost of the one who once "stood in our way." There is the tragic cast over our new civilization: that who we had to remove in order to make it, and to make it free, is *supposed* to be there. The ur-ethical all of the flesh is answered in liberatory solidarity but frustrated by the civilization we have won.

There has not existed a social political paradigm of intelligibility exempt from this. All have won their coherence with a ban, rather than endure the incoherence, unintelligibility, ambiguity and indeed *mystery* that characterize our enfleshed existence. But, since belonging to is as necessary as the cells of the lungs or brain, the ban turns the conditions of our possibility against us. It weaponizes the fleshly organism's systems of self preservation and turns these

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[309] We should note that this is yet another consequence obviously at-odds with banal and maintenance violence: which perpetuate themselves and thrive through the trauma of the colonized.
[310] Roaslyn Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity*, (New York: Suny University Press, 2002), 2.
[311] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 653-659.
[312] Martin Luther King Jr., "Beloved Community: The World House,"(Heirs to the Estate of Martin Luther King, 1967), 3.

weapons on her. Belonging-*to* becomes an autoimmunity under the ban, a cancer. This reversal is a kind of constant torture, which some endure in order to forge and fortify the boudaries of what is and what matters (who is, and who matters). What we most need wounds. What can save us condemns us. For some of us belonging-*to* has always been an autoimmunity.

Conclusion:

Liberatory and mundane/banal violence are different in substance, aim, duration and temporality, and necessity. They share a base-line undesirability (and certainly we think a liberation won without violence would be one ideally won), and the carnal, objective, and brute fact of broken bodies, of flowing blood, and of inevitable mourning, and trauma. But I think the differences between the two are substantial enough to constitute a *difference in kind*. That is to say, it would be a category mistake to accuse the long-suffering revolutionary of solidary *betrayal* and the emulation of her oppressor when she at long last resorts—with her cohort—to violence against her. Indeed, this analysis misses the very possibility of solidary violence, in active defiance or perhaps biased ignorance of the testimony of solidary actors throughout both history and the world.[313] In missing solidary violence as a possibility, this analysis also fails to see how integral to solidarity is *risk* and the *willingness to sacrifice*.

If, after all, "no true solidarity is violent," then we must dismiss as non-solidary the relationships that constituted most historical labor movements, most liberatory revolutions, the unshackling of most of the worlds' enslaved (where they were unshackled), and even the basic,

[313] One need not look far at all to see accounts of persons embroiled in violent conflict, justifying the risks they take with their own life—and with their own *souls*—by reference to the solidary relation and the debt it entails. I do not see why we should favor a conceptual analysis which denies the truth of these experiences, outside of a moral-aesthetic distaste for the genuinely *unfortunate* fact that violence is often difficult to avoid.

the *mere*, humanitarian *reform* of our own prison systems. If we ignore these (and I am unconvinced that any argument we should is not circular, otherwise fallacious), it is not obvious that solidarity goes beyond perhaps warmth, friendship, and well-wishes or even a kind of empathy. While these are important facets of a successful movement (winning the hearts and minds of those in power is, of course, invaluable), we have seen that they aren't identical with solidarity. This is because most friendships, well-wished, and even relations of empathy do not involve much *risk*. We might even break off such relationships if they put us at risk because this is not appropriate to the relationship. To leave the solidary condition because it imperils you, however, is defection, betrayal; no solidary movement would accept such selfishness.

I think we regularly see this naive, shallow, and politically *useless* conception of "solidarity" in play. Such a non-committal solidarity is easy to deploy in the digital world. For instance, I say "the workers at such and such factory, across the world have my solidarity. No worker should live like this." But I commit myself only to arguments over a social media platform, and my "solidarity" means, at the absolute *most* (in other words it often does not mean *even this much*) that I might refrain from buying things made there. To call this voting-with my dollar—by buying the exact same commodities from another manufacturer—'solidarity' I think lowers the bar such that any well-wishes, empathy, friendship, or non-malevolence from someone in a relative position of privilege can masquerade as a relatively rare and specific phenomenon. We can only make such a mistake if we abstract away from concrete, lived, instances of the solidary relation, ignore their specificity, and shrink away from the nucleus of their unique intensity.[314] This nucleus is the willingness of each to risk, to lose, to suffer or even to *die* for all, for a future she might not get to inhabit: a nucleus that is readily revealed when we

[314] See Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History," 42.

look to the brute and carnal facts of most—if not all—historical liberatory struggles, and to the testimony of their survivors.

According to Brommarito even private acts of solidarity, which are not meant to join with anyone else's cause nor to help anyone procure a better future must be conscientious and habitual acts. There is a kind of thoughtful labor here. They must work to *sustain* one's concern for the other.[315] In the absence of any *actually helpful* activity*,* this sustention of concern is the only cite of morality, differentiating "private solidarity" from the bitter apathy, which makes of the mere, public, declaration of accord an affective *release* and an embodied *relief*. Solidarity, whether active and shared or private does not *let us go*.[316] Rather, it moves us toward a shared horizon of justice. We should therefore be suspicious of feelings of release and satisfaction.

This being said, liberatory violence *must* move toward this goal. It is obvious that liberators often go overboard, going beyond killing to torture, bodily mutilation, and rape. It is difficult to see how much of this genuinely connects with the liberatory goal. And it is indeed in the same spirit of sacrifice, which I argue is at the heart of solidarity, that someone wronged might forego the satisfaction of revenge.

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[315] Nicolas Bommarito, "Private Solidarity," in *Ethical Theory Moral Practice*. Vol 19 (2016). 453, 455.

[316] Nicolas Bommarito, "Private Solidarity," in *Ethical Theory Moral Practice*. Vol 19 (2016).
So-called acts of private solidarity do have some promise, when we think of the human community, the inherent interdependency of its members, and the kinds of character that we want to have and to see in others. Bommarito argues that private acts of solidarity, while they might not have any particular effect upon those who suffer, might still be considered morally good in that they develop in their meticulous and cognizant practitioners a kind of moral consciousness and caring character.

This is all fine and well since acts of private solidarity *often* involve self-deprivation and sacrifice. I would maintain, however, that the formation of one's own character does not and could never alone rise to the demands of solidarity. Taking part in the work of solidarity is an indispensable part of the solidary bond, as we shall see in the first Fanon case study I analyze.

The phenomenon of broadcasting one's opinion as solidarity, however, obviously doesn't even meet the very low bar of giving anything up. Nor is it *private*. The social media post meets none of the criteria of solidarity (it doesn't require sacrifice, it doesn't *develop* character or require any of that kind of work, it doesn't require any connection with he work of liberation).

Gordon argues that this kind of violence might serve as a kind of catharsis for a people that has been so thoroughly submitted to their own abjection that they will never revive their gods. What lies behind the colonized subject is a world utterly dead, petrified, untenable. And thus, perhaps, all they have in the moment is the equal desacralization of those who have conquered and exsanguinated their past; perhaps they can make some meaning and take some solace from the fact that everyone is equally debased.[317] If the conqueror is indeed vulnerable to such destruction, then she was never any better than those she conquered. The meanings she inflicted on them, which include their subordination and inferiority, are not eternal, immutable, or at the end of the day *true*. This means that many terrifying acts might catalyze a kind of epiphany and catharsis for the oppressed, through which they see themselves as equal in an extremely meaningful sense; everyone is vulnerable, immanent, adjacent to her own death.[318] No different than those who have taken over the world, colonized persons might reclaim their lands.

But, Willett responds to Gordon's argument, which seems on some level to justify the rape of women within the oppressive class; the subjection of women through rape ensures the primacy of male values in the world to come, and thus replicates some of the power-structures structural oppression of all sorts presupposes.[319] This means that such violence is dis-adhered from the kind of horizon to which solidarity must always bind itself. As Fanon insists, there should be no shadow of these institutions of oppression upon the new worlds liberators make. There should be no such divisions between persons (along class, gender, and racial lines) within the new peoples they make. While oppressive structures throughout history and all over the world might have made it impossible for peoples to liberate themselves without some kind of

[317] Cynthia Willett, *Interspecies Ethics*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 2014), 166.
[318] Cynthia Willett, *Interspecies Ethics*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 2014), 166.
[319] Cynthia Willett, *Interspecies Ethics*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 2014), 167.

force, there might well be some kinds of violence that obstruct liberation. Perhaps this accounts for why liberation so often decays into regimes of desolate terror.

I will add that the following case studies from *Wretched of the Earth* do not attest to the cathartic, epiphanic, benefits of excessive violence but to its capacity to deeply traumatize and twist the people who perpetrate it, no matter for which side they fight. This makes retributive violence of this source even more suspect on my account since it seems not to take into account what kind of future the revolution is building. Thus, these acts are done in order to satisfy the one who perpetrates them, not to foster the promise of an egalitarian world to come.

Again, we must be suspicious of release, or self-satisfaction. The solidary relationship is a difficult one, requiring steadfast selflessness and a total concern with the horizons of the others. This puts out of play behaviors that negatively impact the dawn of liberty on that horizon. Where there are other means for a people to realize their worthiness, violence itself is less desirable because of the way it traumatizes the hands that perpetrate it. Violence that exceeds the barest means of affecting liberation because it does not connect with the solidary aim, only stands to populate the world to come with flayed souls; this is a serious *practical* challenge for any emerging new order.

The trauma of revolution will always-already await anyone who succeeds in liberating herself. She will be dependent upon her new community and the structures her people build in order to heal. This carries the solidary relation beyond its struggle. This fecund intensity of the solidary relation—which places the moral standards so high that we might remain responsible for another enduringly—accounts, as we shall see in the next chapter, for the possibility of betrayal that haunts it in its every hour.

Chapter IV

Under Wild Skies: Analyses of Further Phenomenological Artifacts
(Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* Case Studies as Phenomenologies of Belonging-*to*)

A Word on Me Reading Fanon

In "Judging Fanon," David Marriott addresses what he sees as an aporia in the way that Fanon is commonly read—either pessimistically or optimistically, as a writer of revolution, rebellion, and a new world to come, or as a critic of the current world who sees its possibly eternally enduring power. Because I have written so much about death in what has gone before,I think it is important to quickly note that the coming analysis deals more explicitly with, and dempnstrates the fecund *power* I see in death and mourning. While Marriott says:

> As opposed to the optimist, who is on the side of life, let us call any pessimistic reader of Fanon a *death-reader*; between the two, lies the actual text: books and essays written and published during a time of crisis, war, torture, and death. There is virtually no compatibility between the optimist's language and the pessimist's (they frequently coexist in one and the same individual); but to read Fanon is to come across something altogether more difficult, or singular; reading begins at the point where either becomes *impossible* (in the sense of an aporia).[320]

I do not think I am this kind of death-reader. It seems obvious to me, looking back at what I have written, that I am one of these writers who holds on their tongue and in their mind the irreconcilable languages of optimism and pessimism while I read Fanon. This is not because I do not appreciate the tension between these two readings, nor the absolute magnitude of the task of introducing "invention," into the world, as Karera calls it. Rather it is because I see in the figure of the dead, of those who die-*for* others, both the finality of the threat and

[320] David Marriott, "Judging Fanon," in *Rhisomes,* vol. 29, (2016), http://www.rhizomes.net/issue29/marriott.html.

a historically potent means for achieving some promise beyond contemporary oppression. The danger and the promise are indeed joined in the corpse of the liberator martyr, in the scars of the traumatized survivor, in night terrors, and decades of bodies made sore building society back anew. The form of the corpse is simply the most demonstrative. Those of us who survive because this other ransomed us from our own most death are pall bearers, we carry our dead to the future they one, we give them a place here. The idea of dying *meaningfully* is both pessimistic and optimistic, I suppose. But *all* genuine invention on this earth arises from *mortal* beings, in the company, and upon the backs, of the eternal dead.

Case No. 1—The murder by two thirteen-and-fourteen-year-old Algerians of their European Playmate

> Liberation is a teleological concern, a concern about purpose, a concern about out and whys: Whatever we may be, the point is to focus energy on what we ought to become.[321]

Fanon includes this case study among those that demonstrate the likely *lasting* trauma and pathology arising from what he calls an "atmosphere of outright war" in Algeria.[322] We should note right away that these subjects are not officially veterans of any war, nor do their actions seem in any way to promote or ensure Algerian victory. Rather, these young boys do not have available to them any appropriate outlets for their feelings of national solidarity, they have no productive projects nor active affiliations in which they might invest. They are left with a mere feeling of solidarity but remain outside the solidary relation.

> Then there are those who resist and rebel but do not know what, who, why, or how exactly they should do about this. They are aware but confused. They are the least fortunate, for they end where I have ended. By using half measures and failing dismally to effect any real improvement in their condition, they fall victim to the full fury and might of the system's repressive agencies.[323]

In fact, their act of extreme violence—killing a friend because he is a colonist— is undertaken due to little more than the felt valence of solidary commitment, and thus severs from the revolution and its fighters. Their act isnothing more than an act of mere retribution. And, while retribution might flow naturally from outrage (an entire town was razed, everyone living there

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[321] Lewis Gordon, "Dubois's Humanistic Philosophy" 267
[322] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 199.
[323] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann), 41.

brutally killed), and while some of us might even empathize with the rage into which these young people fell, their murder in no way *does the work* of liberation. They killed, without connecting to solidary others. Their rage made them bloody but remained impotent to help draw up a new sun of Algerian freedom over a shared horizon. After all, as Fanon argues, the revolutionary does not want to annihilate the colonist, nor even to exile her, but to build with her a genuinely peaceful future. The murder of a child, by other children, is hardly a step in this direction: it is not even so-called collateral damage in the wake of a step in this direction.

The basic bones of political solidarity are, nonetheless, visible within this case study: the oppressive other vs the solidary group, embracing great sacrifice on behalf of the cause. The first boy says he is not sorry he killed someone because "they want to kill us."[324] This justification also leads him to answer that he does not mind being remanded permanently to prison.[325] But the solidarity here exemplified through a willingness to risk remains impoverished in terms of its *connection* with solidary goals, such as liberation and a free national future. It also fails to rise to the level of solidarity because these children are not *responsible* for anything.

The boys cite their exclusion from the solidary community, due to age, as the reason they chose to kill another child on their own. They therefore also unconsciously provide a reason that the murder is and remains completely disconnected from Algerian interests and liberation. From outside the solidary community and its bonds of mutual responsibility, debt, and sacrifice, their violence and even their willingness to endure prison for the cause are *not* solidarity. Their act is little more than self-aggrandizement.

It may be true, on the phenomenological account we have been building that since "we are open to otherness in being open to our birth and our death," and these children are indeed

[324] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 200.
[325] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 200.

steeped in Algerian death, that we must admit their suffering circumstances render them far more open to the other than they would be otherwise.[326] This is no doubt one reason so much of the literature on solidarity takes shared suffering to be *the* necessary and often sufficient condition for the creation of solidarity bonds and movements; oppression puts us in an intimate and constant contact with our own mortality, opens us to our death so that it might flood us. But this case study serves as an obvious counterfactual. These boys did not act in solidarity, even though they suffered as Algerians (making it clear again that suffering is not sufficient for solidarity). And, as we have seen elsewhere—and as we shall see in the next case study—people who suffer less or do not suffer at all might well act in solidarity (suffering isn't necessary). But, what of their willingness to suffer? Is it not the case that they embrace possibly being imprisoned or even killed for their actions? If they are willing to sacrifice for the cause, and yet they fail to rise to the level of the solidary commitment, isn't willingness to die/sacrifice *just as problematic* as any other foundation of solidarity we have examined?

This would certainly be the case if we had argued that a mere willingness to suffer or die (full stop) is what solidarity requires. But we have not argued that masochism and suicidality are in themselves solidary. We have instead argued that a willingness to die-*for* the other—both in her stead and in order to procure for her a freer future. We have argued that one must die a death fecund death, a death aware of its utility. We have argued that one must instrumentalize her corpse, as a vital component of the others' living bodies, as they approach the horizon they won. I think case study does not have the same implications for willingness to die-*for* because these boys—unaware as they are of the possible utility of their suffering and loss, unaware as they are of what might be useful at a fundamental level—were not willing to sacrifice themselves *for* the

[326] See Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity*. 159.

others. What they did was nihilistic, self-effacing, and ultimately stood only a chance of harming the cause.

This is not to say that one cannot enter the solidary community, for the first time, by means of some grand risk or sacrifice. It merely means one must be motivated to sacrifice by the depth of her mutual indebtedness, and a willingness to prioritize above any and all of her potential futures the horizons of the other. The boys admit that their act is a mere act of reprisal, by which they have eliminated themselves from the Algeria-to-come—confined themselves from it with the walls of a prison—all without really considering the solidary goal of the movement: a future Algeria that is more peaceful, more just, and more promising for all its people.[327]

Furthermore, sacrifice must do the *work* of solidarity in order to exemplify it. Fanon, if nothing else, reprimands the boys for their actions because they are *incompetent*. That is, because they are children, they can do little for the work of liberation (though they can of course harm it by fueling colonial notions of Algerian animality).[328] If children are unfit for work in a factory or restaurant, they are certainly not prepared to engage in the work of nation-building. Insofar as these boys neither properly avenged the deaths of their loved ones, nor prevented further deaths, nor did they further nor ensure the solidary goal, they remain hopelessly outside the flesh of the solidary movement, even while they are ensnared in the bleeding and raw flesh of the conflict. One boy asks, "in your opinion, what do you think we should have done?" and Fanon replies, "I don't know. But you are a child and the things that are going on are for grown-ups."[329] The solidary relation does not have room for children, except, of course, as possible inhabitants of the

[327] See Cureton, "Solidarity and Social Moral Rules," in *Ethical Theory Moral Practice*, Vol 15 (2012). 697/
[328] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.
[329] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 201.

future it tries to procure for them. This is, in no small part because children are not generally thought to be as ethically or morally capable as adults, and thus the deep commitments of the solidary bond might be too heavy a burden for them.

But the phenomenological approach we have taken here commits us at least to the idea that children have always-already some intimation of and instinct for the bond that makes solidarity possible—belonging-to—and that they carry this forward into all their relations. Thus, it is entirely possible for children to enter into grave pacts with one another (and they frequently do), to uphold a variety of complex duties, and indeed to be instrumental in the success of some kind of solidary movement.

We must therefore see the exclusion of children from the solidary group—a *good* thing by the way—as motivated not by their moral incapacity, but rather by their moral worth, on the eve of a nascent and burgeoning new world. We could even think of their exclusion as an extension of the intuitions already enshrined in labor-laws (where they exist to protect workers and would-be workers). I can only risk myself in my mature age for a free future, if I think there will be someone there to enjoy that future, to carry forth the fruits of liberation without me. Those younger than me, with many more years to risk also risk the coherence and the purpose of the solidary liberation struggle, when they involve themselves in it.

The use of child-soldiers frequently occurs without the solidary relation. Children are kidnapped, compelled to fight, and compelled to die, all over the world. This is, of course, not the self-sacrificing solidary bond, but slavery. What holds together such militaries is not mutal indebtedness and belonging, but dominion and threat. When one risks oneself in such a context, she does not do so out of the bond of flesh she shares with the other, or the call of a mutually free horizon.

International human rights organizations, in their concern to protect the rights of children highlight the various ways in which participation in militarized struggle and extreme violence is compelled around the world: noting in general the pervasiveness of enslavement, coercion through threat and privation, and other utterly exploitative means of inclusion.[330] Indeed many of the contexts where the youth are made to take on these extreme risks, they fight not for the fecund freedom of generations to come, but for the maintenance of totalitarian power, or its replacement by an equally horrifying regime.We should not confuse such exploitative communities with solidary groups, and we should not confuse their violence with a purely liberatory kind (this violence has the same ends as liberatory violence, but perhaps betrays them in its willingness to employ such means).

The same goes for the murder committed by these young boys in Fanon's case-studies; neither conscription into a liberation-force nor acts of violence motivated merely by felt solidarity are solidary action, because neither attaches itself appropriately to the aspirational horizon of the solidary cause. In the case Fanon presents willingness to suffer for the cause is present, but the for is in no sense obvious. In the case of the child soldier, conscripted—even when she fights for her own material benefit—we should have serious questions regarding will, regarding willingness. The sacrifice given in solidarity—whether it is of relative privilege, freedom, rights, or one's own life—is not, and can never be, given in solidarity if the sacrifice is compelled by anything other than our primordial debt and its enmeshment in shared time.

This also means that children may be capable of joining solidary communities, and even of sacrificing themselves in various ways for a shared cause. But there is always a graver danger

[330] "We Cannot Give Up the Fight to End Child Recruitment Says Unicef Chief," in *UN News* (2017), https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/02/551882-we-cannot-give-fight-end-child-recruitment-says-unicef-chief

that they 1) do not understand the nature of their sacrifice and cannot properly will it and 2) that their incarceration, death, or traumatization might actually undermine the future around which the solidary community is formed.

Even when the second boy observes: "But they kill children, too," Fanon replies, "But that's no reason for killing your friend."[331] Because there is no reason endemic to the liberation struggle for any possible course of action the boys might take, murder or otherwise. It is defacto impossible for their activity to gain a coherent meaning within the solidary movement: their murder of another child is a-futural, without a horizon, an isolated flash of violence with little more than a fleeting, personal significance in the discharging of energies, because the movement itself lacks a unifying goal, if the youth die or remain incarcerated.

As such, Fanon is right to point out that at least the Algerian struggle is "for grown-ups," and that the way in which these children have included themselves means they may not populate and extend in time, beyond their dead adult relations, the promise for which they have fought. They may be incarcerated hereafter. But even if they find themselves free one day, Fanon notes that the effects on them of their own violence will likely be with them for the rest of their lives: another, enduring, reactive symptom that arises from environments of violence, even where the violence itself may be justified or necessary. This trauma might make their lives very difficult in the future, and thus it may remain hard for them to take up the promise left by their liberators: another possible breach of the solidary bond.

What is perhaps somewhat ironic about this, however, is that the enduring trauma left to solidary actors by liberatory violence may very well extend the solidary relationship in time, past

[331] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 201.

the resolution of the conflict: implicating each actor in the other's life through the same primordial debt for years to come.

I have not now and would never argue that violence is itself some inherent good, merely that it does not undermine or run afoul the solidary relation. When we conceive of solidarity as I have—from its fleshly phenomenological roots—then we see that it is a product of a primordial debt to the other, of belonging-*to*, and thus that it implies a depth and complexity of responsibility not generally accounted for in philosophical and sociological considerations of the phenomenon. These extant accounts focus, not wrongly, upon what solidarity requires of us when we are embroiled in conflict, facing a strong or healthy oppressive-other: but they do not see, or at least do not account for the ways in which solidarity survives this conflict and extends into the process of building a new world.

At the very least, solidary groups are left with a struggle that exceeds the stuggle to build a freer world. They they are left also with supporting their liberators as they struggle with the scars the fight has left upon them. This new world, if it is to be free, must support not just their liberators—but their widows, orphans, drifting survivors, and all of their wounded and mourning. Here I see that liberatory violence in fact extends the solidary relation in time, precisely *because* violence is bad for the soul, rips deep and enduring wounds. Like the brutality, privation, and oppression that at first necessitated a struggle for liberation, liberatory violence also makes the solidary bond indispensable. Whatever conditions transmute belonging-*to* into solidarity are not always good ones: in fact, they usually aren't.

The annihilation of an entire Algerian town, Rivet, is a particular kind of violence which, in the way it multiplies and proliferates death makes a drop in the bucket of each corpse. The absolute violence of *annihilation* absorbs each death into the background of colonial oppression:

not as discrete events, as specific mournable losses but as the persistence of empire. That is, loss becomes the persistence of the status quo. When someone dies under certain kinds of systemic oppression, *nothing happens*. Their death is the preservation of what *is*. Some of us have always been counted dead—or near enough to death that the actual cessation of life is a mere formality. Wild animals live and die while seldom making any kind of impact on so-called civilization. They effect only the margins. Those relegated always-already to the constitutive wilds of the civilized world also do not meaningfully die.

§ I. Devitalization Permission to Kill: Our Blood Will not Stick to Their Hands

From the perspective of the colony the massacre is a non-event. Thousands might die in retaliation for some small glimmer of political motivation or aspirations to freedom and equality, and yet *nothing has happened*. The colony has maintained homeostasis, its sacrificial parts have done their work. *The dead cannot die*.

> "[He]… asks me if I have ever seen a European in prison. Has there ever been a European arrested and imprisoned for the murder of an Algerian? I replied that in fact I had never seen any Europeans in prison.
>
> "And yet there are Algerians killed every day, aren't there?"[332]

What more evidence do we need of the devitalized status of the colonized life than the child's observation that there are no Europeans in jail for killing Algerians?[333] There are two ways of conceiving this devitalization. The first is via the well-analyzed and extremely potent concept of dehumanization, which is *absolutely* at play. That is to say, there are many fewer contexts in which killing a non-human animal is a crime than there are contexts when it is not.

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[332] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 200.
[333] *Ibid*

Dehumanization accomplishes the de*valuation* of a life. When a life is deemed less "valuable," we conclude (all too quickly, as philosophy of animal rights and bioethics have recently shown) that it is certainly *less* heinous to take it. Indeed, in many cases people argue *fervently* for taking lives with "less value," or "lesser quality."

Much of bioethics is dedicated to locating and specifying those cases wherein a life might be taken—whether actively or passively, whether through privation or intervention. And, one of the *primary* justifications for euthanasia—as letting-die *or* as a kind of *active killing*—is that the life that they'd be ending is *low-quality*.[334] [335]But, this is of course not cut-and-dried and it hardly seems bioethical debates have settled this matter. This kind of thinking in fact mirrors political devitalization and even quite often devitalizes the same kinds of lives—the same kinds of demographics.[336] How are arguments proceeding from the supposed "low quality of a life" devitalizing arguments? Beside the obvious devitalizing impact of this rhetoric, we can look to the place of these arguments within the history of bioethics.

When considering whether euthanasia is morally permissible, bioethicists begin by defining death. After all, if we are going to justify some kinds of killing, it is important to know what it is that killing brings about. Further, it is important to have a genuinely robust sense of who counts as alive and who counts as dead. This is because much public controversy about euthanasia has been over cases wherein doctors and family would like to remove life support from, or even more actively bring about the demise of, someone in an at least aesthetically death-

[334] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), 80.
[335] Kittay, Eva. "At the Margins of Moral Personhood." In *Ethics*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). 108.
[336] *Ibid*, 129.

like state: the persistently vegetative, the brain-dead, those who have been in comas for years, etc..

In the interest of defining death, and thereby of finding those cases wherein various methods of physician assisted suicide could be permitted, ethicists point to the scientific and medical ambiguity that has shrouded this most mysterious phenomenon. For many years, the medical establishment agreed that cardiac death constituted death. The silence of the heart over some number of minutes renders the human being a corpse. Her organs may be given away. She may be buried.

But, new technologies and supposedly better science have lead doctors to conclude that *brain death* constitutes death, instead. This definition of death allows for the pulling of many hundreds of plugs, not because anyone has provided an argument *justifying killing*, but because those attached to the machines have been declared *already dead*. You cannot kill the dead, because *the dead cannot die*. But this logic doesn't stop with the persistently vegetative. It does not end with those who have no prognosis of eventual consciousness. Doctors told Michael Hicksons wife, Melissa, that his life was not of a high enough quality to justify saving it, *because he was disabled*. That is, his life was unsalvageable because his legs and arms did not move in a particular way any longer, or that he could not remember certain things.

This is nothing new. People inconvenient to the state have been pretty reliably devitalized throughout our history—whether by theories of their animality or by arguments about their cognitive abilities and so-called "wild" quality of their lives. Indeed, this example shows that the disabled very easily find themselves among the abjectly oppressed. Proclaimed dead, while their hearts are still beating—while they are still in the acts of loving, of looking forward, of bonding with their world, and ensnaring others— the disabled are not alive enough to be murdered. Death

becomes so mundane under oppressive force, that it genuinely begins to lose meaning, even for those whose bodily processes are stopped by that force.

> *His evolution and the story of his life.*It would be better to say the history of his death, a daily death.
> A death in the tram
> a death in the doctor's office,
> a death with the prostitutes,
> a death on the job site,
> a death at the movies,
> a multiple death in the newspapers,
> a death in the fear of all decent folk of going our after midnight.
> A death,
> yes a DEATH.[337]

Of course, the eugenicist logic of the State cannot but co-opt such a definition of death, which generates in its implications a nest-egg of surplus life and resources to be liberated through killing. The devitalization of the brain-dead expanded into a devitalization of the disabled during COVID 19. Before a single person in the US had been hospitalized with COVID-19, doctors warned that those with cognitive disabilities would be allowed to die of neglect.[338] Michael Hickson was refused care because the life of a quadriplegic lacks whatever "quality" it is that

[337] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 13.
[338] Joseph Shapiro, "One Man's COVID-19 Death Raises Worth Fears of Many People With Disabilities," on *NPR Morning Edition* (July 31, 2020), https://www.npr.org/2020/07/31/896882268/one-mans-covid-19-death-raises-the-worst-fears-of-many-people-with-disabilities

binds a doctor to prolong it. Redefining death has created a kind of creeping devitalization. Such devitalization consumes the same persons as have all previous eugenic technologies of death, while swearing: *no one has died, you cannot kill the dead, the dead cannot die!*

… We must be careful to listen to these philosophers. These ethicists never justify killing, they simply disavow it. They claim instead that no killing has happened. Perhaps this is because it is difficult or impossible to justify killing, after all.

Even if we could grant the supposed "low quality" of Hickson's life—even if he had he asked doctors to let him die because he was suffering—we know that doctors wouldn't have taken the same action if Hickson were able-bodied[339]. That is to say, someone suffering just as much through say privation, temporary impairment and sickness, or mental illness would not be allowed to die merely because she's is *suffering*. The so-called "low quality" of Hickson's life makes him less alive than the suicidal or the despondent and desperate person bc 1) his disabled state is seen as endemic and permanent and 2) "low quality" lives are deemed low quality because of what they produce, *not what it's like to live them.* That is to say, Hickson's life was obviously deemed low-quality because he was permanently unable to engage in certain kinds of activity, not because it was unpleasant for him to live it.

In fact Hickson's death, wrought on him in spite of his Melissa's fervent interest in him continuing to live, demonstrates that our experience—our fear of death, our compassion for our families, our attachment to our future, our projects, and our world—is immaterial in the event that medical professionals are rationing care. In most circumstances a wife would be seen as capable of enacting the will of her very sick husband in his stead. Melisa Hickson was not granted this mundane power. Instead she was told that the testimony of her experience—that she

[339] See Kittay, 129.

and her husband had a good life together, that his disabilities did not intervene on the quality of the life they *shared*, and that *she* wanted that life as much as he did—had no actionable truth to it. Indeed her life, which would be destroyed when her husband died, *could* be so destroyed because it was a life with a disabled person. Her experience didn't reflect the reality her husband's doctors presupposed, and it was therefore not *true*. Her testimony failed to represent what her husband's doctors took as empirical fact: her husband's life was low-quality, not worth saving, and hardly worth living. But is it not an act of supremacy to tell someone they have lost *nothing? The death-rattle fills the room louder and louder, but the killers it's just an echo.*

With this devaluation of experience any claim that *suffering*—which is itself an experience—motivates a rationing doctor's behavior is extremely suspect and must be subjected in each case to scrutiny. In order to ration, these doctors must somehow break away from the patient and her family. She must tear herself from the others and deny the ways in which we are implicated in one another's experience. Otherwise she would *feel* the mourning that engulfs the patient and the family alike. She would see *the grave, feel the cold overturned earth under her feet, she would hear the wailing, smell the incense and flowers. She wouldn't be able to shake off the knowledge that death had appeared in the corner of that very room*—right then, as a result of her decision not to provide care. Not before, when he was rendered paralyzed.

Caught up with all others—as we are by in nature another conception of the irreducible human soul—the illusion of devitalization fails to entrance us. We have to think of ourselves as separate, isolable, and fundamentally autonomous in order to value our very own *"good and practical decision,"* over the palpable silence, the painful breathlessness, of loss. We have to isolate ourselves—that is, cut ourselves out of the social tapestry of our own instincts—in order to buy arguments for devitalization, even while a wife intercedes for her husband's life.

Assertions of "low quality if life" devitalize the patient, so that she might be killed without killing—not so that she may be *actually* killed but rather such that we are caught in an apparent paradox when we call it killing. No matter what acts proved necessary to being about the complete cessation if her vital processes, they didn't *kill* her. But, if we lived up to our innate social nature, there is no question of when the man died. And it wasn't when his legs and arms stopped moving in a particular way. *Through the air, like tendrils of smoke, the cold and pulseless hand reaches us.* The medium of others in which we live makes a felt absence of the death and the dead alike.

But, in reality all this dithering over that constitutes a death doesn't come from any real confusion. Everyone knows when to bury the patient. And the doctors were not mystified by the changes that were to come over Hickson—the changes that would seize his body, the foreclosure of his horizons. Doctors could certainly figure out that the moment of total and final loss for his family had not yet occurred (was not affected by his paralysis), but that they would *cause* it, against their wishes. Hickson's devitalization was incomplete because someone was there to plead for him. And quality of life arguments remain horrifyingly unconvincing.

Euthanasia is no longer justified by the *eu-thanos* or good death. Rather, it is justified by the *bad* or at least the inadequate *life*. It is also important to note that justifying euthanasia (whether active or passive) in this way does away with all of the moral complications around justifying taking a life. This argument does not say killing is ok, sometimes. Rather it says killing is simply *not happening*. This is, of course, in tension with the fact that the doctor knows exactly what to do in order to affect total death—there's no confusion about what's *dead* when it comes right down to it otherwise euthanasia of any kind would be logically impossible.

The devitalization of the subject is accomplished by the concept of low quality of life, the life bad-enough that it is more like a vital death: a spasming and gasping, or comatose and ineffectual tethering to the world, a life-by-technicality. We have seen, in 2020, the way in which this thinking bolsters the eugenic drive of our own status quo, reaffirming the subordinate and disposable nature of marginal persons like Michael Hickson and all other disabled persons, real or speculative, who might have sought care at the onset of this pandemic.

Being killed or neglected because your life is inadequate, lowly, and mean is not the same as being saved from your suffering. Otherwise no one would be denied care while they and their families beg for their lives. Likewise, while oppression is nothing other than the devitalization, depletion, and devaluation of human life, the oppressor does not kill out of mercy. This might seem disanalogous, since in the case of something like COVID-19, and paralysis, etc. no one need be to blame for someone having it. There are both persons and structures clearly to blame for the devitalized conditions in which the marginal, the colonized, and the oppressed live.

While it is true that, as Fanon says, "It is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject. The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system," the question of culpability is of course never simple. If we follow phenomenological insights, as we have throughout this work, the very idea of culpability is somewhat fraught and blurry, and it seems like we seldom act as subjects that have the kind of juridicial culpability the makes blame possible. Rather, the colonial subject *is* a colonial subject. Her vice, avarice, and even sadism were forged within a *colonial world*, which provided her very few possibilities for meaning-making, outside the violent enforcement of her own supremacy. Every person, and perhaps everything, in the colony is *afflicted*.

So, while the colonizer inflicts oppression upon the colonized, this does not mean that she doesn't attempt some moral justification of her violence toward them. 45,000 died in a day because they were perhaps a threat.[340] On one hand, the colonizer kills out of self-defense: defense from existential threats, which are of course threats against the colony. But, we cannot look at the colony and simply affirm its right to exist. Its denizens have that right. The colony itself, as a Manachean world, generating meaning at the expense of the majority of its conscious entities has no such right.[341] Where this justification fails, we see the success of colonial dehumanization. The dehumanized, in the wildernesses their oppressors made for them, feel each heart throb in its relation to their last.[342]

The devitalized life—imposed on the colonized by the colonizer herself—undermines each death in the oppressor's hands. Killing the colonized is simply not killing, because murder—no matter how visceral—was not her cause of death. Colonialism itself got to her before men's hands, muscles, weapons. The daily struggle for survival that characterizes colonized life moves the duour to the precipice of colonized death, annihilation. Fanon demonstrates that every human form takes on the form of a threat, within the colonized zone. The starving neighbor could kill for flour, the crying baby could render one dangerous at work

But, also, the colonist might decide to tighten his grip and make of himself a more pervasive and deadly threat, such that the colonized must "think twice before urniating, spitting, or going out in the dark."[343] Even the most bare, the most basic and mundane functions of the living body become deadly threats within the colonial system. The devitalization of the colonized

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[340] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 656-657.
[341] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 656.
[342]Diprose and Reynolds. *Merleau-Ponty, Key Concepts*. R. Diprose and J. Reynolds eds. (Acumen: Durham, 2011). 85.
[343] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 19.

might be made so complete by their oppressors that excrescence and movement fall under a ban. The organism itself must deny and hide the truth of its vitality from the meaning-making structures in which it is bound.

Even the realization of one's own humanity—the loss of which has made her more vulnerable to death at the hands of the colonist, the acquisition of which might make killing her a *crime again*—draws her, necessarily nearer to her own death for a time. "…At the very moment when they discover their humanity they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory."[344] The paradox of revolutionary violence is that the fight to win one's humanity back, to see it prevail, and to secure for it vital and futural horizons, might very well *kill you*. Winning back the life and vitality proper to a human being might require the very kind of combat which finally and once and for all forecloses all subjective futures.

§ II. If I Didn't Die, How Can You Mourn Me?

With devitalization comes the incoherence of mourning. It is not that the visceral and felt subjective sense of loss is impossible. The boy Fanon interviewed in this case study felt the losses from the Rivet massacre, without a doubt. Rather, he—and all colonized Algerians—are forced into a world where their mourning is absurd, where the time of each death is questionable and ambiguous, where the dead seem to die once more, and where those forty men slaughtered in were not murdered, their deaths were not wrong, and nothing was really taken from anyone that day: even from this boy who lost two family members.[345] Forty corpses and not a single legitimate death. Agamben calls this "death without shedding blood," and it is the perveiw of the

[344] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*,), 8.
[345] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 201.

sovereign power to determine who might die in such a manner—that is, who *does not bleed*.[346] Colonial reality cannot *support* the emotional, affective, and intersubjective reality of the colonized subject.

If this is the case, then it is not entirely clear that their European friend is capable of losing them or of mourning them, within this colonial context. And, even it he is it might well be the case that he is allowed a kind of mourning they are not; because he is granted the coherence of world and futural projection they are not, because he is granted a kind of meaningfulness to his projects and concerns which they are not, he may be allowed to mourn even the unmournable, always-dead, subaltern while they are not allowed even to mourn one another properly, much less seek justice when they are killed. But, the horizon still comes—whether on the wings of violence, of economic collapse, catastrophe, or policy. And so too, we hope, a world comes that can support our reality.

> Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity.[347]

Liberatory struggle the a struggle toward world-transition. It might subvert or even render obsolete the everyday values that animate us, allow our experience to hang together intelligibly, and provide us with a future. This case study illustrates the subversion of several mundane values

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[346] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*,trans. D. Heller-Roazen, (Stanford :Stanford University Press, 1995), 55.
[347] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 3.

of the colony. But, in particular we have seen that revolution subverts the devitalization of the colonized life—perhaps 40 Algerians' lives must be *paid for*. World transition is, indeed, a revitalization of the colonized subject, for Fanon. The colonized Zone is a district of Hades. That is to say for the colonized to affirm the value of her own life, in the face of the mundane, taken-for-granted atmosphere of extreme oppression under which she was brought-up and in which she is suspended, presents a fundamental challenge to her *very reality:*

> The colonized subject thus discover that his life, his breathing and his heartbeats are the same as thecolonist's/ He discovers that the skin of a colonist is not worh more than the "native's." In other words, his world receives a fundamental jolt.

The solidary bond can, therefore, come to supplant the bonds that—in our everyday maintenance of the status quo—might inspire us to take on great and grave risks for others. Subverted also is the more familiar value of friendship, wherein the friend might genuinely become an enemy (although Fanon does not think this is the case here). We see this in several case-studies Fanon presents in *Wretched of the Earth*, as well as his writings in *Alienation and Freedom*. The tectonic interruption of the world on which colonial subjects stand, that rumbling of the once solid Earth beneath their feet, affects a revaluation. Family might become estranged—or, as we shall see in the next case-study, simply *strange*—friends may become enemies. From the crumbling of the world arises the piercing tones, the clarion-call of a free Algeria—and with it a horizon of mournable Algerians, meaningful deaths, lives. Such a call, in its urgency, gives people something to which they are called.

Such vocations are, make no doubt, calls to one another, to the bond of solidarity, and to the attainment of a mutual cause. This subversion of ordinary values means solidary others, and those free persons to-come become, during revolutions, those for whom we would risk much, or

even die (taking priority, perhaps, even over family and friends). While the young men Fanon counseled in this case-study were mistake about their relationship to the revolution and its revolutionaries, they understood at an almost instinctive level that solidarity entails radical precarity and risk.

The devitalized live the ontological and social truth that death permeates life, but they do not experience it as the promise of some fecundity that will survive them. Rather, they experience it as a life arrested, a life-not-being-lived, or a life of such little quality and vitality that its end doesn't necessarily constitute a death.[348] Under oppressive violence, the very intersubjective structures that make it possible for us to die-*for* one another, and to die in all kinds of meaningful ways, render the actual, final cessation of oppressed human life utterly meaningless. In what sense, after all, has she died? Wasn't she already dead? The last beat of a human heart becomes a mere formality. It is from this meaningless death that dying-*for*—and all liberatory heroism and risk—rescues the oppressed. The first martyr may be mourned, and even *exalted* in the new world she helped procure for the others: in this way she is present in this new world, even though she has forever deprived herself of its benefits in her remarkable selflessness.[349]

§ III. Conclusion: Killing our friends? Is Allyship possible?

This realization that solidarity requires precarity and risk—and is, therefore, a stronger and deeper connection between persons than mere friendship—subverted for the young boys in this case study the value of other relationships, which had in the moments just before the revolution radically shaped and organized their lives: imbuing them with the foundational meanings that

[348] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 13.
[349] See C. Arnsperger and Y. Varoufakis, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity," in *Erkenntnis* Vol. 59, No. 2 (2003). 172.

constitute for each of us a world into which we can project and a future that draws forth the lived, thinking, body.

This subversion arises from solidarity as a *call*, as a vocation to the elaboration of bare, fleshly, belonging-*to* into a deeper and stronger duty between human beings. Where mortality necessarily underpins all our experiences, and with them their foundations, the greater proximity of the colonized to her death amplifies the call of belonging-*to*, an urgent, fever-pitch. Some friendships will be deepened—perhaps for life, but at least in this revolutionary moment—by the ambiguity of loss and of death, by their shared nature, by the crossing of the flesh accomplished by the sacrifice. When one dies-*for* the other, she inhabits a horizon that exceeds her. When one dies-*for* the other, the other *has a death*, while still living.

Phenomenology finds the intercorporeal within the peaceful environs of ideal interactions—indeed ideal *worlds*— which allow each to flow into the other, to color the perception of the other. Such theoretical control-samples are of course invaluable, as they reveal what flesh uninhibited might do, and what structures might radically make possible this doing. Structures like belonging-*to* are easily lured forth from thinking our genuine mourning and loss—so long as we are mourning in a *world* where we are allowed to. Thus, the debt expressed by our shared, vital, flesh in the ideal worlds that foster its development—that produce breezes to cool it, harmonies and rhythms to animate it, and futures to give it sense—is simply belonging-*to*. But the worlds that macerate our souls, while denying we have them, that torment us while arguing that we do not feel pain, that kill us while arguing that we were already dead: fundamental phenomena vibrate at different frequencies, here. The friendships fostered by the nutritive, the soothing, the beneficial world, are altered beyond recognition within the devitalized, the painful, the (under)worlds of extreme oppression, represented here by colonial

intelligibility. Pre-revolutionary bonds must either grow into bonds of solidarity, or they must be severed.[350] Indeed, if the friend cannot, when you are in your deepest and most obvious need, move herself to sacrifice something for you, her friendships is *at best* presently irrelevant.

Willingness to sacrifice remains necessary for solidarity, and without solidarity there is betrayal. The boy they killed could not give up his privilege to die European and to therefore be mournable, to be murderable. But, perhaps he could have given up the differential by which it is a privilege. That is to say, perhaps he—and all the French—could have mourned those 40 deaths, or even tried to prevent them (or further deaths). In the first case, one risks marginalization as weak or even insane for breaching the standards of a shared intelligibility. In the second case, one may be imprisoned or even die as a traitor to her country. These are certainly personally undesirable outcomes. But without a pretty major sacrifice allyship in the colonial world and other such radically unjust worlds, becomes mere "tolerance" and "inclusion" and "colorblindness": which can never rise to the demands of genuine *solidarity.* Indeed, such half measures have always stymied genuine revolution.

[350] It is of course possible that the solidary bond is ephemeral, only lasting until liberation, but I think Fanon really lights upon the protraction of this deeper debt in post-revolutionary society. That is, the trauma of revolution will make absolutely necessary the spirit of mutual sacrifice that characterizes this bond, as we saw earlier.

Case No. 2—Paranoid delusions and suicidal behavior disguised as "terrorist act" in a young twenty-two-year-old Algerian

Fanon writes this patient history of a man who had once been a scout and dissident, in solidarity with the Algerian resistance but who had changed life-courses, embraced the educational opportunities presented by the colony, and abandoned himself completely to technical work as an engineer:

> November 1, 1954 found him absorbed in strictly professional matters. At the time he showed no interest in the national liberation struggle. He had already forsaken former friends. He said he was at the time' entirely devoted to improving his technical abilities.'
>
> In mid-1955, however, during a family reunion suddenly got the impression his parents considered him a traitor… it was during the night he suffered the attack. For three hours he heard all kinds of insults, voices crying in his head and in the darkness: "Traitor…coward…all your brothers are dying…[351]

The patient's delusions arise, of course, out of an extreme sense of *guilt*, barely suppressed by his daily activities. Where there is guilt, of course, there is some transgression. In this case, the patient feels guilty because of his *inaction.* He has transgressed by abstention. This is to say, he has transgressed the primordial debt of belonging-*to*—which is now forcing its way to the surface through the pounding heart and cold sweat of his panic. This debt requires that he return to the national liberation struggle: that he *fight* either to save those who are dying, or at the very least to die with them and not make of himself an exception.

I think that it is important that the delusion arises within the context of the literal family bond, and that this bond seems to diffuse—through the patient's own anxious locutions—from

[351] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 202.

the persons to whom he is blood-related to those strangers who fight for a free Algeria—an Algeria that he, in his abstention, is perhaps more likely to see than these liberators. From the bare fact that liberatory forces are fighting and dying, this patient intuits that 1) he has some *duty or debt* to them (either to arrest their deaths or to contribute his own), with regard to which he has been delinquent; 2) the hallmark features of relationships of the greatest intimacy and deepest meaning—like those we have with our families—can characterize other relationships, especially when something like a shared, national, trauma orients each supposed individual to a shared horizon;[352] and 3) the technical and academic horizon to which he had been oriented was only possible because of his relative privilege within the colonial structure, and it served to sever him from his fellow Algerian—from that horizon of mutual sacrifice, care, and possibility—rendering him inert with regard to the struggle.

We should make no mistake had he none of these revelations, had he managed to fully distance himself—through the thickness of a book, the impenetrability of a theory—from the reality of liberatory violence, he might well have been more likely than anyone to inhabit this fecund horizon of Algerian potential. His abstention from deadly conflict obviously might have preserved his bare life. Had he abstained, perhaps he might have felt the call to help others, and to sacrifice for them within this Algerian future. He might well have helped its other inhabitants thrive, given his intellectual and practical gifts. Indeed, there are a lot of possible futures for someone who lives unwilling to sacrifice *anything* for another; one might even defraud the

[352] As I shall argue soon, the fleshly connections between us, which are laid bare in solidary movements have the capacity to remake peoples. As such, they might arise out of some kind of mutual recognition (though I have shown amply that they need not), without necessitating that demographics, tribal affiliations, races, or other historically circumscribed classes of humanity endure in the post-revolutionary world. As unnecessary as these are for solidarity (shared identity is not a necessary condition for solidarity), they are also unnecessary to the new world for which solidarity strives. Rather the capacity of our co-embodiment to join us with other *in spite* of these identities intimates its capacity for rewriting them.

government in order to sacrifice nothing through tax, guaranteeing the unfathomable bounty of limitless capital, for example.

Regardless of the depth of his potential post-revolutionary bonds with his countrymen, the fact remains that during the period of their greatest turmoil—when death stalked them most rabidly—liberators would have died-*for him—had been dying for him*—while he remained unwilling to sacrifice anything at all for them. This imbalance is so intolerable to him that he becomes genuinely haunted, afflicted. The *call* of solidarity—as the oscillation in tone of the call of belonging-to, produced as oppression bends it—is the call of an ethical debt. And it is not altogether clear to me that this debt can *only* be paid by participation in the revolution (although the patient is of course convinced of this).

The futural, horizonal, nature of solidary sacrifice is always sacrifice-*for* some others *to-come*: a sacrifice meant to procure for them lives worth living, vital lives punctuated by mournable deaths. Any liberatory combat which completely annihilates the oppressed people renders moot and merely intended, the solidary sacrifice. Some *must* live. This is, after all, one of the undergirding concerns Fanon has when he encounters the young boys who killed their schoolmates: they are among the future ones for whom Algerians were dying! If they end up incarcerated or killed, there is in some sense *less* for the liberator to fight for. From such a concept of horizonality we can infer that there are a number of ways in which this patient, haunted as he is by his unpaid solidary debt might repay his liberators, without arming himself. Because he is an engineer, he might for instance rebuild Algeria.

But this would require him to ally himself anew with his countrymen: to do his work not in order to satisfy is intellectual curiosity or to keep his mind off his country's struggles, but with an eye toward their shared, free horizon. As such, he could risk much in solidarity by risking his

time and investment. He might toil away inventing public works, and taking up through his intellect and imagination the needs of his fellow Algerians to-come, only to have the revolution fail. He might dedicate a life's work to a world that will never come, and risk retaliation by the wounded and gnarling colonial government: the very government that educated him. If the revolution fails while he is fully dedicated to planning a free world to heal his liberators and to nurture all Algerians-to-come, he might very well make himself a traitor in the hands of a much more vicious ego-battered colony. After all, we know that colonial retaliation for *any* challenge is always monumental brutality and violence.

If this man did not take up his arms (that is, in some respect, if his doctors' intended treatments were successful), then he still has ample opportunity to risk enough to regain his solidarity with his fellow Algerians. His actions and choices could easily make contact with that commonly sought horizon of free Algerians-to-come, the pulsing electricity of his brain, the scratching of his pen, the planning of his mind are all vulnerable to and capable of reaching that *flesh* of the liberatory community, which strains against the earth to reach its free end. But, even without a weapon, this incorporation into a solidary organism requires risk. He must be willing to give up the status he has now, as a colony-educated man, any safety it guarantees him. He must be willing, finally to be *seen* as "an Algerian," as *the Algerian* through the ambiguity of flesh, and sinew, the undecidability between the torments of the past and present and a free future. Such a willingness will make his work the labor of liberation.

This case study shows that we might try to forge our own identity independently, we might struggle to live that identity day-to-day, we might disassociate ourselves from our families and others who remember our previous identity and share our history and might therefore put some strain on the self we have chosen, we might try all manner of things to break free of the

intercorporeal gravitation in which the subject is formed, and reinvent ourselves instead in the void of individualism; but we cannot but fail to build up a *livable* personage (much less a *subject*) in such a void.[353]

> …during the struggle for liberation, when the colonized intellectual touches base again with his people…all those (European intellectual) discourses appear a jumble of dead words. Those values which seemed to ennoble the soul prove worthless because they have nothing in common with the real-life struggle in which the people are engaged.[354]

The atoms of this artificial self fly apart in the void, it its voice stops short, deprived of the flesh upon which it normally travels. This self cannot look behind it because it sees the horror of those who loved it, those who birthed it, those who constitute the very past its fleeing, who *know* the secrets it keeps from the world as part of themselves. When finally the self-made engineer—who no longer needs to stand in solidarity with his people, as a scout and dissident—chokes upon the depleted air of the world in which he created himself, he finds *no self* to live. Whether some signification is alive or dead, futural or static, has to do with its *shared* meaning. In short, the case study demonstrates the intercorporeal nature of personhood, which serves as a fundament of all political solidarity (and therefore of also of betrayal).

The primordial ethical debt, belonging-*to*, tears at this Algerian's sensible body. Those who he abandoned when he abandoned his work as a dissident and a scout reclaim his *body* as organs of sight, of hearing, as an organism that needs its rest, etc.. These others who become his paranoid conscious are those who constituted him as a flesh with a history—that is, as the person, the *Algerian* and liberator, he futilely attempted to obscure with the artifice of a colonial

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[353] See Fischer, "Ethical Reciprocity at the Interstices of Communion and Disruption," 156
[354] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 11.

engineer. As constituent parts of this more real, more *inevitable*, intercorporeal self, these others become forces of the sensuous body, guilt becomes a *heard* impulse, a call *felt* in the most primordial reaches of the errant or treacherous man: far below any ideas, ideals, values, and other affectations of ego to which he has dedicated himself. Mother, father, abandoned siblings and friends do not endure the alienation of betrayal, because the human being who tries to remake himself *solely* plucking these others from his flesh can leave behind very little, *too little* self to live on.

> Though I owe allegiance to no one other than myself I clearly understand that my future rests with the black people of the world. I am trying in every way possible to adjust my thinking habits so that their ways of life won't seem...strange...to me… After I am finished with myself, an observer who could read my thoughts and watch my actions would never believe that I was raised in the United States, and much less would never believe that I came from the lowest class, the black stratum of slave mentality.[355]

It is of course possible to remake oneself as Jackson here asserts he has—to forge a new and livable self, without family relationships and in the intentional and concerted absence of those who share your past. People who flee abuse, for example, are called upon to do this difficult work. So do those who, by war and other nihilating traumas have no remaining family, or are even s*tateless*. The point is you cannot remake yourself simply by disassociating from others. Rather, your new self could *only* come from *new others*.[356] Jackson here tells us that, although he

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[355] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann), 32.
[356] While a proper revolution on Fanon's account means remaking society in such a way that the individual can also be remade, I only emphasize the point that it is impossible to think this remaking of the individual as a solitary activity. Self-making in more mundane social contexts is communal, and we must assume that changing the world through revolution *means* creating a reality in which the self can be remade, free.

has made himself anew through his intellectual pursuits, he has not created for himself a world, or a private destiny. A livable self can only have a *social* ontogenesis. But the man considered in this case study does not ally himself with the colonist in such a way that he belongs-*to* her, rather than to his old, Algerian, community.

In order to live the identity with which he merely has covered over the old, he would have to *project* himself into his new colonial others—take on their futural horizons as his own, and share the impulses of the flesh that arise from such a future. Instead, he avoids the identity of bonds, altogether, in the bad faith dissolution of his human needs—his intercorporeal human *nature*—into the inadequate medium of intellectual labor. What remains indissoluble haunts him, rattles its chains so loudly as to be incompatible with life. What remains is the guilt of the primordial debt, unpaid—of belonging-*to*, denied.

§I. My People, Myself, Shattered: Violent Fragmentation of the Subject in Oppression, and War

This patient experiences his separation from others as a kind of tear. Indeed, his separation from others comes to be nothing other than an *amputation*. In the first place, he has separated himself from the others, voluntarily, in order that *he* might survive their inevitable destruction. He has separated himself from his "brothers" as one might separate herself from a crushed limb: not because she doesn't desire it, but because it will kill her if it remains. But, what evidence have we that he has removed something that belongs to him? Besides the phenomenological theory

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Axelle Karera, "The Racial Epidermal Schema," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon *eds.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 291.

and Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

from which we are operating (and which we shouldn't presuppose, but should always be proving), what reason do we have to think that the other he has separated himself from belongs to him? We have his account; being separate from his dying countrymen has fragmented his sense of self, left him uncertain who he is, where he is from, and to which future he belongs. Without the others, can I be an Algerian? While the amputee can find herself whole, the traitor feels himself utterly haunted by intercorporeal phantoms—not phantom limbs of course, but pieces of himself which ache in him, outside him, nonetheless.

After walking the streets unnoticed, without identity papers, surrounded by other Algerians who were stopped on the basis of their appearance to be searched, arrested, or even beaten, the man realizes that he is being taken for a European by the French soldiers. This bolsters his delusion. The oppressor knows he has sided with them, that he is one of them, and thus that he might comfortably walk among them as they torment those who were once his "brothers." This patient does not regard himself as stateless (which to some degree he is), rather he deludes himself into thinking he has recreated himself so successfully that the colonial world has made room for him, has already ensnared him in the flesh of their dominance and the temporality of empire. Rather, as Fanon notes, he is not stopped because the *racism* of the colony is inherently colorist. The French stop those with the darkest skin and most arab features, and they leave those who might have merely grown tan in the sun. This basic racism should both offend and frighten the patient, and his paranoia is in no sense misplaced when he looks upon officers maintaining the violent intelligibility of the colony: especially in its racist fundaments. But he is absolutely mistaken in thinking they are not stopping him because he has somehow managed to ally himself with them: that the colonists have affirmed and accepted the

monomaniac-engineer-artifice as a *living being* bound up in the communal, colonialist flesh, as an operative and completing member of the colonial body.

The idea that he has in any way succeeded in excising himself from the flesh of his Algerian community is at-best dubious. Indeed, such a notion will always be doubtful since—as phenomenological investigations of cases like abandoned children, shame, mourning, and now the guilt of betrayal *show*—we seldom succeed in total dissociation from the community of our ontogenesis. We remain mired in it, at any distance, because it forms and informs even the fleshly, prereflective moral and social impulses, the basic unnoticed intercorporeal electricity that dances across our muscles and bones: the shared and learned that becomes *instinct*, *reflex*, working at a fundamental and *invisible* level to make us who and what we are.

This notion is, indeed, doubly dubious since the colonist would have to find herself in the kind of fleshly reciprocity that precedes—and is badly injured by—the divisions, violence, and ideologies that make a social arrangement like the colony possible in the first place. That is to say, the Manachean hierarchy of the colony cuts off and cauterizes our primordial vulnerability, it dams the reciprocity that makes each of us ambiguous, genuinely *part of* one another.

The colonial racism which that day protected this particular patient would *always* have kept him outside the colonial community. Explicitly and always-already *banished* from this flesh, he can only constitute it as a *margin*, as the negative space through which the image stands forth. The soldiers ignored this patient, whose skin reflected the North African sun to their eyes at just a slightly whiter wavelength, until:

> He walked over to the soldiers, hurled himself onto one of them and tried to grab his machine gun, shouting:' I am Algerian!'[357]

[357] Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, *trans*. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1963). 203.

But, of course, this display was unnecessary—the French would never, *really*, have thought any different. This display was unnecessary, that is, insofar as he uses it to disavow membership in the colonial community, to excise himself from this flesh in which he was never enmeshed. But, it is perhaps necessary insofar as it is a turn to his Algerian community. Driven to the street by the phantom impulses of his lost Algerian community, this patient can no longer rely on the artificial, European, personality which he had used to disavow it. His will is indistinguishable from his delusions as we might expect by virtue of the very nature of delusion. But this will tentatively and shakily also rejoins that but very real intercorporeal electricity of its people, and in some sense resumes the ambiguity and indistinction of the flesh, as well.

This patient expresses a genuine instinct for solidarity—or perhaps, he simply remembers what it was to risk himself for the others, and for their future. He *affirms* his Algerian identity, that is his *belonging* to an oppressed people, by risking his own life. He cannot *be* Algerian, unless the French want him to die, he surmises. He cannot *belong* without renewing the primordial vow of belonging-*to*, in its war-torn solidary oscillation.

> All I wanted to do…was to die. Even at the police stationI believed and hoped that after they had tortured me they would kill me. I was happy to be beaten because it proved that they considered me to be one of the enemy as well.[358]

A death for being the enemy is a death for being Algerian, the patient surmises. More importantly it is a death in which he invests his *hope*. Through it he *hopes* no longer to be a traitor. Although, through luxurious inaction the patient thinks he is culpable for the deaths of those he calls "brother," he *hopes* that he might rejoin them. Even if the horizon of their

[358] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 203.

communion can *only* be reached by his death. He does not, however, question whether a dead man might nonetheless inhabit a vital and free futural horizon. He will simply die for being Algerian. He will simply die-*for* his brothers.

§ II. When the Smoke Settles, Let It Not Choke Us: The Enduring Debt of Solidarity

The patient in this case study has such guilt that it completely undoes his conception of self and of the world. He finds everything into which he has projected himself and through which he has made sense of himself, his future, others, and the intelligible world completely unreliable. This is at least in part because his rejection of his Algerian identity could never, on its own, provide him with anything resembling a full self. After all, a full self is the product of co-constitution, communal building, and the incorporation of the others as living, breathing, contradictions to self, into the very fabric of one's own body. This patient was always-already held at too far a distance, alienated at too fundamental a level, to ever get this robust co-constitution from his country's captors alone.[359]

In the deaths of his brothers, this patient realizes the identity he has rejected in favor of more calm, lucrative, and perhaps personally fulfilling work—that is, his former identity as a scout and dissident—entails brutalization, punishment, privation and even *death*. Fanon does not say, at the end of this case study, that the man was healed in any sense by his treatments. Instead, the case study ends with the man asserting his suitability for the cause; his desire to strip himself of these accusations—coward, traitor—is coextensive with, even blended into, his desire to be tortured, punished, extinguished. He is in this sense a fuller person at the end of this case-study,

[359] Though, to be sure, the oppressor and the oppressed are both also constituted by one another: as constitutive outsides, yes, but also as seemingly innate features like the colonized's various instincts for survival. Such instincts, after all, reflect the ferocity and perversion of the predators that share our environments.

since he is not disavowing the conditions of his creation. But he is in another sense a badly broken and pained man. And this pain comes in part from the fact that he fled the risks that inhered in the Algerian cause.

Willingness to die-*for* the others is not raving, delusion-ridden, suicidality.[360] It is inherently practical, oriented by the aspirational horizon the oppressed share. It relates, in a relevant and causal way to the attainment of such a horizon. We must, therefore, hope that after his psychiatric stay, this patient becomes less nihilistic, cognitively scattered, and self-destructive. Otherwise, of course, he is not fully suitable for the cause—not all dying is genuinely dying-*for*, not all good intentions rise to the level of solidarity.

Even if he rejoined the fight after his psychiatric stay, and found a deeply solidary, practical, and useful relationship to his own death and his own willingness to suffer, he might remain haunted by his survivor's guilt and the echoes of his current suicidality, even in any new, freer, world he and his brothers might win. He will of course not be able to regain his sense of identity on his own. But he will also need the others to address the wounds of war, and the wounds of abstention that remain with him. Revolutionary violence, therefore, dilates the time of solidarity. The ethical debt is amplified against the drums of war: becomes a protracted, an enduring, solidary duty, unbroken even by the inauguration of a new, post-revolutionary world.

Fanon's case studies reveal that he is in no way naive as regards the undesirable consequences of liberatory violence. Indeed, he demonstrates that persons on both sides of the conflict will unravel in its violence: as embodied minds, ensouled bodies, diffuse communal persons. This is to say that his work as a psychologist demonstrates both a keen sense of the urgent and enduring medical needs that emerge from war. He does not focus upon the spilled

[360] Angela Davis, *Lectures on Liberation*, (Committee to Freed Angela Davis, 1971), 5.

blood and torn flesh of conflict in isolation from its cognitive, shared, and affective components. Thus, he shows that war wounds the flesh of the world, rather than the mere tissues of the human organism. After all, war frightened this patient into an artificial self—a decoy—which might conform with the European-dominated environment and protect him.

But this resulted in a kind of trauma which might for him last well past the war. He might find himself forever haunted by those he survived—by those who did not hide behind a decoy, but who fought in open solidarity with his community. If this patient lives to see the new world, he might be among its delusional, its suicidal, its irreparably or at least permanently traumatized. He would not bear such lacerations of the soul were it not for the violence of war: which twisted and bloodied him even as he hid and it killed only his brothers. Fanon does not glorify violence. He merely sees that inchoate in colonial violence is the stifled call for liberatory violence. This does not constitute sanction. After all, in treating the trembling victims of this struggle, he sees also that liberatory violence proliferates, amplifies, and deepens the needs of the other. Inchoate in liberatory violence is a heightened duty to one another. The ethical bond, belonging-to, cinches tight in its solidary isolation. But this closer bond and heightened duty do not belong to the revolutionaries alone; they constitute the sociality that must characterize the new, free, world to which they struggle. As this world emerges, so many of its denizens will be deeply traumatized.[361]

The world born out of solidarity sees belonging-to sung at its highest frequency—where the waves of a shared voice vibrate in their closest proximity, where the peaks and valleys of

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[361] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 203-204.

And this trauma will appear as always-already, from a historical horizon erased, an intelligibility forgotten. Its events might be remembered. But from a genuinely new world, we could never fully appreciate the metaphysics upon which the old was built. Fanon calls for total revolution, saying do not build a new Europe quote and indeed his desire in Alienation and Freedom for Europeans to share a non-racist world with those they once colonized, would constitute such a radical break. It has to. Or the racism would persist.

sound rise and fall, quickly, like a racing heart, our racing heart. And it sees this increased bond and deepened duty as a condition of its possibility. But the action-for one another this potentiates—liberatory violence—also sees this duty protracted. Should we die-*for* the other, as this patient's brothers finally died-*for* him, we might increase the degree of her need. The greatest expression of solidarity necessitates even more solidarity: that civilization itself, and each of us in it, might sacrifice whatever is necessary to help the other bear the trauma of our solidary acts.

But this is only an apparent tension. Solidary acts, even those that seem most moving and most final, reveal beyond them the need for further solidarity, further community, and further sacrifice because belonging-to is fundamental. When it is suddenly revealed, under the artifice of modernist individualism, when the emergency calls forth our genuine, prereflective nature: then we move as one flesh, we take on the horizons of the other, and we can move toward them with her even if by virtue of our sacrifices we will never live upon them.

. What these case studies point to is the fact that solidary movements, especially liberatory moments that seek to install new governments and laws, in their futural gaze, must realize that they will be governing badly broken and beaten people, as badly broken and beaten people, and that whatever world they bring into being has to accommodate and even heal those wounds.[362] One element of criticism within political solidarity is to continue the criticism if the new regime fails or is worse than the old regime.[363] The solidary urge to work for the other

[362] Cynthia Willett, *Irony in the Age of Empire*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 93.

[363] Sally Scholz, "Political Solidarity and Violent Resistance," in *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Special issue: Solidarity, Carol Gould and Sally Scholz, *eds.* (2007), 22.

therefore extends into this new world, because of the violence in which it was born. In other words, the relation to the goal of liberation does not stop once a substantive goal is achieved.[364]

This seems to come into sharp contrast with the more classical, somewhat evolutionarily onto-generated, intelligibilities Nancy and Agamben consider. These are communities formed through the simple and reflexive acknowledgment of similarity. And, though they are refined later through the rule, the myth, and the law (and with them through epistemologies of various kinds), they are not born of any robust ideology. Rather, ideology simply justifies *post hoc* the intelligibility that arose from more or less arbitrary proto-civic marginalization and ban. The new, free, world to which the revolution aims is of course called forth by ideology. In this sense, perhaps, it stands some chance of heeding its deepened and temporally extended natural duty to each of its citizens; perhaps it is possible of governing in solidarity. At the very least, it *should* govern this way.

§ III. Conclusion: Forgiveness, Absolution, and the Collision of Worlds

> Let me be sinful before everyone, but so that everyone will forgive me, and that is paradise.[365]

The fact that we are traumatized by the violence we ourselves commit tells us much about violence and about ourselves. Every sword is double-edged, and very few people are able to physically harm another without enduring countervailing wounds. But we see as well that *inaction* and the renunciation of violence are not without their capacity to tear, traumatize, and

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[364] (Sally Scholz, "Political Solidarity and Violent Resistance," in *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Special issue: Solidarity, Carol Gould and Sally Scholz, *eds.* (2007), 44.
[365] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, L. Volokhonsky, *trans*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), 290.

leave festering. Liberatory violence is inevitably and invariably damaging. This guarantee of blood and madness is, therefore, one of the central risks taken in political solidarity: at least where it takes up arms. If the free horizonal world toward which revolutionaries strive is to be characterized not by the same kinds of mundane violence, marginalization, and control that fundamentally structure the colony, much work will have to be done to calm the nerves of its traumatized people.

> To undertake the work of solidarity, we would have to give up lingering fantasies that some single class, some chosen race, or some nation-state could bear the universal. The fantasy of privileged suffering conceals a desire to be master.[366]

This future people includes those colonists who undoubtably will remain, according to Fanon, "We Algerians, we say:' We agree, Algeria belongs to all of us, let us build it on democratic bases and together build an Algeria that is commensurate with our ambition and our love.'" [367] Fanon emphasizes the importance of a kind of cultural sensitivity, void of any trace of supremacy, for the *healing* of those injured and traumatized by colonial life and wars of revolt.[368] Martin Luther king echoes these sentiments for those of us in the U.S., referring to the people of this country as "a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest," but who can "never again live apart."[369] Like Fanon, King asserts that there is *no* possibility outside the decay of the present world—born on our history of slavery, displacement, killing and subjection—in order that an entirely *new* world take its place. This is a world where the ills of the past are genuinely

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[366] Cynthia Willett, *The Soul of Justice: Social Bonds and Racial Hubris*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 229,
[367] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 656-657.
[368] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015),363.
[369] Martin Luther King, "Beloved Community: The World House," 3.

absolved, where forgiveness is total, and where everyone—even those who were once oppressors—thrives in the dawn of global liberty.[370] [371]

But how is this possible? We know violence damages the one who perpetrates it, to her core. We know that both the American white and he French colonist have been ruined by their positions, twisted by their power—they bear the trauma of total-violence as well; "[they] hit their children hard, for they think they are still with Algerians. They threaten their wives, for "I threaten and execute all day." They do not sleep, because they hear the cries and the moans of their victims."[372] [373] The new world will require us to attend to everyone's wounds, if it is to be a peaceful and free one. As a people-once-made-two by the violence of colonial oppression, healing requires a deeper communion which must also be a political *goal*.[374]

We can extrapolate from Fanon's work with Arab patients in *Alienation and Freedom* that any effort to create a new community—much less a newer, better, and freer *society*—will require, "a tenacious, real, and concrete interrogation into the organic bases of..." the cultures and societies that preceded it in time upon the land.[375] Indeed, since Fanon argues

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[370] Martin Luther King, "Beloved Community: The World House," 3.

[371] See Hamilton, "On Being a 'Good' Interviewer: Empathy, Ethics and the Politics of Oral History," 41.

[372] Fra See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 67.

[373] Angela Davis argues that the slave-breaker in the U.S.—that is, the person in charge of beating enslaved persons into lifelong submission, without will, without genuine vitality—is also bound by chattel slavery. The slave breaker is in some senses without his freedom, reduced to a rabid form of animality, and ruined spiritually and mentally by the lies he tells and the blows he lands.

"The master is always on the verge of becoming the slave and the slave is always on the verge of becoming the master." But we should aspire for a world with neither slaves nor masters; Fanon has convinced me of this.

See Angela Davis, *Lectures on Liberation*, 20 and 22

[374] See Fischer, "Ethical Reciprocity at the Interstices of Communion and Disruption," 160.

[375] See Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 362

Fanon here says indigenous society, but in extrapolating from the clinical setting to the post-revolutionary one, we must take notice that there are two distinct cultures—that of the European colonizer and that of the indigenous person—that must be synthesized.

here that the liberation forces have never *originally* sought to totally eradicate the colonists nor to drive them from the land but merely to *free themselves*, assimilation to the freer revolutionary world cannot require that "one entire culture disappear in favor of another."[376]

> The child who asks his mother to console *him* for the pains *she* is suffering is turned toward himself just the same.[377]

The urgent need to heal the other's pain is at one and the same time the absolute need to heal *ourselves*. Thus, the solidary bond which brings the colonized against the colonist in literal war, as it seeps into the burgeoning post-revolutionary world, implicates a responsibility of the liberated to their previous persecutors.[378] It demands the European citizen of this new world be viewed in an altogether different light. One no longer has a duty to stave her off, but to include her in the healing flesh of a free Algeria. One no longer has to duty to fight her, but to embrace her. Gordon argues that not including her in the social life of a burgeoning free-world amounts to a kind of political nihilism. Her exclusion, that is, would bespeak a faithlessness in the new government, in its ability to meet her needs, and in its ability to maintain its fundamental commitments to freedom. Essentially, in relegating her to its constitutive outside, the denizen of this new world does what was done to her in the old. She abandons her faith in universal freedom, and in the fecundity of the revolution by limiting it in the case of the ex-colonizer.[379]

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[376]See Fanon*, Alienation and Freedom*, 362
[377] See Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 174.
[378] Indeed, this is a responsibility the colonist had to the colonized—belonging-*to* is only heightened by power differentials. Those in-power always owe the other more.
[379] See Gordon, "DuBois's Humanistic Philosophy," 272
See Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*

The mundane violence of the colony no doubt twisted her to the same degree as it did the colonized, and the violence of liberation could not have but traumatized her. If she remains, the community must see to her welfare—just as it must see to the rehabilitation of the delusional paranoid engineer, and the equally delusional Algerian children who killed their friend. To some degree, of course, this is merely a practical concern: a mentally and physically healthier populace is beneficial to the functioning of any society much less a new one, struggling over the sundry rubble of war. But it is not *merely* a practical concern.

> …the child who anticipates devotion and love bear witness to the reality of that love, and to the fact that he understands it and , in his weak and passive way plays his role in it…there is a linkage of egotism and love which wipes out their borders, an identification which goes beyond solipsism in the reigning as well as in the devoted one. Egotism and altruism exist against a background of belonging to the same world, and to want to construct this phenomenon beginning with a solipsist lay is to make it impossible once and for all.[380]

Perhaps the deepest and most brilliant promise of revolutionary world-transition is its at-least-possible power to forge entirely new worlds and even new peoples: to make of its survivors saints with no need of violence, and to make of their habitation a genuinely free *paradise* on the earth.[381] Fanon argues that this is always the goal of liberatory aggressors. The acquisition of the land is a first step along the path of liberating the individual.

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[380] See Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 175.

[381] I do not mean to imply in this promise of new peoples that it is somehow desirable or even possible that the historical peoples that engaged in revolution somehow *disappear*. Rather, I take Fanon seriously when he says that a free and peaceful world necessitates the remaking of humanity. Another identity, born of the ambiguity of the body and the self, might intersect with those identities that pre-exist it and need not nihilate the specificity of place and time, written onto the self we each live.

> The liberation of the individual does not [necessarily] follow national liberation. An authentic national liberation exists only to the precise degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his own liberation. It is not possible to take one's distance with respect to colonialism without at the same time taking it with respect to the idea that the colonized holds of himself through the filter of the colonialist culture.[382]

Solidarity, as it permeates and mutates in the atmosphere of conflict's aftershocks will mean fostering this liberation of the individual: and curing both colonist and colonized of the enduring, and unique, sicknesses of each soul, each community, and indeed of the fresh scars upon the flesh each is.[383] This is also the most precarious and unpredictable work of revolution. While solidarity might have a telological structure, its fecundity is messy and unpredictable. And this is because it is utterly *new*. There has never been on this Earth a genuine social harmony. There has never been a people without some constitutive outside, some already-dead other, some *homo sacer*. Fanon, "conceived of political transformation as the quasi-impossible task of introducing invention into existence," not of "changing the world," but of *creating it*.[384] Radical creation means radical destruction, however, and a genuinely *new people*— that is a people who can it its

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[382] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 103.

[383] Again, Fanon finds an unlikely friend in Martin Luther King. Insofar as the *same* revolutionary horizon lured both men through danger and risk to become the liberatory thinkers (and actors) they were, their disagreement about the *means* of the revolutions is less important than we might otherwise have thought. King also argues that any revolution worthy of the name would affect a fundamental change in the intellectual, emotional life and intentionality of the human being (as an individual and as a *new* community).

Martin Luther King knew State violence would permeate his movement, propelling it forward. Fanon knew decolonization would, likewise, call hell fire from these same abstract European Leviathans.

See King, "Beloved Community," 4.

[384] Axelle Karera, "The Racial Epidermal Schema," in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, Weiss, Gail, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon *eds.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 293.

David Marriott, "Judging Fanon," in *Rhisomes,* vol. 29, (2016), http://www.rhizomes.net/issue29/marriott.html.

soul accept the liberation of all others—will see things through an entirely novel lens of intelligibility and valuation.[385]

Indeed, where Fanon cites the way in which maintenance violence escalates, it is in response to this possibility. That is to say, supremacy of the French people is dubious at best and honestly more likely impossible where the power to forge peoples exists. The French people, in contact with the Algerian people, juxtaposed to them as their "masters," is revealed in its contingency, as a frail concept, indeed. Where the oppressed begin to fight for equality and justice, the oppressors must abandon themselves to utter depravity: massacres and even *genocide*. This is because the oppressed seek a kind of synthesis, which would make a new people: a people which defies the criteria by which the oppressed are oppressed, the marginalized.

In ordinary, embodied, contact with one another, Merleau-Ponty says the other "invades me."[386] The experiences of lived, emotive, and sensory embodiment render always-already dubious, and indeed *unliveable* the boundaries that make me a unique person, who might be compared with the other, evaluated, and ranked.[387] These boundaries are taken for granted, and they maintain the very volatile stati quo against which human beings must periodically, and seemingly eternally, struggle. The world as we know it now is poised upon unstable foundations, which are at every turn disturbed and shaken by our barest experience—if we'd only pay attention to it.

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[385] Even if this new lens is simply the actualization and elevation of many extant *ideals* into genuine authors of reality.

[386] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, Alphonso Lingus, *trans.*Claude Lefort, *ed*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 11.

[387] These divisions truly are unlivable. We do not *experience* them, after all. Our experience seems to prove that individualism and supremacy are nothing more than illusions.

French supremacy in the colony, white supremacy in the prison system, the supremacy of the wealthy, the Western, etc., each relies upon the most basic presupposition that clean distinctions can be made. But, at first contact—in the instant of sight, of touch, when the light of the sun reflects off the other's face and makes its impression on my sense organs, "…my private world has ceased to be mine only; it is now the instrument with which another plays, the dimension of a generalized life which is grafted onto my own."[388] Our intertwining is a fundamental *fact* of our embodied subjectivity, from which our subjectivity grows *originarily.*[389] It makes supremacy and separation impossible. I have said before that an ethics of the flesh must be mindful of intersubjectivity and of the ethical debt it entails—at the level of our organism, as the medium of its growth and generality.

If a successful revolution maintains its liberatory goal, it will not exile the old oppressor and it certainly will not use its new mechanisms of state to hurt or kill her. Instead, the new state will regard her as one of its people. The solidary bond which permeates this post-revolutionary atmosphere should extend the solidary debt also to the traumatized ex-opponent. She must be *forgiven*, and taken up into the ethical bond of a new flesh. She must be *absolved* of her past treachery, her future foibles, and come to belong-*to* an entirely new community.[390]

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[388] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, Alphonso Lingus, *trans.*Claude Lefort, *ed*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 11.

[389] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, Alphonso Lingus, *trans.*Claude Lefort, *ed*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 155.

Merleau-Ponty here insists upon a kind of synesthesia, which runs through this text. When we *see* the other, we hold her in all her sonorous being. When we call to her, we bring forth her visibility as well as our own. Our ontological entanglement with others implicates the senses globally—but not just sensuousness—with them come language, logic, anticipation, the sense of the *world*. Colonialism and other kinds of supremacy work hard to cover over this primordial interconnection. But the patina is always thin, frail. It's structures are rigid, but the ground under it is fluid, moving, synesthetic, ambiguous, given-over.

[390] That this is a function of the flesh, and indeed—that it is the *healing* of the flesh—is somewhat obvious at this point.

Roaslyn Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity*, (New York: Suny University Press, 2002), 126.

The fact that it is relatively easy to see how we might gain solidary duties to our wartime *enemies* within the burgeoning world of post-revolutionary freedom demonstrates the degree to which violent conflict extends the debt of solidarity. Solidarity of a more dilute kind extends far beyond the immediate community, as absolutely the willingness to sacrifice—one's desire for revenge, for example, the resources of a nascent community, for another—even if it is no longer willingness to die. After all, this is no longer *political solidarity*: rather it is a new paradigm of belonging-*to*, from which the everyday reality of this new world might spring.

Our givenness-over to one another is, in the tender early days of a new world, still a ripple of revolutionary solidarity. In the guilt of the second of Fanon's patients covered in this chapter, we see a genuine threat to the liberated world: will we not be able to forgive ourselves for how we became free? In the ire of the two boys we see another threat: will we have to eradicate one another, do we need homogeneity as defined by colonial Manacheanism in order to live peaceful lives? It seems that we cannot live completely on that horizonal world without forgiving and being-forgiven. It seems that we can only secure the horizon we've won through an *ethics of the flesh,* which absolves its parts: whether once-treacherous, once-inimical, once-mistaken, whether dead, sacrificed, missing, or badly damaged. Such an ethics is necessary for the mobility, coherence, and vitality of a flesh with each of these precious parts, desperate holding the quaking earth still so that a new world can condense.

We will remember that community programs, which reinforce the connectedness of an offender with her community in general find greater success rehabilitating offenders and returning them to their communities than do carceral programs, which aim to sever the offender from her community to as great of a degree as possible. They physically separate her from the others and therefore from the reciprocity of its daily life and from the complex network of its

flesh, and this makes is more likely that she will have to *forever* inhabit the margins, or the constitutive absences of her own people. The synthesis of offender with her community is like the synthesis of the oppressor with the freed, then. It requires repentance.[391] It requires forgiveness.[392] It requires fecund, synthetic, love.

[391] Bibas, Stephanos and Bierschbach, Richard. "Integrating Remorse and Apology into Criminal Procedure." in *the Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 114, No. 1. (Oct. 2004).

[392] *Ibid*

Part II Conclusion: Belonging-*to* Becomes Solidary Debt, When We Can Finally Hear the Free Horizon

If solidarity requires us to be willing to sacrifice much, even ourselves or our lives, for the other and for the procurement of a freer future in which she might thrive, then it is somewhat easy to see how belonging-*to* as the primordial ethical debt, inhering in all human flesh as the corporeal-social medium of history is its fundamental condition of possibility. That primordial debt that arises from my being-embodied amongst others—that is, I suppose, from my being-enfleshed—is heightened, deepened, and made more urgent by situations of oppression and shared suffering, *so long as we have decided to escape them*. I must emphasize here, again, that the suffering itself is not enough for solidarity.

Oppressive presents do not always give rise to solidarity. Fanon argues that the colonized can tolerate their oppression for seemingly impossibly long periods of time. Although the oppressive force wielded by the colony against the colonized is so brutal and so thorough as to border on the absurd, the colonized endure it. Indeed, they work every day in the colony's peculiar industries, they render to the colony their taxes.[393] The colonial and carceral worlds—alongside many other totalizing programs of absolute violence, domination, and exploitation—become totalizing intelligibilities, outside of which human imagining and aspiration are unstructured, abstract, and incoherent. The only alternative to such a world seems to be death, and this is indeed how the devitalized subjects in the case studies and interviews I've analyzed here experience their worlds. The colonized intellectual compulsively conjures images of tanks, when he imagines a freer world.[394] The demonstration for freedom may kill 45,000.[395] Desperate to shake loose, at least, from the sensation of her waning, exhausted, starved and dying soma, the

[393] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 231.
[394] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 25.
[395] See Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 657.

Algerian worker fantasizes about killing.[396] The incarcerated subject tarries with death, as well, when there is no hope for her escape. She fights, she is buried alone in isolation, she is convicted of murder behind bars, when she was never a murder in that other, fading, forgotten, world-lost-to-her.[397]

The oppressive world stands stable, unwavering, until *something happens*. That is until somehow the oppressed hear the call of a different, freer, future. We know from reading Fanon and from listening to those held captive at Attica that the oppressive world owes much of its stability to the fact that it plunges the oppressed—and *only* the oppressed—into the evolutionary privation of a genuine wilderness. There, you might kill in order to live. But there is no one there to kill but those who suffer with you: the same wounds, from the same cause, the same *enemy*. The oppressed mistake their comrades for their enemies as long as their aching and hungry bodies can, through their incapacity, bind them to the present. Shared oppression is not enough for solidarity because, as we have seen, it petrifies us and denies us access to the other. [398]

Relegated to the wild time of eternal presence, the oppressed face a first radical break with the world of their abjection when they hear, above the groaning of their joints and the churning of their stomachs, the call of a freer future. I do not know what reveals to them anew the field of their possibilities. But I think we have seen in this phenomenological analysis that some share goal is necessary in order to amplify belonging-*to* until it grows into political solidarity. We have shown, in short that:

1. Solidarity only exists where there is some willingness to make great sacrifices for the others, often up to the point of sacrificing ourselves and our lives.

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[396] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 231.
[397] George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, (New York: Coward-McCann).
[398] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska).

2. In mere shared oppression where there is not yet any organization or goal (future), we have Algerians longing to kill Algerians, captives abandoning captives to atmospheric and specific violence. We might have the absolute inversion of solidary debt: willingness to *sacrifice the other for myself.*

When oppressed people finally orient themselves toward a freer future, however this happens (perhaps the suffering becomes unbearable and gives rise to the necessary, horizonal, conditions of the solidary bond), they recall the radical debt of the flesh, the intercorporeity of historical time, and they *affirm their humanity*. Fanon says it is then that they "…begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory."[399] Regardless of the means the oppressed might use, this is the time at which they *take action* and enter into *grave risk*: this is the generative cite from which bursts forth political solidarity.

These observations will likely be somewhat unpopular. In fact we popularly equate solidarity with the public expression of empathy, support, and well-wishes for the suffering. My analysis reveals this is too little to be called solidarity. Solidarity is a heightened ethical demand, a deepening and strengthening of the *ur,* ethical debt—belonging-to—which we have built entire ideologies in order to obscure (individualism, capitalism, liberalism, solipsist existentialisms all Cartesian derivatives). The meticulous, rigorous, and demanding ways in which we have neglected and obscured the palpable fleshly truth of our innate ethical debt to one another—in spite of the ways in which it is written on our bodies, the way it reveals itself in shame, or in neglect, in isolation, and of course in solidarity—speaks to a secondary, selfish, nature. This nature, which is not a structure of the shared flesh of intersubjectivity, arises from the pressures of the world. It denies the risk and responsibility of an open flesh, by sealing it off. But, aswe

[399] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 8.

have seen, the edges between us individualist ideologies choose are always somewhat arbitrary, and we are left with little reason to affirm them. Selfishness and self preservation as the modern metaphysics of individualism intervene upon the flesh, and make attractive this easy-though-*false* solidarity.[400]

> …If YOU do not want the man who is before you how can I believe the man that is perhaps in you?... If YOU do not sacrifice the man who is in you so that the man who is on this earth shall be more than a body…by what conjurer's trick will I have to acquire the certainty that you, too, are worthy of my love?[401]

The ultimate display of apathy to a solidary cause, the antithesis of actual solidary bonds, is the refusal to sacrifice *anything* in order to procure a free horizon for the others. In reducing solidarity to expression—especially in a country where ideological allegiance means you wager not even a fine—is just such a refusal. If we assume our expressions of support are expressions of solidarity, we assume we have already accomplished it. We are free to turn from the cause, we feel no compulsion to put anything on the line, we are again anesthetized to the others' suffering: we will not acknowledge or remit our debt.

Indeed if solidarity is mere expression, we need not risk even our time nor any convenience. Rather, we share our bare *sentiments* using the same device that endows out lives with countless conveniences. From the phone or the computer, we can *express* solidarity—and thus demonstrate that the nuclear cogitos with we mistake for ourselves have some quality of

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[400] However, *self*ishness and *self* preservation in these senses have no place in solidarity. The artifical and convenient self of modern individualism has no place in solidarity. In fact it is not visible in most instances of the communal life at all.

In solidarity, to be sure, the self seeks her place in a free future. But that self is a boundless self: a self who might be borne into the free horizon in the others', a self that might be anything from 'this continuous body,' to 'their continued capacities,' even 'this corpse'.

[401] See Fanon. *Toward the African Revolution*, 16.

solidarity. If solidarity is a feeling expressed, *I alone can accomplish it*. I submit my post, and feel I've absolved *myself* of any further commitment.

Within the solidarity *bond*, however, we absolve one another, and we do so on the basis of worthy acts, noble risks, and for the sake of a freer more loving future. Nothing in solidarity is accomplished alone.[402][403]

[402] See Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 236.
[403] Attica Defense Committee, *We Are Attica*, (Lincoln: Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska), 1.

Who Has My Heartbeat?

Mutual willingness to sacrifice gives rise to the harmony of solidarity. And this willingness to sacrifice is presaged in our ontological givenness over to one another, especially in the intercorporeal phenomenon I have called belonging-*to*. This ontological givenness to the other by nature extends to all others. The medium of mutual embodiment implicates us even in the lives of those we hate and those who hate us. Structural violence disavows this connection and leaves all of its people incomplete, living always only partial and thus enduringly painful amputations. We hang on to one another by a thread in oppressive social arrangements. Since these divisions are merely illusory, merely denials of the connections that *are* between us, we have opportunities to recondense and again take up residence in the shared flesh that is our primordial nature.

At a primordial level, we were wounded by the disavowal of our mutual humanity and interdependence. What we have been given instead is neoliberal conceptions of equality and progress as well as a kind of steadfast individualism which discourages us from missing those who have been excised from the living flesh of the community. Yancy is right that we are not often called upon to notice the open, bleeding, wound that systemic racism (and sexism, and colonialism, etc.) inflicts upon us.[404] Such wounds are effects of the banal violence, which serves as the medium upon which we grow and through which we move with variable degrees of ease.

[404] Yancy, George. "Dear White America," in *The New Yok Times: The Stone*. (2015), https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-white-america/

I write almost exclusively while my one-year-old child sleeps, these days. Just moments ago, I held him as he slipped into that regular, rhythmic, disavowal of the waking and shared world that punctuates his experience so much more often than mine. I looked upon his face with love, but also with calculating curiosity; "Is that the last blink? Will I have time to conclude?" Through this ever-present parental distraction by tasks, however, came a familiar sensation; *from my thumb, enwrapped by his tiny hand comes the pulse.* I wonder how often I've failed to attend to it in my opportunism around his naps. *I cannot tell at first whose heart I feel beating, in the unexpected strength of his grip*. How often have I ignored some of the very basic sensations that make up holding this person I love so much more than myself, *for*-whom I would gladly die, and who certainly means infinitely more than my tasks? *That is my heart!* The others' embrace returns me to myself in palpable vitality, excavates me from the din of my doing. Without the other, I lose myself and it is difficult to see how I might retrieve myself. The other gives me back my heart, my body, so that I can *have them at all*. So much for the existentialists' easy equation of being-together with inauthenticity.

Solidary struggles, when they take aim at a liberatory horizon, wean us off the ideological methadone. Superiority, privilege, comfort and all the other trappings of a modern life serve to make the absence of the abject bearable for the majority, and thus protect a status quo which denies us these others: which damns us all to incompletion and violence. In this narcotic haze of modern convention that calls itself the world, we accept the enslavement, ghettoization, incarceration, *conquest* of the others; even if their absence really does damage us. We belong-*to* one another. When we are ripped from one another, we bleed. The surgical excision of our others removes not a tonsil or proud flesh, but the still beating heart.

> There is…and between [my] phenomenal body and the other person's phenomenal body … internal relation that makes the other person appear as the completion of the system.[405]

Systemic injustice renders us immeasurably lonely: deprived of the other we are deprived of part of ourselves, fragmented, incomplete, yearning. And it has always rendered us so. We are fundamentally lonely, incomplete, and yearning, when anyone is oppressed.

What power is willing to give us in return for the other, in order to pack these exit-wounds, only worsens the rot. Yancy is attentive to the degree to which we *need* at a deep, ethical level to *feel* these wounds. Especially those of us who have been anaesthetized by privilege and opportunity.[406] But I argue through this phenomenological investigation of solidarity that, in order for such lesions to heal, we must be drawn closer to one another. The dispersal of each in each within each revealed by Merleau-Ponty's thought indicates that it might well be possible for us to heal, to reincorporate the other, and again give ourselves over. When the other is removed from us by oppression and injustice, however, we give ourselves over in solidarity with her and with her cause. This means that we are called upon to sacrifice much for her.

Understanding this solidary sacrifice has required an analysis of death and its place in life, especially as mourning and as dying-*for*. Mourning is one way in which we make death meaningful. Through this process, which is both social and private, we embed the dead all around us. We eulogize in part in order to remember how the dead might guide us. We sing, get

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[405] See Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 368.
[406] See Yancy, "Dear White America," in *The New Yok Times: The Stone*. (2015). https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-white-america/

intoxicated, speak with one another, in order to forge memories of the *pain* that separation caused. We make dehiscent the wound through which she left us.

> I intend to bury my brother,
> And if I die in the attempt, I shall die
> In the knowledge that I have acted justly.
> What greater satisfaction than that,
> For a loving sister to embrace a loving brother
> Even in the grave: and to be condemned
> For the criminal act of seeing him at peace!
> Our lives are short. We have too little time
> To waste it on men, and the laws they make.
> The approval of the dead is everlasting…[407]

Under oppressive norms which place our dead below the level of their own humanity, mourning itself becomes an act of resistance. But it also becomes a paradox, wherein the dead were always-already dead. Entangled as life is with death through mourning, it is even more tightly woven to it through oppression. While solidarity does not always require us to die, or even necessarily to literally risk our lives, for the other, it does makes possible this particular sacrifice. Solidarity in fact often calls upon the comrade to make great sacrifices. Because this willingness to sacrifice inheres as a necessary condition in the solidary relationship, willingness to die-*for* the other arises in solidarity as a cite of possible ethical evaluation. What would ordinarily be astounding heroism is a norm of the solidary relationship, should self-preservation mean the others will be killed or tortured. And, while this norm is a very difficult one to fulfill and thus serves as purely regulative, it is nonetheless the case that countless people have given their lives in human history in order to save others. Solidarity is one of few relationships that obtain between people wherein sacrificing one's life seems somewhat natural and sacrificing the others in order to preserve oneself constitutes a transgression.

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[407] Sophocles, *Antigone*. Don Taylor, *trans.* (Methuen Drama: New York, 2012), 7.

We must take up those who have been unjustly separated from us—whether through incarceration or the subtle segregation of neighborhoods, by our own embodied anxieties or the locks on the doors of our cars—because they belong-*to* us and we belong-*to* them. We *suffer* their loss, our isolation from them. We have been stitched together with an always-already inadequate approximation of the fleshly threads that should have held us together: by the logic of dominion, of privilege, and of an illusory sense that we might use the existing order to our advantage. .[408] But this separation from others is an injustice to all. Furthermore, the promise of individual fulfillment our social structure dangles in front of us is a poor replacement for those we have lost to it. Activism and solidarity reveal this wound and allow us to feel it, from out of modern distraction and the obscurity of the everyday. But awareness of a wound is always-already a desire for it to heal. The flesh is repaired by attaching us again to those of whom hierarchy and dominion deprived us.

I have shown that solidarity congeals a people in spite of the differences that mattered to them before they shared a cause—whether these be racial divisions that defined them before their presence in a prison or differences in caste that obtained prior to colonial contact. Furthermore, I have shown that solidary movements also have the capacity to create altogether new peoples. The ethical debt solidarity renders explicit is diffuse, universal, and extends also to those against whom solidary actors once struggled.

Solidarity might be a harmonious relationship of mutual sacrifice, but the *work* of solidarity is not without its dissonances. The means and strategies a solidary group entertains might well be sources of contention asking a people in solidarity. Disagreements about the usefulness or place of violence, for example, do not necessarily constitute a break in the solidary

[408] See Yancy, "Dear White America," in *The New Yok Times: The Stone*. (2015) https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-white-america/

bond. Neither do ideological differences, etc.. Alterity proliferates even in supposedly leveling phenomena such as solidarity, (which to some degree collapse the will of the individual into a group).[409]

I have shown that solidarity might obtain between people who do not suffer the same way or to the same degree under an oppressive structure. And have therefore shown shared suffering is not a necessary condition for solidarity. I have shown that solidarity might obtain between people who share no recognizable identity. Likewise, shared identity is not necessary for solidarity. I have shown that solidarity might obtain between good and bad people alike, between oppressors as well as the oppressed and therefore that the relationship itself is not inherently good/that goodness is not necessary for the relation to obtain. I have shown even that solidarity might obtain between persons engaged in violent liberatory upheaval or between those engaged in liberatory non-violence. Solidarity might well persist even when the particular activity through which persons in solidarity hope to reach their shared goals is contested within the group. Solidarity cannot, however, obtain when one of the group, or when some faction therein, ceases to be willing to make deep and meaningful sacrifices for the others. This kind of imbalance, whereby some are willing to lose everything and others are willing to lose nothing, can really be nothing other than exploitation. When a traitor breaks bond of mutual sacrifice, the importance of the solidary goal, an aspirational future shared by a people, and even the untenability of a present and oppressive world all come into question. This world rending force is betrayal and it might cut so deeply that it undermines the perceptual faith, rendering the betrayed unreal to herself, while casting her into a void.

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[409] See Willett, *Irony and the Age of Empire*, 95.

When we bond with the other in solidarity and love—two of very few relationships wherein we find ourselves automatically willing to sacrifice for her—we increase in her a kind of security, a kind of boldness before her future and her possibilities. We fortify her world by being a part of it. And not just any part, but one entwined, load-bearing, structural. When this support crumbles away, there is little left of this world in which the other was so secure. Indeed, betrayal becomes a matter of perceptual faith. The world and her future within it was only possible for her because others supported it. Some degree of world decay, and the decay of the self and its futural projects is inevitable when we are betrayed. After his final, very public, betrayal by the Brotherhood—one in a string of betrayals that estranged him in New York, deprived him of his education, friends, family and love, and found him tortured and mutilated by sadistic doctors—the *Invisible Man* realizes he cannot "…return…to any part of [his]old life," but must instead live in impenetrable, objectless, subterranean blackness, "tak[ing] up residence underground."[410]

Because betrayal connotes one of only a few very particular kinds of relationship between the traitor and her victim. I cannot be betrayed by casual acquaintances, or by people I interact with in a store. I *can* be betrayed by family, lovers, and comrades: anyone with whom I assume I share a world, aspirations, and horizons. These are the ones who owe me something more, whose selfishness might raze my future, and even throw into question my present, and myself. When belonging-*to* condenses and specifies into these kinds of relationship, the power of our fleshly entanglement with one another is laid bare, and with it the responsibility we have to one another. We can completely dissolve the other, render the self into which she projects, the real in which she is submerged, and the tomorrow toward which she strives all utterly

[410] Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, (New York, Random House-Vintage International, 1947), 571.

impossible. Selfishness and disavowal can plunge our old comrades, lovers, and family into subterranean darkness.

A possible counterargument to the ethical account I have put forth here is that I make solidarity, and really being *good* at all, too difficult. This is of course not unique to the ethics of the flesh, as I have called it. One of the perennial concerns about utilitarianism for example is that it renders us almost incapable of behaving rightly; the calculus requires us to take into account the interests of all sentient beings, some of which we do not understand terribly well, in order to do the right thing. But this strain might come as even more of surprise in my account since I trace the lineage of our ethical duties to the mere fact of our co-embodiment. I argue what we should do is presaged in our very nature. And yet, it is very difficult to do what we should.

I see no logical reason we should accept easy virtue. Epistemologists often reject any theory that leads to so-called 'easy knowledge,' arguing that it is in fact difficult to prove whether we know anything and that extant skeptical challenges are sufficient to render any to-quick attribution of knowledge to a subject highly suspect. The field of ethics has as many intractable debates as does epistemology. Ethical theories when applied to hard cases prescribe often radically different courses of action. Utilitarianism is criticized for making the good unattainable, but virtue ethics itself requires a *lifetime* of ethical learning (and in the case of Aristotle a very fortunate kind of birth). Deontology will not allow us to rob the rich (no matter how little it hurts them) in order to feed the poor (no matter how badly they need it). There is no easy virtue *anywhere* in the formal study of ethics. Furthermore, if we look to personal experience, we see ourselves failing others in spite of our best intentions—over and over again. It is, therefore, actually difficult to be good, in theory *and* in practice. And I am therefore not

convinced that there is necessarily anything wrong with an ethical theory that requires we work very hard and very persistently in order that we may call ourselves good: if we ever may.

I think we are reticent to embrace ethical theories that require such rigor and that thereby *humble* us before their demands because we all at root think we are doing the right thing. Very few people think they are in the wrong or set off to align themselves with evil. We see in our best instincts—like empathy and love—a genetic affinity for the good. We hope beyond hope that these social reflexes will lead us to behave correctly. And very often they do. But, as we have seen, empathy can make someone an expert torturer. Vulnerability is a necessary precursor to exploitation and murder. Love can blind us to fatal flaws in the other that only we could have helped them overcome. Something more than our instincts is needed because we are always-already implicated in the life work of the other, we are always-already responsible for who she becomes, who she lives as. Inchoate in our nature is this debt to the other. And with it, there are duties that we might not be capable of fulfilling. I answer this concern with a question; why is any one of us *entitled* to think of herself as a good person? It is not obvious to me that much good comes from such a final positive self-assessment, at any rate. Having accomplished the right character I am not sure there would be any reason to do the work of solidarity or of love (you would do enough by merely co-existing).

If my phenomenological observations are correct, and our co-implication in one another's lives has the kind of power it seems to, then the stakes here are quite high. How we relate to one another has the capacity at its extremes to uphold and enable the world-making machinations of another, or to bury them in a void of a-futural meaninglessness. In its less extreme instantiations this power over the other might still trouble us. There are mundane activities and drives we might tamp down in the other with little justification and to her detriment, even if we haven't

necessarily challenged her whole world. We should therefore be concerned to place our goals higher than our ordinary reach, rather than vainly honoring all the good we have done.