

Trauma and Literature
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Lecture – 18
Malabou's The New Wounded – Part 3

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Identity Without Precedent

I am a kind of newborn creature.

– ZASETSKY/LURIA, *The Man with a Shattered World*

This course is entitled “Trauma and Literature” on Catherine Malabou’s book “The New Wounded”. We have located Malabou’s position theoretically, philosophically and also in terms of how she can be a very interesting philosopher and theorist looking at the convergence shall we say within literature and trauma in the way we have studied in this particular course.

We just begin to wind up with Malabou. There is a very post-structuralist manner in which Malabou looks at plasticity, the brain, the self, identity, etc. There is a performative quality.

There is a plastic and a mutable textual quality in Malabou’s determinations of these categories. She starts with a quotation from a book called “The Man with a Shattered World” by Alexander Luria which says “I am a kind of newborn creature.”

In other words, what kind of identity can emerge out of a zero template. There is no template preceding it and she looks at trauma, she looks at the wound as the phenomenon or as an

event which generates this identity without a precedent, without a template to draw on. In other words, a new plastic self emerges as an epiphenomenon of trauma.

Epiphenomenon is something which we consider as a fallout of trauma, the result of trauma, the consequence of trauma. She is looking at the consequentiality of trauma in a way which is a very post-structuralist shall we say.

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The Impossibility of Turning Back

Has neurology today undertaken a thinking and writing of destruction more radical than psychoanalysis? As soon as one examines the literature of contemporary neuropathology, the question becomes inevitable. The case histories, in particular, make it possible to contest the Freudian definition of psychic plasticity.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE PRIMITIVE IN FREUD

As I indicated in the Introduction, plasticity, for Freud, designates the imperishable character of psychic formations. The clearest articulation of this definition of plasticity appears in “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death”:

If we can take a look at what she is saying which is a very post-structuralist understanding of trauma and how she is departing from a classic Freudian understanding of trauma and this is something that she talks about and Freud. There is a quotation from Freud that she mentions only to deconstructed.

Plasticity for Freud designates the imperishable character of psychic formations. The clearest articulation of this definition of plasticity appears in the essay by Freud which is “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death”. This is where Freud defines plasticity in a systematic way and this is a Freud quotation that Malabou is citing here.

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It is otherwise with the development of the mind. Here one can describe the state of affairs which has nothing to compare with it, only by saying that that in this case every earlier stage of development persists alongside the later stage which has arisen from it; here succession also involves co-existence, although it is to the same materials that the whole series of transformations [*Veränderungen*] has applied. The earlier mental state may not have manifested itself for years, but none the less it is so far present that it may at any time again become the form of expression of the forces in the mind, and indeed the only one, as though all later development had been annulled or undone.¹

A careful reading of these assertions shows that the imperishable nature of psychic life does not apply to all mental developments—every life experience or every event—but only to the fundamental psychic form, the initial form that subsists throughout these developments even as it undergoes transformation.

Plasticity must then be understood as a form's ability to be deformed without dissolving and thereby to persist throughout its various mutations, to resist modification, and to be always liable to emerge anew in its initial state. It is precisely the series of transformations that can always "be annulled" so that this "unique form" can reappear. Precisely and paradoxically, plasticity characterizes both the lability and the permanence of this form.

"It is otherwise with the development of the mind. Here one can describe the state of affairs which has nothing to compare with it, only by saying that it is in this case every earlier stage of development persists alongside the later stage which has arisen from it. Here succession also involves co-existence, although it is to the same materials that the whole series of transformations has applied. The earlier mental state may not have manifested itself for years, but nonetheless it is so far present that it may at any time again become the form of expression of the forces in the mind and indeed the only one as though all later development has been annulled or undone."

This is a classic Freudian understanding of trauma where Freud talks about how the different states of the mind can coexist together. In other words, the mind has a form of entanglement or different kinds of mental orders, different kinds of mental situations and depending on the environment or depending on the situation of the self any one particular mental state can be foreground. It can become the dominant form of mentality and others can just become relegated into unimportant orders. But the important thing here for Freud is the interconnected quality of all the mental states.

Freud says quite clearly in this particular quotation that every mental state is connected to a preceding state and that to proceeding state and that just goes on at infinitum. In other words, what we are today is a series of experiences that have accumulative quality, that have a

connective quality and a sort of successive connective quality of mental states something for Freud is an important state.

Because what he defines, how it defines it as a way any one particular mood, any one particular emotion, any one particular mental state can become abruptly foregrounded or can become abruptly the dominant category which will subsume every other mental state, so that would be an interesting way to look at it. As Freud mentions in the quotation any earlier mental state can certainly resurface, it will never disappear.

It can certainly resurface in a form of expression of the forces in the mind and it can become the only one, it can become the superior, the dominant, the hegemonic form which should put everything else which will undo all the other categories at that point of time. We will see how Malabou draws on this theory, draws on this template and also departs from it in a way which is quite deconstructive.

A careful reading of these assertions shows that the imperishable nature of psychic life does not apply to all mental developments, every life experience or every event but only to the fundamental psychic form, the initial form that subsists throughout these developments even as it undergoes transformation. In other words, there is what modern neuroscience calls the core self or the proto self.

The proto self is the fundamental self and everything else just connects to it and that fundamental psychic form subsists and that is the Freudian understanding of the self that Malabou is citing at the moment. She situates plasticity apropos of this. Plasticity is defined by Malabou and as defined or in relation to the Freudian understanding of the self as having a core proto self.

If there is a core proto self how does plasticity feature, what is its nature, and what is the function of plasticity in the way that Malabou is trying to locate it in a Freudian vocabulary. Plasticity must that then be understood as a form's ability to be deformed without dissolving and thereby to persist throughout as various mutations to resist modification and to be always liable to emerge anew in its initial state.

It is precisely the series of transformations that can always be annulled so that a unique form can reappear. Precisely and paradoxically plasticity characterizes both the liability and the permanence of this form. We can see there is a very ambivalent quality about plasticity and on one hand plasticity is it makes the form perishable. It perishes the form. The form gets deformed but then it does not stop there.

It also reforms in a way which is just draws an original template. Appearance and reappearance almost simultaneous categories in plasticity and that is something which Malabou is quite clearly underlining the textual, mutable quality of plasticity. And that that paradox plasticity makes the form a liability as well as something which is permanent to the form constantly mutates.

It is always disappearing but it is also reappearing in a way which is drawing on the original template. We can see there is destructive plasticity but also there is a regenerative plasticity and that is something Malabou had mentioned before as well.

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transformation.

Plasticity must then be understood as a form's ability to be deformed without dissolving and thereby to persist throughout its various mutations, to resist modification, and to be always liable to emerge anew in its initial state. It is precisely the series of transformations that can always "be annulled" so that this "unique form" can reappear. Precisely and paradoxically, plasticity characterizes both the liability and the permanence of this form.

This extraordinary plasticity of mental developments [*diese ausserordentliche Plastizität der seelischen Entwicklungen*] is not unrestricted as regards direction; it may be described as a special capacity for involution—for regression—since it may well happen that a later and higher stage of development, once abandoned, cannot be reached again. But the primitive stages can always be re-established; the primitive mind is, in the fullest meaning of the word, imperishable.²

As we can see, this persistent form is the primitive. The notion of primitivity thus gives content to the concept of the initial form of psychic life. The primitive, and not what descends from it, is imperishable.

The primitive, for Freud, has two meanings, each rigorously articulated in relation to the other. On one hand, the primitive is the "savage," also called "prehistoric man," who subsists within each of us. On the other hand, as in the preceding passage, the primitive designates the "primitive psyche"—that is, both the general psychic form in which the savage survives within us and the particular psychic style of this survival: the constitutively unique character of the individual's *childhood*. Psychic plasticity

She has another quotation right after this and again this is Freud. The extraordinary plasticity of mental development is not unrestricted as regards direction, it may be described as a special capacity for involution, for regression since it may well happen that a later and higher

stage of development once abundant cannot be reached again. But the primitive stages can always be re-established.

The primitive mind is in the fullest meaning of the word imperishable. This connects Freud's understandings of libido, desire and everything else. The whole idea of the primitive self which is appetitive in quality that is just has a permanent presence whereas all the other forms which are plastic in quality can be perished.

Freud has a very interesting almost a dualistic understanding of the permanent and the impermanent. The permanent as a primal animalistic self, the primitive self and the textual mutable one which is the more cultural, the more extended self which can appear as well as disappear. We can see this persistent form is a primitive form. The notion of primitivity thus gives content to this concept of the initial form of psychic life.

The primitive and what does not descend from it is imperishable. This is in Freud's vocabulary in Freud's understanding or theory of the mind. There is a protocol self which is imperishable in quality and that protocol itself is the primitive self, the animalistic self, the appetitive self. That is why Freud places so much importance and libido and hunger on other forms of bodily appetites.

The word savage comes in an interesting way as well. Savage as the signifier of primitivity that is something which is always there in the human self and everything else can just be peeled on and peeled off depending on the situation. The primitive for Freud has two meanings, each rigorously articulated in relation to the other. On one hand, the primitive is a savage, also called prehistoric man who subsists within each of us.

On the other hand, as in the preceding passage the primitive designates the primitive psyche that is both the general psychic form in which the savage survives within us and a particular psychic style of this survival. The constitutively unique character of the individual's childhood. We can see childhood plays a very important role in Freud's theory of the mind.

There are two kinds of primitive thing, primitive concepts Freud articulates according to Malabou one is a savage, the primitive man, the prehistoric man, the uncultured man. The all-cultured man or the pre-cultured man and the other is a primitive psyche which is the fundamental psychic form which the savage survives within us, the mental state in which the savage self survives in us as a residual presence.

The psychic pattern for that survival the constitutively unique character of the; individual's childhood. Childhood for Freud is a very important concept because childhood is reflective of the primitive quality of the human self, the survival instinct, the selfish instinct, the libidinal instincts. All these instincts play a very important role in Freud's understanding of the psyche.

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designates the combined persistence within us of prehistoric man and the child, the always open possibility of their imminent return.

The shadow of this return most often takes the form of a threat because *the revival of the primitive is what defines mental illness*. Indeed, Freud affirms that psychic disturbances always bear witness to the possibility of such resurgence:

What are called mental diseases inevitably produce an impression in the layman that intellectual and mental life have been destroyed. In reality, the destruction only applies to later acquisitions and developments. The essence of mental disease lies in a return to earlier states of affective life and of functioning [*das Wesen der Geisteskrankheit besteht in der Rückkehr zu früheren Zuständen des Affektlebens und der Funktion*]. An excellent example of the plasticity of mental life is afforded by the state of sleep, which is our goal every night. Since we have learnt to interpret even absurd and confused dreams, we know that whenever we go to sleep we throw off our hard-won morality like a garment, and put it on again the next morning.³

Freud thus underscores two fundamental characteristics of psychopathologies: They always entail both regression and destruction, and they only destroy that which stands in the way of regression. Destruction only bears upon the "later acquisitions and developments" that Freud compares to a

Psychic plasticity designates the combined persistence within us of prehistoric man and the child, the always open possibility of the imminent return. We can see there is a lot of cultures that is done on the child savage or the savaged child and there is a degree of connection to be made there. The connection could be one of innocence, but also one of a morality.

The child does not know morality, neither does the savage know morality because of morality as a cultural concept is constructed of different kinds and knowledge narratives and the primitive self does not know that, is sort of immune to that cultururation as is a child. This is what Freud talks about in terms of plasticity. There is a dualistic model in Freud's understanding of plasticity.

On one hand, there is a primitive imperishable self, on the other hand the same primitive imperishable self. It controls the other plastic forms of psychic life in terms of the patterns appearing and reappearing. We will come to the next section and then we can see how Malabou talks about memory loss in terms of Alzheimer's disease, etc.

It is important because in the case of Alzheimer's, very quickly in the case of Alzheimer's the knowledge of the self, the self's knowledge of itself disappears. In other words, we do not quite know who we are and that connection with the environment disappears as well and that is something which becomes destructive in quality.

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infiltration into the present, its obstruction of the future, and even its reorganization of the past, all of which constitute the unfortunate destiny of the traumatized neurotic.³¹

TRAUMATIC METAMORPHOSIS

The specificity of the traumatic event thus inheres in its *metamorphic power*. The traumatic event, in a certain sense, invents its subject. The past of the traumatized individual changes, becomes *another past* when it is not pure and simply destroyed or consigned to oblivion. Accordingly, a *new subject* enters the scene in order to assume this past that never took place. It is no longer the same subject who anticipates himself and sees himself die. Separation can no longer be anticipated but it does occur, precisely, in metamorphosis.

Crocq insists on the "lasting modification of the personality that follows an experience of catastrophe," a modification that leads him to propose the concept of the "traumato-neurotic personality."³² Further: "The personalities of today's neuroses are 'constitutional' . . . *the traumato-neurotic personality is only constituted through trauma, at any age. It is what becomes of the personality of the patient under the impact of trauma.*"³³

The subsection is titled "Traumatic Metamorphosis". There is a metamorphosis quality about trauma in the sense that what happens post-trauma is sometimes fundamentally different in terms of what happened how the subject was pre-trauma and we just spent some time looking at Freud's understanding of the proto core itself.

We see how trauma can actually unsettle that proto core itself to a certain extent. The specificity of the traumatic event thus inheres in its metamorphic power. One of the conditions of trauma is the metamorphic power, the ability to transform the subject in a negative nihilistic way. The traumatic event in a certain sense invents its subject.

There is a regenerative quality about trauma in the sense that it creates a different subject which is different fundamentally from the earlier subject. The past of the traumatized individual changes, becomes another past which when it is not pure and simply destroyed or consigned to oblivion. Accordingly, a new subject enters the scene in order to assume this past that never took place.

There is a sense of a false past that is created, past which is never there so we can find that in a case of extreme trauma situations the subject invents the past. The subject is connected to a past which was never there. This his idea of the false past becomes interesting because what that also means is that trauma creates a sense of pseudo-memory or pseudo-remembrance, remembrance of things which were never there, which never happened.

It is no longer the same subject who anticipates himself and sees himself die. Separation can no longer be anticipated but it does occur precisely in metamorphosis. And then there are some philosophers that Malabou is mentioning; Crocq for example. Crocq insists on the lasting modification of the personality that follows the experience of catastrophic, a modification that leads them to propose the concept of the traumato-neurotic personality.

Further the personalities of today's neuroses are constitutional. The traumato-neurotic personality is only constituted through trauma at any age. It is s what becomes of the personality of the patient under the impact of trauma. We can see this is something we may have mentioned at the beginning of this work and that is Malabou looks at trauma as an event in a way that Alain Badiou does for instance something which changes.

Something which changes before and the after and the seamless continuation when the past and present gets interrupted by this particular event and in the case of trauma the event is a negative destructive even. The subject's connection to the past becomes interrupted sometimes permanently and this permanent interruption becomes a problem in terms of the subject's awareness of themselves as a subject and thus that becomes a self-reflexive crisis.

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an experience of catastrophe,” a modification that leads him to propose the concept of the “traumato-neurotic personality.”³² Further: “The personalities of today’s neuroses are ‘constitutional’ . . . *the traumato-neurotic personality is only constituted through trauma, at any age. It is what becomes of the personality of the patient under the impact of trauma.*”³³

This modification of the identity of patients is a long-established fact of observation. Simmel already spoke of a “change in the soul” and an “entombment of the person” under the effect of the accident.³⁴ But the psychoanalytic model, “even as it accounts for the effraction and its overwhelming effect on the personality, *does not postulate that this personality has been changed.*”³⁵ If Freud admits the obvious fact that an accident can severely and permanently damage the psyche, he never presents the formation of the new identity as a discontinuous process, a leap, a phenomenon that is no less unforeseen or unexpected than the catastrophe itself. For him, traumas and wounds do not seem capable of creating *ex nihilo* a posttraumatic identity. There is always a certain psychic continuity between what comes before and what comes after the wound; the subject remains what he is within his very alienation. However, this very continuity is what will be called into question within contemporary neurological debate.

Indeed, from the neurological point of view, the hypothesis of absolute danger designates the risk of brutal and sudden disappearance of the trace resulting in the formation of an identity without origin and without memory;

This modification of an identity of patients is a long-established fact of observation. Simmel already spoke of a change in the soul and an entombment of the person under the effect of the accident. We can have more metaphysical understanding of this metamorphosis like for instance some people might say there is a change in the soul, the person changes so fundamentally that the thinking subject changes, the soul subject changes the person.

But the psychoanalytic model even as it accounts for the effraction and its overwhelming effect on the personality does not postulate that the personality has been changed. If Freud admits that obvious fact that accident can severely and permanently damage the psyche, he never presents the formation of the new identity as a discontinuous process, a leap, a phenomenon that is no less unforeseen or unexpected than the catastrophe itself.

For him, traumas and wounds do not seem capable of creating *ex-nihilo* a post-traumatic identity. There is always a certain psychic continuity between what comes before and what comes after the wound; the subject remains what he is within his very alienation. However, this very continuity is what will be called into question within contemporary neurological debate.

We can see one of the key things in this particular book is a deconstruction of Freud. There is a lot of Freud scholarship which is all for it but there are certain fundamental tenets of

Freudian psychoanalysis which are called into question and one of the key tenets is this; the idea of the continuous subject. There is a proto self which never disappears for Freud.

There is a core self which never disappears no matter what the event is, no matter what the trauma is. There is always this very fundamental self which is retained in a very almost stubbornly shall we say whereas as Malabou is examining and as she is corroborating through empirical evidence from contemporary neuroscience there seems to be a very direct discontinuity between the subject before and after the trauma.

In the sense that the subject's connection to the past changes so fundamentally that it is no longer can be seen as a proto subject, as an unchanged imperishable subject. The fantasy of imperishability that is there in Freudian psychoanalysis is called into question by Malabou here and what we have instead is a more plastic idea of the self. The self is something which can be mutated at a very fundamental level.

It is very fundamental mutation is something that Malabou seems to acknowledge and also articulate in this theory. There is this very fundamental departure from Freud that Malabou is offering over here in terms of offering a model of trauma which can change a metamorphosis fundamental subject in a way which is discontinuous with any understanding of or any access to the subject's past.

Freud does a fundamental continuity which constitutes a core proto self; whereas Malabou trauma is capable, so she almost gives an agency to trauma in a certain sense. Trauma is capable of completely destroying the subject in a way which is unrecognizable, so the subject cannot recognize themselves anymore post-trauma. This is what she mentions the idea; the final sentence of this page as the deformation resulting in the formation of an identity without origin and without memory.

There is the idea the memory less subject, the idea of the original subject is something which Malabou offers has a very clear and dramatic and direct departure from Freud. there is always a continuity no matter what the trauma is for Freud. There is always this fundamental subject, a fundamental personality which is unchangeable or imperishable and as Malabou says there

may have been occasions that Freud had hinted at a sense of discontinuity but never spilled it out.

Whereas modern neuroscience tells us and Malabou is drawing on that in terms of mapping more post-structuralist understanding of the self that there could be an identity which is formed one is one without origin and without memory. The idea the memoryless man or the origin-less man becomes very important in Malabou's study.

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an identity, produced by destructive plasticity, that is not interested or only falsely interested in itself.

Rehabilitating the event is thus a matter of taking into account the discontinuity produced by the traumatizing event and of its destructive power to transform identity ("Gage was no longer Gage").

If we ask patients about their experiences of these changes of personality, we observe that this is no metaphor. The patients find themselves really changed; they no longer recognize themselves as they were before. And this is not simply due to the fact that they are sad about having undergone a difficult event; it is, more profoundly, on the level of their entire way of living, that they come to realize that a new being is within them, a being whom they do not recognize.³⁶

THE SUBORDINATION OF SEXUAL ETIOLOGY

The contemporary conception of the traumatic event has permanently disrupted the link between mechanical commotion and sexual excitation that was first established by Freud and subsequently consolidated by Fenichel. In his work, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of the Neuroses*, Fenichel accords much importance to the genital excitation that subtends traumatic excitation.

This is "produced by destructive plasticity that is not interested or only falsely interested in itself. Rehabilitating the event is thus a matter of taking into account the discontinuity produced by the traumatizing event and of its destructive power to the transform identity; Gage was no longer Gage", the famous case study of Phineas Gage a railway worker who suffered an accident when the splinter hit his head and then he went into coma, lost his consciousness, but then he recovered.

He was medically fit to walk again, but then it was a blunt force trauma and then they realized, his contemporary people, his colleagues realized, his family realized there was a very fundamental difference in what he was after the accident.

His ability to emote, his ability to connect, his ability to be receptive to what was the familiar world around him that changed in such a fundamental way. The people started saying "Gage

was no longer Gage”. He has emerged as if a different person out of it and this is exactly Malabou’s point that a different subject can emerge at a very fundamental level out of this event of trauma.

This is a quotation with which she ends. “If we ask patients about the experiences of these changes of personality, we observe that this is no metaphor where the patients find themselves really changed. They no longer recognize themselves as they were before. And this is not simply due to the fact that they are sad about having undergone a difficult event.”

It is more profoundly on the level of the entire way of living that they come to realize that a new being is within them, a being whom; they do not recognize. It is a very fundamental level of cognitive crisis as well. The patient’s post-trauma, the sufferers of trauma, the survivors of trauma they sometimes fail to recognize themselves and the world around them.

It is almost as if a different person comes up which can be an imposter to the look-alike but an imposter to the original subject. There is no connection at all to the original subject. This is a very key difference that Malabou is offering so that is something which we need to take into account.

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It now appears that the impact of social war is just as forceful as a brain lesion and no less violent than being struck by a bullet or an iron bar. Even if such blows do not always occur as sudden events but tend to be more continuous or harassing, their sense, like that of a brain lesion, remains dissimulated beneath an absence of sense—social conflict without dialectic, as anonymous as a natural catastrophe—an absence that reveals *the very coolness of the political and the social today*.

Damasio affirms:

Developmental sociopaths or psychopaths are well known to all of us from the daily news. They steal, they rape, they kill, they lie. They are often smart. The threshold at which their emotions kick in, when they do, is so high that they appear unflappable, and are, from their self reports, unfeeling and uncaring. They are the very picture of the cool head we were told to keep in order to do the right thing. In cold blood, and to everybody’s obvious disadvantage including their own, sociopaths often repeat their crimes. They are in fact another example of a pathological state in which a decline in rationality is accompanied by a diminution or absence of feeling.⁶¹

We retain this formulation: “the threshold at which their emotions kick in.” Reflecting upon trauma, today, obviously constitutes a reflection on the nature of this threshold. Difficulty letting oneself be touched is the evil of our times, the paradoxical result of being wounded. To be wounded, indeed,

This is a very interesting section because Malabou talks about the idea of coolness and by coolness she mentions, she refers to the subject who is unaffected by anything. The sense of

being indifferent or unsensitized to anything or any stimuli around themselves. She refers to the work of Antonio Damasio to a large extent.

It appears that the impact of social war is just as forceful as a brain lesion and no less violent than being struck by a bullet or an iron bar. This is why it gets really interesting. She talks about the conversions to be made between trauma as a medical event, as a physical event and trauma as a social event. As a social war can have sometimes the same traumatic effect let us say compared to being hit by a bullet or hit by an iron bar which is a blunt force.

Even if such blows do not always occur as sudden events but tend to be more continuous or harassing, their sense like that of a brain lesion remains dissimulated beneath an absence of sense. Social conflict without dialectic as anonymous as a natural catastrophe; an absence that reveals the very coolness of the political and the social today. This coolness has a nihilistic quality to it.

This coolness has a disturbing detachment to it and that is something that Malabou is picking on. Damasio affirms and this is a quotation from Damasio. Developmental sociopaths or psychopaths are well known to all of us from the daily news. They steal, they rape, they kill, they lie. They are often smart. The threshold at which their emotions kick in when they do so is so high that they appear unflappable and are, from their self reports, unfeeling and uncaring.

They are the very picture of the cool head we are told to keep in order to do the right thing. In cold blood and to everyone's obvious disadvantage including their own, sociopaths often repeat their crimes. They are in fact another example of a pathological state in which a decline in rationality is accompanied by a diminution or absence of feeling.

Malabou is drawing on it quite a bit because Damasio talks about the equation between emotion and cognition or how emotions actually help in the decision-making process, in a rational decision-making process. Now what Damasio says over here is that the whole idea of the psychopath or the sociopath one of the fundamental features of those unfortunate people

is the fact that their ability to emote goes away, their ability to connect emotionally goes away.

There is a coolness which comes in and that makes them unfeeling or uncaring. In other words, the biggest causality in this particular situation is empathy. The empathy goes away, the ability to empathize goes away and empathy has a medical cerebral quality and equally empathy has an extended social inactive quality. The causality of empathy or the crisis of empathy operates at both levels.

The medical level, the embedded level as well as the more extended and inactive level and that is something that Malabou highlights drawing on Damasio. It is reflecting upon trauma today constitutes a reflection on the nature of this threshold. The threshold in which emotions come in for psychopaths is an interesting concept; the liminal quality in which emotions get in and how they who and the subject in a way.

Difficulty letting oneself be touched is the evil of our times, the paradoxical result of being wounded. She is trying to make the connection between how this idea of indifference or being indifferent to whatever is happening around us it is almost become a social phenomenon given a lifestyle, given how we are encouraged to live in isolation, the very high premium place of privacy, individuality.

They all make this, they all resulted in this industry of untouchability or industry of indifference, we are not touched by anything, we are not affected by anything and that becomes cool and in bold sense as cool as being stylish, fashionable and also cool and has been detached. This is a very interesting play of coolness over here.

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is to be touched, struck by a blow—"Touché!", as one says in a duel. To touch thus means precisely to wound (as in "*il a été gravement touché*" [he was gravely touched]).⁶² But the "touching" of the wound, today, has generated an inability to feel touching, *an inability to be touched affectively, which is the sign that one has been "touched"—that is, wounded.*

How do we explain this paralysis of touching paradoxically caused by the impact or contact of catastrophe? Davoine and Gaudillière declare: "Whether or not it has a neurological origin, the impossibility of feeling anything blurs the mirror that connects us to ourselves and to others."⁶³ There is an undeniable link between *brain lesions* and *lesions in otherness*.⁶⁴ When there is no organic lesion, "what has been injured is the very dimension of otherness."⁶⁵

What knowledge resides in this coolness? Difficult to explain by recourse to an immanent drive of destruction, impossible to associate with a determinate libidinal investment, the posttraumatic state is a gaping wound that appears on all the battlefields of contemporary society. A normal reaction to an abnormal situation, it inscribes the enigma of its event upon the global stage.

"To be wounded indeed is to be touched, struck by a blow, Touche as one says on a duel." She is using a dual metaphor. If one gets touched by someone in a dual manner, we say "Touche", that means we got touched and that is cool. To touch thus means precisely to wound. But the touching of the wound today has generated an inability to feel touching, an inability to be touched affectively which is the sign that one has been touched that is wounded."

This becomes really paradoxical and what she is saying here is the biggest wound of modern life today is the absence of wound or the absence of the ability to be wounded or the ability to be touched. She is looking at the connection between touch and wound.

If we are wounded by something that means we are sensitive to a certain situation. Now what happens in this modern life of isolation and individuality and privacy is the disappearance of empathy, the disappearance of affect becomes interesting because that makes one more and more immune to empathy and affect and that makes one more and more outside of this touchable parameter and that makes one a psychopath in a sense that which is almost medical and quality.

Malabou defines the modern condition as an inability to be wounded and that is paradoxically the new wounded which is also the title of the book. The coolness, the detachment from stimuli around us. We can see how this can be comparable "Mrs. Dalloway" of Virginia

Woolf because at several points in the novel Septimus tells the reader we are inhabiting his mind that he cannot feel, he cannot emote.

He cannot connect emotionally to anything around him and that is a problem, that is the biggest problem that he has. He questions what knowledge resides in this coolness. Difficult to explain by recourse to an imminent drive of destruction, impossible to associate with a determinate libidinal investment, the post-traumatic state is a gaping wound that appears on all the battlefields of contemporary society.

A normal reaction to an abnormal situation, it inscribes the enigma of its event upon the global stage. We see how Malabou begins to use theatrical performative metaphors. The global stage is such with modern consumerism, with high capitalism where we just keep consuming things. We are trained to be unaffected by anything and that is a new wounded.

That is the new battlefield of contemporary society which is also paradoxically very signify of sophistication. The more sophisticated we are, the more consumed we are, the more prestigious we are as a consumer, the less we feel for anything around us because we are satisfied as a consuming subject. This is a post-traumatic stress state and current contemporary situation.

It is a gaping wound which is to say it produces normal reactions through abnormal situations like we see something happening in front of us, an accident, event, injury and we stay normal and this coolness is paradoxically or the absence of wound, the absence of being touched, the absence of being affected is the biggest wound in modern society and Malabou is making a brilliant sweeping.

Brilliant fascinating connection between consumerism, cultural capitalism and with trauma not just as a medical situation, not just a medical state but also as an extended social event which is consuming all of this in different degrees.