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# DIAKRISIS

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**Volume I**

*Immanence and Transcendence*

**E I K O N**

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## Diakrisis: INPR opening

EMMANUEL FALQUE

**S**PONTANEOUS CREATIONS OFTEN EXIST IN nature but rarely in philosophy. Yet, the emergence of the International Network of Philosophy of Religion (INPR) was such an instance. France and the United States have long been linked, not just in friendship, but in thought. Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, and, more recently, Jean-Luc Marion have been among some of the French pioneers bridging this divide. More than a matter of an affiliation to a particular school of thought, a true “bridge of friendship” has been constructed across the ocean, as if these waters were not enough to separate us. One may be surprised by this poetic rendering of a reciprocal relationship, especially as the French have been accustomed to falsely thinking that traversing the Atlantic goes one way (from Europe to the United States) and not the other (from the United States to Europe). We must correct this mistaken idea. There are many “Rubicons” to cross, and this passing must be bidirectional. We never think of ourselves without also becoming crossed by others. The United States is not only a place of welcome for French philosophy but also a veritable dwelling for experimentation and confrontation whereby each side is transformed.

INPR was founded on this conviction. Far from being the property of the few, this “network of thought and friendship” belongs to all those who have previously participated and who continue to participate. The question is not about claiming a particular school of continental thought but, instead, of crossing perspectives whereby each can learn from the other what is also true of his or her own identity.

In this sense, INPR is not intent on being an insular group of established scholars who have already penetrated the intellectual scene. Rather, young professors, doctoral students, and those whose philosophical decisions are still emerging serve as the strength and meaning of this network of friends, preparing today for the philosophy of tomorrow. This is the conviction INPR seeks to retain.

As is well-known in France, there is great diversity and opposition in thought between those who claim a pure secularism and those who seek an explicit, or public, meaning of catholicity. We find something analo-

gous, albeit in a different way, between those scholars in religious study departments on the one hand and confessional faculty who study theology or philosophy on the other. Here again, INPR aims to bring these groups together. All the better to directly engage these differences so that we each may have a greater existence, and to grow in respect and progress together.

Meeting for the first time in Paris in June 2015 on the theme of “Description,” INPR met again in Paris from June 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 on the theme “Immanence and Transcendence”. This volume contains contributions from this gathering that addressed this theme and significantly enriched our thinking on it.

INPR is exceptionally grateful to *Diakrisis* for generously welcoming this collection of papers and for giving a voice to this intercontinental crossing. This publication marks a moment where young shoots emerge from the ground and are gathered together so that their bouquet, fragile and deliberately diversified, may be unified according to a certain mode of the beautiful. Only the future may tell, retrospectively, the meaning of this moment. There is a time for everything – a time to produce and a time to read again. Today is a time to produce, progressing thought forward while not forgetting to look backward so not to kill the bud that has already started to grow so well.

I would like to thank Brian Becker (Lesley University) for his hard work and perseverance in leading the INPR Publication Committee. I would also like to thank the other members of the INPR committee, Kevin Hart (University of Virginia), Richard Kearney (Boston College), and John P. Manoussakis (College of the Holy Cross), for their willingness to support this project. This recognition is not merely an acknowledgment of a collegial allegiance but also testifies to a profound gratitude for having embarked on this journey of learning together. In this sense, the International Network of Philosophy of Religion (INPR) is entrusted to a collaborative group of scholars seeking shape and transform it. There is no “network” without each of its members being involved in caring and cultivating it.

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## The Extra-Phenomenal

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### Abstract

Everything is phenomenon, everything is gift, or everything is given. This presupposition of phenomenology, which makes givenness (*Gegebenheit*) the starting point for phenomenality, is not altogether self-evident. It is not sufficient to look merely at the reverse of the gift (phenomenology of the night), but it is a matter of questioning the impossibility of even giving (the night of phenomenology). Questioning the strategies of the contemporary reappropriations of Kant—radicalization (Heidegger), disproportion (Ricoeur), and inversion (Marion)—this text works under a fourth possibility, seldom examined and yet still envisaged by Kant: the “Extra-Phenomenal”, or in other words, the “Chaos”, the “pell-mell”, the “Cinnabar”, or the “melee of sensations”.

**Keywords:** phenomenology, donation, night, extra-phenomenal, Cinnabar, melee of sensations, madness, trauma, sickness.

WE HAVE, ON THE ONE hand, the “phenomenology of night” and, on the other, the “night of phenomenology”; there is an immense gulf, indeed an untraversable distance, between the two. To speak of the night of phenomenology is not to speak of non-appearance in the possible horizon of appearing but of the suppression of appearing itself—the very conditions of appearance.<sup>1</sup> If the possibility of appearing itself were to disappear, then it is not “non-manifestation” which would be in question but, rather, the non-possibility of “manifesting.” In contrast to the *possibility of the impossibility of the phenomenon*—the non-appearance of a phenomenon that could

<sup>1</sup> ‘Appearing’ here translates the French *apparaître*. Typically used in a juridical context, the verb primarily means “to make oneself present” or, more colloquially, “to show up” (He appears before the court.). When used in conjunction with *faire* (*faire apparaître*), it means “to evidence,” “to indicate” (“The defendant’s self-contradictory testimony evidences his guilt.). Falque uses the verb *apparaître* instead of the verb *apparaitre*, which lacks the twofold juridical connotation, and the noun *apparition*, which would refer to appearances or phenomena in the ontic sense. Thus, “the suppression of appearing [*apparaître*]” does not denote the non-presence of possible phenomena but, more radically, the impossibility of “showing up” and, thus, of “evidencing” givenness—something which non-presence, or lack, can still do.

appear or that remains withdrawn—there exists (or rather doesn't) the *impossibility of the possibility of the phenomenon*. This impossibility is not the closed horizon of existence (death, for example) but the suppression of the possibility itself of a horizon within which something might still appear: the annihilation of all transcendental loci of appearing. Such suppression or annihilation could result, for example, from radical evil, trauma, or psychological disturbance broadly construed, each of which inflicts suffering to the point of numbness and ultimately leads to the disappearance of the possibility itself of feeling. Paradoxically, evil [*mal*] does the most harm [*fait mal*] when it no longer hurts [*ne fait plus mal*], or when the vital conditions by which I am affected are annulled as such.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we cannot always be content to speak of phenomena (Husserl), appearance (Heidegger), epiphany (Levinas), givenness (Marion), speech (Chrétien), inexperience (Lacoste), which is nonetheless a mode of experience, or auto-affection (Henry), whose ownness [*le propre*] consists precisely in always being affected by itself.<sup>3</sup> Put differently, the entire tradition of phenomenology (and not just in France) has been fixated—consciously or not—on “appearance” to such a degree that non-appearance has been understood solely as the *privation* of a phenomenon that could or should otherwise appear. Thus, if there is a “dark night of the soul”—to borrow John of the Cross’ spiritual term—then it consists merely in waiting for clarity, meaning that any darkness presupposes or is rendered possible by the light.<sup>4</sup>

However, can we truly say that all night, all darkness, is nothing but the *privation* of light or of some awaited phenomenon, as if phenomenality determined the horizon of all givens? Is there not some “*other night*,” to use Maurice Blanchot’s term—not the primordial night of all-encompassing darkness nor the romanticized night that falls upon us in the evening but the night in which “everything has disappeared,” the alien night that neither shelters us nor lifts upon dawns arrival. The night that casts us out. “This night is never pure night. It is essentially impure. It is not that beautiful diamond, the void, which Mallarmé contemplates,” says Blanchot. “*In the night* [the phenomenology of night],” he continues, “one can die; we reach oblivion, But this *other night* [the night of phenomenology] is the death no

<sup>2</sup> For more on this point, see my article “Mal et finitude. Dialogue avec Ricoeur et Levinas,” *Études théologiques et religieuses*, no. 2 (forthcoming): 413-431.

<sup>3</sup> This point comes from René Descartes’ “Meditation II: Of the Nature of the Human Mind; and that it is more easily known than the Body” in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*: “...[I]t is at least quite certain that it seems to me that I see light, that I hear noise and that I feel heat. That cannot be false; properly speaking it is what is in me called feeling...” (*The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [1911], 10.). This passage of Descartes is analyzed by Michel Henry in his *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Brick (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. Mirabai Starr (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2002), 13: “The emptiness of the dark night is a yielding emptiness. It is an emptiness that gives way to the fullness of all possibility...”

one dies, the forgetfulness which gets forgotten. In the heart of oblivion it is memory without rest.”<sup>5</sup> Blanchot’s Thomas is “obscure,” then, in that he is nocturnal, or better, in that he himself is Darkness:

[O]utside himself there was something identical to his own thought which his glance or his hand could touch. Repulsive fantasy. Soon the night seemed to him gloomier and more terrible than any night, as if it had in fact issued from a wound of thought which had ceased to think, thought ironically taken as an object by something other than thought. It was night itself.<sup>6</sup>

In place of the night as *lacking* light (the night of obscurity), I would privilege, then, the night as *denied* light altogether (the darkness that is oblivious even to the possibility itself of being brought to light). Not only have apparitions disappeared but also the very possibility of appearing, the horizon as such—hence *the extra-phenomenal*.

In this way, to question not simply the given but givenness itself—even in its lack, which simply reiterates its presence—is to interrogate the possibility itself of signification. Phenomenology and hermeneutics have, unsurprisingly given their connectedness, both fallen prey to this fixation on appearance in their mutual presupposing of signification. To maintain the well-known Husserlian formula that “all consciousness is *consciousness of something*” or even Ricoeur’s claim that “[t]he most fundamental phenomenological presupposition of a philosophy of interpretation is that every question concerning any sort of ‘being’ [étant] is a question about the meaning of that ‘being’” is *de facto* to situate all lived experience and understanding within the paradigm of signification, albeit this paradigm is denied from time to time and the mystery of obscurity is injected therein.<sup>7</sup> In overemphasizing openness (*Dasein*), we fail to see that its negation is not merely closure. What does or would it mean for a door to shut once and for all, to reach a true *im-passe* because one has forgotten what “getting through it” even means? Better, the issue presented by such an *im-passe*, or dead-end, is precisely that one becomes issueless to oneself, one’s case seems closed, regardless of whether one should or could, in reality, “get through” it. In short, how does

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), “The Outside, The Night.”

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, trans. Robert Lambertson (Station Hill Press, 1989), 14.

<sup>7</sup> M. Blanchot, *Thomas the Obscure*, 14. French ed., M. Blanchot, *Thomas l’Obscur* (1950), (Paris: L’imaginaire Gallimard, 1992), ch. II, 17. En remerciant Jérôme de Gramont et Kevin Hart qui, par leurs travaux et leur amitié, m’auront conjointement conduit sur cette même voie. Cf. J. de Gramont, *Blanchot et la phénoménologie, L’effacement, L’événement*, (Paris: Corlevour, 2011), ch. 5, 107–136: “Blanchot and Lévinas” (especially the “first reason”, 110-116: “Thinking from the outside”). See also K. Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), ch. 4, 105–132: “Losing the power to say ‘I’” (especially 114–120: comment by Thomas the Obscure).

the extra-phenomenal differ from the non-phenomenal? Such is the question signaled by Blanchot's "outside," Levinas' *Il y a*, Nietzsche's "chaos," and Bataille's "heterogeneity." They all refer to the erasure of the horizon of phenomenology, which means that immanence is neither leapt beyond through apophatism (Marion), nor burrowed beneath through *Khôra* (Derrida), nor identified with its frame (Deleuze), nor reduced to pathos (Henry), but obstructed and transformed into radically "alien":

The reality of *heterogeneous* elements is not of the same order as that of *homogenous* elements. *Homogenous* reality presents itself with the abstract and neutral aspect of strictly defined and identified objects (basically, it is the specific reality of solid objects). *Heterogeneous* reality is that off a force or shock... [I]t is identical to the structure of the unconscious.<sup>8</sup>

This heterogeneity, this mode of "resistance," which is precisely a subtraction of "significance," poses the question of the limit of phenomenality, even of the act of philosophizing itself. Nevertheless, significance is a constant for all phenomenological thinkers, like a transcendental structure of the given—albeit overturned and even denied from time to time. For this reason, any response to the question thus posed must pass through Kant. Perhaps surprisingly, the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the starting point for any strategy or method of treating the given. Heidegger, for example, reduces the given to *finitude* and restricts it to the paradigm of space and time as a priori forms of sensibility. This reduction to finitude, in the eyes of Ricoeur, reveals our *fallibility*, that is, the limits of our knowledge, the impotence of our will, our fragility. Marion's *saturated phenomenon*, however, reverses this move—a reversal which I contest—and inverts rather than surpasses the Kantian categories. However, behind these three different positions vis-à-vis Kant—radicalization (Heidegger), disproportion (Ricoeur), and inversion (Marion)—lies not exactly a fourth possibility but, more precisely, an *impossible possibility* or, rather, an *impossibility of the possible*: that which renders null, indeed unimaginable, the possibility itself of "imagining" either the limit, or disproportionality, or the revealed. Kant glimpses such an impossibility in his passage on cinnabar or the "melee of sensations":

If cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, if a human being were now changed into this animal shape, now into that one, if on the longest day the land were covered now with fruit, now with ice and snow, then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Georges Bataille, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," trans. Carl R. Lovitt, *New German Critique*, no. 16 (Winter 1979): 64–87 (Candor, NY: Telos Press Ltd., 1979), 70.

<sup>9</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A 101–102.