



From Alphonso Lingis' *Dangerous Emotions* (Berkeley/
Los Angeles: University of California, 2000).

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Chimpanzees, gorillas, Neanderthals, Cro-Magnons are moving with the sun crossing the sky, moving with the wind rustling the leaves of baobabs and acacias, the movements of their legs and hands syncopating with the bends and springs of the elephant grass. A flight of flamingos draws their heads skyward, a rush of wildebeests drives wildness into them, they do a punk slam-dance with the scavenger hyenas. Their hands are extended upon one another's arms, backs, legs, heads, moving with the tensions and flexions of torsos. They lie on the ground, shifting under the recoil of the grass and the stirring of small insects; overhead the branches laden with leaves and berries sway with the gusts of wind. Their fingers are clasping the fingers of those leafy branches, berries falling from fingers to fingers. Their fingers are replying to the movements of their lips and tongues, also bringing berries to and taking berries from one another's fingers and lips. Inside their mouths marshes of bacteria pulsate, neutralizing the toxins in those berries.

They murmur with the rustling leaves, answer the chatter of vervets and mandrills, the bellowings of elephants, and the cries of shrikes and eagles. They hum and chant with one another as they move. Outbursts of laughter spread among them. In laughter they recognize one another as members of the same species and are attracted to one another. They wail and weep together over a lifeless child, over an adult dead of fever. They intone blessings over exquisite forest-floor and grandiose cosmic

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events that delight them; they utter curses that challenge and pursue evil forces to their redoubts. Their pleasures and afflictions are not inner subjective states; they are radiations. The laughing, grieving, blessing, and cursing gestures and words with which they hold on to things and events are not signs designating meanings fixed in a code.

As the sun descends and the darkness softens the hard edges of things, their eyelids close. Lying on the ground, they rest their heads on one another's bellies and thighs, their legs and hands extending and retracting when the torsos they rest on shift to open bends of intestines for cascading leaves and berries and four hundred species of gluttonous bacteria. Through the long night the wind stirs, the leaves of grass hum as they shift positions.

The feet of one human animal stumble on the cliff face; the hand of the other grasps and pulls him erect. Gradations of strength are established in assisting and in contending with one another. Among gregarious animals, contention involves assistance, and becomes contests to establish leadership. The spiral horns of two buck kudu lower, swerve, lock; their legs push; the one buckles and falls. The lead kudu, sighting a lion, paws the ground, the calf's tail swirls and its legs spring and sprint. One human, the alpha male, drives off the cupidinous junior male, who feints, and another cupidinous son runs off with the alpha female. The male or female human with the most experience and endurance leads the pack, watching for danger.

Then, in the desert, in the steppes, there arose the despot. He no longer wrestled with the others in the alpha male position, exposing his moves to adversary forces and charges, exposing his legs to be kicked under him, putting himself in the front line before dangers to the group. The despot covered his head with a blank

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screen, his face. On this blank screen signs take form.¹ The equivocal laughters and wanton gropings of the multitude run up against his face as against a blank wall.

A face faces to express meanings. A face faces to express subjective feelings. More than "express"—there are no meanings without a blank wall on which signs are inscribed and effaced; there is no self-conscious consciousness without black holes where its states of pleasure and displeasure turn.

The surfaces of the animal heads of the multitude are animated with the movements of the body and of the surrounding things. These heads shiver with the cold wind, giggle with the tickling seaweed, glow in the monsoon, grimace with the weight of the rock the hands grip, quake in the night, laugh and weep and yawn by contagion. The words of the multitude, leading their eyes, their laughter, and their grief upon things and events are resonant with overtones and polydirectional. They are equivocal; there is no laughter without tears, no blessing without curses.

A face is a field that accepts some expressions and connections and neutralizes others. It is a screen and a framework. To be confronted with a face is to envision a certain range of things that could be expressed on it and to have available a certain range of things one could address to it. One sees what one might say, what one should not have said.

The pronouncements of the despot extend in linear progression to align the crisscrossing sounds, tones, and also movements coming from the multitude. In his words, one meaning, one direction, is fixed. The words the despot utters are directives, imperatives.

When a question "What is there?" arose in the multitude, the words that responded led them to see or to invoke the thing or event itself. Now, faced with the words

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of the despot, they must ask: "What did he mean?" His words separate a meaning from the pattern, directions, and force of things and events. Their words must capture his meaning; his meaning is designated by repeatable words. His words are signs, repeatably designating one and the same fixed meaning.

The laughter, weeping, blessing, and cursing of the multitude are fields of force and radiation, not inner states of self-consciousness. On the blank wall of the face of the despot, there are black holes dark as night in which his eyes and his ears are suspended. The words of his subjects facing him—aligning their actions upon him—enter these black holes, where his pleasure and displeasure simmer. A spiral of subjectivity turns in these black holes: a movement turning on itself and existing for itself. There the sound and fury of the multitude are directed to a pleasure and displeasure that turns on itself and sanctions and blames.

The authority of the despot is the black holes of his face. To be faced by him is to be judged. His look aligns the laughing and lustful advances, rhythms, and divagations in the multiplicity, directs them to himself, where they are sanctioned or terminated in the black holes of his look. The multitude will know his pleasure and his displeasure only in words put on the blank wall of his face. His arbitration operates by binary oppositions, dichotomies and bipolarities: No. Yes.

The despot demands that his subjects give an account of themselves. They must account for what they did, what they will do. They must inwardly code what they are now as coherent with, consequent upon, what they did yesterday. They must make what they will do tomorrow be the consequence of what they say today. Their movements must no longer be immediate responses to the rhythms and rushes about them. Their voices no

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longer resonate, chant, invoke, call forth; they respond to the voice of a law that orders one to move on down the line. Before the despot they extend over their heads the blank surfaces of faces. They are these blank walls for signs—nothing but subjects of discourse, coding, ordering their animal bodies.

The despot orders his subjects to exercise surveillance over their movements. They themselves are to make the present movement validate the past movement, and make the present moment a pledge for the movement to come. They are to line up the movements of their animal bodies before the black holes of their own looks, where these movements are subjected to judgment, to yes and to no.

About the wandering multitude the environment streams by. They move with its patterns, directions, and forces. About the despot who stands facing them, the turbulent prairies, winds, and desert become a landscape. The pulsings, shiftings, fluxes, and thrusts of continental shelves, oceans and skies, the other animals, the plants and the viruses are covered over with meanings sanctioned in his pleasure and displeasure. Drifting dunes and shifting shadows become a face of the earth inscribed with signs. In the black holes of its glades and caverns, its forbidden sanctuaries, he sees ancestral and demonic passions addressed to his subjectivity.

The polis, the geopolitical empire: in every cubicle of the high-rises, the blank screen of a television set faces the inmates. The blank screen flickers—lines appear within an oval, angular, or round border: the prime minister, the minister of defense, the leader of the opposing army, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, the president of Quantas, the star of the national rugby team, the star of the Hollywood superproduction face millions of viewers. The lines, wrinkles, traits of the face

oscillate. One does not see, divine, or touch the nervous circuitry, the thin strands of muscles, and the inner rivers coursing billions of enzymes, bacteria, and macrophages in a depth behind this blank wall; the face is all surface, a signboard on which a succession of words will appear. In ninety-second sound bites words will fix a meaning for all the wobbling, swarming lines of sallies and feints in the electoral campaign, in the economy, in the stadiums, in the new fashions, in the new trend in pop singers. The blank wall of the face is perforated with black holes; in them the eyes turn, sanctioning or censuring, yes, no. The president, the minister of the interior, the leader of the opposing army, the president of the multinational corporation, the captain of the Olympics team, the heavy metal star is authoritatively pleased, is authoritatively displeased.

In the streets and corridors, in the offices and factories, schools and hospitals, legs move toward goals fixed by words. Lest they stray, there are words written at highway intersections, at street corners, on doors, and along the corridors of shopping malls. Hands reach toward words written on boxes, bottles, and cans. Fingers touch letters and words on security alarm pads, microwaves, phonographs, television sets, computers, and cellular phones. The posture in the torso and neck responds to words—attention: the boss is looking; the highway cop is checking the radar screen; the father, teacher, tour guide is looking over there; the judge, foreman, council member, coach, star has arrived; the face is appearing on the screen. Attention. At ease. Attention. At ease.

The citizens do not lean against, entwine, fondle, and smell one another's bodies, feeling the streams and cascades and backwaters pulsing within; they deal with the blank walls of faces extended over their own heads. They have to face one another and question one another.

A question is not a supplication, an entreaty, nor a velleity for knowledge just put out in the air; it is already an order, a command. (Beggars, the destitute, pupils, factory workers, enlisted soldiers, prisoners, and patients have no right to question; they can only entreat.²) A question commands a certain focus of attention, a selection of resources on hand, a certain type of language. It lays down a direction; it imposes a directive to think further down a certain track.

Facing one another, we require responsibility. And responsibility requires integrity—not only sincerity but also an integration of the faculties and resources of the speaker. One has not only to respond to the greetings and questions of others, but also to answer for what one says and said five minutes ago and yesterday and last year. “But you said. . . .” “But you promised. . . .” To say “I” is not simply to designate oneself as the one now making this utterance; it is to reiterate the same term and attribute to it again utterances and deeds previously predicated of it. If we have changed, we have to reinstate what we were by way of offering a motive for what we have now become. “Yes I promised to get a job and get off welfare, but I was injured in the bus collision.”

To find our identity in facing others is to exist and act under accusation. It is to have to provide a coherent verbal justification for movements that emanate from our body. We cultivate a memory in which everything is filed in an accessible system; we make what we feel and do today consistent with what we felt and did yesterday, what we were trained to do, what we were brought up to be. Know thyself! The unexamined life is not worth living! What we think and say today is a pledge and a commitment, to which tomorrow, next year, the next decade are subjugated. The blank wall and black holes of the face of Socrates lurk about in the workshops, assembly

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halls, and studios of the city, accusing and discrediting the carpenter, the leader of men or of women, who cannot give a linear rational justification for his or her actions—discrediting even the artist, the poet, the composer who cannot give a verbal explanation of his or her composition.

The temptation not to answer for something that was seen or said or done through our organism yesterday—to attribute it to another psychic agency, and to begin to break up into discontinuous psychic sequences—is the very formula for antisocial existence. The schizophrenic is a sociopath. Multiple personality disorder is the final psychosis psychiatry has to deal with. Society sees the sociopath not simply in the violent—violence can be, as in policemen or professional boxers, perfectly socialized—but in someone who leads a double or triple life.

The face extends down the whole length of a body. The hands and fingers no longer probe, punch, and caress with the furry caterpillars, the raccoons, and the octopods; held at a distance from contact with any other body, they gesticulate, diagramming meaningful signals and punctuations consistent with the words set forth. The very genitals, exposed in the collapse of posture and skills, the collapse of will, the dissolute decomposition of orgasm undergoing material transubstantiations, solidifying, gelatinizing, liquefying, vaporizing, are under accusation the whole length of their existence: They must mean something; they must carry the dead weight of a meaning; they must express respect for the person, the ego, the identity, the authority of the face; they must confirm the partner's identity; they must serve the population policy of the nation-state and its patron god. Everything animal in the body must be covered up, with clothing that extends the face—the blank surfaces of the business suit and the tailored two-piece suit of the career

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woman with the black holes of its buttons, the blue of deliveryman's uniform and the white of painter's dungarees, the uniform of flight attendant and politician's wife and university student, uniforms on which orders are seen and where black holes of subjectivity judge and sanction. The surfaces of clothing accept some expressions and connections and neutralize others. The blank wall of a face, extended over a body, detaches the body's skin from its pulsations, flexions, and exudations and makes it a surface for the display of meaning.

But it also happens that the depth of the body invades the face, darkening it with ambiguity and ardor. The expressive lines of the lips and cheeks vacillate, lose the train of the expression they were formulating. They shimmer with the caresses of the sunlight, tremble with the throbbing of the insects and rustling trees. Into the smooth contours of the cheeks, blank for the inscription of signals, there emerges an exposed and susceptible carnality. From behind the carapace of clothing, all the animals within migrate to the face, sole surface of exposure, to connect with the animals outside. The lips crave contact with the lips of the dolphin, the nose brushes the whiskered nose of the Siamese cat, the cheeks seek the caresses of ferns in the forest night.

When our gaze meets such a face, we see freckles that stream off in the autumn leaves, eyes we cross over instead of seeing ourselves in them, looks where our looks can surf. We see the mane of the centaur-woman billowing across the windy prairie, sunlight dancing across the wrinkles of the old woman feeding pigeons in the park, sand dunes of the cheeks and lips of a woman in Hiroshi Teshigahara's film *Woman of the Dunes*, gelatinous crystals of the eyes in which we see the effulgence of stars that burned out millions of light-years ago, open mouth

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into which we push our tongue upon gardens of six hundred species of microorganisms.

When someone's greeting trembles with the dance of springtime or threnody of winter, his voice invites us to hear the murmur of nature that resounds in it. When another turns her eyes to us, she does not look in our eyes only to order them or to find the map of the landscape; her eyes seek out first the vivacity and delight of the light in our eyes which summon her forth. The gaze of another that touches us lightly and turns aside, and invokes not the glare of our gaze but the darkness our eyes harbor, refracts to us the summons of the impersonal night.

Beneath the face as a surface for signs, we see the skin in its carnality and vulnerability. We see in the spasms, the wrinkles, the wounds on her skin, the urgency of her hunger, her thirst, her cold, her fever, her fear, or her despair. We are immediately afflicted with these wounds, these wants, this suffering. In our hands extended to clasp her hands, touch turns to tact and tenderness.

The suffering we see may well be a suffering that does not seek to be consoled: let us beware of setting out to alleviate a suffering that another needs and clings to as his or her destiny—the inner torments of Beethoven, the hardships and heartaches of the youth who has gone to join the guerrillas in the mountains, the grief of the mother mourning the loss of her child. To be afflicted with another's suffering requires that we care about the things the sufferer cares for. The suffering we see in the bloodless white of an anguished face may well be not the suffering of her own hunger and thirst, but suffering for the animals in her care that are dying of the drought or for the peregrines in the poisoned skies, for the crumbling temple, for the nests of seabirds drowned in the tidal wave, for the glaciers melting under skies whose carbon-dioxide layers are trapping the heat of the earth.

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And is there not always joy in the face before us, even joy in suffering? In the midst of grief and torment there is an upsurge of force that affirms the importance and truth of what one is tormented by, of what one grieves over. This upsurge of force that affirms itself unrestrictedly is joy—joy at having known what is now lost, and joy in finding us.

The thumbs-up from the Brazilian street kid—his mouth voraciously gobbling our extra spaghetti, too full to smile or say *obrigado*—is not only contentment in the satisfaction of his hunger; it is the joy of being in the streets so full of excitements and in the glory of the sun reigning over the beaches of Rio. His laughter pealing over the squalls and blasts of the urban jungle gives rise to his hunger and to his relishing the goodness of restaurant spaghetti.