

## BEING AT HOME IN SOLITARY QUARANTINE. PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYTICS AND EXISTENTIAL MEDITATIONS

NADER EL-BIZRI\*

**ABSTRACT.** This ontological investigation is mediated via multifaceted phenomenological analytics and existential mediations over the architectural mode of *being at home in solitary quarantine* under communal global lockdowns. The present line of inquiry is undertaken by way of probing the attuned metamorphoses in solitude of the lived experiencing of the intertwined phenomena of space-time, embodiment-in-the-flesh versus being-with-others via cybernetic and telecommunication technologies, dwelling amidst things and paraphernalia, and the underlying affectivities of the mode of being-toward-death.

**Keywords:** *Architecture, Confinement, Embodiment, Solitude, Technology*

### Exordium

The present article offers précised prolegomena to selected phenomenological analytics and existential meditations over the phenomenon of *being at home in solitary quarantine* within a confined architectural place during the communal lockdowns of the *Covid-19 coronavirus* planetary outbreak of 2020.<sup>1</sup> This line of inquiry probes the attuned metamorphoses in the lived experiencing (*Erlebnis; le vécu*) of intertwined phenomena such as: space-time, embodiment-in-the-flesh versus being-with-others via cybernetic and telecommunication technologies, dwelling amidst things and paraphernalia, and of the relatable underlying affectivities of being-toward-death.<sup>2</sup>

---

\* American University of Beirut

<sup>1</sup> The text was composed as a daily dairy during the *Covid-19 coronavirus* pandemic of the Spring 2020, as this unfolded in my solitary quarantine in Lebanon, while being separated from my two sons in England.

<sup>2</sup> This study expands my reflections on architectural-phenomenology and its ontological underpinnings in: Nader El-Bizri, 'On Dwelling: Heideggerian Allusions to Architectural Phenomenology', *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2015): 5-30; Nader El-Bizri, 'Being at Home Among Things: Heidegger's Reflections on Dwelling', *Environment, Space, Place* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2011): 47-71.

Such investigations do not constitute psychological thought-experiments, psychiatric therapies, or psychoanalytic testimonies, even if such modalities merit philosophical ponderings on their own. The focus hereinafter is set on the unfolding of ontological thinking as mediated via phenomenological ponderings over the introspective existential affective dispositions and embodied lived experiences in the architectural mode of *being at home in solitary quarantine*. This present text stands as such as a philosophized diary during the pandemic of a quarantined *Dasein esseulé* (namely of a lonely being here/there [*Da*] in a space-time of confinement).

### A Lived Experiencing of Space-Time

The spatial expansion (*espacement*) via socio-physical distancing in being-apart under global communal lockdowns results in the contraction of space-making (*Einräumen*) within the architectural dwelling-place of self-confinement in solitary quarantine. This felt experiential shrinking in the existential spatiality (*Die existenziale Räumlichkeit*) is more confining in its spatial significance (*Raumbedeutungen*)<sup>3</sup> when the solitary quarantine is prolonged temporally.

Inhabiting a spatial (*räumlich*) leeway (*Spielraum*) and *clearing* (*Lichtung*) within a confined architectural locale passes via a shrunken realm of kinaesthetic de-distancing (*Ent-fernung*) of ambient things in the corporeal acts of room-making (*Einräumen*).<sup>4</sup> This reflects the manner in which the solitary confinement remains situated within the middle (*die sich öffnende Mitte*) in-between (*Zwischen*) in the dialectics of the outside and inside (*la dialectique du dehors et du dedans*). Such state of affairs points to the experiencing of the confining place as a liminal cleavage (*Die Zerklüftung*) between interiority and exteriority. It is set as such at the threshold of a doorway that is left ajar (*entr'ouvert*)<sup>5</sup> in awaiting from the inside the

<sup>3</sup> I addressed some aspects of this question elsewhere through my phenomenological interpretations of Plato's *XΩPA* (*Khôra*) in: Nader El-Bizri, 'ON KAI XΩPA: Situating Heidegger between the *Sophist* and the *Timaeus*', *Studia Phaenomenologica* 4 (2004): 95-97; Nader El-Bizri, '*Ontopoiēsis* and the Interpretation of Plato's *Khôra*', *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*, Vol. LXXXIII (2004): 25-45; Nader El-Bizri, '*Qui êtes-vous Khôra?*': Receiving Plato's *Timaeus*', *Existential Meletai-Sophias*, Vol. XI, Issue 3-4 (2001): 473-490.

<sup>4</sup> I herein refer to the analysis of Martin Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), *GA* 2, §4.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance: Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), pp. 200-201; Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), p. 14; Nader El-Bizri, '*Parerga. Carnet de Croquis: ni oeuvre, ni hors d'oeuvre*', in *Recto-Verso: Redefining the Sketchbook*, eds. Nader El-Bizri, with Angela Bartram and Douglas Gittens (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 27-38.

coming of a delivery of goods from the outside, or of simply looking through a window unto an external deserted public domain under the communal lockdown.

Being in solitary self-confinement at the time of socio-physical-distancing, the relation with others gets mediated via audio-visual tele-communicative technologies or cybernetics that ensure the seeming removal of the distance of separation from them. This semblance of technological de-distancing passes via an immersive simulation of quasi-[virtual]-nearness despite the actuality of the physically extensive remoteness. However, if meeting others is to be enacted in the physical locale, rather than in the simulated cyberspace, then de-distancing occurs at the threshold of the quarantined dwelling-place. A sense of a curbed hospitality with a metamorphosed etiquette settles therein as a new social norm, wherein we address each other from behind a veiling protective mask, or in being separated by the door itself, in order to avoid meeting face-to-face, and by also eschewing the proximity of being side-by-side. Handling the hand-to-hand exchange of goods (delivered-food, cash-money, credit card, etc.) is mediated as well via gloves, and is immediately followed by the sanitizing and disinfection protocols in a heightened sense of prudent hygiene.

The limitedness in the actual architectural place of quarantined solitary self-confinement lets the constrained realm of concretized sensory perceptions be supplemented by daydreaming images from memory and imagination. Perceiving in the immediacies and actualities of presence becomes ever more co-entangled in confluence with the sense of past and future temporalities in remembering and expecting. The mental distension of accounting for the duration of temporality in recollecting past memories, with contentment or regret, and anticipating a future by way of projected previsions, whether reassuring or threatening, becomes a flux of lived experiences via manifold kinaesthetic sensory perceptions. However, a sense of repetitiveness settles within the unfolding of the field of perception within the confining architectural place, and this is accompanied by a temporal prolongation of the sensed duration of the solitary quarantine. The tiresome overfamiliarity with the self-same architectonic physical attributes of the architectural room of spatial-temporal confinement becomes monotonous. This is the case despite the intermittent interferences from external demands or messages, as transmitted into the place of solitary incarceration via telecommunication means, or through the expected continuation of dealing with the work chores online. The home itself begins to feel uncomfortable due to its spatial-temporal confining character. The sameness in the features of the place turns into a tedium in the daily choices of limited spatial perceptions, which dilate the experiencing of the lived inner *timing* of temporality as a felt duration (*durée*).<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> We hint herein at the parlance of Bergson without going deeper into espousing his philosophical doctrine over this take on temporality in the lived experience. His thesis is set in more than one of his oeuvres, such as: Henri Bergson, *Durée et Simultanéité* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1922).

The spatial self-sameness, with the limited adumbration of manifold sensory apperceptions, drags the duration of the experiential temporality almost with perceptual leaps that are akin to stroboscopic effects, and that mark the monotonies of solitude with disinterestedness and sluggishness that turn into loneliness. The ocular-motor kinaesthetic of embodiment in the flesh is locked as such within a temporally recurrent sequence of perceptual acts within a limited realm of spatiality. Monotonies mark the rituals of quotidian care, hygiene, sanitization, eating-habits, home-entertainment, and oscillating between the motivation for physical exercise and eutenics, or their lack thereof. Such seeming repetitiveness in the perceptual patterns becomes irksome in terms of the flux of the manifoldness of sensory experiences that are lived through monotonously, like what is sensed as being *déjà vécu*, albeit, without implied precognitions. A dislocating spatial sense of temporal slowness becomes burdened by *ennui*. This is the case in spite of the fact that in our epoch of modern telecommunication and cybernetics, the virtual interactions soften the sense of isolated loneliness, wherein the dullness of solitary confinement does not readily amount to feeling lonely *per se*.

Gazing into the limited perceptual field of vision, seeing it all in a spectacle of wholeness, conceals the contemplation of its architectonic details, and makes the bored senses experience the place of solitary confinement as a spatial depth of emptiness, despite the vivid colours or intricate shapes of what is experienced within the home, or of what appears through a window as a distant inaccessible locale or landscape. This distressing side of perception feels like the experienced uncanny event of staring despairingly into a gaping hole that swallows the meaningfulness of a lifeworld.

Mundane agitations arise from the vexing projection of the expectations of others upon us during the communal lockdown, or in anticipating what may still unfold in terms of ordinary affairs and everyday business when the quarantines are phased out and eased. The self-isolation may still offer as such an opportunity to catch up on what we might have not managed to accomplish under busier quotidian schedules, despite being derailed in our plans, whilst also presupposing that pressures would still come our way in terms of delivering the tasks at hand. An added sense of frustration is associated with the anticipation of harder circumstances to compensate what is perceived as a lost time in terms of productivity. We therefore expect being released from confinement into a projected future competitiveness in an environment of scarcity and diminished resources, rather than having a breathing period in which we recuperate from the heaviness of the quarantine and the afflictions of the pandemic. Instead of feeling hopeful from the releasement of confinement, the accumulated duties, and the burdensome setting in which to handle them, may not allow us necessarily to regather our motivations and energies following the long duration of

incarceration. The present hardship in the quarantine is projected with anguish as an impoverished lifestyle in the future that accompanies a post-traumatic sense of degradation in the mode of being.

Being distanced from others feels as a prolonged temporal duration in spatial confinement. Space and time are experienced as being more intimately co-entangled in their respective outer and inner senses. Closed space has a bound horizon in the limited distances that are crossed within the temporal flux of recycled patterns of displacement within it. The projection of crossing a remote distance to reach a destination within the open public space demarcates the flow towards the future as what is to be reached in the horizon of motion. However, the sense of such horizon is closed within the architectural limitedness of the locale of confinement. What is projected as a future to be reached in spatial de-distancing cannot be anticipated with clarity beyond the place of quarantine. Time is as such a temporality that passes, and is not orientated by a vector of teleological timing that carries an expected outcome as we move towards a given destination. This is the case given that spatial de-distancing is unachievable beyond the architectural limiting bounds of the place of incarceration. A sense of hope arises when what is projected as prospective outcome has some potential tangibility in being realizable in de-confinement. It is in this sense that the locked place opens up towards a teleological timing rather than being the space of the time that merely passes. A reconfiguration of the experiencing of space-time in a concretized solitary quarantine entails a *ralentissement* (slowing-down) of the duration of actions in my experiential lifeworld. Space contracts in isolation as a side effect of the spatial expansion of socio-physical-distancing in the communal lockdowns. As for the dilated experiencing of temporal duration in such condition of spatial confinement, it signals the emergent *event (Ereignis)*<sup>7</sup> of a continuum in the lived equiprimordiality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*) of space and time.<sup>8</sup>

The past as what is 'no-longer-present' and the future as 'the-not-yet-here' point to a watchful vigilance over remembering what-has-been and awaiting the yet-to-come, with an ecstatic equiprimordiality of past, present, and future.<sup>9</sup> This is experienced as a sequence of retention, immediate perception, and protention in the

---

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie: Vom Ereignis* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2003), GA 65, §190-191; Reiner Schürmann, 'How to Read Heidegger', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 - Vol. 20, No. 1 (1997): 3-6.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to the Heideggerian consideration of the equiprimordiality of space and time in: Yoko Arisaka, 'Spatiality, Temporality, and the Problem of Foundation in *Being and Time*', *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1996): 36-46; Yoko Arisaka, 'On Heidegger's Theory of Space: A Critique of Dreyfus', *Inquiry*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (1995): 455-467. I also addressed this question in: El-Bizri, 'ON KAI XΩPA: Situating Heidegger between the *Sophist* and the *Timaeus*', *art. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, §65.

spatial continuum of a flowing temporal duration (*durée écoulée*). This state of affairs manifests the intentionality of *presencing* (*Gegenwärtigung*), wherein the lived experience presences (*Gegenwärtigen*), retains (*Behalten*), and anticipates (*Gewärtigen*) of manifold percepts that are intra-temporal (*innerzeitig*). This constitutes an *a priori* condition of the possibility of there being an ecstatic temporal unity.<sup>10</sup>

My solitude is *time itself* and not simply a passage of moments *in time*. After all, as a mortal, I am *temporal* in being destined towards my most certain and yet indeterminate existential end in death, whereby the fundamental characterization of time is experienced herein in being a projection of my *future*. Being *futural* (*zukünftig*) is thusly the possibility of being given time (*gibt Zeit*). The *present* is held as such in a particular temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) that flees its own *futurity* (*Zukünftigkeit*) by evading the angst from what is yet to come, and grasping the *past* (*Vergangenheit*) accordingly as *what has passed* (*das Vorbei*) and is irretrievable (*unwiederbringlich*).<sup>11</sup>

The *futural* (*zukünftig*) aspect is disclosed in the existential analytic of how I am revealed to myself as '*the not-yet*', insofar that I am outstanding as long as I exist. I go to the extreme edge of my being in order to bounce back into the reality of my *meaningful presence* (*Anwesen*) in the lived experience (*expérience vécue*), and with anticipatory resoluteness (*Vorlaufende Entschlossenheit; résolution devançante*). However, by seeking clarity over what is *futural* (*zukünftig*) my lived experience is exposed to what anguishes the flux of my presence. I look at my solitary dwelling-place in confinement under the pandemic communal lockdown with wistfulness, as if already it is the locale that I will leave behind, and the time that unfolded within it is already what has passed; gazing as such into the immediate architectonic features of the bounded room with anxiousness concerning the degradation in being of what I anticipate to be my *futural* lifeworld.

The future is inexistent, yet, in actuality, it does not block the inductive and projective anticipation of the potentialities of what may yet happen through its coming. In average ordinary everydayness, we set plans and schedule activities that reflect the expectations of what is yet to happen as bounded by what is judged as being possibly realizable. However, in the context of the afflictions of the pandemic, in the actual health threats and economic strife, what is imagined as being *futural* is

---

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion around this aspect in Husserl's thought and how it affected Heidegger's thinking, refer to: Rudolf Bernet, 'Origine du temps et temps originaire chez Husserl et Heidegger', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 68 (1987): 499-521; esp. pp. 504, 513; Rudolf Bernet, 'Einleitung', in Edmund Husserl, *Texte zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins, 1893-1917* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1985), pp. xi-lxvii. The ecstatic aspect of the temporal unity of past-future-present, which Heidegger evoked, is itself experientially articulated early-on in: Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. E. J. Sheed, Introduced by Peter Brown, ed. Michael P. Foley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), pp. 242-243.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit*, ed. and trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 10-15.

resistant to the capacity of projecting it with assured resolve. What is yet to come is most anguishing, and not merely in terms of the angst of being-toward-death, but out of a fear over the degraded quality of living in the space-time that remains before dying. The *futural* space-time frustrates the imagining of what is yet to come through an endeavour to assume an authentic resolute anticipation. Time is lost as such in the flux of presence within the locale of solitary quarantine, despite its reassuring concreteness, given that what is seen as a destining towards the future is unclear and threatening in its horizons of teleology. Temporality is co-limited in its horizons with the limitedness of the architectural spatiality of solitary quarantine. Uncertainty becomes anchored as such in the facticity of the lived immediate embodied sensory apperceptions within the tightly delimited architecture of confinement.

I am hermeneutic in making-sense of my confined solitude as a finite temporal mortal and by way of disclosing how others constitute my lifeworld and its meaningfulness. I am historical as such in the sense that I belong to a people, and to what is handed down over to me as traditions from ancestors, and towards whom I stand worthy of receiving their legacies, and becoming myself readied in the pathways of my lifeworld to grant an inheritance to posterity. My worldliness is biographically pre-thrown into what is allotted for me as I came to be a historical being in space-time. An anticipatory resoluteness pushes me to historicize my being *futural* to be freed as such towards grasping my own existential finitude as my own *fate* (*Schicksals*), and precisely in facing up to my destining towards my own death (*frei für seinen Tod*). Even if my *futural* pathways are not disclosable within the blocked horizons of my resolute anticipation, which seem to be locked in my solitary quarantine, what I nevertheless strive to assume as being potentially mine is the assertive grounded attitude that prospectively 'I still have time'. After all, inauthenticity arises herein in the sense that 'I have no time' (*ich habe keine Zeit*) despite experiencing the temporal prolongation and slowness of timing in the spatially confined solitude. I am as such in search for the slowly wasted time (*recherche du temps perdu*)<sup>12</sup> with a resolute endeavour to seek an authentic temporalizing in 'having time' (*immer Zeit hat*).<sup>13</sup> The tragic sense of my historicity can become ultimately an *oeuvre* that outlasts me in the fatefulness of abiding with-others in co-historicizing a communal destiny (*Geschick*), rather than all being scattered as a mere assemblage of individual withering fates, and letting my limited temporality be wasted as such ever more.

---

<sup>12</sup> In homage herein to the novel of Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which was published in seven volumes from 1913 to 1927 (posthumously 1923-1927; mainly via Gallimard and Grasset in Paris), and composed as a narrative reflection on time and remembrance.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, §74.

## Embodiment in the Flesh and the Mediated Telecommunications

Living in the flesh (*la chair*; σάρξ [sárx])<sup>14</sup> is a prototype of being (*l'expérience de ma chair comme prototype de l'être*).<sup>15</sup> The proper body (*le corps propre*) is spatialized and spatializing (*spatialisé et spatialisant*),<sup>16</sup> sensed and sensing, in the flow of lived experiences via manifold adumbrations of kinaesthetic sensory perceptions.

As Merleau-Ponty poignantly indicates:

*'Les choses, ici, là, maintenant, alors, ne sont plus en soi, en leur lieu, en leur temps, elle n'existent qu'au bout de ces rayons de spatialité et de temporalité, émis dans le secret de ma chair, et leur solidité n'est pas celle d'un objet pur que survole l'esprit, elle éprouvée par moi du dedans en tant que je suis parmi elles et qu'elles communiquent à travers moi comme chose sentante'* [*'Things, herein, therein, now, then, are no longer themselves, in their place, in their time, they only exist at the tip of these rays of spatiality and temporality, emitted from the secret of my flesh, and their solidity is not that of a pure object that the spirit flies over, it is experienced by me from within as I am amongst them and that they communicate through me as a sensing thing'*].<sup>17</sup>

The embodiment in the flesh underpins our experiencing of worldliness as a realm of nutrition and food (*le monde est un ensemble de nourritures*)<sup>18</sup> that is marked as well by a carnal sexuality.<sup>19</sup> This embodied existence has an authentic ontological priority over the ontic grasping of the world as a system of handy tools,

<sup>14</sup> Religious symbolism is attributed to reflections on the flesh in European thought. The premodern characterizations of this theological penchant in thinking is connected to the belief in the earthy Incarnation of divinity in the dominant forms of Christianity. *Cur Deus Homo?* This is pictured in the Gnostic sense of the Trinitarian presence of Christ, as reaffirmed in the belief in the annunciation, nativity, crucifixion, and resurrection.

<sup>15</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 291; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'Invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), pp. 110, 119, 148, 298. Refer also to: Reiner Schürmann, 'Symbolic Praxis', trans. Charles T. Wolfe, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 - Vol. 20, No. 1 (1997): 54-63.

<sup>16</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-282. I also discussed this in: Nader El-Bizri, 'A Philosophical Perspective on Alhazen's Optics', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, Vol. 15, Issue 2 (2005): 189-218 (Cambridge University Press); Nader El-Bizri, 'La perception de la profondeur: Alhazen, Berkeley et Merleau-Ponty', *Oriens-Occidens: sciences, mathématiques et philosophie de l'antiquité à l'âge classique*, Vol. 5 (2004): 171-184; Nader El-Bizri, 'A Phenomenological Account of the Ontological Problem of Space', *Existential Meletai-Sophias*, Vol. XII, Issue 3-4 (2002): 345-364.

<sup>17</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'Invisible*, *op. cit.*, p. 151 (English translation mine).

<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), pp. 45-46.

<sup>19</sup> This is associated with the temptations of passionate corporeal cravings. The conception of σάρξ (sárx; 'flesh') in the apostolic Pauline *Epistles* hints at depravity and sin, wherein 'the minding of the flesh' is symbolically pictured as 'death' and 'enmity to God' (Romans [*Epistola ad Romanos*] 8:6-7) or that 'carnal lusting' is 'against Spirit' (Galatians [*Epistola ad Galatas*] 5:16-17).



equipment, and accumulated paraphernalia. When addressing the phenomenon of the flesh in this context, the experiential phenomenology that we invoke herein does not advocate dualism or a strict monism, be it that of physicalism or idealism. What is rather at stake relates analytically to a strand in *neutral monism* that points to a unified psychosomatic mode of entwining the mind with the body. My body remembers its past corporeal acts while expecting them to reoccur within the active flux of its normalized kinaesthetic sensory lived experiences in space-time.

Being at a distance from an actual embodied experiencing of *being-with-others-in-the-world-in-the-flesh* risks opening the solitary lifeworld in confinement to mental stresses that dislocate the structure of the lived experiencing of space-time. The distress in solitary incarceration can be accompanied at times by headaches and migraines, or a choking feeling of tightness in the throat and abdomen. The experience of going out of breath, throttled, or suffocating becomes even more acute with the thought of the effects and symptoms of respiratory diseases. Such ineffable mental agitations induce physical reactions. In extreme and rare instances, they might be even experienced as an episode of a panic-attack, as it happens in anxious silence, without a direct underlying cause or a fear from an immediate source of threat. Holding therein firmly to physical things, as if seeking to be reassured, albeit unstably, by their tactile seeming solidity. The architectural walls and the ceiling of the homely sanctuary seem to become experientially closing-in claustrophobically as if they were the inner bowels of a terrifying sepulchre. This happens at a moment of vision (*Augenblick*), like a blink of an eye that is nonetheless overstretched in its felt torn duration, all before a providential releasement recoils in corporeal relief, even by way of a single sigh and a tear, still pulled in the draft of the trembling trace of a withdrawing nervousness. The suppuration happens therein in a non-directional silent supplication of atonement, feeling nevertheless forsaken by divinities in flight, without awaiting their arrival.<sup>20</sup> Rather than readily praying for salvific mercy, being inclined as well therein to irreverently bid the sacral *Otherness* farewell for its abandonment of a world tormented by illness.

We are deprived of the embodiments of our human bonding, the handshake, the tap on the back, the hug. The lovers undergo an experience that is akin to sexual abstention, even though it is forced by way of corporeal isolation rather than being spiritually motivated. Nonetheless, the solitary confinement offers the semblance of developing a penchant towards living romantically with the absence of the bodily closeness with the lover who is physically distant. The bodily proxemics in being-with-one-another feel threatening with their infectious probabilities and have

---

<sup>20</sup> The average sense of religiosity is confronted with experiencing in thought an *apophatic* form of negative theology that accounts for the absent Godhead in an uncanny manner as *Deus absconditus* or *Deus otiosus*, rather than *Deus revelatus*, wherein Divinity forsakes humankind and denies it revelation.

necessitated our socio-physical distancing *in concreto*. The technologies of audio-visual telecommunication and cybernetics give us solace and relief in managing to stay in touch with each other. However, these reinforce our dependence on technicity in eschewing the proxemics of being-with-others in concrete situations of embodiment in the flesh. The hold of technicity over the determination of our being-with-others becomes ever more immersive and pervasive in this elongated period of lockdowns and socio-physical distancing.

Even if being-with-others is mediated via the technologies of the seeming tele-co-presence, the suppressed impulses in ordinary everydayness become veiled. This is the case in terms of how angst from being-toward-death is quieted via the distracting immersion in the quotidian affairs of others, the *Das Man* (neuter 'They'), and sometimes with an outright mode of escapism. The solitary confinement within a bounded architectural place makes the realms of the perceived concrete reality limited and dependent more acutely on what is supplementary to the actual sensory experiences by way of the workings of the faculties of imagination and memory. This may potentially increase the haziness of discriminating the concreteness of the lived immediate situations that are saturated with imaginings and memories from what is inaccessible of the actualities of the wider reality outside the locale of confinement. The limitation of the potentialities of the experiential lifeworld become more intensely felt not simply in terms of solitary confinement, but in how this unfolds under the conditions of the societal lockdowns, despite the interactive telecommunication with others. This situation limits the personal perceptual acts of dealing with the challenges of the solitary quarantine beyond the mechanisms of coping in reflective introspections that seek healthiness via the euthenics of daily routines (working online, reading, writing, cooking, cleaning, exercising, audio-visual quasi-socializing, using distractive technologies of home-entertainment, etc.). Under an extreme duress in solitary isolation, the multifaceted psychosomatic dynamics, which ordinarily underpin the sense of a cohesive unified self, risk becoming exposed to strife, and to being pitted against each other in a disorder of moods and cognitive dissonance. If this situation is overstretched, the attributes of a dissociative disorder in the personal identity of the psyche may occasion an emergent segregation of the lived states in the private inner life. These can further degenerate into outward corporeal manifestations that can turn into bodily self-harm in solitude; or if the quarantine is not solitary, they may occasion instances of domestic violence.

The prolonged duress may also unlock unfamiliar psychosomatic experiences in the interplay within the same passing moments of living through actual perceptions that are accompanied with immediacy by streams of memories and anticipatory projective imaginings. The distinction between what is real and what is virtual becomes less clear, and fantasy as mediated via mental constructs may thusly impinge on the

concreteness of the sensory lived experience in non-ordinary situations that occasion unfamiliar bodily sensations. These may result in an altered sense of experiencing the percepts of the confined architectural surroundings in the locale of isolation in terms of its forms, colours, and bodily kinaesthetic situational positioning in space-time.

During a prolonged solitary quarantine, the introspective inwardness in the use of language, which is marked by silence in not outwardly uttering what is self-said in introspection inwardly, is not adequately substitutive of the dialogue in an actual conversing with others. The use of telecommunication audio-visuals entails that the auditory and visual sensory-experiences are intermittent, fractal, and framed. The tactile and olfactory senses are not the only ones that get bracketed, but myriad and manifold sensory experiences in vision and hearing are not encompassed by telecommunication. After all, the audio-visual telecommunications are episodic, bound in their spatial and temporal parameters. They give glimpses of a mediated actuality through the reconstituted technological transmission and reception of the visual and auditory data. These conditions are straining in the expected adaptations in our various modes of performance, with the accompanying online-fatigue in changing our virtual personas as we pass across the buffers we generate in-between our working lifeworld and the personal one. We face the screen in cybernetic transmissions, and liaise via telecommunication means that necessitate segregating our formal appearance in virtual publicness from the personalized private interactions.

The isolating situational condition is not relieved when the face-to-face encounter or the side-by-side proxemics are replaced by audio-visual telecommunications. This is the case given that intermittent, delimited, framed, and fractioned audio-visual telecommunications do not result in an immediate presence, but constitute a mediated filtering that is akin to the virtual attributes of cybernetic simulacra in an overloaded fabrication of transmitted information. When the technical transmission-receptivity of the telecommunication signals is weak, the time lapses in the transmission are sensed, and the visual as well as auditory data become disclosed in their deconstruction-reconstitution operational structures; since the optical and auditory units are deconstructed via the technical processing devices to be transmitted as data that get reconstituted with bijection correspondence (point-by-point) to appear and sound as they issued from the source. The moving image is therein an assemblage of dynamic pixilation, and the auditory sound is a radio-frequency wave.

The increasing reliance on cybernetic and telecommunication technologies sheds light over the extent of our social embeddedness in lived corporeal experiences in the flesh. This calls for thinking over alternative modes of simulated embodiment that are not in the concrete actuality of our own proper corporeity in the flesh. Such situation demarcates the realm of manoeuvring the choreography

of quasi-embodied virtual gestures within the cyberspace via avatars,<sup>21</sup> which correlate with the commensurable kinaesthetic acts of our corporeity in the flesh, with the eye/hand coordination being also aided by auditory sensing. The gaze, *logos*, and gesture are co-entangled herein in the body language and facial expressiveness as well (*'du regard, de la parole, du geste'*).<sup>22</sup>

Further advancements in cybernetics would augment the seeming *realism* of the sensory-enhanced virtual matrices, which are being designed with greater precisions in simulating the lived experience in the flesh. The virtual domain carries as such the mimetic attributes that characterize the architectonic elements of dwelling in physical concretized places. These are transposed into the virtual inhabiting of a simulated mathematized digital realm that generates sense-stimuli parameters via plenoptic projections and haptic sensors.<sup>23</sup> The overreliance on cybernetics, telecommunication, robotics, and multi-modal biometrics in our effective sociability at a distance offers greater occasions for advancing these techno-sciences. Such penchant in the altered lifestyles, which would be increasingly dependent globally on technologism, increases the potency of the *Gestell* (en-framing; *le dispositif*)<sup>24</sup> of the unfolding of the essence of modern technology (*das Wesen der modernen Technik*) in its hold over beings. Technicity and the scientific endeavour in healthcare, pharmacology, and epidemiology offer us promising hopes of healing and relief in the face of what threatens our wellbeing. Telecommunication technologies, cybernetics, and robotics add to the smartly advancing means of facilitating our virtual being-with-one-another. However, experiencing the *Weltlast* (world-burden) and *Weltschmerz* (world-weariness), which emerges in de-personalization, de-humanization, and objectification, deepens the framing of humans as a standing-reserve (*Bestand*) that is orderable in a functional way as equipment (*Werkzeug*).<sup>25</sup> We are evermore challenged forth and harassed with demands to supply what we are readied for as standing-reserve in answering such calling online. With a flow of telecommunication that can happen anytime, the world's night is rearranged into a technological day, whereby we are ever-readied to respond to what orders us to channel our energies. The mechanical hand and muscle labour is replaced by the data-packet energies that

---

<sup>21</sup> For an informative study on avatars, refer to: Krisine L. Nowak and Jesse Fox, 'Avatars and Computer-Mediated Communication: A Review of the Definitions, Uses, and Effects of Digital Representations', *Review of Communication Research*, Vol. 6 (2018): 30-53.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris : Éditions de Minuit, 1967), pp. 126-127.

<sup>23</sup> Nader El-Bizri, 'Phenomenology of Place and Space in our Epoch: Thinking along Heideggerian Pathways', in *The Phenomenology of Real and Virtual Places*, ed. Erik Champion (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 123-143.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Die Frage nach der Technik', in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske Verlag, 1954), pp. 13-44.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, §15.

are deconstructed and reconstructed as cyber puzzles between a machine hardware and another via the internet matrices. We are situated by way of simulation in the cleavage (*Zerklüftung*) of the liminal virtual space, in-between opposing physical regions that are held together in virtuality via telecommunication. Nonetheless, dwelling in the intimacy of nearness, which is opened up as a leeway (*Spielraum*) and clearing (*Lichtung*) in the interplay of the energies of life in its plenitude through our embodiment in the flesh, transcends the mere localization within the manufactured enclosures of virtual domains. However, our embodiment in the flesh is exposed to the risks of the pandemic, and in lockdown socio-physical distancing the individual is forced to be-with-others via a technical inhabiting of the architectonic simulated isthmuses in the interfaces between machines. The cyber-sociability has a heterogeneous multiplicity in spontaneous improvisations in the dissemination of information via telecommunicated simulacra. Such fractal networking is complex and concealable like a rhizome in its transmission of information, which is hard to verify in terms of its veracity or the reliability of its untraceable origins.<sup>26</sup>

When thinking about the separate physical locales that are held together via telecommunication means, the interaction with others is after all an interfacing with machines in technologically-mapped isomorphic semblances of being in direct contact with one another. I am talking to my machine as you talk to yours, facing luminous rectangular glazed screens as if they were windows, and experiencing this as if we are talking to each other *in concreto* with immediacy. However, the cybernetic and telecommunication transmission-receptivity in-between the two-networked machines is what reconstitutes the correspondence of the visual and auditory data packets, which gives the semblance of us being in direct communication with each other. This occurs as such without the interference of extraneous data from outside the domain of what we exchange in our actual situation of embodiment in the flesh in terms of how we appear or utter. My appearing bodily forms and colours, as captured by the photo-sensors of the machine, get transmitted into what is received as pixels, which are reconstituted in an orderly algorithm as being my kinematic visual representations. This becomes manifested visually as if I appear on your computer/mobile screen. The reprocessing of the radio-receptivity of the frequency of my voice is reconstituted as what sounds similar to when I talk to you in person. Nevertheless, you and I are all along facing the machines, talking to them, typing on their keyboards or screens, with the lived experience that gives both of us the accurate semblance that we are indeed seeing and talking to one another with immediacy.

---

<sup>26</sup> The notion of rhizome resonates with the concept that was proposed in the synergy of philosophy with psychoanalysis in critical post-structuralism in: Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. L'anti-Œdipe* (Paris : Éditions de Minuit, 1972); Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. Mille Plateaux* (Paris : Éditions de Minuit, 1980).

We are getting nowadays dependent ever more on interacting with machines with an increasing intensity and extent. This state of affairs transmutes the face-to-face encounter of our corporeal embodiments in the flesh into a digital face-[machine]-to-[machine]-face telecommunication. The cybernetic sense of selfhood can become hijacked and hacked by the manifoldness of the imaginary order of the splintered digital self-image. This becomes more evident via the technologies of augmented-reality digital immersions in the cyber space-time of virtual embodiment as quasi-avatars, with an algorithmic precise fidelity in humanoid likeness and haptic proxemics. Such avatars are sometimes left nowadays as posthumous cybernetic relics. The advancement in the digitized morphological representation can turn the quasi-avatar homophilous by looking and sounding like an actual person. This can even go beyond the real-time and photo-metric similarities in video-re-rendering edits of a voice that is mapped unto lip-movements and facial-expressions in the dubbed visage technologies of telecommunication (as per the uses of the existing new 'Face2Face' software). A future technology may even manifest a virtual appearance in a holographic guise that represents an embodiment in the flesh without there being an actual corporeity that underpins its source. Such quasi-avatar could be controlled by an autonomous bot, or by a human being, and would appear online with technical precision as a digital impostor that takes on my cyber identity or yours, and can be mistaken for being me or you, while in actuality being a rearrangement of pixels and auditory frequencies that constitute a visual and auditory similitude to you or me. The dangers on our being alive with one another in the flesh due to the infectious pandemic have forced upon us more than ever before to willingly accept and promote the over-dominance of the virtual domain within a technological mode of en-framing of our being-in-the-[cyber]-world.

### **Being-with-others at Remote Socio-Physical Distancing**

The face-to-face relation in our embodiment in the flesh is a primordial dimension of ethics, and the side-by-side proximity of our co-presence around joint endeavours and projects is a sign of solidarity and collegiality. Both modes of embodiment in the flesh are transmuted through the technological semblance of being-among-one-another (*Untereinandersein*) via cybernetic and telecommunication means. A lostness (*Verlorenheit*) in the distractive digital immersions within the virtual space-time, or of being in a mode of cyber-escapism, may itself compensate with some indifference the reductive character of the technological mode of being-for-one-anther (*Füreinandersein*) at a distance.

The capacity for empathy and ethical reciprocity can be still sustained at a socio-physical distance, since it can be imagined and projected, as well as signalled via telecommunication means. However, this remains alien to the actual witnessing

of the suffering of others in the flesh, or their joy. We also suppress mistrusting others at a distance in a climate of fear and impoverishment due to the pandemic afflictions, and we henceforth aim at retaining an uncorrupted trust that they would still do what is right in the time of our collective agony, despite the austerity and scarcity in resources. One hopes it is not the ruthless situation of *Canis canem edit* that will face us. The afflictions of the pandemic bracketed our being-with-one-another in the flesh, and forced some of us into an isolating solitary quarantine. Albeit, socio-physical-distancing reveals the dependence of our wellness on others, in taking alterity as an ethical keystone of our being, especially in how we encounter each other face-to-face in the flesh.

The being-in-the-world of the mortal human being is that of being-toward-death; however, the structure of such inner-worldly finitude is determined by being-with-others. *Dasein* is herein the mode of my 'being' *Da*, namely my being 'there/here', in the world, and in a situational manner. *Dasein* is as such the mode of 'être-là' *qua* 'être-le-là'; namely being the thereness/*hereness* of my lived worldliness.<sup>27</sup>

By meditating over the question of the being of the mortal human in its relationship with others in the world, Levinas levelled his critique of Heidegger's existential analytic of *Dasein* in *Sein und Zeit*, seeing it accordingly as a manner of affirming the impersonal lonely character of *Dasein* as 'esseulé'. In ordinary circumstances, the solitary character of being-in-the-world is manifested in being-with-others in a situational relation of side-to-side (*côte à côte*). This is in everyday affairs a situated gathering around a common project, a theme or goal, instead of being in a face-to-face relationship. According to Levinas, this constitutes the meaning of Heidegger's notion of *Miteinandersein* in the mode of being reciprocally with one another: *être réciproquement l'un avec l'autre*.<sup>28</sup> However, the solitary character of *Dasein* is manifested with authenticity and angst in the isolated quarantine that separates my being-in-the-world from the mode of being-with-others in the flesh; hence not even having the opportunity to being situated alongside them in a *side-to-side* relation of the teamwork solidarity, let alone of being *face-to-face* in affirming the primacy of otherness in ethics. Levinas pictured the solitude of *Dasein* as being itself *neuter* in its ethical imports, and that being *side-by-side* is similar to being positioned

<sup>27</sup> Jean Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger, Tome II: Philosophie moderne* (Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1973), p. 51; Jean Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger, Tome IV: Le chemin de Heidegger* (Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), pp. 113-115.

<sup>28</sup> Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, *op. cit.*, 18-19, 69, 88-89. I also treated this question elsewhere in: Nader El-Bizri, 'Uneasy Meditations following Levinas', *Studia Phaenomenologica*, Vol. 6 (2006): 293-315; Nader El-Bizri, 'Ontological Meditations on Tillich and Heidegger', *Iris: Annales de Philosophie* 36 (2015): 109-114; El-Bizri, 'Variations ontologiques autour du concept d'angoisse chez Kierkegaard', in *Kierkegaard, notre contemporain*, ed. Nicole Hatem (Beyrouth-Copenhague: Presses universitaires de l'USJ – Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, 2013), pp. 83-95.

alongside things, which contrasts with the ethical predisposition of the face-to-face relation. However, in the solitary quarantine, under a communal lockdown of socio-physical distancing, the side-by-side itself proxemics are compromised, and the face-to-face encounter is bracketed. This undermines even the neutrality of ethics and exposes us to greater risks without a situated condition for being treated ethically by others at a distance and under a veil of anonymity. This is the case given that the virtual-interaction-in-remoteness via telecommunications and cybernetics does not amount to a *face-to-face* relation *per se*, let alone of being a *side-by-side* form of concretized proxemics, since it is of the order of simulating a relation with otherness rather than living it through in an actual embodied being in the flesh. Being-with-others at a socio-physical distance is spatial in the sense of being a mode of separation from others that does not amount to being reciprocally with one another (*Miteinandersein*). The face-to-face encounter (which is advocated by Levinas) and the side-by-side positioning (as attributed by Levinas to Heidegger) both describe the spatiality of proxemics in embodied lived experience (*Erlebnis, le vécu*), while being-with-others in the virtual domain of cybernetics or telecommunication technologies is underpinned by physical and social remoteness, and exposed to the risk of becoming an ethical distancing as well. The prolonged duration and recurrence of such episodes of communal lockdown and socio-physical distancing may ultimately further undermine the valuing of being in the flesh, which even before the pandemic was exposed to deconstructions in theory and praxis by way of the advancements in genetics, robotics, cybernetics, and the logistical technicities of financial systems and warfare. Albeit, even the face-to-face encounter with others does not arrest the human inclinations towards violence, and the atrocities of armed conflicts, especially in intercommunal wars, have shown repeatedly how ruthlessness effaces the face of the other in the flesh. The one who is near and dear concerns me even without being present, and this may furthermore be the case with the other who asks from me to develop an ethical predisposition towards otherness without being ordered to do as such by anyone *per se* (commanding as such without appearing; '*il ordonne sans se montrer*'... '*sans apparaître*').<sup>29</sup> Even at the average scales of human affairs in the private lifeworld, being confined in a shared place with others can occasion interpersonal tensions, and these may be worsened by overcrowding. Such situations might degenerate into a claustrophobic mode of '*Huis clos*' ('no exiting'),<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Autrement: Lecture d'Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence d'Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), pp. 22-23.

<sup>30</sup> This is unlike the sense intended by being locked with others in a confining space as portrayed by Jean-Paul Sartre in his theatrical piece in which he famously noted that 'hell is others' (*l'enfer c'est les autres*), even though what he meant is that they can torture us because we care about how they perceive us, and in how we are framed by them, given that others are what we most care about in



or even in a predisposed aggressive contexts, and in domestic relationships that are compromised by mistrust, this can become terribly degraded with abusiveness into verbal bullying and bodily harm.

The sense of reducing other human beings in a levelled averageness to the *Das Man* accentuates more the neutrality and indefiniteness of the framing of others as 'They'. The *Das Man* as 'They' has the anonymity of the 'anyone'. This is akin to the impersonal 'on' in French, which is indefinite and more neutralizing than the use of 'nous' ('we' or 'us' in French), or 'eux/elles' ('they' in French). The neuter *Das Man* ('They') resonates with the usage of 'it', as in saying 'it is being said that...' rather than 'they have said that...', wherein the 'it' is much more indefinite than the 'they' (or French *eux/elles*), without having a directionality as such towards a given group of persons there or here, but aimed at anyone rather than someone *per se*. The solitary *Dasein* in quarantine during communal lockdowns, is situated at a remote distance from an indefinite, impersonal, and anonymous *otherness* as *Das Man*. This uncanny *otherness* presences in stealth within the virtual cyber space-time, and it is even felt in the empty urban piazzas and streets, wherein there is *nobody* in sight; literally *no-body-[in-the-flesh]* here or there. *Das Man* is dialectically experienced therein/herein as the *uncanny presence in absence*. The technology of the virtual, and the architecture of the real, both veil the hidden *otherness* in their lived modes of *Dasein* behind closed doors.

The auspiciousness of the unpredictable, overwhelming, and uncontainable universal pandemic resonates with the gnostic occult signifiers of the imminence of an apocalypse, albeit without prophecy, catharsis, redemption, or divinities. The nostalgic yearning (*Sehnsucht*) for being fetched back home (*wieder in der Heimat zu sein*) from whatever is unhomely and alien (*Fremde*) contrasts herein with the manner the *home* becomes a place of an isolating incarceration. *Being at home in a prolonged solitary quarantine during a universal communal lockdown* is an uncanny unified event through which the homely is haunted by the un-homely, and solitude is inhabited by introspective thoughts about others, while the sensory embodied experience in the flesh lived only amidst things. When overwhelmed by the non-ordinary, the lived experience surpasses the earthbound average everydayness, wherein the dwelling-place is experientially transformed into a trapping space-time with its limited percepts and kinaesthetic possibilities. This estrangement via self-alienation (*Selbst-entfremdung*) is no longer situated within the habituated familiarity of the home, it is rather de-familiarized experientially from within the place of average

---

defining our sense of who we are and the meaning we assign to our being. I see myself as *the one who I am* under the gaze (*le regard*) of the other. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Huis clos* (Paris : Gallimard, 1945).

habituation and quotidian habitation in an ostracizing inward withdrawal that is an exile without intentionality, a banishment without directionality. The responsiveness to others with charity, hospitality, and care, which align with nurturing the attributes of temperance and εὐδαιμονία (*Eudaimonia*), of character-edifications in ἀρετή (*aretê*) and φρόνησις (*phronêsis*) of practical wisdom (Socratic, Stoic, Epicurean, Cynic, Sceptic, Hermitic) all become experientially burdening by a sense of lonely isolation. However, technicity can facilitate charity by way of philanthropic online pledges of donations to the needy or to the public services, such as healthcare, which may prove to be an efficacious method of aiding others during the communal lockdown.

The busied *lostness* (*Verlorenheit*) in the quotidian workings of average everydayness characterizes our *being-among-one-another* (*Untereinandersein*). In ordinary circumstances, outside the framed mode of being in isolated quarantine, the engagement with others in publicness lets the individual fall prey to *Das Man* in an inauthentic mode of *being-for-one-anther* (*Füreinandersein*). A *call of conscience* (*Gewissensruf*) attends to the authentic *angst* from mortality that each one of us may have in times of solitude, while being directional in the resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) to seize upon what is left of existential possibilities, rather than surrendering to fate with reticence (*Verschwiegenheit*). Such anticipatory attitude towards the future is frustrated by the locked horizons of what can be expected during the pandemic, or in pre-projecting the worries over what unfolds of afflictions in its aftermath. I am called upon by my conscience to snatch myself back from falling prey to the seducing average idle talk (*Das Gerede*),<sup>31</sup> which uproots, hinders, and conceals the authentic pondering over the meaning, place, and truth of my being. This is the calling voice of an unfamiliar existential caller. It does not report facts, rather it cometh without uttering by speaking in an uncanny mode of silence (*Der Ruf berichtet keine Begebenheiten, er ruft auch ohne jede Verlautbarung. Der Ruf redet im unheimlichen Modus des Schweigens*).<sup>32</sup> My *angst* of being-toward-death as a mortal, which is more intensely felt at the time of an actual global threat, ought to be seized upon and endured as what is originary and primordial (*ursprünglicher*). The call of conscience is a mode of care that is attuned to the existential uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) of not being in flight from what anguishes, nor of being distracted from it with an illusory familiarity or publicness. Homesickness (*Sehnsucht*) is oddly experienced within my own dwelling-place in an out of joint solitary confinement. I make-sense of not feeling homely within my architectural

---

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, §35.

<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.*, §56-57.

place of confinement; yearning for the familiarities of average everydayness away from what is alienating (*Fremde*). This inward introspective journey amidst thoughts passes as a longing νόστος (*nostos*) to being brought back home (*wieder in der Heimat zu sein*).

The *force majeure* that befell upon us affirms the essence of our loneliness as mortals; each destined *suum cuique* to one's ownmost dues in the individuated pathways of our veiled lamentations toward death. The existential preoccupation with the solitary experiential lifeworld need not necessarily degenerate into indifferences towards the communal affliction with a bourgeois reactionary loneliness. The introspective self-reflection in solitude can be a mode of pondering over the question of being-with-others, and can become an authentic embodiment in the flesh of the microcosm of a *conditio humana*. Albeit, this can degenerate into a dystopic *contra mundum* in critiquing others by being fixated on depletions in the healthcare resources, impoverishments in economics, deviances in politics, and restrictiveness in sociability. Such penchant can be isolationist rather than done with the genuine spirit of activism, and it can as such turn from melancholy to revengefulness. The lifeworld may become exposed to the pessimism of being experienced as *Weltlast* (world-burden) and *Weltschmerz* (world-weariness). Besides such demoralizing affectivities, the isolating confinement is marked by episodic boredom (*Langeweile; ennui*), which is experienced as the 'long-while' of the unoccupied passing time in monotonous limbo (*Hingehaltenheit*). My bored solitude (*Vereinzelung*) unveils my individuated limited temporality and spatial finitude. I am thusly self-awakened to my essence as a temporal worldly mortal who is held out into the nothing (*Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts*). A distinction is revealed as such between my ontic *cum* inauthentic *existenziell* of fearing death, and my ontological *cum* authentic *existenzial* of angst from the nihil.<sup>33</sup>

### Dwelling Amidst Things

The prospects of honest dialogical hermeneutics in the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*)<sup>34</sup> is compromised in the solitary preoccupation with the immediacy of limited kinaesthetic perceptual acts within the architectural place of quarantine with its locked spatial-temporal horizons. When we are in communication with others, face-to-face or side-by-side, we engage in a dialogue that presupposes the 'I-Thou' (*Ich-Du*) relationship. However, in solitude, I address myself in silent

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit., §19.

<sup>34</sup> To evoke, herein, the phenomenological hermeneutics parlance in: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), pp. 284-290.

monologues, or I direct my *logos* towards things in an objectifying 'I-It' (*Ich-Es*) relationship. The de-personalization tendencies in solitary quarantine let the 'I-It' dominate over the 'I-Thou', even if these are mediated via audio-visual telecommunication (WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, etc.). The 'I-It' accentuates the a mode of being-amidst-things over being-with-others *per se*.<sup>35</sup>

Being-in-the-world is dwelling amidst things as well as being-with-others. The metamorphosed relation of being-with-others under solitary quarantine during a communal lockdown posits *otherness* at a distance in space-time. However, the architectural locale of self-isolation in solitude places immediate things into proximity within the fields of sensory lived experiences. Things are co-present with the quarantined *Dasein* in solitude, and brought closer in handiness. This state of affairs does not relate only to paraphernalia in the eumenics of our modes of habitation (furniture, tools, utensils, clothing, equipment), but more fundamentally in handling food (*nourritures*) and the intimate modes in which we gather with others around them. The architectural sensibility is tied as such to our sensory kinaesthetic experiences of being in the flesh, with interactions with others and the handling of things, along with the underlying aspects of nourishment, sexuality, hygiene, bodily sheltering and comfort.

The 'thingly' beingness of a thing (*l'être-chose d'une chose... sa choseité*) is altered experientially in how our sensory experiencing is affected by attuned moods. The altered protocols in disinfecting things contrasts with the familiarity with which we handled them in average everydayness as ready to hand entities (*zuhanden; Zuhandenheit*), or in the detached gazing upon them as present at hand existents (*vorhanden; Vorhandenheit*). The quotidian dealings with things under the ordinary average everydayness discloses these entities under the modes of *Vorhandensein* ('thing on-hand'; 'being-present-at hand'; 'objective presence') and *Zuhandensein* ('thing at-hand'; 'being-ready-at-hand'; 'handy').<sup>36</sup>

The modes of being with-others and amidst-things reflect the ontological significance not only of the *logos*, but of the hand as well in the manipulation and handling of everyday workings. This is not simply indicative of the handiwork (*Handwerk; travail de la main*) in artisanship or manual labour. Being at remoteness from others in the flesh, and barely touching what others might have touched feel like mutilations of handiness. A devaluing of dwelling with others and amidst things occurs with curbing the kinaesthetic handling of things via new habituations in avoiding to handshake or touching what others have touched. Our hands, like our

---

<sup>35</sup> Martin Buber, *Ich und Du. I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit, op. cit.*, §9.

faces, become sources of worry over what contaminates or not in the new protocols of hygiene and sanitation. Nonetheless, the ontological centrality of the phenomenon of the hand-touch for thought cannot be underestimated.<sup>37</sup>

The way we experientially handle paraphernalia in average quotidian everydayness is altered under the situational circumspections of being confined within the locale of a solitary quarantine. Touching things within the locale of confinement is marked by an awareness of their level of disinfection as contrasted with the goods that are freshly delivered from the outside. The familiarity in the gestures of the hands in handling things becomes subjected to stricter levels of awareness, especially with what we admit into the quarantined locale from what is outside it. Things are sanitized at the threshold of their entry, or necessitate a repeated disinfection as accompanied by re-cleaning the hands when feeling unsure about the precautionary protocols of the hygienic prudence. Delivered goods accentuate the concerned awareness of how the hands touch their exposed outer surfaces. Cooked food is more reassuring than what is uncooked; even the outer surfaces of fruits and vegetables become inspected with greater care to avoid traces of contamination. Handiness is disclosed through how we monitor the hand-usage in handling the many things we touch on a daily basis. The presence at hand and readiness to hand of things shift out of the homely region of familiarity while being brought closer to the lived space-time of the moods through which we handle them, whether with concern or reassurance. What we handle under normalized circumstances with ease and immediacy becomes increasingly an object of our hygiene, sanitation, and disinfection in new fixation habits that border on neurosis.

Things at home are in a direct relationship with our embodiment in the flesh in the perceptual flow of lived sensory experiences, and in the comforts they offer to the daily routines of confinement, despite the monotonies in the adumbrations of limited sequences of apperceptions. In the place of solitary quarantine, things are no longer appraised by the externalized mercantile values that others have speculatively ascribed to them. Their experiential valuing depends instead on the comfort they offer to the embodied sensory engagement with them *hic et nunc*. Resting amidst things, the comforts they give within the locale of confinement allow for imagined supplements to scaffold the concreteness of the lived experience, along with its mood-swings and emotive dispositions. This reflects the sobering essence of euthenics in how the sense of wellbeing depends on improving the living conditions within the ambient habitual environment. After a

---

<sup>37</sup> This is for instance emphasized by Derrida in his interpretation of Heidegger's take on the hand and Nancy's consideration of the touch. Refer for instance to: Jacques Derrida, *Heidegger et la pensée. De l'esprit et autres essais* (Paris : Flammarion, 1990); Jacques Derrida, *Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris : Galilée, 2000).

prolonged confinement, one becomes habituated to the private new modes of the intimate and basic homely comforts, and these may be experienced as attachments to the place of quarantine, albeit feeling that with a sense of unease whilst longing to be out in the publicness of being with others.

It is not simply the memorabilia that get disclosed in the lived sensory experience as affective prompters of wistful recollections and imaginings, this is also the case with paraphernalia, clothing items, and certain tastes of foods and drinks. The poetics that are usually associated with these homely things can still be undermined by an anguished ennui that makes the previously intimate abode feel unhomely during the period of confinement. A sense of humbling asceticism might settle in via the daily routine of solitary quarantine. The accessories of sociability, elegant attires, items luxury, or even perfumes, seem to recede more than ordinarily into the closed drawers and cupboards. The appetite for acquiring more of these possessions becomes gently tamed.

The lived experiences through which we handle things has a phenomenological *noētic-noēmatic* structure, which reveals how the same given object can itself gain differing significations in perception, recollection, and imagining. *Noēsis* (νόησις; intentional-act) is taken herein to be the mode of understanding and intellection, which designates a concept *cum* idea that is perceived in the mind (*nous*; νοῦς), while *noēma* (νόημα; object-as-intended) is what is thought about, be it a perceived phenomenal thing with its *hylē-morphē* sense-data, or the content of thought in judgement. The *noētic* is hence a mental judgement, while the *noēmatic* is what is intentionally judged by way of filling that judging-act with its intended sense. A single act of *noētic* apprehending has a specific *noēmatic* object that is apprehended, while a single *noēma* has the potential of correlating with more than one act of *noēsis*. This is the case given that a *noētic* act is correlatively directed towards a *noēmatic* intentionally-held object. The *noētic* content emerges as such in a directional act-process that is orientated towards the idealized sense (*Sinn*) of the object being perceived, judged, described, and constituted. Intentionality is grasped in this context as a directed experiencing of things in the world as mediated via consciousness, with attuned moods and affectivities.<sup>38</sup>

In the normalized average everydayness of a mortal, things recede into being inert entities that are left behind as relics after one's own death, even if they are pictured as posthumous inheritances. Worldly possessions have the character of

---

<sup>38</sup> To appeal herein to the foundational Husserlian phenomenological investigations in: Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 238 cf.; Edmund Husserl, 'Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie - Buch 1, Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie', *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 1.1 (1913): 1-323.

being nothing for the dying person, unless viewed from the standpoint of becoming a material legacy that will be handed down over to posterity. In times of calamity and catastrophe, of natural disasters, or communal meltdowns, in lawlessness and collective violence, the valuing of things becomes shaken for those who are threatened in their life, unless such *things* shield their being from harm, or can be handed over to their heirs as reclaimable heritage. This passes via the sense in which the destiny of a people is co-historicized by mortals who constitute its generational communities. In the lived circumstances of a global pandemic, under the universal existential threat to humanity, and to the sense of history across the Earth, the mercantile valuing of things is out of joint due to the sorrowful anguish that brings the value of all possessions to the brink of being sucked into the gaping hole of a nihil that swallows the lifeworld of mortals. When such things are pictured as potentially inheritable relics, they experientially regain a commercial value. At a time of a universal existential crisis, living has primacy over accumulating wealth or possessions, and material riches are of value insofar that under a calamitous disaster they can still save lives or left behind as inheritances for a surviving posterity.

### Affectivities of Being-Toward-Death

Angst in being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*) is associated not with anxiousness over mortality *per se*, rather it is projected towards the future that is left before dying. This is especially more acute when the futural conditions are expected to be impoverished in a lifeworld of scarcity and austerity, wherein the penchant towards resentment, antagonism, and strife becomes the trend. Relinquishing *the courage to be* in the face of what anguishes us in being-toward-death, is itself a mode of seeking tranquilizing distractions and coping techniques. The question of being (*Seinsfrage*) is experienced herein as an *appropriating event* (*Ereignis*) that is manifested by way of an un-concealing ἀλήθεια (*alétheia*)<sup>39</sup> that reveals *Dasein* as 'being' *Da* ('there/here'), namely 'être-là' qua 'être-le-là' (being-thereness/hereness)<sup>40</sup> that is destined toward what annihilates all existential possibilities.<sup>41</sup> If you exist, then

---

<sup>39</sup> The reflection on ἀλήθεια (*alétheia*) relates to Martin Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics Θ*, which correlates with his own take on phenomenology and his reflection on the manifold and the oneness of being in critiquing metaphysics in his fundamental ontology. Martin Heidegger, *Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1–3: Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), GA 33.

<sup>40</sup> Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger, Tome II: Philosophie moderne, op. cit.*, p. 51; Jean Beaufret, *Dialogue avec Heidegger, Tome IV: Le chemin de Heidegger, op. cit.*, pp. 113-115.

<sup>41</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris : Gallimard, 1943), pp. 594-595.

death does not ... if death exists, then you do not (*si tu es, elle n'est pas ... si elle est, tu n'es pas*), since there is an abyss separating the *present* from death (*il y a un abîme entre le présent et la mort*).<sup>42</sup> The mortal is prevented from dying by death itself (*empêché de mourir par la mort même*), whereby, in embodied living in the flesh, an external bodily death clashes with an inner anticipation of mortality (*comme si la mort hors de lui pouvait désormais que se heurter à la mort en lui*), wherein an affirmation of my situation of *being alive* is counterpoised by asserting my own mortality (*Je suis vivant ... Non, tu es mort!*).<sup>43</sup> Insofar that I am a mortal, living is also dying.

*Dasein* is *ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-the-world* (*Sich-vorweg-im-schon-sein-in-einer-Welt*),<sup>44</sup> wherein it makes itself known via inner-worldly beings (*Die am innerweltlich Seienden sich meldende Weltmäßigkeit der Umwelt*),<sup>45</sup> and is inauthentic in the preoccupied mode of being-with (*Mitsein*) of the neuter *Das Man* of publicness. The auto-disclosure of the authentic self (*eigentliches Selbst*) happens in its pondering with anticipatory resolve over its destining towards-the-end as a finite mortal, and by aiming to assume its potentiality of being as its own. *Dasein* makes-sense of its affective disposition (*Befindlichkeit*) by having a conscience (*Gewissen*) in its existential projection (*Entwerfen*) toward death (*Tod*). Such predicament is silenced (*Verschwiegenheit*) in the idle chatter with others that does not permit *Dasein* to have the courage to be toward its death. The notion of *care* (*Sorge*) is grasped in this situation as a *concern* or *worry* (*souci*) that turns into a *call of conscience* (*Gewissensruf*) in being inclined towards resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) to gather the experiencing of the past, present, and future with equiprimordiality as a lived temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*).<sup>46</sup>

Shrinking back from what the existential fear discloses, lets us hide in the business of publicness, whereby our being-in-the-world is that in the face of which angst is anxious (*wovor die Angst sich ängstet, ist das In-der-Welt-sein selbst*).<sup>47</sup> Death is the horizon of resoluteness for disclosing one's own worldly dwelling in an authentic mode of being that does not shrink back in fear from the nothing. A *courage to be* in the tempest transcends soldiery fortitude in wondering about the meaning, truth, and place of being,<sup>48</sup> even in the loneliness of an anchorite within the solitary

<sup>42</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), pp. 59, 73.

<sup>43</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *L'instant de ma mort* (Paris : Gallimard, 2002), pp. 9, 11, 15, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit., §41.

<sup>45</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit.; §16.

<sup>46</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit., §50.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, op. cit., §40.

<sup>48</sup> Paying homage herein to Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1954), pp. 30-31; as I did before in: El-Bizri, 'Ontological Meditations on Tillich and Heidegger', art cit.



quarantine in the time of a communal lockdown under a universal existential threat. Authenticity arises in not falling prey (*Verfallen*) to the neuter *Das Man* in preoccupied hurried busyness, even if it unfurls in confinement via telecommunication online.

The solitary quarantine signals a tacit releasement (*Gelassenheit*) from what holds sway over the disclosure of our essence, to be at peace with each other in compassion, mercy, dignity, empathy, solicitude, as these unfurl via acts of charity, hospitality, and care. However, the dread from the nothing in which we are held as mortals makes us restless about the time that passes away, despite the renewal and relief it promises in the mode of a projected potential future. The dreadfulness of experiencing the *nihil* in the withdrawal of meaning from my worldly being is itself experienced as a gaping hole that swallows the meaningfulness of my lifeworld. This may give rise to a sense of revengefulness, guilt, or repulsion from the passing away of time in confinement. I am undead but limited in the degraded possibilities of my being, not solely under the actuality of solitary confinement, but in terms of the impoverished lifestyles in the aftermath of the pandemic as distraught by the prospects of unemployment and personal derailment.

The angst about death that determines the disclosure of *Dasein* as being-toward-its-end, and hence of its own temporality as a passing finite mortal, is manifold in its manifestations. It is anguishing about the mortal's own ending, but more fundamentally in how such implied wholeness in death of one's own being will come to be. What is destined for my being before my ending? How capable am I in taking my own dying in my own hand when the time left in awaiting natural death is gradually becoming an utterly unbearable degraded mode of existence for myself, and in no longer being able to take care of my loved ones, or even turn into an existential burden on them? The authenticity of angst about death is alerted by the projected quality of what is left of living before dying. This figures more prominently when the potential imminence of mortality is witnessed as a threat during a war, or natural disasters. The concern over the time that passes during a period of communal existential threat fears the incapacity to be resolute in anticipating whatever is left for the life of a mortal as historical being. The anguish is deepened over the quality of the remaining time of a mortal in the aftermath of a pandemic within a world that may yet be destined to face tragic afflictions. The resoluteness in the courage to be within a degraded lifeworld in solitary quarantine and its aftermath seems to be frustrated by the diminished capacity to anticipate with assuredness the nature of what is futural. The horizon of the future is fuzzy at best if not daunting altogether with the threats it signals. Vexed from being able to assume a resolute anticipation towards a future, the attitude of fortitude without querulousness can itself be frustrated. An apathetic disinterestedness and lethargic disengagement with sentimental melancholy awakens deep-seated

impulses of avoidant solipsism and withdrawals into reclusiveness; as if I become trapped in my irreducible personal *qualia*. As if self-isolation becomes quasi-habitual, and is taken to be a newly disclosed eco-syntonic personality trait, rather than being as such an ego-dystonic alienation with anguished grouchiness. During the quarantine, thoughts go to those who are suffering in sickness, or to the heroism of the health-carers in healing the ill, as well as being empathetic towards those who live in isolation. The solitary quarantine gives us lived perspectives on loneliness, we think herein of the phenomenon of the Hikikomori, mainly in Japan, of adolescents and adults who willingly pull inward into reclusive confinement and extreme isolation. We also think of those whose bodily illness necessitates quarantines in the midst of regular everyday human affairs, or even what is experienced, and to a certain extent, in the highly-skilled and systematically-trained endurances of submariners or spaceship astronauts. We are also inclined to understand with greater empathy the fragile states of advanced senescence, wherein a shrunken lifeworld is filled with bodily frailties, and marked with reminiscence, silent patience, and anxious awaiting over the uncanny manner in which the inevitable destiny of all mortals comes to happen.

Faced with a destining to end, the resolute mortal can still stand worthy of ancestors by having held their past creditable legacies as heritage, and lived it in the flux of presence as an oeuvre of tradition, as well as readied it *a fortiori* for posterity to be a posthumous future inheritance. This does not depict a picture of reactionary conservatism, rather it points to a rootedness in the temporal personal sense of historicity via the manner in which it partakes in co-historicizing the epochal making of a People's History. The traces of solitary quarantine, the relics of a mortal, become as such the intimate testimonies of a universal History. It is in this sense that this humble text presences herein as a phenomenological memoire of *un Dasein esseulé*, registered as an existential testament of solitary quarantine during the planetary universal pandemic of the Spring of the year 2020.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> This article was composed as a diary in a *contra spem spero* spirit, which is experientially irreducible to a *contradictio in terminis*; and it is via this penchant that I dedicate it to the *Dasein esseulé* in solitary quarantine.