



The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity

Catherine Malabou

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In the usual order of things, lives run their course and eventually one becomes who one is. Bodily and psychic transformations do nothing but reinforce the permanence of identity. But as a result of serious trauma, or sometimes for no reason at all, a subject's history splits and a new, unprecedented persona comes to live with the former person - an unrecognizable persona whose present comes from no past and whose future harbors nothing to come; an existential improvisation, a form born of the accident and by accident. Out of a deep cut opened in a biography, a new being comes into the world for a second time.

What is this form? A face? A psychological profile? What ontology can it account for, if ontology has always been attached to the essential, forever blind to the *aléa* of transformations? What history of being can the plastic power of destruction explain? What can it tell us about the explosive tendency of existence that secretly threatens each one of us?

Continuing her reflections on destructive plasticity, split identities and the psychic consequences experienced by those who have suffered brain injury or have been traumatized by war and other catastrophes, Catherine Malabou invites us to join her in a philosophic and literary adventure in which Spinoza, Deleuze and Freud cross paths with Proust and Duras.

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