The Progression of Emotional Trauma from 1688 to 2018: Finding Reality in the Abstract

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The Context
Trauma has long been a topic of intrigue due to its unpredictable yet relentless influence on individuals in society. It is persistent in both grand suffering and everyday circumstances. Trauma was first introduced in 1688 by Johannes Hofer as a form of nostalgia. However, in recent decades, the definition of emotional trauma has been debated. Robert Hemmings makes the distinction that, “Like nostalgia, but in a different register, trauma is located on the threshold between remembering and forgetting, seeing and not seeing, transparency and occlusion”.

The Thesis
The concept of trauma has matured to exist in complex contradictions. The contrasts and juxtapositions simultaneously cancel and sustain each other. In this new meaning, trauma can begin to be understood beyond the immediate threat and instead as a theoretical existence.

The Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1688</th>
<th>1882-1917</th>
<th>1945-Present</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event vs. Condition</td>
<td>Linear concept of time produces trauma as an event.</td>
<td>Circular concept of time produces trauma as a condition.</td>
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<td>Real vs. Imagined</td>
<td>&quot;An event...&quot;: The event is believed to be the absolute truth. (Felman and Laub)</td>
<td>&quot;...without a witness&quot;: Without creditability, the event cannot fully exist. (Felman and Laub)</td>
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<td>Individual vs. Universal</td>
<td>It is the event that holds the power.</td>
<td>It is not the event but the aura around the event that holds the power.</td>
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<td>Tangibility allows for separation.</td>
<td>There exist reasons for trauma that are undeniable: “The ways of God are strange!” (Sassoon)</td>
<td>All certainties must be questioned especially ones that lack concrete evidence: “God is dead.” (Nietzsche)</td>
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<td>Fate: The trauma belongs to the individual.</td>
<td>Abstraction creates constancy.</td>
<td>The individual belongs to the trauma.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Conclusion
The absolute vulnerability effect reinforces trauma’s inherent tug of war, allowing trauma to remain “on the threshold” of the absoluteness of reality and the uncertainty of the abstract. What exists at the center of this tug of war is the idea of comfortability. There is comfort found in self-proclaimed uniqueness and comfort found in the common. As a result, even individualized trauma gives a sense of unified suffering.

References
Hartmann, Friedrich. Friedrich Nietzsche. 1875
Marks, Joel. ‘Absolute Vulnerability.” Philosophy Now, no. 86, 2011.
Sassoon, Siegfried. “Suicide in the Trenches.” 1917.