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

Jacqueline S. Way

University of Miami, jsw129@miami.edu

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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.”

1688
Event vs. Condition
Linear concept of time produces trauma as an event.

Circular concept of time produces trauma as a condition.

1882-1917
Real vs. Imagined
"An event...": The event is believed to be the absolute truth. (Felman and Laub)

"...without a witness": Without creditability, the event cannot fully exist. (Felman and Laub)

There exist reasons for trauma that are undeniable: “The ways of God are strange!” (Sassoon)

All certainties must be questioned especially ones that lack concrete evidence: “God is dead.” (Nietzsche)

1945-Present
Individual vs. Universal
Trama is experienced in a singular capacity which is perceived as distinct.

Systematic similarities exist in each of these individualized traumas.

"It is that currently we are absolutely vulnerable...” (Marks)

“As absolute vulnerability is universal, it offers the safety of the collective and loses its validity.

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 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
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