

The overcoming of overcoming: On Dominique Janicaud

SIMON CRITCHLEY

Department of Philosophy, Graduate Faculty, New School University, 65 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003, USA (E-mail: critchls@newschool.edu)

Abstract. This paper aims to give an overview of the central preoccupations of the work of Dominique Janicaud. In the first part, I discuss Janicaud's basic strategy with regard to Heidegger's work, with particular reference to the question of metaphysics and its overcoming. Opposing Heidegger's alternative between the completion of metaphysics in technology (*Gestell*), on the one hand, and the experience of meditative thinking (*Gelassenheit*), on the other, Janicaud's position can be described as what I call an overcoming of all claims at overcoming, whether it concerns metaphysics, rationality or humanity. This leads, in the second part of the paper, to a discussion of Janicaud's radical and compelling reconsideration of the genealogy of rationality in his major work, *La puissance du rationnel*. This genealogy permits Janicaud to sketch a novel conception of reason as what he calls *partage*, conceived as both the shared space of dialogue and the sense of the thrown contingency of our existence. In the third part of the paper, and with reference to posthumously published work, I go on to show how this conception of *partage* shapes Janicaud's conception of the human condition and how this conception shows a significant debt to Pascal.

Dominique Janicaud died, aged 64, on the morning of August 18th 2002 at Èze on the Côte d'Azur from a cardiac arrest after swimming. He was close to the foot of what is now called *Le chemin Nietzsche*, the rough, steep path, ascending some 1000 meters from the Mediterranean shore to the old village, where Nietzsche liked to walk during his seven winters in Nice in the 1880's. Nietzsche recalls these strenuous ascents during euphoric passages of *Ecce Homo*. He writes of composing "The Old and New Law-Tables" from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* during "the most painful climb from the station to the marvelous Moorish mountain lair of Eza – my muscular agility has always been greatest when my creative power has flowed most abundantly."¹ One can find these words, in questionable French translation, on a little plaque at the end of the path, where even "Friedrich" becomes "Frédéric," *à la française*. Janicaud evokes Nietzsche's words at the end of a posthumous text, "*Sur le chemin Nietzsche*," the reverie of a solitary walker imagining himself in constant colloquy with the ghost of Nietzsche and interspersed with acutely observed descriptions of nature.² The text is dedicated to his closest philosophical friend and Nietzsche specialist, Michel Haar. With dreadful coincidence, Haar

died on August 18, 2003, exactly one year to the day after Janicaud, in the heat that suffocated France throughout that summer. This text is dedicated to both their memories.³

*

I would like to focus here on a short book by Janicaud, essentially an essay – seemingly occasional – that appeared a few months after his death: *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?*⁴ For reasons that I hope soon become clear, the word that provides my focus is the verb *dépasser*, to overcome, and the related substantive *dépassement*, overcoming. In this way, we can bring out a recurrent feature of Janicaud's work, what is arguably its governing logic. In my view, the overwhelming *critical* intention of Janicaud's work is to leave behind all fantasies of overcoming whether that concerns an overcoming of metaphysics, of rationality, or humanity as such. Renouncing such fantasies, which recur with frightening regularity – in the 1980's and 1990's around the question of artificial intelligence and more recently in bio-ethical debates on genetic modification, mutation and cloning – Janicaud's sage counsel is to attain what I would like to call an 'overcoming of overcoming'. That is, to leave behind all apocalyptic discourse on the end, whether the end of man, of history or whatever, and all concomitant talk of a new beginning, of the post-human or post-history. As Janicaud makes clear in "Heideggeriana," a fragmentary meditation which echoes the form and content of Heidegger's own collection of fragments *Überwindung der Metaphysik* (*Overcoming Metaphysics*) – a text which I think it is fair to say haunted Janicaud for much of his early career – the idea of an overcoming of overcoming is inherited from Heidegger.⁵ In the almost final words of the important 1961 lecture, *Zeit und Sein*, Heidegger writes,

Yet a regard for metaphysics still prevails even in the intention to overcome metaphysics. Therefore, our task is to cease all overcoming, and leave metaphysics to itself.⁶

However, as we will see, Janicaud's understanding of these words is not Heideggerian in any orthodox sense, but on the contrary opens up a new possibility for thinking about reason and rationality that refuses the opposition between metaphysics, on the one hand, and meditative thinking or *Gelassenheit*, on the other. I would like to begin by trying to clarify Janicaud's line of interrogation with respect to metaphysics and its overcoming, before going on to discuss how this decisively influences his innovative approach to rationality. In conclusion, I will try and spell out the vision of the human that might be

said to follow once one has attained an overcoming of overcoming. To that extent, *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?* is not some afterthought or appendix, but rather the extension of the logic of Janicaud's work into the question of the meaning of the human. Indeed, it might be seen as a conclusion of sorts.

*

In 1973, Janicaud published "*Dépasser la métaphysique? (Overcoming Metaphysics?)*," a title where what should be emphasized is the skeptical question mark. After a careful identification of the different strands of Heidegger's strategies with regard to metaphysics or onto-theo-logy, whether it is a question of *Destruktion* (de-structuring), *Abbau* (dismantling), *Überwindung* (overcoming), or the untranslatable *Verwindung*, Janicaud adds the following revealing remark in a *post-scriptum* that was written for the essay's republication in 1983.

Formally, we can claim at once that metaphysics is overcome by Heidegger . . . and that it is acknowledged to have an unsurpassable character (LM, 23).

Or again,

Delimited, left to itself, metaphysics can continue to exist (LM, 23).

What Janicaud identifies in Heidegger is what he calls on several occasions "the aporia of overcoming (*l'aporie du dépassement*).⁷ Now, this aporia has a consequence that is both Heideggerian and anti-Heideggerian. On the one hand, Janicaud emphasizes the uncertainty of any project of overcoming of metaphysics in Heidegger in order to prevent the kind of misinterpretation that one finds in Deleuze (and he is not alone; one can find similar sentiments in Rorty, Habermas, and many others) when he attributes to Heidegger the idea of "an exit outside the metaphysical field" or "a turning beyond metaphysics."⁷ All talk of the overcoming of metaphysics in Heidegger has to be linked to the idea of a *Verwindung* of metaphysics, that is, a reappropriation of metaphysics in terms of its unthought essence, what Janicaud translates as "*remission*," a sort of re-sending or repeat transmission of the original sending of being (*Geschick des Seins*).

However, on the other hand, this aporia is anti-Heideggerian insofar as Janicaud argues that it is simply false to claim that the previous, i.e. pre-Heideggerian, history of metaphysics, and he is thinking in particular of Hegel,

is incapable of thinking ontological difference. Therefore, if it is false to claim that Heidegger believed that we could leave metaphysics behind, it is also false of Heidegger to claim that the previous history of metaphysics was unable to think the truth of being as such. Heidegger's conception of the history of metaphysics suffers from a certain "unilateralism." In an autobiographical text published in English in 1997, Janicaud wrote extremely candidly of his sharp disagreement with Heidegger,

I could no longer accept neither the schema of history nor that of Being, nor the secret, destinal correspondence of the originary and the *Ereignis*. And I do not think that meditative thought can preserve a resource against technicist nihilism if it refuses all specific understanding of new realities, which always resound with ambiguity.⁸

One of the most impressive features of Janicaud's work was its detailed engagement with those new realities and Janicaud had an impressive knowledge of both the history and philosophy of science and much contemporary scientific research. The critique of Heidegger was extended to the latter's "unconditional destinal historicism" in a 1990 engagement with Heidegger's politics and its effects in French philosophy, *L'Ombre de cette pensée*, which also includes a powerful and, to my mind, absolutely decisive critique of Lacoue-Labarthe's work.⁹

In "Heideggeriana," Janicaud writes,

It is therefore false to claim that metaphysics does not think ontological difference, just as it is false to understand the Heideggerian overcoming of metaphysics as a "going beyond (*outrépassement*)" (LM, 31).

The philosophical consequence of the aporia of overcoming is simple, but far-reaching: it leads Janicaud to question Heidegger's separation between, on the one hand, metaphysical rationality and, on the other, the meditative thinking of being which Heidegger saw as the unthought ground of reason. That is, if metaphysics in the period of what Heidegger called its completion (*Vollendung*) continues to exist, then the task of thought is not a meditation on the truth of being, but rather a *philosophical* thinking of reason and rationality that would avoid this Heideggerian separation, a separation which risks congealing into a cleavage. In short, if we can say *with* Heidegger and against Carnap, Rorty and Habermas that metaphysics is not decisively overcome, then Janicaud invites us to say *against* Heidegger that rationality is not entirely containable within a reductive metaphysics whose alternative is a pre-rational experience of *Gelassenheit* or poetic meditation. On the contrary, despite the hyper-ra-

tionality of what Heidegger calls the attitude of enframing (*Gestell*) that defines the age of technology, rationality holds opens a whole domain of possibility, potential or *puissance* whose analysis is the task of philosophical *intelligence*. It is interesting to enumerate the various occasions and contexts in which Janicaud employs the word “intelligence.” For example, in *La puissance du rationnel*, he speaks of “the intelligence of the enigma”, and I will come back to the question of enigma; in *Chronos*, he speaks of “the intelligence of the temporal *partage*,” and I will also come back to the meaning of the word *partage*; in *L’homme va-t-il dépasser l’humain?* he speaks of “the intelligence of our mortal and fragile *partage*”; and in a long posthumously published essay, “*Vers l’intelligence du partage*,” Janicaud speaks of “the fleeting fragility of intelligence.”¹⁰ It is a favorite word in his lexicon, as indeed is the word, “philosophy.” With an increasing firmness, which perhaps testifies to his ongoing debt to Hegel, Janicaud sought to defend the notion of philosophy and philosophical intelligence against the retreat of Heidegger and Heideggerians into meditative thinking, a tendency that finds its clearest expression in the 1991 collection of essays, *À nouveau la philosophie*.¹¹ In “Heideggeriana,” Janicaud writes,

Breaking through the hardening dichotomy between metaphysics and the thinking of being, I would suggest that there subsists a *possibility for the rational* (*un possible rationnel*) that apportions itself in fields of intelligibility more open than operative or instrumental rationality.¹²

This project of *un possible rationnel* finds its first sketch in an important essay from 1976, “L’apprentissage de la contingence,”¹³ but reaches its decisive expression in what is undoubtedly Janicaud’s major philosophical work, *La puissance du rationnel* from 1985.¹⁴ Let me now turn to this book.

*

La puissance du rationnel begins from the neo-Weberian premise that we are in the grips of an aggressive and aggressively globalizing rationalization whose principal means of expansion is technologized science or what Janicaud, after Jacques Ellul, calls “techno-science.” Such rationalization is linked both to the scientific project of the mastery of nature that has defined modernity since Descartes and Bacon, but also to the military, industrial and informational operational deployment of science through the cultivation of R & D, research and development. Janicaud’s hypothesis is that today the rationality of techno-science has become what he calls “*une surrationalité*,” or hyper-rationality. This is what Heidegger calls the *Gestell*, or power of enframing,

and what Janicaud sees as the intensification of the process of rational power whose goal is the total *actualization* or *effectuation* (*Wirklichkeit*) of the powers of the possible. As such, contemporary techno-science is characterized by a sheer willfulness, a desire for total actualization, what Heidegger would see as the “the will-to-will,” where the hyper-rationality of techno-science risks reversing itself, becoming irrational. In other words, to follow Adorno and Horkheimer, there is a dialectical inversion of the process of rational enlightenment, an irrationality linked for us to the names of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, but which equally defines the contemporary logic of corporate governance, scientific research and its technological implementation. It also defines the terrifyingly rational irrationality of our current context, which is – should anyone forget – a situation of war.

What, then, is one to do faced with the all-pervasive irrationality of rationality? Well, one option would be to follow Heidegger and argue for some sort of separation between rationality and the thinking of being or *Gestell* and *Ereignis*, but Janicaud has already excluded this option for the reasons given above. Janicaud’s conviction, a conviction that I would see as Pascalian (and I will come back more than once to Pascal), is that we cannot take leave of rationality simply because its limits have been shown. As Pascal would put it, there are two excesses: to exclude reason and to admit nothing but reason. The task of thinking consists in trying to render intelligible the massive and inevitable presence of rationality in order to mark a limit to the irrationality of rationalization. If the latter is defined by the attempted actualization of all the powers of possibility, then the task of philosophical *intelligence* is to produce an account of rationality that testifies to a certain *puissance* or potency of the rational. This explains the deliberate ambiguity in the title of *La puissance du rationnel*, where it is a question of a certain potency of rationality, *un rationnel puissant*, which is not that of the order of *Puissance* or Power with a capital “P” that attempts to actualize the possible.

For Janicaud, scientific rationality is characterised by “potentialization.” This word has a double meaning, being at once the enabling of the possible and the withholding of the complete effectuation of the possible in action: potentialization has to remain potent. Thus, science potentializes; it makes possible forms of human knowledge and action that were hitherto unimaginable. The Heideggerian question of whether science does or does not think is a cul-de-sac, the point is that scientific rationality makes possible new forms of human activity with higher degrees of coherence, universality and explanatory power and to deny this is simply to fall into anti-scientific obscurantism. However, the irrationality of contemporary rationalization consists in the fact that it sacrifices this power of the possible in the name of total actualization.

Thus, the irrationality of the rational consists in the privileging of the actual over the possible. The ambition of *La puissance du rationnel*, which brings us back once more to its title, is to leave open the space of possibility for the rational.

If scientific rationality is characterized by potentialization, then at the heart of *La puissance du rationnel* is a genealogical account of the four phases of potentialization. Very roughly, these four phases might be summarized as follows. (i) Phase one is the potentialization of technique in the power of tools which allow for technical ‘know-how’ in the domain of human praxis. (ii) Phase two is the potentialization enabled by the mathematical or geometrical abstraction of entities – *mathesis* – which is characterized by the work of Euclid. (iii) Phase three is the extension of the apodicticity of Greek geometry to domains that the Greeks would not have imagined possible. This is the scientific project of modernity, linked by Husserl to the name of Galileo and the mathematization of nature, a project whose aim is the total mastery of nature through science. (iv) Phase four has already been partially described in terms of the reversal of rationality into irrationality and the privilege of the actual over the possible. This is something quite new in human history, where the coupling of science and technology becomes a passionate and ultimately destructive love affair. Through the power of R&D, techno-science becomes available for industrial, military, and informational processes where these processes increasingly define the nature and scope of scientific research, not to mention furnishing the financial conditions of its possibility.

So, can we imagine a fifth phase in this genealogy, a new potentialization or *puissance* for rationality? That is the wager of the last chapters of *La puissance du rationnel*, where Janicaud sketches a more reasonable notion of reason that he calls *partage*. This word has many shades of meaning in French, denoting both sharing and division. But the sense of the word that Janicaud liked to emphasize was the idea of rationality as *notre partage*, that is, as our lot or portion. I remember suggesting to Janicaud the idea of *partage* as “allotment,” which both suggests the idea of “our lot in life,” but also the portioning out of a piece of land, a piece of ground that would be allotted to a person but still owned in common. Indeed, there was an “allotment” movement in England from the late 19th Century which was linked to the emergence of co-operative societies, where ordinary working people would grow their fruit and vegetables in an allotment. Thus, *partage* is our share, our lot, the small piece of time and space which we are allotted upon an earth whose ownership is held in common and held in trust. In “*Vers l’intelligence du partage*,” Janicaud makes a compelling distinction between *partage* and destiny. If the latter suggests a sheer necessity working itself out despite our free

choice, then *partage* is the thrown and utterly contingent character of human life, what Heidegger would call “facticity,” whose understanding is the task of philosophical intelligence.¹⁵

Far from submitting to some finally obscurantist fantasy of an overcoming of rationality, what Janicaud was trying to think was a non-dominating, non-instrumental and dialogic experience of rationality as that which is *shared* by mortals in their everyday being-with one another. In many ways, Janicaud’s critique of Heidegger’s division between meditative thinking and technologized reason echoes Habermas’s critique of Adorno’s univocal notion of *Zweckrationalität* which is opposed to aesthetic experience. However, at that point the similarities end, and unlike Habermas’s rather blunt and explicitly post-metaphysical theorization of communicative action, Janicaud’s conception of rationality as *partage* is presented in a much more fragile and experimental manner in a series of dialogues and philosophical experiments. For example, in *La puissance du rationnel*, we are presented with a long and compelling dialogue between “Y,” a critical rationalist, “X,” a neo-Hegelian, and “Z,” who might be described as a “Janicaudian.” Similarly, there is a wonderful dialogue, “*Heidegger à New York*,” between two men and two women in a loft in Manhattan. Or again we might think of the 45 meditative fragments entitled “*Chroniques*” that appear as an epilogue to *Chronos*. Finally, the posthumous *Aristote aux champs-élysées* is both a series of imagined dialogues with Aristotle, Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger and a sequence of more solitary colloquies, often tightly aphoristic and highly lyrical in style. Such texts are experiments; they are performative enactments of *partage* which are faithful to the fleeting fragility and delicacy of philosophical intelligence.

These texts are also, in another key word in Janicaud’s lexicon, experiments in *contiguity*, dialogue as the enactment of the space of contiguity. The thought of contiguity, as I see it, suggests the idea of different entities being in contact, in proximity to each other, without merging or blending into one another or becoming a whole. Conceived philosophically, contiguity is the placing in proximity of different worlds, different language games, not with the intention of producing some overarching dialectical synthesis, but rather of letting the truth emerge in a non-univocal manner in the space of dialogue, or better, *as* that space. Contiguous dialogue is the non-dialectical experience of a Yes and No, or of several Yes’s and No’s, abutting, confronting, and entertaining each other without requiring a final act of reconciliation. If, as Hegel teaches, the true is the whole, then Janicaud might have added that the whole is a complex fabric of contiguous parts. Dialogue produces a dynamic of contiguity, literally a *dynamis*, a movement of possibility that allows us to challenge the irrationality of the fourth phase of potentialization.

*

How does humanity look from the perspective of *partage*? Towards the end of the dialogue between X, Y, and Z in *La puissance du rationnel*, the Janicaudian personage, Z, makes the following astonishing remark,

It is clear that everything depends upon the manner in which humanity assumes the inevitable. There could be some surprises. If rationalization is passively accepted as a necessary collective resignation in favor of more efficient organization, then we will have the worst of destinies: subjection and tyranny. If, on the contrary, rationalization is felt as a call or appeal, as a new source of creativity that our recovered energies can make use of, then *perhaps* a new clearing awaits the world, more radiant yet than its Greek model . . . (LP, 321).

Admittedly, this passage contains an important “perhaps,” it ends with a skeptical question mark, and Janicaud is not quite speaking in his own voice, but in a rather grand style. Yet what interests me here is precisely the possibility, the potential, for thinking about rationality as a call, an appeal, a new source of creativity, a *human* creativity that allows, in turn, for new forms of inventiveness of the human. That is, if Janicaud’s overcoming of overcoming invites us to give up the fantasies of an abandonment of metaphysics or rationality, then it is also a question of giving up the fantasies of the overcoming of the human in the post-human superman, or *Übermensch*. On the contrary, it is a question of creating new possibilities or potentialities for the human, new forms of humanization. To put the point a little more polemically, as Zarathustra teaches, man is a rope fastened between animal and overman, a rope over an abyss. But this does not imply, as Zarathustra also teaches, that man is something to be overcome. On the contrary, what has to be overcome is the desire for overcoming itself. When we have achieved an overcoming of overcoming, then perhaps we can attend to the finally enigmatic character of the human condition, and to the utterly fragile and un-heroic nature of this condition. The human being is not something to be overcome, but *undergone*. We can take the piece of rope that we are and choose to hang ourselves with it, or at least try to do so and fail, as in Beckett’s *En attendant Godot*. However, we can also take the rope in our hands, stretch it tight between animal and overman and try to find our feet, find our balance, and find our way.

As I read it, this is the lesson of Janicaud’s *L’homme va-t-il dépasser l’humain?* – a book that finally owes more to Pascal than to Nietzsche. This book is a *Zeitdiagnose*, a critical diagnosis of our time, a moral reflection, an *essai* in the best French sense of the word. The moral, if you will, of the essay

is revealed in the title of its conclusion, “*ne pas se tromper de dépassement*,” do not be mistaken about overcoming. The context here is the contemporary questioning of human identity, and the prospect – greeted by some as utopia and by others as dystopia – of an overcoming of the human in some sort of post-human condition. Signs of incipient post-humanism are everywhere: from the cultural fascination with the figure of the monstrous in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and its myriad cinematic variants and descendants, through to the science fiction world of cyborgs and artificial intelligence, to apocalyptic interpretations of contemporary nanotechnologies, genetically modified *enfants à la carte* or just plain old Dolly, the sheep from Edinburgh. A particularly fatuous and influential recent version of the fantasy of the post-human can be found in Michel Houellebecq’s *Atomised* which identifies the possibility of a post-human future through genetic manipulation. This is the theory of what Houellebecq calls “metaphysical mutation,” which also incidentally entails the elimination of philosophy and the human sciences. Houellebecq writes, “THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE MENTAL, BUT GENETIC.”¹⁶ To those of us reared on the novels of Aldous Huxley, this is familiar fare, whether the dystopia of *Brave New World* or the utopia of *Island*. The question is: What is one to do, faced with the prospect of the post-human?

Without ever retreating into an anti-scientific conservatism, Janicaud’s counsel is clear, “for the foreseeable future, it is not probable that the human being will cross the frontier and escape from its condition (HDH, 97). He is equally firm in his opposition to the various forms of structuralist anti-humanism that emerged in the wake of the debate (or rather non-debate) between Sartre and Heidegger. Janicaud writes, “Let us state it clearly: the indulgence that was shown in the 1960’s for various utopias was fallacious” (HDH, 91). Thus, the claim for an overcoming of the human is a myth, furthermore it is a myth that is complicit with a scientific and deeply anti-philosophical conception of progress. As such, the claims for any sort of overcoming are a feature of what Janicaud calls in *La puissance du rationnel*, “techno-discourse,” with its basis in publicity-hungry scientists and inflated by the sensationalizing amnesia of the mass media. For Janicaud, what is morally problematic with aspirations towards the post-human is that they risk collapsing into the inhuman, whether it is the Bolshevik desire for the new man, the racial science of National Socialism or other variations on Ernst Jünger’s category of “the Titanesque.” The previous century was painfully replete with myths of the overcoming of humanity that legitimated the most inhuman of horrors. Janicaud writes, “the utopia of an overcoming of the human is replete with inhumanity” (HDH, 91).

So, if the target of Janicaud's critical *Zeitdiagnose* is the fantasy of an overcoming of the human condition, and one perceives a clear analogy between this claim and his approach to metaphysics and rationality, then what prognosis follows from this diagnosis? Janicaud's view is more complex than might at first appear because the recurring fascination with myths of the post-human cannot simply be dismissed. But let us ask: if the humanity of the human cannot simply be overcome through an act of will or a new theory of metaphysical mutation, then what is the difference that characterizes the human? Summarizing his argument at the mid-point of *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?* Janicaud writes,

Let us come back to man and the human, not in order to please ourselves, but rather in order to understand better the ambiguous richness of a condition which no monstrosity allows us to escape. Man believes himself able to exit his condition, but all these 'exits' simply lead us back to this fundamental truth: humanity is the unfathomable overcoming of its limits (HDH, 55).

The seductive power of the various fantasies of overcoming is not just evidence of human stupidity. Rather, humanity itself might be defined by the restless attempt at the overcoming of its limits, the endless reshaping and reinvention of the human condition. The desire for overcoming is therefore a consequence of what, for Janicaud, is the most basic human characteristic: *liberty*. The dialectical paradox here is that the consequence of free human activity is subjugation to myths of the overcoming of the human condition that place in question that very freedom. We are free to err, it would seem. In his concluding paragraphs, Janicaud writes, "A humanity which ceased from questioning itself would cease being free." As I see it, a deeply Pascalian anthropology underlies Janicaud's argument in *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?* He continues,

Three centuries ago, without requiring all our technological marvels to arrive at this intuition, Pascal brilliantly shed light on the irreducible ambiguity of the human condition. He emphasized the instability of the human condition and its balance between extremes (wretchedness, greatness), without feeding the illusion of finally resolving this constantly reviving and sometimes unbearable tension between beast and angel (HDH, 103–104).

We are divided between beast and angel, between an endless and endlessly frustrated desire for overcoming, for the posthuman, and by the equally endless risk of falling back into the worst excesses of the inhuman. This situation is that of the human *partage*. Janicaud writes, once again turning to Pascal at

a crucial moment in his argument,

Indeed, the *partage* between the inhuman and the post-human corresponds to the two fronts on which man, that chronically unstable being, struggles to stabilize his existence: between inhuman regression and post-human overcoming, between bestiality and angelhood, between malignancy and divinity. It should be emphasized that Pascal knew how to describe the ever-unstable and ever-surprising territory of the human, this “being-between” where “man infinitely surpasses man (HDH, 100–101).

The human being is this mortal and fragile *partage*, this division between the posthuman and the inhuman, a *partage* which is also our lot, our allotment, the thrown contingency of our being. Otherwise said, the human being is a paradox: both beast and angel, divided against ourselves, defined by a conflict that constitutes us, but which is the very experience of our freedom, a freedom that constantly risks inverting itself into captivity. The human being is a movement of non-self-coincidence, a *partage* between what Max Scheler would see as the hiatus between *Sein* and *Haben*, between being and having, between the beastly material creature that one *is* and the angelic thoughtful reflection that we *have*. We are both *Sein* and *Haben*, that is, we are a paradox – “*ich bin, aber ich habe mich nicht*.” The beastly and the angelic, the material and the spiritual, the physical and the metaphysical do not coincide, which means that we are eccentric creatures *par excellence*. We live beyond the limits set for us by nature by taking up a distance with respect to ourselves in the activity of free reflection, yet we are always caught in the nets of nature. We might even go so far as to say that the human being *is* the experience of this eccentricity with respect to itself, this hiatus between the beastly and the angelic, the inhuman and the post-human, the physical and the metaphysical, being and having. Should one be so inclined, one might describe this condition as tragic, as evidence of the tragic division of subjectivity. But I would prefer to think of it, with Beckett, as tragic-comic, or perhaps just comic, as long as it is understood that comedy is a very serious business. Let me therefore illustrate my meaning with a joke, a favorite of Groucho Marx, which, I think, catches beautifully the nature of our divided subjectivity

I’m sure most of you have heard the story of the man who tells an analyst he has lost the will to live. The doctor advises the melancholy figure to go to the circus that night and spend the evening laughing at Grock, the world’s funniest clown. “After you have seen Grock, I am sure you will be much happier.” The patient rises to his feet and looks sadly at the doctor. As he starts to leave the doctor says, “By the way, what is your name?” The man turns and regards the analyst with sorrowful eyes. “I am Grock.”¹⁷

This is a wonderful performance of the movement of non-self-coincidence that constitutes us as human. For I am Grock, and you are too, and neither of us has a stable self-identity. I am not one; I am one-two, as it were, and you are one-two, too. The individual is divided against itself, a *dividual* that can never undivided. Might we conceive of the *partage* of the human as our *principium dividualionis*? Perhaps.

Let me close by considering another central word in Janicaud's philosophical lexicon: *enigma*. Janicaud's thought is an activity of philosophical intelligence that moves between extremes – between instrumental rationality and the thinking of being, between metaphysics and its overcoming, between hyper-rationality and irrationality, between the post-human and the inhuman, between beast and angel. But it does this not in order to find a compromise, a third way, or an Aristotelian *metron*, but as an act of fidelity to an enigma. The figure of enigma recurs in Janicaud's writing, most strikingly in the closing chapter of *La puissance du rationnel*, where the very possibility that is envisaged as the *puissance* of the rational is revealed as “the intelligence of the enigma” (LP, 342). The movement of thought is here conceived as a response to the enigmatic, which is ultimately the enigma of our *partage*, our human lot, our fragile mortality, or in the final words of *La puissance du rationnel*, “our future” (LP, 377). Paradoxically, the phenomenological task consists in eliciting an enigma that resists phenomenologization, the opaque gravity of human facticity. How, then, to understand the enigma of our being? Well, the point perhaps is not to understand it, but to elicit its features indirectly, however we may, through metaphors, dialogues, images, stories, and jokes, through the entire experimental activity of thinking. With this in mind, let me turn for a last time to Pascal, for *La puissance du rationnel*, like *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?* closes with an allusion to Pascal. However, a few pages earlier in *La puissance du rationnel*, we read the following passage,

Philosophical order is that of the “Heart (*le Coeur*)” in the specific sense that Pascal understood it, and where one cannot simply say that it is identical with the notion of feeling because it also maintains an essential relation to calculation. Thinking *as such* in the sense that we understand it is on the side of the Heart . . . a thinking that does not reduce itself to the fact that one thinks, or even that one thinks with exactitude or virtuosity, but rather that one thinks thinking itself (in our terms, that one meditates upon the enigma that there *is* thinking) (. . . *qu'on pense la pensée même [en nos termes: qu'on médite l'Enigme qu'il y ait pensée]*) (LP, 372).

The enigma is ultimately that of the *heart*. It is the heart which, for Pascal, has its reasons of which reason knows nothing. It is the heart which cannot be

reduced to rational explanation, but which obligates the exercise of rational thought. It is the heart that is the enigmatic movement of thinking as such. It is this heart that beats, and that will beat forever, when we read Janicaud's work.

*

A final confession. Janicaud was the director of my M.Phil. thesis – which was, unsurprisingly given the argument of this paper, on the question of the overcoming of metaphysics in Heidegger and Carnap, a topic that Janicaud assigned to me and carefully supervised.¹⁸ During my year and a half in Nice in the mid-1980's, we met regularly, and he would sit patiently as I explained some text of Hegel, Heidegger, Ravaillon, or whoever in my demotic French. He was a good, kind, and generous man of great integrity, hospitality, and warmth. He was intellectually and geographically remote from the paranoid and finally provincial world of Parisian philosophy, and his life in the provinces paradoxically gave him the liberty of a much more international outlook than most other French philosophers of his generation. The first volume of *Heidegger en France*, the magisterial last work that appeared in his lifetime, is interspersed with fascinating autobiographical epilogues, where Janicaud recounts his philosophical history. The last of them concludes with the words, “*qui vivra verra*,” *who will live will see*.¹⁹ Sadly, Janicaud will not live to see the impact of his hugely impressive body of work.

Notes

1. *Ecce Homo*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 104.
2. In *Aristote aux champs-élysées* (La Fougère: Encre marine, 2003), pp. 43–60.
3. For a more comprehensive brief overview of Janicaud's work, please see my obituary that appeared in *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003), pp. 3–5. See also Jean-François Mattéi's useful obituary in *Revue philosophique* 2 (2003), pp. 267–268.
4. *L'homme va-t-il dépasser l'humain?* (Paris: Bayard, 2002). An English translation is forthcoming from Routledge in 2005 with the title *On the Posthuman*. Hereafter cited as HDH.
5. *La métaphysique a la limite* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), p. 23 [*Heidegger from Metaphysics to Thought*], trans. Michael Gendre (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 2. All references to the French edition and translations are my own. Hereafter, LM.
6. Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 24.
7. *La métaphysique*, p. 25; the text of Deleuze that Janicaud has in mind in *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), p. 90.

8. See "Author's Preface to the English Edition," *Rationalities, Historicities* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), p. xiv.
9. *L'Ombre de cette pensée* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1990).
10. *Aristote aux champs-élysées*, p. 143.
11. *À nouveau la philosophie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1991).
12. *La métaphysique*, p. 39. I am not happy with translating "*un possible*" by "possibility," but I see no other possibility, as it were, as "a possible" simply doesn't work in English. As Jean Grondin rightly pointed in a commemorative conference on Janicaud's work held in Nice in September 2003, "possibility" connotes something more abstract than the more particular and concrete sense of the possible.
13. *Critique* (juin-juillet 1976), pp. 664–676.
14. *La puissance du rationnel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985) [*Powers of the Rational*], trans. Peg and Elizabeth Birmingham (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). All references to the French edition and translations are my own. Hereafter, LP.
15. *Aristote aux champs-élysées*, pp. 159–161.
16. *Atomised*, trans. F. Wynne (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 377.
17. In Stefan Kanfer, *Groucho. The Life and Times of Julius Henry Marx* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 432.
18. A variant of the argument of my M.Phil thesis found its way into my *Continental Philosophy. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Chapter 6, "A Case Study in Misunderstanding: Heidegger and Carnap," pp. 90–110.
19. *Heidegger en France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), p. 443.

