

Uncanny Landscape

Pays, paysan, paysage (country, peasant, landscape): this is like the declension of a word or, rather, of a semanteme that would not be any of these three words, each of which would be one of its cases. There would thus be the case of location (*pays*), the case of occupation (*paysan*), and the case of representation (*paysage*). The location, occupation, and representation of a single reality. This reality would be nothing other than what is indicated by the Latin origin of the word *pays*: *pacus* or *pagus*, the canton, that is, again—and this time in conformity with the word *canton* itself—a “corner” of land. The country is first of all the space of a land considered from a certain corner or angle, a corner delimited by some natural or cultural feature (as one says when one thinks one can tell the difference): a row of trees or a road, a river or a ridge, a pass, a glacial constriction, a formation of alluvial deposits, a passing herd or an armed horde, an encampment. But first a corner: something that depends on a geometry as yet without ideality or analysis, the laying out of at least two axes of reference and thus of an opening separated by whatever angle they create, more or less wide or narrow, only exceptionally a right angle. Already a cadaster emerges: partitions, divisions, delimitations of cultures or of passages, of circulations and sojourns. But it is a cadaster without any administration. There is no need for the immediate invocation of property as an imperious act of takeover or extortion (“this is mine”); that will come later. For the moment we can imagine that

the proper or the appropriated, though not yet the possessed or the exploited, is confused with what is occupied by the occupation. But of course that is for the convenience of exposition: it is perhaps not so easy to disentangle the proper itself from all its appropriations, expropriations, and depropriations, although they cannot simply be collapsed together. (How is it possible to confuse what cannot be collapsed together? This is perhaps a general question regarding the landscape: the question of a general mixing together of the proper and the inappropriable, of the common, as divided up and shared out [*partagé*], and what is settled and separate [*départagé*], isolated, delimited . . . Or indeed: How does the landscape distinguish the indistinct and indistinguish the distinct?)

The corner, then, of the country. The country as a sector cut out of an indistinct expanse, like a portion of space that becomes separated out and placed above the general spacing. Which means, immediately: that spacing ceases to produce space purely as *partes extra partes* and that it effects an involution, that it spaces a *pars* for itself, in itself. A garden, a plot, or an enclosure, not, however, one that is first closed, in the sense of enclosed in itself, but disclosed: opened to a capacity that belongs to it but that does not preexist it so long as it is not made available within its closure. With this closure, it is not simply closed: it is also opened, and the opening as such lays out the edges, the demarcations that it needs.

Thus it is not a garden, for a garden belongs to a presupposed, preexisting space, which is the space of a dwelling. The garden is domanial; it belongs to the order of the courtyard: the house and its outbuildings open onto it, but it does not open onto anything. Paradise is a garden (that is the original sense of the word) because it is the common dwelling place of man and God. That is, moreover, why it can be closed to those who were expelled from it, which is to say, those whose own freedom drove them out of the domain.

In the garden, there cannot be any landscape (in the sense of countryside). There can only be the positing of reminders, citations of certain types of landscape (that is one of the principles of the Chinese garden). This is not merely a question of scale; it is a question of the relation to what is far and near, in a sense that is not simply that of measurable spatial distance. There are gardens—parks, if you prefer—of vast dimensions, whose perspectives, regular or not, can stretch far out of sight [*à perte de vue*]. But if sight gets lost, consciousness does not; it maintains itself as the consciousness of a domain and

as a self-assurance with respect to what is off in the distance. You yourself won't get lost there.

The landscape begins with a notion, however vague or confused, of distancing and of a loss of sight [*une perte de vue*], for both the physical eye and the eye of the mind. And so it is, already, with the *pays*. What constitutes a land or a country escapes any clear and distinct determination—whether geographical, juridical, or political. For a country is not a nation, nor is it a fatherland or a state. We often tend to confuse it with one or several of these notions, whereas it is very sharply distinguished from them. Even today, in many local areas [*campagnes*] in France (that is to say, among the *country people* or *pay-sans*), the word *pays* designates a hamlet or a canton as often as it refers to France itself. It thus designates in each case the place—the corner—from which one, or someone, comes: the place one comes from, where one was born, or where one lives. People used to say “un pays, une payse,” meaning “a man or woman from the same place as oneself—the village, hamlet, or corner.” In this sense, the country has some relation to the region, and yet the latter refers to an orientation rather than to a belonging. The region is at times the entirety of the surroundings, the area or vicinity as a space in which one finds oneself or which one traverses, and at times a space defined by the traits and features of a certain unity or identity, at once geographic, economic, and administrative: the region results from the establishment of a perspective, a directing of the gaze, and a conception. By contrast, the country manifests itself as something based on a belonging, but a belonging that can only come from one who “belongs” insofar as, and because, he is related to what he calls his “country.” “To belong” means “to hold to [*tenir à*],” both in the sense of “being attached to” and in the sense of “having one’s own pertinent relation to.” “My country” is for me a matter of holding [*la tenue*] (I hold to it, it holds me, it holds together) and pertinence (it corresponds, it responds, it makes sense at the very least as a resonance). That is why “my country” can be, at the same time and with no contradiction, a town and a nation, a region, a neighborhood, a city. One also says *une terre* [literally, an “earth” as an area of land] in a sense close to this. The country is the corner of earth that one is attached to, by which one is held: as a son or daughter of the earth—which we all are—one can only be from one corner or another; one cannot be from the entire earth. The earth is made up entirely of countries and of the other spaces that are not corners of earth in that sense: open seas,

high mountains. When one is taken out of one's country, one feels estranged, unsettled, uncanny: one no longer knows one's way around, there are no more familiar landmarks, and no more familiar customs.

With the country, then, one is not in the garden, or in the courtyard, or in paradise, or in citizenship, or in any consideration determined by perspective, orientation, management, or administration. Before any other relation to the country, one is *in* it. When we speak of other countries, it is above all to designate the countries of other people, the countries to which others belong. But within the concept of a country is included the fact that it is the country of some particular set of people or another: it is "each time my own," one might say, invoking Heidegger's *Jemeinigkeit*. Taking this borrowed or detoured notion, I would even add that the country thus understood can be considered an existential in the sense of the existential analytic. And yet it has nothing to do with any nationalism or patriotism, nor with the community of a people—let this be said in order to prevent any political misunderstanding.

It remains true, nonetheless, even when all such misunderstandings are set aside, that the country and the people refer to one another. Perhaps the people is the country that speaks, and perhaps the country is a language when it is set outside of meaning. Be that as it may, they are both "each time my own," and they are both only vaguely determinable: thus my people [*peuple*] (I mean my own people for me, those I make my own) are a mixture of people [*gens*] from the north and from the south of France, French speakers and German speakers, with a Catholic (or, if you prefer, a baroque) sensibility and a theoretical disposition (or a philosophical or conceptual one, as you like), and also "country people" and "peasants" from my family and my childhood. Just as, for each person, the "people" and the "country" are a mixed and changing composite of signposts, signals, and connectives, which may be more or less logical, and just as, therefore, each person most often has (or is from) more than one people and more than one country, likewise each country and each people can be identified in several ways, and—reciprocally and symmetrically—the "each time my own" does not at all presuppose that a "my own," nor, therefore, a "me," is given in advance. There is no "me," identical to myself and present before all else, who would, then, recognize "my country." Quite the contrary: in "my country" (as in "my people," "my language") the possessive "my," and the whole "me" or ego that goes with it, is possible only on the basis of

an appropriation of the singular “So-and-so [*Untel*]” (a kind of “your name here”) on the basis of the country, the language, and so on. Hence we see that everything is concentrated in an exemplary way in what makes up “my name”: in what composes, destines, appropriates, declares a name in such a way that I have the task, for the sake of history, adventure or legend, of making it “each time my own,” each day of my life, knowing that I will never have done with this appropriation. (As for this *I* who will never have done, it is precisely neither “me” nor another; it is nothing but the one who can say, “I am from this or that country, language, people,” a statement in which the “I” is each time also empty and identical to the mere enunciation, and in which the “country,” the “language,” etc. can vary each time, can multiply and recompose itself otherwise in every case.)

That is indeed why the statement “I am”—Descartes’ *ego sum*—never says anything about me: it says merely that there is here, in this here-and-now, a point from which speech is emitted, a speech that can continue, “I am from this or that country, of this or that language . . .”

The countryman, the peasant, is someone whose occupation is the country and the land. He occupies it and takes care of it, and he is occupied with it: that is, he takes it in hand and is taken up by it. *Occupy* comes from *capio*, “to take, to grasp.” Being a peasant means taking in hand the place and the time of the country. Its culture and cultivation, as one says; that is, the fashioning of one by the other—the occupier and the occupied, the toiler and the toiled (which are by turns the one called “the peasant” and that which surrounds him, which is called “the land,” “the countryside [*le campagne*],” in the sense of the field [*le champ*], which, for its part, is also a corner or a piece of earth, but opened, extended, cleared by and for the occupation of growing and grazing). The peasant is the one who occupies himself with the land, but he is not, for all that, necessarily someone who works in agriculture. He can be the landsman of all sorts of lands, languages, peoples. What defines him is that he is occupied by or with belonging. Thus there are peasants of the cities or even of science or philosophy. There is some peasant in anyone who belongs and who is taken up with time-and-place, in anyone who makes his own some corner of the here-and-now: it can be a machine, a highway, or a computer as much as a field of beets or a stable. (To be sure, the peasant is, properly speaking, someone who is occupied

with an immobile land, and this extension of the concept that I am proposing is only acceptable if we “immobilize” the machine or the computer: if we make of them a sort of ground or region [*contrée*] that one can dig into, dig up, uncover . . . Why wouldn’t the Internet also be a kind of movable earth?)

A peasant is a worker who works time-and-place at the same time as the object of his work. It is in this sense that there can be a peasant in the city, a peasant in thought or in art: as the one who not only produces, but who above all cultivates, that is, who makes something come about and lets something grow. The peasant is also the one who is not at all in his work, the one who gives place and time to operations other than his own, to ripenings and stretches of waiting, to very ancient buried memories or to sudden mutations, to unforeseeable intersections and to the vagaries of the sky. Even if he cultivates with fertilizer or if he prevents the birds from coming into his fields, even if he manipulates genetic sequences or the crossing of varieties, the peasant works with the land, he works *on, at, and in the land*. Or else, the land is itself the set of forces that play off one another, against one another, and in one another.

It is not a question of “nature.” “Nature,” as it is most often understood, is an abstraction, as is the idea of man standing before it. What is real is the earth, the sea, the sky, the sand, one’s feet on the ground, and one’s breath, the smell of grass and of coal, the crackling of electricity, the swarming of pixels . . . There is no real except for the earth, with all its corners and recesses [*coins et recoins*], all its lands and their peasants. In this sense, the country represents the order of meaning that is posited selfsame with the earth, equally separated from the order of language and from that of nature. It is an order of the body, of embodied extension, disposed and exposed: the earth such that it has nothing other than itself outside itself.

But the peasant is also the pagan: both words are doubles for the single word *paganum*. The pagan is the one who knows and worships the gods of the country, the gods who are present in each corner of the field, at each limit of the domain, or in the spring, in the hollow of the oak, along the side of the road or in the stable, among the reeds of the pond or even as a toad, a slowworm, or a barn owl. The pagan lives in the continuous presence of the gods, or he is someone for whom the gods are presence itself: someone for whom the divine is distributed among numerous gods because it is the divine of presence. The pagan does not have a religion with multiple gods, as if this

were a possible choice in relation to other religions with only one god or even without any gods. There are, in fact, only two possibilities: either the divine is present, and it is so immediately in a crowd of gods who populate the land; or the divine is absent, and there is only one god withdrawn into an elsewhere—or else no god, which, in the end, amounts to the same. Being a pagan, the peasant is occupied with the gods as much as with the sowing of barley, the bulls, or the thunder. In all things, in every respect, each time distinct and singular, there is a presence that acts, that lurks or gives signs, that occupies the place, the plant, or the animal that encounters (and sometimes counters) the occupation of man. This occupation in each case reckons and comes to terms with the presence that is nothing but the earth itself as an inexhaustible reserve of presence and presentation, that is, the non-mortal or the immortal that gives and takes, that provides and that threatens, in which everything rests or lies buried.

In a certain way, the peasant can only be pagan. But when the country is transformed in such a way that its land and occupation become urban and industrial, even in the countryside—in its cultures and its exchanges—then the divine withdraws from presence. Meaning is no longer a matter of presence but of another regime, suspended between pure absence and infinite distancing. A general estrangement occurs, in which pagans and peasants can find themselves unsettled, straying and lost.

It is thus that we encounter the question of landscape, that is, of the representation of the country and the peasant, but perhaps also of estrangement and uncanniness. Two orders of representation are possible here. The pagan order, properly speaking, does not give us what we call a “landscape.” It gives us scenes played out among characters and figures: spring nymphs, forest satyrs, a goddess surprised at her bath by a hunter, the north wind, or the mossy hollow in the trunk of an oak. This is the reason why antiquity seems hardly, or not at all, to have known the genre we are calling “landscape” (whether understood in terms of painting, literature, or even music). When there is something that resembles a landscape—in Virgil’s *Georgics*, for example—it is the activity of the peasant that comes to the foreground, not the “land” or the corner of earth for itself: the activity of the peasant is situated between the divine presences and the tutelary presence of the empire. In what we know of ancient painting, we can find pastoral and sometimes exotic settings, but this

goes no further than a setting that takes its meaning only from an action (work or pleasure) and from presences at work (which one could call theologico-political). The same is true for painting all the way up to Giotto. To specify these ideas, and because it is a very well-known work, consider *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (1412–16): there the landscape is clearly subordinate to the organization of theologico-political signs.

We could say that landscape begins when it absorbs or dissolves all presences into itself: those of the gods or of the princes, and also the presence of the peasant, at least insofar as this figure is in dialogue with those just mentioned. In the landscape, the landsman can appear, but as an element of the landscape: he is entirely given over to his occupation there, is lost in it, and that is also why he can be replaced by a traveler or a walker, in any case by figures who are occupied only with the land as such and to no other end, figures whom, by the same token, the land occupies, takes hold of and, as one says, “absorbs” into itself. Despite the importance of the natural framework, Millet’s *Angelus* or Breughel’s *Fall of Icarus* are clearly not landscapes. Or else—and in order to remain with familiar references—consider the background of the *Mona Lisa*: it shows two allegories of the human relation to the world, on one side a path of life, on the other an engineer’s bridge, and there is no landscape in any of this, not even that of a background. This is because, quite precisely, the landscape is the contrary of a ground: the “land” in it must be entirely surface, and that alone throughout.

A landscape contains no presence: it is itself the entire presence. But that is also why it is not a view of nature distinguished from culture but is presented together with culture in a given relationship (of work or rest, of opposition or transformation, etc.). It is a representation of the land as the possibility of a taking place of sense, a localization or a locality of sense, which makes sense only by being occupied with itself, making itself “itself” as this corner, this angle opened onto an area opposite or onto a spectacle already laid out; but it is an angle opened onto itself, creating an opening and thus a view, not as the perspective of a gaze upon an object (or as vision) but as a springing up or a surging forth, the opening and presentation of a sense that refers to nothing but this presentation.

For this situation to be in place, an originating condition is necessary: an absencing of all presence that would possess any authority or any capacity for sense. This means that the landscape can be neither

theological nor political, neither economic nor moral. It appears in history, in a very precise manner, at the moment when these different registers of meaning are changing, to the point of overturning the entire order of landmarks in the European world—and this is perhaps also the very birth of Europe.¹ In his own way, Chateaubriand clearly grasped what was at stake: in *The Genius of Christianity* he explains that the landscape belongs specifically to Christianity in art.² Indeed, Christianity drives the pagan gods out of nature “in order to give the caves their silence and the woods their reverie.” Thus “the true God, by returning back into his works, has given his immensity to nature.” What Chateaubriand does not notice is that this penetration of God into nature, along with the unbounded enlargement that accompanies it, also constitutes a withdrawal of all divine presence and thereby of all presence in general: what is henceforth present is the immensity itself, the limitless opening of place as a taking place of what no longer has any determinate place, that is, of what no longer corresponds to determinate figures, circumstances, or actions. But Chateaubriand touches on this motif nonetheless: evoking the poetry of the “American forests,” he notes that “the traveler . . . feels disquieted, agitated, as though in expectation of something unknown.”³

The landscape opens onto the unknown. It is, properly speaking, place as the opening onto a taking place of the unknown. It is not so much the imitative representation of a given location as the presentation of a given absence of presence. If I may force the point a bit, I would say that, instead of depicting a “land” as a “location [*endroit*],” it depicts it as “dis-location [*envers*]”: what presents itself there is the announcement of what is not there; more exactly, it is the announcement that, “there,” there is no presence, and yet that there is no access to an “elsewhere” that is not itself “here,” in the angle opened onto a land occupied only with opening in itself.

That is why the landscape is not a view that “opens onto” some perspective. It is, on the contrary, a perspective that comes to us, that rises from the picture and in the picture in order to form it, that is, in order to *conform* it in relation to an absolute distance and according to the spacing and distancing from which, rather, an unknown light “opens onto” us, placing us not before it but within it. After Chateaubriand, Baudelaire will say (in a poem entitled “Landscape”): “The great skies that make one dream of eternity.”⁴ Dream, presentiment, vague aspiration—these make up what one can call the “feeling” or the “sense of the landscape” in the various meanings of the genitive. This feeling is that of an absence: I would say that it is

the feeling of atheism, not as a positive affirmation of a world consisting of nothing but itself—precisely because here, in this “here” of the landscape, it does not consist of itself but of its opening—but rather as an affirmation that the divine, if it presents itself in some way, certainly does not present itself as a presence or as a representation, nor as an absence hidden behind or within the depths of nature (another form of presence), but as the withdrawal of the divine itself.

In this sense, the complete determination of the landscape is given—not surprisingly—in a poem by Hölderlin. After evoking the ruins of the “cities of the Euphrates” and the “streets of Palmyra,” he writes:

Jetzt aber siz' ich unter Wolken (deren
 Ein jedes eine Ruh' hat eigen) unter
 Wohleingerichteten Eichen, auf
 Der Heide des Rehs, und fremd
 Erscheinen und gestorben mir
 Der Seeligen Geister.

But now I sit beneath clouds
 (Each one has a peace of its own), among
 The well-ordered oaks, on
 The deer's heath, and strange to me
 Seem, and dead,
 The blessed spirits.⁵

The landscape is the space of strangeness or estrangement and of the disappearance of the gods. It is, in truth, the opening of the space in which this absenting takes place. For this reason, it cannot give a presentiment of another, analogous presence that would simply be invisible where others were visible. It neither hides nor reveals nor evokes the invisible as a sur-visible that it would be necessary to divine by squinting into the light of the sun. For it opens onto itself: it opens onto the dividing up and sharing out [*partage*]—of the sky and the earth, of the clouds and the oaks—that it itself is, the separation of the elements in which a creation always consists.

It is in this precise sense that creation takes place *ex nihilo*: its materials and its operation are nothing other than separation and division. It is the separation or tearing apart of what is not yet anything, what is not distinguished from anything and is purely empty in itself. The division itself is nothing: it is the separation, the interval, the insubstantial line of the horizon that joins and disjoins earth and sky. All landscape painting paints a horizon: it paints the one-dimension-

ality of its line as at once a closure of space, a flight into infinity, and an arabesque laid out and multiplied in the lines of trees, clouds, hills and paths, branches and vaults, loops and angles, so many fractals of a single horizon, which never stops drawing back and renewing the partition of its elements.

These elements are given each for itself—the peace of the cloud and the order of the oak, the uncultivated earth on which the deer passes—and nothing else is presented or hidden, nothing but the withdrawal of the presences that, in another world, would have populated the landscape. This landscape is depopulated of its “blessed spirits.” Depopulated, the landscape estranges, it renders uncanny [*le paysage dépayse*]: there is no more community, no more civic life, but it is not simply “nature.” It is the land of those who have no land, who are uncanny and estranged [*le pays des dépayés*], who are not a people, who are at once those who have lost their way and those who contemplate the infinite—perhaps their infinite estrangement.

If the Blessed have departed from this land, it is not, for all that, stricken with sorrow: neither blessed nor sorrowful, it is held in suspense. Uncanny estrangement occurs in the suspension of presence: the imminence of a departure or an arrival, neither good nor evil, only a wide space [*largeur*] and a generosity [*largesse*] that allow this suspension to be thought and to pass.

For this suspension is always a question of a passage or a passing on. A landscape is always a landscape of time, and doubly so: it is a time of year (a season) and a time of day (morning, noon, or evening), as well as a kind of weather [*un temps*], rain or snow, sun or mist. In the presentation of this time, which unfolds with every image, the present of representation can do nothing other than render infinitely sensible the passing of time, the fleeting instability of what is shown. Every cloud has *its own* peace, but this peace is so properly its own that it has such a peace—everything shows this—only at the moment when *this* cloud has not yet become another, and with it the entire landscape, which incessantly estranges and unsettles.

A landscape is always the suspension of a passage, and this passage occurs as a separation, an emptying out of the scene or of being: not even a passage from one point to another or from one moment to another, but the step [*le pas*] of the opening itself. This *step* is the immobilization in which forward movement is grasped as a basis or a “footing,” a span of the hand, the marking out of a measure accord-

ing to which a world can be laid out. The walker stops, and his step becomes that of a compass, the angle and amplitude of a disposition of space, on whose step—at whose threshold, at whose point of access—a gaze presents itself as a gaze.

This gaze does not discover presences within an already formed and given order, like that of religion, which populates the forests and the fields. It discovers the place without god, the place that is only a place of taking place and a taking place for which nothing is given, nothing is played out in advance: no country, then, is given, and every possible peasant has to invent everything in his occupation, as well as in the manner and the intention by which his culture is most suitably invented. Here uncanniness is originary.

What is contemplated is a *templum*: a temple, that is, for the Romans, a sacred space cut out of the sky by the wand of an augur. When it is sacred, the temple defines a place for presences: such as the birds that will pass through it, or clouds, or lightning flashes. When it is the temple of the landscape (Baudelaire, once again: “nature is a temple”), it cuts out a place for the withdrawal of presence, for the thought of presence as withdrawn from itself: estranged and unsettled presence, from which all the gods have departed and the humans are always still to come.

This contemplation is the contemplation of an access: the step, the threshold, the measure of the compass, as a way to accede to what remains inaccessible. It is inaccessible not because it would be concealed in the clouds, the greenery, or the flowing water but because it is, from the outset and forever, beyond and on this side of access: indeed, it is access itself, it is the opening step of the landscape, it is the measure of the picture—whether on canvas or on a screen, in verse or in prose, or even in music (in a certain way, is there not always landscape in music, and vice-versa?). This measure is the artistic and philosophical measure par excellence: it is the measure that defines the infinite in the finite.

Distinct Oscillation

When I have painted a beautiful picture, I have not written down a thought. That's what they say. How simple-minded! They rob painting of all its advantages. The writer has to say almost everything to be understood. In painting, a kind of mysterious bridge is built between the soul of the figures *and that of the spectator* [. . .]. On the difference between literature and painting in terms of *the effect that a sketched out thought can produce*, in a word, on the impossibility of sketching anything in literature in such a way as to depict something for the mind.¹

◆ The difference between text and image is flagrant. The text presents significations, the image presents forms.

♣ Each one shows something: the same thing and yet a different thing. By showing, each one shows itself, and therefore also shows the other one across from it and facing it. It therefore also shows itself to it: image shows itself to text, which shows itself to image.

♥ Thus an imaged image and the word *image* show—in showing each other and showing themselves (to be)—the same thing and yet a different thing. Furthermore: the word “image” shows itself as an image whereas an imaged image shows itself the way the word *image* does. At least each of them wants to believe this, or behaves as if it did.

♠ Can a text on a text (an interpretation, a commentary) and the image of a text (the painting of a book, of a letter) be interchanged? Does the text make an image of the text it interprets? Does the image become a text on the text that it, too, interprets?

● In any case, the two show what it means to show—to manifest, to reveal, to place in view, to shed light on, to indicate, to signal, to produce. They show, and in showing, they show that there are at least two kinds of showing, heterogeneous and yet stuck to one another, collated, pressed and compressed together (like the stones in an arch), attracting and repelling one another. Each is both pleasing and repulsive to the other. Each is *monstrative* and *monstrous* to the other. A monstrum is the sign of a wonder. Image and text are each a wonder for the other.

♠ This is because they are such strangers to each other and because, at the same time, each discerns itself in the other: each one distinguishes a tinge, a vague outline of itself in the ground of the other, deep in its eye or its throat. Each one draws the other toward itself or is drawn toward it. There is always a tension. There is a drawing out [*du tirage*], a traction: in a word, a line [*un trait*]. There is an invisible, untraced line that draws out and traces on both sides, that passes between the two without passing anywhere. It draws out and traces nothing, perhaps, but this impalpable line . . .

♣ But in this tension, in spite of it or because of it, both one and the other *present* something, which is placed before our eyes. But the text can be pronounced, and therefore drawn away from every image, perhaps also every presence. In any event, it is not a question of the same eyes in each case: there are the eyes of the mind and those of the body.

♠ I hear you, I understand. Moreover, I can close my eyes and repeat, out loud or silently, what you just said. Does it follow, then, that the text pronounced excludes all images? I'm not so sure. The speaking voice has its own form, its sonorous image. See for yourself: when I say "sonorous," do you not have an image? Do you not discern a round "o"-"o"-"o" . . . ?

● Oh, oh! I see what you're saying: I see the voices that I hear! I see them so well, in fact, that the spoken text calls up, as though from out of itself, the face of its voice, the movement of its lips, the

passing glimpse of the inside of the mouth, of the tongue and the teeth, and of the whole articulatory cinema, not to mention of the overall expression of the face. The voice draws the eye. It is always a drawing and pulling: a division of space, an incision, but also a shot taken [*un trait lancé*], a drawing back and letting fly toward the other. Image and text: arrow and target for each other.

♣ You spoke of “cinema”: it is also theater, although the nature of the images or their mode of delivery is not the same.

● Certainly, they are different. At the very least in that, in their relation to the text, the theater proposes an entire body, a body that is physical and present, moving on a stage, whereas the cinema presents a body that is cut up and framed—even if it is shown in its entirety. This frame is linked to the text, even if it is not subordinated to it, or else it becomes a sort of text, an articulation.

◆ One could say, then, that the theater embodies the text above all, gives it flesh and blood, breath and posture, whereas the cinema textualizes the body, makes it signifying. And the theater demands a writing appropriate to it, a writing of gesture, posture, and breath.

◆ But it is also in this sense that cinema was initially “silent.” One spoke by way of a text written on panels inserted between the images, after or before the filmed faces pronounced the words. Often one saw these words twice: once as text, in images of writing; once in the movement of the lips, the eyes, the hands, which the actors deliberately drew out in their poses and gestures.

♠ You said it yourself: the text on the panels was, nonetheless, an image too. It was not merely the text as the meaning of the words. It was, in the successive stream of images, a kind of image, which offered a passing insight into the element of sense: into consciousness, if you like. The black ground of the screen on which the letters appeared, or else the frame surrounding them (which was often embroidered with a few foliage designs, curlicues, or arabesques), delivered sense as an image, in a view opened onto that which makes this sense: onto the subject, into the subject. A view into that obscure subject of meaning, that black sun.

♥ You mean both into the thinking subject, therefore also the speaking subject, and into the subject treated, that is, the object of

the discourse and of the action, the intentions, feelings, and agitated representations of the characters.

♠ Yes, both of these together, and each one subject to the other: the subject of sense and the sense of the subject, the whole making up the subject of the film, which is inextricably what it treats and what directs it, what gives it a perspective or a proper vision, a style or an atmosphere, a manner.

● But the manner is that of an image. It is what makes an image, including in the text. Making an image means producing a relief, a protrusion, a trait, a presence. Above all, the image gives presence. It is a manner of presence. Manner and matter of presence. It has often been said: no discourse can compete with the power of an image. (Nevertheless, discourse is not the same as text.)

♥ But what is “giving presence”? Isn’t it giving what cannot be given: what is or is not? You are present or you are not. Nothing will give you presence except your arrival, which is no one or is yourself. Come on, now, show yourself!

● Yes, yes, giving presence means giving to someone who is not there something that one cannot give him. It is the squaring of the circle, or of love, which gives something one does not have to someone who does not want it, as a psychoanalyst (which is to say, a specialist in image-texts) once said. The image gives a presence that it lacks—since it has no other presence than the unreal one of its thin, filmlike surface—and it gives it to something that, being absent, cannot receive it.

♣ The image thus gives presence to the text, if with this word *text* you understand the interlinking, the meshing and weaving together of a sense. Sense consists only in being woven or knit together. Text is textile; it is the material of sense. But sense as such has no material, no fibers or consistency, no grain or thickness. Sense “as such” consists precisely in nothing other than weaving together an “as such”: for example, I say “a flower,” and now the flower *as such*, that is, as nothing presentable, absent from every bouquet, from every garden or botanical book, begins to link “such” to “such,” relating endlessly to itself as its own sense or idea, which never has done with linking itself to itself, all the better to let loose and unwind

its parcel of silky fibers while also spinning out its sense or its indefinite metaphor.²

◆ Its metaphor or its image, you see. This image is necessary for us, and this image of images—meta-phor, trans-*port* and movement aside, displacement—in order to give presence to this sense without material, incorporeal by definition, but which is only in the weave, not in the web or cloth. But how could there be a weave without a web? The image is the web of a threadless weave. Sense requires the image in order to emerge from its meager material, its inaudibility and its invisibility. Sense requires sound, line, and figure, without which it is as abstract and fugitive as the movement of a needle through the stitches of a piece of lace. The lace of sense fails at every moment to abolish itself in the doubt of its embroidery.

♠ Notice, however, that by drawing sense out of absence, by making *absense a presense*, the image does not do away with the impalpable nature of absence. On the contrary, it is occupied solely with this im-material, and that is what it *images*: allow me to use this verb in a sense that is neither “to illustrate” nor “to imagine.” “To image” must be heard as a transitive verb whose action, however, cannot act on an object. I can illustrate a discourse by giving a concrete example, but this remains secondary in relation to the sense (at least that is how it is ordinarily understood). If, by contrast, I say that *I image* this discourse (for example, the discourse that says, “I say ‘a flower’”), this is something completely different: I present its saying with its said; therefore I say “a flower” or rather, here, I say, “I say a flower,” and the image is there, palpable as the impalpable in this saying of the saying, this movement of the needle in the stitch that already links saying to flower, but also “saying” to “speaking,” “singing,” “evoking,” and “flower” to “scent,” “petal,” “wilting,” “florete,” “flora,” or “flame”—and so many others that are *absent*. But there is doubtless no saying that is not in some way imaged. No denotation is without connotation, if you like. Connotation borders on denotation, and embroiders its borders. It is there that the image rises.

● The word *imago* designated the effigy of the absent, the dead, and, more precisely, the ancestors: the dead from whom we come, the links of the lineage in which each of us is a stitch. The *imago* hooks into the cloth. It does not repair the rip of their death: it does less and more than that. It weaves, it images absence. It does not

represent this absence, it does not evoke it, it does not symbolize it, even though all this is there too. But, essentially, it presents absence. The absent are not there, are not “in images.” But they are imaged: their absence is woven into our presence. The empty place of the absent as a place that is not empty: that is the image. A place that is not empty does not mean a place that has been filled: it means the place of the image, that is, in the end, the image as place, and a singular place for what has no place here: the place of a displacement, a metaphor—and here we are again. The image calls out: “Make way! [Place!] Make way for displacement, make way for transport!”

♣ Thus the physical body of the theater and the framed body of the cinema are modes of occupying this place. They are ways of being placed there. And, by definition, there are various modes of this placement: since the place is empty, the number of modes is indefinite, perhaps infinite. Sense as what is absent, as its own incessant absenting, does not have any single mode of existing. Only full, complete presence has a single mode: it is identical to itself. But in this way, it does not exist, it is there. Sense exists, or rather it is the movement and flight of existing: of *ex-ire*, of going outside oneself, exceeding, exiling. Sense essentially disidentifies.

.....

Intermezzo

What Diderot admired in Richardson and in Greuze is, therefore, and quite precisely, what will later be sought in the cinema: “Outbursts of passion have often struck your ears; but you are very far from knowing all the secrets of their accents and their facial expressions. Each one has its own physiognomy; and all these physiognomies follow one another upon a given face without it ceasing to be the same face; and the art of the great poet and of the great painter is to show us a fleeting circumstance that had escaped our attention.” One could not better describe what we expect from the close-up. And what captivates Diderot in Joseph Vernet is the latter’s “western” style avant la lettre: “with infinite artfulness, to intermingle movement and rest, daylight and shadows, silence and noise.”

The history of art sometimes plays the accordion, as it were. With his “necessary lengthiness,” Richardson first stretched out the literary

time that Greuze's instantaneous cinema would compress in his paintings (which require long descriptions nonetheless; see the Salons). In its turn, cinema, which like painting operates by means of images, will stretch them out by multiplying them in duration, as literature does with words.⁵

.....

♥ Would you say that the body is the image, whereas the text is the soul?

● Certainly not, if you are suggesting that the image is on one side and the text on the other—which is what happens in what is normally called “illustration.” This is an impoverished dualism, like every dualism. But, in truth, every image and every text is potentially, and respectively, text and image for itself. This potential is actualized in the gaze or in reading. I read a text and here is an image, or indeed, here is yet more text! In looking at the image, I always textualize it in some way, and in reading the text, I image it. These actualizations are innumerable: no text has its proper image, no image its proper text.

♥ But when an actualization occurs—which one could call, in either case, an *interpretation*—there is indeed soul and body, that is, form and intensity (for these are the true senses of the words *soul* and *body*). Form and intensity are intimately mingled together, however, just as the Cartesian soul is present everywhere in the body that it animates, or that animates it, as one might say. To *interpret* is precisely that: animation as embodiment, and embodiment as animation. It means configuring an intensity and intensifying a figure. *Body* and *soul* are in truth only one word, divided in two in order to show how they interpret each other in both senses at once.

♠ There is one thing that is outside interpretation, both as text and as image: namely, spirit—the self-equivalent breath, neither body nor soul, without form or intensity. Spirit becomes neither trait nor trace. It has no color, no figure, no letter, no style. Spirit has no body or soul.

♣ Image and text are therefore distinguished as soul and body: each is the limit of the other, its horizon of interpretation. The hori-

zon of the image is the text, with which it opens an indefinite power to imagine, before which the image is only a closure, a closed contour. But the horizon of the text is the image, with which it opens an indefinite power to imagine, before which the text is only an impotency, a permanent postponement of images.

♠ But in the end, or in the beginning, every horizon recedes indefinitely and is engulfed in the sea and the sun mixed together.

● But the image is not self-identical. Essentially, it is distinguished from itself. Thus we differentiate very clearly between an image and a thing that is not an image (at least so long as we do not treat the image as a thing or any thing as an image, which is always possible: the displacement is limitless). The image is, in every respect, distinction. It is distinguished from things or from living beings, it is distinguished from the imageless ground from which it is detached, and it distinguishes itself insofar as it designates itself as an image. It always says, simultaneously, "I am this, a flower," and "I am an imaged flower, or a flower-image." I am not, it says, the image *of* this or that, as if I were its substitute or copy, but I *image* this or that, I present its absence, that is, its sense. I image what is unimaginable in sense.

◆ Or rather, if I understand you, I present one of the possible modes of its sense, one of its possible distinctions, for example, as a physical body and a proffering of voice, as a framed body and an articulation of speech . . .

♠ And many other modes besides. It is not possible to enumerate them all. Theater and cinema are only modes in which the text is itself posited as such, giving rise, or giving place, to a delicate interval between textual presence (the sense understood, if you like) and an imaged absence (the sense concealed in the image's ground). Only the interval between the two, in the rhythm of the spectacle, properly makes the truth of the thing: the truth of sense. It is the cadence of moments in which sense is imaged, in which it stops the image in a "freeze frame," in an ungraspable grasping.

♥ There are other modalities in which the text is not given as such, in which it can no doubt appear, but also disappear. Then there is no text as text. The text, the weave, becomes something absent, which the image images. This happens even in the theater and in the

cinema, or at their limits, in pantomime or tableau vivant, sometimes in performance, or in the silent shot, especially if it is still or if it comprises an entire film. One is then in a situation of contagion with other modes.

♣ To tell the truth, where is there not contagion? Each mode is a mode of giving presence to an absence that threads its way in every direction, a point on the front, a point on the back, upside down or inside out, and this absence in incessant absencing puts all the modes into contact at their borders: the same unidentifiable texture circulates everywhere. The relation of image to sense is the eternal return of the same. The same sense always imaged otherwise.

◆ In the modes where no text is indicated as such—when sense does not say, “I say”—the text proceeds from the image itself. It comes out of it and returns to it, without setting down any words. This is the case with painting, photography, installation, sculpture and architecture, and, sometimes, video, performance, music, and dance. Always another step, always a step to the side: the image murmurs “*no text* [pas de texte],” and you hear “*the text step by step* [pas à pas le texte].”

● In fact, each of these modes may or may not display a text. In any case, there will be a title, a tag, even if only the negative “untitled.” Somewhere there will be an indication that here is what one calls a “work.” The minimum of discourse is the word *work*, or some other designation or deictic (a pointing finger, a pedestal) with the same function. *Work* then means not so much the product of a setting-into-work, not so much a particular piece of work, as the following indication: freeze frame here. A still image, meaning also: a still text, a fixed point and a cut of the weave in process, an immobilized needle, an eternalized movement.

◆ In that sense, look at the words found in paintings, when there are any, as in the medieval phylacteries, in inscriptions like “Et in Arcadia ego,” in the snippets from diaries and the cubists’ stenciled letters, not to mention the signatures (Caravaggio’s in dripping blood, Bellini’s on a parchment, among many others).⁴ These words make sense, their ordinary sense—“pipe” or “I am the painter”—but they do so by absencing this sense in their image: they are their own graphism, their graphite and their graffiti, its matter, its paste, its

color; they are images in the image, insisting on their absent sense, giving rise to the unheard and the unintelligible, distinct from all received sense. In “Caravaggio” we hear “ravage,” and the name resounds with blood and wounding, death and the death of sense, sense entering into death, knitting death with its needle, a withdrawn, secret sense, sacred and consecrating the image as image, that is, as an empty place, opening onto this indistinct ground in which the distinct, the absolutely distinct, detaches itself and disappears. Death to sense and sense in death: a skull images its empty thought. Upon it one writes: “Vanitas.” In close proximity to this, Pascal declares: “What vanity painting is.” But painting always paints a vanity of words.

♣ From Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes* to Burroughs’s cut-ups and the various forms of “concrete poetry,” passing through the cubists or the suprematists, or from Schwitters to Hantaï, in countless places in contemporary art and in countless different ways, there has been a kind of proliferating obsession with words in painting, with the painting of words, with painted words and with writing as painting. The principle stimulus is a desire to embed words within painting, to bring out their form and material at the expense of their incorporeal value. Sense deposited right at the painting’s skin. But this skin is already brushed against [*affleure*] in language: for a French or English speaker, meaning takes on another grain in German, another texture. From one language to another, there is always a diminution of signification and an increase in sensation. The text images itself. If I say “flower,” *fleur*, *Blume*, *fior*, I do not say the same flower and yet I also do not say the flower itself (the flower “as flower”).

♠ There would thus be none that is “absent from every bouquet,” but rather each flower flourishes only in the climate of a language imaged in a way that is necessarily idiomatic and thus sonorous and visual. This paste of words, these petals stuck to the tongue, cannot be extricated—or transmitted.

♥ But the converse is equally true: there is also what might be called a stabbing desire to write in painting, to make some kind of signifier point, spurt, or spring forth in the image and outside the image. A desire for the image to speak of itself, in itself, and for itself. For it to become the body of the Word. There is an entire secret theology of transsubstantiation, a profane atheology of incarnation and communion: take and touch, devour with your eyes, this is my sense

spread before you, resuscitated as painting. Blood of sense that flows vermilion.

♠ Another atheology will say: image and text are the two holy species of a single withdrawn presence. The two aspects, the two sides or faces presented to the eye of the body and to the eye of the mind for an absence of surface, for an absent sense that has no facial value. The presentation of the absent always oscillates between the presence of a form and the presence of a sense; one always refers back to the other. Neither one, consequently, truly fixes a presence. Each one bears itself as an immobilization, in itself, of presence (here is the image, here is the text, everything is there)—and as an immediate reference in the direction of the other: here is the image, it *means* . . . ; here is the text, it *represents* . . . But who, then, is the one that is absent? Who is the one that is neither text nor image? Who is the one that would be located precisely at the intersection of this double reference, at the place where the meaning of the image encounters the meaning of the text without either one ever being the meaning of the other?

● We must avoid naming him, as you well know. I would like to use one of your words, however, and call him the “Oscillator.” This word is the diminutive form of the Latin *os*, which signifies the mouth and, by metonymy, the face. *Oscillum* thus designated a small mouth (closely related to *osculum*, kiss), as well as a small mask of Bacchus hung in the vines as a scarecrow: the movement of this face swinging in the wind produced the sense of “oscillation.” The Oscillator, then, swings between mouth and face, between speech and vision, between the emission of sense and the reception of form. But what appears to move toward an encounter does not do so at all: on the contrary, the mouth and the look are turned forward and are parallel, turned into the distance, toward an infinite perpetuation of their double and incommunicable position. Between mouth and eye, the entire face oscillates.

◆ And yet, the Oscillator does not cease to knock back and forth, to leap or to dance between the two, touching both of them. It wants to make the mask speak and it wants to give speech a mask. This happens for us now especially with video. With video, we no longer have to do with the textualized body of the cinema. Something else is involved, whose generic name is incrustation. Not only the incrustation of words in the image, but incrustation of the image itself: it is

embedded into the material of the screen, it is not placed upon it as in cinema, nor is it physically joined with a canvas as in painting. In a sense, we must not even speak any longer of a screen: video is not of the order of the screen, but of penetration. One is not a spectator but a voyeur. *Vīdeo* means “I see,” whereas *theaō* means “I look” (and *kineō* is “I move”). “I look,” “I move,” and “I see” do not designate the postures of the presumed “spectator,” nor of the presumed “artist.” These verbs signify the work’s *doing*, its manner of doing and making, what it does to sense or how it *makes sense*. Thus, in *video*, there is absorption in vision, with a tendency toward making absent what is seen. The seer and the viewer come before the visible. The support, in fact, is not an illuminated film but light converted into punctual signals. One enters into pulverulence and into the dance of points. The image becomes particular or particulate. The text, for its part, spoken or written on the image, becomes vibratory, decomposed and recomposed into suspended and rustling waves, slightly drawn back from any spoken language. The Oscillator is imprinted somehow in the flaky and granular matter of a vision turned into itself, onto itself (not necessarily in a narcissistic way), but everywhere rubbing against seeing and rubbing the text or making a text of this rubbing. In an oscilloscopic machine, the distinction between text and image is *virtually* effaced.

♣ But it is reborn from these snowy ashes. The Oscillator is indestructible in its oscillation. That is what separates it at every moment from any resolution into one side or the other, as well as into an improbable union of the two. For the interval between sense and sense is not masked only by the Oscillator. Consider painting once again: *pingo* means above all “to embroider with threads of color,” or else “to tattoo.” This mixes weaving, incision, and delineation with tinting and coloration. The woven thread and the puddle, or the line and the covered surface. Finally, drawing and painting, both of which run through the text: the first gives more lines to read, while the second gives warmth to words. If I write “red,” why isn’t it red? Should it be? Or should it be written in green? In purple? In black? I say “a flower,” and here is the absent one arising red or white, or red and white and just as smooth and soft, flourishing or faded. But I write “a flower,” and here is the word that is traced by marking the paper with a colorless smear.

◆ And yet, the flower is somewhere. It is behind the Oscillator itself. It follows its movement and remains behind the mask with

each oscillation. But behind it there is something else, or someone, who or which is neither text nor image, who or which is in the background, and forms the ground. Let us call this one the “Distinct.” The Distinct is set apart: the distinct mark of sense, its *trait*. It is the stigma, that is, the incision that separates. It is the distinct mark of sense in two ways that are perfectly conjoined and contradictory: on the one hand, the mark by which sense is distinguished; on the other hand, the mark that is distinguished from every possible sense. On the one hand, the distinctive trait by which there is sense—this and not that, a flower or a caterpillar—but also one sense or another in the sense of sight and hearing: that which prevents one from confusing flower and caterpillar, written word and spoken word, embodied sense and incorporeal sense. On the other hand, a trait that is in retreat and drawn back from all sense. A nonsensory trait that is not embodied in any sense—neither a pencil stroke [*trait*] nor a stroke of the violin bow—but which is also not incorporeal like signification.

♣ The Distinct is in fact none of that, but it is not nothing. It is the thing itself: it is what is in the ground of things, at the heart of all things that are, and that withdraws their sense of being into the secret from which all the senses draw their sensibility. The Distinct and the Oscillator have a common cause. One supports the other, which in turn agitates the first. It is no more possible to distinguish them than to confuse them.

♣ But we must not believe that “text and image” can be replaced by “distinct and oscillator.” These two couples are not homologous. They are also chiasmic in relation to one another. Either text is distinguished in the ground of the image and this image oscillates on the former’s surface, or else the image is distinguished between the lines of the text and this text oscillates throughout. The image scintillates, and the text gives off a flat, muffled sound. The image is mute, and the text crackles with white noise. Or it is the inverse, at the same instant, in the same movement. Each one, in the end, is the distinct and the oscillator of the other. Each is the *ekphrasis* of the other while also being its illustration, its illumination. *Ekphrasis* draws a phrase from its other, just as, from its other, illumination draws a sight. A phrase image and a sight of sense.

● How does an image speak? In an image’s language; that is, in a language with no verb or substantive, a language of infinitives and

conjunctions. How does sense make something seen? As a figure and an air of sense, that is, with no aspect or frontal surface, and in concealment.

♠ The infinitive of the image and the concealment of sense: each one courts the other and flees from it. That is Illumination: Image envelops Text, which conceals itself from it; Text devours Image, which emerges from it intact. The words appear to be there only in order to portray their own silence; the drawing seems to figure nothing other than a sense buried in its absence. Text calls Image: perhaps it says nothing other than this call. Image illustrates Text: it dazzles it and us with it, and perhaps does nothing else.

♥ Thus, on both sides there is a pressure and a precipitation toward the presence of the image, the blinding brilliance and the intimate conviction, immediate certainty. One believes the image with one's eyes closed. But there is also on both sides a disquietude and a melancholy in the text and its sense: eyes wide open, one sees it sink into the night, into which one would like to follow it.

♣ Each one calls to the other: illuminate me! *Mebr Licht!*⁵ Without you I'll die! Or: you are my death but dying in you I illuminate myself. Illuminate me, illustrate me: surround me with glory, celebrate me, even delude me and de-limit me in your element!

● The relation between each one is a relation of sense: the text says the sense of the image, which says the sense of the text; it is the torturer's wheel. But at the same time, it is a relation of certainty: each one exposes to the other the assurance it lacks in not being identical to the other. Each exposed to the other and nothing between them. Image and text: this is the slit, perfect, definitive, and delicious, in which the naked truth is always recognized.

♥ *Image would therefore be to text what sense is to truth. But this equality of proportion would be perfectly reversible: image would also be to text what truth is to sense. Indeed, the image cannot lie: it is what it is and refers to nothing else. The text consists entirely in its reference to that of which it speaks. One might conclude from this that the image is a stranger to truth, is neither true nor false, or that it is nothing other than truth, the whole truth that shows itself in it each time. One might also conclude that the text is outside truth, since it always only takes us further and further into the infinity*

of sense, or that it alone is able to enunciate truth or lies concerning the subject of which it speaks. Everything depends on your notions of “truth” and “sense.” If truth is what lends itself to verification, then the image is unverifiable unless it is compared with an original, which one assumes it must resemble. But this assumption is a discourse that you will have introduced, to which the image by itself gives no legitimacy. If truth is what is revealed or manifested from itself, it is not only the image that is always true, it is truth that is, of itself, always image (being in addition and simultaneously image of itself). As for “sense,” if it consists in a reference moving from signifier to signified, it belongs only to text—where, in addition, it turns out to be indissociable from the reference of signifier to signifier and from the entire weave of a language. In this respect, an image has no sense: it is pure truth. But if sense is validity for a subject, then the image makes sense out of the fact that it shows itself: it is insofar as it has at least the sense of its arrival in coming up against and countering the gaze. In the end, as you can see, what is “image” and what is “text” depends on who is thus countered and what comes to be encountered. The encounter involves recognition and exchange, a commerce of signs and of mutual trust or mistrust. That which counters presents an obstacle and suspends the forward step. So it is at the beginning of Dante’s path, when a panther “light-footed and very fleet, covered with a spotted hide” appears before him “and did not depart from before my face.”⁶ Only a little later does Virgil appear. But countering and encountering are mixed together in everything that is ordinarily designated as “image” or as “text.” There is almost nothing, only a minute separation, between the mark of drawing and that of the grapheme, between graphism and writing: this very narrow slit which is nothing other than the incision of the mark, paraph of truth in the midst of sense but also traced sideways from sense across the true, the slit between the lips, their very contour.

◆ Through this slit, sight looks and speech writes, simultaneously, alternatively. In this way, sight looks into the mouth and speech writes into the eye. One sees the image in the other’s ground, and the other traces a text in the ground facing it. But, through this operation, the ground in each becomes abyssal. Sight loses the Distinct in the ground of the eye, and speech loses the Oscillator at the tip of the tongue. In the ground of the abyss split open—blind spot, cloven tongue or pen—the Oscillator and the Distinct glow with a common and irreconcilable incandescence.

♠ What Image shows, Text de-monstrates. It withdraws it in justifying it. What Text exposes, Image posits and deposits. What Image

configures, Text disfigures. What the latter envisages, the former faces down [*dévisage*]. What one paints, the other depicts. But precisely that, their common cause and their common thing [*chose*], oscillates distinctly between the two in a paper-thin space: recto the text, verso the image, or vice (image)–versa (text).

● It has often been said that cathedrals were Bibles in stone for the illiterate. How mistaken! They are, quite obviously, both for the literate and for the illiterate, the frozen forms and the flipside of reading, the hidden face of writing. The *Qur'an*, for its part, is writing that is imaged from and as itself, and in reading it one is immersed in the illustrious letter. The icon, by contrast, makes the Word see: it does not make it visible, but makes vision plunge into it. The statue of Buddha is Buddha, says the disciple, but the master checks him: "You talk too much!"

.....

Coda

*Of the secret Word of
tongue does not let us
ing us away. Our true words
are here. The words that do not
in the air, are here. Read
ceptible to any pronun-
the eyes. Passing over the
stretch to infinity. Touch-
no body, the clarity
Only absorbing the light
The true words that connect
sounds; we see them dis-
clearly. The words that
umbra whose meaning sparkles
iant days, neither timbre nor
the words, these words here.
but impossible to recount
is entrusted to the voice; perhaps
them a little, although un-
Silence.⁷*

*Silence, even our mother
speak, except by turn-
The words never spoken
inhabit a voice resounding
as if they were not sus-
ciation, mutely transmitted. By
taut string of gazes, they can
ing no lip, passing over
allotted to words.
of the pupils. Through the eyes.
us, never reduced to these
tinct, their forms appear
shine in the pen-
through one of those rad-
melody, which remains always
Intention to divulge them;
them in a language that
with numbers, they resemble
pronounceable, Word of*

.....

For the secret Image of . . . —there is no word for an absence of image. Perhaps the text-word? There is no word to say without an image. Which is not darkness. Nor blindness. But the unformed (rather than the formless, always somewhat deformed and therefore discernible), the inapparent, the unappearing. Without parency or patency or latency: but no image. The unimaginable that no word brings to image, not even this word unimaginable. The privative un- here is the entire image, the darkness on stage, the end of the film, the film not printed. Not a thing behind the image waiting to appear, but the reversal and underside of the image, the back of the painting without a painting on the back. Rough surface of the real. Speaking of it turns us away from it, makes it an image after all, as when a painter paints the back of a painting. It is an image that must be unimagined, that is, thought, if thought is a commotion, a syncope, and a bedazzlement. Its flash is not the image of the obscure, but the brilliance that sparks out from having knocked against it: a flash of darkness sliced away. A blow and a shout, a stupefying pain, a breath cut short, the wordless unimagined, in a bark, a wail, a groan, a sonorous uprising.

Masked Imagination

The Kantian Schema

Between the Renaissance and the nineteenth century, European thought (the world that was in the process of westernizing itself, of imagining itself as “world”) shifted from the painting to the projection screen, from representation to presentation, and from the idea to the image, or, more precisely, from the fantasy or the fantasm to the imagination. We can also say it thus: from ontology to phenomenology, or, therefore, from being to appearing, from form to formation, or from matter to force, from idea to conception, and, to sum it all up in a word: from sight [*la vue*] to vision. Or, in terms that are even more incisive: from the image as lie to truth as image. Nothing less.

This important group of displacements no doubt constitutes, after the Greeks and Christianity, the third decisive moment in the West. For the Greeks, there was light, and a sight that looks into the light (following a nocturnal world populated by forces, not forms). For the Christians, there was an eclipse of the visible and an insistence on speech: call, exhortation, a saying whose force is not in the said, an auto-energetic enunciation.

With the modern age, a certain synthesis occurs: a sight that operates like a saying, a performative enunciation of a vision—“this is a thing.” In fact, what occurs is *synthesis* plain and simple, one that we could call the synthesis-image, an expression whose current technical

sense can only be derived from Kant (since it is to him that these remarks refer, as you have no doubt guessed).

The Kantian imagination is indeed the first modern figure (if I dare to speak of a figure here . . . but this is deliberate, as you can well imagine) of a faculty of images that is not representative (at least not in the current sense of the word) but presentative, appresentative, or apperceptive (that is, perceiving for itself, perceiving *ad subjectum*), constitutive or productive of its object—or of itself as an object—and thus, in the end, a purveyor of knowledge. Regardless of whether this knowledge is determinant or reflective in the Kantian sense of these terms, and regardless of whether it is therefore cognition or thought (or, indeed, knowledge or belief—or faith—here too in Kant’s sense), it is a knowledge through the image, for the imagination is what presents all things—the object and the subject, the triangle and the ultimate ends, the imaginable and the unimaginable.

Between these two extremes, as we know, there is a technics (or an art), which occupies the decisive place insofar as it is understood as the pure production of a form whose name, “beauty,” signifies that it is valid absolutely for itself—or, indeed, as pure production of an excess of all form (called “sublime”), in which the imagination imagines itself as unimaginable or unimagining, and thus again as productive of itself even unto its failure, productive of its limit and of the surpassing of its limit. The Kantian subject—since that is what this *self-imagining* is—designates two pure modalities of such a surpassing, modalities that form the two extremes of its tension: its transcendental temporality and its unconditional freedom.

The imagination goes from one to the other, since time forms or gives the possibility of presentation as composition of unity in general: “Number is therefore simply the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition [in general, a unity] due to my generating time itself in the apprehension of the intuition.”¹ Number is the first of the schemata, or the “pure schema of magnitude (*quantitas*).” In other words, it is the schema of the *one* as successive to itself. It is the pure image (the schema is a non-sensible image) by which, in general, *an* image is possible, that is, by which the unity and unicity of a representation are possible.

The subject produces unity—that is, its own unity as subject-of-a-representation—as successive. That is its primary schematism, or its pure imagination, the condition of possibility of any image, of any (re)presentation: the condition for their being *an* image, and not a

chaotic flux (without this singular image being simply one and unified: what it does, simply, is present itself).

Insofar as it is or makes time, the schema gives the image as finite: in place of a uni-totalizing intuition that would be the divine vision of a One in-itself in its own infinite act (the Monad of monads in Leibniz), there is merely the one *that succeeds itself* by giving itself or by opening a possibility of images, of the vision of an object. This one is a sort of *ad hoc* formation of the image always renewed but never completed in the unique form of the real.

At the other extreme, freedom consists, for the subject—and in a symmetrical fashion—in *not* (re)presenting an image of the world as a rational or reasonable whole endowed with ends, except through a weak image called a “type” (as distinguished from a “schema”) which serves as a symbol: the type of a nature ordered by laws, which helps us to think the duty of acting unconditionally in order to *produce* (that is, also in order to *imagine*) a moral, or free, nature.

Kant’s famous Pietism is of some importance here. Without going back to Luther’s principled reserve concerning images (which, it should be recalled, had to do with the adoration of the image and not its production or its presence as such), and also without doing history here, properly speaking, it must be pointed out that Kant inherits the critique of *Schwärmerei* from an entire tradition in which this *Schwärmerei* was associated, as a delirium of the imagination, with magic, sorcery, and mysticism in general, as well as with Catholicism considered to be a form of idolatry.

As a movement with mystical tendencies (particularly in comparison to the dominant form of Lutheranism), Pietism had a complex relationship with the imagination. The latter was simultaneously rejected, on the grounds that a given image cannot claim to be an immediate presence of the divine or of spirit, and yet solicited once again—behind the scenes, so to speak—as a force capable of letting the divine manifest itself in an inner light (an expression associated with the Puritan traditions) by which one accedes, not to images properly speaking, but to the very condition of all vision and/or truth (if it is true, precisely, that truth must in the end be seen). On this point as on others, one always finds in Protestantism (of which I consider Kantianism to be one extreme) a tendency to discredit a false religion (and sometimes religion in general) for the purpose of establishing another that is more pure, more abyssal or more abysmal (more engulfed, more rapturous . . .), and thus a movement that

carries itself beyond images (idols) toward the very origin of illumination and, consequently, toward the obscure point of a divine imagination. If Leibniz's God calculates, Kant's God, to the extent that one can speak of him, imagines: he imagines the moral world and he imagines himself as the light of this world. For this God is nothing other (and in this sense he is an heir to Spinoza's God) than the *intuitus originarius*, which in turn is nothing other than the imagination that creates the world. This latter (whose objective reality cannot be posited) is what must regulate the thought of the *intuitus derivatus*, that is, the imagination that produces our representations. This movement toward the source, both unconditional and asymptotic with respect to an ordinary imagination, will have managed to pass through the very death of God, and perhaps it had to do so; we will come back to this.

But let us remain with Kant for a moment. In the perspective I am indicating, time, on the one hand, and freedom, on the other—the subject's two lines of flight—necessarily come *from before themselves*: in order to take place, they have already taken place. In order to open the possibility of a world and of experience, they have already opened this opening itself. In this sense, the correspondence between time and freedom is an intimate one, it is even *interior intimo ipso . . .*

Now, experience is first the image, *Bild*: the possibility of a presentation. Henceforth, presence cannot consist in a being-present without consisting identically in a presentation of being. In general, anything that is comes down, in the first or last instance, to an image that I give myself or that gives itself: this, here, comes down to the same, and there is no imagining "subjectivity" that is not also the "objectivity" of the image itself. Thus, the corollary of the "subject of representation," or, more exactly, its very condition, consists in what is not yet either a subject or a representation, but a making-image, a *mise-en-image* or putting-into-image: *Einbildung*.² That is what subjectivizes the subject and also what objectivizes the object, and it is there that the subject becomes abyssal, engulfed in its infinite antecedence to every possible object.

What I thus give myself or what thus gives itself *before all else*—in the precise sense of these words—cannot be already an image, but must be its possibility: not *Bild* but the *Einung* of *Bild* (*Einung* is an old, and rare, poetic form of *Einigung*, uni-fication). It is the making-one, the bringing-into-the-one of the *Bild*. It is a fore-seeing of the image, of

the opening to a view in general. The schema thus fore-sees and pre-opens the vision of the union (or as the union) of the concept (*a* thing, *some* thing, *several* or *all* things . . .) and sensible material (proliferating multitude, magma or plasma that is not anything). The schema is “the non-sensible image,” as Kant says, which is to say that it has the unity of a manifold without any manifold being given, but also without the pure and empty unity of the one that is nothing but one. The schema fore-sees in that it forms a pure image *of* the image as a gathering together and a unifying of the manifold: a pure image of how something *presents itself* in general. The schema fore-sees and in sum pre-(s)-ents self-presenting: in German, *es bildet*, or *vor-bildet*, it preforms or models the *Bild*. One could also say: it imagines or it images the imagination itself, the ground and the force from which it arises. And, by that very fact, it gives us an understanding of the image that is completely different from the ordinary version of representation, figuration or fiction.

To say it in German: “ein Bild ist was sich einbildet und wie es sich einbildet.” An image is what imagines itself and how it imagines itself. Or again: “ein Bild ist das dass und das wie, sich als und in eins zu bilden”; an image is (the fact) that and the way in which something forms itself in and as one. An image is the making-one, the making-itself-one of something. This “one” is not unity as opposed to multiplicity: it is the possibility that anything at all, including something multiple or fluid, may come to presence; which is to say that, as some thing or event, it may bring itself out of the confused and incessantly dissolved dispersion of sensible givens in order to give *itself* to be seen. In order to make something be seen.

To give itself—to be given—to be seen coming out of the non-visible and the non-seeing: for we understand that in the imagination thus envisaged, the object and the subject are given together and give themselves to one another, or even in one another, “ein ins andere hinein sich bildend.”⁵

The Heideggerian Image

In his analysis of the schematism, Heidegger perfectly understands what is at stake here, and the necessity of thinking it in order to penetrate the secret of the schematism (reputed by Kant to be unassailable, as is well known)—which, however, does not exactly amount, it will be noticed, to “wrenching away” this secret (Kant uses this expression), to extract its “art” (also Kant’s term). It means, rather,

entering into the logic of what can be called, for the sake of convenience and in order to provide an image, the *self-imagining* of the schematism.

I would like to examine the operation by which Heidegger attempts to do this, and, in particular, the way in which this operation *images self-imagining* for us, the way in which it exemplifies or provides a model for “making an image.” I would like to do this by commenting on section 20 of the *Kantbuch*,⁴ entitled “Image and Schema.”

There Heidegger writes: “First of all, image [*Bild*] can mean: the look [*Anblick*] of a determinate being insofar as it is manifest [*offenbar*] as something at hand [*Vorhandenes*]. It offers the look.”⁵ The usual sense of *image* here, then, is “first of all” the *aspect offered* by something. (It should also be noted that the German *Bild* has an etymology very different from that of *imago*—which is the representation of the dead—implying rather form, aspect, or overall outward appearance.) It is the *Anblick*, the “glance” or the “look” presented, directed toward us by the thing. Heidegger continues by saying that this sense can be extended to *Abbild* or copy (the translator says “likeness,” in the sense of a portrait or reflection; a photo is commonly referred to as an *Abbild*)—the copy of a present thing, then, or else to *Nachbild*, an imitation, reproduction, or “after-image” of a being no longer present, and to *Vorbild*, the model or “fore-image” of a being yet to be created.

We find ourselves, then, before the immediate image-aspect, as well as the mimetic triplicity of portrait-reconstruction-model; Heidegger adds to this the “very broad” sense of “look in general,” in which it is not said whether what is rendered visible (*anschaulich*, “intuitable”) is “a being or a non-being” (consequently, this is also true for the “look” of a projection, an ideal configuration). He says that Kant uses all three senses without formally distinguishing them, and he expresses a doubt that these distinctions alone will be able to clarify the schematism. But of course that is precisely what he sets out to do. In fact, he will attempt to show how the production of the possibility of “creating a look” in general refers back, prior to any kind of mimetic image, to the ordinary sense of the *Bild* as an aspect that makes itself seen. One could also formulate it in this way: he will attempt to show how every creating-a-look finds its condition in a primordial putting-into-the-look. And how this putting-into-the-

look—that of the schematism—must be envisaged (quite literally) with regard to its native constitution.

In fact, the elucidation proceeds from here first by discussing the three senses. First, it is said that the ordinary mode of the *Bild* is empirical intuition, which is always that of a “this-here [*Dies-da*].” Such a “this” can itself embrace a multiplicity, for example, “this particular totality of this landscape.” Heidegger thus recalls intuition in general as a regime of grasping presence (which is the Kantian definition), a presence that is singular or plural but always in some way *one*, precisely because it is grasped-in-presence. He explains that by calling it “look,” *species*, one speaks of the landscape “as if it were looking at us” (“als blicke sie uns an”; in Latin, *species* can have the active or the passive sense of “look,” as can *visus* or *adspectus*). Let us keep this feature in mind; Heidegger does not recall it, but it will play a decisive role behind the scenes.

Heidegger then says that every derivative image—every *Abbild*—is only an *Abschreibung*, a copy or transcription “of what shows itself immediately as ‘Bild.’” Thus is introduced what could be considered a motif of inverted mimetic values: every copy copies the thing and the thing’s showing-itself. The *Abbild* (or the *Nach-* or *Vor-bild*) always shows the *Bild*, while also showing itself as something that shows itself: a photograph shows itself as a photograph, and it shows the showing-itself of the photographed thing. Thus the copy does not lose the originary monstration: it maintains it and restages it in the ground of its own secondary monstration. Heidegger’s aim here is clear: the primary sense of the image, the giving-itself-to-be-seen and the offering-its-look, the *Aussehen*, the looking-like-while-showing-itself of every thing understood at the same time “as if it were looking at us” (*aussehen*, “to look,” or “to seem (like)” breaks down literally into “seeing-outward”), forms the originary and proper value of the image, which is preserved in the ground of every reproduction.

Consequently, what is present at hand (*vorhanden*) can be represented in the sense of copied. But what *presents itself* does so always in its own showing-itself. In a sense, this implies that each thing, before being present at hand in a pure availability, has brought itself to presence, at bottom [*au fond*], like a person.⁶ Much later, in the Zähringen seminar of 1973, Heidegger will say that Dasein is “face to face with what-is itself—and not with a representation.” He continues, for example, “if I remember and think of René Char in *Les Busclats*, what is given to me there? René Char himself! Not some ‘image’ by which I would be immediately referred to him.”⁷ In 1929,

the “himself” (or “itself”) is the same as the image insofar as it shows itself *at bottom*. Or else, at bottom, the image is an *ipse*: it is the ipseity of and in the act of a showing-itself. (We will see later which *ipse* lies at the foundation of the text of the *Kantbuch*.)

This is also true if one reproduces the reproduction, thus producing a *Nachbild* (picture or photograph) of an *Abbild* (portrait)—that “of a deathmask, for example,” as Heidegger says. This photo shows us itself and the mask, and what the mask shows, namely, “the dead person, as he appears—*aussieht*—shows himself or showed himself [bzw. *aussab*].” But “an individual corpse itself can also show this,” that is, “wie das Gesicht eines toten Menschen aussieht,” “how the face of a dead man seems/looks-outward”—to transcribe literally and according to the indication given above by Heidegger. This indication stated: “gleich als blicke sie uns an”—just as if it were looking at us. “As if,” *gleich als*, implies that it is the same as, that it faithfully resembles: there is thus here, in the ground of the *Bild*, an *Abbild* of the *Bild* itself as a showing-itself that shows itself as a gaze directed at us. The primary image shows itself as a gaze turned toward us. The image makes an image by resembling a gaze. It is as if Heidegger had said: the primary image is always an image (resemblance) of an image (monstration). There is here, *at bottom*, a chiasmus or a generative enfolding: the image gives itself to be seen by resembling a seeing; the visible presents itself by seeing. The primary image is always also *like a gaze*; it is therefore image by being at the same time what op-poses itself to the gaze and what opens itself as gaze. (And perhaps, in addition, it is “sage comme un image”⁹ in several senses: calm, immobile, impassive, and overcoming all pathos, possessed of an assurance, a knowledge, and a profound art, that of seeing by being seen, that of making activity out of passivity itself.)

The Image, the Idea, and Time

Heidegger does not explain this “like an image” as I am doing—but he does explain it by going back to what is shown by all these conjoined or dislocated *images*, images of images that always show a general *Aussehen*, a “seeming-and-outward-looking,” which the text relates, in parentheses (and in Greek¹⁰), to “*eidos*, idea.” The *idea* is the showing-itself, the carrying-itself-outwardly in general of every possible particular *aspect*.

It is impossible not to point out, at least in passing, something remarkable here. I am thinking of what Heidegger will later problema-

tize regarding the Platonic Idea as a “yoke” imposed on *aletheia* (that is, on unveiling) or as a “ground” of presence that stops the movement of advent and withdrawal, the veiling-unveiling of presence as *Anwesen* and not *Vorhanden*.¹¹ I do not want to depart here from our commentary on the *Kantbuch*. But it is important to note that, in 1929, the *idea* appeared, however briefly, in terms rather different from those of its later distinction from *aletheia*, which, moreover, is not mentioned in 1929. It literally does not appear. Under these conditions, the *idea* finds itself in the place of *aletheia*: it gives to veiling-unveiling the appearance of a seeing-showing. The seeing by which the thing as its own image is unveiled, and remains veiled. This episode is interesting in that it suggests that there was for Heidegger, at a certain moment, a possibility of truth for the image, which, by being brought back into play, might make it possible to avoid the excessively occulting/bedazzling turn later taken by *aletheia*,¹² a turn whose final consequences pose a certain danger to thinking: the danger of vertigo and of fusional blinding. The image or the *idea* as manifest aspect (contour, surface, *species*) of the non-manifest in a gaze (*species, adspectus*), engages—to say it with a touch of provocation—a thought of the clarity and distinction *of* and *in* the blinding evidence of truth itself. Moreover, we also know that in 1942 Heidegger will write that the *idea*, as he interprets it (limitative form, correlate of a direct gaze) nonetheless preserves something of *aletheia*.¹³ That is, something of what we see showing itself in the 1929 text.

We will come back to this, but first let us return to the text.

Once it has been introduced as the Greek name or the proper name of *Aussehen*, the *idea* will be understood as the *how* of self-showing “in general,” and therefore as the unity of a representation, that is, in the terms required by the problematic of the schema, as the modality or as the side (the aspect?) of the concept taken up in representation in general. This unity is not a unity given apart from the image or one that would be superimposed on it. On the contrary, the image is constituted by and as the conjunction of the concept’s unity and the plasmatic chaos of sensation. The unity forms the rule according to which a plurality must be drawn out and inscribed (*auszeichnen, hineinzeichnen*—these words occur a little later in the text) in order to make (an) image. Such formulations make it clear that what is at stake here is not an abstract or numerical unity that would come to capture and make rational what is given as the sensible flux. On the contrary, what is at stake is a kind of design or drawing, a tracing, a sketch

delineating this flux, enabling it to present itself without, for all that, setting it down in a petrified form, in the sole mode of the geometrical object that the Kantian schema most readily evokes.

The *idea* or the look in the ground of every possible image constitutes the “*Bilden* not bound to a determinate something at hand” — which could be translated as “the forming not subordinated to a determinate form at hand” — that makes possible every *Bildbeschaffung*, every creation of an image, and with it every coming to presence of something as something. In the end, we have to do with a proposition that could be called profoundly graphic or pictorial: there is a thing only through the design of the thing, and this design gives the thing the contour of a look turned toward our vision.

This look that unifies the sensible and sensibilizing unity (the chiasmus of the two is what properly makes up the gesture, the site, and the art of the schema) forms the schematizing operation, which does not first give an image but is nonetheless related to “something like an image” (for which Heidegger introduces the expression “schema-image”). The schematism operates through a “like-an-image” that constitutes at once a quasi-image and an image of image, that is, in the first or final instance, an antecedence of the image to itself, its imaging arrival or occurrence: its imagination. This imagination is what sees before and outside itself the look that it will present to us and allow us to represent to ourselves.

That is why the schema will then be understood, coming back to Kant, as the fore-seeing rule of the *Vor-stellung* — which makes every look possible, in both the active and passive senses of “look.” This priority of the look over the look, this anticipation of and in apprehension (to use the Kantian terms), will be said to form the mark of finitude (in section 21). Finitude means that the look, unlike an *intuitus originarius*, does not arise from nothingness and does not give itself to itself in totality as an *intuitus intellectualis*, rather, it precedes itself and therefore always succeeds itself. It precedes itself and succeeds itself just as the contour of a drawing anticipates itself and prolongs itself in the hand holding a pencil and moving toward the piece of paper then back away from it. In a sense, it itself sees itself and it itself illuminates itself. But it is not, for all that, a self-creating totality. It is also, in its fore-seeing, a not-seeing of its own form, which is always to come or else always already past.

Thus time is the “pure image” or the “schema-image” (section 22), which means that there is no given present (*Vorhanden*) that is not

preceded by the pre-giveness of its givability, identical to its receivability: *Vor-stellung* of its *Stellung*, pre-positing of a being-positing. The imagination is therefore time, since time is the non-present, the non-instantaneous, of a look that does not see its own unity (its concept) directly, but only in and as the *Bildung* (formation) of the unity of the manifold, a unity that, consequently, is itself manifold, many-folded (if you will) into itself and from out of itself in order to image itself. The self-imaging unity is the unity unifying itself as a sensible unity, while in this same chiasmus of the schema, the sensible images itself by sensibilizing itself as *a thing* that is sensed.

The Death Mask

But what about the example chosen by Heidegger, the death mask and the photograph of it? He says nothing more about them. Once the *eidōs/idea* is mentioned, we pass to another example: the look of a house, the “distinguishing [*Auszeichnen*] of the whole” of the “how of the appearing of a house in general.” But this example does not have the same status: it is turned toward the production of a look (that of a house), whereas the example of the mask proposes a look of the production of an image (the how-a-dead-man-shows-himself). In both cases it is, of course, a question of going back to what is before any empirical image. All the examples exemplify such a movement back toward the eidetic and non-sensible *Bild* of the *ein-bilden*. But one could say that the example of the look of a house is turned toward the *gebildet*—toward the imaged image, the presented image—whereas that of the mask, which is in a way turned around and looking back, indicates the *einbildend*—the imaging image, the image presenting itself.¹⁴ It is indeed the mask, then, that properly gives the example.

Now, such an example cannot fail to surprise. Or, perhaps, what surprises us in this text is that its author does not seem to address the singular character of his example. A double surprise: to see the appearance of a death mask where one could just as easily have a more banal image, and to notice that this relative incongruity, or this somewhat *unheimlich* or uncanny intrusion, has no effect on the author. It is this double surprise that I would now like to analyze: which is to say that in analyzing the implications of the example, I will be led to analyze—not to say psychoanalyze—some hidden mechanism that imposes the example or slips it in as though unbeknownst to Heidegger (whether this lack of awareness is a mat-

ter of blindness or of negation—in the Freudian sense—makes little difference).

Let us look again, then. When this example appears, we sense that it is something more or other than just any example of an image. Heidegger could have spoken of a portrait or of a painted landscape and a photograph of it, or else of a photograph and its reproduction in a book: in one sense, such examples would have been even more rigorous with regard to the indifferent character of the reproduction as such, since the theoretical concern here is to reduce attention to the reproduction in order to center everything on the production of the image, or, better yet, on the image-producing-itself. But the example of the mask is odd for the simple reason that it exemplifies an ordinary showing-itself through the showing-itself and the outward-seeming of a dead man, which by definition does not show itself but essentially withdraws itself from all monstration. There must, then, be a particular reason for the emergence of this example.

Appropriately enough, there are in fact two: there is an empirical reason and a transcendental reason. What is strange—and it is a strangeness that I would not know how to dissipate—is that we have to find these two reasons ourselves, since the author gives us no indication concerning them.

The empirical reason is the following: in 1926, the year in which Heidegger first taught the material that would become the *Kantbuch*, a book by Ernst Benckard was published in Berlin under the title *Das ewige Antlitz (Undying Faces)*. This book presents photographs of the death masks from the collection of the Schiller National Museum of Marbach (123 masks, many of well-known figures like Newton or Cromwell, Beethoven, Pascal, Hebbel, or the famous “Inconnue de la Seine”¹⁵). This book was an immediate success and was reprinted several times in subsequent years. It caught the attention of Gide and Canetti, Aragon and Céline, from whom we have statements showing some interest in it.¹⁶ There is no great risk in the hypothesis that Heidegger was also struck by this work, whose renown would surely have made him aware of it, and that he would have seen it as a remarkable example of an image of an image. This is all the more likely in that photography, already for him an ordinary means of *Abbildung*, which he introduces into his text in the first place as an example of reproduction (before introducing the idea of a reproduction of a first reproduction), is associated in this book with an *Abbildung* that is

much less ordinary (it is very likely that Heidegger never saw a death mask before opening this book in 1926) and more archaic both from a historical point of view and from a logical point of view, since it implies the immediate contact of the cast and the face.

We can note—without going any further into their differences—that, in the text of Heidegger’s course from which the *Kantbuch* was later drawn,¹⁷ there are two moments when the implicit reference to Benkart’s book comes into focus. In the course, an example of a specific mask is given: “for example, that of Pascal,” which in fact does appear in Benkart’s book. On the other hand, when introducing the death mask in general, the course remarks in a parenthesis: “(we are not concerned here with the presentative phenomenon [*Darstellungsphänomen*], which the death mask constitutes in general).” The death mask as such thereby finds itself even more clearly and explicitly disregarded (to say nothing of the fact of ignoring the question whether “the mask in general” consists always and above all in the reproduction of a given face!). But this disregard might well be masking something in turn, and perhaps also to Heidegger himself.

It is obvious that this example’s archaeo-logical movement back toward a self-presenting is much more radical, or more abyssal, than what the photograph is able to illustrate. In the final instance, it is a question of what is manifested by “the face of a dead human being in general.” It is this generality—presented by every “individual corpse”—that functions as a shifter in the passages on the “sensible transposition” of the concept and on the rule of the schematism as *Ein-bildung*. We are touching, then, on the transcendental, and perhaps involuntary, reason of the example.¹⁸

The fact that the dead person, as dead, does not give rise to any explicit considerations on the part of the thinker of “being-toward-death” is a surprise that only increases the strangeness of the example. But there is yet another surprise: after emphasizing the ambiguity of the *Aussehen*, the *aspect* by which something shows itself and at the same time appears to regard our gaze (such that the image appears to be born only by producing a reflection or resonance of the gaze, by coming face-to-face with the one who sees, who *imagines* or who *imagines himself*), Heidegger does not remark on the fact that the *Gesicht* or face of the dead man forms a face-to-face that is blind. He does write that the image of the dead man shows him to us according to the aspect that is his or that was his (*ausieht bzw. aussah*). The word *beziehungsweise* (abbreviated *bzw.*)—meaning literally “accord-

ing to the relation,” or as one sometimes says, “respectively” — is very important, since it can imply the play on words that Heidegger does not recall: the dead man has a present aspect, insofar as he does not see, and he has another aspect insofar as he looked. However, everything happens as if his image superimposed the two aspects: the one respective to now and the one respective to before. As if the before (the look) remained in the now (the non-look), or as if the now (the non-look) retroactively affected the before (the look). There is projection and retrospection of each of the aspects into the other: blinding of the eyes, gaze of the empty sockets. To say it in an awkward manner, respective to the present and dead aspect or respective to the past and looking aspect — respective to the aspected and to the aspecting, there occurs a strange conjunction of *aussehen*. The second is the past aspect that the present aspect shows as past: not a past present (the one who would give a portrait with his gaze), but a present past.

But everything changes from one present to another. The past-present, like the present-present of the corpse, tendentially forms something present at hand, *vorhanden*, something simply placed there, lying there, and thus not *coming* to presence.¹⁹ But the present past in the aspect of the non-seeing or non-aspecting *Gesicht* presents the withdrawal of the look. And it is the look of the withdrawal of the look that in the end, in this text — that is, as an *eidos*-look of the dead man located in the ground and origin of the entire series of looks — becomes the element that makes it possible to bring out the fore-seeing rule that is constitutive of the schematizing *Ein-bildung*.

After-seeing also amounts to fore-seeing, the pro-vidence of vision, the possibility of a world; and the aspect of the dead man also amounts to the *ad spectus*, the *species* or the *eidos* of that for which there can be no “intuition”: the concept or the unity of the manifold in the image. The implications of the death mask could be drawn out most freely, but most rigorously, by saying this: the divine power of an intuition that would be creative of the unity of its sensibility is supplemented (and not replaced or substituted for) by a lack of vision that joins the sensible manifold in or to a unity by default, a blind, non-creative unity, but one that, with its empty gaze, gives rise to the possibility of the image.

In thinking of the analyses of being-toward-death (and in wondering whether it was possible for Heidegger not to think of it when he looked at the photographs of the death masks), one comes to discern

a strict parallel between the impossibility of an *intuitus originarius* and the impossibility of substituting myself for the dying man in his death. One is even tempted to say: the true beginning of the death of God is the removal of divine intuition from the world and from experience, which is then precisely the assignation of death to the place of the origin, there where a world springs from nothing, in an inverted repetition of the gesture of creation.

At the same time, however—or, indeed, as a consequence—there occurs, as though inadvertently or by subreption, a silent displacement of the double impossibility (of being in the place of the dying other / of being in the place of the absolute seer). For in following the logic of the *Kantbuch*, we must admit a certain access to an understanding of fore-seeing, therefore of *Ein-bildung*, therefore of the “hidden art” of the schema—and consequently, according to the parallel, we would have to admit, under the notion of *Sein zum Tode* (being-toward-death), something like an access to the other’s dying . . .

From Death to Death

The gaze directed at the non-seer—our gaze directed at the mask—enters into the empty eye as well as the backside or the inside of the eye: my look slips all the way into the back of the look and places sight in view [*met la vue en vue*]—which, after all, is something that both painting and philosophy have sought to do.²⁰ To bring the invisible to the surface or to make sight seen, and to render the aspect of the perspect: these are the two lines of flight in all art called “visual” art and in all thought of the *intuitus*, of schematism and of phenomenality in general.

To be sure, we are speaking of an access without access, since it accedes to what has no aspect—or else to the aspect of the unaspectant. But this latter, the gaze without gaze or the withdrawal of the gaze—more precisely still, withdrawal as gaze—is also the forelook of the look, the *Ein-bildung* of the *Bild* and the fore- or forthcoming [*prévenance*] of presence. (In this context we could resuscitate the old terms for “gaze” in French that were eventually supplanted by *regard*: *engard*, *surgard*, *pourgard*, so many attempts on the part of language to designate taking-into-view as a taking-into-account, as attention and, if you will, as intention in the phenomenological sense, but falling short of both the act of intention and the phenomenon.)

Thus another parallelism emerges: just as dying is “thrown being toward the ownmost potentiality-of-being”²¹ and is thus distin-

guished from “demise” (*Ableben*), so does the *Aussehen*, the actualized aspect of the dead face, form the possibility of the schema and distinguish itself from its merely present aspect at hand, which forms only the *Abbild* of the dead man’s traits. But the ungraspable and ownmost *Sterben* (the *Sterben* of the proper) passes through *ableben*; likewise, *bilden* properly speaking passes through (and escapes) the *Abbild*, the mask, and the *Nachbild*, the photograph of the mask.²² It passes through and it escapes as a *Gesicht* of the dead man, a face, a look, a blind seeing—this *Gesicht* that bears in itself the mark of being-past since it presents the aspect in relation to the look that it has and/or in relation to the look that it had, and which it therefore no longer has, such that the look that it has is the look of no longer looking as it did . . . *Sterben, bilden*: the singular proximity of an “I die (myself) [*je (me) meurs*]” and an “I image (myself) [*je (m’)image*].”

There remains, then, as a point of contact with this unimaginable because unimagining *bilden*, the one concept that Heidegger does not discuss again after the beginning of section 20: the *Vorbild* (fore-image) or the model of a “being that is yet to be created or produced.”

The gaze of the dead man is a model of the image or of the look in both senses of the word, in that it looks without seeing or sees without looking: a model of the fore-vision of the unity that anticipates itself in the precession of its own succession: time as a series of time, which forms the first of the schemata. This model has no look, since it fore-sees the look [*pré-voit la vue*]. But it is a model, since it images (*bil-det*) and in-images or imagines (*ein-bil-det*) an imaging (*Bil-dung*) in general. It imagines the image or—if we can put it this way—the general imagery of the image. This is to say that it fore-images or models (*vor-bil-det*) the *one* of the image. It imagines the one. This has nothing to do with what would be implied by the apparently related formula “It fictions the One.” For there is precisely no fiction (in the sense of construction, setting into form, erection) of the substance or structure of a being-One. There is rather this: the empty gaze imagines itself (as) one; that is, it bears itself ahead of itself as that which succeeds itself, a blind spot that also forms, at every moment, and as every moment, the focal point where an image lights up (a look, a representation, some thing, a spark of world). To imagine the one, and to imagine oneself (as) one—this is possible only beginning from death: from the point at which the one ceases, by which alone the “one” appears (to) itself as such, in disappearing. (Or else, in a sym-

metrical manner: it is possible only beginning from birth: the non-presence of the one in which the one pres-ents itself, precedes itself as the image of the self precedes the child's self in the imagination of those who make it, and these latter are in any case not only the child's parents.)

But this is also the moment to point out that the parenthetical remark from the course, in which Heidegger states that he will not be concerned with the mode of presentation proper to the mask in general, may well be the index of a malaise. What Heidegger thus sets aside is the concealing role of the mask (for the sake of a role that is rather ostensive, if not ostentatious). In the logic of the *Kantbuch*—its manifest logic, at least—everything comes down to a *self-showing*. But the exemplary example of this, if we may put it thus, is a *hiding* or a *self-hiding* (the death mask): a self-showing that withdraws itself. Monstration occurs in concealment and from out of concealment or disappearance. And it is precisely this delicate mechanism that Heidegger simultaneously shows and hides. He suggests the truth of the look of the dead man, but he glides over the fact that this look is a dead look, or the death of the look. *Aletheia*—as a play of veiling/unveiling—is already at work in the *eidōs* as ostension of the aspect. But reciprocally, the *eidōs* already occupies a place at the heart of *aletheia*: the logic of *aletheia*, with which Heidegger will later attempt to overcome the fixity of a given *eidētics* of the being, in order to move toward the inaugural event of a (re)velation of being—this very logic will perhaps never avoid the demand that becomes manifest in the *Kantbuch*. This demand states that there must also be a self-showing of the unshowable, a tracing out of the effacement, a modeling of the absented gaze. In other words, there must be an *eidōs* of *aletheia*, and a face of death (not only an aspect of the dead man, but, through it, of that which made him die). Once again, it is no doubt precisely this demand that will be accounted for in a different way by the reflection on art, for which the analysis of the schematism (in fact never reactivated in any subsequent work) would have opened the way.

By this or some other means, what Heidegger gains, in a more or less visible manner, would take the following form: the image goes from death to death, as it would have gone from the *imago* of the ancestors to the disappearance of the Kantian imagination in the sublime—which is to say, its disappearance in the presentation of the subject without an objectivizing schema, or rather in what one could call a

symbolizing beyond-the-schema. In the ground of every image, there is an unimaginable imagining: there is dying as a movement of self-presenting (once again, given the dismissal of the purely-present-being, present to and in itself, the *intuitus originarius*, which would be without image because it would in advance absorb every image in its pure and simple primordial Unity).

At the far end of all imagination, there is access without access to what is never-yet-imagined of the one, and to an interminable in-figuration of every finite figure. The image always promises more than the image, and it always keeps its promise by opening its imagination onto its own unimaginable.

But if, consequently, the *one* of the image is never anywhere but in the sketch, the fore-tracing and the fore-seeing of itself (in the fore-seeing of its unforeseeability . . .), if it is, in sum, an imaging that is never imaged (what Kant would call a pure image), if this imaging originates in death as the unseeing gaze face-to-face with my own gaze as it sinks in turn into its withdrawn image, then this means that the “one” comes from the “other,” and not from an auto-intuitive self, that it comes from the other, through the other and as other, in order to return to the other.

In the ground of the image there is the imagination, and in the ground of the imagination there is the other, the look of the other, that is, the look onto the other and the other as look—which also opens, consequently, as an other of the look, a fore-seeing non-look. The other approaches me face-to-face, and thus shows itself as other. The image is first of all other and from the other, altered and altering. It gives the other according to which the same can be shown.

Thus, the other essentially does not show itself as such: what it gives to be seen is the same. The same is altered in its image, and it is thus that it makes itself the same as itself—visible, imaginable, and presentable. But the operator of this imagination recedes and withdraws to the ground of the image, in which it is concealed from every look and conceals its own fore-seeing, sur-veying, and pro-viding vision. The final effect of the death mask is to mask the imagination *itself*, even as it uncovers it as dead beneath the mask. Dead and consequently, respectively, *having been*: it will always already have begun to image (itself). The secret of the schematism—a secret that one unveils only by veiling it anew—is that there is no imagination *as such*, identifiable and appropriable. The imagination remains unimagin-

able. Dead, free, and creative: this would be the same thing, this would be its same thing, its hidden art.

“Light, invisible to my eyes . . . ”

Curiously—or rather, if you prefer, not surprisingly—I now find myself seeing the return of a completely different scene. A chorus announces, “You will see him appear,” and at this point a tragic mask steps forth on its buskins [boots worn by tragic actors in ancient Greece], its empty sockets streaming with blood. Oedipus has gouged out his eyes—Oedipus who had “known nothing, seen nothing,” who had “excluded himself from his own view when he ordered the sacrilege to be driven out,” who had committed the unimaginable, whose “eye too many” sees into the night of the gaze, in which, however, he cannot reach death, “having been saved at the moment when I was dying” (dying always without ever meeting his demise).

But when he does disappear, near Colonus, in a disappearance that no one will be able to see (Theseus, the sole witness, will cover his eyes), inasmuch as a disappearance can be seen, at that moment he will say: “Oh light, invisible to my eyes, though long ago you were mine, and my body feels your contact for the last time today.”²⁵

Beneath the mask, and from the bottom of the dead gaze flowing back through the entire body, a vision of contact, a blind vision, touches not the visible but the light, that which makes visible and that which makes one see, the element of every image, the imagination not beneath its mask but as the living-dead body of the mask itself, entering the scene in order to withdraw from it.

Entering and exiting, that is what makes the image: appearing and disappearing. Not first representing, but first being or making “a time, *une fois*,” a first and last time, the time [*temps*] of making or taking an image, the time of time itself, which opens the eyes. The time, *la fois* (from *vix*, *vice*: succession in turn, the moment as access or as success-succession), that is what exits the no-time, the *sans-fois*, to return to it immediately. Scansion, eclipse, spark of inimagination.

The image contains the index of its frozenness (its form, its present, its representation) and at the same time the index of movement (force, appearing/disappearing). That is also why it engages both the indefinite proliferation of images as well as each image’s isolation and enframing, its being hung on the wall.

And, finally, to end: the photograph *itself*, as a death mask, the instantaneous and always rebegun image as the casting of presence in contact with light, the casting of a presence fleeing into absence, which one neither captures nor represents, but which, paradoxically, one thus contemplates (one comes into its *templum*, the time of its framing). Contemporary contemplation of the eclipse of the gaze in the ground of the imagination itself: schema of the same in its other.