

light and shade, zones of indiscernibility, and processes of intensification that show the extent to which there is also experimentation in philosophy; whereas Newton constructed the function of independent variables or frequency. If philosophy has a fundamental need for the science that is contemporary with it, this is because science constantly intersects with the possibility of concepts and because concepts necessarily involve allusions to science that are neither examples nor applications, nor even reflections. Conversely, are there functions—properly scientific functions—of concepts? This amounts to asking whether science is, as we believe, equally and intensely in need of philosophy. But only scientists can answer that question.

7. Percept, Affect, and Concept

The young man will smile on the canvas for as long as the canvas lasts. Blood throbs under the skin of this woman's face, the wind shakes a branch, a group of men prepare to leave. In a novel or a film, the young man will stop smiling, but he will start to smile again when we turn to this page or that moment. Art preserves, and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. It preserves and is preserved in itself (*quid juris?*), although actually it lasts no longer than its support and materials—stone, canvas, chemical color, and so on (*quid facti?*). The young girl maintains the pose that she has had for five thousand years, a gesture that no longer depends on whoever made it. The air still has the turbulence, the gust of wind, and the light that it had that day last year, and it no longer depends on whoever was breathing it that morning. If art preserves it does not do so like industry, by adding a substance to make the thing last. The thing became independent of its “model” from the start, but it is also independent of other possible perso-

nae who are themselves artists-things, personae of painting breathing this air of painting. And it is no less independent of the viewer or hearer, who only experience it after, if they have the strength for it. What about the creator? It is independent of the creator through the self-positing of the created, which is preserved in itself. What is preserved—the thing or the work of art—is a *bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*.

Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself.

Harmonies are affects. Consonance and dissonance, harmonies of tone or color, are affects of music or painting. Rameau emphasized the identity of harmony and affect. The artist creates blocs of percepts and affects, but the only law of creation is that the compound must stand up on its own. The artist's greatest difficulty is to make it *stand up on its own*. Sometimes this requires what is, from the viewpoint of an implicit model, from the viewpoint of lived perceptions and affections, great geometrical improbability, physical imperfection, and organic abnormality. But these sublime errors accede to the necessity of art if they are internal means of standing up (or sitting or lying). There is a pictorial possibility that has nothing to do with physical possibility and that endows the most acrobatic postures with the sense of balance. On the other hand, many works that claim to be art do not stand up for an instant. Standing up alone does not mean having a top and a bottom or being upright (for even houses are drunk and askew); it is only the act by which the compound of created sensations is preserved in itself—a monument, but one that

may be contained in a few marks or a few lines, like a poem by Emily Dickinson. Of the sketch of an old, worn-out ass, “How marvellous! It’s done with two strokes, but set on immutable bases,” where the sensation bears witness all the more to years of “persistent, tenacious, disdainful work.”¹ In music, the minor mode is a test that is especially essential since it sets the musician the challenge of wresting it from its ephemeral combinations in order to make it solid and durable, self-preserving, even in acrobatic positions. The sound must be held no less in its extinction than in its production and development. Through his admiration of Pissarro and Monet, what Cézanne had against the Impressionists was that the optical mixture of colors was not enough to create a compound sufficiently “solid and lasting like the art of the museums,” like “the perpetuity of blood” in Rubens.² This is a way of speaking, because Cézanne does not add something that would preserve Impressionism; he seeks instead a different solidity, other bases and other blocs.

The question of whether drugs help the artist to create these beings of sensation, whether they are part of art’s internal means that really lead us to the “doors of perception” and reveal to us percepts and affects, is given a general answer inasmuch as drug-induced compounds are usually extraordinarily flaky, unable to preserve themselves, and break up as soon as they are made or looked at. We may also admire children’s drawings, or rather be moved by them, but they rarely stand up and only resemble Klee or Miró if we do not look at them for long. The paintings of the mad, on the contrary, often hold up, but on condition of being crammed full, with no empty space remaining. However, blocs need pockets of air and emptiness, because even the void is sensation. All sensation is composed with the void in composing itself with itself, and everything holds together on earth and in the air, and preserves the void, is preserved in the void by preserving itself. A canvas may be completely full to the point that even the air no longer gets through, but it is only a work of art if, as the Chinese painter says, it nonetheless saves enough

empty space for horses to prance in (even if this is only through the variety of planes).³

We paint, sculpt, compose, and write with sensations. We paint, sculpt, compose, and write sensations. As percepts, sensations are not perceptions referring to an object (reference): if they resemble something it is with a resemblance produced with their own methods; and the smile on the canvas is made solely with colors, lines, shadow, and light. If resemblance haunts the work of art, it is because sensation refers only to its material: it is the percept or affect of the material itself, the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of metal, the crouch of Romanesque stone, and the ascent of Gothic stone. The material is so varied in each case (canvas support, paint-brush or equivalent agent, color in the tube) that it is difficult to say where in fact the material ends and sensation begins; preparation of the canvas, the track of the brush's hair, and many other things besides are obviously part of the sensation. How could the sensation be preserved without a material capable of lasting? And however short the time it lasts, this time is considered as a duration. We will see how the plane of the material ascends irresistibly and invades the plane of composition of the sensations themselves to the point of being part of them or indiscernible from them. It is in this sense that the painter is said to be a painter and nothing but a painter, "with color seized as if just pressed out of the tube, with the imprint of each hair of his brush," with this blue that is not a water blue "but a liquid paint blue." And yet, in principle at least, sensation is not the same thing as the material. What is preserved by right is not the material, which constitutes only the *de facto* condition, but, insofar as this condition is satisfied (that is, that canvas, color, or stone does not crumble into dust), it is the percept or affect that is preserved in itself. Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself *in the eternity that coexists with this short duration*. So long as the material lasts, the sensation enjoys an eternity in those very moments. Sensation is not

realized in the material without the material passing completely into the sensation, into the percept or affect. All the material becomes expressive. It is the affect that is metallic, crystalline, stony, and so on; and the sensation is not colored but, as Cézanne said, coloring. That is why those who are nothing but painters are also more than painters, because they "bring before us, in front of the fixed canvas," not the resemblance but the pure sensation "of a tortured flower, of a landscape slashed, pressed, and plowed," giving back "the water of the painting to nature."⁴ One material is exchanged for another, like the violin for the piano, one kind of brush for another, oil for pastel, only inasmuch as the compound of sensations requires it. And, however strong an artist's interest in science, a compound of sensations will never be mistaken for the "mixtures" of material that science determines in states of affairs, as is clearly shown by the "optical mixture" of the impressionists.

By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations. A method is needed, and this varies with every artist and forms part of the work: we need only compare Proust and Pessoa, who invent different procedures in the search for the sensation as being.⁵ In this respect the writer's position is no different from that of the painter, musician, or architect. The writer's specific materials are words and syntax, the created syntax that ascends irresistibly into his work and passes into sensation. Memory, which summons forth only old perceptions, is obviously not enough to get away from lived perceptions; neither is an involuntary memory that adds reminiscence as the present's preserving factor. Memory plays a small part in art (even and especially in Proust). It is true that every work of art is a *monument*, but here the monument is not something commemorating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and that provide the event with the compound

that celebrates it. The monument's action is not memory but fabulation. We write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present. Music is full of them. It is not memory that is needed but a complex material that is found not in memory but in words and sounds: "Memory, I hate you." We attain to the percept and the affect only as to autonomous and sufficient beings that no longer owe anything to those who experience or have experienced them: Combray like it never was, is, or will be lived; Combray as cathedral or monument.

If methods are very different, not only in the different arts but in different artists, we can nevertheless characterize some great monumental types, or "varieties," of compounds of sensations: *the vibration*, which characterizes the simple sensation (but it is already durable or compound, because it rises and falls, implies a constitutive difference of level, follows an invisible thread that is more nervous than cerebral); *the embrace or the clinch* (when two sensations resonate in each other by embracing each other so tightly in a clinch of what are no more than "energies"); *withdrawal, division, distension* (when, on the contrary, two sensations draw apart, release themselves, but so as now to be brought together by the light, the air, or the void that sinks between them or into them, like a wedge that is at once so dense and so light that it extends in every direction as the distance grows, and forms a bloc that no longer needs a support). Vibrating sensation—coupling sensation—opening or splitting, hollowing out sensation. These types are displayed almost in their pure state in sculpture, with its sensations of stone, marble, or metal, which vibrate according to the order of strong and weak beats, projections and hollows, its powerful clinches that intertwine them, its development of large spaces between groups or within a single group where we no longer know whether it is the light or the air that sculpts or is sculpted.

The novel has often risen to the percept—not perception of the moor in Hardy but the moor as percept; oceanic percepts in Melville;

urban percepts, or those of the mirror, in Virginia Woolf. The landscape *sees*. Generally speaking, what great writer has not been able to create these beings of sensation, which preserve in themselves the hour of a day, a moment's degree of warmth (Faulkner's hills, Tolstoy's or Chekhov's steppes)? The percept is the landscape before man, in the absence of man. But why do we say this, since in all these cases the landscape is not independent of the supposed perceptions of the characters and, through them, of the author's perceptions and memories? How could the town exist without or before man, or the mirror without the old woman it reflects, even if she does not look at herself in it? This is Cézanne's enigma, which has often been commented upon: "Man absent from but entirely within the landscape." Characters can only exist, and the author can only create them, because they do not perceive but have passed into the landscape and are themselves part of the compound of sensations. Ahab really does have perceptions of the sea, but only because he has entered into a relationship with Moby Dick that makes him a becoming-whale and forms a compound of sensations that no longer needs anyone: ocean. It is Mrs. Dalloway who perceives the town—but because she has passed into the town like "a knife through everything" and becomes imperceptible herself. *Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man*, just as percepts—including the town—are *nonhuman landscapes of nature*. Not a "minute of the world passes," says Cézanne, that we will preserve if we do not "become that minute."⁶ We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes. Becoming animal, plant, molecular, becoming zero. Kleist is no doubt the author who most wrote with affects, using them like stones or weapons, seizing them in becomings of sudden petrification or infinite acceleration, in the becoming-bitch of Penthesilea and her hallucinated percepts. This is true of all the arts: what strange becomings unleash music across its "melodic landscapes" and its "rhythmic characters," as Messiaen says, by combining the molecular

and the cosmic, stars, atoms, and birds in the same being of sensation? What terror haunts Van Gogh's head, caught in a becoming-sunflower? In each case style is needed—the writer's syntax, the musician's modes and rhythms, the painter's lines and colors—to raise lived perceptions to the percept and lived affections to the affect.

We dwell on the art of the novel because it is the source of a misunderstanding: many people think that novels can be created with our perceptions and affections, our memories and archives, our travels and fantasies, our children and parents, with the interesting characters we have met and, above all, the interesting character who is inevitably oneself (who isn't interesting?), and finally with our opinions holding it all together. If need be, we can invoke great authors who have done nothing but recount their lives—Thomas Wolfe or Henry Miller. Generally we get composite works in which we move about a great deal but in search of a father who is found only in ourself: the journalist's novel. We are not spared the least detail, in the absence of any really artistic work. The cruelty we may have seen and the despair we have experienced do not need to be transformed a great deal in order to produce yet again the opinion that generally emerges about the difficulties of communication. Rossellini saw this as a reason for giving up art: art was allowing itself to be invaded too much by infantilism and cruelty, both cruel and doleful, whining and satisfied at the same time, so that it was better to abandon it.⁷ More interestingly, Rossellini saw the same thing taking place in painting. But it is literature primarily that has constantly maintained an equivocal relationship with the lived. We may well have great powers of observation and much imagination, but is it possible to write with perceptions, affections, and opinions? Even in the least autobiographical novels we see the confrontation and intersection of the opinions of a multitude of characters, all in accordance with the perceptions and affections of each character with his social situation and individual adventures, and all of it swept up in the vast current of the author's opinion, which, however, divides itself so as to rebound on

the characters, or which hides itself so that readers can form their own: this is indeed how Bakhtin's great theory of the novel begins (happily it does not end there; it is precisely the "parodic" basis of the novel).

Creative fabulation has nothing to do with a memory, however exaggerated, or with a fantasy. In fact, the artist, including the novelist, goes beyond the perceptual states and affective transitions of the lived. The artist is a seer, a becomer. How would he recount what happened to him, or what he imagines, since he is a shadow? He has seen something in life that is too great, too unbearable also, and the mutual embrace of life with what threatens it, so that the corner of nature or districts of the town that he sees, along with their characters, accede to a vision that, through them, composes the percepts of that life, of that moment, shattering lived perceptions into a sort of cubism, a sort of simultaneism, of harsh or crepuscular light, of purple or blue, which have no other object or subject than themselves. "What we call styles," said Giacometti, "are those visions fixed in time and space." It is always a question of freeing life whenever it is imprisoned, or of tempting it into an uncertain combat. The death of the porcupine in Lawrence and the death of the mole in Kafka are almost unbearable acts of the novelist. Sometimes it is necessary to lie down on the earth, like the painter does also, in order to get to the "motif," that is to say, the percept. Percepts can be telescopic or microscopic, giving characters and landscapes giant dimensions as if they were swollen by a life that no lived perception can attain. Balzac's greatness. It is of little importance whether these characters *are* mediocre: they *become* giants, like Bouvard and Pecuchet, Bloom and Molly, Mercier and Camier, without ceasing to be what they are. It is by dint of mediocrity, even of stupidity or infamy, that they are able to become not simple (they are never simple) but gigantic. Even dwarves and cripples will do: all fabulation is the fabrication of giants.⁸ Whether mediocre or grandiose, they are too alive to be livable or lived. Thomas Wolfe extracts a giant from his

father, and Henry Miller extracts a dark planet from the city. Wolfe may describe the people of old Catawba through their stupid opinions and their mania for discussion, but what he does is set up the secret monument of their solitude, their desert, their eternal earth, and their forgotten, unnoticed lives. Faulkner may also cry out: oh, men of Yoknapatawpha. It is said that the monumental novelist is himself "inspired" by the lived, and this is true: M. de Charlus closely resembles Montesquiou, but between Montesquiou and M. de Charlus there is ultimately roughly the same relationship as between the barking animal-dog and the celestial constellation-Dog.

How can a moment of the world be rendered durable or made to exist by itself? Virginia Woolf provides an answer that is as valid for painting and music as it is for writing: "Saturate every atom," "eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity," everything that adheres to our current and lived perceptions, everything that nourishes the mediocre novelist; and keep only the saturation that gives us the percept. "It must include nonsense, fact, sordidity: *but made transparent*"; "I want to put practically everything in; yet to saturate."⁹ Through having reached the percept as "the sacred source," through having seen Life in the living or the Living in the lived, the novelist or painter returns breathless and with bloodshot eyes. They are athletes—not athletes who train their bodies and cultivate the lived, no matter how many writers have succumbed to the idea of sport as a way of heightening art and life, but bizarre athletes of the "fasting-artist" type, or the "great Swimmer" who does not know how to swim. It is not an organic or muscular athleticism but its inorganic double, "an affective Athleticism," an athleticism of becoming that reveals only forces that are not its own—"plastic specter."¹⁰ In this respect artists are like philosophers. What little health they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illnesses or neuroses but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this something is also the source or breath that supports them through

the illnesses of the lived (what Nietzsche called health). "Perhaps one day we will know that there wasn't any art but only medicine."¹¹

The affect goes beyond affections no less than the percept goes beyond perceptions. The affect is not the passage from one lived state to another but man's nonhuman becoming. Ahab does not imitate Moby Dick, and Penthesilea does not "act" the bitch: becoming is neither an imitation nor an experienced sympathy, nor even an imaginary identification. It is not resemblance, although there is resemblance. But it is only a produced resemblance. Rather, becoming is an extreme contiguity within a coupling of two sensations without resemblance or, on the contrary, in the distance of a light that captures both of them in a single reflection. André Dhôtel knew how to place his characters in strange plant-becomings, becoming tree or aster: this is not the transformation of one into the other, he says, but something passing from one to the other.¹² This something can be specified only as sensation. It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons (Ahab and Moby Dick, Penthesilea and the bitch) endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an *affect*. In *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, Pierre reaches the zone in which he can no longer distinguish himself from his half-sister, Isabelle, and he becomes woman. Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of co-creation. This is because from the moment that the material passes into sensation, as in a Rodin sculpture, art itself lives on these zones of indetermination. They are blocs. Painting needs more than the skill of the draftsman who notes resemblances between human and animal forms and gets us to witness their transformation: on the contrary, it needs the power of a ground that can dissolve forms and impose the existence of a zone in which we no longer know which is animal and which human, because something like the triumph or monument of their nondistinction rises up—as in Goya or even Daumier or Redon. The artist must create the syntacti-

cal or plastic methods and materials necessary for such a great undertaking, which re-creates everywhere the primitive swamps of life (Goya's use of etching and aquatint). The affect certainly does not undertake a return to origins, as if beneath civilization we would rediscover, in terms of resemblance, the persistence of a bestial or primitive humanity. It is within our civilization's temperate surroundings that equatorial or glacial zones, which avoid the differentiation of genus, sex, orders, and kingdoms, currently function and prosper. It is a question only of ourselves, here and now; but what is animal, vegetable, mineral, or human in us is now indistinct—even though we ourselves will especially acquire distinction. The maximum determination comes from this bloc of neighborhood like a flash.

It is precisely because opinions are functions of lived experience that they claim to have a certain knowledge of affections. Opinions prevail on human passions and their eternity. But, as Bergson observed, one has the impression that opinion misjudges affective states and groups them together or separates them wrongly.¹³ It is not even enough to do what psychoanalysis does and give forbidden objects to itemized affections or substitute simple ambivalences for zones of indetermination. A great novelist is above all an artist who invents unknown or unrecognized affects and brings them to light as the becoming of his characters: the crepuscular states of knights in the novels of Chrétien de Troyes (in relation to a possible concept of chivalry), the states of almost catatonic "rest" that merge with duty according to Mme de Lafayette (in relation to a concept of quietism), on up to Beckett's state, as affects that are all the more imposing as they are poor in affections. When Zola suggests to his readers, "take note; my characters do not suffer from remorse," we should see not the expression of a physiologist's thesis but the ascription of new affects that arise with the creation of characters in naturalism: the Mediocre, the Pervert, the Beast (and what Zola calls instinct is

inseparable from a becoming-animal). When Emily Brontë traces the bond between Heathcliff and Catherine, she invents a violent affect, like a kinship between two wolves, which above all should not be mistaken for love. When Proust seems to be describing jealousy in such minute detail, he is inventing an affect, because he constantly reverses the order in affections presupposed by opinion, according to which jealousy would be an unhappy consequence of love: for him, on the contrary, jealousy is finality, destination; and if we must love, it is so that we can be jealous, jealousy being the meaning of signs—*affect as semiology*. When Claude Simon describes the incredible passive love of the earth-woman, he sculpts an affect of clay. He may say, "this is my mother," and we believe him since he says it, but it is a mother who has passed into sensation and to whom he erects a monument so original that she no longer has an ascribable relationship with her real son but, more distantly, with another created character, Faulkner's Eula. It is in this way that, from one writer to another, great creative affects can link up or diverge, within compounds of sensations that transform themselves, vibrate, couple, or split apart: it is these beings of sensation that account for the artist's relationship with a public, for the relation between different works by the same artist, or even for a possible affinity between artists.¹⁴ The artist is always adding new varieties to the world. Beings of sensation are varieties, just as the concept's beings are variations, and the function's beings are variables.

It should be said of all art that, in relation to the percepts or visions they give us, artists are presenters of affects, the inventors and creators of affects. They not only create them in their work, they give them to us and make us become with them, they draw us into the compound. Van Gogh's sunflowers are becomings, like Dürer's thistles or Bonnard's mimosas. Redon entitled a lithograph "There was perhaps a first vision attempted in the flower." The flower sees—pure and simple terror: "And do you see that sunflower looking in through

the bedroom window? It stares into my room all day."¹⁵ A floral history of painting is like the endlessly and continuously resumed creation of the percepts and affects of flowers. Whether through words, colors, sounds, or stone, art is the language of sensations. Art does not have opinions. Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects, and blocs of sensations that take the place of language. The writer uses words, but by creating a syntax that makes them pass into sensation that makes the standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: this is the style, the "tone," the language of sensations, or the foreign language within language that summons forth a people to come, "Oh, people of old Catawba," "Oh, people of Yoknapatawpha." The writer twists language, makes it vibrate, seizes hold of it, and rends it in order to wrest the percept from perceptions, the affect from affections, the sensation from opinion—in view, one hopes, of that still-missing people. "I repeat—my memory is not loving but inimical, and it labors not to reproduce but to distance the past. What was it my family wished to say? I do not know. It was tongue-tied from birth—but it had, nevertheless, something that it might have said. Over my head and over the head of many of my contemporaries there hangs the congenital tongue-tie. We were not taught to speak but to babble—and only by listening to the swelling noise of the age and bleached by the foam on the crest of its wave did we acquire a language."¹⁶ This is, precisely, the task of all art and, from colors and sounds, both music and painting similarly extract new harmonies, new plastic or melodic landscapes, and new rhythmic characters that raise them to the height of the earth's song and the cry of humanity: that which constitutes tone, health, becoming, a visual and sonorous bloc. A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event: the constantly renewed suffering of men and women, their re-created protestations, their constantly

resumed struggle. Will this all be in vain because suffering is eternal and revolutions do not survive their victory? But the success of a revolution resides only in itself, precisely in the vibrations, clinches, and openings it gave to men and women at the moment of its making and that composes in itself a monument that is always in the process of becoming, like those tumuli to which each new traveler adds a stone. The victory of a revolution is immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution's fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal.

Aesthetic figures, and the style that creates them, have nothing to do with rhetoric. They are sensations: percepts and affects, landscapes and faces, visions and becomings. But is not the philosophical concept defined by becoming, and almost in the same terms? Still, aesthetic figures are not the same as conceptual personae. It may be that they pass into one another, in either direction, like *Igitur* or *Zarathustra*, but this is insofar as there are sensations of concepts and concepts of sensations. It is not the same becoming. Sensory becoming is the action by which something or someone is ceaselessly becoming-other (while continuing to be what they are), sunflower or Ahab, whereas conceptual becoming is the action by which the common event itself eludes what is. Conceptual becoming is heterogeneity grasped in an absolute form; sensory becoming is otherness caught in a matter of expression. The monument does not actualize the virtual event but incorporates or embodies it: it gives it a body, a life, a universe. This was how Proust defined the art-monument by that life higher than the "lived," by its "qualitative differences," its "universes" that construct their own limits, their distances and proximities, their constellations and the blocs of sensations they put into motion—Rembrandt-universe or Debussy-universe. These universes are neither virtual nor actual; they are possibles, the possible as aesthetic category ("the possible or I shall suffocate"), the existence of the possible, whereas events are the reality of the virtual, forms of

a thought-Nature that survey every possible universe. This is not to say that the concept precedes sensation in principle: even a concept of sensation must be created with its own means, and a sensation exists in its possible universe without the concept necessarily existing in its absolute form.

Can sensation be assimilated to an original opinion, to *Urdoxa* as the world's foundation or immutable basis? Phenomenology finds sensation in perceptual and affective "a priori materials" that transcend the perceptions and affections of the lived: Van Gogh's yellow or Cézanne's innate sensations. As we have seen, phenomenology must become the phenomenology of art because the immanence of the lived to a transcendental subject must be expressed in transcendent functions that not only determine experience in general but traverse the lived itself here and now, and are embodied in it by constituting living sensations. The being of sensation, the bloc of percept and affect, will appear as the unity or reversibility of feeling and felt, their intimate intermingling like hands clasped together: it is the *flesh* that, at the same time, is freed from the lived body, the perceived world, and the intentionality of one toward the other that is still too tied to experience; whereas flesh gives us the being of sensation and bears the original opinion distinct from the judgment of experience—flesh of the world and flesh of the body that are exchanged as correlates, ideal coincidence.¹⁷ A curious Fleshism inspires this final avatar of phenomenology and plunges it into the mystery of the incarnation. It is both a pious and a sensual notion, a mixture of sensuality and religion, without which, perhaps, flesh could not stand up by itself (it would slide down the bones, as in Bacon's figures). The question of whether flesh is adequate to art can be put in this way: can it support percept and affect, can it constitute the being of sensation, or must it not itself be supported and pass into other powers of life?

Flesh is not sensation, although it is involved in revealing it. We spoke too quickly when we said that sensation embodies. Sometimes flesh is painted with pink (superimpositions of red and white), and

sometimes with broken tones [*tons rompus**], a juxtaposition of complementaries in unequal proportions. But what constitutes sensation is the becoming animal or plant, which wells up like a flayed beast or peeled fruit beneath the bands of pink in the most graceful, delicate nude, Venus in the mirror; or which suddenly emerges in the fusion, firing, or casting of broken tones, like the zone of indiscernibility of beast and man. Perhaps it would be an interference or chaos, were there not a second element to make the flesh hold fast. Flesh is only the thermometer of a becoming. The flesh is too tender. The second element is not so much bone or skeletal structure as house or framework. The body blossoms in the house (or an equivalent, a spring, a grove). Now, what defines the house are "sections," that is to say, the pieces of differently oriented planes that provide flesh with its framework—foreground and background, horizontal and vertical sections, left and right, straight and oblique, rectilinear or curved.¹⁸ These sections are walls but also floors, doors, windows, French windows, and mirrors, which give sensation the power to stand on its own within autonomous *frames*. They are the sides of the bloc of sensation. There are certainly two signs of the genius of great painters, as well as of their humility: the respect, almost dread, with which they approach and enter into color; and the care with which they join together the sections or planes on which the type of depth depends. Without this respect and care painting is nothing, lacking work and thought. The difficult part is not to join hands but to join planes—to produce bulging with joined planes or, on the contrary, to break them open or cut them off. The two problems, the architecture of planes and the regime of color, are often mixed up. As for the joining of horizontal and vertical planes in Cézanne, "Planes in color, planes!

*There does not seem to be a standard equivalent technical term in English for the French *tons rompus*, which means colors or tones made up of several different colors or tones. Van Gogh's letters, which are a principal reference point for this notion, speak of colors that are "broken" with other colors; following this we have translated the term as "broken tones."

The colored place where the heart of the planes is fused.” No two great painters, or even oeuvres, work in the same way. However there are tendencies in a painter: in Giacometti, for example, the receding horizontal planes differ from right to left and seem to come together on the thing (the flesh of the small apple), but like a pincer that would pull it backward and make it disappear if a vertical plane, of which we see only the thread without thickness, did not fix it, checking it at the last moment, giving it a durable existence, in the form of a long pin passing through it and rendering it spindly in turn. The house takes part in an entire becoming. It is life, the “nonorganic life of things.” In every way possible, the house-sensation is defined by the joining of planes in accordance with a thousand orientations. The house itself (or its equivalent) is the finite junction of colored planes.

The third element is the universe, the cosmos. Not only does the open house communicate with the landscape, through a window or a mirror, but the most shut-up house opens onto a universe. Monet’s house finds itself endlessly caught up by the plant forces of an unrestrained garden, a cosmos of roses. A universe-cosmos is not flesh. Neither is it sections, joined up parts of planes, or differently oriented planes, although it may be constituted by the connection of every plane to infinity. But ultimately the universe appears as the area of plain, uniform color [*l’aplat**], the single great plane, the colored void, the monochrome infinite. The French window, as in Matisse, now opens only onto an area of plain, uniform black. The flesh, or rather the figure, is no longer the inhabitant of the place, of the house, but of the universe that supports the house (becoming). *It is like a passage from the finite to the infinite*, but also from territory to

* As with *tons rompus*, the term with which it is contrasted here, there does not seem to be a standard English equivalent for the French *aplat*. The noun has connotations of flatness, following the verb *aplatir* (to flatten or smooth out), but in painting it signifies areas of plain, uniform color. In the absence of a single English word we have decided to use the entire phrase “area of plain, uniform color.”

deterritorialization. It is indeed the moment of the infinite: infinitely varied infinities. In Van Gogh, Gauguin, or, today, Bacon, we see the immediate tension between flesh and the area of plain, uniform color surging forth, between the flows of broken tones [*tons rompus*] and the infinite band of a pure, homogeneous, vivid, and saturated color (“instead of painting the ordinary wall of the mean room, I paint infinity, a plain background of the richest, intensest blue”).¹⁹ It is true that the monochrome area of plain color is something other than a background. And when painting wants to start again at zero, by constructing the percept as a minimum before the void, or by bringing it closer to the maximum of the concept, it works with monochrome freed from any house or flesh. Blue in particular takes on the infinite and turns the percept into a “cosmic sensibility” or into that which is most conceptual or “propositional” in nature—color in the absence of man, man who has passed into color. But if the blue (or black or white) is exactly the same within a picture, or from one picture to another, then it is the painter who becomes blue—“Yves the monochrome”—in accordance with a pure affect that topples the universe into the void and leaves the painter above all with nothing to do.²⁰

The colored or, rather, coloring void, is already force. Most of the great monochromes of modern painting no longer need to resort to little mural bouquets but present subtle imperceptible variations (which are constitutive of a percept nevertheless), either because they are cut off or edged on one side by a band, ribbon, or section of a different color or tone that, through proximity or distance, changes the intensity of the area of plain, uniform color or because they present almost virtual linear or circular figures, in matching tones, or because they are holed or slit: these are problems of junction, once again, but considerably expanded. In short, the area of plain, uniform color vibrates, clenches or cracks open because it is the bearer of glimpsed forces. And this, first of all, is what makes painting abstract: summoning forces, populating the area of plain, uniform color with

the forces it bears, making the invisible forces visible in themselves, drawing up figures with a geometrical appearance but that are no more than forces—the forces of gravity, heaviness, rotation, the vortex, explosion, expansion, germination, and time (as music may be said to make the sonorous force of time audible, in Messiaen for example, or literature, with Proust, to make the illegible force of time legible and conceivable). Is this not the definition of the percept itself—to make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become? Mondrian achieves this by simple differences between the sides of a square, Kandinsky by linear “tensions,” and Kupka by planes curved around the point. From the depths of time there comes to us what Worringer called the abstract and infinite northern line, the line of the universe that forms ribbons, strips, wheels, and turbines, an entire “vitalized geometry,” *rising to the intuition of mechanical forces*, constituting a powerful nonorganic life.²¹ Painting’s eternal object is this: to paint forces, like Tintoretto.

Perhaps also we rediscover the house and the body?—because the infinite area of plain, uniform color is often that onto which the window or door opens; or it is the wall of the house itself, or the floor. Van Gogh and Gauguin sprinkle the area of plain, uniform color with little bunches of flowers so as to turn it into wallpaper on which the face stands out in broken tones. In fact, the house does not shelter us from cosmic forces; at most it filters and selects them. Sometimes it turns them into benevolent forces: Archimedes’ force, the force of the water’s pressure on a graceful body floating in the bath of the house, has never been made visible in painting in the way that Bonnard succeeded in doing in *Le Nu au bain*. But equally, the most baleful forces can come in through the half-open or closed door: cosmic forces themselves are what produce zones of indiscernibility in the broken tones of a face, slapping, scratching, and melting it in every way, and these zones of indiscernibility reveal the forces lurking in the area of plain, uniform color (Bacon). The clinch of forces as percepts and becomings as affects are completely complementary.

According to Worringer, the abstract line of force is rich in animal motifs. Animal, plant, and molecular becomings correspond to cosmic or cosmogenetic forces: to the point that the body disappears into the plain color or becomes part of the wall or, conversely, the plain color buckles and whirls around in the body’s zone of indiscernibility. In short, the being of sensation is not the flesh but the compound of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man’s nonhuman becomings, and of the ambiguous house that exchanges and adjusts them, makes them whirl around like winds. Flesh is only the developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensation. Like all painting, abstract painting is sensation, nothing but sensation. In Mondrian the room accedes to the being of sensation by dividing the infinite empty plane by colored sections that, in turn, give it an infinite openness.²² In Kandinsky, houses are sources of abstraction that consist less in geometrical figures than in dynamic trajectories and errant lines, “paths that go for a walk” in the surroundings. In Kupka it is first of all on the body that the painter cuts out colored ribbons or sections that will give, in the void, the curved planes that populate it by becoming cosmogenetic sensations. Is sensation spiritual, or already a living concept—the room, house, universe? Abstract art, and then conceptual art, directly pose the question that haunts all painting—that of its relation to the concept and the function.

Perhaps art begins with the animal, at least with the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house (both are correlative, or even one and the same, in what is called a habitat). The territory-house system transforms a number of organic functions—sexuality, procreation, aggression, feeding. But this transformation does not explain the appearance of the territory and the house; rather it is the other way around: the territory implies the emergence of pure sensory qualities, of sensibilia that cease to be merely functional and become expressive features, making possible a transformation of functions.²³ No doubt this expressiveness is already diffused in life, and the simple

field of lilies might be said to celebrate the glory of the skies. But with the territory and the house it becomes constructive and erects ritual monuments of an animal mass that celebrates qualities before extracting new causalities and finalities from them. This emergence of pure sensory qualities is already art, not only in the treatment of external materials but in the body's postures and colors, in the songs and cries that mark out the territory. It is an outpouring of features, colors, and sounds that are inseparable insofar as they become expressive (philosophical concept of territory). Every morning the *Scenopoetes dentirostris*, a bird of the Australian rain forests, cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler, internal side contrasts with the earth. In this way it constructs a stage for itself like a ready-made; and directly above, on a creeper or a branch, while fluffing out the feathers beneath its beak to reveal their yellow roots, it sings a complex song made up from its own notes and, at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates: it is a complete artist.²⁴ This is not synesthesia in the flesh but blocs of sensations in the territory—colors, postures, and sounds that sketch out a total work of art. These sonorous blocs are refrains; but there are also refrains of posture and color, and postures and colors are always being introduced into refrains: bowing low, straightening up, dancing in a circle and lines of colors. The whole of the refrain is the being of sensation. Monuments are refrains. In this respect art is continually haunted by the animal. Kafka's art is the most profound meditation on the territory and the house, the burrow, portrait-postures (the inhabitant's lowered head with chin sunk into their chest or, on the contrary, "Shamefaced Lacky" whose angular head goes right through the ceiling); sounds-music (dogs who are musicians in their very postures; Josephine, the singing mouse, of whom it will never be known whether she sings; Gregor whose squeaking combines with his sister's violin in a complex bedroom-house-territory relationship). All that is needed to produce art is here: a house, some postures, colors, and songs—on condition that it all opens onto

and launches itself on a mad vector as on a witch's broom, a line of the universe or of deterritorialization—*Perspective on a Room with Occupants* (Klee).

Every territory, every habitat, joins up not only its spatiotemporal but its qualitative planes or sections: a posture and a song for example, a song and a color, percepts and affects. And every territory encompasses or cuts across the territories of other species, or intercepts the trajectories of animals without territories, forming interspecies junction points. It is in this sense that, to start with, Uexkühl develops a melodic, polyphonic, and contrapuntal conception of Nature. Not only does birdsong have its own relationships of counterpoint but it can find these relationships in the song of other species, and it may even imitate these other songs as if it were a question of occupying a maximum of frequencies. The spider's web contains "a very subtle portrait of the fly," which serves as its counterpoint. On the death of the mollusk, the shell that serves as its house becomes the counterpoint of the hermit crab that turns it into its own habitat, thanks to its tail, which is not for swimming but is prehensile, enabling it to capture the empty shell. The tick is organically constructed in such a way that it finds its counterpoint in any mammal whatever that passes below its branch, as oak leaves arranged in the form of tiles find their counterpoint in the raindrops that stream over them. This is not a teleological conception but a melodic one in which we no longer know what is art and what nature ("natural technique"). There is counterpoint whenever a melody arises as a "motif" within another melody, as in the marriage of bumblebee and snapdragon. These relationships of counterpoint join planes together, form compounds of sensations and blocs, and determine becomings. But it is not just these determinate *melodic compounds*, however generalized, that constitute nature; another aspect, an infinite *symphonic plane of composition*, is also required: from House to universe. From endosensation to exosensation. This is because the territory does not merely isolate and join but opens onto cosmic forces that

arise from within or come from outside, and renders their effect on the inhabitant perceptible. The oak's plane of composition is what supports or includes the force of the acorn's development and the force of formation of raindrops, and the tick's plane of composition is what supports the force of light, which can attract the insect to the end of a branch to a sufficient height, and the force of weight with which it lets itself fall onto the passing mammal—and between them nothing, an alarming void that can last for years if no mammals pass by.²⁵ Sometimes forces blend into one another in subtle transitions, decompose hardly glimpsed; and sometimes they alternate or conflict with one another. Sometimes they allow themselves to be selected by the territory, and the most benevolent ones are those that enter the house. Sometimes they send out a mysterious call that draws the inhabitant from the territory and launches it on an irresistible voyage, like chaffinches that suddenly assemble in their millions or crayfish that set off in step on an immense pilgrimage to the bottom of the water. Sometimes they swoop down on the territory, turn it upside down, wickedly, restoring the chaos from which, with difficulty, the territory came. But if nature is like art, this is always because it combines these two living elements in every way: House and Universe, *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*, territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and large refrain.

Art begins not with flesh but with the house. That is why architecture is the first of the arts. When Dubuffet tries to identify a certain condition of *art brut*, he turns first of all to the house, and all his work stands between architecture, sculpture, and painting. And, not going beyond form, the most scientific architecture endlessly produces and joins up planes and sections. That is why it can be defined by the “frame,” by an interlocking of differently oriented frames, which will be imposed on the other arts, from painting to the cinema. The prehistory of the picture has been presented as passing through the fresco within the frame of the wall, stained glass within the frame of

the window, and mosaic within the frame of the floor: “The frame is the umbilicus that attaches the picture to the monument of which it is the reduction,” like the gothic frame, with small columns, diagonal ribs, and openwork spire.²⁶ By making architecture the first art of the frame, Bernard Cache is able to list a certain number of enframing forms that do not determine in advance any concrete content or function of the edifice: the wall that cuts off, the window that captures or selects (in direct contact with the territory), the ground-floor that wards off or rarefies (“rarefying the earth’s relief so as to give a free path to human trajectories”), the roof that envelops the place’s singularity (“the sloping roof puts the edifice on a hill”). Interlocking these frames or joining up all these planes—wall section, window section, floor section, slope section—is a composite system rich in points and counterpoints. The frames and their joins hold the compounds of sensations, hold up figures, and intermingle with their upholding, with their own appearance. These are the faces of a dice of sensation. Frames or sections are not coordinates; they belong to compounds of sensations whose faces, whose interfaces, they constitute. But however extendable this system may be, it still needs a vast plane of composition that carries out a kind of *deframing* following lines of flight that pass through the territory only in order to open it onto the universe, that go from house-territory to town-cosmos, and that now dissolve the identity of the place through variation of the earth, a town having not so much a place as vectors folding the abstract line of relief. On this plane of composition, as on “an abstract vectorial space,” geometrical figures are laid out—cone, prism, dihedron, simple plane—which are no more than cosmic forces capable of merging, being transformed, confronting each other, and alternating; world before man yet produced by man.²⁷ The planes must now be taken apart in order to relate them to their intervals rather than to one another and in order to create new affects.²⁸ We have seen that painting pursued the same movement. The frame or the picture’s edge is, in the first place, the external envelope of a series of frames or

sections that join up by carrying out counterpoints of lines and colors, by determining compounds of sensations. But the picture is also traversed by a deframing power that opens it onto a plane of composition or an infinite field of forces. These processes may be very diverse, even at the level of the external frame: irregular forms, sides that do not meet, Seurat's painted or stippled frames, and Mondrian's squares standing on a corner, all of which give the picture the power to leave the canvas. The painter's action never stays within the frame; it leaves the frame and does not begin with it.

Literature, and especially the novel, seems to be in the same situation. What matters is not, as in bad novels, the opinions held by characters in accordance with their social type and characteristics but rather the relations of counterpoint into which they enter and the compounds of sensations that these characters either themselves experience or make felt in their becomings and their visions. Counterpoint serves not to report real or fictional conversations but to bring out the madness of all conversation and of all dialogue, even interior dialogue. Everything that novelists must extract from the perceptions, affections, and opinions of their psychosocial "models" passes entirely into the percepts and affects to which the character must be raised without holding on to any other life. And this entails a vast plane of composition that is not abstractly preconceived but constructed as the work progresses, opening, mixing, dismantling, and reassembling increasingly unlimited compounds in accordance with the penetration of cosmic forces. Bakhtin's theory of the novel goes in this direction by showing, from Rabelais to Dostoyevsky, the coexistence of contrapuntal, polyphonic, and plurivocal compounds with an architectonic or symphonic plane of composition.²⁹ A novelist like Dos Passos achieves an extraordinary art of counterpoint in the compounds he forms with characters, current events, biographies, and camera eyes, at the same time as a plane of composition is expanded to infinity so as to sweep everything up into Life, into Death, the town cosmos. If we return to Proust, it is because he more than

anyone else made the two elements, although present in each other, almost follow one another; the plane of composition, for life and for death, emerges gradually from compounds of sensation that he draws up in the course of lost time, until appearing in itself with time regained, the force, or rather the forces, of pure time that have now become perceptible. Everything begins with Houses, each of which must join up its sections and hold up compounds—Combray, the Guermantes' house, the Verdurins' salon—and the houses are themselves joined together according to interfaces, but a planetary Cosmos is already there, visible through the telescope, which ruins or transforms them and absorbs them into an infinity of the patch of uniform color. Everything begins with refrains, each of which, like the little phrase of Vinteuil's sonata, is composed not only in itself but with other, variable sensations, like that of an unknown passer-by, like Odette's face, like the leaves of the Bois de Boulogne—and everything comes to an end at infinity in the great Refrain, the phrase of the septet in perpetual metamorphosis, the song of the universe, the world before or after man. From every finite thing, Proust makes a being of sensation that is constantly preserved, but by vanishing on a plane of composition of Being: "beings of flight."

EXAMPLE 13

The situation of music seems no different and perhaps embodies the frame even more powerfully. Yet it is said that sound has no frame. But compounds of sensation, sonorous blocs, equally possess sections or framing forms each of which must join together to secure a certain closing-off. The simplest cases are the melodic *air*, which is a monophonic refrain; the *motif*, which is already polyphonic, an element of a melody entering into the development of another and creating counterpoint; and the *theme*, as the object of harmonic modifications through melodic lines. These three elementary forms construct the sonorous house and its territory. They

correspond to the three modalities of a being of sensation, for the air is a vibration, the motif is a clinch, a coupling, whereas the theme does not close without also unclenching, splitting, and opening. In fact, the most important musical phenomenon that appears as the sonorous compounds of sensation become more complex is that their closure or shutting-off (through the joining of their frames, of their sections) is accompanied by a possibility of opening onto an ever more limitless plane of composition. According to Bergson, musical beings are like living beings that compensate for their individuating closure by an openness created by modulation, repetition, transposition, juxtaposition. If we consider the sonata we find a particularly rigid enframing form based upon a bithematism, and in which the first movement presents the following sections: exposition of the first theme, transition, exposition of the second theme, developments on the first or second, coda, development of the first with modulation, and so on. It is an entire house with its rooms. But it is the first movement, rather, that forms a cell in this way, and great musicians rarely follow the canonical form; the other movements can open out, especially the second, through theme and variation, until Liszt ensures a fusion of movements in the "symphonic poem." The sonata appears then rather like a crossroads form where the opening of a plane of composition is born from the joining of musical sections, from the closure of sonorous compounds.

In this respect, the old procedure of theme and variation, which maintains the harmonic frame of the theme, gives way to a sort of deframing when the piano generates *compositional studies* (Chopin, Schumann, Liszt): this is a new essential moment, because creative labor no longer bears on sonorous compounds, motifs, and themes, even if this may involve extracting a plane from them, but on the contrary bears

directly on the plane of composition itself, so that it gives birth to much freer and deframed compounds, to almost incomplete or overloaded aggregates, in permanent disequilibrium. Increasingly, it is the "color" of the sound that matters. We pass from the House to the Cosmos (according to a formula taken up by Stockhausen's work). The work of the plane of composition develops in two directions that involve a disaggregation of the tonal frame: the immense uniform areas [*aplats*] of continuous variation that couple and combine the forces that have become sonorous in Wagner, or the broken tones [*tons rompus*] that separate and disperse the forces by harmonizing their reversible passages in Debussy—Wagner-universe, Debussy-universe. All the tunes, all the little framing or framed refrains—childish, domestic, professional, national, territorial—are swept up in the great Refrain, a powerful song of the earth—the deterritorialized—which arises with Mahler, Berg, or Bartók. And no doubt in each case the plane of composition generates new closures, as in serial music. But, each time, the musician's action consists in deframing, in finding the opening, taking up the plane of composition once more, in accordance with the formula that obsesses Boulez: to plot a transversal, irreducible to both the harmonic vertical and melodic horizontal, that involves sonorous blocs of variable individuation but that also opens them up or splits them in a space-time that determines their density and their course over the plane.³⁰ The great refrain arises as we distance ourselves from the house, even if this is in order to return, since no one will recognize us any more when we come back.

Composition, composition is the sole definition of art. Composition is aesthetic, and what is not composed is not a work of art. However, technical composition, the work of the material that often calls on

science (mathematics, physics, chemistry, anatomy), is not to be confused with aesthetic composition, which is the work of sensation. Only the latter fully deserves the name *composition*, and a work of art is never produced by or for the sake of technique. To be sure, technique includes many things that are individualized according to each artist and work: words and syntax in literature; not only the canvas but its preparation in painting, pigments, their mixtures, and methods of perspective; or the twelve tones of Western music, instruments, scales, and pitch. And the relationship between the two planes, between technical and aesthetic planes of composition, constantly varies historically. Take two states of oil painting that can be opposed to each other: in the first case, the picture is prepared with a white chalk background on which the outline is drawn and washed in (sketch), and finally color, light, and shade are put down. In the other case, the background becomes increasingly thick, opaque, and absorbent, so that it takes on a tinge with the wash and the work becomes impasted on a brown range, “reworkings” [*repentirs**] taking the place of the sketch: the painter paints on color, then color alongside color, increasingly the colors become accents, the architecture being assured by “the contrast of complementaries and the agreement of analogues” (van Gogh); it is through and in color that the architecture will be found, even if the accents must be given up in order to reconstitute large coloring units. It is true that Xavier de Langlais sees throughout this second case a long decline, a decadence that collapses into the ephemeral and fails to restore an architecture: the picture darkens, becomes dull, or quickly flakes.³¹ And doubtless this remark raises the question, at least negatively, of progress in art, since Langlais judges decadence as beginning after Van Eyck (somewhat like those who see music coming to an end

with the Gregorian chant, or philosophy with Thomas Aquinas). But it is a technical remark that concerns only the material: not only is the duration of the material quite relative but sensation belongs to a different order and possesses an existence in itself for as long as the material lasts. The relationship of sensation with the material must therefore be assessed within the limits of the duration, whatever this may be. If there is progress in art it is because art can live only by creating new percepts and affects as so many detours, returns, dividing lines, changes of level and scale. From this point of view, the distinction between two states of oil painting assumes a completely different, aesthetic and no longer technical aspect—this distinction clearly does not come down to “representational or not,” since no art and no sensation have ever been representational.

In the first case *sensation is realized in the material* and does not exist outside of this realization. It could be said that sensation (the compound of sensations) is projected onto the well-prepared technical plane of composition, in such a way that the aesthetic plane of composition covers it up. The material itself must therefore include mechanisms of perspective as a result of which the projected sensation is realized not solely by covering up the picture but according to a depth. Art thus enjoys a semblance of transcendence that is expressed not in a thing to be represented but in the paradigmatic character of projection and in the “symbolic” character of perspective. According to Bergson the Figure is like fabulation: it has a religious origin. But, when it becomes aesthetic, its sensory transcendence enters into a hidden or open opposition to the suprasensory transcendence of religion.

In the second case it is no longer sensation that is realized in the material *but the material that passes into sensation*. Of course, sensation no more exists outside of this passage, and the technical plane of composition has no more autonomy, than in the first case: it is never valid for itself. But now it might be said that it *ascends* into the aesthetic plane of composition and, as Damisch says, gives it a specific

*We have translated *repentirs* as “reworkings,” but the French also conveys the sense of “corrections and revisions made while the painting is being executed,” that is to say, not a reworking of a completed painting.

thickness independent of any perspective or depth. It is at this moment that the figures of art free themselves from an apparent transcendence or paradigmatic model and avow their innocent atheism, their paganism. Of course, between these two cases, between these two states of sensation and these two poles of technique, transitions, combinations, and coexistences are constantly being produced (the impasted work of Titian or Rubens, for example): the poles are more abstract than really distinct movements. Nonetheless, modern painting, even when it is satisfied with oil and medium,* turns increasingly toward the second pole and makes the material ascend and pass “into the thickness” of the aesthetic plane of composition. That is why it is so wrong to define sensation in modern painting by the assumption of a pure visual flatness: the error is due perhaps to the fact that thickness does not need to be pronounced or deep. It could be said that Mondrian was a painter of thickness; and when Seurat defined painting as “the art of ploughing a surface,” the only support he needs is the furrows and peaks of unglazed drawing paper. This is painting that no longer has any background because the “underneath” comes through: the surface can be furrowed or the plane of composition can take on thickness insofar as the material rises up, independently of depth or perspective, independently of shadows and even of the chromatic order of color (the arbitrary colorist). One no longer covers over; one raises, accumulates, piles up, goes through, stirs up, folds. It is a promotion of the ground, and sculpture can become flat since the plane is stratified. One no longer paints “on” but “under.” These new powers of texture, that ascent of the ground with Dubuffet, have been pushed a long way by informal art, and by abstract expressionism and minimal art also, when they work with saturations, fibers, and layers, or when they use tarlatan or tulle in such a way that the painter can paint behind the picture in a state of

* *Médium* is the same in English—“medium”—and signifies the liquid used to bind powdered color to produce paint, e.g., oil, size, egg yolk, gum arabic.

blindness.³² With Hantai, foldings hide from the painter’s sight what, once unfolded, they give up to the spectator’s eye. In any case, and in all of these states, painting is thought: vision is through thought, and the eye thinks, even more than it listens.

Hubert Damisch turned the thickness of the plane into a genuine concept by showing that “plaiting could well fulfil a role for future painting similar to that performed by perspective.” This is not peculiar to painting, since Damisch finds the same distinction at the level of the architectural plane when Scarpa, for example, suppresses the movement of projection and the mechanisms of perspective so as to inscribe volumes in the thickness of the plane itself.³³ From literature to music a material thickness is affirmed that does not allow itself to be reduced to any formal depth. It is characteristic of modern literature for words and syntax to rise up into the plane of composition and hollow it out rather than carry out the operation of putting it into perspective. It is also characteristic of modern music to relinquish projection and the perspectives that impose pitch, temperament, and chromatism, so as to give the sonorous plane a singular thickness to which very diverse elements bear witness: the development of studies for the piano, which cease being just technical and become “compositional studies” (with the extension given to them by Debussy); the decisive importance assumed by the orchestra with Berlioz; the rise of timbre in Stravinsky and Boulez; the proliferation of percussive affects with metals, skins, and woods, and their combination with wind instruments to constitute blocs inseparable from the material (Varèse); the redefinition of the percept according to noise, to raw and complex sound (Cage); not only the enlargement of chromatism to other components of pitch but the tendency to a nonchromatic appearance of sound in an infinite continuum (electronic or electro-acoustic music).

There is only a single plane in the sense that art includes no other plane than that of aesthetic composition: in fact, the technical plane is necessarily covered up or absorbed by the aesthetic plane of composi-

tion. It is on this condition that matter becomes expressive: either the compound of sensations is realized in the material, or the material passes into the compound, but always in such a way as to be situated on a specifically aesthetic plane of composition. There are indeed technical problems in art, and science may contribute toward their solution, but they are posed only as a function of aesthetic problems of composition that concern compounds of sensation and the plane to which they and their materials are necessarily linked. Every sensation is a question, even if the only answer is silence. In art the problem is always that of finding what monument to erect on this plane, or what plane to slide under this monument, and both at the same time: hence, in Klee, the “monument at the edge of the fertile country” and the “monument in fertile country.” Are there not as many different planes as universes, authors, or even works? In fact, universes, from one art to another as much as in one and the same art, may derive from one another, or enter into relations of capture and form constellations of universes, independently of any derivation, but also scattering themselves into nebulae or different stellar systems, in accordance with qualitative distances that are no longer those of space and time. Universes are linked together or separated on their lines of flight, so that the plane may be single at the same time as universes are irreducibly multiple.

Everything (including technique) takes place between compounds of sensation and the aesthetic plane of composition. Now the latter does not come before, being neither intentional nor preconceived and having nothing to do with a program, but neither does it come afterward, although the awareness of it is formed progressively and often suddenly appears afterward. The town does not come after the house, nor the cosmos after the territory. The universe does not come after the figure, and the figure is an aptitude of a universe. We have gone from the composite sensation to the plane of composition, but only so as to recognize their strict coexistence or complementarity, neither of them advancing except through the other. The composite

sensation, made up of percepts and affects, deterritorializes the system of opinion that brought together dominant perceptions and affections within a natural, historical, and social milieu. But the composite sensation is reterritorialized on the plane of composition, because it erects its houses there, because it appears there within interlocked frames or joined sections that surround its components; landscapes that have become pure percepts, and characters that become pure affects. At the same time the plane of composition involves sensation in a higher deterritorialization, making it pass through a sort of deframing which opens it up and breaks it open onto an infinite cosmos. As in Pessoa, a sensation does not occupy a place on the plane without extending it, distending it over the entire earth, and freeing all the sensations it contains: opening out or splitting open, *equaling infinity*. Perhaps the peculiarity of art is to pass through the finite in order to rediscover, to restore the infinite.

What defines thought in its three great forms—art, science, and philosophy—is always confronting chaos, laying out a plane, throwing a plane over chaos. But philosophy wants to save the infinite by giving it consistency: it lays out a plane of immanence that, through the action of conceptual personae, takes events or consistent concepts to infinity. Science, on the other hand, relinquishes the infinite in order to gain reference: it lays out a plane of simply undefined coordinates that each time, through the action of partial observers, defines states of affairs, functions, or referential propositions. Art wants to create the finite that restores the infinite: it lays out a plane of composition that, in turn, through the action of aesthetic figures, bears monuments or composite sensations. Damisch has analyzed accurately Klee’s picture *Equals Infinity*. It is certainly not an allegory but the act of painting that appears as a painting. It seems to us that the brown blobs dancing in the margin and crossing the canvas are the infinite passage of chaos; the sowing of points on the canvas, divided by rods, is the finite composite sensation, but opening onto the plane of composition that restores the infinite to us, = ∞ . However, art

should not be thought to be like a synthesis of science and philosophy, of the finite and infinite routes. The three routes are specific, each as direct as the others, and they are distinguished by the nature of the plane and by what occupies it. Thinking is thought through concepts, or functions, or sensations and no one of these thoughts is better than another, or more fully, completely, or synthetically “thought.” The frames of art are no more scientific coordinates than sensations are concepts, or vice versa. Abstract art and conceptual art are two recent attempts to bring art and philosophy together, but they do not substitute the concept for the sensation; rather they create sensations and not concepts. Abstract art seeks only to refine sensation, to dematerialize it by setting out an architectonic plane of composition in which it would become a purely spiritual being, a radiant thinking and thought matter, no longer a sensation of sea or tree, but a sensation of the concept of sea or concept of tree. Conceptual art seeks an opposite dematerialization through generalization, by installing a sufficiently neutralized plane of composition (the catalog that brings together works not displayed, the ground covered by its own map, disused spaces without architecture and the “flatbed”^{*} plane) so that everything takes on a value of sensation reproducible to infinity: things, images or clichés, propositions—a thing, its photograph on the same scale and in the same place, its dictionary definition. However, in the latter case it is not at all clear that this way leads either to the sensation or to the concept, because the plan of composition tends to become “informative,” and the sensation depends upon the simple “opinion” of a spectator who determines whether or not to “materialize” the sensation, that is to say, decides whether or not it is art. This is a lot of effort to find ordinary perceptions and affections in the infinite and to reduce the concept to a *doxa* of the social body or great American metropolis.

The three thoughts intersect and intertwine but without synthesis

or identification. With its concepts, philosophy brings forth events. Art erects monuments with its sensations. Science constructs states of affairs with its functions. A rich tissue of correspondences can be established between the planes. But the network has its culminating points, where sensation itself becomes sensation of concept or function, where the concept becomes concept of function or of sensation, and where the function becomes function of sensation or concept. And none of these elements can appear without the other being still to come, still indeterminate or unknown. Each created element on a plane calls on other heterogeneous elements, which are still to be created on other planes: thought as heterogenesis. It is true that these culminating points contain two extreme dangers: either leading us back to the opinion from which we wanted to escape or precipitating us into the chaos that we wanted to confront.

^{*}In English in the original.

Conclusion: From Chaos to the Brain

We require just a little order to protect us from chaos. Nothing is more distressing than a thought that escapes itself, than ideas that fly off, that disappear hardly formed, already eroded by forgetfulness or precipitated into others that we no longer master. These are infinite *variabilities*, the appearing and disappearing of which coincide. They are infinite speeds that blend into the immobility of the colorless and silent nothingness they traverse, without nature or thought. This is the instant of which we do not know whether it is too long or too short for time. We receive sudden jolts that beat like arteries. We constantly lose our ideas. That is why we want to hang on to fixed opinions so much. We ask only that our ideas are linked together according to a minimum of constant rules. All that the association of ideas has ever meant is providing us with these protective rules—resemblance, contiguity, causality—which enable us to put some order into ideas, preventing our “fantasy” (delirium, madness) from crossing the universe in an instant, producing winged horses and dragons breathing

fire. But there would not be a little order in ideas if there was not also a little order in things or states of affairs, like an objective antichaos: "If cinnabar were sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes heavy . . . , my empirical imagination would never find opportunity when representing red color to bring to mind heavy cinnabar."¹ And finally, at the meeting point of things and thought, the sensation must recur—that of heaviness whenever we hold cinnabar in our hands, that of red whenever we look at it—as proof or evidence of their agreement with our bodily organs that do not perceive the present without imposing on it a conformity with the past. This is all that we ask for in order to *make an opinion* for ourselves, like a sort of "umbrella," which protects us from chaos.

Our opinions are made up from all this. But art, science, and philosophy require more: they cast planes over the chaos. These three disciplines are not like religions that invoke dynasties of gods, or the epiphany of a single god, in order to paint a firmament on the umbrella, like the figures of an *Urdoxa* from which opinions stem. Philosophy, science, and art want us to tear open the firmament and plunge into the chaos. We defeat it only at this price. And thrice victorious I have crossed the Acheron. The philosopher, the scientist, and the artist seem to return from the land of the dead. What the philosopher brings back from the chaos are *variations* that are still infinite but that have become inseparable on the absolute surfaces or in the absolute volumes that lay out a secant [*sécant*] plane of immanence: these are not associations of distinct ideas, but reconnections through a zone of indistinction in a concept. The scientist brings back from the chaos *variables* that have become independent by slowing down, that is to say, by the elimination of whatever other variabilities are liable to interfere, so that the variables that are retained enter into determinable relations in a function: they are no longer links of properties in things, but finite coordinates on a secant plane of reference that go from local probabilities to a global cosmology. The artist brings back from the chaos *varieties* that no longer

constitute a reproduction of the sensory in the organ but set up a being of the sensory, a being of sensation, on an anorganic plane of composition that is able to restore the infinite. The struggle with chaos that Cézanne and Klee have shown in action in painting, at the heart of painting, is found in another way in science and in philosophy: it is always a matter of defeating chaos by a secant plane that crosses it. Painters go through a catastrophe, or through a conflagration, and leave the trace of this passage on the canvas, as of the leap that leads them from chaos to composition.² Mathematical equations do not enjoy a tranquil certainty, which would be like the sanction of a dominant scientific opinion, but arise from an abyss that makes the mathematician "readily skip over calculations," in anticipation of not being able to bring about or arrive at the truth without "colliding here and there."³ And philosophical thought does not bring its concepts together in friendship without again being traversed by a fissure that leads them back to hatred or disperses them in the coexisting chaos where it is necessary to take them up again, to seek them out, to make a leap. It is as if one were casting a net, but the fisherman always risks being swept away and finding himself in the open sea when he thought he had reached port. The three disciplines advance by crises or shocks in different ways, and in each case it is their succession that makes it possible to speak of "progress." It is as if the *struggle against chaos* does not take place without an affinity with the enemy, because another struggle develops and takes on more importance—the *struggle against opinion*, which claims to protect us from chaos itself.

In a violently poetic text, Lawrence describes what produces poetry: people are constantly putting up an umbrella that shelters them and on the underside of which they draw a firmament and write their conventions and opinions. But poets, artists, make a slit in the umbrella, they tear open the firmament itself, to let in a bit of free and windy chaos and to frame in a sudden light a vision that appears through the rent—Wordsworth's spring or Cézanne's apple, the sil-