

The Work of Art as Monument: Deleuze and the (After-) Life of Art

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And death has come, the last cleaning lady.
Death comes. So she does the housework;
for the last time she has swept the floor,
she has put the works in order.

(Charles Péguy)¹

Introduction

In 1991, at the end of his life, Gilles Deleuze writes together with Félix Guattari *What is Philosophy?*, in which the last chapter ‘percept, affect and concept’ traces the singularity of art with regard to science and philosophy. They return here to some of the great themes of their art philosophy, among which their critical stance towards phenomenology and their own post-phenomenological concepts of aesthetic experience, such as ‘becoming-animal’ and ‘becoming-imperceptible’ – themes which express the assertion that aesthetic experience is a matter not so much of mental (reflective) judgement, but rather of the bodily *participation* in material conditions that exceed the human. In this important essay, the work of art is repeatedly conceptualised as a monument, be it with the paradoxical nuance that it is never something commemorating a past.² The work of art, they write, is a composition (*composé*) of sensations that are directed at nothing outside themselves – thus it refers not to an act of creation that preceded it and neither does it narrate or depict histories. Art is not an *alibi* for something that would chronologically or logically precede it, something it would both depict and represent. Rather, it establishes something that becomes *passible* only through the artwork itself, it

exposes inhuman conditions of life in such a way that no other discipline can: ‘to make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become’.³

In the following paper we will examine Deleuze and Guattari’s paradoxical understanding of the work of art as a monument existing ‘in the absence of man’. If the work’s mode of existence is only ‘in itself’, if it is, as they put it, ‘self-preserving’, then this is so because of the ‘self-positing’ nature of sensations.⁴ The first part of our inquiry will therefore look into Deleuze’s understanding of sensations as ‘affects’ and ‘percepts’. We will do so by tracing one of its main conceptual sources in the phenomenology of Erwin Straus and Henri Maldiney.⁵ Secondly, to further investigate the work of art’s ‘monumentality’, we will turn to an essay of Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Valéry Proust Museum’, which in contrasting Valéry and Proust’s respective views of the museum as a *mausoleum*, will serve as a ground for formulating what might be called the Deleuzian ‘afterlife’ of art.

The heart of the sensible

A closed environment, integrally human and made out of signs, where one can never lose oneself, where the hidden *physis* is no more but the material of insignificant significations, is not the world, and takes from man the resistance of alterity, hurting by that the heart of his plenary humanity.⁶

Deleuze refers us in his conceptualisation of sensation in *What is Philosophy?* to the phenomenologist Erwin Straus who, in his *Vom Sinn der Sinne* (1935) exposes in sensory experience (*le sentir*), a deeper, underlying feeling (*ressentir*), a specifically profound mode of sensing.⁷ The latter is not a return of the self to itself; it is neither reflection nor self-affection. Such a return would imply, in fact, a separated self, functioning as a subject opposed to an object that it would be faced with. Certainly, as has been known since Aristotle, sensory experience (*aisthesis*) is always a 'sensing oneself' sense, an aware sensing (*ressentir*); but the subject of sensation, Straus writes, 'is not an isolated and solitary subject which, departing from its own self-consciousness, sketches and conceives a world which it transcends'.⁸ Of course, the polarity between subject and object, between a subject that objectifies the world (or the art 'object'), thereby distinguishing itself, cannot be denied; yet this duality is always secondary, and only possible arising from a more 'originary' situation: 'that of sensation'.⁹ More rigorously, there aren't two separate worlds, one interior and the other exterior, but only a double polarity of being with or in the world. Perception, hearing and our other senses do not only *render* an apparition of colour, sound and other sensations; they don't merely *offer* us sensible impressions (Kant), but also 'grab' (*saisissent*) us and 'arrange' (*disposent*) us in the order of sensation.¹⁰ Not only do we grasp optic and acoustic phenomena of colours and tones, we are at the same time always also being grasped by them. Straus' logic of the senses refuses to posit a subject in front of an object: sensation is always an event that unfolds in two directions at once, that of the world and that of the self. Whence a key sentence in Straus' *Vom Sinn der Sinne*, which for Maldiney and Deleuze forms the basis for every possible aesthetic:

In sensory experience there is an unfolding of both – *read*: sensation unfolds itself as *both* – the becoming of the subject and the becoming of the

world. I become, only because something happens, and something happens (to me), because I become.¹¹

For Straus, the traditional primacy of consciousness does not suffice to uncover this double-sided unfolding of sensation. Rather, one is in need of a phenomenology of motor induction, as, for example, a temporal acoustic rhythm effectively pushes me to physically move. Its temporal pulsations effectively touch and invade my senses and do not merely bring about a figuration of content. As Straus writes with regard to dance:

Sensation is linked to a vital movement by means of an *internal* connection [...] No kind of *association* links the movement to sound or to rhythm, the movement follows the music in an absolutely *immediate* manner.¹²

Straus calls this primary internal situation the 'pathic' moment of sensation. Henri Maldiney – in an essay on Straus¹³ – writes in line with this that every sensation is marked by, on the one side, an emotional, *pathic* moment and, on the other side, a *representational* moment.¹⁴ The latter, which he also calls the *gnostic* or *gnoseological* moment, concerns speculative or pragmatological functions of the subject, such as *perception* and *recognition*. Whereas the pathic is connected to the *how* of being with the world, the representational and reflective turns to the *what* of the world and its objects. Maldiney gives the example of colour sensations. He writes:

The immediate lyricism of the rosette of a cathedral is independent of the object that is represented. The play of colour induces in the spectator a spiritual and bodily movement that precedes every iconographical lecture of the stained glass window. The pathic moment of a colour sensation is expressed in this musical and rhythmic dimension of colours.¹⁵

For Straus, our sensibility to colours, forms and sounds is entirely constituted by this pathic moment.

It rises up from the depths of the body, as was the case with Cézanne, who described the colour that gave rise to *An Old Woman with a Rosary* as a 'big blue red' that fell into his soul.¹⁶ Maldiney sees in Cézanne's colour an existential communication with 'a world still buried, which only his art will bring to light'. Cézanne himself described the initial moment of confronting the world prior to painting as being lost *in* the surrounding, a confrontation with chaos that precedes the act of creation:

At that moment I am one with my painting (= not the painted canvas, but the world to be painted). We are an iridescent chaos. I arrive in front of my motive, and there I lose myself. [...] We grow together. Once the night begins to fall, it seems to me that I shall not paint and that I have never painted.¹⁷

Maldiney defines Straus' pathic communication – the abovementioned *profound* mode of sensing – by means of three criteria. First, it is a communication taking place on the level of the *aisthêsis* itself. Second, this mode of sensing is always a communication with phenomena themselves. The pathic belongs to the most 'originary level of lived experience'; it is an 'immediately present communication, intuitively-sensible, still pre-conceptual, that we have with phenomena'.¹⁸ Finally, the pathic communication with phenomena follows strict laws which hold for the phenomenality of the entire world: a set of singular sensations can serve as a general category for man's being-in-the-world.¹⁹

The most important trait for us at this moment is that Maldiney promotes the pathic to the true aesthetic dimension, which already points to a privileged correlation between art and affectivity. Also, it is important to note that both dimensions, pathic and gnostic, do not harmoniously balance each other out: the pathic for Straus and Maldiney is always inevitably *lost* in perception, which must be seen as a first level of a reductive, objectifying process. 'With perception,' Maldiney writes, 'we have already

left the order of sensation.'²⁰ Thus, the *certainty* or *indubitability* (Descartes) of the *aisthêsis* does not have as a higher *telos* the truth of perception. The sensible is not a mere impulse for the mind to ascend towards higher spheres of understanding, but 'has its own truth', its own internal logic that exceeds the sterility of thought and can never be fully recuperated by it. Straus and Maldiney explicitly go against the traditional hierarchy of the senses: not the visible (*gnosis*) but the tactile, not the gaze, but the touch become primary. For them, sensation must not be thought of in terms of the human capacity to intentionally attribute sense or meaning, but rather in terms of the bodily-affective, the horizon of the unexpected (*cette surprise précède toute prise*). Every form of presenting the world to oneself goes back to its presence as event (*événement*), to the pathic as our being-with-the-world, which precedes every opposition between subject and object and, moreover, discloses no intentional structure whatsoever. In line with this, in an interview with Claire Parnet, Deleuze speaks of art as resistance against the constant human 'imprisonment of life':

Art consists of liberating the life that man has imprisoned. Man doesn't cease to imprison life, to kill life – 'the shame of being a man' [...] The artist is the one who liberates a life, a forceful life, a life more than personal, it's not his life!²¹

For Deleuze, art cultivates a moment of *immediacy* and *indeterminacy* which precedes any mediation: a *pathos* that always comes unexpectedly, and that as the *epochè* of presence momentarily disarms the subject.²² Aesthetic experience is about sensing the quality of an event, submitting oneself to the '*it happens*' rather than grasping '*what happens*', to undergo a moment of indeterminacy without the shielding mediation of the discursive or ideal. 'Sensing,' Straus writes, 'is to knowledge what the scream is to the word.'²³ Grasping the event in its singularity demands not a synthesis of the given by the imagination, no associations, but rather the

demise of all syntheses, a radical openness, readiness and receptiveness to that which announces itself.

Reality

Nothing more can be said, and no more has ever been said: to become worthy of what happens to us, and thus to will and release the event, [...] to have one more birth, and to break with one's *carнал* birth [...].²⁴

To understand what Deleuze and Guattari mean with the paradoxical determination of the work of art as a monument that does not commemorate but is directed only at itself, it is essential to look into their interpretation of the pathic, their own conceptualisation of the *pathos* of art. As noted, the work is literally a *compound* (*composé*), a *composition* of sensations, a *self-sustaining* composite of sensations. As Isabelle Stengers puts it, the term *composition* is explicitly directed against 'any direct link between art and any kind of ineffable revelation, transcending words, demanding meditation and a sense of sacredness akin to negative theology'.²⁵ Hence, the literal use of the concept of force: the work 'captures' forces at work in the world and renders these sensible. Its effects are above all real and not merely imaginary: the image is not a mental given but a concrete, existing reality.

To further determine this reality of the work of art, Deleuze distinguishes two kinds of sensation, 'percept' and 'affect', which he explicitly opposes to human reading or mediation. Percepts are not perceptions of visible things, but sensations made visible or (in the case of literature) legible in such a way that perceiving them thwarts speculative or pragmatic distancing. Such visions or percepts are what remains when this distance is undone: the coincidence with something material that can only be sensed. *Affects*, on the other hand, are sensations 'in action', so-called non-human 'becomings', as they are contained *in* the work of art. The percept,

Deleuze states, paraphrasing Cézanne, is the landscape in the absence of man, the inhuman nature of the landscape, while the affect unfolds itself as a material zone of indeterminacy (*indétermination*) and indiscernability (*indiscernabilité*); for example, between man and animal. We are referred at this point to Straus' *Vom Sinn der Sinne*:

The great landscapes have a wholly visionary characteristic. Vision is what of the invisible becomes visible... The landscape is invisible because the more we conquer it, the more we lose ourselves in it. To reach the landscape we must sacrifice as much as we can all temporal, spatial, objective determination; but this abandon does not only attain the objective, it affects us ourselves to the same extent. In the landscape we cease to be historical beings, that is to say, beings who can themselves be objectified. We do not have any memory for the landscape, we no longer have any memory for ourselves in the landscape. We dream in daylight with open eyes. We are hidden to the objective world, but also to ourselves. This is feeling.²⁶

The enigma we are confronted with here is that of Cézanne's 'logic of the senses': man absent from, but entirely within the landscape. Cézanne's art, as Merleau-Ponty has also shown (*Le Doute de Cézanne*), consists of *pursuing* reality without leaving sensation, without giving up the sensuous surface. He therefore takes on a more difficult task than the musician, because the *gnostic* (speculative, pragmatic) tends to dominate vision, whereas the *pathic* dominates in hearing: I face the visible, whereas the sonorous surrounds me and always presupposes my participation, my contagion even.²⁷ To *reach* the landscape and thus for vision to *descend* to the pathic, Cézanne must tear (*arracher*) the percept from perceptions of objects and the state of a perceiving subject. If art, for Deleuze, aims at 'rendering a moment of the world durable in itself, made to exist by itself'²⁸, then this means it cultivates that moment when subjective perception dissolves

in the perceived, thus elevating an underlying, invisible force of life. Art is that discipline which grounds a moment of the world independent in itself, and which establishes this singular temporality sensible in such a way that its sense does not depend on an intentional act of a sensing subject. For Deleuze, the subject doesn't *have* sensations: in sensing it attains access not to the 'self' (a supposedly given subject), nor to the 'self' of the other (the painter, musician, who is also a presupposed given with his subjectivity), but rather to the form or structure of the self: all that is left is the *reality* of a *temporal relation in itself* insofar as it *forms* a self. Sensation is not a metaphor for the access to the self, but the reality of that access: a singular, material, signifying but *also* asignifying reality.²⁹

The affective and non-intentional 'pathic' moment of sensation is for Maldiney, too, the mark of the real as such. It induces, one might say, a 'reality-effect': it opens up the horizon of man in his existential entirety and not the domain of one of his 'faculties'. Maldiney envisages here any kind of transcendental philosophy (most explicitly Kant, Hegel and Husserl) which reduces all action and effective passion to static faculties of doing or receiving, of acting or being affected, always already present, and always grounding, either in the subject or in consciousness. The ordeal (*pathos*) which resonates in the term 'pathic' designates a *crisis* or *unique force*: the radical inversion through which sensation, far from being the affection by a sensible particular or by a punctual, sensible quality, opens me up to the world. The primacy of the *aisth sis* designates not the perception of an object, but an *affective* communication with 'the depth of the world, from which each thing holds its reality and to which it inversely confers a focal existence before its constitution into an object in perception'.³⁰

The fact that the pathic moment *de jure* precedes the gnostic moment does not mean that it excludes it, but rather, it designates it to being (onto)logically

'first': it is the aesthetic (sensible) condition of possibility of all the senses. Yet, how to understand the claim that this subterranean affective condition can *only* be sensed, being irretrievably lost in perception? 'The *aesth sis* as such,' Maldiney writes, 'is below the question of the real and of truth. Because the coincidence of seeing and seen in a vision (*une vue*) which is both vision (*vision*) and spectacle (*aspectus*) doesn't arrange (*m nage*) any kind of space of play which might serve as a field of truth, a field of appropriation (or alienation) of the other and myself.'³¹ What is the invisible reality or 'presence' opened up in the pathic moment of sensation? And in what sense is it more 'originary' than that of the objectifying gaze?

In the latter, in our visual understanding, our encounter with things always presupposes distance. This distance (in its turn ensured by the semantic horizon of language) guarantees the grasp of the intentional, objectifying gaze and prevents the confusion of the coalescence with things. When, however, the gaze itself is grabbed in a kind of distant contact and is, as it were, touched, we descend to an immediate experience of our being *with* and *in* the world, an *immediate* and *unmediated* presence (*Gegenwrtigsein* (Straus)). This presence is a dynamic sensation of *exposure* and *dependency*: the intimacy of the sensation, the coincidence of sensing and sensed, unfolds itself as exposure outside of oneself. Far from being a spherical plenitude or some kind of mystical harmony with the soul of the world, the pathic presence is a being in advance and outside of oneself, torn and in fraction: in line with the Latin etymology of presence, it designates the impossibility of coinciding with oneself. The pathic encounter is, for Maldiney, a *fact of existence* in the way that Kant speaks of a 'fact of reason' with regard to the moral imperative. Yet, the pathic is not a causal beginning, and it certainly does not designate a principle transcending the world. On the contrary, as Jean-Louis Chr tien so nicely phrases it, with the pathic,

Maldiney envisages ‘the fundamental fragility of our exposure to the world, which is our only resource, and which is covered and obfuscated by fears and prejudices of all kinds, derisory fortifications which we edify against the lacerations of existence’.³²

How can philosophy access this primordial experience? Language offers us the being of things (*l'être*), but always through placing us in their absence: language can only narrate the world through negating its apparition, it cannot narrate being but only a relation to being, which is its negation, the obliteration of ‘the depth of the world, from which each thing holds its reality’.³³ There is no language which could give us a direct access to being, but neither is there a pure, immediate and unmediated experience of being itself. For Maldiney, human existence must always be thought of as departing from the negation that is in progress in reality through becoming, the temporality which traverses our relations to things.³⁴ Being cannot be thought of without nothingness (*le rien*), just as presence always arises from absence. Now, by determining the essence of sensation, this pathic moment, as a radically *non-intentional* receptivity, Maldiney aims to think of negativity as a fundamentally *ambiguous* force that can open up the possible, but can *also* arise as *impossibility*; that is to say, as *the being of nothingness, the presence of absence*. Sensation does not necessarily have to be a contact with a given object but can just as well be the *ordeal* of nothingness. At the non-intentional ‘moment’ of sensation, we do not yet fictionally dispose over absent things, we do not yet relate to something possible. Far from it, in fact, since for Maldiney, the essence of sensation consists of a pre-logical, pre-reflexive receptiveness, a non-perceptive mode of sensing. Rather than a ‘sensible certainty’, the pathic designates a ‘sensible uncertainty’, a kind of original opacity that is constitutive of sensible consciousness, as envisioned by Cézanne when searching for an expression to describe ‘those

confused sensations which we carry with us in being born’.³⁵

How can a receptivity pushed to such a point of passivity – when strictly speaking *nothing* is intended or even felt – still be called a receptivity? Maldiney uses the term ‘transpassibility’ to designate this ‘pure’ mode of sensing, such that nothing can be projected, intended or anticipated in it. ‘Transpassibility consists of not being passible to anything that might announce itself as real or possible. It is an opening without intention or drawing (*une ouverture sans dessein ni dessin*), one which we are not passible to *a priori*’.³⁶ Transpassibility is never a relation to a possibility but takes place ‘below the question of the real and truth’, implying what Renaud Barbaras calls ‘a fundamental *impossibilisation*’.³⁷ However, what we are passible to does not oppose itself to the possible insofar as this relates to reality, which would suggest that it draws us from the possibilities of the subject to the laws of the real. Rather, sensation in the form of the impossible, as envisaged by Maldiney, opposes itself to *both* the possible and to the real. Thus, if we said above that the pathic is the mark of the real ‘as such’, we should be clear about its sense. It designates reality not as the ‘what’ of the world, the domain of objects (insofar as this is governed by laws therefore always measurable and predictable), but as the ‘how’ of being with the world. The veritable sense of the real is, for Maldiney, what is radically received, the correlate of an originary sensation. In this sense, the real is the unpredictable itself, that which never lets itself be announced or predicted, which does not appertain to any kind of legality, and which, in occurring, reflects neither my possibilities nor those of the world as the domain of legality.

No man’s land

Following Maurice Blanchot, Deleuze defines the reign of the work of art as a universe or ‘chaosmos’ (Joyce) where the work:

[...] ceases to be secondary in relation to the model, in which imposture lays claim to truth, and in which, finally, there is no longer any original, but only an eternal scintillation where the absence of origin, in the splendor of diversion and reversion, is dispersed.³⁸

The image as 'simulacrum': an ordinary copy. Its 'origin' lies not outside, but in the very work itself. 'The poet,' writes Blanchot, 'does not survive the creation of the work. He lives by dying in it.'³⁹ As with Mallarmé's symbolic attempt to achieve the elocutionary disappearance of the poet: 'an experiment at grasping, as though at its source, not that which makes the work real, but the 'impersonified' reality in it: that which makes it be far more or still less than any reality'.⁴⁰

For Deleuze, the artist's greatest difficulty is to make the work of art *stand up on its own*.⁴¹ This means that for sensation to preserve itself and be rendered *durable*, an artist must find a way to efface his own presence. The novelist cannot write only with memories, opinions, travels or fantasies. It is always a matter of eliminating everything that adheres to such personal traits – 'everything that nourishes the mediocre novelist' – and of reaching 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'.⁴² In order to create true 'blocs of sensations', the artist is always obliged to face the chaos of his or her bodily depth, to embody and *will* the senselessness of the wounds which are inflicted on his life. As Deleuze writes with Joe Bousquet: 'My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it.'⁴³ To 'will' such events does not mean to desire one's wounds, but to will something *in* that which occurs, 'something yet to come which would be consistent with what occurs, in accordance with the laws of an obscure, humorous conformity: the Event'.⁴⁴ Bousquet: 'Become the man of your misfortunes; learn to embody their perfection and

brilliance'.⁴⁵ The Deleuzian figure of the artist represents an actor who delves into the intensive, chaotic presence of the flesh which he *is*, and who, by selecting in what happens (the accident), the *force* of the pure event (thereby participating in it), *redoubles* the cosmic, physical event into a *pure, intensive becoming*; 'a counter-actualization'.⁴⁶

A clear illustration of such a 'pathic' act of 'purification' can be found in *The Logic of Sensation*, where Deleuze discerns a consistent scheme of three logical moments essential to this Baconesque mode of production.⁴⁷ The first moment is that of the 'cliché', which the artist must fight.⁴⁸ It stands for the figurative givens, the instituted forms of the object the painter wants to depart from, with their accompanying connotations and conventions. These initial 'lived' givens are representational, narrative and figurative. Bacon, too, began with drawing the body from photos before decomposing it: an ambiguous 'detour' via the world is inevitable and necessary. Because of it, sensation always runs the risk of being reduced to the *sensational*, which Deleuze still finds even in Bacon's crucifixions of suffering flesh – Bacon, whose *cruelty* is nonetheless so far removed from the *misérabilist* cult. The second moment stands for a 'catastrophic', de-representational phase in which the artist confronts himself with chaos: the fusion of sensing and sensed, when all the forms of the world dissolve in that iridescent chaos of sensation evoked by Cézanne (note 16). Deleuze calls this the *diagrammatic* or *de-territorializing* moment, the discovery of a *materiality* that presents itself as a *pure* material presence which is not reducible to an object that can be imagined, recalled or conceived by a subject. Finally, out of this pictorial 'catastrophe', an authentic Figure comes forth, a 'chaosmos' charged with 'blocs of sensation', which each artist attains by means of his own style – in Bacon's case, *figural*. From the death of the form rises the truth of the becoming-flesh, the becoming-imperceptible, the excessive presence of

the body,⁴⁹ Proust's *assignifying memory*: to make the illegible force of time legible by draining the intention out of memory's objects.

In each case, there has to be a break in the circuit of usage, a gap, an anomaly that makes the work leave behind any referential relation to the world so that it can become a veritable work of art. The fundamental premise of art's 'life' is the death of the living intention of the work: the formal dimension of the work of art, its identity, that which is 'conserved' in it, does not consist in an intentional scheme that awaits its own incarnation. On the contrary, as Theodor Adorno masterfully puts it, paraphrasing Proust:

What eats away at the life of the artwork, is also its own life. [...] Works of art can only fully embody the *promesse du bonheur* when they have been uprooted from their native soil and have set out along the path to their own destruction.⁵⁰

This unworldly dimension of the work is described by both Deleuze and Blanchot as the abyss of the present, a temporality *without* present, grasp or measure, to which the Ego has no relation and, thus, toward which I am *unable* to project myself. This untraceable region 'forms' a kind of *atopic* and imagined no man's land; an *Erewhon* of images, signifying at once the originary 'nowhere' and the displaced, disguised, modified and always re-created here and now. Perhaps Deleuze has the same region, the same chaosmos in mind when speaking of the sublime in terms of 'the fundamentally open whole (le fondamentalement ouvert) as the immensity of future and past'.⁵¹ This veritable Bergsonian interiority of time as:

The whole which changes, and which by changing perspective, constantly gives real beings that infinite space which enables them to touch the most distant past and the depths of the future simultaneously, and to participate in the movement of its own 'revolution'.⁵²

The transcendental reduction envisaged here is, in the materialist terminology of Maldiney, a reduction to the pathic dimension of sensation, which always takes place *in and through* the artwork itself. The singularity of sensation thus lies in its being located in the immanence of an emptiness: it forces us to an *atopic* vision that *a priori* excludes any appropriation and permits only the experience of a temporality that comes from a chaotic reality in which humans have no proper place. As Maldiney writes: 'An event is a rupture in the frame of the world and its appearance is subtracted from the convoy of causes and effects. Likewise, the present of the appearance is a crack (*déchirure*) in the temporal frame.'⁵³ In Deleuze's terms, the pathic moment of sensation is constituted upon a primary order of intensive, bodily depth (*viande*) that links man to an *independent ontological reality* inherent to *becoming (le devenir)* that verges on chaos. This event-ness of the work, which constitutes its solidity and durability, its monumentality, should, however, not solely be defined *negatively* by the absence of possibility and causality (as that which neither we nor the world are capable of), but also *positively* by its power to transform, by the revolution it introduces in our lived reality. In Maldiney's terms: 'As long as man is capable of astonishment, art lives. With it man dies.'⁵⁴

The museum as mausoleum

For art, dying does not mean to disappear but to survive itself.

Its death would mean that it no longer equates the reality of our presence in the world and to ourselves.⁵⁵

Adorno writes in this context that museums are like family graves of images to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. He quotes Valéry's sublime statement: 'dead visions are entombed here.'⁵⁶ Museums are mausolea in the sense that they testify to the inevitable neutralisation of culture, the fragility of

the *cosmos* created by the artist. Valéry's appeal is directed against the confusing overabundance of the Louvre. He is not, he writes, overly fond of museums. In the Louvre, Valéry feels confronted with frozen creatures, each of which demands the non-existence of the others – a disorder strangely organised. The more beautiful a picture is, the more it is distinct from all others; it becomes a rare object, unique, and this is counteracted by the over-accumulation of riches in the museum. Art runs the risk of thus becoming solely a matter of education and information. The shock of the museum brings Valéry to a historical-philosophical insight into our destruction of artworks. There, he says, we put the art of the past to death. Valéry grieves over the decontextualisation of the works of art. Painting and sculpture, he says, are like abandoned children:

Their mother is dead, their mother, architecture. While she lived, she gave them their place, their definition. The freedom to wander was forbidden them. They had their place, their clearly defined lighting, their materials. Proper relations prevailed between them. While she was alive, they knew what they wanted. Farewell, the thought says to me, I will go no further.⁵⁷

Proust's view of the museum opposes Valéry's romantic gesture. Adorno mentions a trip Proust took to the sea resort Balbec. He remarks on the caesura that voyages make in the course of life by 'leading us from one name to another name'.⁵⁸ These caesuras are particularly manifest in railway stations, 'these utterly peculiar places [...] which, so to speak, are not part of the town and yet contain the essence of its personality as clearly as they bear its name on their signs'. Adorno observes how Proust's memory seems to drain the intention out of its objects, turning the stations into mere historical archetypes. Proust compares the station to a museum: both stand outside the framework of conventional pragmatic activity, and, Adorno adds, both are bearers of a death symbolism. In the case of the museum, this death symbolism is one

associated with the work of art as a new, fragile and finite cosmos the artist has created. Just like Valéry, Proust stresses the mortality of artefacts. 'What seems eternal,' he says, 'contains within itself the impulse of its own destruction.'⁵⁹

This dialectical attitude brings Proust into conflict with Valéry. It makes his perverse tolerance of the museums possible, whereas for Valéry the duration of the individual work is the crucial problem. The criterion of this duration is the here and now, the present moment. For Valéry, art is lost when it has relinquished its place in the immediacy of life, in its functional context. The pure work is for him threatened by reification and neutralisation. And it is exactly this that Valéry recognises in the museum, whence his nostalgic mourning for works as they turn into relics. Proust begins where Valéry stopped – with the afterlife of works of art. For him, works of art are more than their specific, context-bound aesthetic qualities. They are part of the 'Life' (Deleuze) of the observer, they become an element of his consciousness. He thus perceives a level in them very different from that of the formal laws of the work. It is a level, Adorno writes, set free only by the historical development of the work, a level which has as its *premise* the death of the living intention of the work. For Proust the latter produces a new and broader stage of consciousness, a new and broader level of immediacy. His extraordinary sensitivity to changes in modes of experience has, as its paradoxical result, the ability to perceive history as a landscape, a percept if you will. For Proust, the power of history as a process of disintegration is not incompatible with the power of art – on the contrary.

If Valéry understands something of the power of history over the production and apperception of art, Proust knows that even within works of art themselves history rules like a process of disintegration. Valéry takes offense at the chaotic aspect of the museum because it distorts the works' expressive realisation; for Proust this chaos assumes tragic

character. For him it is only the death of the work of art in the museum which brings it to life.

Art, here and now

The procedure which today relegates every work of art to the museum is irreversible. It is not solely reprehensible, however, for it presages a situation in which art, having completed its estrangement from human ends, returns to life. Let us, by means of conclusion, look at what this afterlife of the work may consist in. On the one hand, museums are essentially like mausolea; like family graves of artworks which, having been torn away from their original cultural soil and sentient intentions related to this context, form but 'a tomb of dead visions' (Valéry), a non-animated and unworldly *nowhere* of images. The ritual *neutralising* of images in the museum is an *inevitable* and *necessary* process.

On the other hand, there is for Deleuze a level proper to the work of art underneath this static, cultural context: a non-historical, dynamic eventness or becoming, if by 'historical' is meant that which leaves durable traces in the collective memory. Art induces a non-intentional, affective mode of sensing the material conditions of our being-in-the-world, a pre-reflexive relation to exteriority. Whereas in its pragmatical and speculative functions, the subject occupies time and the world, mediating the given, sensation, on the contrary, is a de-subjectivising, immediate experience of an unlimited, infinite dimension of time as pure becoming. The pathic dimension of sensation is a dimension towards which we cannot project ourselves but which we can only undergo: a passive dimension essential to sensation, which opens up the unexpected of the real as such. Time and again it unveils (for us) what (in itself) was always already unveiled: the transcendental illusion (Kant) of a world that would be more originary than the linguistic, and especially of a language that would be more originary than the visual. It is the repression of this transcendental illusion inherent to the human condition which

'forms' the Deleuzian *pathos* of art ('*la honte d'être un homme*'), an unmasking privileged to art, and always to be reanimated by generations to come.

Notes

1. Charles Péguy, *Clio* (Paris: Gallimard, 1932), p. 23: 'Et la mort est venue, la dernière femme de ménage. La mort vient. Elle donc fait le ménage; pour la dernière fois elle a balayé le plancher, elle a mis en ordre les oeuvres.' (My translation)
2. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 167.
3. Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 182.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64. Whereas the English translation reads: 'Art preserves, and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. It preserves and is preserved in itself (...),' the French original is clearer with regard to the *self*-preserving nature of the work: 'L'art conserve, et c'est la seule chose au monde qui se conserve. Il conserve et se conserve en soi (...).' See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Qu'est ce que la Philosophie?* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2005), p.154.
5. For references to Straus and Maldiney see Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 169 and Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 35 (note 1).
6. Jean-Louis Chrétien, 'Introduction aux "oeuvres philosophiques"', p. 14, in Henri Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace* (Paris: les Éditions du Cerf, 2012). (Translation by author)
7. See Erwin Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, trans. by G. Thines and J. P. Legrand (Grenoble: Milon, 2000), p. 417, and Henri Maldiney, 'Le dévoilement de la dimension esthétique dans la phénoménologie d'Erwin Straus' in: *Regard Parole Espace*, pp. 188-89.
8. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, p. 417. (Translation by author) See also: Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 189.
9. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 189.

10. Pierre Sauvanet, *Le Rythme et la Raison. I. Rythmologies* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2000), p. 121.
11. Erwin Straus, *Vom Sinn der Sinne*, transl. by G. Thinès and J. P. Legrand, Berlin, J. Springer, 1989, p. 372. (Translation and emphasis by author). Deleuze cites this proposition at the beginning of chapter 6 of *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*.
12. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, p. 277. (Translation and emphasis by author). Cited by Henri Maldiney in Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 195.
13. Henri Maldiney, 'Le dévoilement de la dimension esthétique dans la phénoménologie d'Erwin Straus', in Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, pp. 175-200.
14. Ibid., p. 45: 'Toute sensation comporte un moment émotionnel, pathique, et un moment représentatif, gnosique.' & p. 190: 'le moment pathique est signifiant – non pas à la manière significative du moment gnosique. [...] Elle ne concerne pas un *quoi* mais un *comment*.'
15. Ibid., p. 45. (Translation by author)
16. Ibid., p. 190.
17. Cited in Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 204. (Translation by author).
18. Ibid., p. 190.
19. Straus notes that this expression of 'being-in-the-world' is distinct from Heidegger's usage of the term in *Sein und Zeit*. Straus misses in Heidegger's ontological analytics of *Dasein* a place for life, for the body, for the 'animalia'. For him it is an oversimplification to think that man and nature form a harmonious continuum, which he found in Heidegger's interpretation of nature as ready-at-hand (*vorhanden*). In particular, Heidegger had overlooked man's struggle with nature and hence his being-in-the-world lacked gravity for Straus. See Herbert Spiegelberg, *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry: A Historical Introduction* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972) p. 274, and Straus, 2000, p. 418.
20. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 189. (Translation by author)
21. *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, 'R pour Résistance'. (Translation by author)
22. Deleuze refers in this context to the English writer Virginia Woolf who in her diary points to the importance of eliminating everything that adheres to our current and lived perceptions and of incorporating in the moment nonsense, fact, sordidity, '*but made transparent*'. See Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 172.
23. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, p. 371. (Translation by author)
24. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. by Mark Lester (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 149-50. (Emphasis by author)
25. Isabelle Stengers' instructive reading of *What is Philosophy?* <<http://www.recalcitrance.com/deleuzelast.htm>> [Accessed 07 April 2014].
26. Straus, *Du Sens des Sens*, pp. 382-83. Cited by Deleuze and Guattari in Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 169.
27. Jean-Luc Nancy, *A l'écoute* (Paris: Galilée, 2002), pp. 32-4. (Translation by author). In this essay devoted to the particular incidence of sound, Nancy also draws on Straus' *Vom Sinn der Sinne* to develop a concept of 'listening' (*l'écoute*) as opposed to 'hearing', the French 'entendre' which apart from hearing means also to comprehend, as in 'hearing a language and understanding its meaning.'
28. Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 172.
29. Nancy, 2002, p. 30.
30. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 383. (Translation by author)
31. Ibid., p. 339
32. Chrétien, 'Introduction aux "oeuvres philosophiques"', p. 29.
33. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 383.
34. I follow here Sarah Brunel's instructive essay 'Entre Un et Rien', p. 38, in Maldiney. *Une singulière présence* (Paris: Éditions les Belles Lettres, 2014).
35. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 221.
36. Henri Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie* (Grenoble: Millon, 2007), p. 421. (Translation by author)
37. Renaud Barbaras, 'L'essence de la réceptivité', p. 22, in Maldiney. *Une singulière présence* (Paris: Éditions les Belles Lettres, 2014).
38. Maurice Blanchot, 'Le Rire des dieux' (Paris: NRF,

- 1965), p. 103, cited in Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 362.
39. Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace Littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard (folio essais), 2002), p. 302.
 40. Ibid., p. 294.
 41. Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 164.
 42. Ibid., p. 172.
 43. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 148.
 44. Ibid., p. 149.
 45. Ibid.
 46. Ibid., p. 150.
 47. Mireille Buydens, *Sahara. L'esthétique de Gilles Deleuze* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), pp. 165-68.
 48. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, pp. 89-92, Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 170.
 49. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, p. 55.
 50. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum', in *Prisms*, trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 183-84.
 51. Gilles Deleuze, *The Movement-Image*, trans. by H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 46.
 52. Ibid., pp. 38-9.
 53. Maldiney, 2007, p. 419.
 54. Maldiney, *Regard Parole Espace*, p. 230.
 55. Ibid., p. 175.
 56. Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum', p. 176.
 57. Ibid., pp. 176-77.
 58. Ibid., p. 177.
 59. Ibid.

Biography

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