Baroque Naturalism in Benjamin and Deleuze

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The Art of Least Distances

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This book, itself a study of two books on the Baroque, proposes a pair of related theses: one interpretive, the other argumentative.

The first, enveloped in the second, holds that the significance of allegory Gilles Deleuze recognized in Walter Benjamin's 1928 monograph on seventeenth-century drama is itself attested in key aspects of Kantian, Leibnizian, and Platonic philosophy (to wit, in the respective forms by which thought is phrased, predicated, and proposed).

The second, enveloping the first, is a 'literalist' claim about predication itself—namely, that the aesthetics of agitation and hallucination so emblematic of the Baroque sensibility (as attested in its emblem-books) adduces an avowedly metaphysical naturalism in which thought is *replete* with predicates. Oriented by Barbara Cassin's development of the concerted sense in which homonyms are critically distinct from synonyms, the philosophical claim here is that 'the Baroque' names the intervallic [διαστηματική] relation that thought establishes between things. On this account, any subject finds its unity in a concerted state of disquiet—a state-*rempli* in which, phenomenologically speaking, experience comprises as much seeing as reading (as St Jerome encountering Origen's *Hexapla*).

An interval and a ratio are different [διαφέρει δὲ διάστημα καὶ λόγος], for an interval is what lies between homogeneous and unequal terms [τὸ μεταξὺ τῶν ὁμογενῶν τε καὶ ἀνίσων ὅρων], while a ratio is quite generally the reciprocal relation of homogeneous terms [τῶν ὁμογενῶν ὅρων πρὸς ἀλλήλους σχέσις]… for example, from 2 to 1 and from 1 to 2 there is one and the same interval, while the ratio is different: double that of 2 to 1, one half that of the 1 to 2… for instance, the sensible is to the intelligible in the same ratio as opinion is to science, and the intelligible differs from the knowable as opinion differs from the sensible. An interval, instead, is given only between terms that are different either in magnitude, in quality, in position or in any other way.

(Theon of Smyrna [*On Mathematics Useful for the Understanding of Plato*] in Ugaglia 2016, pp. 62–63)

Of course it is really true that things which are absolutely equal have a difference which is absolutely nothing; and that straight lines which are parallel never meet, since the distance between them is everywhere the same exactly… Yet a state of transition may be imagined, or one of evanescence, in which indeed there has not yet arisen exact equality or rest or parallelism, but in which it is passing into such a state, that the difference is less than any assignable quantity; also that in this state there will still remain some difference, some velocity, and some angle, but in each case

one that is infinitely small; and the distance of the point of intersection, or the variable focus, from the fixed focus, will be infinitely great…

Truly it is very likely that Archimedes, and … Conon, found out their wonderfully elegant theorems by the help of such ideas…

<div align="right">(Leibniz 2005, pp. 148–149)</div>

To put it more clearly, the distance between two fixed things—whether points or extended objects—is the size of the shortest possible line that can be drawn from one to the other. This distance can be taken either absolutely or relative to some figure which contains the two distant things... It is also worth noticing that there are distances not only between bodies but also between surfaces, lines and points. And we can speak of the 'capacity', or rather the 'interval', between two bodies or two other extended things, or between an extended thing and a point, as being the space constituted by all the shortest lines which can be drawn between the points of the one and of the other.

<div align="right">(Leibniz 1996, p. 147)</div>

On manque dans les langues de termes assez propres pour distinguer des notions voisines

<div align="right">(Leibniz 1990, p. 131)</div>

Il y a bien une étymologie philosophique, ou bien une philologie philosophique

<div align="right">(Deleuze, 1980b)</div>

…on utilise toutes les langues pour essayer de mieux comprendre même les langues qu'on ne connaît pas

<div align="right">(Deleuze, 1981a)</div>

In spite of his own declarations, I could never believe, that it was possible for him to have meant no more by his *Noumenon*, or Thing in itself, than his mere words express; or that in his own conception he confined the whole *plastic* power to the forms of the intellect, leaving for the external

cause, for the *materiale* of our sensations, a matter without form, which is doubtless inconceivable.

<div align="right">(Coleridge 1906, p. 77)</div>

So is there many a one among us, yes, and some who think themselves philosophers too, to whom the philosophic organ is entirely wanting. To such a man philosophy is a mere play of words and notions, like a theory of music to the deaf, or like the geometry of light to the blind. The connection of the parts and their logical dependencies may be seen and remembered; but the whole is groundless and hollow, unsustained by living contact, unaccompanied with any realizing intuition which exists by and in the act that affirms its existence, which is known, because it is, and is, because it is known

<div align="right">(Coleridge 1906, p. 136)</div>

Openings

To say that 'naturalism' and 'baroque' are intrinsically fraught terms speaks not only to their being words laden with a great many associations but so too to their being in themselves disconcertingly vague topics.

This presents a significant problem for the conventions of scholarly writing since the semantic precision by which any such undertaking is required to distinguish *itself* requires, in turn, *and at the same time* [ἅμα],[1] a 'conceptual' determination or *katalepsis* which, in the end, neither the received etymology nor ongoing use of either term is placed to yield (let alone perhaps even grasp [*greifen*] in the first place). As will be shown in the work that follows, the poetic heritage of the allegorical *concetto* attests to this problem, as does the philosophical reaction under-girding Kant's view that Leibniz "did not define [*erklärt*] the monad. He merely invented [*erdacht*] it" (1992, p. 249);[2] a version, perhaps, of Aristotle's critique of Plato[3] (ancient "twitterings" recast as modern *Schwärmerei*).

Indeed for Kant, perhaps ultimately the question of any *semantic* precision might well in the end be "merely grammatical" (1992, p. 249) since "words can neither show in their composition the constituent concepts of which the whole idea, indicated by the word, consists; nor are they capable of indicating in their combinations the relations of the philosophical thoughts to each other" (1992, p. 251).[4] And so the further problem here arises, then, upon any attempt, as in the one that follows, to say that 'baroque' and 'naturalism' are not so much synonyms (definitional

terms which might happen to resemble the same 'thing') as words that obtain by means of the structuring element of their homonymy: that is by their being-stated ('*dici*' as the terminists' account of *prédicables* held) rather than as proudly universalizable beings *of which* things can be said.[5] A better phrasing, then, might be to say that 'baroque' and 'naturalism' are themselves as much predicates as subjects—although only on condition that this here be understood as a form of predication which resounds in its very iteration rather than in terms of any definition; in this sense, the present project might very well aspire to one of "high metaphysics"[6] or at it is one that least can take little from discussion of sortals or the semantics of natural kinds.

For as will be shown in this work, *the extent* to which (or 'where') any distance might be articulated—including, and not least of all here, in the syntagm Baroque Naturalism—is never to be found outside things, but rather upon the subtle or slight [*gering*] variation of their (real) relation to everything else, including, not least of all, to each other. Accordingly, it is owing to the sense in which the account of reason to be set out in this work is naturalist that it suffices to *name* it 'baroque'—for this term, which functions both as an adjective and a noun and thereby proposes the thesis of a literalist predication, is one that *qualifies itself* as much in terms of philosophical logic and metaphysics (of categories and predication) as it does in terms of the grammar of any discourse. As such, it is in the context of these nested problems (or rather, nested problems of a nested problem)[7] that the present study unfurls and in so doing proposes a certain unity which—on account of its being *generative* rather than derivative of any (discursive) order—is to be conceived *while* being articulated, figuratively: as a hallucinatory form of experience involving as much things that can be 'read' as things that can be 'seen'.

In this way, the specific unity to be analysed (or rather *developed*) here is one that obtains co-incidentally, that is, *as* a reading of the respective baroquebooks by Benjamin and Deleuze. In other words, its very disputation is itself a figuration[8] *of* what it conceives[9]; its unity is to be regarded 'relationally' as something *para*bolic,[10] "just as [ὥσπερ] geometricians draw lines as they contemplate" (Plotinus [III.8.4] 1967, pp. 368–369)[11]—an asymptotic calque, as in the case of the steeples named Martinville and Vieuxvicq, "something analogous to a pretty phrase... in the form of words" (Proust 1992a, p. 215), which would suffice to furnish what is to be rendered here as the pantographic or intervallic relation between things: *The Art of Least Distances*. Indeed it is in this way that

this title, the name of the project that follows, is one which takes its phrasing drawn from what Benjamin describes as "the insight [*Einsicht*]", "transposed" by Hausenstein, that

> Baroque naturalism is "the art of least distances [*die Kunst der geringsten Abstände*]... In every case, the naturalistic means serves the reduction of distances [*dient das naturalistirer Mittel zur Verkürzung der Distanzen*]... In order to leap back the more surely into the hypertrophy of form and the forecourts of the metaphysical, it seeks its rigid springboard in the region of the liveliest objective actuality
>
> (Benjamin 2003, 1978a, p. 48; p. 66)

Whether hyperbole or parable—almost tautologically, then, or at least quite literally for what follows, 'Baroque Naturalism' remains a *nominal* title rather than a definition of any eponymous object—the italicised heading names the requisite concept of this work, *The Art of Least Distances*. In claiming as much, the argumentative project here could well be said to be one of those that "resorts to a standard method of transcendental deduction, which had been used *ad nauseam* by German post-Kantian idealists. This consists in calling the concepts which play an essential role in the argument by names whose ordinary meaning is much richer than the defined meaning of those concepts, and allowing the aura of meaning suggested thereby to strengthen the premises in which such concepts occur" (Torretti 1984, pp. 305–306). However, and notwithstanding their respective definitional complexities, rather than exploiting an ambiguity in terms, here 'baroque' and 'naturalism' are themselves to be understood as constituting organons instead of canons for thought; meaning is to be as much generated as determined. Of course, an investigation that in this way undertakes to content itself with its own form (a self-sufficiency of terms) could well be reprimanded, along Kantian lines, as methodologically illegitimate on account of a certain ontological hubris or pride. And yet while a *technique*[12] of least distances would certainly avoid the charge of being a *metaphysica generalis*, such a discursive procedure might at the same time seek to recuse its own iteration from the ontological tension so characteristic of the seventeenth-century sensibility that forms the literalist basis for predication to be here developed.

   The specific origin of the work that follows (the "little fragment" for the present study) was "composed" as a postgraduate student; what was written at that time "to satisfy my enthusiasm" formed something which I

"now reproduce with only a slight revision here and there" (Proust 1992a, p. 215) and whatever the final resemblance of that inquiry to the one at hand. In this way, the role of the thesis proposed then—"the same object, known to me and yet vague, which I could not bring nearer" (Proust 1992b, p. 343)—has since become 'auxiliary' for that which is proposed now; what became "a circle of crystal or granite, formed about a soft core; a core of lava, of liquid or viscous gas… has lost its hold and faded. It no longer encloses anything; it rather distances every aspect of the other moment" (Deleuze, 1990a p. 158)—and is what is set out in the recuperation that forms the variorum of the following project. If such a project might seem at once "to enjoy a manic omnipotence", to suffer the "loss of the object in every sense and direction", to be something "unravelled [*dénoue*]" so as to have "fled with outstretched wings" (ibid.) and yet at the same time to be something that, "as if heavy, unrolled itself [ἐξείλιξεν αὐτὸν] because it wanted to possess everything" (Plotinus [III.8.8] pp. 386–387)—in short, to be a project "wherein the present auxiliary expresses only the infinite distance of every participle and every participation" (Deleuze 1990a, p. 159)—then this follows simply from the same sense in which one can ever, at all, claim to 'have-done', to 'have-loved', to 'have-seen', and to 'have-drunk'[13] … and, in the present case, to 'have-read' the respective baroquebooks by Walter Benjamin (2003) and Gilles Deleuze (1993a).

Ahead of its notorious polysemy, the first lexical appearance of the '*baroque*' is to be found in the 1690 *Dictionnaire universel* as "a jeweller's term, used only for pearls that are not perfectly round".[14] For its part the *Oxford English Dictionary* attests to an "uncertain origin" of the term, and yet claims that even in modern Portuguese the *barroco* designates a "rough or Scotch pearl".[15] Whatever the eventual irregularities and imperfections of the work that follows—some inherent to the material at hand, others attendant in the at times exhausting or circumlocutory style and the residuum (perhaps even surfeit) of endnotes[16] that accompany and occasionally, or rather *virtually*,[17] compete with the main body of the text that has pushed ahead of it and left them in its wake in aspiring to form the 'best' of this project[18]—a result of the already lapidary having become overwrought and perhaps brittle or even ground to a dust[19] by an all too constant reworking (more Giacommeti than Bernini, a combinatorics without a Characteristic) one that "cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and

clears another",[20] a work which should "never stop" (Plotinus [I.6.9] 1966a, p. 259) although[21] or*because* it remains frivolous[22] (*disfazione*, *ciselante*)[23]—I would like to thank the family, friends, colleagues, and students who have accompanied and forborne me on this wending and often quixotic essay which first came into view while a doctoral student overlooking the Firth of Tay. At that time, warm and supportive conversations with Kurt Brandhorst, Rachel Jones, and many others complemented the generous supervision of James Williams. In more recent times, thanks go to Anne Schwenkenbecher, an ever-great neighbour across the corridor, and to Wahida Khandker for many helpful discussions in the UK, WA, and 'Erewhon'.

Overview

This book takes as its object Gilles Deleuze's estimation of the subtle, yet nonetheless powerful and profound, significance of allegory developed by Walter Benjamin.

Whatever the difficulties of staging such an object—difficulties beset, for example, by the kaleidoscopic question of whether one of these arcane 'baroquebooks' is required to silhouette the claims of the other, or even the two together, for either of them to make sense—the *philosophical* significance of allegory can be regarded here, at the outset, straightforwardly enough, against key terms from the traditional scenography of Critical thought: that is, as involving the (transcendental role of the) *modality* of concepts, but developing a certain understanding of them which, "might have, through its determinateness and completeness, not only utility, but also in addition, in virtue of its systematicity, a certain beauty" (Kant 1997, p. 79);[24] "to work with very developed material of thought to make forces that are not thinkable in themselves thinkable" (Deleuze 2020, p. 244). That Baroque Naturalism *names* this understanding, *and does so by figuring the concept of its experience through a 'literalist' account of predication*, is what the following project proposes.

The proposal takes place via six chapters of which three are oriented by philosophical personae—Kant (Chapter 3), Leibniz (Chapter 4), and Plotinus (Chapter 5). These are foregrounded by a pair of introductory Chapters (1 and 2). A final Chapter (6) resounds in the work of Barbara Cassin and extracts from the previous five so as to summarise the account of predication that is unfurled throughout. Proust is indelible.

Following this scheme, the first two chapters set out the difficulty bound-up in the formulation of definitive concepts and how such difficulty has often gone by the name Baroque. The chapter on Kant considers the important structuring role of concepts but contends that the orientation and source of this structure, its conditioning, is all too often external (synthetic, schematic, and Ideal). This is followed in the chapter on Leibniz by an account of the internal nature of concepts' 'predicative' relations to the world (and, as monads, to one another). Two short chapters close the study. The chapter on Plotinus details the experience of such Leibnizian transcendental philosophy, and the chapter on Cassin serves as a coda for the thesis claim of the project: that the Art of Least Distances that characterises the unstable 'naturalism' of the Baroque sensibility is one in which the form of things is to be understood in terms of their ongoing formation (a productivity rather than a product, an *energeia* rather than an *ergon*)—a hallucination in which we cannot stop reading as we see, and cannot stop seeing as we read.

Notes

1. See Cassin (2014c, p. 155) for an overview of the significance of this term.
2. Compare Leibniz's interest (1989a, pp. 121–130) in the questions attending the philosophical style of the Italian humanist Marius Nizolius and, to too, the distinction between the exoteric and esoteric that accompanies the "indeterminacy in the use of language" (1997, p. 261).
3. "The Forms may be dismissed—they are mere prattle [τερετίσματά]" writes Aristotle, at 83a32-4 of the *Posterior Analytics* (1960, pp. 120–121). For a survey of the uniquely philosophical problem of concept formation in this regard, see the collection edited by Haas, Leunissen, and Martijn (2011).
4. As will be shown in what follows, Kant himself sought to make use of the received use of words. Moreover, ahead of the *syntactic* 'form' or creation of language to be discussed in later chapters, to be noted here at this juncture is the confluence of the 'logical' ratios of grammar:language and mathematics:knowledge (which in turn anticipates the question of the 'form' of thought in Plotinus, that is, whether non-discursive thought is propositional). Such ratios have perhaps never been stable. "The standard logical tools of ancient philosophers could never really cope with the actual mathematical practice. Neither the propositional calculus of the Stoics not the Aristotelian syllogistic (which after all is not more powerful than monadic first-order predicate calculus), could express, even in principle, the richness of the mathematics of the day" explain Hintikka and

Remes in their study *The Method of Analysis: Its Geometrical Origin and Its General Significance* (1974, p. 97). In this way, the 'rules' by which thoughts might be linked to one another, though certainly involving conventional marks, do not stand independently of their being actually written or ("manually", after Bacon) worked-through. "Pappus says… that analysis is a heuristical method ἔν γραμμαῖς, that is, in geometrical investigations (literally 'in the study of lines'). A mere graphical study is not what is meant, but a serious theoretical investigation, geometrical in nature… Thus Galen says frankly that he had found the Stoic, Peripatetic, and Platonic—he knew Albinus personally—logical theories impractical and useless to many purposes. What he recommends as a substitute is precisely the *mos geometricus*, geometrical or 'linear' proof (γραμμικὴ ἀπόδειξις)" (Hintikka and Remes 1974, p. 99).

5. See the narrator's account of Françoise's limited vocabulary (Proust 1992c, p. 17).

6. A tradition which, according to Wiggins, would seek "to demote artefacts from the status of genuine entities" (2001, p. 100)—one which would risk "sneering discontent with all would-be factual thought or speech as such, or a gloating dissatisfaction with it as any sort of a record of reality" (155); compare the "metaphysical plainness" of conceptual realism (142).

7. "Every symptom is a word [*une parole*], but first of all every word is [*toutes les paroles sont*] a symptom", as Deleuze notes (2000, p. 92; 2006a, pp. 112–113).

8. According to Deleuze, the great insight of Benjamin's study of Baroque philosophical aesthetics was to have shown "that allegory was not a failed symbol, or an abstract personification, but a power of figuration", one which involves "the logical relation between a concept and its object" (1993a, p. 125). The putative logic of this "relation" is precisely the object of the following study and yet here, at the outset, its *hallucinatory* character should be recognized. Important in this regard is Deleuze's earlier interest in Lyotard's development of "the word 'figural' as a substantive in order to oppose it to the 'figurative'" (2003, p. 173) and the use to which Deleuze puts this in his estimation of Bacon: "The figurative lines will be scrambled by extending them, by hatching them; that is, *by introducing new distances and new relations between them*, out of which the nonfigurative resemblance will emerge" (2003, p. 158, emphasis added).

9. At stake in this logology is the (transcendental) status of that 'faculty'—a metaphysical but not (necessarily) a merely cognitive hypostasis or 'power' (a *Kraft* whose *Vermögen* is never "empty" [*leer*], and is anything but "blind", on account of its being preoccupied with hallucinations)—by which concepts might be thought at all. "Nature creates similarities",

Benjamin explains in a well-known piece from 1933, published posthumously as 'On the Mimetic Faculty'. "The highest capacity for producing similarities, however, is man's" (2006b, p. 720).

10. This outlook comprises a naïvely etymological, rather than mathematical, sense of this term—in much the same way that Deleuze describes his use of 'singularity' as "making a childish inquiry, we are talking mathematics, but we don't know a word of it" (1980c). In this regard consider Plotnitsky's account of a Hegelian Baroque in which certain multiplicities "serve a descriptive quasi–mathematics ('calculus', 'algebra', 'geometry', 'topology', or 'analysis') or allegorical translation of the other, even though all of them are also placed in the service of what they or anything else cannot access. History is a calculus or an allegory of philosophy; philosophy is that of history; matter of mind, mind of matter, consciousness of the unconscious, unconscious of consciousness, and so forth" (2004, p. 127). "The redeployment of mathematical problematics as models for philosophical problematics is one of the strategies that Deleuze employs in his engagement with and reconfiguration of the history of philosophy", notes Duffy (2013, p. 3). A certain Dutchman who had no great love of religion", recounts Leibniz, "in order to hold Christian theology and the Christian faith up to ridicule… wrote a little Flemish dictionary in which he defined or explained the terms in accordance not with their use but with what the original sense of the words seemed to imply, and gave them a malicious twist" (Leibniz, 1997, p. 277).

11. The generative nature of discursive similitude is reflected in the repetition of the comparative/conditional sense established by the ὥσπερ that follows in the very next sentence. "But I do not draw, but as I contemplate, the lines which bound bodies come to be as if they fell from my contemplation [ἀλλ᾽ ἐμοῦ μὴ γραφούσης, θεωρούσης δέ, ὑφίστανται αἱ τῶν σωμάτων γραμμαὶ ὥσπερ ἐκπίπτουσαι]" (Plotinus [III.8.4], 1967, pp. 368–369).

12. Compare the "image of philosophy as an experimental technique" to be found in Nancy, Laruelle, Steigler, and Malabou which, according to Ian James, is "entirely different from the image of philosophy as the creation of concepts. Whereas Deleuze wishes to maintain philosophy as a metaphysics that would be adequate to contemporary scientific knowledge", James explains, the thinkers in his book "seek to overturn, suspend or otherwise move beyond philosophy's metaphysical foundationalism in a variably configured experience of an absence of origins and foundations" (2019, p. 52). To abjure the creation of concepts as poetic cannot simply be avoided in shifting from *ars* to *techne* (whatever might be thought to be gained in reclaiming the original Greek from the Latin) since the classical distinction from other modes (*theoria, phronesis*, and *praxis*) remains.

See Deleuze's discussion of the "very delicate" problem of beginning philosophy (1994, p. 129).

13. See the discussion in Deleuze (1990, p. 158–159). That this is not a creative recollection distinguishes it from Proustian reminiscence, Deleuze explains. And yet consider the account of drunkenness at Rivebelle in which the narrator "was glued to the sensation of the moment, *with no extension beyond its limits, nor any object other than not to be separated from it*" (Proust, 1992b, pp. 457, emphasis added).

14. "Irregular pearls exist, but the Baroque has no reason to exist without a concept that forms that very reason", writes Deleuze in his call for a conception of this notion (1993a, p. 33). Compare Leibniz's observation "that very able geometers, while knowing several properties of certain figures which seemed to exhaust the topic, did not properly understand what figures they were. For instance, there were the curves called 'pearls' whose quadratures had even been given, as had the dimensions of their surfaces and of their solids of revolution, before it was realized that all that was involved was a combination of certain cubic parabolas. Thus, prior to that insight, when these pearls were considered to be a distinct species, there was only a provisional knowledge of them. If that can happen in geometry, is it any wonder that we can find it difficult to determine the incomparably more composite species in corporeal nature?" (Leibniz, 1996, p. 348).

15. See Santoro for an extended analysis of the Portuguese language in this regard (2014).

16. "In the case of Lohenstein this same attitude gives rise to the corpus of notes which rivals the dramas in length… 'But why so much? For the learned it is all written in vain; for the unlearned it is not enough" (Benjamin 2003, p. 63). Consider Benjamin's reflection in a letter: "what surprises me most of all at this time is that what I have written consists, as it were, almost entirely of quotations. It is the craziest mosaic technique [*tollste Mosaiktechnik*] you can imagine and, as such, may appear so odd for a work of this kind that I will probably touch up the fair copy in places" (1994, p. 256; 1978b, p. 366).

17. Consider Leibniz's criticism of "the *hypothesis of impressions* or that of *occasional causes*… Whatever happens to the soul arises out of its own depths without any need of adapting itself to the body in successive events, any more than the body needs to adapt itself to the soul". In the present work, text and endnotes might be regarded thus—"Each following its own laws… each agrees with the other in the same phenomena" (1989a, p. 338).

18. "It has a summit because there is a world that is the best of all worlds, and it lacks a base because the others are lost in the fog, and finally, there remains no final one that can be called the worst" (Deleuze 1993a, p. 61);

"things emerge from the background plane, colours spring forth from the common depth that attests to their obscure nature, figures are defined more by their covering than their contour" (Deleuze 1993a, pp. 31–32).

19. As such, footnotes in the present text might constitute "the obscure dust of the world" (Deleuze 1993a, p. 90) "a dust of tiny dark and scattered perceptions" (Deleuze 1993a, p. 92); "we have been grasping figures without objects, but through the haze of a dust without objects that the figures themselves raise up from the depths, and that falls back again, but with enough time to be seen for an instant" (Deleuze 1993a, p. 94).

20. Benjamin sought "to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moments the crystal of the total event" (2002, p. 461) "When a language is hollowed out [*se creuse*] by its turning within language, it finally completes its mission: the Sign shows the Thing, and effectuates the nth power of language", writes Deleuze (1998a, p. 98; 1993a, pp. 124–125).

21. "Hammer and chisel [*Meissel und Schlägel*] are perfectly fine for working raw lumber, but for copperplate one must use an etching needle [*Radiernadel*]" insists Kant (1878, p. 7; 1997, p. 10).

22. Consider how for Derrida, "Condillac's method… consists in indefinitely recharging signs, in saturating semiotics with semantic representation, by including all rhetoric in a metaphorics, by *connecting the signifier*" (1980, p. 119). "Does Condillac write, without knowing it, in the margins of a book he has not read? Is his discourse the *frivolous* repetition or the *identification* of Leibniz's statements which themselves are striving to distinguish between identical propositions and frivolous ones, and thus, next, to save metaphysics from a frivolity which gnaws at it from the inside?" (Derrida, 1980, p. 120).

23. Consider Beckett's use of Leonardo's term (1965, p. 31) in his study on Proust, and Proust's own description of Bergotte as "a sterile and precious artist, a chiseller of trifles" (Proust 1992b, p. 151). Consider too the declared 'hypostases' of Isou's Lettrist manifesto which proclaimed that "chiselled poetry eliminates the *exterior* for the *interior* and substitutes *divergences* for *convergences*" (1947, p. 93, my translation). "By continual polishing, by the transparency of notions, poetry is formed as an art of obscure sensibility, spiritualized in its very element" (97–98); "it was in the exiguity and in the nuance that the characteristic of the chiselling poetry resided. Because of pettiness, the powerlessness to embrace a *vision* is revealed" (p. 99).

24. See discussion of Leibniz's attempts to eliminate oblique cases from Latin (Mates, 1986, pp. 61 & 179).

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