PAINTING AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME: DELEUZE ON THE IMAGE OF TIME IN FRANCIS BACON AND MODERN CINEMA

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"There is a great force of time in Bacon", Gilles Deleuze writes in his 1981 study of the work of the British painter Francis Bacon, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. "Time is being painted."[1] Though a number of such appraisals of Bacon's ability to "paint time" appear throughout *Francis Bacon*, Deleuze's philosophical account of this ability remains frustratingly thin. In contrast to his elaborate expositions of other aspects of Bacon's work—his handling of color and space, his use of the triptych form, his treatment of the relation between chaos and figuration, his place in the history of painting—Deleuze gives the issue of time in Bacon's painting scant attention; his longest discussion of it, appearing at the end of Chapter 8, comprises just four sentences. Most of these brief discussions (of which there are ten, by my count) involve the idea that Bacon's compositions express two distinct modes of time: on the one hand, "time that passes", which appears in "the chromatic variation of broken tones" that compose Bacon's distorted human figures; on the other hand, "the eternity of time", which appears in the contoured, monochrome fields that contain the figures.[2] Evocative as this idea may be, however, it explains little. It leaves completely unaddressed what seems to me the fundamental question: How can a painting—an object that, unlike a film or a work of "time-based media", typically contains no moving or obviously changing elements—"render time visible"?[3] Indeed, Deleuze's claim that Bacon's painting presents two modes of time via two orders of chromatic composition seems merely to displace this question, which now becomes: How do variegated figures, which are not in themselves obviously temporal, depict time that passes, and how do monochrome fields depict time as eternity? Deleuze does not offer a clear answer.

To the general question of how a painting can render time visible, one might respond: "A painting can depict a very old thing, an object or a person's face or even a landscape, in whose weathered surfaces we see the effects of time. Or a painting can render time visible by portraying a story, for instance by depicting a sequence of historical, religious, or mythic

events, either as discrete scenes within a single panel or on the multiple panels of a diptych or triptych, as in many early Renaissance paintings." For Deleuze, however, neither of these responses will do. This is because they envision painting's rendering time visible in terms of illustration or narration: illustration of the effects of time, narration of a story that unfolds over time. On Deleuze's analysis—which on this point simply follows remarks made by Bacon himself—Bacon rigorously eschews both illustration and narration.[4] Instead, Bacon's painting aims to "*record the fact*", by which Deleuze means the fact of sensation.[5] Bacon's work, Deleuze argues, presents sensation to sensation; it makes sensation sense itself, its structure and its dynamism. "Sensation is what is painted. What is painted on the canvas is the body, not insofar as it is represented as an object, but insofar as it is experienced as sustaining *this* sensation."[6] Illustration and narration, by contrast, instrumentalize sensation in order to present an extra-sensuous content: a concept or a story.

But Deleuze's rejection of painting that illustrates or narrates in favor of painting that records the fact of sensation seems to point toward another reason to be dissatisfied with his brief remarks about time in Bacon's work. Time that passes, he says, is presented through chromatic variation, and eternal time through monochrome fields—is this not a vision of painting as a kind of metaphoric illustration? It seems hard to conceive of the presentation of passing time via chromatic variation as anything but a visual metaphor illustrating a temporal concept: each chromatic shift is akin to a second that slips by. Similarly with eternal time and monochrome fields: the uniform expanse of the field would be a visual metaphor for the changelessness of the eternal. Must we conclude that Deleuze's understanding of the temporal in Bacon violates the anti-illustrative principle on which much of his account of Bacon's work rests?

I think that Deleuze's claims for Bacon as a painter of time can be salvaged and made intelligible. But to do this, we must look beyond *Francis Bacon*. Where to look? We could turn to almost any work by Deleuze and find rich reflections on time, but he deals most explicitly and intensively with the relation between time and images in the text that, perhaps not coincidentally, appears just after *Francis Bacon*: his two-volume study of cinema. Though the moving image of cinema is *eo ipso* different from the static image of painting, Deleuze's *Cinema* books—*Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*[7] and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*[8]—offer us important resources for understanding his remarks about time in Bacon's painting. This is especially true of *Cinema 2*, in which, I argue, we find an account of the composition of images

that is remarkably homologous to the account in *Francis Bacon* of the eponymous artist's composition of paintings. Put differently, Deleuze understands the postwar creation of cinematic time-images to be structurally, one might say logically, similar to Bacon's creation of paintings. This homology, I argue, provides us a kind of heuristic tool for making sense of the idea that Bacon is a painter of time. *Cinema 2*, that is, shows us how to read *Francis Bacon* so as to understand Deleuze's obscure claims about the temporality of Bacon's work. This is not to say that we expect to find in one or another of the many types of cinematic time-image described and taxonomized in *Cinema 2* a concept that can be applied, readymade, to explain how Bacon paints time, as if it would be possible ultimately to say that Bacon is a painter of "crystal-images" or of "peaks of present" or some such. To expect such a result would be to obliterate the manifest differences between cinema and painting and to deny the specificity of Deleuze's cinema-concepts. Rather, I argue that *Cinema 2* shows us where in *Francis Bacon* we can expect to find the concept we need to understand Bacon as a painter of time. In other words, *Cinema 2*'s account of the composition of time-images points us, by way of its structural similarity to *Francis Bacon*'s account of the Baconian composition of paintings, toward the concept that will clarify the question of time in Bacon—a concept that, like a purloined letter, was there all along, although Deleuze himself did little to make its significance for the question of painterly time clear. This, we will see, is the concept of *rhythm*.

THE TIME-IMAGE

To avail ourselves of the heuristic I've described, we must first understand Deleuze's account in *Cinema 2* of postwar film's creation of a time-image. Scholars have done a great deal of careful work to explicate Deleuze's philosophy of film in general and the concept of the time-image in particular, so I will keep my reconstruction brief and schematic.[9]

Cinema presents images of time, Deleuze argues. Classical prewar cinema and much postwar Hollywood cinema present their images of time, he says, "indirectly"; in these films time appears as derived from or dependent on the well-coordinated movements depicted on the screen. Deleuze calls such an indirect cinematic image of time a *movement-image*. But beginning with Italian neorealism, Deleuze argues, postwar cinema elaborates a new image

of time. Instead of indirectly presenting time as derived from movement, modern cinema presents time *directly*, as the very condition of movement and change. Deleuze calls this new, direct cinematic image of time a *time-image*. It is in Deleuze's account of the composition and nature of the time-image that we find resources for making sense of Bacon as a painter of time.

The composition of the time-image begins from the decomposition of the movement-image; the former must, in some sense, be won from the latter. Despite the initial inventiveness of the compositional techniques employed by the prewar cinema of the movement-image, many of these techniques had by the middle of the century become familiar, had become clichés that a new generation of filmmakers would have to surpass if they were to create anything truly new. But more fundamentally, Deleuze argues, the compositional techniques of the movement-image are in themselves, in their very functioning, clichéd. Movement-image cinema constructs its images to tell a recognizable story, a story that "makes sense", by establishing causal and explanatory linkages among shots and the movements they depict. Following Bergson, Deleuze calls these "sensory-motor linkages". These sensory-motor linkages secure continuity from image to image and from shot to shot, but at the cost of subordinating image to linkage, of minimizing everything excessive or sui generis in the image. Sensory-motor linkages ensure that each image of a film is *recognizable*, and therefore, Deleuze says, *tolerable*, in relation to the other images of the film. They enable us to recognize easily and to interpret quickly the movements depicted on the screen, connecting images of movement in such a way that they conform to what everyone already knows—about good and evil, heroism and cowardice, love and hate, but also about cause and effect, action and reaction, identity and contradiction, experience and psychology. This is why they are clichés.

The first step in modern cinema's composition of the time-image is the interruption of these clichéd sensory-motor linkages, which it achieves by making movement within the shot or the linkages between shots abnormal, disorienting, irrational, or indifferent. Think, for instance, of the jump cuts of Godard's *À bout the souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960), or the intentionally out-of-sync vocal dubbing of Fellini's *Satyricon* (1969), or the meandering, drawn-out panning shots of Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979). Deleuze calls this sort of abnormality in the image *aberrant movement*.[10] Aberrant movement acts as a kind of distanciator or alienator; it blocks the continuous flow of shot into shot and movement into movement, and thereby

blocks us from identifying easily with the characters on screen, or even with the point of view of the camera understood as a kind of surrogate human consciousness. In this way, aberrance defamiliarizes the image, extricating it from the circuit of perceptions, emotions, and actions, extricating it thereby from the clichés of sensory-motor linkage.

With the continuity of sensory-motor linkages thus blocked, a new kind of image can appear on the screen: what Deleuze calls a *pure optical and sound situation*. Invoking Alain Robbe-Grillet, Deleuze characterizes pure optical and sound situations in terms of their descriptive function: these images, freed from the univocal demands of explication and narration, simply describe a scene or a vision, depicting its qualities and distances, rather than leveling it down to an explanation of the actions it shows. A pure optical and sound situation, Deleuze writes, "brings out the thing in itself, literally, in its excess of horror or beauty, in its radical or unjustifiable character, because it no longer has to be 'justified,' for better or for worse".[11] Here we find the second compositional step in modern cinema's creation of a time-image: the extraction of a pure optical and sound situation from the circuits of sensory-motor linkage.

For cinema to present a direct image of time, however, something more is needed; description alone will not suffice. The pure optical and sound situation, its sensory-motor linkages attenuated, must enter into a different kind of linkage with a different kind of image. But what kind of linkage is possible, and to what kind of image, other than another sensory-motor linkage to another shot? How, in other words, will modern cinema articulate the pure optical and sound situation without collapsing back into the clichés of classical cinema? The answer: the image will become self-referential—or better, auto-affective. The image, that is, will establish a linkage with itself, but "itself" in the mode of its own potential or power—its own virtuality. "For the time-image to be born, Deleuze writes, "the actual image must enter into relation with its *own* virtual image as such."[12] To make sense of this idea, we must first say something about Deleuze's understanding of time.

The conception of time in the *Cinema* books is manifestly indebted to Bergson. Many of the concepts Deleuze employs in these books, however—particularly in the second volume—originate in his work on Kant.[13] Crucially, we find one of these Kant-derived concepts at the point in *Cinema 2* where Deleuze comes closest to offering an explicit definition of time: "time itself, pure virtuality which divides itself in two as affector and affected, 'the affection of self by self' as definition of time".[14] The formulation "affection of self by self" first

appears (to the best of my knowledge) in Deleuze's 1978 lecture course on Kant, given at the University of Paris 8: time, he says, is "the form under which we affect ourselves, it's the form of auto-affection. Time is the affection of self by self".[15] Variations on this formulation recur in several texts from the 1980s and 90s, in each case (with the exception of *Cinema 2*) appearing in the course of remarks on Kant's philosophy of time.[16]

What does it mean to define time as the "affection of self by self"? Deleuze develops this definition in his reconstruction of Kant's critique of Descartes.[17] Descartes says: That I am thinking shows me indubitably that I exist. The clarity and distinctness with which my act of thought demonstrates the fact of my existence show in turn that my existence is determined in terms of my thought: *I am a thing that thinks*; the *I am* is determined by the *I think* to be a *thinking thing*.[18] Kant objects:[19] Yes, the fact of my existence is given in my act of thinking—it is evident from my thinking that I am—but the determinability of my existence by my thought is not thereby given. For me to say *I am a thinking thing* requires that the *I am* be available to thinking in a form that would enable thinking to determine it as such; the *I am*, in other words, must show up as a kind of thing that could be determined as a thinking thing. But this does not follow from Descartes's observation of the *I am*'s evidence in the *I think*. Under what form, then, does the *I am* show up as determinable by the *I think*? Under the *a priori* form of inner sense, Kant says—and this is time. The *I am* can be determined by the *I think*—or, put differently, one can cognize oneself—only insofar as the self appears to itself as a phenomenon in time. Deleuze argues that this temporalization of the structure of self-determination has far-reaching ramifications that radically alter the Cartesian picture. The determining act of cognition—the *I think*—is an act undertaken by the self as a spontaneous power. But the phenomenal self thereby determined is, qua phenomenon, passive. Thus time, as the ground of this phenomenality, effects a split in the self, Deleuze argues, a split that functions as a transcendental difference: time splits the spontaneous self as thinker from the passive self as thought. Insofar as the self is determinable only in time as a phenomenon, it cannot, contra Descartes, be determined as a thinking thing, i.e. as spontaneity.[20] It can only be determined *by* an act of thinking, which, Kant writes, "exercises that action on the passive subject, whose faculty it is, about which we rightly say that the inner sense is thereby affected".[21] Deleuze concludes: "time is the formal relation through which the mind affects itself, or the way we are internally affected by ourselves. Time can thus be defined as the Affect of the self by the self".[22]

Time separates the self-as-spontaneity from the self-as-passive-phenomenon and is thus the form by which the self affects itself in determining itself. Though *Cinema 2* articulates the idea of time as auto-affection in Bergsonian terms, i.e. in terms of a split between an actual present that passes and a virtual past that is conserved in itself, I contend that Deleuze's Kantian interpretation of time remains foundational for his conception of cinema's direct presentation of time in a time-image.[23] A time-image, we noted above, is a kind of compound image in which a pure optical and sound situation—an image whose sensory-motor linkages have been attenuated by the unchecked aberrance of the movement it depicts—is linked with a "virtual image". The establishment of this linkage presents a direct image of time, an image of the affection of self by self. How does this work? Deleuze does not offer a precise definition of "virtual image"; instead he, as it were, describes extensively around this concept, offering numerous examples of virtual images in postwar film and characterizing the varieties of virtual image (dream-images, mirror-images, world-images, crystal-images, seed-images). What all of these examples and varieties of virtual image share in common is this: in each case, the virtual image presents a latency, a potential, or an incompossibility in relation to the optical and sound situation to which it is linked and which it doubles. The virtual image offers a potential determination or functions as a determinative power in relation to the actual image it links up with; it doubles this image, but doubles it differentially, with a difference of potential that makes a new determination possible. The time-image, then, as this relation between a virtual image and its pure optical and sound double, presents an image of the affection of self by self, an image of time as the differential form of determinability. Alain Resnais and Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), a film Deleuze discusses repeatedly in *Cinema 2*, plainly illustrates this relation. The man, X, claims to have met the woman, A, previously at Marienbad (or somewhere like Marienbad), where they promised one another that in the future they would run away together—a claim A denies, insisting she has only just met X. The image of X and A is thus a doubled image: X's account of the relationship presents a virtual determination with respect to A's, and vice versa. Resnais and Robbe-Grillet's refusal to provide an answer as to whose story is true and whose is false ensures that the relation of virtual determinability in the image will never collapse into a fully determined actuality. Did X and A actually meet in the past, or is X's story a falsehood? Will A turn out to be a liar? An amnesiac? Will X turn out to be a lothario? A madman? The irresolution of the image with respect to such questions reve-

als time as the form of auto-affection in the image. Time thus appears here, as Deleuze says in both *Cinema 2* and "On Four Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy", as a vertigo, or an oscillation.[24]

In summary, *Cinema 2* offers an account of modern cinematic composition as a three-stage process that culminates in the creation of a time-image. These steps are:

1) The elimination of clichés and concomitant weakening of sensory-motor linkages in the image through the use and proliferation of aberrant movement.
2) The creation of a new image, a pure optical and sound situation, whose perceptual qualities, no longer subordinated to the demands of clichéd motor patterns, come to the fore as such.
3) The coupling of this pure optical and sound situation with its own virtual image, through which an image of time as the affection of self by self emerges.

We will see in the next section that *Francis Bacon* develops a homologous account of Bacon's compositional process—a homology that will help us to solve the problem of time in Bacon's painting.

COLOR MODULATION

In broad terms, Deleuze is concerned in *Francis Bacon* to explicate what he sees as the expression of a "logic of sensation" in Bacon's work. For Deleuze, Bacon is a great painter for the same reason that Michelangelo, Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Klee are great painters: they create works that *clarify sensation*; in their paintings sensibility encounters not just a beautiful or sublime image, not just a condensation of the plastic givens of two-dimensional composition, not just a translation of emotion into expressive marks; in these painters, sensibility encounters the very conditions and dynamisms of sensation itself, as these are expressed in the image, its expressive marks, and the plastic givens of its construction. Deleuze's account of the compositional process by which Bacon achieves such a clarification of sensation is remarkably homologous to the compositional process he describes in *Cinema 2*. By exami-

ning this homology, we can begin to understand Deleuze's assertions concerning time in Bacon's painting.

Like the directors of modern cinema, Bacon begins with a struggle against clichés. Contemporary life, Deleuze argues, is saturated by clichéd images—advertisements, propaganda, television programs, personal photography. Such images, together with the clichéd modes of seeing they organize, preexist any act of painting; they are already there on the painter's canvas and in her mind before she even begins to paint. If she is not content simply to reproduce the familiar images that dominate modern life, then, she must find a way past the clichés overwriting her painting in advance. She must find a way to access a properly novel vision. Bacon, Deleuze shows, has found a method not only to surpass such clichés, but to turn them to his advantage. Bacon begins a painting by sketching out some image he has in mind. This image inevitably contains clichés. Echoing remarks made by Bacon and presaging his own remarks about cinematic clichés, Deleuze associates the clichés of this initial image with the twin impulses to narrate and to illustrate. To free the image from these clichés, Bacon at some point breaks off from delineating the image and, through the use of an aleatory mark-making process, disrupts it. He hurls paint at the canvas; he scrubs some area of the painting with rags; he covers a portion of the image with quick, stippled brushstrokes—in short, he employs a chaotic painting procedure, a mark-making process not fully under his control, to interrupt his initial image and thereby to obstruct his original, clichéd plan. Deleuze calls the chaotic zone of marks thus produced "the diagram".

The diagram functions not only to disrupt the clichés inevitably contained in Bacon's initial image, however; it at the same time generates a new image. Bacon allows the visual interaction between the diagram and his initial image to suggest a new vision: a body of some kind—typically human, or at least humanoid—that he could not have planned or foreseen. Freed from the clichés of illustration and narration, this new image can be encountered purely in terms of its sensuousness, its existence as "fact". Following Bacon, Deleuze reserves the name "Figure" for this new image. Importantly, the Figure is born of the chaos of the diagram, but it is not itself chaotic; Bacon carefully models the Figure through subtle gradations of impure or "broken" tones, a "flow" of "millimetrical variations".[25] The Figure is thus order that comes from disorder, a form created through deformation. And the diagram, concomitantly, must be understood as a medium of properly creative destruction: it is the chaos that deforms and neutralizes the cliché, but it is at the same time the "germ of or-

der", as Deleuze says, that converts the deformed cliché into the rudiment of a non-clichéd Figure. Importantly for Deleuze (for reasons we will see below), Bacon incorporates the diagram into the image as he proceeds; he does not paint entirely over it but rather retains some part of it as a localized zone of compositional chaos lying in close proximity to the Figure.

The deformation of the cliché and the extraction of the Figure from the chaos of the diagram, however, are not sufficient for the clarification of sensation at which Bacon's painting aims, according to Deleuze. Like the cliché-bucking, aberrance-born optical and sound situation of modern cinema, the Figure must be linked to something else—not, as in cinema, to its own virtual image, but rather to a different element of the image. Bacon completes the painting by establishing linkages between the Figure and the pictorial space that surrounds it, which he fills with contoured, monochrome fields of flat, unadulterated color. The linkages he creates, Deleuze argues, are of a particular type: they are modulatory color relations. *Color modulation* between the Figure and the surrounding color fields, Deleuze argues, is the relation in which Bacon's paintings find their dynamic and structural completion.

What does Deleuze mean by "color modulation"? In brief, he means a continuous modeling of pictorial form through the establishment of a complex regime of color relations. Color modulation may be contrasted with the classical technique of *chiaroscuro*, which builds an image through the modulation of value, of relations of light and dark. In color modulation, variations in value take a back seat to variations in saturation and hue, whose progressions and interactions alone determine the contours of the picture; a human torso, for instance, is not painted as a luminously modeled volume emerging from the darkness engulfing it, but rather as, say, a mottled umber shape standing out against the ultramarine expanse surrounding it. In Bacon's hands, modulation becomes a relation not just among individual colors, but between two orders of color, or "two modes of clarity": the Figure, with its "millimetrical flow" of broken tones, and the color field, with its flat expanse of pure color. The modulatory chromatic relations within and between these two orders generate the entire structure of Bacon's paintings. Thus, color can be seen—literally—to be the genetic element of Bacon's paintings, and modulation the genetic relation. It is in this sense that Bacon's painting can be understood to clarify sensation or express a logic of sensation: it displays in the image the genetic elements and relations that produce the image, and it thereby grants sensibility access to its own genetic conditions as these are expressed in those elements and relations. Bacon's painting, as it were, composes a sensation in which we sense

the composition of the sensation. This is "the 'coloring sensation'", Deleuze says, "the summit" of the logic of sensation.[26] In composing such a coloring sensation, Bacon makes visible a "power" that Deleuze will identify "as the essence of painting": *rhythm*.[27] We will see what exactly Deleuze means by rhythm presently.

For the moment, let us observe that in this very brief and basic reconstruction of Deleuze's analysis of Bacon we catch a glimpse of a compositional process that is remarkably similar, *mutatis mutandis*, to the one described in *Cinema 2*. Bacon's compositional process, on Deleuze's account, goes as follows:

1) Bacon begins a painting with a particular image in mind but at some point deforms it through the imposition of the diagram, a zone of random, chaotic marks, which eliminates clichés.
2) Bacon allows the diagram's deformation of his initial image to suggest a new image, the Figure, which that could not have been predicted.
3) Bacon completes the painting by establishing modulatory chromatic relations between the Figure and the flat field or fields of color that surround it.[28]

Abstracting from the particulars of Deleuze's accounts of painting and cinema, we get the following, general description of what we might call modern image-composition:

1) Eliminate clichés through the use of chaotic or disorienting phenomena.
2) Extract from the wreckage of the now disordered or deformed cliché a new image, a descriptor-image or a fact-image.
3) Establish within the new image linkages through which a transcendental or genetic structure is expressed.

It is with the third step that the time-image comes into view in cinema, in the linkage of the pure optical and sound situation with its virtual image. Treating the homology between *Cinema 2* and *Francis Bacon* as a heuristic for understanding Deleuze's claims for Bacon as a painter of time, we can expect to find the sense of these claims in the corresponding step in *Francis Bacon*, i.e., in the establishment of modulatory color relations between the Figure and

the color field and the concomitant realization of a sensuous pictorial rhythm. Time in Bacon's work, in short, would emerge in the discovery of rhythm.

RHYTHM AND TIME

Deleuze's discussion of rhythm in *Francis Bacon* begins from a consideration of the nature of sensation in the work of Cézanne, whom Deleuze repeatedly treats as Bacon's most direct aesthetic forebear. "Sensation", Deleuze writes in respect of Cézanne, "has one face turned toward the subject [...] and one face turned toward the object. [...] As a spectator, I experience the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the sensing and the sensed".[29] This unity is precisely what we saw in our discussion of color modulation above: in Bacon's hands—and in a different way, Deleuze suggests, in Cézanne's—the painting constructed through color modulation displays color as its genetic element, and thereby composes a sensation in which sensibility encounters its own genetic conditions. Deleuze argues that Bacon is able to render this unity of sensing and sensed visible, is able to deploy color modulation in this sensuously revelatory way, by virtue of his careful treatment of the "vital power that exceeds every [sensuous] domain and traverses them all". This power, Deleuze says, "is Rhythm, which is more profound than vision, hearing, etc. [...] What is ultimate is thus the relation between sensation and rhythm."[30]

What does Deleuze mean by "rhythm"? In his Translator's Introduction to *Francis Bacon*, Daniel W. Smith points to an answer, for which we must again turn to Deleuze's interpretation of Kant.[31] In an exegesis of Kant's theory of the sublime, given in the same 1978 lecture course on Kant mentioned earlier, Deleuze develops a Kantian account of rhythm that, as Smith says, "forms a kind of complementary text to *The Logic of Sensation*".[32] On Deleuze's reconstruction, the experience of the sublime has primarily to do with a fundamental perceptual operation that Kant calls *comprehensio aesthetica*—aesthetic comprehension.[33] Aesthetic comprehension, Deleuze says, names the process by which I grasp in every perception a subjective unit of sensible measure against which I estimate the magnitude of the elements in that perception. "When I see a tree, for example, […] I say that this tree must be as big as ten men … I choose a kind of sensible unit to carry out my successive apprehension of parts. And then, behind the tree, there is a moun-

tain, and I say […] it must be ten trees tall. And then I look at the sun and I wonder how many mountains it is."[34] This process of aesthetically comprehending a unit of measure for each perception, Deleuze says, turns out to constitute the foundation of the syntheses of perception that Kant, in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, identifies as grounding all experience. These syntheses are: the synthesis of apprehension, through which I successively grasp the parts of my perception; the synthesis of reproduction, through which I reproduce the (just-apprehended) parts of my perception as I apprehend new ones; and the synthesis of recognition, through which I relate my spatio-temporally determinate perception to the form of an object in general.[35] Deleuze's argument for the fundamentality of aesthetic comprehension in relation to these syntheses goes as follows: in order for the most fundamental of the syntheses of perception, that of apprehension, to perform its function of successively grasping the parts of a perception, I must first determine what will count as a part. When looking, for instance, at Bacon's 1969 *Study for a Bullfight No. 1*, I am able successively to apprehend the parts of the image—the compound bull-bullfighter figure in the center of the canvas, the mottled ellipse on which the figure seems to be standing, the arced section of wall behind the figure, the contoured orange color-field in the background, etc.—by virtue of the fact that I have first determined these indeed to be parts to be apprehended. Aesthetic comprehension, "a lived evaluation of a unit of measure", makes this determination possible insofar as it enables me to estimate the magnitude of what I perceive and thereby to determine what will count as an appropriate part in relation to that magnitude.[36] In the case of *Study for a Bullfight No. 1*, my aesthetic comprehension determines the parts mentioned just above, and not, say, the individual patches of mottled yellow and blue in the central ellipse, as appropriate parts to apprehend. If I were standing only a few inches away from the painting, however, my aesthetic comprehension of its magnitude would be very different, and those individual patches of yellow and blue might show up to me as apprehendable parts.

This latter qualification points to an important feature of aesthetic comprehension: it varies constantly with our perceptions. As my perception meanders from this object to that, my activity of aesthetic comprehension varies in response. This constant variation of aesthetic comprehension, Deleuze says, describes a *rhythm*. Rhythm, he is quick to point out, is not equivalent to tempo or cadence or meter; rather, meter—which is to say measure—depends on rhythm. "Beneath measures and their units, there are rhythms which give me, in each

case, the aesthetic comprehension of the unit of measure."[37] Rhythm, then, denotes the order of continuous fluctuation that characterizes the aesthetic determination of magnitude on which the organization and coherence of perception rest. Rhythm, in short, is the foundation of perception.

This foundation, however, is not entirely stable; it "comes out of chaos", Deleuze says, and it constantly courts the "catastrophe" that will return it again to chaos. What does it mean for rhythm to return to chaos? It means precisely the irruption of the sublime. Certain phenomena—those, Kant explains, "the intuition of which brings along with them the idea of infinity"—exceed our capacity to find an appropriate unit of measure by which to estimate their magnitude.[38] In these perceptions, Deleuze says, the rhythm of aesthetic comprehension breaks down, and with it, the syntheses of perception: "I can no longer apprehend parts, I can no longer reproduce parts, I can no longer recognize something. … [T]his is because my aesthetic comprehension is itself compromised, which is to say: instead of rhythm, I find myself in chaos."[39]

Bringing these insights to bear on *Francis Bacon*, we can conclude that when Deleuze attributes Bacon's great achievement as a painter to his treatment of the "vital power" of rhythm, he means that Bacon is acutely sensitive to and able precisely to manipulate variations in aesthetic comprehension, in perceptual magnitude. Bacon's sensuously clarifying color modulation is nothing but the rhythmic variation of perceptual magnitudes—the extensive magnitudes of size and distance, and the intensive magnitudes of hue and saturation. In beholding Bacon's paintings, we undergo precisely this rhythmic variation.

Furthermore, Deleuze's conception of the sublime as a dissolution of rhythm into chaos appears quite clearly in his account of Bacon's painting. "We can seek the unity of rhythm", he writes, "only at the point where rhythm itself plunges into chaos, into the night, at the point where the differences of level are perpetually and violently mixed."[40] We have already encountered this point in Bacon's painting where rhythm plunges into chaos: it is the diagram. The diagram is a source of sublime chaos in Bacon's painting, where it interrupts the rhythm of Bacon's initial image. This initial image, we saw above, is always plagued by clichés; we may thus say that the rhythm it interrupts is a clichéd rhythm, a rhythm that determines familiar magnitudes, worn-out distances and qualities. Now, the Kantian sublime does not terminate in the breakdown of the syntheses of perception; for Kant, this breakdown is redeemed by the fact that it awakens in us a feeling of respect for "the superiority

of the rational vocation of our cognitive faculty over the greatest faculty of sensibility"—a feeling of respect, i.e., for the supersensible in us.[41] Is there a corresponding redemption of chaos in Deleuze's account of Bacon? We already know that the answer is yes: "the diagram is indeed a chaos, a catastrophe, but it is also a germ of order or rhythm".[42] The diagram makes possible the Figure and the operation of color modulation. Thus, in contrast to the Kantian sublime, where the breakdown of one faculty is redeemed by the elevation of another faculty, in the Deleuzian sublime the breakdown is redeemed in the very same faculty: through the diagram, sensation is renovated. Clichéd sensation is disoriented and converted into a superior or even, we might say, transcendental sensation: a "coloring sensation" in which rhythmically modulated color expresses the genetic conditions of sensation itself.[43]

Bacon's work, in short, enables us to sense the rhythm of aesthetic comprehension at the foundation of our sensation. This rhythm is the "vital power" by which sensibility determines itself—determines how it will apprehend a sensuous manifold—in accordance with the object it senses. Is this not simply to say that rhythm is the affection of self by self? Is this not to say, in other words, that rhythm is time?[44] This would not be the same aspect of time that we encountered in examining *Cinema 2*; there the affection of self by self was the *I think*'s spontaneous determination of existence—the time of thought. Hence Deleuze's emphasis in that book on modern cinema as a cinema of thought. Here, in *Francis Bacon*, we are dealing with a different aspect of time: the time of sensation, time or rhythm as the form under which aesthetic comprehension determines the sensibility of the sensible. Finally, then, we see clearly the sense in which Deleuze can say that there is a great force of time in Bacon, Bacon is a painter of time, Bacon renders time visible: through color modulation Bacon enables sensibility to sense the rhythm, the time of sensation, by which self affects self sensibly. In fact, in the sublimity of his work, Bacon enables us to sense this time in its very genesis, in its emergence from chaos. In this way, *Francis Bacon* helps to clarify a rather obscure remark about the sublime that Deleuze makes at the end of "On Four Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy": the Kantian sublime, he says, is "the source of time".[45] Bacon's diagram—and, in a different way, cinematic aberrant movement—deforms clichéd temporality and in so doing provides sensibility—and in cinema, thought—with a chaotic ground upon which to compose a superior time. Bacon, we may say, is a painter at the beginning of time.

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 42.

2. Ibid., 115.

3. Ibid., 53. Of course, many paintings *do* change over time: colors darken, varnishes crack, owners restretch and resize canvases, vandals attack paintings, conservators restore them. But we tend to regard such changes as accidents that befall a painting, and not as essential changes that belong to the work of art as such.

4. See David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 18, 22. Bacon, however, is not as categorical in his dismissal of illustration as Deleuze is. See Sylvester, *Interviews*, 126-28.

5. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 32. Deleuze takes the phrase "record the fact" from Bacon's interviews with Sylvester. See Sylvester, *Interviews*, 41.

6. Ibid., 32. Deleuze is referring in this passage to the work of Cézanne, not Bacon, but he is doing so in order to draw out the affinities between the two, which serve as a kind of motif throughout the book. Deleuze goes on in the next sentence: "This is the very general thread that links Bacon to Cézanne: *paint the sensation*."

7. Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

8. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

9. See, e.g., David Deamer, *Deleuze's* Cinema *Books: Three Introductions to the Taxonomy of Images* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Felicity Colman, *Deleuze & Cinema: The Film Concepts* (New York: Berg, 2011); Paola Marrati, *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy*, trans. Alisa Hartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and D.N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

10. See Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 36ff.

11. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 20.

12. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 273.

13. Gregory Flaxman has recently argued for the importance of Kant—as well as Hölderlin—for the understanding of time in *Cinema 2*. See Flaxman, "Chronos Is Sick: Deleuze, Antonioni and the Kantian Lineage of Modern Cinema", in *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy*, ed. Craig Lundy and Daniela Voss (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). Deleuze, for his part, asserts that Kant and Bergson are not as distant as Bergson claimed. See *Cinema 2*, 82.

14. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 83.

15. Gilles Deleuze, Kant lecture, March 14, 1978, trans. Melissa McMahon, accessed 8 July 2018, https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/66.

16. See Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: The Athlone Press, 1984), ix; Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 31; and Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 32.

17. One finds this reconstruction in each of the texts cited in the preceding note, as well as in Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 85-87.

18. See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. II, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1984), 16–19.

19. For the passages in Kant that Deleuze is reconstructing, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), §24–25, B152–B159.

20. This is to say nothing of the problem of Descartes's self-determination as a thinking *thing*, i.e., his attribution of substantiality to the thinking being. For Kant's critique of this aspect Descartes's claim, see his discussion of rational psychology at *Critique of Pure Reason*, B421-B422.

21. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B153-B154, 257-258, emphasis removed.

22. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 31.

23. This is especially clear when, in the second half of *Cinema 2*, Deleuze develops his account of modern cinema as a cinema of thought. Here, many of the concepts that in *Difference and Repetition* he draws from Kant's understanding of time come to the fore: the otherness of the I ("I is another"), the thinking subject as riven by a fracture or a crack (*fêlure*), the powerlessness or "impower" (*impuissance* or *impouvoir*) of thought. Compare Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 133, 153-54, and 166-70 with Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 86-87, 199-200. For a helpful reconstruction of the Bergsonian bases of Deleuze's account in *Cinema 2*, see Marrati, *Gilles Deleuze: Cinema and Philosophy*, 68-77; and Deamer, *Deleuze's* Cinema *Books*, 5-73.

24. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 31; Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 84.

25. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 121.

26. Ibid., 3.

27. Ibid., xxxii.

28. Darren Ambrose has posited a similar three-stage formulation of Deleuze's account of Bacon's compositional process. See Darren Ambrose, "Deleuze, Philosophy, and the Materiality of Painting", in *Gilles Deleuze: The Intensive Reduction*, ed. Constantine Boundas (London: Continuum, 2009), 116-117.

29. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 31.

30. Ibid., 37.

31. Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze on Bacon: Three Conceptual Trajectories in *the Logic of Sensation*", in Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, vii-xxvii.

32. Smith, "Deleuze on Bacon", xv.

33. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:251. Deleuze pays remarkably little attention in this lecture to the role of reason in Kant's account of the sublime.

34. Deleuze, Kant lecture, March 28, 1978, trans. Melissa McMahon, https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/68, accessed July 8, 2018.

35. For these syntheses, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A98-A111. See also B160-B162. We should note that Kant does not himself say that the syntheses of perception are founded on aesthetic comprehension, and it is not clear that he would agree to this claim.

36. Deleuze, Kant lecture, March 28, 1978.

37. Ibid.

38. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:255

39. Deleuze, Kant lecture, March 28, 1978.

40. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 39.

41. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:257.

42. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 83.

43. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze refers to such an operation of sensation as "the transcendent exercise" of sensibility. See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 140ff.

44. In his discussion of the Kantian and Hölderlinian sources of Deleuze's "third synthesis of time" in *Difference and Repetition*, Arkady Plotnitsky has shown that the relation between rhythm and its "counter-rhythmic" interruption, here understood in terms of "caesura", lies at the heart of the Hölderlinian reformulation of Kantian time that provides the core concepts for Deleuze's third synthesis. We can thus begin to see the logic of Deleuze's later account of sublime rhythm already in *Difference and Repetition*, underpinning the account of time that will prove foundational for all of his future work on that topic. See Arkady Plotnitsky, "The Calculable Law of Tragic Representation and the Unthinkable", *At the Edges of Thought: Deleuze and Post-Kantian Philosophy*, 134-137.

45. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 35.