Chapter Seven

The Work of the Gaze

CHAPTER 2 FROM LA FOLIE DU VOIR

Christine Buci-Glucksmann
Translated by Dorothy Z. Baker

Imagine that you are in Venice at the Church of the Madonna dell’Orto, looking at a painting so large that it initially covered part of the organ pipes. It is Tintoretto’s The Vision of Saint Peter (1555) (figure 7.1):

What does Saint Peter see, looking sideways, recoiling backward, holding a book, and staring as if dumbfounded, dazzled? Surely it is a supernatural Apparition: this great spiraling column of angels carrying the cross. They are fixed and almost carried away in the play of forces of the undulating line (the serpentina), and floating suspended, frozen in the theatrical moment of corporeal tension that is dramatized, quasi-sensual, and hardly “angelic.” To see these angels is to see him seeing them, if the angel is truly a figure of apparition, irruption, encounter, the pure surprise of a visio disparans that blazes in beauty and creates a bridge, a passageway toward the invisible, a madness that confounds every limit.

But does he really see angels? Or in his delight and rapture, is he actually seeing an extracting space, a confusion of space, a purely qualitative site that displaces and unseats him? A pure opening and explosion of yellow, a light that surges from the interior of the painting, invades it, and disturbs the composition with two parallel, diagonal lines across the work. The angels, who are the power of day, according to Augustine, grant the vision, presentify it, and transfigure any naming. These angels are only colored dynamics, light that expresses color and contextualizes them in a whirlwind of chiaroscuro. An orange pink angel aloft at the bottom, a brown angel appearing in the shadows above, already held in the green radiance, which is even more disturbing. The yellow that adds brightness is the “illuminated and emphatic side” of paint, which according to Goethe dilates the heart and brings joy to the soul. This yellow is the radiance of the painting, the perception of the perceived, the vision of the envisioned. In fact, Saint Peter sees nothing: a simple radiance, the “suspense” of a miracle that erases forms and compositions by its exalted luminism.

And yet I look once more. This yellow opening persists in reuniting and separating two surfaces, fusing them like a fractured joint or rib, inviting me to reconstruct the totality of the visual. Because of the yellow opening, two spaces coexist: a “real” space of Peter’s sight or what Tintoretto paints, and another irreal and phantasmatic space opened by the angels. An imaginary space to which Tintoretto was especially attached. Consider The Miracle of St. Mark freeing the Slave (1547) (figure 7.3). The inverted angel, painted from behind and from underneath with a striking foreshortening of the golden body, appears so suddenly that the slave, as the image of a shadow, is knocked to the ground.ii

Thus there are two spaces: the possible, and this sort of madness of the impossible that is the phantasm of the Apparition. In The Vision of Saint Peter, does the “gaze of the painter” watch us, a gaze “at work,” doing battle with its own madness? As a result, in its Baroque mannerism, Tintoretto’s

---

i The author takes the title of her book from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phrase “la folie du voir” in The Visible and the Invisible, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evaston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 75. All other references to this work by Merleau-Ponty will be cited in the text as vi. The phrasing, “madness in vision,” suggests the generative capacity of seeing and signals the visionary aspect of all vision.—Trans.

In her essay, Buci-Glucksmann calls the painting The Vision of Saint Paul, but in fact she describes The Vision of Saint Peter, Tintoretto’s painting of 1555 in the Church of the Madonna dell’Orto in Venice. The Vision of Saint Peter, also called The Apparition of the Cross to Saint Peter now hangs on the left side over the main altar. The painting directly over the altar is Tintoretto’s The Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple, and Tintoretto’s The Martyrdom of Saint Paul, also known as The Decapitation of Saint Paul (figure 7.2), is on the right of this painting. So, the works by Tintoretto flank the central painting, and in a certain sense respond to each other. Throughout the essay, references to Paul have been silently changed to Peter.—Trans.


iii The Miracle of St. Mark freeing the Slave depicts not an angel but Saint Mark descending headfirst from the sky to rescue the slave who is devoted to him.—Trans.
painting stages the madness in vision, releases a fictional body, and inhabits
two bodies at once within the compositional perspective in which the visual
multiplicity leads to a *je ne sais quoi*, a revelatory appearance.⁴⁴

I suspect that the vision of Peter is none other than a form of persecution gilded by light, a martyr dazzled by the gaze, the "miracle": the advent


and event of the other (figure 7.2). I suspect that in this moment of difficulty, the form enacts its autoanalysis, that this gigantic fracture of luminous color, sustained by its own internal dynamic, defines the empty space of the painting: the schema of the impossible. Can we see this seeing? Can the eye see itself without resorting to the remarkable artifice of the mirror and all its

⁵ The author here refers to Tintoretto’s *The Martyrdom of St. Paul*, which is also in the Church of the Madonna dell’Orto. The author appears to conflate this work with *The Vision of Saint Peter*. See note ii.—Trans.
mythologies? Doesn't the eye retract in the night, a blind spot of disappearance, something that the Greeks call *aphanismos*: to vanish, to escape the self, to wrest the self from the self, to lose consciousness.

In response to this very question, Merleau-Ponty's concept of "Vision" and Lacan's "Seeingness" bring the visible closer to the Gaze and its "work" by giving weight to the imaginary. In this common ground shared by philosophy and psychoanalysis, Vision is understood to exceed sight, to be an aspect of the visual that is liberated from the context of the optic-representative, which could prompt here the initial step toward a reinterpretation of the Baroque.

To initiate a dialogue with Merleau-Ponty on the topic of his posthumous book, *The Visible and the Invisible*—a work that is "both an end and a beginning," and pushes the limits of any phenomenology of seeing.—Lacan from the outset based his developments on the schyze [split] of the eye and the Gaze under the sign of a meeting, a *Tuché* (Lacan 53–64). The sight of the visual finds itself related to the construction of form, to the seeing eye, and to what he himself called "the seer's 'shoot' (pousse)" (Lacan 72). The seer's "shoot" is a sort of in-sensate preexistence in which, even before taking place, "I am looked at from all sides" (Lacan 72). Does this "omnivoyant" spectacle that engenders the first scopic pleasure (to be seen without seeing this) not circumscribe a *situationnal madness* in which I am always and already mired? To see and always be seen, to be offered to, exposed to, and constituted by "that which makes us consciousness constitutes us by the same token as *speculum mundi*" (Lacan 75).

Speculum, mirror, omnivoyant world — all the topoi of the Baroque determine the point of departure for the incomplete ontology of Merleau-Ponty's final work in which *madness in vision creates Being": "There is a sort of madness in vision such that with it I go unto the world itself, and yet at the same time the parts of that world evidently do not coexist without me" (vi 75).

Such madness is the "enigma" even of visibility, which is seated in my seeing-visible body, in the originating chiasm where there is "the dehiscence of the seeing into the visible and of the visible into the seeing" (vi 153). There is a "devouring vision" beyond the visual, such as the interior, pictur

---

vi Merleau-Ponty's term, *Voyance*, which I translate as "Vision," denotes insight into intelligible forms. This term was suggested by Arthur Rimbaud's *Le petit du voyant.*

Lacan's term, *Voyure*, is translated by Alan Sheridan as "Seeingness." See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Karnac, 2004), 82. All further references to Lacan are from this text. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of chiasm, which he develops in *The Visible and the Invisible*, is the intertwining of two elements (such as seeing and being seen) that, though reciprocal, are nonetheless divergent. — Trans.

As Martin Jay reports, Lacan "critically appropriated Merleau-Ponty's chiasmic ontology of the visible and the invisible, which he redescribed in terms of 'the eye' and 'the gaze.'" Just as for Merleau-Ponty, the visible preexists the advent of the seeing subject, so for Lacan the gaze preexists the subject's eye. However, Lacan rejects Merleau-Ponty's "search for a primordial *voyure* anterior to the split between the eye and the gaze" (Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993], 353–64, 353, 360). — Eds.


viii The author here mirrors the language of Lacan, "the gaze that circumscribes us ... makes us beings who are looked at, without showing this" (Lacan 75). — Trans.
eye that gives "the imaginary texture of the real" and effects the passage from the visible toward the invisible, according to Klee, as Merleau-Ponty states (EM 165). In this respect, Visioning — by which things absent become present to us — defines simultaneously the place of art and the access to Being, the simultaneous appearance of an aesthetic and an "ontology," whether it be negative, fractured, or exploded. "Vision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me to be absent to myself, to participate in the fission of my Being" (EM 186).

Contrary to any metaphysics of the subject and the Cogito as self-presence in re-presentation, vision — such as that of Saint Peter — dispossesses the subject from himself, disappreciates him, and absents him in a series of metamorphoses, movements outside the self. The goal of the movement toward and inside is a seduction that ravishes the self as a narcissistic economy, a mirror that offers an ontological structure of "nonrapport" with the self: "Not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom" (VI 139).

On the stage of the mirror of dispossession, "flesh" — that is neither mind, nor body, nor substance — seizes itself in the vision of the vision, in the gaze of the gaze, resulting from a first redoubling of body and being. To feel one's self as a bodily being is already to know the image of one's self, which is certain to be fragmentary and partial in the extreme.

Moving from a phenomenology of perception to an ontology of Seeing blocks every subject, every prereflexive Cogito. In the chiasm of vision, seeing all, as in mythic transparency and, similarly, seeing nothing prove impossible: I lose myself, I lose myself there, I am and am not there. In this, I resemble those who flee in Baroque poetics and opera. Being is passage and change, silhouetted: "He who sees is both of it and in it," without a geometrical and punctiform subject appearing like Archimedes's point in the structure. "Vision encounters, as at a crossroads, all the aspects of Being" (EM 188). A position of finitude.

To be is to be seen, as in the image of those towns that are dear to Leibniz, towns with multiple places of entry, decentered, without a fixed identity. Yet I am never in front of — as in the space of modernity — "conceptions of the world" where Being is parcelled into the double certainty of the requisite subject and object in order to re-present the self. To the contrary, here Being gives itself (es gibt) only to be in, already given to a visible to the sec-
the more one sees, the less one is; the more one is, the less one sees. Because the gaze is never objectifiable, it floats, and "loses its place" (Lacan). The gaze is a surprise and is surprised, linking matter and manner, consistent with Gracián's rule: "Substance alone is not enough; appearance is also at issue." To achieve this, to realize "elegant manners," is a rare happiness. Beauty loves to embellish itself, to adorn itself with a thousand trinkets. It plays at guises and disguises without exhausting its own desire.

Thus sight induces a loss of ontological qualities and qualifications of the "subject" outside the self, much as the object is elevated to a state of perpetual change, to anamorphosis and metamorphosis. The Baroque enforces a "retreat from Being," an "insufficient Reason," in the sense of the high classical period. In this way, the Baroque ruptures a unified episteme. Because this form informs what affects me, this law and its proliferating variations exhibit the pure state of materiality. Whether speaking of the sensual use of color in this Venetian painting or in Vivaldi's frenetic beat, energetic and moving at rapid tempo, the same sensory and sometimes sensual logic penetrates and organizes these subjects that radiate from their own consumption. Odyssey of a mad form of itself as in Tintoretto's paintings in San Roco, The Glory of Paradise and The Massacre of the Innocents in which terror becomes a spiral, an ellipse, an ellipse of ellipses, whirling bodies, sacrificed and martyred to vanish in infinite space, unbounded by radiance and pleasuring luminism. A dazzling dioptric that might have welcomed the darkness of suffering and violence. Still there, always there, we long "to see at the interior of the spiral," as Lezama Lima described it in Orphic Vases.

Painting manifests itself only as "madness in vision." Thus, painting gives consistency and credibility to Merleau-Ponty's ontology. According to his philosophy of figured appearances, it constitutes the hyperbolic proof of knowing. His position on aesthetics is so radical that it shows the transition from inert sight to the "work of the gaze," the active-passive genesis of seeing. The thought of sight announces itself in the simultaneous construction of an ontology of topological space and a hermeneutics of color. Baroque

---

x Gracián uses the Italian term bel portarse for this impulse (Oraculay manual y arte de prudencia 157).—Trans.

xi Tintoretto's The Massacre of the Innocents is found in the Scuola Grande de San Roco in Venice, and his The Glory of Paradise is in the Palazzo Ducale, also in Venice. On the subject of the ellipse, see Severo Sarduy's complex play with the words ellipse and ellipsis in Barroco (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1974). Sarduy's "Baroque Cosmology: Kepler," chapter five of Barroco, is translated in this volume.—Trans.
Pascal or Leibniz—be determined other than by God. For Leibniz, seeing and creating coalesce in the mind of the great architect and divine mathematician in a point of light without shadow, in “a madness” that becomes wisdom: “God produces different substances according to the different views he has of the universe.” Even greater, he is Sight of all sights, mirror reflecting and expanding his glory. “Moreover every substance is as it were an entire world and a mirror of God, or rather of the whole universe, expressing it in its own way, somewhat as the same town is variously represented according to the different positions of an observer. It can even be said that every substance bears in some way the mark of the infinite wisdom and omnipotence of God, imitating Him as far as it is capable.” Yet man must reckon with the system of phenomena, the plurality of perspectives, the darkness and the shadow.

We understand, then, how Pierre Charron, in his various works on the Baroque, might detect in architectural motifs (a column that is a screen and an obstacle, the effects of perspectives, confusion of décor or ornaments, formal abundance . . .) a Leibnizian space where everything is full of life and vision: “This space— which is never an a priori given and which the architects and sculptors of eastern Europe are beginning to weave unrelentingly with an accumulation of objects and relationships—is but an image of ‘the order of coefficients’ that Leibniz opposed in Cartesian thought. ‘There is nothing fallow, nothing sterile, nothing dead in the universe.’ More to the point, space ‘is nothing without bodies; bodies are everywhere.’”

Leibniz’s influence on the Baroque is clear. So, too, is the incorporation of the Baroque mathematician and vitalist: monads—even if they are “substances”—are endowed with a triple nature: sight as perceptive being, form-force as spontaneous being, and memory of traces and signs as an alphabet of everything that happens to them. Sight, form-force, and writing in palimpsest are three elements of seventeenth-century Baroque sensibility. The world is simultaneously a mirror of mirrors, a book of books, and an aesthetic universe of form-forces in permanent equilibrium/disequilibrium. The idea of expression rules as the master of this world.

There remains one ambiguity that Yves Bonnefoy identified in *L’improbable et autres essais* concerning the conflict between Bernini and Borromini. Must one explain the visible (Bernini), the form-spectacle, at the risk of detecting therein an unconscious and infinitesimal mathematics? Or might one allow the visible its interior force, its point of rupture and spiritual chaos, its resonance in the spiraling void of a restless, sublimating spirituality where

“The force envelops a center that is simultaneously close and inaccessible” (Borromini). Baroque “philosophies” produce such ambiguities. On the side of a philosophy of continuum, the expressive gushing of vision, forces, and forms, there is theatricalized order.

However, in comparison to the interexpressive perspectivism of overabundance and affirmation of Being, which we find in Leibniz, there is an entirely different optic. In this more Nietzschean perspectivism, nothingness— *Il Niente*, emptiness, *La Nada*—crops up everywhere, exudes the profusion of forms, and reveals their limited reality. This is the perspectivism of Italian rhetoricians and epistemologists who sing *Le Glorie del Niente*, that of a Gracian, and even that of a Pascal in his scientific work on the void and his impassioned rhetoric of the extremes found between Being and Nothingness. Without delving into the whole of seventeenth-century Baroque mysticism, we recognize its scenography of loss and annihilation, its strategies of unspeakableness as a “staging” of the wounds of love, or of an absent or retreating God.

The resort to nothingness—the art of nothingness—coincides with a crisis of “mimetic” models of knowing and statements of Platonic origin. The empty interval, like the articulatory silence in Baroque music or the compelling opening in a painting by Tintoretto, permits artifice, dramatization and the advent of form, the power of anthesis, metaphor, and metamorphosis, above all referent or signifier. A true oxymoronic practice of nothingness delights in its sophistry against Platonism.

Thus it is with all Gracianesque strategies of ostentation: “Knowing how to show oneself,” “playing with appearance,” “exploiting absence,” “masks and secrets,” “continually acting before witnesses,” acting as if. Yet when we privilege the manner of showing oneself as a modality of being, paradoxically we imply how little there is of reality, an infinite production of ontological illusions, a true nihilism of appearances. “The art of display fills up many voids and offers a second being.” The “second being,” which is fictive and born of the imagination, can only be rhetorical and the imposer of a rhetoric— *a rhetoric of seeingness*. This paradoxical pronouncement can be found in Gracian’s axiom: “Ah, how vast is nothingness!” This statement can be easily compared to an entirely different axiom from Scholastics and Cartesianians: nothingness has no properties.

---


"The author does not identify this quotation.— Trans."
Nothingness is vast because within it and because of it is found the very possibility of Gracián’s ontological perspectivism, as well as his pre-Nietzschean and even pre-Baudelairean pursuit of a heroic philosophy. One is always seen from a particular point of view (which is the rationale for keeping up appearances) to the extent that a superficial awareness “is not awareness of one’s self, but of others.”13 Understood from a certain perspective, the world is plural, diverse, beautiful. Yet this sort of polymorphic and pleasuring perversity of reality, of random happiness and of movement is permanently reduced to the figure of double, ambidextrous knowledge, the inverted world, and the antithesis of illusion/disillusion. As Benito Pelegrín noted, “In Gracián, double meaning, ambiguity, is the desired minimum for a bold mind, longing to unravel it into a multiplicity of meanings with a semantic hydra.”14

From multiplicity to a scene of duality: such is the dark, melancholic truth of the Criticón. At the end of the novel, Andreino and Critilio, taken captive by allegorical figures, encounter a Queen, a divided character with a divided countenance. Who is she?

ANDRENO: How ugly she is!
CRITILIO: No, how beautiful!
ANDRENO: What a monster!
CRITILIO: What a marvel!
ANDRENO: She wears black.
CRITILIO: No, green . . . (985)

The minister’s lesson: “Because you see her from different perspectives, you find different countenances, producing different effects and affects” (985–86). Referring to the anamorphic gaze, he says, “the type of painting in which an angel appears on one side and a demon on the other” (986).

We understand that this Queen, to whom all appearances are equivalent, who is fearful and free, sad and happy, this Queen is Death: “Everything is all the same to me” (987).

The allegory of death, which is common to all forms of the Baroque, tempers its hedonist abundance. It is hardly alone in this. If “nothingness is vast,” are all forms overwhelmed? Consider, too, the other Allegory of Nothingness, the famous and feminine “Cave of Nothingness” — la cueva de la nada — where the characters find themselves. Men of great merit are worth nothing there; nobility, beauty, courage, and beautiful lives are dulled; all “substance” reveals itself as “appearance”: “Where you see substance, there is only appearance; what appears to be solid is hollow, and what is hollow, empty” (881).

Nothingness, hollowness, emptiness, death. The great “Wheel of time” crushes everything, shatters appearances, and calls out to immortality. But returning to the persistent question of the Baroque: can we think simultaneously of emptiness and wholeness? In vision itself and its “work,” can we structure a capacity of absence that would be the basis of a rhetoric of the visible and the inter-sections of seeing, of plural and anamorphic seeing?

This question, this attempt to contemplate “nothing” and “nothingness” on the basis of the Gaze as the power of decentering, demands, according to Merleau-Ponty, “a complete reconstruction of philosophy” (vi 193). So complete that, from the difference of the Hegelian negation of the Concept or Sartre’s essentialist Nothingness, Merleau-Ponty seeks an understanding of nothingness outside a philosophy of reflection and the metaphysics of the subject, from the interior of “perspective multiplicity” (vi 187). From this we understand the priority of research that concerns the existentials of Vision pertaining to topological space, these providing the framework of the invisible world that “is given originally as non-Urpräsentierbar” (vi 180). In summary, from the perspective of the Gaze, let us reconsider the links between phenomenology and ontology that bind them to Sein und Zeit: “Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible.”15 This project led Heidegger directly to an understanding of phenomenology as “the meaning of being In Itself” bearing on “existentials” as “characters of being In Itself” (vi 248, 252).

Merleau-Ponty takes up the Heideggerian terminology of “existentials” and develops it for his discussion of single sight and perspective multiplicity. Presentiment, structures of nonperceived perception, the framework of the world, these existentials “organize” topological space. Effectively, unlike a homogenous, representative, mapped space, topological space includes and fragments, joint and membrane, and allows the Gaze to do its work to the very limit without a totalizing snapshot. Such space impacts “the branches of Being” that are encroachment, veins, juxtaposition, light (EM 188). Everything that breaks up the single form-spectacle by overturning the pronominal construction of sight (Where am I? I who see and who or what that sees me?) and by disturbing the visual referents that are part of representation: content/form, hierarchized horizon, scale and perspective. Uncertainty, the state of floating, rechannels vision to mount the stage of form, to its Appa-
rition. This is what Kant terms *exhibitio* and what underlies the visual anamnesis of the Baroque.

From this comes the deployment of a form that is entirely specific to nothingness and is successively termed erasure and replacement, ambiguity, divergence, latency, and lacuna—and finally difference. As in the Critique, "Nothingness (or rather non-being) is hollow and not hole" (v 196). More accurately, things are "non-beings, divergencies" (v 180). It remains, then, in this field where a form takes form in the intersection of multiple visions, to circumscribe the existentials of vision, which are neither categories in the sense of Aristotle or Kant, nor concepts. At the very most, they are figurative and metaphoric concepts, a priori scenographies, a sensible and material "transcendental."

In fact, these "transcendental"s become thinkable only on the basis of aesthetics, and particularly in painting, which would be ontologically primary: "The aesthetic world to be described as a space of transcendence, a space of incompossibilities, of explosion, of dehiscence, and not as objective-immanent space" (v 217). As in the Baroque, aesthetics is the paradigm of all ontology of "Being" in defeat, flight, and retreat, this on the basis of what we know of the great symbolic matrice[s] of the Gaze.

Merleau-Ponty explores this entirely new distinction between topology and aesthetics in two domains, which bring into consideration the ontological primacy of color and "flesh" for the visual, representative form.

First, of course, is that of a dynamic specific to vision and close even in its terms to plastic, Baroque vision. Thus the core that is common to "subject" and "object" approaches "being as undulation," the "flexuous line" that ineluctably suggests the "linea serpentina" (EM 183). Moreover, divergence—morphological nothingness—presents itself as a "ray": objects lose their stable, fixed identity and move around us "like the stars" (v 86). Finally, we understand that not only "the line is a vector, that a point is the center of forces" (v 195), but that its being is "Apparition": "The Gestaltung is not being by definition, essentialization—It is [verbal] Wesen, the operation of essence, the apparition of an *Etwas* existing by radiation" (v 206–7). These terms converge in a reprise of the Husserlian notion of the "ray of the world" (v 247) as an axis of equivalences, as a "page of the being" (v 242).

Form-force, "undulating line" (EM 183), *Etwas* existing by radiation: in these ideas we recognize the spatial matrices of a pictorial Baroque taken in the "chiasm of the eyes," in a configuration of matter (EM 183). In fact, this radiating *Etwas* appears to the "flesh" as a sort of ontology of colors found throughout Cézanne or Klee. Because this "flesh of the world" that is continually pursued by the Baroque is neither reality nor a representation of reality, neither a psychological nor a strictly physiological fact (v 255). The "prototype of Being" is in these vibrations, modulations, color—such as the red "concretion of visibility" (v 133, 136). Colors that have no pure identity take their value in constellation, in context: "It is by the same virtue that the color, the yellow, at the same time gives itself as a certain being and as a dimension, the expression of every possible being" (v 218).

One might even speak of a nonempirical sensibility: "As soon as it becomes the color of illumination, the dominant color of the field, it ceases to be such or such a color, it has therefore of itself an ontological function" (v 217).

We know that when Rembrandt painted a gold helmet, he did not paint gold. I give myself over to the presence of what is not me by the light and shadows of color, everything that is interpretive, uncertain and in flux in vision, the entire philosophy of shapes, presenting and staging colors in their "visual quale" as revealed in a painting (EM 187). I give myself to an ontological and nonhuman alterity, which constitutes the world and its existentials. However, therein is somewhat of an initial methodological circle. If the ontology of Being-in-the-world in Vision depends on aesthetics, then, inversely, topological space as a paradigm of Being has substance only because of the visual arts, particularly painting, which makes the invisible visible. Yet "nothingness is nothing more (nor less) than the invisible" (V 298).

A "circle" of this kind is not stripped of a difficulty, which is readily apparent when Merleau-Ponty broaches the rather problematic status of "ontological psychoanalysis" and connects two types of "transcendences": that of the thing and that of the phantasm. If the sensible is not observable, must we not admit that "there is no absolute contrast" between "thing" and "phantasm" (v 192)? But where do their specific constructions begin? If we take painting as a "hermeneutic" that offers us a pre-sense, a philosophy of the universal that is "beneath us," to search in the perceived world for "the core of the senses that are invisible" to constitute a stylistic of expression, we...
remain without question in a "logic of the senses," though it would be incomplete, blank, and silent.

Perhaps we must agree to radicalize the movement of such analysis, to pursue this "topology" within a broader rhetoric and epistemology free from every phenomenological quest of an archaic Being, savage and primitive? Perhaps the work of the Gaze leads to a "Borromean" construction in the madness in vision, in this knot of semblance-dissemblance that links Lacan to Merleau-Ponty. A knot to untangle so that vision, which becomes Seeingness, opens to the phantasmic eye. Baroque nothingness with its mad exhibition of pleasuring, obscene bodies, eroticism, and morphogenesis could find here complementary outlines of an aesthetic—a "Lacanian" aesthetic resonating with the great treatises of seventeenth-century rhetoric, searching for a connection between vision and speech. In this very place, the Being in dehiscence, given over to the work of the Gaze, to the visual chiasm, to divergency, to the unrepresentability of Vision, turns out to be a rhetorical Being, for whom to say is to see.

Notes

2 Baltasar Gracián, Oraculo manual y arte de prudencia, in Obras completas (1647), ed. Artura Del Hoyo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967), 157. [All quotations from Gracián are from this collection and are translated by Lois Parkinson Zamora.—Trans.]
4 Pierre Francastel, La réalité figurative, éléments structurés de sociologie de l'art (Paris: Gonthier, 1965), 143. [Francastel's statement is the following: "The topological representation of space rests on the ambivalence of a limited number of certain pairings: similar and opposite; identical and different; part and whole; localized and ubiquitous."—Trans.]
6 See Sarduy for an analysis of the Baroque cosmology and the role of the ellipse. [See note 13.—Eds.]
7 Jean François Nicéron, Perspective curieuse, ou, Magie artificielle des effets merveilleux de l'optique (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1663), 3.
8 Michel Serres, Le système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 1:168. [Serres's statement is the following: "One could even say ad libitum that to see is to construct or to construct is to see; vision is analyzed in architecture or we analyze the vision of the those who construct."—Trans.]
10 Ibid., 47. Note that Leibniz dedicates La monadologie to the first patron of Fischer von Erlach and Hildebrandt. [Leibniz, Monadology (1714), ed. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).]
12 Baltasar Gracián, Eríncritión in Obras completas, 947. [Gracián makes similar statements throughout the novel. See 898 and 912. All subsequent quotations from Gracián in this essay are from Eríncritión.—Trans.]
16 See vi, 203 on divergency (écart).