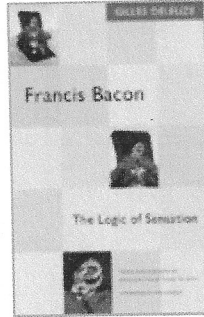


## From Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation



*excerpt from the translator's introduction*

### Deleuze on Bacon: Three Conceptual Trajectories in *The Logic of Sensation* Daniel W. Smith

*Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* is a remarkable text in which Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), one of the most original French philosophers of the twentieth century, confronts the work of Francis Bacon (1909–1992), one of the most original painters of that century. The book originally appeared in 1981, when Bacon and Deleuze were both at the height of their powers. Although already well known at the time, Bacon was hardly a canonical painter and was even suspect in certain circles for his figural leanings. When Deleuze's book appeared, it received a number of favorable reviews but then was largely passed over in silence. Today, *The Logic of Sensation* has come to be recognized as one of Deleuze's most significant texts in aesthetics. It was the first book Deleuze published after his decade-long collaboration with Félix Guattari on the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972, 1980). In the following years, Deleuze would publish a number of works on the arts, including the two-volume *Cinema* (1983, 1985), *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988), and the writings on literature collected in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993). *The Logic of Sensation* can thus be read not only as a philosophical study of Bacon's paintings but also as a crucial text within Deleuze's broader philosophy of art.

The original French version of *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* was published in Paris by Éditions de la Différence as a two-volume set. The first volume contained Deleuze's essay; the second volume consisted entirely of full-page reproductions of Bacon's paintings, allowing readers to view and study the reproductions directly alongside Deleuze's text. Regrettably, it has not been possible to include reproductions in the present edition. Images of Bacon's paintings, however, are widely available both on-line and in catalogs, and it goes without saying that Deleuze's book is best read with such images on hand. The paintings cited by Deleuze are designated by a number in brackets, which refers to the chronological list of Bacon's paintings at the end of the volume.

Deleuze has frequently insisted that he writes on the arts not as a critic but as a philosopher, and that his works on the various arts must therefore be read, as he himself says, as works of "philosophy, nothing but philosophy, in the traditional sense of the word." In *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), Deleuze and Guattari define philosophy as an activity that consists in the creation or

invention of concepts. “One can very easily think without concepts,” Deleuze writes, “but as soon as there is a concept, there is truly philosophy.” Yet art itself is an equally creative enterprise of thought, but one whose object is to create sensible aggregates rather than concepts. Great artists are also great thinkers, but they think in terms of percepts and affects rather than concepts: painters think in terms of lines and colors, just as musicians think in sounds, filmmakers think in images, writers think in words, and so on. None of these activities has any priority over the others. Creating a concept is neither more difficult nor more abstract than creating new visual, sonorous, or verbal combinations in art; conversely, it is no easier to read an image, painting, or novel than it is to comprehend a concept. Philosophy, for Deleuze, can never be undertaken independently of art (or science); it always enters into relations of mutual resonance and exchange with these other domains, though for reasons that are always internal to philosophy itself.

As a philosopher, then, Deleuze’s aim in his analyses of the arts is to create the concepts that correspond to these sensible aggregates. In *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze creates a series of philosophical concepts, each of which not only relates to a particular aspect of Bacon’s paintings but also finds a place in “a general logic of sensation.” The text is organized in quasi-musical fashion, divided into seventeen sequences that each develops concepts as if they were melodic lines, which in turn enter into increasingly complex contrapuntal relations and together form a kind of conceptual composition that parallels Bacon’s sensible compositions. In a similar manner, Deleuze’s two-volume *Cinema* can be read as “a book of logic, a logic of the cinema” that sets out “to isolate certain cinematographic concepts,” concepts which are specific to the cinema but which can only be formed philosophically. Strictly speaking, there is no “philosophy of art” in Deleuze: “art” is itself a concept, but a purely nominal one, since there necessarily exist diverse problems whose solutions are found in heterogeneous arts. Hermann Broch wrote that “the sole *raison d’être* of the novel is to discover what only the novel can discover,” and each of the arts, and each work of art, can be said to confront its own particular problems, using its own particular material and techniques. The cinema, for instance, produces images that move, and that move in time, and it is these two aspects of film that Deleuze sets out to analyze in *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*: “What exactly does the cinema show us about space and time that the other arts don’t show?” Similarly, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, as its title indicates, is not only a study of Bacon’s paintings but also an inquiry into a more general logic of sensation.

Readers who approach this book expecting a work of art criticism will thus be disappointed. There is little discussion of the sociocultural milieu in which Bacon lived and worked; nor of his artistic influences or contemporaries, such as Lucian Freud or Frank Auerbach; nor of his personal life (his homosexuality, his lovers and friends, his drinking and gambling, his nights at the Colony Room Club), which played such an evident role in Bacon’s work and in his choice of subjects. Even the secondary sources are sparse. Apart from two short texts by the French writers Michel Leiris and Marc Le Bot, the only secondary book Deleuze refers to is John Russell’s 1971 now-classic study, *Francis Bacon*. The links Deleuze establishes with Bacon’s work are as often as not with writers (Conrad, Proust, Beckett, Kafka, Burroughs, Artaud) and musicians (Messaien, Schumann, Berg) that figure prominently in Deleuze’s other writings, but whom Bacon may or may not have been influenced by or even read. In this sense, *The Logic of Sensation* is a highly personal book, though it is hardly written in a personal style.

Deleuze wrote his study of Bacon at the suggestion of Harry Jancovici, the editor of the series in which the book first appeared, which was titled *La vue le texte*. The aim of the series was to

explore the resonances between the visual arts and domains such as philosophy and literature, and it would come to include texts by the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and the writer Michel Butor. Deleuze never explains why he chose to write on Bacon in particular. Bacon, however, had a strong presence in Paris during the 1970s and 1980s. He maintained a studio near the Place des Voges and was close friends with Leiris, whose portrait Bacon painted several times and who in turn wrote several important texts on Bacon. It was the Grand Palais exhibition of 1971 in Paris that had cemented Bacon's international reputation, and the exhibition at the Galerie Claude Bernard in 1977 further solidified his position in the late 1970s. Deleuze undoubtedly encountered Bacon's work at some point at an exhibition in Paris—in a later interview, Deleuze says that he frequently went to art exhibitions and films on weekends, on the lookout for precisely this kind of "encounter." The book itself attests to the profound resonances Deleuze found between his own work and Bacon's paintings.

The relationship between the two men, however, was not personal. Deleuze and Bacon met only once, sometime after the book was published. Deleuze had sent the original manuscript to Bacon, who was intrigued by the book and delighted with the attention. The two arranged to spend an evening together, and Deleuze arrived with what Bacon described as a little "court" of admirers. Michael Peppiatt, in his biography *Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma*, reports that "although there was a perceptible sympathy and admiration between the two men, no friendship evolved." Deleuze later recollected some of his impressions in an interview: "One senses in him a power and violence, but also a very great charm. After he is seated for an hour or so, he contorts himself in every direction, as if he were himself a Bacon painting.... When I met Bacon, he said that he dreamed of painting a wave, but dared not believe in the success of such a venture. It is a lesson of the painter, a great painter who comes to say to himself, 'It would be nice if I could trap a little wave...' It's very Proustian; or Cézannian: 'Ah! If only I could manage to paint a little apple!'" According to Peppiatt, the two would never meet again.

Deleuze said that he wrote this book primarily with two things in front of him: reproductions of Bacon's paintings and the texts of David Sylvester's interviews with Bacon, which had been published in 1975 under the title *The Brutality of Fact*. This approach reflects the tension between percept and concept: how does one talk in one medium (concepts) about the practices of another (percepts)? The dictum that one should heed what artists do, not what they say, is no less true for Bacon than for other artists. "I have often tried to talk about painting," he cautioned, "but writing or talking about it is only an approximation, as painting is its own language and is not translatable into words." Nonetheless, Bacon's interviews contain penetrating discussions of the practice of painting, and have been favorably compared with Delacroix's journals and da Vinci's notebooks. Deleuze himself insists that we do not listen closely enough to what painters have to say. "The texts of a painter act in a completely different manner than the paintings," he notes. "In general, when artists speak of what they are doing, they have an extraordinary modesty, a severity toward themselves, and a great force. They are the first to suggest the nature of the concepts and affects that are disengaged in their work." Deleuze thus uses the interviews not as definitive statements on Bacon's part but rather as the starting point for his own conceptual inventions. Deleuze once wrote: "We dream sometimes of a history of philosophy that would list only the new concepts created by a great philosopher—his most essential and creative contribution." *The Logic of Sensation* is perhaps best approached in the same manner: as a book of philosophical concepts. The concepts Deleuze develops are sometimes drawn from everyday language, sometimes from specific scientific and art historical traditions, sometimes from Bacon's interviews, sometimes

from Deleuze's own philosophical vocabulary. But the concepts themselves enter into multiple resonances and interactions, such that it is possible to trace numerous trajectories through the "rhizome" of the book: the brevity of the text belies its complexity. The remarks that follow attempt to isolate three such conceptual trajectories, which respectively concern Deleuze's formal analyses of Bacon's paintings, the general "logic of sensation" that underlies the book, and the techniques through which painters can be said to participate in such a logic of sensation (the "coloring sensation").

The first trajectory concerns the concepts Deleuze uses in his formal analyses of Bacon's work, which, he says, move "from the simplest to the most complex" aspects of Bacon's paintings. The question Deleuze poses to an artwork is not "What does it mean?" but rather "How does it function?" Deleuze thus treats Bacon's work as a *multiplicity* (although he does not use this term in the book) and attempts to isolate and identify the components of that multiplicity. Deleuze frequently returns to the three simplest aspects of Bacon's paintings—the Figure, the surrounding fields of color, and the contour that separates the two—which taken together form a "highly precise system" that serves to isolate the Figure in Bacon's paintings (chapter 1). But a first level of complexity immediately intervenes: the fields of color tend to curl around the contour and envelop the Figure, but at the same time the Figure itself tends to strain toward the fields, passing through washbasins, umbrellas, and mirrors, subjected to the forces that contort it, that *deform* or *contract* it in a kind of "derisory athleticism," revealing the intensive "body without organs" beneath the extensive organic body (chapter 3). In some cases, the Figure is dissipated entirely, leaving behind nothing but a sand dune or a jet of water—a pure Force that replaces the Figure (chapter 5). A second level of complexity appears in the works in which Bacon paints *coupled* Figures that nonetheless resonate together in a single "matter of fact" (chapter 9). A third level of complexity emerges in the triptychs, where this "matter of fact" includes not only the distances that separate the distinct panels but also the forced movement or *rhythms* that constitute the true Figure of the triptychs: the steady or "attendant" rhythm; an active, rising, or diastolic rhythm; and a passive, descending, or systolic rhythm (chapter 10). Deleuze not only identifies these three fundamental rhythms found in Bacon's triptychs, he also shows that even the simple paintings already function like triptychs, with their complex movements and combinatorial variability. A final level of complexity arises with regard to Bacon's handling of *color* (chapter 16), and his construction of a properly "haptic" space, since it is primarily through the use of color (relations of tonality) that he brings about all these effects in his works (isolation, deformation, coupling, rhythm...). Deleuze's book is marked throughout by extraordinarily specific and detailed analyses of individual paintings.

The fundamental concept in all these analyses, however, is that of the Figure. Modern art and modern philosophy can be said to have converged on a similar problem: both renounced the domain of representation and instead took the *conditions* of representation as their object. Deleuze suggests that twentieth-century art remained far ahead of philosophy in this regard, and that philosophers still have much to learn from painters. But he also suggests that there are two general routes through which modern painting escaped the clichés of representation and attempted to attain a "sensation" directly: either by moving toward abstraction, or by moving toward what Lyotard has termed the figural. An abstract art like that of Mondrian or Kandinsky, though it rejected classical figuration, in effect reduced sensation to a purely optical code that addressed itself primarily to the eye; by contrast, an abstract expressionism, like that of Pollock, went beyond representation, not by painting abstract forms, but by dissolving all forms in a fluid and

chaotic texture of manual lines and colors (chapter 14). Bacon in effect followed a "middle path" between these two extremes, the path of the Figure, which finds its precursor in Cézanne. Whereas "figuration" refers to a form that is related to an object it is supposed to represent, the "Figure" is the form that is connected to a sensation, and that conveys the violence of this sensation directly to the nervous system. In Bacon's paintings, it is the human body that plays this role of the Figure: it functions as the material support or framework that sustains a precise sensation. This is Bacon's solution to the problem he shares with Cézanne: How to extract the Figure from its figurative, narrative, and illustrational links? How to "paint the sensation" or "record the fact"?

This brings us to the second trajectory, which concerns the nature of the "logic of sensation" that constitutes the object of Deleuze's analyses in this book. The notion of "sensation" one finds in Deleuze is taken initially from the phenomenological tradition. Erwin Straus, in his classic book *The Primary World of the Senses* (1935), had established a fundamental distinction between perception and sensation. Perception, he argued, is a secondary rational organization of a primary, nonrational dimension of sensation (or "sense experience," le sentir). Earlier in the century, Marius von Senden had recorded the experiences of congenitally blind people who were given sight after the operation to remove cataracts was developed. Initially such patients were afflicted by a painful chaos of forms and colors, a gaudy confusion of visual *sensations* within which they could distinguish neither shapes nor space. They would acquire a *perception* of the world only after an often-painful process of learning and apprenticeship, during which they developed the schemata and "Gestalten" capable of providing this prereflective sense experience with the coordinates familiar to ordinary perception. Studies of infants have revealed in them a similar sensory world populated by pure intensities (of sound, light, hunger, etc.) in which the baby cannot yet distinguish between itself and its world. "In sensory experience," writes Straus, "there unfolds both the becoming of the subject and the happenings of the world. I become only insofar as something happened, and something happens (for me) only insofar as I become....In sensing, both self and world unfold simultaneously for the sensing subject."

This prerational world of sensation is not *prior* to the world of perception or representation, but strictly speaking is *coextensive* with it. It is precisely this world, the world of "lived experience," that phenomenologists have attempted to describe. Straus, for instance, drew a distinction between what he called geography and landscape. The geographical world, the world recorded on maps, is perceptual and conceptual; it is an abstract system of coordinates with an unspecified perspective. A landscape, by contrast, is sensory; it is a perspectival world, enclosed by a horizon that moves as our body moves. In a landscape, we do not so much move in space as space moves with us. Similarly, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, following Kurt Goldstein, distinguished between "touching" and "pointing": a patient who is able to scratch his nose at the point where a mosquito is biting him is unable, a moment later, to point to his nose with his finger. The former takes place within the "intentional" system of bodily space (sensation), whereas the latter requires an abstract coordination of points in external space (perception); in certain pathological cases the transition from the first to the second is blocked. It is often difficult to separate sensation from perception, landscape from geography, since conceptual perception is such an integral part of our everyday experience of the world. For all his indebtedness to thinkers such as Straus, Merleau-Ponty, and Henri Maldiney, however, Deleuze is not a phenomenologist. Phenomenology is insufficient because it merely invokes the "lived body." But the lived body, says Deleuze, is still a "paltry thing in comparison with a more profound and almost unlivable Power," which is precisely the

power of *rhythm* in its confrontation with chaos. Sensation is itself constituted by the “vital power” of rhythm, and it is in rhythm that Deleuze locates the “logic of sensation” indicated in his subtitle, a logic that is neither cerebral nor rational. This linkage between sensation and rhythm can perhaps best be illustrated by means of a somewhat lengthy detour through Deleuze’s reading of Kant’s theory of perception, which forms a kind of complementary text to *The Logic of Sensation*.

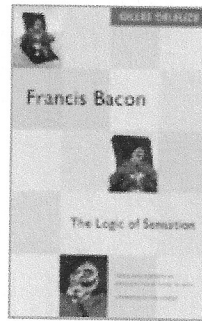
In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that perception requires a *synthesis* of what appears in space and time. In the first version of the transcendental deduction, Kant identifies three operations that make up a synthesis: apprehension, reproduction, and recognition. Since everything is a multiplicity and has a multiplicity of parts, perception begins when I synthesize these parts successively in an act of *apprehension*. I must also *reproduce* or “contract” the preceding parts when the following ones occur if a synthesis is to take place. These two aspects of spatiotemporal synthesis—the apprehension and reproduction of parts—are activities of the productive imagination and no longer sensibility. But a third moment is required for a perceptual synthesis to be complete: this sensible complex of space and time must now be related to the form of an object (*recognition*). To be sure, one can imagine numerous sensations in which the diversity of space and time is *not* related to the object-form, such as hallucinations. It is rather *perception* as such that is constituted in such a manner that a sensible diversity is related to the form of an object. In other words, it is not so much that I perceive objects; it is rather my perception that presupposes the object-form as one of its conditions. Kant invented a famous formula for this object-form: the object x. The object x is a pure form of perception, just as space-time is the pure form of sensation. The object x will receive a concrete determination (e.g., as a lion-object) only when it is related to the synthesized parts of a spatiotemporal diversity (a long mane, a loud roar, a heavy step...), such that I can say, “So it’s a lion!” But the multiplicity of sensations that appear to us in the manifold of experience would never be referred to an object if we did not have at our disposal the empty form of the object x, since there is nothing within sense experience itself that accounts for the operation by which I go beyond sensible diversity toward something I call an object. Where does this form come from? The object in general, Kant tells us, is the correlate of the “I think” or the unity of consciousness; it is the expression of the cogito, its formal objectivation. “Therefore the real (synthetic) formula of the cogito is: I think myself, and in thinking myself, I think the object in general to which I relate a represented diversity.” The predicates that are attributed to the object x are what Kant calls the categories or the pure a priori concepts of the understanding; and the subsumption of a sensible diversity under a concept is what Kant calls an act of *judgment*.

*The Critique of Pure Reason* thus presents us with an analysis of the edifice of perception: the apprehension of successive parts, the reproduction of preceding parts, recognition by means of the form of the object in general. Kant’s analysis in effect moves from the form of space and time (the pure form of sensation) to a determined spatiotemporal form (apprehension and reproduction as syntheses of the imagination) to the form of the object x (the pure form of perception). The philosophical adventure Deleuze explores in *The Logic of Sensation* begins at this point. The post-Kantians such as Hegel took as their starting point Kant’s theory of the “transcendental unity of apperception.” But Deleuze moves in the opposite direction, breaking with the form of recognition that grounds that unity. There are neither categories nor mediation in Deleuze, and one of his most insistent themes is “to have done with judgment” (Artaud). Deleuze effectively pushes to its limit a trajectory inaugurated in the *Critique of Judgment*, in which Kant explored the role of the

imagination freed from the legislation of the understanding. Four elements of his analyses are particularly relevant to the themes of *The Logic of Sensation*.

1. *Aesthetic comprehension*. The first is the theme of "aesthetic comprehension" (measure). In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant tells us that the act of synthesis begins with the apprehension of successive parts. In the *Critique of Judgment*, however, he in effect starts over and asks a question that went unformulated in the first critique: what counts as a part? To determine what constitutes a part, the imagination must have at its disposal a constant, or at least common, unit of measure. To be sure, the understanding could intervene and provide a mathematical evaluation of magnitudes in the fixed form of a *concept* of number (this object is "ten meters high" or "four inches wide"). But the imagination does not have recourse to concepts, and in the nature of objects there is no such constant measure. The imagination can thus begin to carry out its syntheses only by choosing a sensible or qualitative unit of measure. Kant notes, almost in passing, that such a unit of measure is found primarily in the *human body*: "A tree judged by the height of man gives, at all events, a standard for a mountain." In other words, I can use the height of a human being as the unit of measure to apprehend the parts of a tree ("this tree is as tall as ten men..."); in turn, I can then use the height of the tree to measure the mountain behind it ("that mountain is as high as twenty trees..."). Even at the level of simple perception, apprehension already implies something like a "lived evaluation" or "aesthetic comprehension" of a unit of measure, and, as Derrida notes, "this primary (subjective, sensory, immediate, living) measure proceeds from the body." This is the moment of phenomenology in Kant: aesthetic comprehension presupposes the situatedness of our bodies in the world, our "being-in-the-world." In the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), Merleau-Ponty analyzed in detail the manner in which our body provides us with such a "corporeal or postural schema" on the world.

2. *Rhythm*. This leads to a second theme, that of rhythm. What Kant is saying in the *Critique of Judgment* (§26) is that even the most elementary act of the synthesis of perception presupposes a logical act (though Kant here gives the term logic a new meaning). Beneath the successive apprehension of arts, there is a kind of logical synthesis that requires a purely aesthetic comprehension of the unit of measure. "All estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is in the last resort aesthetic (i.e., subjectively and not objectively determined)." Because the measure is subjectively determined, it is subject to constant evaluation and reevaluation, and is therefore in *constant variation*. The unit of measure varies in each case depending on the thing to be perceived, just as the thing to be perceived depends on the chosen unit. I may evaluate a tree in relation to the human body, but at night I may evaluate the rising moon in terms of a coin held at close range. From the viewpoint of aesthetic comprehension, I am continually in the process of changing my unit of measure according to my perceptions. Following Maldiney, Deleuze describes this aesthetic comprehension of units of measure as the grasping of a *rhythm* (though Kant himself does not use this term), which takes place *without a concept*. Aesthetic comprehension is the grasping of a rhythm with regard to both the thing to be measured and the unit of measure. Beneath both the measure and the units, there is rhythm. In this sense, concepts are *metrical*: they give one the beat, but beneath the concept there is the rhythm. "Rhythms are always heterogeneous, we plunge into them in a sort of exploration," an experimentation; even if you have a concept, "you do not yet have the rhythmicity of the things which are subordinated to it. A concept, at best, will give you the beat or the tempo." Beneath concepts, one always finds rhythmic blocks or complexes of space-time, spatiotemporal rhythms, ways of being in space and in time. The *foundation* of perceptual synthesis is aesthetic comprehension, but the *ground* on

From Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation

*excerpt from the translator's introduction*

## Deleuze on Bacon: Three Conceptual Trajectories in *The Logic of Sensation* Daniel W. Smith

*Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* is a remarkable text in which Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), one of the most original French philosophers of the twentieth century, confronts the work of Francis Bacon (1909–1992), one of the most original painters of that century. The book originally appeared in 1981, when Bacon and Deleuze were both at the height of their powers. Although already well known at the time, Bacon was hardly a canonical painter and was even suspect in certain circles for his figural leanings. When Deleuze's book appeared, it received a number of favorable reviews but then was largely passed over in silence. Today, *The Logic of Sensation* has come to be recognized as one of Deleuze's most significant texts in aesthetics. It was the first book Deleuze published after his decade-long collaboration with Félix Guattari on the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972, 1980). In the following years, Deleuze would publish a number of works on the arts, including the two-volume *Cinema* (1983, 1985), *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988), and the writings on literature collected in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993). *The Logic of Sensation* can thus be read not only as a philosophical study of Bacon's paintings but also as a crucial text within Deleuze's broader philosophy of art.

The original French version of *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* was published in Paris by Éditions de la Différence as a two-volume set. The first volume contained Deleuze's essay; the second volume consisted entirely of full-page reproductions of Bacon's paintings, allowing readers to view and study the reproductions directly alongside Deleuze's text. Regrettably, it has not been possible to include reproductions in the present edition. Images of Bacon's paintings, however, are widely available both on-line and in catalogs, and it goes without saying that Deleuze's book is best read with such images on hand. The paintings cited by Deleuze are designated by a number in brackets, which refers to the chronological list of Bacon's paintings at the end of the volume.

Deleuze has frequently insisted that he writes on the arts not as a critic but as a philosopher, and that his works on the various arts must therefore be read, as he himself says, as works of "philosophy, nothing but philosophy, in the traditional sense of the word." In *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), Deleuze and Guattari define philosophy as an activity that consists in the creation or

invention of concepts. “One can very easily think without concepts,” Deleuze writes, “but as soon as there is a concept, there is truly philosophy.” Yet art itself is an equally creative enterprise of thought, but one whose object is to create sensible aggregates rather than concepts. Great artists are also great thinkers, but they think in terms of percepts and affects rather than concepts: painters think in terms of lines and colors, just as musicians think in sounds, filmmakers think in images, writers think in words, and so on. None of these activities has any priority over the others. Creating a concept is neither more difficult nor more abstract than creating new visual, sonorous, or verbal combinations in art; conversely, it is no easier to read an image, painting, or novel than it is to comprehend a concept. Philosophy, for Deleuze, can never be undertaken independently of art (or science); it always enters into relations of mutual resonance and exchange with these other domains, though for reasons that are always internal to philosophy itself.

As a philosopher, then, Deleuze’s aim in his analyses of the arts is to create the concepts that correspond to these sensible aggregates. In *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze creates a series of philosophical concepts, each of which not only relates to a particular aspect of Bacon’s paintings but also finds a place in “a general logic of sensation.” The text is organized in quasi-musical fashion, divided into seventeen sequences that each develops concepts as if they were melodic lines, which in turn enter into increasingly complex contrapuntal relations and together form a kind of conceptual composition that parallels Bacon’s sensible compositions. In a similar manner, Deleuze’s two-volume *Cinema* can be read as “a book of logic, a logic of the cinema” that sets out “to isolate certain cinematographic concepts,” concepts which are specific to the cinema but which can only be formed philosophically. Strictly speaking, there is no “philosophy of art” in Deleuze: “art” is itself a concept, but a purely nominal one, since there necessarily exist diverse problems whose solutions are found in heterogeneous arts. Hermann Broch wrote that “the sole *raison d’être* of the novel is to discover what only the novel can discover,” and each of the arts, and each work of art, can be said to confront its own particular problems, using its own particular material and techniques. The cinema, for instance, produces images that move, and that move in time, and it is these two aspects of film that Deleuze sets out to analyze in *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*: “What exactly does the cinema show us about space and time that the other arts don’t show?” Similarly, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, as its title indicates, is not only a study of Bacon’s paintings but also an inquiry into a more general logic of sensation.

Readers who approach this book expecting a work of art criticism will thus be disappointed. There is little discussion of the sociocultural milieu in which Bacon lived and worked; nor of his artistic influences or contemporaries, such as Lucian Freud or Frank Auerbach; nor of his personal life (his homosexuality, his lovers and friends, his drinking and gambling, his nights at the Colony Room Club), which played such an evident role in Bacon’s work and in his choice of subjects. Even the secondary sources are sparse. Apart from two short texts by the French writers Michel Leiris and Marc Le Bot, the only secondary book Deleuze refers to is John Russell’s 1971 now-classic study, *Francis Bacon*. The links Deleuze establishes with Bacon’s work are as often as not with writers (Conrad, Proust, Beckett, Kafka, Burroughs, Artaud) and musicians (Messaien, Schumann, Berg) that figure prominently in Deleuze’s other writings, but whom Bacon may or may not have been influenced by or even read. In this sense, *The Logic of Sensation* is a highly personal book, though it is hardly written in a personal style.

Deleuze wrote his study of Bacon at the suggestion of Harry Jancovici, the editor of the series in which the book first appeared, which was titled *La vue le texte*. The aim of the series was to

explore the resonances between the visual arts and domains such as philosophy and literature, and it would come to include texts by the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and the writer Michel Butor. Deleuze never explains why he chose to write on Bacon in particular. Bacon, however, had a strong presence in Paris during the 1970s and 1980s. He maintained a studio near the Place des Voges and was close friends with Leiris, whose portrait Bacon painted several times and who in turn wrote several important texts on Bacon. It was the Grand Palais exhibition of 1971 in Paris that had cemented Bacon's international reputation, and the exhibition at the Galerie Claude Bernard in 1977 further solidified his position in the late 1970s. Deleuze undoubtedly encountered Bacon's work at some point at an exhibition in Paris—in a later interview, Deleuze says that he frequently went to art exhibitions and films on weekends, on the lookout for precisely this kind of "encounter." The book itself attests to the profound resonances Deleuze found between his own work and Bacon's paintings.

The relationship between the two men, however, was not personal. Deleuze and Bacon met only once, sometime after the book was published. Deleuze had sent the original manuscript to Bacon, who was intrigued by the book and delighted with the attention. The two arranged to spend an evening together, and Deleuze arrived with what Bacon described as a little "court" of admirers. Michael Peppiatt, in his biography *Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma*, reports that "although there was a perceptible sympathy and admiration between the two men, no friendship evolved." Deleuze later recollected some of his impressions in an interview: "One senses in him a power and violence, but also a very great charm. After he is seated for an hour or so, he contorts himself in every direction, as if he were himself a Bacon painting.... When I met Bacon, he said that he dreamed of painting a wave, but dared not believe in the success of such a venture. It is a lesson of the painter, a great painter who comes to say to himself, 'It would be nice if I could trap a little wave...' It's very Proustian; or Cézannian: 'Ah! If only I could manage to paint a little apple!'" According to Peppiatt, the two would never meet again.

Deleuze said that he wrote this book primarily with two things in front of him: reproductions of Bacon's paintings and the texts of David Sylvester's interviews with Bacon, which had been published in 1975 under the title *The Brutality of Fact*. This approach reflects the tension between percept and concept: how does one talk in one medium (concepts) about the practices of another (percepts)? The dictum that one should heed what artists do, not what they say, is no less true for Bacon than for other artists. "I have often tried to talk about painting," he cautioned, "but writing or talking about it is only an approximation, as painting is its own language and is not translatable into words." Nonetheless, Bacon's interviews contain penetrating discussions of the practice of painting, and have been favorably compared with Delacroix's journals and da Vinci's notebooks. Deleuze himself insists that we do not listen closely enough to what painters have to say. "The texts of a painter act in a completely different manner than the paintings," he notes. "In general, when artists speak of what they are doing, they have an extraordinary modesty, a severity toward themselves, and a great force. They are the first to suggest the nature of the concepts and affects that are disengaged in their work." Deleuze thus uses the interviews not as definitive statements on Bacon's part but rather as the starting point for his own conceptual inventions. Deleuze once wrote: "We dream sometimes of a history of philosophy that would list only the new concepts created by a great philosopher—his most essential and creative contribution." *The Logic of Sensation* is perhaps best approached in the same manner: as a book of philosophical concepts. The concepts Deleuze develops are sometimes drawn from everyday language, sometimes from specific scientific and art historical traditions, sometimes from Bacon's interviews, sometimes

from Deleuze's own philosophical vocabulary. But the concepts themselves enter into multiple resonances and interactions, such that it is possible to trace numerous trajectories through the "rhizome" of the book: the brevity of the text belies its complexity. The remarks that follow attempt to isolate three such conceptual trajectories, which respectively concern Deleuze's formal analyses of Bacon's paintings, the general "logic of sensation" that underlies the book, and the techniques through which painters can be said to participate in such a logic of sensation (the "coloring sensation").

The first trajectory concerns the concepts Deleuze uses in his formal analyses of Bacon's work, which, he says, move "from the simplest to the most complex" aspects of Bacon's paintings. The question Deleuze poses to an artwork is not "What does it mean?" but rather "How does it function?" Deleuze thus treats Bacon's work as a multiplicity (although he does not use this term in the book) and attempts to isolate and identify the components of that multiplicity. Deleuze frequently returns to the three simplest aspects of Bacon's paintings—the Figure, the surrounding fields of color, and the contour that separates the two—which taken together form a "highly precise system" that serves to isolate the Figure in Bacon's paintings (chapter 1). But a first level of complexity immediately intervenes: the fields of color tend to curl around the contour and envelop the Figure, but at the same time the Figure itself tends to strain toward the fields, passing through washbasins, umbrellas, and mirrors, subjected to the forces that contort it, that *deform* or *contract* it in a kind of "derisory athleticism," revealing the intensive "body without organs" beneath the extensive organic body (chapter 3). In some cases, the Figure is dissipated entirely, leaving behind nothing but a sand dune or a jet of water—a pure Force that replaces the Figure (chapter 5). A second level of complexity appears in the works in which Bacon paints *coupled* Figures that nonetheless resonate together in a single "matter of fact" (chapter 9). A third level of complexity emerges in the triptychs, where this "matter of fact" includes not only the distances that separate the distinct panels but also the forced movement or *rhythms* that constitute the true Figure of the triptychs: the steady or "attendant" rhythm; an active, rising, or diastolic rhythm; and a passive, descending, or systolic rhythm (chapter 10). Deleuze not only identifies these three fundamental rhythms found in Bacon's triptychs, he also shows that even the simple paintings already function like triptychs, with their complex movements and combinatorial variability. A final level of complexity arises with regard to Bacon's handling of *color* (chapter 16), and his construction of a properly "haptic" space, since it is primarily through the use of color (relations of tonality) that he brings about all these effects in his works (isolation, deformation, coupling, rhythm...). Deleuze's book is marked throughout by extraordinarily specific and detailed analyses of individual paintings.

The fundamental concept in all these analyses, however, is that of the Figure. Modern art and modern philosophy can be said to have converged on a similar problem: both renounced the domain of representation and instead took the *conditions* of representation as their object. Deleuze suggests that twentieth-century art remained far ahead of philosophy in this regard, and that philosophers still have much to learn from painters. But he also suggests that there are two general routes through which modern painting escaped the clichés of representation and attempted to attain a "sensation" directly: either by moving toward abstraction, or by moving toward what Lyotard has termed the figural. An abstract art like that of Mondrian or Kandinsky, though it rejected classical figuration, in effect reduced sensation to a purely optical code that addressed itself primarily to the eye; by contrast, an abstract expressionism, like that of Pollock, went beyond representation, not by painting abstract forms, but by dissolving all forms in a fluid and

chaotic texture of manual lines and colors (chapter 14). Bacon in effect followed a “middle path” between these two extremes, the path of the Figure, which finds its precursor in Cézanne. Whereas “figuration” refers to a form that is related to an object it is supposed to represent, the “Figure” is the form that is connected to a sensation, and that conveys the violence of this sensation directly to the nervous system. In Bacon’s paintings, it is the human body that plays this role of the Figure: it functions as the material support or framework that sustains a precise sensation. This is Bacon’s solution to the problem he shares with Cézanne: How to extract the Figure from its figurative, narrative, and illustrational links? How to “paint the sensation” or “record the fact”?

This brings us to the second trajectory, which concerns the nature of the “logic of sensation” that constitutes the object of Deleuze’s analyses in this book. The notion of “sensation” one finds in Deleuze is taken initially from the phenomenological tradition. Erwin Straus, in his classic book *The Primary World of the Senses* (1935), had established a fundamental distinction between perception and sensation. Perception, he argued, is a secondary rational organization of a primary, nonrational dimension of sensation (or “sense experience,” le sentir). Earlier in the century, Marius von Senden had recorded the experiences of congenitally blind people who were given sight after the operation to remove cataracts was developed. Initially such patients were afflicted by a painful chaos of forms and colors, a gaudy confusion of visual *sensations* within which they could distinguish neither shapes nor space. They would acquire a *perception* of the world only after an often-painful process of learning and apprenticeship, during which they developed the schemata and “Gestalten” capable of providing this prereflective sense experience with the coordinates familiar to ordinary perception. Studies of infants have revealed in them a similar sensory world populated by pure intensities (of sound, light, hunger, etc.) in which the baby cannot yet distinguish between itself and its world. “In sensory experience,” writes Straus, “there unfolds both the becoming of the subject and the happenings of the world. I become only insofar as something happened, and something happens (for me) only insofar as I become....In sensing, both self and world unfold simultaneously for the sensing subject.”

This prerational world of sensation is not *prior* to the world of perception or representation, but strictly speaking is *coextensive* with it. It is precisely this world, the world of “lived experience,” that phenomenologists have attempted to describe. Straus, for instance, drew a distinction between what he called geography and landscape. The geographical world, the world recorded on maps, is perceptual and conceptual; it is an abstract system of coordinates with an unspecified perspective. A landscape, by contrast, is sensory; it is a perspectival world, enclosed by a horizon that moves as our body moves. In a landscape, we do not so much move in space as space moves with us. Similarly, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, following Kurt Goldstein, distinguished between “touching” and “pointing”: a patient who is able to scratch his nose at the point where a mosquito is biting him is unable, a moment later, to point to his nose with his finger. The former takes place within the “intentional” system of bodily space (sensation), whereas the latter requires an abstract coordination of points in external space (perception); in certain pathological cases the transition from the first to the second is blocked. It is often difficult to separate sensation from perception, landscape from geography, since conceptual perception is such an integral part of our everyday experience of the world. For all his indebtedness to thinkers such as Straus, Merleau-Ponty, and Henri Maldiney, however, Deleuze is not a phenomenologist. Phenomenology is insufficient because it merely invokes the “lived body.” But the lived body, says Deleuze, is still a “paltry thing in comparison with a more profound and almost unlivable Power,” which is precisely the

power of *rhythm* in its confrontation with chaos. Sensation is itself constituted by the “vital power” of rhythm, and it is in rhythm that Deleuze locates the “logic of sensation” indicated in his subtitle, a logic that is neither cerebral nor rational. This linkage between sensation and rhythm can perhaps best be illustrated by means of a somewhat lengthy detour through Deleuze’s reading of Kant’s theory of perception, which forms a kind of complementary text to *The Logic of Sensation*.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that perception requires a *synthesis* of what appears in space and time. In the first version of the transcendental deduction, Kant identifies three operations that make up a synthesis: apprehension, reproduction, and recognition. Since everything is a multiplicity and has a multiplicity of parts, perception begins when I synthesize these parts successively in an act of *apprehension*. I must also *reproduce* or “contract” the preceding parts when the following ones occur if a synthesis is to take place. These two aspects of spatiotemporal synthesis—the apprehension and reproduction of parts—are activities of the productive imagination and no longer sensibility. But a third moment is required for a perceptual synthesis to be complete: this sensible complex of space and time must now be related to the form of an object (*recognition*). To be sure, one can imagine numerous sensations in which the diversity of space and time is *not* related to the object-form, such as hallucinations. It is rather *perception* as such that is constituted in such a manner that a sensible diversity is related to the form of an object. In other words, it is not so much that I perceive objects; it is rather my perception that presupposes the object-form as one of its conditions. Kant invented a famous formula for this object-form: the object x. The object x is a pure form of perception, just as space-time is the pure form of sensation. The object x will receive a concrete determination (e.g., as a lion-object) only when it is related to the synthesized parts of a spatiotemporal diversity (a long mane, a loud roar, a heavy step...), such that I can say, “So it’s a lion!” But the multiplicity of sensations that appear to us in the manifold of experience would never be referred to an object if we did not have at our disposal the empty form of the object x, since there is nothing within sense experience itself that accounts for the operation by which I go beyond sensible diversity toward something I call an object. Where does this form come from? The object in general, Kant tells us, is the correlate of the “I think” or the unity of consciousness; it is the expression of the cogito, its formal objectivation. “Therefore the real (synthetic) formula of the cogito is: I think myself, and in thinking myself, I think the object in general to which I relate a represented diversity.” The predicates that are attributed to the object x are what Kant calls the categories or the pure a priori concepts of the understanding; and the subsumption of a sensible diversity under a concept is what Kant calls an act of *judgment*.

*The Critique of Pure Reason* thus presents us with an analysis of the edifice of perception: the apprehension of successive parts, the reproduction of preceding parts, recognition by means of the form of the object in general. Kant’s analysis in effect moves from the form of space and time (the pure form of sensation) to a determined spatiotemporal form (apprehension and reproduction as syntheses of the imagination) to the form of the object x (the pure form of perception). The philosophical adventure Deleuze explores in *The Logic of Sensation* begins at this point. The post-Kantians such as Hegel took as their starting point Kant’s theory of the “transcendental unity of apperception.” But Deleuze moves in the opposite direction, breaking with the form of recognition that grounds that unity. There are neither categories nor mediation in Deleuze, and one of his most insistent themes is “to have done with judgment” (Artaud). Deleuze effectively pushes to its limit a trajectory inaugurated in the *Critique of Judgment*, in which Kant explored the role of the

imagination freed from the legislation of the understanding. Four elements of his analyses are particularly relevant to the themes of *The Logic of Sensation*.

1. *Aesthetic comprehension*. The first is the theme of "aesthetic comprehension" (measure). In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant tells us that the act of synthesis begins with the apprehension of successive parts. In the *Critique of Judgment*, however, he in effect starts over and asks a question that went unformulated in the first critique: what counts as a part? To determine what constitutes a part, the imagination must have at its disposal a constant, or at least common, unit of measure. To be sure, the understanding could intervene and provide a mathematical evaluation of magnitudes in the fixed form of a *concept* of number (this object is "ten meters high" or "four inches wide"). But the imagination does not have recourse to concepts, and in the nature of objects there is no such constant measure. The imagination can thus begin to carry out its syntheses only by choosing a sensible or qualitative unit of measure. Kant notes, almost in passing, that such a unit of measure is found primarily in the *human body*: "A tree judged by the height of man gives, at all events, a standard for a mountain." In other words, I can use the height of a human being as the unit of measure to apprehend the parts of a tree ("this tree is as tall as ten men..."); in turn, I can then use the height of the tree to measure the mountain behind it ("that mountain is as high as twenty trees..."). Even at the level of simple perception, apprehension already implies something like a "lived evaluation" or "aesthetic comprehension" of a unit of measure, and, as Derrida notes, "this primary (subjective, sensory, immediate, living) measure proceeds from the body." This is the moment of phenomenology in Kant: aesthetic comprehension presupposes the situatedness of our bodies in the world, our "being-in-the-world." In the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), Merleau-Ponty analyzed in detail the manner in which our body provides us with such a "corporeal or postural schema" on the world.

2. *Rhythm*. This leads to a second theme, that of rhythm. What Kant is saying in the *Critique of Judgment* (§26) is that even the most elementary act of the synthesis of perception presupposes a logical act (though Kant here gives the term logic a new meaning). Beneath the successive apprehension of arts, there is a kind of logical synthesis that requires a purely aesthetic comprehension of the unit of measure. "All estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is in the last resort aesthetic (i.e., subjectively and not objectively determined)." Because the measure is subjectively determined, it is subject to constant evaluation and reevaluation, and is therefore in *constant variation*. The unit of measure varies in each case depending on the thing to be perceived, just as the thing to be perceived depends on the chosen unit. I may evaluate a tree in relation to the human body, but at night I may evaluate the rising moon in terms of a coin held at close range. From the viewpoint of aesthetic comprehension, I am continually in the process of changing my unit of measure according to my perceptions. Following Maldiney, Deleuze describes this aesthetic comprehension of units of measure as the grasping of a *rhythm* (though Kant himself does not use this term), which takes place *without a concept*. Aesthetic comprehension is the grasping of a rhythm with regard to both the thing to be measured and the unit of measure. Beneath both the measure and the units, there is rhythm. In this sense, concepts are *metrical*: they give one the beat, but beneath the concept there is the rhythm. "Rhythms are always heterogeneous, we plunge into them in a sort of exploration," an experimentation; even if you have a concept, "you do not yet have the rhythmicity of the things which are subordinated to it. A concept, at best, will give you the beat or the tempo." Beneath concepts, one always finds rhythmic blocks or complexes of space-time, spatiotemporal rhythms, ways of being in space and in time. The *foundation* of perceptual synthesis is aesthetic comprehension, but the *ground* on

which this foundation rests is the evaluation of rhythm.

3. *Chaos*. But once we have reached this point, we cannot stop. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant finally becomes aware of an impending catastrophe, as if the ground (rhythm) upon which the foundation of the synthesis rests were starting to tremble. Kant presents a disconcerting scenario: I look at something, but my imagination wavers, I become dizzy, vertiginous. First catastrophe: I seek an appropriate unit of measure, but I cannot find one; or I choose one, but it is destroyed. I choose another, but it too proves to be inadequate, as if what I am seeing is incommensurable with any unit of measure. Second catastrophe: In my panic, I can perhaps see parts, completely heterogeneous parts, but when I come to the next one, my dizzy spell only becomes worse; I forget the preceding part; I am pushed into going ever further, losing more and more. Third catastrophe: What is striking my senses is unrecognizable; it is something that goes beyond any possibility of aesthetic comprehension. My entire structure of perception, in other words, is in the process of exploding: I can no longer *apprehend* the successive parts, I cannot *reproduce* the preceding parts as the following ones arrive, and finally I can no longer *recognize* what the thing is. I can no longer qualify the object in general. Why does this happen? Because my aesthetic comprehension, that is, the evaluation of a rhythm that would serve as a foundation of measure, has become compromised, threatened. This is what Kant calls the experience of the *sublime*. The sublime takes place when the edifice of synthesis collapses: I no longer apprehend parts, I no longer reproduce parts, I no longer recognize anything. Instead of rhythm, I find myself drowned in a *chaos*.

What Kant discovers in the *Critique of Judgment* is that the synthesis of the imagination (apprehension, reproduction, recognition), which constitutes the edifice of knowledge, rests on a basis of a different nature—namely, an aesthetic comprehension of both the thing to be measured and the unit of measure. Aesthetic comprehension is not part of the synthesis, it is the foundation on which the synthesis rests, its soil. But at the same time that Kant discovers this foundation, he also discovers the extraordinary variability of its ground (rhythm) and its fundamental fragility (chaos). Between the synthesis and its foundation, there is the constant risk that something will emerge from beneath the ground and break the synthesis. Why this fundamental fragility? According to Kant, it is because there are infinite phenomena in space and time (such as the immense ocean or the starry heavens) that risk overturning the aesthetic comprehension of the unit of measure. The imagination finds itself overturned, blocked before its own limit; it discovers its own impotence, it starts to stutter. We here reach the point that Deleuze calls the “bend” in sufficient reason: it is at one and the same time that we discover both the ground of the synthesis (rhythm) and its ungrounded nature (chaos). Fortunately, we are not caught up in the sublime all the time, which would be a terrible experience; normally we manage to hold on to our perception, and to relate spatiotemporal diversities to the object-form. The sublime, however, entails a suppression of perception, an experience of the formless or the deformed. Yet chaos itself can also be a germ of order or rhythm, and it is this rhythm-chaos couple that lies at the heart of *The Logic of Sensation*.

When Deleuze was asked if the aim of *The Logic of Sensation* was to make readers see Bacon’s paintings better, he conceded that it would necessarily have that effect if it succeeded. “But,” he continued, “I believe that it has a higher aspiration, of which everyone dreams: to approach something that would be the common ground [fond] of words, lines, and colors, and even sounds. To write on painting, to write on music always implies this aspiration.” This “common ground” is,

precisely, rhythm: "Rhythm appears as music when it invests the auditory level, and as painting when it invests the visual level. This is a 'logic of the senses,' as Cézanne said, which is neither rational nor cerebral. What is ultimate is thus the relation between sensation and rhythm, which places in each sensation the levels and domains through which it passes." In painting, it was Cézanne and Klee who best exemplified this complex relation between chaos and rhythm.

Cézanne said that the painter must look beyond a landscape to its chaos: he spoke of the need to always paint at close range, to no longer see the wheat field, to be too close to it, to lose oneself in the landscape, without landmarks, to the point where one no longer sees forms or even matters, but only forces, densities, intensities. This is what Cézanne called the world before humanity, "dawn of ourselves," "iridescent chaos," "virginity of the world"—a complete collapse of visual coordinates in a universal variation or interaction. Afterward, in the act of painting, the earth can emerge, with its "stubborn geometry," its "geological foundations" as "the measure of the world"—but with the perpetual risk that the earth in turn may once again disappear in a second catastrophe, in order for colors to arise, for the earth to rise to the sun. Similarly, Paul Klee, in a famous text in *Modern Art*, wrote of how rhythm emerges from chaos, and how the "grey point" jumps over itself and organizes a rhythm, "the grey point having the double function of being both chaos and at the same time a rhythm insofar as it dynamically jumps over itself." Translated into Kantian terms, both Cézanne and Klee mark the movement by which one goes from the synthesis of perception (apprehension, reproduction, recognition) to aesthetic comprehension (rhythm) to the catastrophe (chaos), and back again: the painter passes through a catastrophe (the diagram) and in the process produces a form of a completely different nature (the Figure).

4. *Force*. But there is a final moment to this Kantian trajectory. Kant himself presents us with a kind of consolation: at the very moment the imagination discovers its impotence, it makes us discover within ourselves a higher faculty that is stronger than the imagination: the faculty of Ideas, which is like a faculty of the infinite, of the supersensible. What is this faculty of Ideas? Kant famously identified two types of the sublime: the mathematical sublime and the dynamical sublime. For Deleuze, the latter is more profound than the former because the dynamical sublime finds its figure in the "unformed" or the "deformed" (the undoing of the object-form). The forces of Nature are unleashed: a flood, a fire, an avalanche, a hurricane at sea. What do I experience? The fact that I am nothing! It is all too much for me, too strong, too overwhelming, and I experience a kind of terror. As a mere human, I am nothing compared to the might of Nature: my intensive power is reduced to zero faced with the unformed or deformed power of Nature. But at the same time, what is thereby awakened in me is a new power, a spiritual power, a faculty of Ideas that Kant identifies as the faculty of Reason, and by which humanity is revealed to be superior to Nature, pointing beyond Nature toward our spiritual destiny as moral beings (the noumenal as transcendent).

But this is where Deleuze breaks with Kant and inverts the critical philosophy. For Deleuze, the faculty of Ideas is no longer identified with Reason; rather, Deleuze posits Ideas within sensibility itself and defines them not by their transcendence to Nature but rather in terms of their immanence to experience itself (the noumenal as immanent). Ideas remain supersensible, but they now reveal the *forces* or intensities that lie behind sensations, and which draw us into nonhuman or inhuman *becomings*. In Deleuze, in other words, the power of Nature in the unformed or the deformed appears in the form of the *nonorganic life of things*: "The non-organic life of things, a frightful life, which is oblivious to the wisdom and limits of the organism....It is the vital as potent pre-organic germinality, common to the animate and the inanimate, to a matter which raises itself

to the point of life, and to a life which spreads itself through all matter." Bacon's primary subject matter is the "body without organs" that lies beneath the organism, the body insofar as it is deformed by a plurality of invisible forces: the violent force of a hiccup, a scream, the need to vomit or defecate, of copulation, the flattening force of sleep. In Cézanne, similarly, mountains are made to exist uniquely through the geological forces of folding they harness, landscapes through their thermal and magnetic forces, apples through their forces of germination. Van Gogh even harnessed as yet unknown forces, such as the extraordinary force of a sunflower. Klee's famous formula echoes through Deleuze's writings like a kind of leitmotif: *not to render the visible, but to render visible*. Sensations are given, but it is force that constitutes the condition of sensation. The artistic question then becomes: How to render sensible forces that are not themselves sensible? How to render the nonvisible visible in painting, or the nonsonorous sonorous in music?

This leads us, finally, to the third line of concepts in Deleuze's book, which concerns the way in which painters, and Bacon in particular, produce this "logic of sensation." The aim of the book, Deleuze tells us, is not only to build a "general" logic of sensation, but to show how, in Bacon's work, its summit is found in the sensation of *color*. In arriving at this conclusion, Deleuze once again takes us through a kind of deduction of concepts. The first is the concept of the *cliché*. Clichés, Deleuze writes elsewhere, are anonymous and floating images "which circulate in the external world, but which also penetrate each of us and constitute our internal world, so that everyone possesses only psychic clichés by which we think and feel, are thought and felt, being ourselves one cliché among others in the world that surrounds us." If Deleuze's philosophy is a *genetic* philosophy, the cliché is precisely what *prevents* the genesis of an image, just as opinion and convention prevent the genesis of thought. In this sense, one of the fundamental questions of Deleuze's philosophy is, What are the conditions for the production of the *new* (an image, a thought...)? Hence the essential role of the catastrophe: the condition for the genesis of the image (or the sensation) is at one and the same time the condition for the destruction of the cliché.

How then does the painter pass through the catastrophe and destroy the cliché? This is the role of what Deleuze calls the *diagram* or *graph* (chapter 12), a term he derives from the semiotic theory of C. S. Peirce. Peirce had noted the important and often overlooked role that diagrams play in mathematical thought. Although mathematics is usually presented as a purely deductive or axiomatic science, theorematic reasoning often involves the construction of diagrams and a kind of "ideal experimentation" with schemata consisting of points, lines, surfaces, and relations: "points are made and stretched...pins are stuck in maps...pages are covered in scribbles." Mathematics, Peirce insisted, is as experimental as physics or chemistry, except that its experiments necessarily take on an ideal or "diagrammatic" form. In his semiological theory, Peirce had classified the diagram as a special case of the icon, "an icon of intelligible relations." Although Deleuze admits his indebtedness to Peirce, he rejects the iconic status that Peirce assigned to the diagram, since it tends to conceive the diagram simply as a "copy" or graphic representation of intelligible relations or coordinates. Deleuze, rather, prefers to assign to the diagram a much more strongly creative or genetic role: "the diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality." As Deleuze explains in chapter 13, the diagram acts as an analogical *modulator*, a conjunction of matter and function.

Painters, Deleuze argues, have their own type of diagrammatism. What he terms a painterly

diagram (an operative set of nonrepresentational and nonsignifying lines and colors) is the means by which painters, in their own way, pass through the experience of catastrophe. The painter's diagram undoes the optical organization of the synthesis of perception (clichés), but also functions as the "genetic" element of the pictorial order to come. Every painter, Deleuze suggests, will pass through this process in a different manner. "The diagram is indeed a chaos, a catastrophe," he writes, "but it is also a germ of order or rhythm." Using Wittgensteinian language, Deleuze says that the diagram constitutes a "possibility of fact," out of which the Fact itself will emerge. Plateau 11 of *A Thousand Plateaus* analyzes, in a more general manner, this complex emergence, out of chaos, of the elements of rhythm, with its territories and milieus. The struggle against chaos in art, philosophy, and science is also one of the central themes of *What Is Philosophy?*, notably in its final chapter, "From Chaos to the Brain."

If the summit of Bacon's own logic of sensation is found in the "coloring sensation," it is because it is primarily (though not exclusively) through the use of *color* that Bacon effects his diagrammatic procedures. In this regard, Deleuze identifies two fundamental uses of color in the history of painting. The first, more traditionally, emphasizes relations of *value* between colors, that is, the contrast of shadow and light (*chiaroscuro*). It has as its correlate the construction of what Deleuze calls a tactile-optical space, that is, the representational space that was inaugurated by Greek art and refined in the Renaissance. Figuration is itself a consequence of this *tactile-optical* space. In such a space, bodies are not merely perceived optically but take on a sculptural or tactile quality (depth, contour, relief, etc.), producing the illusion of a three-dimensional space behind the frame. In chapter 14, Deleuze shows how, in the history of art, this tactile-optical world would subsequently be broken and develop in two different directions: toward the exposition of a purely optical space, in which space is freed from its references to even a subordinate tactility (Byzantine art); and toward the imposition of a violent *manual* space, in which the hand begins to express itself in an independent way, producing a line that delineates nothing, and which the eye can barely follow (Gothic art). Deleuze's analyses of these developments draw heavily on the German art historical tradition of Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, and Wilhelm Worringer, though without the last's appeal to a "will to art" (*Kunstwollen*). These developments, in turn, would be recapitulated in their own way in modern art: abstraction would develop a purely optical code (Mondrian), whereas expressionism would move toward the extraction of a purely manual line (Pollock).

In chapter 15, however, Deleuze will define Bacon's novelty in a twofold manner that breaks with these earlier conceptions of color and space. On the one hand, in his use of color, Bacon follows Cézanne and Van Gogh in replacing relations of value with relations of *tonality*, that is, with pure relations between the colors of the spectrum. Following Gilbert Simondon, Deleuze calls this a technique of *modulation* that relies on the relations between colors or the juxtaposition of tints. "The formula of the colorists is: if you push color to its pure internal relations (hot-cold, expansion-contraction), then you have everything." For the colorist, everything in painting—form and ground, light and shadow, bright and dark—is derived from pure relations of color. In this regard, Deleuze sees Bacon as one of the great colorists in the history of painting. Chapter 16 analyzes how the three formal elements of Bacon's paintings—the Figure, the contour, the structure—are all constructed by means of color: the internal variations of intensity in the structure, the "broken tones" of the Figures, the colored line of the contour. Thus, each element of Bacon's paintings converges in color, and it is modulation (the relation between colors) that explains the unity of the whole, the distribution of each element, and the way each of them acts

upon the others. This is why Deleuze says that it is the “coloring sensation” that stands at the summit of Bacon’s logic of sensation.

On the other hand, this use of color claims to bring out a peculiar kind of sense from sight: a haptic vision of color, as opposed to the optical vision of light. What Deleuze calls *haptic* vision is precisely this “sense” of colors. *The tactile-optical space* of representation presents a complex eye-hand relation: an ideal optical space that nonetheless maintains virtual referents to tactility (depth, contour, relief). From this, two types of subordination can occur: a subordination of the hand to the eye in *optical* space (Byzantine art), and a strict subordination of the eye to the hand in a *manual* space (Gothic art). But what Deleuze, following Riegl, terms *haptic* space (from the Greek verb *aptō*, to touch) is a space in which there is no longer a hand-eye subordination in either direction. It implies a type of seeing distinct from the optical, a close-up viewing in which “the sense of sight behaves just like the sense of touch.” Riegl argued that haptic space was the invention of Egyptian art and bas-relief, in which form and ground are experienced as being on the same plane, requiring a close vision. Deleuze in turn suggests that a new Egypt rises up in Bacon’s work, this time composed uniquely of color and by color: the juxtaposition of pure tones arranged gradually on the flat surface produces a properly haptic space, and implies a properly haptic function of the eye (the planar character of the surface creates volumes only through the different colors that are arranged on it). In this regard, Deleuze will place Bacon in the great tradition of Turner, Monet, Cézanne, and Van Gogh—the great modern colorists who replaced relations of value with relations of tonality.

We have attempted to distinguish three conceptual trajectories in *The Logic of Sensation*, which respectively concern aspects of Bacon’s paintings (isolation, deformation, coupling...), the nonrational logic of sensation (rhythm, chaos, force...), and the act of painting itself (clichés, the diagram, modulation...). Obviously, the three trajectories are interlinked: painting has its own manner of experimenting with the logic of sensation, and Bacon’s path has a validity of its own that does not negate other paths such as abstraction or expressionism. In turn, each of these trajectories points beyond itself toward linkages with other arts such as music, cinema, and literature, such that *The Logic of Sensation* can itself be seen as an entry point into the conceptual proliferation of Deleuze’s philosophy as a whole, and his other writings on the arts.