

JEAN-LUC NANCY



The Ground of the Image

Translated by Jeff Foet



PERSPECTIVES IN
CONTINENTAL
PHILOSOPHY

The Ground of the Image

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TRANSLATED BY JEFF FORT

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The closer he came to this deceptive image of the island's shore,
the more this image receded; it continued to flee from him, and
he knew not what to think of this flight.

—Fénelon, *Adventures of Telemachus*

In the depths of the forest your image follows me.

—Racine, *Phaedra*

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Note on the Texts

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The Ground of the Image

The Image—the Distinct

The image is always sacred—if we insist on using this term, which gives rise to so much confusion (but which I will use initially, and provisionally, as a regulative term in order to set into motion the thought I would like to develop here). Indeed, the meaning of the “sacred” never ceases to be confused with that of the “religious.” But religion is the observance of a rite that forms and maintains a bond¹ (with others or with oneself, with nature or with a supernature). Religion in itself is not ordered by the sacred. (Nor is it ordered by faith, which is yet another category.)

The sacred, for its part, signifies the separate, what is set aside, removed, cut off. In one sense, then, religion and the sacred are opposed, as the bond is opposed to the cut. In another sense, religion can no doubt be represented as securing a bond with the separated sacred. But in yet another sense, the sacred is what it is only through its separation, and there is no bond with it. There is then, strictly speaking, no religion of the sacred. The sacred is what, of itself, remains set apart, at a distance, and with which one forms no bond (or only a very paradoxical one). It is what one cannot touch (or only by a touch without contact). To avoid this confusion, I will call it *the distinct*.

One attempt to form a bond with the sacred occurs in sacrifice, which as a matter of fact does belong to religion, in one form or another. Where sacrifice ceases, so does religion. And that is the point

where, on the contrary, distinction and the preservation of a distance and a “sacred” distinction begin. It is there, perhaps, that art has always begun, not in religion (whether it was associated with it or not), but set apart.

The *distinct*, according to its etymology, is what is separated by marks (the word refers back to *stigma*, a branding mark, a pinprick or puncture, an incision, a tattoo): what is withdrawn and set apart by a line or trait,² by being marked also as withdrawn [*retrait*]. One cannot touch it: not because one does not have the right to do so, nor because one lacks the means, but rather because the distinctive line or trait separates something that is no longer of the order of touch; not exactly an untouchable, then, but rather an impalpable. But this impalpable is given in the trait and in the line that separates it, it is given by this *distraction* that removes it. (Consequently, my first and last question will be: is such a distinctive trait not always a matter of art?)

The distinct is at a distance, it is the opposite of what is near. What is not near can be set apart in two ways: separated from contact or from identity. The distinct is distinct according to these two modes: it does not touch, and it is dissimilar. Such is the image: it must be detached, placed outside and before one’s eyes (it is therefore inseparable from a hidden surface, from which it cannot, as it were, be peeled away: the dark side of the picture, its underside or backside, or even its weave or its subjectile), and it must be different from the thing. The image is a thing that is not the thing: it distinguishes itself from it, essentially.

But what distinguishes itself essentially from the thing is also the force—the energy, pressure, or intensity. The “sacred” was always a force, not to say a violence. What remains to be grasped is how the force and the image belong to one another in the same distinction. How the image gives itself through a distinctive trait (every image declares itself or indicates itself as an “image” in some way), and how what it thus gives is first a force, an intensity, the very force of its distinction.

The distinct stands apart from the world of things considered as a world of availability. In this world, all things are available for use, according to their manifestation. What is withdrawn from this world has no use, or has a completely different use, and is not presented in a manifestation (a force is precisely not a form: here it is also a ques-

tion of grasping how the image is not a form and is not formal). It is what does not show itself but rather gathers itself into itself, the taut force on this side of forms or beyond them, but not as another obscure form: rather as the other of forms. It is the intimate and its passion, distinct from all representation. It is a matter, then, of grasping the passion of the image, the power of its stigma or of its distraction (hence, no doubt, all the ambiguity and ambivalence that we attach to images, which throughout our culture, and not only in its religions, are said to be both frivolous and holy).

The distinction of the distinct is therefore its separation: its tension is that of a setting apart and keeping separate which at the same time is a crossing of this separation. In the religious vocabulary of the sacred, this crossing is what constituted sacrifice or transgression: as I have already said, sacrifice is legitimated transgression. It consists in *making sacred* (consecrating), that is, in doing what in principle cannot be done (which can only come from elsewhere, from the depth⁵ of withdrawal).

But the distinction of the image—while it greatly resembles sacrifice—is not properly sacrificial. It does not legitimize and it does not transgress: it crosses the distance of the withdrawal even while maintaining it through its mark as an image. Or rather: through the mark that it is, it establishes simultaneously a withdrawal and a passage that, however, does not pass. The essence of such a crossing lies in its *not* establishing a continuity: it does not suppress the distinction. It maintains it while also making contact: shock, confrontation, *tête-à-tête*, or embrace. It is less a transport than a *rapport*, or relation. The distinct bounds toward the indistinct and leaps into it, but it is not interlinked with it. The image offers itself to me, but it offers itself as an image (once again there is ambivalence: only an image / a true image . . .). An intimacy is thus exposed to me: exposed, but *for what it is*, with its force that is dense and tight, not relaxed, reserved, not readily given. Sacrifice effects an assumption, a lifting and a sublation of the profane into the sacred: the image, on the contrary, is given in an opening that indissociably forms its presence and its separation.⁴

Continuity takes place only within the indistinct, homogeneous space of things and of the operations that bind them together. The distinct, on the contrary, is always the heterogeneous, that is, the unbound—the unbindable.⁵ What it transports to us, then, is its very unbinding, which no proximity can pacify and which thus remains at a distance:

just at the distance of the touch, that is, barely touching the skin, *à fleur de peau*.⁶ It approaches across a distance, but what it brings into such close proximity is distance. (The *fleur* is the finest, most subtle part, the very surface, which remains before one and which one merely brushes against [*effleure*]: every image is *à fleur*, or is a flower.)

This is what all portraits do, in an exemplary manner. Portraits are the image of the image in general. A portrait touches, or else it is only an identification photo, a descriptive record, not an image. What touches is something that is borne to the surface from out of an intimacy. But here the portrait is only an example. Every image is in some way a “portrait,” not in that it would reproduce the traits of a person, but in that it pulls and *draws* (this is the semantic and etymological sense of the word), in that it *extracts* something, an intimacy, a force.⁷ And, to extract it, it subtracts or removes it from homogeneity, it distracts it from it, distinguishes it, detaches it and casts it forth. It throws it in front of us, and this throwing [*jet*], this projection, makes its mark, its very trait and its *stigma*: its tracing, its line, its style, its incision, its scar, its signature, all of this at once.

The image throws in my face an intimacy that reaches me in the midst of intimacy—through sight, through hearing, or through the very meaning of words. Indeed, the image is not only visual: it is also musical, poetic, even tactile, olfactory or gustatory, kinesthetic, and so on. This differential vocabulary is insufficient (though I cannot take the time to analyze it here). The visual image certainly plays the role of a model, and for precise reasons, which will, no doubt, emerge later. For the moment, I will give only one example of a literary image, whose visual resources are evident, but which remains no less a matter of writing:

A girl came out of lawyer Royall’s house, at the end of the one street of North Dormer, and stood on the doorstep.

The springlike transparent sky shed a rain of silver sunshine on the roofs of the village, and on the pastures and larchwoods surrounding it. A little wind moved among the round white clouds on the shoulders of the hills, driving their shadows across the fields.⁸

Framed by a door opening onto the intimacy of a dwelling, a young girl, whose youth is all we see of her, already exposes the imminence of a story and an unnamed encounter, an unknown shock, happy or painful: she exposes this in the light from the sky, and this

sky provides the wide, “transparent,” and unlimited frame in which the successive frames of a street, a house, and a doorway are embedded. It is less a matter here of the image, which we do not fail to imagine (the one that each reader forms or forges in his or her way and according to his or her models): it is a matter of an image function, of light and the proper relation of shadow, of framing and detachment, the emergence and the touch of an intensity.

What happens is this: with the “girl” (whose name is an intensity unto itself) an entire world “comes out” and appears, a world that also “stands on the doorstep,” so to speak—on the threshold of the novel, in its initial traits and in the “opening lines” of its writing—or that places us on its threshold, on the very line that divides the outside and the inside, light and shadow, life and art, whose division [*partage*]⁹ is at that moment traced by something that makes us cross it without eliminating it (the distinction): a world that we enter while remaining before it, and that thus offers itself fully for what it is, a *world*, which is to say: an indefinite totality of meaning (and not merely an environment).

If it is possible for the same line, the same distinction, to separate and to communicate or connect (communicating also separation itself . . .), that is because the traits and lines of the image (its outline, its form) are themselves (something from) its intimate force: for this intimate force is not “represented” by the image, but the image is it, the image activates it, draws it and withdraws it, extracts it by withholding it, and it is with this force that the image touches us.¹⁰

The image always comes from the sky—not from the heavens, which are religious, but from the skies, a term proper to painting: not heaven in its religious sense, but sky¹¹ as the Latin *firmamentum*, the firm vault from which the stars are hung, dispensing their brightness. (Behind the vault are the gods of Epicurus—to mention him again—indifferent and insensitive even to themselves, therefore without images, and deprived of sense.)

The painted sky contains within itself what is sacred in the sky insofar as it is the distinct and the separated par excellence: the sky is the separated. It is first of all something that, in the ancient cosmogonies, a god or a force more remote than the gods separates from the earth:

When the Sky was separated from the Earth
—Firmly held together up to then—
And when the goddess mothers appeared.¹²

Before the sky and the earth, when everything is held together, there is nothing distinct. The sky is what in essence distinguishes itself, and it is in essence distinguished from the earth that it covers with light. It is also itself distinction and distance: extended clarity, at once distant and near, the source of a light that nothing illuminates in turn (*lux*) but by which everything is illuminated and brought into distinction, which is in turn the distinction of shadow and light (*lumen*), by which a thing can shine and take on its brilliance (*splendor*), that is, its truth. The distinct *distinguishes itself*: it sets itself apart and at a distance, it therefore marks this separation and thus causes it to be remarked—*it becomes remarkable*, noticeable and marked as such. It also, therefore, attracts attention: in its withdrawal and from out of this withdrawal, it is an *attraction* and a *drawing* toward itself. The image is desirable or it is not an image (but rather a *chromo*, an ornament, a vision or representation—although differentiating between the attraction of desire and the solicitation of the spectacle is not as easy as some would like to think . . .).

The image comes from the sky: it does not descend from it, it proceeds from it, it is of a celestial essence, and it contains the sky within itself. Every image has its sky, even if it is represented as outside the image or is not represented at all: the sky gives the image its light, but the light of an image comes from the image itself. The image is thus its own sky, or the sky detached for itself, coming with all its force to fill the horizon but also to take it away, to lift it up or to pierce it, to raise it to an infinite power. The image that contains the horizon also overflows it and spreads itself out in it, like the resonances of a harmony, like the halo of a painting. This does not require any sacred place or activity, nor any magical *aura* conferred on the image. (We could also say: the image that is its own sky is the sky on earth and as earth, or the opening of the sky in the earth—that is, again, a world—and that is why the image is necessarily not religious, for it does not bind the earth to the sky but rather draws the latter from the former. This is true of every image, including religious images, unless the religiosity of the subject degrades or crushes the image, as happens in the pious bric-a-brac produced by every religion.)

The celestial force, a force that the sky *is*—namely, the light that distinguishes, that renders distinct—is the force of the passion that the image immediately transports. The intimate is *expressed* in it: but this expression must be understood in the most literal sense. It is not the translation of a state of the soul: it is the soul itself that presses

and pushes on the image; or rather the image is this pressure, this animation and emotion. It does not give the signification of this pressure: in that sense, the image has no object (or “subject,” as one speaks of the subject of a painting), and thus it is devoid of intention. It is therefore not a representation: it is an imprint of the intimacy of its passion (of its motion, its agitation, its tension, its passivity). It is not an imprint in the sense of a type or a schema that would be set down and fixed.¹⁵ It is rather the movement of the imprint, the stroke that marks the surface, the hollowing out and pressing up of this surface, of its substance (canvas, paper, copper, paste, clay, pigment, film, skin), its impregnation or infusion, the embedding or the discharge effected in it by the pressure applied to it. The imprint is at once the receptivity of an unformed support and the activity of a form: its force is the mixing and resistance of the two.

The image touches me, and, thus touched and drawn by it and into it, I get involved, not to say mixed up in it. There is no image without my too being in its image, but also without passing into it, as long as I look at it, that is, as long as I show it *consideration*, maintain my regard for it.

The image is separated in two ways simultaneously. It is detached from a ground [*fond*] and it is cut out within a ground. It is pulled away and clipped or cut out. The pulling away raises it and brings it forward: makes it a “fore,” a separate frontal surface, whereas the ground itself had no face or surface. The cutout or clipping creates edges in which the image is framed: it is the *templum* marked out in the sky by the Roman augurs. It is the space of the sacred or, rather, the sacred as a spacing that distinguishes.

Thus, through a process repeated innumerable times in painting, an image is detached from itself while also reframing itself as an image—as in this painting by Hans von Aachen, in which the painting is doubled in a mirror that is held out, as though to us, while at the same time, within the image, it is held out to the woman it reflects.

In this double operation, the ground disappears. It disappears in its essence as ground, which consists in its not appearing. One can thus say that it appears as what it is by disappearing. Disappearing as ground, it passes entirely into the image. But it does not appear for all that, and the image is not its manifestation, nor its phenomenon. It is the force of the image, its sky and its shadow. This force exerts its pressure “in the ground” of the image, or, rather, it is the pressure



1. Hans von Aachen, *Joking Couple* (in fact, the painter and his wife; ca. 1596), Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

that the ground exerts on the surface—that is, under this force, in this impalpable non-place that is not merely the “support” but the *back* or the *underside* of the image. The latter is not an “other side of the coin” (another surface, and a disappointing one), but the insensible (intelligible) sense that *is sensed as such*, self-same with the image.

The image gathers force and sky together with the thing itself. It is the intimate unity of this assemblage. It is neither the thing nor the imitation of the thing (all the less so in that, as was already said, it is not necessarily plastic or visual). It is the resemblance of the thing, which is different. In its resemblance, the thing is detached from itself. It is not the “thing itself” (or the thing “in itself”), but the “sameness” of the present thing as such.

With his famous phrase “This is not a pipe,” Magritte merely enunciates—at least at first sight or at first reading¹⁴—a banal paradox of representation as imitation. But the truth of the image is the inverse of this. This truth is, rather, something like the image of the pipe accompanied by “This is a pipe,” not in order to replay the same paradox in reverse, but, on the contrary, to affirm that a thing pres-

ents itself only inasmuch as it resembles itself and says (mutely) of itself: I am this thing. The image is the nonlinguistic saying or the showing of the thing in its sameness: but this sameness is not only not said, or “said” otherwise, it is an *other sameness* than that of language and the concept, a sameness that does not belong to identification or signification (that of “a pipe,” for example), but that is supported only by itself in the image and as an image.

The thing *as* image is thus distinct from its being-there in the sense of the *Vorhanden*,¹⁵ its simple presence in the homogeneity of the world and in the linking together of natural or technological operations. Its distinction is the dissimilarity that inhabits resemblance, that agitates it and troubles it with a pressure of spacing and of passion. What is distinct in being-there is being-image: it is not here but over there, in the distance, in a distance that is called “absence” (by which one often wants to characterize the image) only in a very hasty manner. The absence of the imaged subject is nothing other than an intense presence, receding into itself, gathering itself together in its intensity. Resemblance gathers together in force and gathers itself as a force of the *same*—the same differing in itself from itself: hence the enjoyment [*jouissance*] we take in it. We touch on the same and on this power that affirms this: I am indeed what I am, and I am this well beyond or well on this side of what I am for you, for your aims and your manipulations. We touch on the intensity of this withdrawal or this excess. Thus *mimesis* encompasses *methexis*, a participation or a contagion through which the image seizes us.

What touches us is this self-coincidence or self-fittingness [*convenance à soi*] borne by resemblance: it resembles *itself* and thus it gathers *itself* together. It is a totality that fits and coincides with itself [*se convient*]. In coming to the fore, it goes within. But its “within” is not anything other than its “fore”: its ontological content is sur-face, exposition, ex-pression. The surface, here, is not relative to a spectator facing it: it is the site of a concentration in co-incidence. That is why it has no model. Its model is in it; it is its “idea” or its energy. It is an idea that *is* an energy, a pressure, a traction and an attraction of sameness. Not an “idea” (*idea* or *eidolon*), which is an intelligible form, but a force that forces form to touch itself. If the spectator remains across from it, facing it, he sees only a disjunction between resemblance and dissimilarity. If he enters into this self-coincidence, then he enters into the image, he no longer looks at it—though he does

not cease to be in front of it. He penetrates it, is penetrated by it: by it, its distance and its distinction, at the same time.

The self-coincidence of the image in itself excludes its conformity to a perceived object or to a coded sentiment or well-defined function. On the contrary, the image never stops tightening and condensing into itself. That is why it is immobile, calm and flat in its presence, the coming-together and co-inciding of an event and an eternity. The musical, choreographic, cinematographic, or kinetic image in general is no less immobile in this sense: it is the distension of a present of intensity, in which succession is also a simultaneity. With regard to the image, the exemplarity of the visual domain lies in its first being the domain of immobility as such; the exemplarity of the audible domain, by contrast, is that of distension as such. At one extreme, immobility—immutability and impassability—at the other, distension and the passionate movement of separation: the two extremes of sameness.

There is an expression in French: *sage comme une image*, literally, “wise as an image.”¹⁶ But the wisdom of the image, if it is indeed a kind of restraint, is also the tension of an impetus or impulse. It is first offered and given to be taken. The seduction of images, their eroticism, is nothing other than their availability for being taken, touched by the eyes, the hands, the belly, or by reason, and penetrated. If flesh has played an exemplary role in painting, that is because, far beyond the figuration of nudity, flesh is the spirit of painting. But penetrating the image, just as with amorous flesh, means being penetrated by it. The gaze is impregnated with color, the ear with sonority. There is nothing in the spirit that is not in the senses: nothing in the idea that is not in the image. I become the ground and depth of the painter’s eye that looks at me, as well as the reflection in the mirror (in Aachen’s painting). I become the dissonance of a harmony, the leap of a dance step. “I”: but it is no longer a question of “I.” *Cogito* becomes *imago*.

But at the same time each thing, in the distance in which its self-coincidence is separated in order to coincide with itself, leaves behind its status as a thing and becomes an intimacy. It is no longer manipulable. It is neither body, nor tool, nor god. It is outside the world, since in itself it is the intensity of a concentration of world. It is also outside language, since in itself it is the assembling of a sense without signification. The image suspends the course of the world

and of meaning—of meaning as a course or current of sense (meaning in discourse, meaning that is current and valid): but it affirms all the more a *sense* (therefore an “insensible”) that is *selfsame* with what it gives to be sensed (that is, itself). In the image, which, however, is without an “inside,” there is a sense that is nonsignifying but not insignificant, a sense that is as certain as its force (its form).

One could say that the image—neither world nor language—is a “real presence,” if we recall the Christian¹⁷ use of this expression: the “real presence” is precisely not the ordinary presence of the real referred to here: it is not the god present in the world as finding himself there. This presence is a sacred intimacy that a fragment of matter gives to be taken in and absorbed. It is a real presence because it is a contagious presence, participating and participated, communicating and communicated in the distinction of its intimacy.

That is in fact why the Christian God, and particularly the Catholic God, will have been the god of the death of God, the god who withdraws from all religion (from every bond with a divine presence) and who departs into his own absence, since he is no longer anything but the passion of the intimate and the intimacy of suffering [*du pâtir*] or of feeling and sensation: what every thing gives to be sensed insofar as it is what it is, the thing itself distinguished in its sameness.¹⁸

So it is as well, according to another exemplarity, with what is called the “poetic image.” This is not a decoration provided by a play of analogy, comparison, allegory, metaphor, or symbol. Or else, in each of these possibilities, it is something other than the pleasant game of an encoded displacement.

When Rilke writes (in French):

Au fond de tout mon coeur phanérogame
At the bottom of my phanerogamus heart¹⁹

The simultaneously sexual and botanical metaphor of an open heart exposing itself creates a certain collision of meaning and sound, and a slightly humorous effect, somewhere between the noun and the adjective: this collision communicates the density of the word *phanérogame*, its foreign substance, both in relation to the French language and to the language of sentiments, in a double withdrawal that at the same time lays the heart open as a plant or a flower, a botanical plate. But in this way it also communicates its visibility, which gives both the sense and the sound of the word, as well as the contours of a sort of indecency in poetic form. It does this even as it discreetly carries away the “coeur phanérogame” in the decasyllabic rhythm of which

it forms one hemistich, in a discreet but distinct reference (all the more distinct for being discreet, not crushed by a noisy rhythm) to the French prosody that the German poet is playing with here. The image is all of this—or it is this, at least, in the cutout of the verse and in the pulling apart of the language, in the suspense of rhythm and attention, and in this *fond* whose *f* is repeated in the *pb*, a muted consonance. This is an echo of another verse (also a decasyllable) in a variant from the same poem:

les mots massifs, les mots profonds en or
the massive words, the deep golden words

Here it is poetry itself that becomes the matter of the image.

For the image is always material: it is the matter of the distinct, its mass and its density, its weight, its edges and its brilliance, its timbre and its specter, its pace and step, its gold.

But *matter* is first *mother* (*materies* comes from *mater*, which is the heart of the tree, the hardwood), and the mother is that from which, and in which, there is distinction: in her intimacy another intimacy is separated and another force is formed, another same is detached from the same in order to be itself. (The father, on the contrary, is a reference point and marker of identification: figure, not image, he has nothing to do with being-a-self, but with being-such-and-such in the homogeneous current of identities.)

The image, clear and distinct, is something obvious and evident. It is the obviousness of the distinct, its very distinction. There is an *image* only when there is this obviousness: otherwise, there is decoration or illustration, that is, the support of a signification. The image must touch on the invisible presence of the distinct, on the distinction of its presence.

The distinct is visible (the sacred always was) because it does not belong to the domain of objects, their perception and their use, but to that of forces, their affections and transmissions. The image is the obviousness of the invisible. It does not render it visible as an object: it accedes to a knowledge of it. Knowledge of the obvious is not a science, it is the knowledge of a whole as a whole. In a single stroke, which is what makes it striking, the image delivers a totality of sense or a truth (however one wishes to say it). Each image is a singular variation on the totality of distinct sense—of the sense that does not link together the order of significations. This sense is infinite, and each variation is itself singularly infinite. Each image is a finite cut-

ting out, by the mark of distinction. The superabundance of images in the multiplicity and in the history of the arts corresponds to this inexhaustible distinction. But each time, and at the same time, it is the *jouissance* of meaning, the jolt and the taste of its tension: a little sense in a pure state, infinitely opened or infinitely lost (however one wishes to say it).

Nietzsche said that “we have *art* in order *not to be sunk to the depths* by truth.”²⁰ But we must add that this does not happen unless art touches on truth. The image does not stand before the ground like a net or a screen. We do not sink; rather, the ground rises to us in the image. The double separation of the image, its pulling away and its cutting out, form both a protection against the ground and an opening onto it. In reality, the ground is not distinct as ground except in the image: without the image, there would only be indistinct adherence. More precisely: in the image, the ground is distinguished by being doubled. It is at once the profound depth of a possible shipwreck and the surface of the luminous sky. The image floats, in sum, at the whim of the swells, mirroring the sun, poised over the abyss, soaked by the sea, but also shimmering with the very thing that threatens it and bears it up at the same time. Such is intimacy, simultaneously threatening and captivating from out of the distance into which it withdraws.

The image touches on this ambivalence by which meaning (or truth) is distinguished without end from the bound network of significations, which at the same time it never ceases to touch: every phrase that is formed, every gesture made, every act of looking, every thought puts into play an absolute meaning (or truth itself), which does not cease both to separate itself and to absent itself from all signification. More than that: each signification that is constituted (for example, this proposition, and this entire discourse) also forms by itself the distinctive mark of a threshold beyond which meaning (truth) goes absent. It goes absent not in an elsewhere, in fact, but right here.

It is in this sense that art is necessary, and is not a diversion or entertainment. Art marks the distinctive traits of the absencing of truth, by which it is the truth absolutely. But this is also the sense in which it is itself disquieting, and can be threatening: because it conceals its very being from signification or from definition, but also because it can threaten itself and destroy in itself the images of itself that have been deposited in a signifying code and in an assured beauty. That is why there is a history of art, and so many jolts and

upheavals in this history: because art cannot be a religious observance (not of itself or anything else), and because it is always taken back up into the distinction of what remains separate and irreconcilable, in the tireless exposure of an always unbound intimacy. Its unbinding [*déliaison*], its endless flourish [*délié*],²¹ are what the precision of the image weaves together and disentangles in each case.

Let us remain with a final image, which speaks of an image's gift of love and death:²² "The Image of My Past Days," which Violetta holds out, and sings, is an image of youth and of lost loves, but it is their truth at once eternal and now absent, inalterable in its distinction. But again, and finally, this image is none other than the opera itself which is now reaching its end, the music that has just *been* love and tearing apart, and which expires by showing them, infinitely distinct in their distance.

Viol.

Pren-di quest'ò l'im-ma-

Nous Autres

Someone who says "I," in saying it, distinguishes himself. Indeed, he does nothing other than that: he separates himself, he sets himself apart, he even cuts himself off. *I is an other*, as Rimbaud said, and this obvious fact precedes any possible feeling of self-estrangement or alienation. Before being an other to oneself (which perhaps the self always also is), *I* is an other to every other *I*. *I am* other than every other *I* who is (who can say "I am"). Through its enunciation, which adheres to the statement it makes and functions as a shifter for its meaning, *I* defines (define . . . ?) an other who is other than anyone thus set off as non-identical to the sameness that this word, *I*, establishes in it, that is, the sameness of its linguistic value and of the subject that poses itself in it by proffering it. This subject "pronouns" or "pro-names" itself in this word by pronouncing itself in it, and "to pro-name oneself" means: to pose that which comes before the name, that which, or the one who, will then be able to name him-/herself.

That is why *I* can say *you*, singular or plural, in all clarity and in all equality. "You" gives to the other the status of a symmetrical "I" whose own *I* has already silently resounded in the statement of the very first "I." A child says "I" when he or she comes to grasp this pronoun's ability to substitute for everyone, even as, in each case, it becomes strictly unsubstutable. Everyone distinguishes himself, unflinching and without hesitation, from the other with whom he shares the unshareable: the obscure recesses, the shadowy hiding

place or the vertiginous chasm from which this syllable *I* can emerge, like the *smack* of a clapperboard during a film shoot, or the *click* of a computer.

Or like the snap of a camera shutter: by pressing down, the finger says *I*; it suspends the hesitations between the multiple subjects intersecting and mixing in it (in the viewfinder, the seer, the visionary, the blind eye). It suspends them in a suspense that dramatically immobilizes a possibility caught in the process of becoming a necessity, or even a fatality. Just as this click and its result, the photograph or the *snapshot* [*l'instantanée*], as it is called, appropriate a brief difference, an imperceptible alteration that thus becomes perceptible, present, indubitable—a fold of skin, a pouting face, a plume of smoke—likewise do *I* appropriate myself, in the instant when I say “*I*,” the wholly-other of a singular subject, totally invisible and as such, as non-visual, suddenly totally exposed. By taking the photograph, I fix an other in a suspended hesitation by which the image and its subject are both determined: *I*, the one who takes the photograph, completely other in each case, other than all the rest, other than everything that does not say “*I*” and other than everything that says it from the position of another *I*.



It is quite a different matter when it comes to saying “we.” If *I*, like *you*, constitutes a *pronoun*, it is entirely apart: just as a proconsul takes the place and the role of the consul, likewise here the pronoun suffices to assume the presence and the authority of the name. It is also in this way that the biblical god combines the unnamable name with the affirmation “*I am*.” And in the *I am*—whether spoken by this god or by Descartes—“being” weighs very little by itself: it is merely the redundancy of the “*I*.” (That is why Descartes writes *ego sum*, adding this *ego*, in principle unnecessary, to the verbal form *sum*, in which *ego* is already grammatically enveloped. By developing it, Descartes transfers the being of the verb *to be* to the pronoun *I*.)

But *we* constitutes a less evident and less certain pronoun. When we hear “we” (for example, in this sentence that *I* am writing and that *you* are reading), *we* are caught up in an indeterminacy that is itself additionally polymorphous. We must ask ourselves immediately: Who, “we”? What subject has just been identified thus? On what grounds is it possible for me, or better, for *us* to admit that a “we” subsumes the multitude of subjects who would be the real or potential readers of the text that *you* have in your hands (*you* and no

other, at this moment, just as *I* write it alone, in this other present moment in which *we* most certainly cannot conjoin our two presences). You see, then, that you are indeed alone in reading, and this is true even if you are with someone else, “reading from the same book, your foreheads touching side by side,” as Victor Hugo wrote somewhere.

I am writing, you are reading. But all of us, *nous autres*, “we others” who are readers and writers of texts relating to photography, or perhaps to art in general (if I try to imagine who might read this text), if we want to identify *ourselves*, we need to construct an identity that is not at all given with this simple “we.” Every time, then, someone says “we”—and who could say “we” if not *someone*, a single person? who can say it if not *I* or *you*?—he formulates a request for identification. For this request, he proposes or suggests traits, indices, lineaments, whereas, however, he cannot confirm in their immediate and in some ways intangible positions, which the *I*, on the contrary, does confirm them.

I is distinguished without remainder, like every other. *We* lays the same claim, but with the explicit character of a solicitation, a demand, a desire, or a will to distinction. *We* must construct its alterity, which is wholly other only in a tendential manner. That is why we accompany “we” with the elements of its request: “we French,” “we in this family,” “we photographers.” By the same token, the request thus formulated confesses its fragility or its difficulty. Indeed, *who* are the “French,” *who* is “my family,” *who* are the “photographers” . . . ? In each case, it is necessary either to construct a concept or to fall back on a formal and extrinsic identification (identity card, civil records, professional license).



That is why we say *nous autres*, “we others”—or rather, certain languages say it, others imply it. Perhaps Spanish is the language in which the usage is most common. A Spanish speaker can say, “Nosotros (españoles), decimos frecuentemente ‘nosotros’”—which is, very literally, “We-others (we Spanish), we frequently say ‘we-others.’” The most ordinary context is enough to indicate implicitly the identity of the group thus distinguished (for example, those who have already seen the exhibition): an identity at once precise and weak, and insofar as it is weak, assumptive. In French, on the contrary, “*nous autres visiteurs de l’exposition*” (“we others, visitors of the exhibition”) tends toward a stronger (pretentious, emphatic, etc.)

identification. In German or in English, languages in which “*nous autres*” is not a possible construction, the context can make it implicit: when Nietzsche writes, “*Wir gute Europäer* [We good Europeans],” the French translator gives, “*Nous autres bons Européens*,” aware of the fact that the “good Europeans” are not an entity that is already given or taken for granted, but an appeal, a call, an assumption, or a distinctive claim.¹

It is always a matter of assumption or presumption. Alterity—the distinct identity—is not given. Whereas *I* produces or creates its own identity, *we* project it or assume it. *Nous autres* lets it be heard that in the end, after further investigation, this *we* could one day become a completely different—an entirely other—subject.

In a related manner, “*nous autres*” contains a presumption, without any evidence, about its enunciation. Who says “*nous autres*”? This is anything but clear. The individual who says it assumes and demands that one assume with him the enunciative co-presence of every other individual among these “others” who are designated (every other “Spanish” person, every other “photographer”). Whereas *I* distinguishes itself as wholly other, *we* appeals to all those others whom it sees fit to include within its common, supposed, but never posited identity. All the questions of democratic representation and the possibility or impossibility of a “people” can be brought together on this basis. A people can say neither “I” nor “we.” Rather, it speaks of itself in the third person: “The Spanish people declare . . .” one reads in the official, constitutional texts. But, in fact, this third person too visibly conceals the identity of the speaker (who? which subject of public law?) and endangers the performative power of the enunciation (the founding power of democracy . . .).



In a definitive way, *I* constitutes a performative in the sense that linguists give to the *speech act*:² the enunciation itself produces the truth of the statement. I am by saying “I am.” *We*, on the contrary, constitutes an inchoate performative: in the process of being formed, but not yet *performed*. “We” is always *in statu nascendi*, and it is precisely this that *nous autres* designates: a distinctive alterity aimed at, desired, held at a distance.

There is perhaps only one case in which “we” would meet up with “I” asymptotically, at infinity. This is when, faced with misfortune, misery, or death, one says (*one*: a way to avoid both *I* and *we*, degree zero of enunciation): “*pauvres de nous autres!*” (This is an old

French expression for which I hope there is an equivalent in Spanish.)⁵ *Nous autres* here designates the totality of humans in the fragility of their finitude. The only stable and evident alterity shared out to “us all” (to us as all, and other than all the rest of nature), is the alterity of the humanity in us, insofar as it has no stability and is sunk in the obscurity of an originary collapse.

It is *we* who are *other* than other beings, but this *nous autres* simultaneously distinguishes us and precipitates us—very far from gathering us together within an *I*—into the alterity or in the ontological alteration of a being that is lacking to itself. An essential non-coincidence makes *us* other than *ourselves*. (In French, “*nous-mêmes* [ourselves]” can in certain cases be a substitute for “*nous autres*”: “*nous-mêmes*” can take on the value of “for us,” “as far as we are concerned.”)

This non-coincidence passes through photography in an exemplary way. Of course, it can also be at work in painting. But painting has never envisaged the “snapshot,” the coincidence of an *I* with a click that releases a *you*, an other *I*. Photography is elaborated around the common incidence, on the silver or digital support, of light and the eye, of a view of the outside and a view from the inside, of *this particular* look (active) and of *this* other one (passive).

This common incidence is instantaneously divided between the luminous (*photo*) and its trace (*graphy*). In its trace, it is altered. The luminous turns back toward the eye (into the eye) and what it presents to it is no longer a “view” or a “vision,” neither objective nor subjective. It is, rather, the stigma of the surprise in which the thing that or the one who “takes” the photo and the thing that or the one who “is taken” in the photo are suspended together. At that point, in this stigma (photography itself), both are taken by each other and by surprising or coming upon each other. They are there, intimate and intrusive, strange and familiar to each other, at the same moment, as the same image. The sameness of this image is permeated with the alterity of its two concomitant subjects.

Photography is a monster with two subjects, with a double body (human) and a single, cavernous head whose one eye blinks on and off.

At this point, at this moment, in this place of the photograph in which time blinks and is distended as an immobile surface, the most exact and the most rigorous *nous autres* is produced. Each one affirms its alterity while both together make the request for an identity distinct from every other, in whose distinction they are absorbed into

one another, one by the other (as in a designation of this sort: *James Joyce by Gisèle Freund*, a view of one of them [Joyce] in the eyes of the other, and one of them looking [Freund] into the eyes of the other). It is the identity of the photograph itself, openly non-identical to itself and thus strangely identical to the superimposition of the two others in it, the viewfinder and the viewed surprising one another—over-seeing [*sur-veillant*] one another and suddenly “coming upon” or happening [*sur-venant*] to one another. Both of them together, as a “photograph,” pronouncing a kind of silent *nous autres*.



In this sense, each of the *I*'s (model and photographer—or subject and subject . . .) deposits in the photo a performative self-certainty, by attesting *only in the other* to one's own distinction as wholly other. Each photograph forms a *nous autres* in which, for a moment, the eternal instant that trembles in the photo unites photographer and photographed who are now one—a single identity assumed, and presumed, for which the photograph is only the supposition and the support. Consequently, although every photograph articulates this “*nous autres*,” it also ends up pronouncing and performing a tacit *I* that it itself immediately and improbably *is*.

Every photograph is an irrefutable and luminous *I am*, whose proper being is neither the photographed subject nor the photographing subject, but the silvery or digital evidence of a *grasping*: this thing, that thing, this man here, that woman there was grasped, there, at that time, by a click, and this *hic et nunc* eternalizes here and now, on this paper on which it was *developed* and *printed*, its sovereign hesitation immobilized and sublimated in the decision that took it, and grasped it, by surprise. This grasping presents itself and says to us, “I am.” But at the same time this *I am* says “*nous autres*”: we who were grasped in the grasping, we who were surprised and caught together by this *hic et nunc*, which makes us others together, others to one another, one through another and one in another, others who we never are outside of this surprise, we who are other (finally and above all) than you who regard us, we others who are now embedded in the strangeness of our illuminated capture.

Like the other *ego sum*, this one is made explicit as an *ego cogito*. Photography thinks, which is to say that it relates to itself as the photo-being that it is. It is experienced and constructed as an illumination, a dividing up and sharing out of shadow, frame, grain, and depth of field, and in doing so it determines a knot of signification

whose intimate entwining is played out in the grasping or gripping of hesitation. Because this knot cannot be undone—only somewhat loosened, through a few interpretive sketches—thought remains here fundamentally a thought of its own strangeness.

In a photograph there is always something hallucinatory, something that has lost its way or is out of place. Whereas painting—or cinema, though in a completely different way—works to present, to bring us into proximity with a modality of presence, photography, which at first seems bound to operate in the same direction, is given over to an irrepressible removal of its own presence.⁴ It is lost; as soon as it is printed [*tirée*]—as though drawn [*tirée*] out of nothing—it is withdrawn [*retirée*] from our grasp, hidden, and secret. Even the least photograph openly holds out a secret, and it does so by metamorphosing everything into an alterity all the more altered in that it is close to us, in that it refers us to our familiar immediacy. Consequently, it always murmurs a *nous autres*: we (others) who are exposed, who are illuminated by the sun, the moon, and the projectors, we (others) who are the strange beings of this world of day and night, we (others) who surprise ourselves in viewing ourselves, in turning ourselves into visions, in photosynthesizing ourselves, we humans and shadows of humans, we are our most proper and therefore our strangest, most foreign others.

The secret of the photograph, the very clear mystery of its being lost and straying, is its flight into the strange in the very midst of the familiar. The photo *captures* the familiar, and immediately, instantaneously, it *strays* into strangeness. By capturing its own straying, it leads what it captures astray. The photograph *estranges*, it estranges *us*. Between the subject of the click and the subject grasped, there is a coexistence without coincidence, or there is a coincidence without contact, or a contact without union (which is the law of contact). The encounter is ineffective in its effectivity (which is the law of encounter).

Such is the straying and secret *I am* of the photo. Thus it does not say, “I is an other”; rather, it proffers the wholly other “I am” whose text consists in “we others.” It remains to be asked whether there is ever any *I am* that is not laden in the depths of it-self with innumerable we-others: but that is perhaps exactly what the photograph charges itself with uncovering, with suggesting. Each “subject” in the photo refers tacitly, obstinately, to all the others, to this prodigious universe of photos in(to) which we all take ourselves and one another, at some time or another, this colossal and labyrinthine photo-

theque in whose depths there stalks—like a Minotaur—the monster, the monstration, and the prodigious image of our strangeness. The encounter is always monstrous, or monstrating, ostensive and threatening, invasive and evasive in the same moment, straying in its capture, released in being grasped. This is not a dialectic, or else it is the point—the seed or grain—of madness that vibrates at the heart of every dialectic, the labyrinth that disturbs its progress and throws it off course.

This grain, or this labyrinth, is called a body. A photograph is a rubbing or rubbing away of a body. We others, as others, are bodies. When we meet one another, we are bodies. We are in each case the brother or the sister of the Minotaur's human body, and it is this body's blood that flows through the beast's head. The bodiless, for its part, is the same, the self-same, hidden behind its body, the dimensionless point of spirit, the empty reference of a formal "I think." But what makes the photograph possible (and what once made people believe that it could capture spirits in its gelatin) is that in the photo it is a question of the body: it is the body that grasps, and it is the body that is grasped and released. It is the body, its thin surface, that is detached and removed by the film. This is the physics and the chemistry of the instant, the force of gravity of the click, this curvature of space and this impalpable lightness of a vision that precipitates and coagulates into a thickness of skin, a density of touch. The contact and the tact of the photographic click detaches a new body each time, an instantaneous body, unstable and fixed in its instability, as a loving or a suffering body, desiring or fearing, which is surprised and overtaken by pleasure or pain. We others, we difficult bodies, delicate bodies and exposed skins obscured by their own clarity, bodies gently pressed and released by another body, by its eye, its finger, its uncertain thought of being and appearing, which suddenly comes to take its place in us (others), as in the cavernous recesses in which it will carry on its rumination.

Notes

1. The Image—the Distinct

1. [The French word that Nancy uses here, *lien*, shares its Latin root with “religion.”—Trans.]

2. [Nancy often uses the word *trait* to describe the kind of marking off in question here. In French, *trait* can mean both a “mark” or “line” that is drawn and a “trait,” as in a feature. I will lean toward the literal rendering in order to maintain its resonance with the other words that Nancy puts into play in what follows (words built around *-trait* or *-tract*); its relation to the many senses of “drawing” (withdrawing, etc.) should be kept in mind as well.—Trans.]

3. [The word used here, as in the title of the book in which this essay was published, is *le fond*. It means “depth” or “bottom” in a spatial sense, but is often used to refer to pictorial space, where “ground” or “background” is more appropriate in English. It occurs in a common expression, *au fond*, in the (logical) sense of “at bottom,” “in the end,” but is used by Nancy also in the more spatial sense of “in the (back)ground” or “in the depth.”—Trans.]

4. The relation between the image and sacrifice—a relation of divergent proximity—would require a more precise analysis, particularly in the two directions indicated simultaneously: on the one hand, as a sacrifice of the image, necessary in an entire religious tradition (the image must be destroyed and/or rendered entirely permeable to the sacred), and, on the other, as a “sacrificial image,” where sacrifice is itself understood as an image (not as “only an image,” but as the aspect, the *species*—the Eucharistic “sacred species”—or the appearing of a real presence. See J.-L. Nancy, “L’Immémorial,” in *Art, mémoire, commémoration*, (Nancy: Ecole nationale

des arts de Nancy/Éditions Voix, 1999). But in the second direction, sacrifice deconstructs itself, along with all monotheism. The image—and with it, art in general—is at the heart of this deconstruction. In *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, trans. Rico Franses (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), Marie-José Mondzain has provided a remarkable analysis of the Byzantine elaborations that, at the heart of our tradition, have harbored “a concept of the image that demands a void at the heart of its visibility.” Her approaches and her intentions are different from my own, but they intersect, and this intersection no doubt reveals a certain exigency: the reign of “full” images encounters the resistance of a speech that wants to allow the ground of the image resonate as something that Mondzain refers to as a “void”—something that one could also give the name “distinct,” as I am trying to do here.

5. This was (if anything was) the center of Bataille’s thought.

6. [I have given one of the figurative meanings of this idiomatic expression, which can also mean “touchy.” As Nancy remarks just below, *fleur* (literally, “flower”) evokes the uppermost layer of a surface.—Trans.]

7. See J.-L. Nancy, *Le Regard du portrait* (Paris: Galilée, 2000).

8. Edith Wharton, “Summer,” in *Novellas and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1990), p. 159.

9. [A term treated extensively in Nancy’s writing, *partage* means “division” but also “sharing” in the sense of “sharing out.” See especially *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).—Trans.]

10. Similarly, in Epicurus, the images of things—the *eidola*—are *simulacra* (in Lucretius’ language) only inasmuch as they are also parts of the thing, themselves atoms transported to us, touching and filling our eyes. See Claude Gaudin, *Lucrece: La lecture des choses* (Fougères: Encre Marine, 1999), p. 230.

11. [Word in English in the original; in French, *ciel* can mean “heaven” or “sky.”—Trans.]

12. Sumerian and Akkadian creation story, in Jean Bottéro and Samuel Noah Kramer, *Lorsque les dieux faisaient l’homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

13. It is thus a question of reviving the “instability” that the “onto-typology” analyzed by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe “was supposed to freeze.” See “Typography,” in *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989; rpt. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 138. Art—if the image I am speaking of indeed belongs to art—has always been this reviving and awakening, and the reminder of a vigilance prior to every “onto-typology.”

14. Beyond this first sight, there is the very subtle analysis by Michel Foucault, which has much in common with what follows here. See *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

15. What is simply there, “present at hand” or “available,” according to Heidegger’s terminology in *Being and Time*, not in the sense of the “being-there” of *Dasein*, which, as its name does not indicate, is precisely not there but always elsewhere, in the open: Would the image therefore have something of *Dasein* about it . . . ?

16. [Here *sage* (“wise”) implies well-behaved, restrained, calm, or “good” (as in “be a good boy”). A rough English equivalent would be “good as gold.”—Trans.]

17. Whether literal (Catholic, Orthodox) or symbolic (Protestant).

18. See Frederico Ferrari, “Tutto è quello che è,” in *Wolfgang Laib* (Milan: West Zone Publishing, 1999). Frederico Ferrari says that art refers to nothing invisible, and that it gives what the thing is. I say this as well, but here this means that the “invisible” is not something hidden from the gaze: it is the thing itself, sensible or endowed with sense according to its “quello che è,” its “what it is”—in short, it is its being.

19. A fragment from 1906, printed in Rainer Maria Rilke, *Chant éloigné*, trans. Jean-Yves Masson (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1990). [Also in Rilke, *Werke* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1987), vol. 2, p. 693.]

20. Friedrich Nietzsche, posthumous fragment, *Werke* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1956), vol. 3, p. 832. [Nietzsche uses the phrase *zugrunde geben*, meaning “to perish, to be destroyed.” I follow Nancy (who writes *coulés au fond*) in giving a more literal translation.—Trans.]

21. [Meaning literally “untied” or “unbound,” this word refers to a thin “upstroke” in handwriting.—Trans.]

22. Verdi, *La Traviata*, act 3, “Prendi, quest’è l’immagine.” Violetta, at the moment of her death, offers her portrait to Alfredo. The music is already funereal; it measures out the approach of death, which will be suspended by the tense rising of the strings, the *parlando*, then the shout that ends the song.

2. Image and Violence

1. It is remarkable that we find this in Pascal, who in so many and in such indefatigable ways is the first of the moderns (of our anxieties): “It is as a child, which a mother tears from the arms of robbers, in the pain it suffers, should love the loving and legitimate violence of her who procures his freedom, and must detest only the impetuous and tyrannical violence of those who detain it unjustly” (*Pensées* no. 498, Brunschvig ed., trans. Thomas M’Crie [New York: Modern Library, 1948], translation slightly modified). The two pairs of qualifiers that Pascal uses (“loving and legitimate . . . impetuous and tyrannical . . .”) contain an entire program on passionate and political violence, and on the links between the two. After Pascal, and beyond the Enlightenment (which represents the possibility of keeping violence separate from being), there is a long series of thinkers in whose work a double, contradictory, or undecidable violence is articulated.

20. Descartes, in order to see what seeing is, looked through the eye of a dissected ox, and Flemish perspective was used to produce “views of vision.” (See Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983]. But much more broadly, in truth, to see seeing, to see oneself seeing and to un-imagine what precedes and opens every image, is a powerful motif extending from Plato to us, from Parrhasius to Malevich or Bill Viola and from blind Orion to *Being John Malkovich*.

21. *Being and Time*, section 50 [p. 233].

22. For the reader who does not know German, a further clarification might be helpful: in *ableben* and *Abbild* the prefix *ab* does not have the same value and therefore should not wrongly be used to overextend the parallelism that I am sketching. In *ableben*, the value is that of departure; in *Abbild*, it is that of secondariness. Nonetheless, it is, after all, the same *ab*, which is in fact both Latin and Germanic, and its sense is always at bottom that of “away from . . .,” “taking off from . . .,” “beginning from . . .”

23. [*Oedipus at Colonus*, lines 1767–68. I have given a literal translation of Nancy’s rendering of these lines.—Trans.]

7. *Nous Autres*

NOTE: [This essay was first published in Spanish translation in the catalogue of an exhibition of photographs entitled “NosOtros: Identidad y alteridad” (held in Madrid in 2003), for which it was written. *Nosotros*, the Spanish word for “we,” breaks down literally into “we others.” As Nancy points out below, *nous autres* has certain specific uses in French, whereas “we others” is not used in English.—Trans.]

1. [See, e.g., *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 241, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 174).—Trans.]

2. [English in original.]

3. [The Spanish equivalent is “¡Pobre de nosotros!” Like the French expression, it means, very literally, “Poor us others!”—Trans.]

4. Of course, “photograph,” “painting,” and “cinema” here become concepts that are at least partially independent of determinate techniques and material supports. With these terms I designate valencies or tendencies that can be mixed together within the space and in the use of a single medium, so that in a “photograph” there may be more “painting” or “cinema” than “photograph,” and reciprocally . . . “Video” would also have to enter into this play of concepts.

8. Visitation

1. See *Immemory*, the CD-ROM by Chris Marker (Centre Pompidou, 1998), in which it is a matter not of privation but rather of an overflowing of memory, a memory freeing itself from itself.