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M E R I D I A N

HANDBOOK OF INAESTHETICS

Alain Badiou

TRANSLATED BY ALBERTO TOSCANO

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By "inaesthetics" I understand a relation of philosophy to art that, maintaining that art is itself a producer of truths, makes no claim to turn art into an object for philosophy. Against aesthetic speculation, inaesthetics describes the strictly intraphilosophical effects produced by the independent existence of some works of art.

—A. B., April 1998

§ 1 Art and Philosophy

This link has always been affected by a symptom—that of an oscillation or a pulse.

At its origins there lies the judgment of ostracism that Plato directed against poetry, theater, and music. We must face the fact that in the *Republic*, the founder of philosophy, clearly a refined connoisseur of all the arts of his time, spares only military music and patriotic song.

At the other extreme, we find a pious devotion to art, a contrite prostration of the concept—regarded as a manifestation of technical nihilism—before the poetic word, which is alone in offering the world up to the latent Openness of its own distress.¹

But, after all, it is already with the sophist Protagoras that we encounter the designation of artistic apprenticeship as the key to education. An alliance existed between Protagoras and Simonides the poet—a subterfuge that Plato's Socrates tried to thwart, so as to submit its thinkable intensity to his own ends.

An image comes to mind, an analogical matrix of meaning: Historically, philosophy and art are paired up like Lacan's Master and Hysteric. We know that the hysteric comes to the master and says: "Truth speaks through my mouth, I am *here*. You have knowledge, tell me who I am." Whatever the knowing subtlety of the master's reply, we can also anticipate that the hysteric will let him know that it's not yet *it*, that her *here* escapes the master's grasp, that it must all be taken up again and worked through at length in order to please her. In so doing, the hysteric takes charge of the master, "barring" him from mastery and becoming his mistress.² Likewise, art is always already there, addressing the thinker with the

mute and scintillating question of its identity while through constant invention and metamorphosis it declares its disappointment about everything that the philosopher may have to say about it.

If he balks at amorous servitude and at the idolatry that represents the price of this exhausting and ever deceptive production of knowledge, the hysteric's master hardly has another choice than to give her a good beating.³ Likewise, the philosopher-master remains divided, when it comes to art, between idolatry and censure. Either he will say to the young (his disciples) that at the heart of every virile education of reason lies the imperative of holding oneself at a remove from the Creature, or he will end up conceding that she alone—this opaque brilliance that cannot but hold us captive—instructs us about the angle from which truth commands the production of knowledge.

And since what we are required to elucidate is the link between art and philosophy, it seems that, formally speaking, this link is thought in accordance with two schemata.

The first is what I will call the *didactic* schema. Its thesis is that art is incapable of truth, or that all truth is external to art. This thesis will certainly acknowledge that art presents itself (like the hysteric) in the guise of effective, immediate, or naked truth. Moreover, it will suggest that this nakedness exposes art as the pure *charm* of truth. More precisely, it will say that art is the appearance of an unfounded or nondiscursive truth, of a truth that is exhausted in its being-there. But—and this is the whole point of the Platonic trial—this pretence or seduction will be rejected. The heart of the Platonic polemic about mimesis designates art not so much as an imitation of things, but as the imitation of the effect of truth. This is an imitation that draws its power from its *immediate* character. Plato will therefore argue that to be the prisoners of an immediate image of truth *diverts us from the detour*. If truth can exist as charm, then we are fated to lose the force of dialectical labor, of the slow argumentation that prepares the way for the ascent to the Principle. We must therefore denounce the supposedly immediate truth of art as a false truth, as the semblance that belongs to the effect of truth. The definition of art, and of art alone, is thus the following: To be the charm of a semblance of truth.

It follows that art must be either condemned or treated in a purely instrumental fashion. Placed under strict surveillance, art lends the transitory force of semblance or of charm to a truth that is prescribed *from outside*. Acceptable art must be subjected to the philosophical surveillance of

truths. This position upholds a didactics of the senses whose aim cannot be abandoned to immanence. The norm of art must be education; the norm of education is philosophy. This is the first knot that ties our three terms (art, philosophy, and education) together.

In this perspective, the essential thing is the control of art. This control is possible. Why? Because if the truth of which art is capable comes to it from outside—if art is a didactics of the senses—it follows, and this point is crucial, that the “good” essence of art is conveyed in its public effect, and not in the artwork itself. As Rousseau writes in the *Letter to D'Alembert*: “The spectacle is made for the people, and it is only by its effects upon the people that its absolute qualities can be determined.”

In the didactic schema, the absolute of art is thus controlled by the public effects of semblance, effects that are in turn regulated by an extrinsic truth.

This educational injunction is itself absolutely opposed by what I will call the *romantic* schema. Its thesis is that art *alone* is capable of truth. What's more, it is in this sense that art accomplishes what philosophy itself can only point toward. In the romantic schema, art is the real body of truth, or what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have named “the literary absolute.” It is patent that this real body is a glorious body. Philosophy might very well be the withdrawn and impenetrable Father—art is the suffering Son who saves and redeems. Genius is crucifixion and resurrection. In this respect, it is art itself that educates, because it teaches of the power of infinity held within the tormented cohesion of a form. Art delivers us from the subjective barrenness of the concept. Art is the absolute as subject—it is *incarnation*.

Nevertheless, between didactic banishment and romantic glorification (a “between” that is not essentially temporal) there is—it seems—an age of relative peace between art and philosophy. The question of art does not torment Descartes, Leibniz, or Spinoza. It appears that these great classical thinkers do not have to choose between the severity of control and the ecstasy of allegiance.

Was it not Aristotle himself who had already signed, between art and philosophy, a peace treaty of sorts? All the evidence points to the existence of a third schema, the *classical* schema, of which one will say from the start that it *dehysterichizes art*.

The classical *dispositif*, as constructed by Aristotle, is contained in two theses:

a) Art—as the didactic schema argues—is incapable of truth. Its essence is mimetic, and its regime is that of semblance.

b) This incapacity does not pose a serious problem (contrary to what Plato believed). This is because the *purpose* [destination] of art is not in the least truth. Of course, art is not truth, but it also does not claim to be truth and is therefore innocent. Aristotle's prescription places art under the sign of something entirely other than knowledge and thereby frees it from the Platonic suspicion. This other thing, which he sometimes names "catharsis," involves the deposition of the passions in a transference onto semblance. Art has a therapeutic function, and not at all a cognitive or revelatory one. Art does not pertain to the theoretical, but to the ethical (in the widest possible sense of the term). It follows that the norm of art is to be found in its utility for the treatment of the affections of the soul.

The great rules concerning art can be immediately inferred from the two theses of the classical schema.

The criterion of art is first of all that of liking. In no respect is "liking" a rule of opinion, a rule of the greatest number. Art must be liked because "liking" signals the effectiveness of catharsis, the real grip exerted by the artistic therapy of the passions.

Second, the name of what "liking" relates to is not truth. "Liking" is bound only to what extracts from a truth the arrangement of an identification. The "resemblance" to the true is required only to the degree that it engages the spectator of art in "liking," that is, in an identification that organizes a transference and thus in a deposition of the passions. This scrap of truth is therefore not truth per se, but rather what *a truth constrains within the imaginary*. This "imaginarization" of truth, which is relieved of any instance of the Real, is what the classical thinkers called "verisimilitude" or "likelihood."

In the end, the peace between philosophy and art rests entirely on the demarcation of truth from verisimilitude. This is why the classical maxim par excellence is: "The true is sometimes not the likely." This maxim states the demarcation and maintains—*beside* art—the rights of philosophy. Philosophy, which clearly grants itself the possibility of being without verisimilitude. We encounter here a classical definition of philosophy: The unlikely truth.

What is the cost of this peace between philosophy and art? Without doubt, art is innocent, but this is because it is innocent of all truth. In other words, it is inscribed in the imaginary. Strictly speaking, within the classi-

cal schema, art is not a form of thought. It is entirely exhausted by its act or by its public operation. "Liking" turns art into a service. To summarize, we could say that in the classical view, art is a public service. After all, this is how it is understood by the state in the "vassalization" of art and artists by absolutism, as well as in the modern vicissitudes of funding. In terms of the link that preoccupies us here, the state is essentially classical (perhaps with the exception of the socialist state, which was rather didactic).

Let us briefly recapitulate our argument.

Didacticism, romanticism, and classicism are the possible schemata of the link between art and philosophy—the third term of this link being the education of subjects, the youth in particular. In didacticism, philosophy is tied to art in the modality of an educational surveillance of art's purpose, which views it as extrinsic to truth. In romanticism, art realizes within finitude all the subjective education of which the philosophical infinity of the idea is capable. In classicism, art captures desire and shapes [*éduque*] its transference by proposing a semblance of its object. Philosophy is summoned here only qua aesthetics: It has its say about the rules of "liking."

In my view, the century that is coming to a close was characterized by the fact that it did not introduce, on a massive scale, any new schema. Though it is considered to be the century of endings, breaks, and catastrophes, when it comes to the link that concerns us here, I see it instead as a century that was simultaneously conservative and eclectic.

What are the massive tendencies of thought in the twentieth century? Its massively identifiable *singularities*? I can see only three: Marxism, psychoanalysis, and German hermeneutics.

It is clear that as regards the thinking of art, Marxism is didactic, psychoanalysis classical, and Heideggerian hermeneutics romantic.

The proof that Marxism is didactic need not be located immediately in the evidence of the ukases and persecutions that were perpetrated in the socialist states. The surest proof lies in Brecht's unbridled creative thought. For Brecht, there exists a general and extrinsic truth, a truth the character of which is scientific. This truth is dialectical materialism, whose status as the solid base of the new rationality Brecht never cast into doubt. This truth is essentially philosophical, and the "philosopher" is the leading character in Brecht's didactic dialogues. It is the philosopher who is in charge of the surveillance of art through the latent supposition of a di-

alectical truth. It is in this respect that Brecht remained a Stalinist, if by Stalinism we understand—as indeed we should—the fusion of politics and of dialectical materialist philosophy under the jurisdiction of the latter. We could also say that Brecht practiced a Stalinized Platonism. Brecht's supreme goal was to create a "society of the friends of dialectics," and the theater was, in more than one respect, the instrument of such a society. The alienation effect is a protocol of philosophical surveillance *in actu* with regard to the educational ends of theater. Semblance must be alienated [*mis à distance*] from itself so as to *show*, in the gap thus formed, the extrinsic objectivity of the true.

Fundamentally, Brecht's greatness lay in having obstinately searched for the immanent rules of a Platonic (didactic) art, instead of remaining content, like Plato, with classifying the existing arts as either good or bad. His "non-Aristotelian" (meaning nonclassical and ultimately Platonic) theater is an artistic invention of the first caliber within the reflexive element of a subordination of art. Brecht theatrically reactivated Plato's antitheatrical measures. He did so by turning the possible forms of the subjectivation of an external truth into the focal point of art.

The importance of the epic dimension also originates in this program. The epic is what exhibits—in the interval of the performance—the *courage* of truth. For Brecht, art produces no truth, but is instead an elucidation—based on the supposition that the true exists—of the conditions for a courage of truth. Art, under surveillance, is a therapy against cowardice. Not against cowardice in general, but against cowardice *in the face of truth*. This is obviously why the figure of Galileo is central, and also why this play is Brecht's tormented masterpiece, the one in which the paradox of an epic that would be internal to the exteriority of truth turns upon itself.

It is evident, I think, that Heideggerian hermeneutics remains romantic. By all appearances, it exposes an indiscernible entanglement between the saying of the poet and the thought of the thinker. Nevertheless, the advantage is still with the poet, because the thinker is nothing but the announcement of a reversal, the promise of the advent of the gods at the height of our distress, and the retroactive elucidation of the historicity of being. While the poet, in the flesh of language, maintains the effaced guarding of the Open.

We could say that Heidegger unfolds the figure of the poet-thinker as the obverse of Nietzsche's philosopher-artist. But what interests us here

and characterizes the romantic schema is that between philosophy and art it is *the same truth that circulates*. The retreat of being comes to thought in the conjoining of the poem and its interpretation. Interpretation is in the end nothing but the *delivery* of the poem over to the trembling of finitude in which thought strives to endure the retreat of being as clearing. Poet and thinker, relying on one another, embody within the word the opening out of its closure [*le déclos de sa clôture*]. In this respect, the poem, strictly speaking, cannot be equaled.

Psychoanalysis is Aristotelian, absolutely classical. In order to be persuaded of this, it suffices to read Freud's writings on painting and Lacan's pronouncements on the theater or poetry. In Freud and Lacan, art is conceived as what makes it so that the object of desire, which is beyond symbolization, can subtractively emerge at the very peak of an act of symbolization. In its formal bearing, the work leads to the dissipation of the unspeakable scintillation of the lost object. In so doing, it ineluctably captivates the gaze or the hearing of the one who is exposed to it. The work of art links up to a transference because it exhibits, in a singular and contorted configuration, the blockage of the symbolic by the Real, the "extimacy"⁴ of the *objet petit a* (the cause of desire) to the Other (the treasure of the symbolic). This is why the ultimate effect of art remains imaginary.

I can therefore conclude as follows: This century, which essentially has not modified the doctrines concerning the link between art and philosophy, has nevertheless experienced the *saturation* of these doctrines. Didacticism is saturated by the state-bound and historical exercise of art in the service of the people. Romanticism is saturated by the element of pure promise—always brought back to the supposition of a return of the gods—in Heidegger's rhetorical equipment. Classicism, finally, is saturated by the self-consciousness conferred upon it by the complete deployment of a theory of desire. Whence, if one has not already fallen prey to the lures of an "applied psychoanalysis," the ruinous conviction that the relationship between psychoanalysis and art is never anything but a service rendered to psychoanalysis itself: Art as free service.

That today the three schemata are saturated tends to produce a kind of disentanglement of the terms, a desperate "disrelation" between art and philosophy, together with the pure and simple collapse of what had circulated between them: the pedagogical theme.

From Dadaism to Situationism, the century's avant-gardes have been nothing but escort experiments for contemporary art, and not the ade-

quate designation of the real operations of this art. The role of the avant-gardes was to represent, rather than to link. This is because they were nothing but the desperate and unstable search for a mediating schema, for a didactico-romantic schema. The avant-gardes were didactic in their desire to put an end to art, in their condemnation of its alienated and inauthentic character. But they were also romantic in their conviction that art must be reborn immediately as absolute—as the undivided awareness of its operations or as its own immediately legible truth. Considered as the harbingers of a didactico-romantic schema or as the partisans of the absoluteness of creative destruction, the avant-gardes were above all anticlassical.

Their limit lay in their incapacity to place a lasting seal on their alliances, with respect either to the contemporary forms of the didactic schema or to those of the romantic one. In empirical terms: Just like the fascism of Marinetti and the Futurists, the communism of Breton and the Surrealists remained merely allegorical. The avant-gardes did not achieve their conscious objective: to lead a united front against classicism. Revolutionary didactics condemned them on the grounds of their romantic traits: the leftism of total destruction and of a self-consciousness fashioned *ex nihilo*, an incapacity for action on a grand scale, a fragmentation into small groups. Hermeneutic romanticism condemned them on the grounds of their didactic traits: an affinity for revolution, intellectualism, contempt for the state. Above all, it condemned them because the didacticism of the avant-gardes was marked by a brand of aesthetic voluntarism. And we know that, for Heidegger, the will constitutes the last subjective figure of contemporary nihilism.

Today, the avant-gardes have disappeared. The global situation is basically marked by two developments: on the one hand, the saturation of the three inherited schemata, on the other, the closure of every effect produced by the only schema that the century applied, which was in fact a synthetic schema: didactico-romanticism.

The thesis of which this book is but a series of variations can therefore be stated as follows: In this situation of saturation and closure, it is necessary to propose a new schema, a fourth modality of the link between philosophy and art.

The method of our inquiry will at first be negative: What do the three inherited schemata—didactic, romantic, classical—have in common, that today we would need to rid ourselves of? I believe that the “common” of these three schemata concerns the relation between art and truth.

The categories of this relation are immanence and singularity. “Immanence” refers to the following question: Is truth really internal to the artistic effect of works of art? Or is the artwork instead nothing but the instrument of an external truth? “Singularity” points us to another question: Does the truth testified by art belong to it absolutely? Or can this truth circulate among other registers of work-producing thought [*la pensée vivante*]?

What can we immediately observe? First, that in the romantic schema, the relation of truth to art is indeed immanent (art exposes the finite descent of the Idea), but not singular (because we are dealing with *the* truth and the thinker’s thought is not attuned to something different from what is unveiled in the saying of the poet). Second, that in didacticism, the relation is certainly singular (only art can exhibit a truth *in the form of semblance*), but not at all immanent, because the position of truth is ultimately extrinsic. And third, that in classicism, we are dealing only with the constraint that a truth exercises within the domain of the imaginary in the guise of verisimilitude, of the “likely.”

In these inherited schemata, the relation between artworks and truth never succeeds in being at once singular and immanent.

We will therefore affirm this simultaneity. In other words: Art *itself* is a truth procedure. Or again: The philosophical identification of art falls under the category of truth. Art is a thought in which artworks are the Real (and not the effect). And this thought, or rather the truths that it activates, are irreducible to other truths—be they scientific, political, or amorous. This also means that art, as a singular regime of thought, is irreducible to philosophy.

Immanence: Art is rigorously coextensive with the truths that it generates.

Singularity: These truths are given nowhere else than in art.

According to this vision of things, what becomes of the third term of the link, the pedagogical function of art? Art is pedagogical for the simple reason that it produces truths and because “education” (save in its oppressive or perverted expressions) has never meant anything but this: to arrange the forms of knowledge in such a way that some truth may come to pierce a hole in them.

What art educates us for is therefore nothing apart from its own existence. The only question is that of encountering this existence, that is, of thinking through a form of thought [*penser une pensée*].

Philosophy’s relation to art, like its relation to every other truth proce-

ture, comes down to *showing* it as it is. Philosophy is the go-between in our encounters with truths, the procuress of truth. And just as beauty is to be found in the woman encountered, but is in no way required of the procuress, so it is that truths are artistic, scientific, amorous, or political, and not philosophical.

The problem is therefore concentrated upon the *singularity* of the artistic procedure, upon what authorizes its irreducible differentiation—vis-à-vis science or politics, for example.

It is imperative to recognize that beneath its manifest simplicity—its naiveté, even—the thesis according to which art would be a truth procedure sui generis, both immanent and singular, is in fact an absolutely novel philosophical proposition. Most of the consequences of this thesis remain veiled, and it demands from us a considerable labor of reformulation. The symptom of this novelty can be registered when we consider that Deleuze, for example, continues to place art on the side of sensation as such (percept and affect), in paradoxical continuity with the Hegelian motif of art as the “sensible form of the Idea.” Deleuze thereby disjoins art from philosophy (which is devoted to the invention of concepts alone), in line with a modality of demarcation that still leaves the destination of art as a form of thought entirely unapparent. This is because if one fails to summon the category of truth in this affair, one cannot hope to succeed in establishing the plane of immanence from which the differentiation between art, science, and philosophy can proceed.

I think that the principal difficulty in this respect derives from the following point: When one undertakes the thinking of art as an immanent production of truths, *what is the pertinent unity of what is called “art”*? Is it the artwork itself, the singularity of a work? Is it the author, the creator? Or is it something else?

In actual fact, the essence of the question has to do with the problem of the relation between the infinite and the finite. A truth is an infinite multiplicity. I cannot establish this point here by way of formal demonstration, as I have done elsewhere.⁵ Let us say that this was the insight proper to the partisans of the romantic schema, before they obliterated their discovery in the aesthetic diagram of finitude, of the artist as the Christ of the Idea. Or, to be more conceptual: The infinity of a truth is the property whereby it subtracts itself from its pure and simple identity with the established forms of knowledge.

A work of art is essentially finite. It is trebly finite. First of all, it exposes

itself as finite objectivity in space and/or in time. Second, it is always regulated by a Greek principle of completion: It moves within the fulfillment of its own limit. It signals its display of all the perfection of which it is capable. Finally, and most importantly, it sets itself up as an inquiry into the question of its own finality. It is the persuasive procedure of its own finitude. This is, after all, why the artwork is irreplaceable in all of its points (another trait that distinguishes it from the generic infinite of the true): Once “left” to its own immanent ends, it is as it will forever be, and every touch-up or modification is either inessential or destructive.

I would even happily argue that the work of art is in fact the only finite thing that exists—that art creates finitude. Put otherwise, art is the creation of an intrinsically finite multiple, a multiple that exposes its own organization in and by the finite framing of its presentation and that turns this border into the stakes of its existence.

Thus, if one wishes to argue that the work is a truth, by the same token, one will also have to maintain that it is the descent of the infinite-true into finitude. But this figure of the descent of the infinite into the finite is precisely the kernel of the romantic schema that thinks art as incarnation. It is striking to see that this schema is still at work in Deleuze, for whom art entertains with the chaotic infinite the most faithful of relationships precisely because it configures the chaotic within the finite.

It does not appear that the desire to propose a schema of the art/philosophy link that would be neither classical, didactic, nor romantic is compatible with the retention of the work as the pertinent unit of inquiry—at least not if we wish to examine art under the sign of the truths of which it is capable.

All the more so given a supplementary difficulty: Every truth originates in an event. Once again, I leave this assertion in its axiomatic state. Let us say that it is vain to imagine that one could *invent* anything at all (and every truth is an invention) were nothing to happen, were “nothing to have taken place but the place.” One would then be back at an “ingenious” or idealistic conception of invention. The problem that we need to deal with is that it is impossible to say of the work *at one and the same time* that it is a truth and that it is the event whence this truth originates. It is very often argued that the work of art must be thought of as an eventual singularity, rather than as a structure. But every fusion of the event and truth returns us to a “Christly” vision of truth, because a truth is then nothing but its own eventual self-revelation.

I think the path to be followed is encapsulated in a small number of propositions.

—As a general rule, a work is not an event. A work is a fact of art. It is the fabric from which the artistic procedure is woven.

—Nor is a work of art a truth. A truth is an artistic procedure initiated by an event. This procedure is *composed* of nothing but works. But it does not manifest itself (as infinity) in any of them. The work is thus the local instance or the differential point of a truth.

—We will call this differential point of the artistic procedure its *subject*. A work is the subject of the artistic procedure in question, that is, the procedure to which this work belongs. In other words: An artwork is a subject point of an artistic truth.

—The sole being of a truth is that of works. An artistic truth is a (infinite) generic multiple of works. But these works weave together the being of an artistic truth only by the chance of their successive occurrences.

—We can also say this: A work is a situated *inquiry* about the truth that it locally actualizes or of which it is a finite fragment.

—The work is thus submitted to a principle of novelty. This is because an inquiry is retroactively validated as a real work of art only inasmuch as it is an inquiry *that had not taken place*, an unprecedented subject-point within the trajectory of a truth.

—Works compose a truth within the post-*evental dimension* that institutes *the constraint of an artistic configuration*. In the end, a truth is an artistic configuration initiated by an event (in general, an event is a group of works, a singular multiple of works) and unfolded through chance in the form of the works that serve as its subject points.

In the final analysis, the pertinent *unit* for a thinking of art as an immanent and singular truth is thus neither the work nor the author, but rather the artistic configuration initiated by an evental rupture (which in general renders a prior configuration obsolete). This configuration, which is a generic multiple, possesses neither a proper name nor a proper contour, not even a possible totalization in terms of a single predicate. It cannot be exhausted, only imperfectly described. It is an artistic truth, and everybody knows that there is no truth of truth. Finally, an artistic configuration is generally designated by means of abstract concepts (the figural, the tonal, the tragic...).

What are we to understand, more precisely, by "artistic configuration"?

A configuration is not an art form, a genre, or an "objective" period in the history of art, nor is it a "technical" *dispositif*. Rather, it is an identifiable sequence, initiated by an event, comprising a virtually infinite complex of works, when speaking of which it makes sense to say that it produces—in a rigorous immanence to the art in question—a truth *of this art*, an art-truth. Philosophy will bear the trace of this configuration inasmuch as it will have to show in what sense this configuration lets itself be grasped by the category of truth. The philosophical montage of the category of truth will in turn be singularized by the artistic configurations of its time. In this sense, it is true to say that, more often than not, a configuration is thinkable at the juncture of an effective process within art and of the philosophies that seize this process.

One will point to Greek tragedy, for example, which has been grasped as a configuration time and again, from Plato or Aristotle to Nietzsche. The initiating event of tragedy bears the name "Aeschylus," but this name, like every other name of an event, is really the index of a central void in the previous situation of choral poetry. We know that with Euripides, the configuration reaches its point of saturation. In music, rather than referring to the tonal system, which is far too structural a *dispositif*, one will refer to the "classical style" in the sense that Charles Rosen speaks of it, that is, as an identifiable sequence stretching out between Haydn and Beethoven. Likewise, one will doubtless say that—from Cervantes to Joyce—the novel is the name of a configuration for prose.

It will be noted that the saturation of a configuration (the narrative novel around the time of Joyce, the classical style around that of Beethoven, etc.) in no way signifies that said configuration is a finite multiplicity. Nothing from within the configuration itself either delimits it or exposes the principle of its end. The rarity of proper names and the brevity of the sequence are inconsequential empirical data. Besides, beyond the proper names retained as significant illustrations of the configuration or as the "dazzling" subject points of its generic trajectory, there is always a virtually infinite quantity of subject points—minor, ignored, redundant, and so on—that are no less a part of the immanent truth whose being is provided by the artistic configuration. Of course, it can happen that the configuration no longer gives rise to distinctly perceivable works or to decisive inquiries into its own constitution. It can also happen that an incalculable event comes to reveal in retrospect a configuration to be obsolete with respect to the constraints introduced by a new configuration. But in any

case, unlike the works that constitute its material, a truth configuration is intrinsically infinite. This clearly means that the configuration ignores every internal maximum, every apex, and every peroration. After all, a configuration may always be seized upon again in epochs of uncertainty or rearticulated in the naming of a new event.

From the fact that the thinkable extraction of a configuration often takes place on the edges of philosophy—because philosophy is conditioned by art as *singular truth* and therefore by art as arranged into infinite configurations—we must above all not conclude that it is philosophy's task to think art. Instead, *a configuration thinks itself in the works that compose it*. Let's not forget that a work is an inventive inquiry into the configuration, which therefore thinks the thought that the configuration *will have been* (under the presumption of its infinite completion). To put it more precisely: The configuration thinks itself through the test posed by an inquiry that, at one and the same time, reconstructs it locally, sketches its "to come," and retroactively reflects its temporal arc. From this point of view, it is necessary to maintain that art—as the configuration "in truth" of works—is in each and every one of its points the thinking of the thought that it itself is [*pensée de la pensée qu'il est*].

We can therefore declare that we've inherited a threefold problem:

- What are the contemporary configurations of art?
- What becomes of philosophy as conditioned by art?
- What happens to the theme of education?

We will leave the first point alone. The whole of contemporary thinking about art is full of inquiries—often enthralling ones—about the artistic configurations that have marked the century: dodecaphonic music, novelistic prose, the age of poets, the rupture of the figurative, and so on.

On the second point, I cannot but reiterate my own convictions: Philosophy, or rather *a* philosophy, is always the elaboration of a category of truth. Philosophy does not itself produce any effective truth. It seizes truths, shows them, exposes them, announces that they exist. In so doing, it turns time toward eternity—since every truth, as a generic infinity, is eternal. Finally, philosophy makes disparate truths compossible and, on this basis, it states the being of the time in which it operates as the time of the truths that arise within it.

Concerning the third point, let us recall that the only education is an education *by* truths. The entire, insistent problem is that there be truths,

without which the philosophical category of truth is entirely empty and the philosophical act nothing but an academic quibble.

This question of the existence of truths (that "there be" truths) points to a coresponsibility of art, which produces truths, and philosophy, which, under the condition that there are truths, is duty-bound to make them manifest (a very difficult task indeed). Basically, to make truths manifest means the following: to distinguish truths from opinion. So that the question today is this and no other: Is there something besides opinion? In other words (one will, or will not, forgive the provocation), is there something besides our "democracies"?

Many will answer, myself among them: "Yes." Yes, there are artistic configurations, there are works that constitute the thinking subjects of these configurations, and there is philosophy to separate conceptually all of this from opinion. Our times are worth more than the label on which they pride themselves: "democracy."

In order to nourish this conviction in the reader, we will therefore begin with some philosophical *identifications* of the arts. Poetry, theater, cinema, and dance will be our pretexts.

§ 6 Dance as a Metaphor for Thought

Why does dance dawn on Nietzsche as a compulsory metaphor for thought? It is because dance is what opposes itself to Nietzsche-Zarathustra's great enemy, an enemy he designates as the "Spirit of Gravity." Dance is, first and foremost, the image of a thought subtracted from every spirit of heaviness. It is important to register the *other* images of this subtraction, for they inscribe dance into a compact metaphorical network. Take the bird, for example. As Zarathustra declares: "And especially bird-like is that I am enemy to the Spirit of Gravity."¹ This provides us with a first metaphorical connection between dance and the bird. Let us say that there is a germination, or a dancing birth, of what we could call the bird within the body. More generally, there is in Nietzsche the image of flight. Zarathustra also says: "He who will one day teach men to fly will have moved all boundary-stones; all boundary-stones will themselves fly into the air to him, he will baptize the earth anew—as 'the weight-less.'"² It would really be a very beautiful and judicious definition of dance to say that it is a new name given to the earth. There remains the child. The child "is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes."³ This is the third metamorphosis, found at the beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—after the camel, which is the opposite of dance, and the lion, too violent to be capable of naming as "light" the earth that has begun anew. It should be noted that dance, which is both bird and flight, is also everything that the infant designates. Dance is innocence, because it is a body before the body. It is forgetting, because it is a body that forgets its fetters, its weight. It is a new beginning, because the dancing gesture must always be some-

thing like the invention of its own beginning. And it is also play, of course, because dance frees the body from all social mimicry, from all gravity and conformity. A wheel that turns itself: This could provide a very elegant definition for dance. Dance is like a circle in space, but a circle that is its own principle, a circle that is not drawn from the outside, but rather draws itself. Dance is the prime mover: Every gesture and every line of dance must present itself not as a consequence, but as the very source of mobility. And finally, dance is simple affirmation, because it makes the negative body—the shameful body—radiantly absent.

Later, Nietzsche will also speak of fountains, still within the sequence of images that dissolve the spirit of heaviness. "My soul is a leaping fountain," and, of course, the dancing body is always leaping, out of the ground, out of itself.⁴

Finally, there is the air, the aerial element, summing it all up. Dance is what allows the earth to name itself "aerial." In dance, the earth is thought of as if it were endowed with a constant airing. Dance involves the breath, the respiration of the earth. This is because the central question of dance is that of the relation between verticality and attraction. Verticality and attraction enter the dancing body and allow it to manifest a paradoxical possibility: that the earth and the air may exchange their positions, the one passing into the other. It is for all of these reasons that thought finds its metaphor in dance, which recapitulates the series of the bird, the fountain, the child, and the intangible air. Of course, this series can appear very innocent, almost mawkish, like a childish tale in which nothing may be asserted or assessed any longer. But it is necessary to understand that this series is traversed by Nietzsche—by dance—in terms of its relation to a power and a rage. Dance is both one of the terms of the series and the violent traversal of the whole series. Zarathustra will say of himself that he has "dancing-mad feet."⁵

Dance lends a figure to the traversal of innocence by power. It manifests the secret virulence of what initially appeared as fountain, bird, childhood. In actual fact, what justifies the identification of dance as the metaphor for thought is Nietzsche's conviction that thought is an *intensification*. This conviction is primarily opposed to the thesis according to which thought is a principle whose mode of realization is external. For Nietzsche, thought is not effectuated anywhere else than where it is given—thought is effective *in situ*, it is what (if one may speak in this manner) is intensified upon itself, or again, it is the movement of its own intensity.

But then the image of dance is a natural one. Dance visibly transmits the Idea of thought as an immanent intensification. Or rather, we could speak here of a *certain vision* of dance. In fact, the metaphor works only if we put aside every representation of dance that depicts it as an external constraint imposed upon a supple body or as the gymnastics of a dancing body controlled from the outside. In Nietzsche, the opposition between dance and a gymnastics of this type is nothing short of absolute. After all, one could imagine that dance exposes an obedient and muscled body to our gaze, a body simultaneously capable and submitted. In other words, a regime of the body in which the body is exerted for the sake of its subjection to choreography. But for Nietzsche such a body is the opposite of the dancing body, of the body that *internally* exchanges the earth with the air.

What, in Nietzsche's eyes, is the opposite of dance? It is the German, the bad German, whom he defines as follows: "Obedience and long legs."⁶ The essence of this bad Germany is the *military parade*, the aligned and hammering body, the servile and sonorous body. The body of beaten cadence. Dance instead is the aerial and broken body, the vertical body. Not at all the hammering body, but the body "on points," the body that pricks the floor just as one would puncture a cloud. Above all, it is the silent body, set against the body that prescribes the thunder of its own heavy strike, the body of the military parade. Finally, dance for Nietzsche points to a vertical thought, a thought stretching toward its proper height. This consideration is obviously linked to the theme of affirmation captured by the image of the "great Noon," the hour when the sun is at its zenith. Dance is the body devoted to its zenith. But perhaps, and even more profoundly, what Nietzsche sees in dance—both as an image of thought and as the Real of a body—is the theme of a mobility that is firmly fastened to itself, a mobility that is not inscribed within an external determination, but instead moves without detaching itself from its own center. This mobility is not imposed, it unfolds as if it were as expansion of its center.

Of course, dance corresponds to the Nietzschean idea of thought as active becoming, as active power. But this becoming is such that within it a *unique* affirmative interiority is released. Movement is neither a displacement nor a transformation, but a course that traverses and sustains the eternal uniqueness of an affirmation. Consequently, dance designates the capacity of bodily impulse not so much to be projected onto a space outside of itself, but rather to be caught up in an affirmative attraction *that restrains it*. This is perhaps Nietzsche's most important insight: *Beyond the*

exhibition of movements or the quickness of their external designs, dance is what testifies to the force of restraint at the heart of these movements. Of course, this force of restraint will be manifested only in movement, but what counts is the potent legibility of the restraint.

In dance thus conceived, movement finds its essence *in what has not taken place*, in what has remained either ineffective or restrained within movement itself.

Besides, this would provide yet another way of negatively approaching the idea of dance. For the unrestrained impulse—the bodily entreaty that is immediately obeyed and manifested—is precisely what Nietzsche calls *vulgarity*. Nietzsche writes that all vulgarity derives from the incapacity to resist an entreaty. Or that vulgarity lies in the fact that we are constrained to act, “that we obey every impulse.” Accordingly, dance is defined as the movement of a body subtracted from all vulgarity.

Dance is in no way the liberated bodily impulse, the wild energy of the body. On the contrary, it is the bodily manifestation of the *disobedience* to an impulse. Dance shows how the impulse can be rendered ineffective within movement in such a way that it would be a question of restraint, rather than obedience. We are miles away from any doctrine of dance as a primitive ecstasy or as the forgetful pulsation of the body. Dance offers a metaphor for a light and subtle thought precisely because it shows the restraint immanent to movement and thereby opposes itself to the spontaneous vulgarity of the body.

We can now adequately think what is expressed in the theme of dance as lightness. Yes, dance is opposed to the spirit of gravity. Yes, it is what gives the earth its new name (“the light one”)—but, in the end, what is lightness? To say that it is the absence of weight does not get us very far. By “lightness” we must understand the capacity of a body to manifest itself as an *unconstrained* body, or as a body not constrained by itself. In other words, as a body in a state of disobedience vis-à-vis its own impulses. This disobeyed impulse opposes itself to Germany (“Obedience and long legs”), but above all it demands a *principle of slowness*. The essence of lightness lies in its capacity to manifest the secret slowness of the fast. This is indeed why dance provides the finest image of lightness. The movement of dance can certainly manifest an extreme quickness, but only to the extent that it is inhabited by its latent slowness, by the affirmative power of restraint. Nietzsche proclaims that “the will must learn to be slow and mistrustful.” Dance could then be defined as the expansion

of slowness and the mistrust of the thought-body. In this sense, the dancer points us in the direction of what the will is capable of learning.

It obviously follows from this observation that the essence of dance is virtual, rather than actual movement: Virtual movement as the secret slowness of actual movement. Or more precisely: Dance, in its most extreme and virtuosic quickness, exhibits this hidden slowness that makes it so that what takes place is indiscernible from its own restraint. At the summit of its art, dance would therefore demonstrate the strange equivalence not only between quickness and slowness, but also between gesture and nongesture. It would indicate that, even though movement has taken place, this taking place is indistinguishable from a virtual nonplace. Dance is composed of gestures that, haunted by their own restraint, remain in some sense undecided.

Turning to my own thought—to my doctrine—this Nietzschean exegesis suggests the following point: Dance would provide the metaphor for the fact that every genuine thought depends upon an event. An event is precisely what remains undecided between the taking place and the nonplace—in the guise of an emergence that is indiscernible from its own disappearance. The event adds itself onto what there is, but as soon as this supplement is pointed out, the “there is” reclaims its rights, laying hold of everything. Obviously, the only way of fixing an event is to give it a name, to inscribe it within the “there is” as a supernumerary name. The event “itself” is never anything besides its own disappearance. Nevertheless, an inscription may detain the event, as if at the gilded edge of loss. The name is what decides upon the having taken place. Dance would then point toward thought as event, but *before this thought has received a name*—at the extreme edge of its veritable disappearance; in its vanishing, without the shelter of the name. Dance would mimic a thought that had remained undecided, something like a native (or unfixed) thought. Yes, in dance, we would find the metaphor for the unfixed.

It would thereby become clear that the task of dance is to play time within space. An event establishes a singular time on the basis of its nominal fixation. Since it is traced, named, and inscribed, the event outlines in the situation—in the “there is”—both a before and an after. A time starts to exist. But if dance is a metaphor for the event “before” the name, it nevertheless cannot partake in this time that only the name, through its cut, can institute. Dance is subtracted from the temporal decision. In dance, there is therefore something that is prior to time, something

pretemporal. It is this pretemporal element that will be *played out* in space. Dance is what suspends time within space.

In *The Soul and Dance*, Valéry, addressing himself to the dancer, tells her: "How extraordinary you are in your imminence!" Indeed, we could say that dance is the body beset by imminence. But what is imminent is precisely the time before the time that will come to be. Dance, as the spatialization of imminence would thus be the metaphor for what every thinking grounds and organizes. In other words, dance plays out the event before the event's nomination. It follows that, for dance, the place of the name is taken by silence. Dance manifests the silence before the name exactly in the same way that it constitutes the space before time.

The immediate objection obviously concerns the role of music. How can we speak of silence, when all dance seems so strongly subjected to the jurisdiction of music? Granted, there exists a conception of dance that describes it as the body beset by music and, more precisely, as the body beset by rhythm. But this conception is yet again that of "obedience and long legs," that of our heavy Germany, even if obedience recognizes music to be its master. Let us not hesitate to say that all dance that obeys music—even if this music be that of Chopin or Boulez—immediately turns it into military music at the same time as it metamorphoses into a bad Germany.

Whatever the paradoxes, we must assert the following: When it comes to dance, the only business of music is to mark silence. Music is therefore indispensable, since silence must be marked in order to manifest itself as silence. As the silence of what? As the silence of the name. If it is true that dance plays the naming of the event in the silence of the name, the place of this silence is indicated by music. This is quite natural: You cannot indicate the founding silence of dance except with the most extreme concentration of sound. And the most extreme concentration of sound is music. It is necessary to see that in spite of all appearances—appearances that would like the "long legs" of dance to obey the prescription of music—it is really dance that commands music, inasmuch as music marks the founding silence wherein dance presents native thought in the aleatory and vanishing economy of the name. Grasped as the metaphor for the eventual dimension of all thought, dance is prior to the music on which it relies.

From these preliminaries we can draw, as so many consequences, what I will call the principles of dance. Not of dance thought on its own terms,

on the basis of its history and technique, but of dance such as it is given welcome and shelter by philosophy.

These principles are perfectly clear in the two texts that Mallarmé devoted to dance, texts as profound as they are short, which I regard as definitive.⁷

I discern six of these principles, all of which relate to the link between dance and thought, and all of which are governed by an inexplicit comparison between dance and theater.

Here is the list:

1. The obligation of space.
2. The anonymity of the body.
3. The effaced omnipresence of the sexes.
4. The subtraction from self.
5. Nakedness.
6. The absolute gaze.

Let us discuss them in order.

If it is true that dance plays time within space, that it supposes the space of imminence, then there is for dance an *obligation* of space. Mallarmé indicates this as follows: "Dance alone seems to me to need a real space."⁸ Dance alone, mind you. Dance is the only one among the arts that is constrained to space. In particular, this is not the case with the theater. As I said, dance is the event before naming. Theater, on the contrary, is nothing but the consequence of playing out an act of naming. Once there is a text, once the name has been given, the demand is that of time, not space. Theater can consist in someone reading from behind a table. Of course, we can provide him with a set, a décor, but all of this, for Mallarmé, remains inessential. Space is not an intrinsic obligation of theater. Dance instead integrates space into its essence. It is the only figure of thought to do this, so that we could argue that dance symbolizes the very spacing of thought.

What does this mean? Once again, we need to reiterate the eventual origin of any instance of thought. An event is always localized in the situation, it never affects it "as a whole": There exists what I have called an eventual site.⁹ Before naming establishes the time in which the event "works" through a situation as the truth of that situation, there is the site. And since dance is a showing of the fore-name [*l'avant-nom*], it must deploy itself as the survey of a site. Of a pure site. There is in dance—the ex-

pression is Mallarmé's—"a virginity of the site." And he adds: "an undreamed-of virginity of the site."¹⁰ What does "undreamed-of" mean? It means that the eventual site does not know what to do with the imaginations of a décor. Décor is for the theater, not for dance. Dance is the site as such, devoid of figurative ornament. It demands space, or spacing, and nothing else. That is all for the first principle.

As for the second—the anonymity of the body—we rediscover within it the absence of any term: the fore-name. The dancing body, as it comes to the site and is spaced in imminence, is a thought-body. The dancing body is never *someone*. About these bodies, Mallarmé declares that they are "never other than an emblem, never someone."¹¹ An emblem is above all opposed to imitation. The dancing body does not imitate a character or a singularity. It *depicts* [*figure*] nothing. The body of the theater is instead always caught up in imitation, seized by the role. No role enrolls the dancing body, which is the emblem of pure emergence. But an emblem is also opposed to every form of expression. The dancing body does not express any kind of interiority. Entirely on the surface, as a visibly restrained intensity, it is itself interiority. Neither imitation nor expression, the dancing body is an emblem of visitation in the virginity of the site. It comes to the site precisely in order to manifest that the thought—the true thought—that hangs upon the eventual disappearance is the induction of an *impersonal* subject. The impersonality of the subject of a thought (or of a truth) derives from the fact that such a subject does not preexist the event that authorizes it. There is thus no cause to grasp this subject as "someone," for the dancing body will signify, through its inaugural character, that it is like a first body. The dancing body is anonymous because it is born under our very eyes as body. Likewise, the subject of a truth is never in advance—however much it may have advanced—the "someone" that it is.

Turning now to the third principle—the effaced omnipresence of the sexes—we can extract it from the apparently contradictory declarations of Mallarmé. It is this contradiction that is given in the opposition that I am establishing between "omnipresence" and "effaced." We could say that dance universally manifests that there are two sexual positions (whose names are "man" and "woman") and that, at the same time, it abstracts or erases this duality. On the one hand, Mallarmé states that every dance is "nothing but the mysterious and sacred interpretation" of the kiss.¹² At the center of dance there is thus a conjunction of the sexes, and it is this

that we must call their omnipresence. Dance is entirely composed of the conjunction and disjunction of sexed positions. All of its movements retain their intensity within paths whose crucial gravitation unites—and then separates—the positions of "man" and "woman." But, on the other hand, Mallarmé also notes that the dancer "is not a woman."¹³ How is it possible that all dance is but the interpretation of the kiss—of the conjunction of the sexes and, bluntly speaking, of the sexual act—and, nevertheless, that the female dancer as such cannot be named "woman," any more than the male dancer can be named "man"? It is because dance retains only a pure form from sexuation, desire, and love: the form that organizes the triptych of the encounter, the entanglement, and the separation. In dance, these three terms are technically coded. (The codes vary considerably, but are always at work.) A choreography organizes the spatial knot of the three terms. But ultimately, the triple that comprises the encounter, the entanglement, and the separation achieves the purity of an intense restraint that separates itself from its own destination.

In actual fact, the omnipresence of the difference between the male and the female dancer, and through it the "ideal" omnipresence of sexual difference, is handled only as the *organon* of the relation between reconciliation and separation—in such a way that the couple male dancer / female dancer cannot be nominally superimposed onto the couple man/woman. At the end of the day, what is at play in the ubiquitous allusion to the sexes is the correlation between being and disappearing, between taking-place and abolition—a correlation that draws its recognizable corporeal coding from the encounter, the entanglement, and the separation.

The disjunctive energy for which sexuation provides the code is made to serve as a metaphor for the event as such, a metaphor for something whose entire being lies in disappearance. This is why the omnipresence of sexual difference effaces or abolishes itself, since it is not the representative end of dance, but rather a formal abstraction of energy whose course summons, within space, the creative force of disappearance.

For principle number four—subtraction from self—it is advisable to turn to an altogether bizarre statement by Mallarmé: "The dancer does not dance."¹⁴ We have just seen that this female dancer is not a woman, but on top of this, she is not even a "dancer," if we understand by this someone who executes a dance. Let us compare this statement to another one: Dance—Mallarmé tells us—is "a poem set free of any scribe's apparatus."¹⁵ This second statement is just as paradoxical as the first ("The

dancer does not dance"), since the poem is by definition a trace, an inscription, especially in its Mallarméan conception. Consequently, the poem "set free of any scribe's apparatus" is precisely the poem unburdened of the poem, the poem subtracted from itself, just as the dancer, who does not dance, is dance subtracted from dance.

Dance is like a poem uninscribed, or untraced. And dance is also like a dance without dance, a dance undanced. What is stated here is the subtractive dimension of thought. Every genuine instance of thinking is subtracted from the knowledge in which it is constituted. Dance is a metaphor for thought precisely inasmuch as it indicates, by means of the body, that a thought, in the form of its eventual surge, is subtracted from every preexistence of knowledge.

How does dance point to this subtraction? Precisely in the manner that the "true" dancer must never appear to *know* the dance she dances. Her knowledge (which is technical, immense, and painfully acquired) is traversed, as null, by the pure emergence of her gesture. "The dancer does not dance" means that what one sees is at no point the realization of a pre-existing knowledge, even though knowledge is, through and through, its matter or support. The dancer is the miraculous forgetting of her own knowledge of dance. She does not execute the dance, but *is* this restrained intensity that manifests the gesture's indecision. In truth, the dancer abolishes every known dance because she disposes of her body as if it were *invented*. So that the spectacle of dance is the body subtracted from every knowledge of a body, the body as *disclosure* [*éclosion*].

Of such a body, one will necessarily say—this is the fifth principle—that it is naked. Obviously, it matters little if it is empirically so. The body of dance is essentially naked. Just as dance is a visitation of the pure site and therefore has no use for a décor (whether there is one or not), likewise, the dancing body, which is a thought-body in the guise of the event, has no use for a costume (whether there is a tutu or not). This nakedness is crucial. What does Mallarmé say? He says that dance "offers you the nakedness of your concepts." Adding: "and will silently rewrite your vision."¹⁶ "Nakedness" is therefore understood as follows: Dance, as a metaphor for thought, presents thought to us as *devoid of relation to anything other than itself*, in the nudity of its emergence. Dance is a thinking without relation, the thinking that relates nothing, that puts nothing in relation. We could also say that it is the pure conflagration of thought, because it repudiates all of thought's possible ornaments. Whence the fact

that dance is (or tends to be) the exhibition of *chaste* nakedness, the nakedness prior to any ornament, the nakedness that does not derive from the divestment of ornaments but is, on the contrary, as it is given before all ornament—as the event is given "before" the name.

The sixth and last principle no longer concerns the dancer, or even dance itself, but the spectator. What is a spectator of dance? Mallarmé answers this question in a particularly demanding manner. Just as the dancer—who is an emblem—is never someone, so the spectator of dance must be rigorously impersonal. The spectator of dance cannot in any way be the singularity of the one who's watching.

Indeed, if someone watches dance, he inevitably turns into its voyeur. This point derives from the principles of dance, from its essence (effaced omnipresence of the sexes, nakedness, anonymity of the body, etc.). These principles cannot become effective unless the spectator renounces everything in his gaze that may be either singular or desiring. Every other spectacle (and above all, the theater) demands that the spectator invest the scene with his own desire. In this regard, dance is not a spectacle. It is not a spectacle because it cannot tolerate the desiring gaze, which, once there is dance, can only be a voyeur's gaze, a gaze in which the dancing subtractions suppress themselves. What is needed is what Mallarmé calls "an impersonal or fulgurant absolute gaze."¹⁷ A strict constraint—is it not?—but one that commands the essential nakedness of the dancers, both male and female.

We have just spoken of the "impersonal." If dance is to provide a figure for native thought, it can only do so in accordance with a universal address. Dance does not address itself to the singularity of a desire whose time, besides, it has yet to constitute. Rather, dance is what exposes the nakedness of concepts. The gaze of the spectator must thereby cease to seek, upon the bodies of the dancers, the objects of its own desire—an operation that would refer us back to an ornamental or fetishistic nakedness. To attain the nakedness of concepts demands a gaze that—relieved of every desiring inquiry into the objects for which the "vulgar" body (as Nietzsche would say) functions as support—reaches the innocent and primordial thought-body, the invented or disclosed body. But such a gaze belongs to no one.

"Fulgurant": The gaze of the spectator of dance must apprehend the relation of being to disappearing—it can never be satisfied with a mere spectacle. Besides, dance is always a false totality. It does not possess the closed

duration of a spectacle, but is instead the permanent showing of an event in its flight, caught in the undecided equivalence between its being and its nothingness. Only the flash of the gaze is appropriate here, and not its fulfilled attention.

"Absolute": The thought that finds its figure in dance must be considered as an eternal acquisition. Dance, precisely because it is an absolutely ephemeral art—because it disappears as soon as it takes place—harbors the strongest charge of eternity. Eternity does not consist in "remaining as one is," or in duration. Eternity is precisely what watches over disappearance. When a "fulgurant" gaze grasps a vanishing gesture, it cannot but keep it pure, outside of any empirical memory. There is no other way of safeguarding what disappears than to watch over it eternally. Keeping watch over what does not disappear means exposing it to the erosion of the watch. But dance, when seized by a genuine spectator, cannot be used up, precisely because it is nothing but the ephemeral absolute of its encounter. It is in this sense that there is an absoluteness of the gaze directed upon dance.

Now, if we examine the six principles of dance, we can establish that the real opposite of dance is theater. Of course, there is also the military parade, but that is merely a negative opposite. The theater is the *positive* opposite of dance.

We have already suggested, on a few counts, how the theater counters the six principles. We have indicated in passing that, because the text possesses the function of naming within it, there is in the theater no constraint of the pure site, and the actor is everything but an anonymous body. It would be easy to show that in the theater there is also no omnipresence of the sexes, but, quite to the contrary, that what we find is the hyperbolic role play of sexuation. That theatrical play, far from constituting a subtraction, is in excess of itself: While the dancer may not dance, the actor is obliged to act, to play out the act, as well as all five of them. There is also no nakedness in the theater. What we have instead is a mandatory costume—nakedness being itself a costume and one of the most garish at that. As for the theater spectator, the absolute and fulgurant impersonal gaze is not required of him, since what is appropriate to his role is the excitement of an intelligence that finds itself entangled in the duration of a desire.

There is thus an essential clash between dance and theater.

Nietzsche approaches this clash in the simplest of ways: through an an-

titheatrical aesthetics. Especially in the last Nietzsche, and in the context of his total rupture with Wagner, the veritable slogan of modern art commands that you subtract yourself from the despicable and decadent grip of the theatrical (in favor of the metaphor of dance, as a new name given to the earth).

Nietzsche calls the submission of the arts to the theatrical effect "histrionics." Once again, we encounter the enemy of all dance, vulgarity. To have done with Wagnerian histrionics is to oppose the lightness of dance to the vulgar mendacity of theater. The name "Bizet" serves to pit the ideal of a "dancing" music against Wagner's theatrical music, which is a music debased by the fact that, instead of marking the silence of dance, it persistently underlines the heaviness of the play.

As the remainder of this book should amply prove, I do not share the idea according to which theatricality is the very principle of the corruption of all the arts. This is also not Mallarmé's idea. Mallarmé states the complete opposite of this idea when he writes that the theater is a superior art. He sees very clearly that there is a contradiction between the principles of dance and those of the theater. But far from endorsing the histrionic infamy of the theater, he underlines its *artistic* supremacy without thereby forcing dance to forfeit its own conceptual purity.

How is this possible? In order to understand, we must put forward a provocative, but necessary statement: Dance is not an art. Nietzsche's error lies in the belief that there exists a common measure between dance and theater, a measure to be found in their artistic intensity. In his own way, Nietzsche continues to arrange theater and dance within a classification of the arts. Mallarmé, on the contrary, when declaring that the theater is a superior art, does not in any sense wish to affirm the superiority of theater over dance. Of course, Mallarmé does not say that dance is not an art, but we can say it in his place, once we penetrate the genuine meaning of the six principles of dance.

Dance is not an art, because it is the sign of the possibility of art as inscribed in the body.

Allow me to provide a brief explanation of this maxim. Spinoza says that we seek to know what thinking is while we don't even know what a body is capable of. I will say that dance is precisely what shows us that the body is capable of art. It provides us with the exact degree to which, at a given moment, it is capable of it. But to say that the body is capable of art does not mean making an "art of the body." Dance signals toward this

artistic capacity of the body without thereby defining a singular art. To say that the body, qua body, is capable of art, is to exhibit it as a thought-body. Not as a thought caught in a body, but as a body that thinks. This is the function of dance: the thought-body showing itself under the vanishing sign of a capacity for art. The sensitivity to dance possessed by each and every one of us comes from the fact that dance answers, after its own fashion, Spinoza's question: What is a body as such capable of? It is capable of art, that is, it can be exhibited as a native thought. How are we to name the emotion that seizes us at this point—as little as we ourselves may be capable of an absolute and impersonal fulgurant gaze? I will name this emotion *an exact vertigo*.

It is a vertigo because the infinite appears in it as latent within the finitude of the visible body. If the capacity of the body, in the guise of the capacity for art, is to exhibit native thought, this capacity for art is infinite, and so is the dancing body itself. Infinite in the instant of its aerial grace. What we are dealing with here, which is truly vertiginous, is not the limited capacity of an exercise of the body, but the infinite capacity of art, of all art, as it is rooted in the event that its chance prescribes.

Nevertheless, this vertigo is exact. This is because ultimately it is the restrained precision that counts, that testifies for the infinite. It is the secret slowness, and not the manifest virtuosity. This is an extreme or millimetric precision that concerns the relation between gesture and nongesture.

It is thus that the vertigo of the infinite is given in the most enduring exactitude. It seems to me that the history of dance is governed by the perpetual renewal of the relation between vertigo and exactitude. What will remain virtual, what will be actualized, and precisely how is the restraint going to free the infinite? These are the historical problems of dance. These inventions are inventions of thought. But since dance is not an art, but only a sign of the capacity of the body for art, these inventions follow the entire history of truths very closely, including the history of those truths taught by the arts proper.

Why is there a history of dance, a history of the exactitude of vertigo? Because *the* truth does not exist. If *the* truth existed, there would be a definitive ecstatic dance, a mystical incantation of the event. Doubtless this is the conviction of the whirling dervish. But what there are instead are disparate truths, an aleatory multiple of events of thought. Dance appropriates this multiplicity within history. This presupposes a constant redistribution of the relationship between vertigo and exactitude. It is neces-

sary to prove, time and time again, that *today's* body is capable of showing itself as a thought-body. However, "today" is never anything apart from the new truths. Dance will dance the native and eventual theme of these truths. A new vertigo and a new exactitude.

Thus we must return to where we began. Yes, dance is indeed—each and every time—a new name that the body gives to the earth. But no new name is the last. As the bodily presentation of the fore-name of truths, dance incessantly renames the earth.

In this respect, it is effectively the reverse of theater, which has nothing to do with the earth, with its name, or even with what the body is capable of. The theater is itself a child, in part of politics and the state, in part of the circulation of desire between the sexes. The bastard son of *Polis* and *Eros*. As we will now set forth—axiomatically.