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Metaphorizing Abysses and the Archaeologies of Vision

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Nietzsche's Zarathustra, at one of the most crucial hinges in his grappling with the thought of eternal recurrence, announces that 'vision itself is seeing abysses.' He says this in 'On the Vision and the Riddle,' where he is attempting to come to terms with the riddle of vision and the recurrence of the *Augenblick*, or the twinkling of the eye…. Could it be that we are now effortlessly educating our young to see the abyss of vision in preparation for a world of videos within videos? （Gary Shapiro, *Archaeologies of Vision*, 5）

Thinking the abyss of vision as a vision of abyss is thinking the metaphorical in its shifting multiplicity—the *mise en abîme* of "videos within videos." Metaphors are abysses: they are chiasmatic seeing—vision that is double （or multiple） where the differences between the literal and the metaphorical levels open up a space framed by the substitutions that have marked thinking about metaphors since Aristotle's time. The language of substitutions between species and genus （Aristotle）, literal and figurative （Fontanier）, tenor and vehicle （I.A. Richards）, live and dead metaphor （Ricoeur） – each opens up a space *in* the doubling and *in* the crossing of the chiasm that is reiterated in vision and seeing. The abyss of the visual chiasm opens up the bottomless pit of indecidability as it marks its place in the in-between space of difference.

Metaphors of "abyss" are shifting metaphors. Abysses have no fixed place or locus in the thought of the *mise-en-abîme* or what Nietzsche called the "eternal return of the Same." Abysses relocate or rearrange wherever they occur and in whatever context they appear. The Heideggerian *Abgrund* （or Abyss） and the Derridean *mise-en-abîme* take place wherever the context provides space for them by marking off where solid ground dissipates. Metaphors of the "abyss" invoke instances of play （*Spielraum*） between Light and Vision, spaces for thinking the indecidable as liminal （if not luminal） zones of indeterminacy. The Abyss operates as an in-between space where the concrete shifts – as if in an earthquake – and evades the determinate, the unequivocal, and the univocal. The Abyss is a metaphor for an infinite regress, a vortex without end, a chasm that breaks off from solid ground. Just as metaphors themselves open up a chasm "between" the metaphor of the abyss delineates the literal and the metaphorical as a space that defies literal specificity. Although not all abysses are metaphorical （e.g. geographically located ones are literally there in specific and "fixed" places）, all metaphors are marked by an abyss-like space of difference. Furthermore, some of those abysses are metaphors of the abysmal character of the metaphorical.

Gary Shapiro's *Archaeologies of Vision* （2003）[1] does not thematize the question of metaphor. However, it does provide a context for thinking this abysmal character of metaphors. Themes of "Light" and "Vision" recur throughout Shapiro's assessment of the experience of seeing. By linking the question of seeing and knowing to the character of metaphor, a new perspective on this often

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[1] Gary Shapiro, *The Archeologies of Vision. Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying* （Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003）, 4. Henceforth cited as *AV.*

discussed, rhetorical figure, opens up a discursive space. Our interest is in those gaps where the "abysmal" makes itself known without being an object of knowledge, without being the direct object of vision, without being the subject of inquiry. Repeated forays into the interconnections between philosophy and painting are ways that philosophers have been able to say what they see and have seen, most notably in the paintings that have marked out their own philosophical enterprises. Seeing as a metaphor for knowing is an ancient story. And seeing abysses is celebrated in Romantic traditions of painting as well as in literature. But understanding pictorial as well as literary metaphors as abysses and as opening up abysses is a postmodern adventure.

Foucault's "*archaeology of knowledge*," a digging up of the knowledge events, epistemological frameworks, and discursive practices of an epoch – cutting across a variety of disciplines to bring out the prevalent *epistemē* of the period – has as its counterpart an "*archaeology of vision*." Archaeologies go back to beginnings, to places of origin, to spaces of knowledge formation in which ways of thinking prevail and then die out, only to be replaced by new prevalent discourses. Shapiro's multiple archaeologies of vision uncover the metaphorical dimension between images and things just as Foucault elaborated the relation between words and things at different synchronic time-slices. Abysses appear, after all, in many different places, and each time they appear, they mean (*vouloir-dire*) differently – even across a given *epistemē* (as Foucault would have called it) or *visual metaphors* (as we shall elaborate here). After all, there is an abyss between images and things, just as there is an abyss between words and things…

From the earliest times in the West, ancient Greek ideas of knowledge were associated with seeing and vision (often interwoven with "intuition"). Plato's classic allegories of the sun, the line, and the cave were standard examples of how everyday figures were given figurative (if not metaphorical) significance. In order to give an account of the "intuition" [*Anschauung / noesis*] of ideas and the ways in which a philosopher-king might achieve knowledge of the ideas—perfect ideas that are not available in the here and now—Plato would offer substitute figures for the abysmal experience of intuition that cannot be simply represented directly in non-metaphorical language. According to Plato, once "seen", once "intuited", once "envisioned", the philosopher-king will discover that a form (*eidos*) will have its often multiple counterparts in the actual world. These forms (*eidoi*) serve as the archic principles for anything derived from any one of them. To see the idea of a bed is very different from seeing a bed in a hotel room or in a mattress store or even worse (for Plato) seeing a bed in Van Gogh's colorful painting of a bed (presumably his own bed in the south of France) [See Figure 1]. But Van Gogh was not the only artist to paint a bed or a bedroom.

As in Titian's *Venus* (of Urbino) and Ingres' *Grande Odalisque*, Manet's *Olympia* is stretched out nude on a bed. By contrast, Van Gogh's bed is empty. These many instances of

Figure 1: Vincent Van Gogh, "The Bedroom" (1888)

painted beds are *metaphors* for many things. An empty bed signifies differently from a bed filled with a nude woman. Where Plato was convinced of an archetype of a single idea of a bed (independently of what kind of bed was in question, or who was in it), the shift from seeing, intuiting, envisioning Ideas (*eidoi*) to seeing (and painting) images of occupied or unoccupied beds undermined the Platonic vision. But what did not disappear in the shift away from Platonic idealism were the differences between the seeing and the seen, the intuiter and the intuited, the envisioning and the envisioned. Seeing a bed, whether it be the Idea or Form of a bed or Van Gogh's own bed, a space of difference takes place, an event of difference happens in-between—in the seeing-seen / seen-seeing. And this crossing or space in-between can be an abyss!

Seeing an actual bed, painting a bed, looking at a painted bed opens up a difference. With our two eyes, we see the one bed (whichever type it is). But seeing is always double, chiasmatic as long as both eyes are employed in the activity. The very physiology of the retina entails a crossing of the image. This is where the link with Plato breaks down, for Plato's intuitions did not involve "seeing double." His "seeing" was quite unitary, except when looking at actual beds (and that was a diminished activity). Even if only one bed is available in the room, seeing double means that a parallax view is possible. Two lines of sight intersect in one place – the bed in question. Plato's vision *qua* intuition (*noesis*), however, is monocular. Remember Homer's Cyclops with his one eye, and hence singular vision [See Figure 2]. The Cyclops is the model of a failed figure who cannot see properly. Because the Cyclops sees with one eye and not two, he is limited in his sight. In effect, he is unable to "see metaphorically." For instance, in Claude Lorrain's (1600-82) painting *Landscape with Acis and Galatea* (1657), the Cyclops appears isolated, displaced, apart from human society [See Figure 3]. The Cyclops is the model figure of monocular, single-minded vision, seeing, thinking. After all, one might even claim that monocular vision cannot see the metaphor of the Abyss. Hence also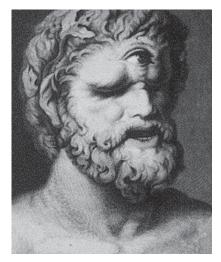 the metaphor *as* Abyss. One might argue that chiasmatic (double) vision is required to achieve the crossing of two at the place of difference, gap, interval.

The unitary *telos* of the Platonic metaphor of true knowing – the heliotropism that motivates Plato's "white mythology" (as Derrida would call it), Plato's obsession with the sun – is matched with the unitary limitation of Polyphemous (Homer's Cyclops) with his one eye whom Odysseus encounters in the dark, sunless cave. For Plato, the truth is unitary. For each form, there is one truth. The True, like the Good and the Beautiful, is unitary, not multiple. Even the trinity of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True is often read as One (particularly in the Neoplatonic and Augustinian Trinitarian tradition). Similarly in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, while sense-certainty is multiple, self-consciousness and ultimately Absolute Knowledge is unitary. The unity of the Truth of the philosopher is

Figure 2: Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, "Polyphemus" (1802)

Figure 3: Claude Lorrain, "Coastal landscape with Acis and Galatea"（1657）

matched in a curious way by the single-mindedness of Cyclopic Vision. Nietzsche, however, is not convinced. For him, truth（and lie）stand outside the sense of morality.

Actual seeing, when unitary and single-minded, will lead to error and despair – just the opposite of what Plato hoped for in his account of unitary intuition. Polyphemous the Cyclops（who had been blinded by Odysseus earlier）was then fooled by Odysseus when the Cyclops with his impaired vision could not see Odysseus clinging to the underside of one of the sheep who were guided out of the cave unbeknownst to Polyphemous the Cyclops. To the question posed by the Cyclops "who's there?," Odysseus answers: "Nobody." If he had said "*Neant*" "*Nichts*" or "Nothing," he could have been a card-carrying existentialist! However Odysseus named himself "Nobody." But "nobody" is not anybody. None of us can be "*das Man*" without some sense of identity. Single-mindedness like that of Polyphemous when he could still see, the single-minded viewer, can see only what is in front of him. His own identity will be clear, but what he sees can be mistaken. Descartes was also convinced that sight could deceive. The single-minded person can see only the scene before him or her. The single-minded person can understand only what is said directly, explicitly, non-figuratively, non-metaphorically, without abysses, indeci-dabilities, differences. The single-minded person takes things literally and is unable to see the figurative aspect that colors what is seen.

Chicken-Little[2], or sometimes cited under the name *Henny Penny*（an American folk tale, reiterated in the 1943 and 2005 film versions）, recounts the story of Chicken-Little who experienced an acorn falling on his head. He then went around telling everyone that the "sky is falling." All the others took the statement seriously, literally, as a truth. The Platonic-Hegelian model is one that takes things literally. For the Platonist and the Hegelian, unitary knowledge is the highest form of knowledge. Figurative thinking is a form of double, and hence deceptive, mistaken, seeing. But what if unitary seeing is itself another figure – like the seeing of the Cyclops, who sees only the one truth that turns out to be illusory. Gary Shapiro points out that, in the Spring 2001, the Taliban in Afghanistan destroyed many age-old Buddhist statues, icons of tradition and belief because they needed a single-minded vision of the truth – without the trappings of pictures, images, idols. Similarly many Americans – soon thereafter – found it convenient to have one and only one story about the events of Sept 11[th.]. They would be convinced absurdly that because the nineteen airplane terrorists, whose airplanes downed the World Trade Center, were Arabs, the whole Arab world,

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[2]　See *The Remarkable Story of Chicken Little*（Boston, 1840）.

including Sadam Hussein's Iraq, must have been attacking the United States. Hence they could persuade themselves that it was right and justified not only to attack Afghanistan, but also Iraq. Single-minded Cyclopic narratives provide answers. Chicken-Little was convinced that the sky was falling. So one can picture him running around telling everyone else to read the same newspapers, or to watch the same FOX news reports, or to listen to the same American President, all of whom claimed that "the sky was falling." This time it was not "Nobody," but the effect was the same. Or perhaps, at that point in his wanderings, Odysseus indeed felt like a "Nobody" – someone far from home, someone who had been at war with the Trojans for ten years, shipwrecked, having lost most of his men, wandering from Mediterranean island to island, someone who hardly had an identity of his own any more. So perhaps there was just one story to tell the Cyclops. But Odysseus was surely too wily and crafty for that. His language would have been too metaphorical, allegorical, distanced by an abyss to operate at the same level as the Cyclops. In any case, one-eyed seeing is limited, limiting, and ultimately the biggest lie of all, a vision without abysses, without a sensibility for multiple layers of thinking, without a sense of the metaphorical, without an understanding of shifting metaphors…as marked by abysses.

Seeing multiple, recognizing multiple truths, understanding that there must be multiple ways of seeing is the lesson of an archaeology of vision. The point becomes particularly poignant when remembering Oedipus's plight. Faced with the challenge of solving the riddle of the Sphinx, Oedipus gives the single-minded answer that the Sphinx required. Like Odysseus's "Nobody," Oedipus' answer "Man" was convenient and comforting – like getting the correct answer in a multiple choice exam or a TV quiz show. You get the one right answer and all ambiguity is removed, resolved, eliminated, disambiguated. But Oedipus did not "see" ("know") what the Sphinx saw, namely, that the person who solved the riddle of the Sphinx would not only rid the *polis* of the flu-like plague that beset it, but would also have the right to marry the recently widowed Queen of Thebes (and that this would have dire consequences for Oedipus in particular). Overjoyed that he had given the "right" answer, he did not see the various other levels or meanings implied by his action. He missed the metaphorical, and took only the literal value. As "we" know, what he did not know, is that the Queen of Thebes was, in fact, his biological mother – with whom he went on to have four "lovely" children. The tale of "blindness and insight" is also well-known – from Teiresias to Paul de Man.[3] The tale of the blind-man Teiresias – who could not see at all – finally had to reveal to Oedipus that there were more levels of meaning than what Oedipus was able to see with his unitary vision, his single-minded resolution to the riddle of the Sphinx. He could not see what he had done since he did not have the parallax view of double vision, of chiasmatic thinking that would demonstrate to him that it is dangerous to take the one answer as the one (good) meaningful truth. The Sphinx saw the multiple truths to its insidious riddle, for the riddle was more than met the "single" eye of the single-minded thinker who thinks only in algorithms. What was beneath the surface, latent, metaphorical, abysmal remained inaccessible, invisible to Oedipus' sight and knowing. Belatedly, Oedipus is forced to strikes out both of his own eyes. But it is too late, the

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[3]   See Paul De Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. (London/New York: Routledge, 2005).

damage has been done, the single (monocular) view lead to no vision at all (blindness), with the only consolation being the knowledge of the multiplicity that had deceived him for so long.

There is little doubt that in the *Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), what Nietzsche took to be the failure of tragedy (or at least its decline), was the loss of Dionysian multiplicity. To reduce tragedy to Socratic and Platonic dialectic, reasoning, or maieutic, to transform tragedy into something purely Apollonian, purely based on illusion, heliotropic vision, dream, and the *principium individuationis* was destined to undermine the magnificent tension of multiplicity in what Nietzsche called the "Greek Dionysian." Nietzsche found this Greek Dionysian to be so wonderfully embodied in Aeschylean tragedy and so markedly absent from the work of the tragedian Euripides. When tragic dramatic poetry was reduced to the demonstration of conflict between the excesses of emotion and the usually failed call to reason, when the choric element was reduced to some identified representatives of the society, the "vision" that Nietzsche saw in Greek tragedy was effectively erased from the scene.

Claude Lorrain's potentially obscure seventeenth century painting that Nietszche was presumed to have seen in Dresden serves as a kind of synecdoche for Nietzsche's own critique of a single-minded sense of vision. Archaeologies of vision are, for Shapiro, an attempt to restore the multiplicity of vision that figures such as Nietzsche, Deleuze, and Foucault and their visionary (painterly) counterparts – Claude Lorrain, Frans Hals, Holbein, Cezanne, Manet, Kandinsky, Klee, Magritte, and Warhol – have articulated in their own ways. Claude Lorrain's painting shows lovers in the lower center of the painting, covering themselves under the folds of a vulva-like tent. They are miniscule in relation to the grand sweep of trees on either side and the expanses of the water at the core of the painting. The Cyclops cannot actually see the lovers – he is too far away, and he is looking at the wrong angle. He can see only the back of what we see. He cannot see the lovers as they are protected by the tent. The scene is not unlike another seventeenth century painting that opens Michel Foucault's 1966 *The Order of Things*. – the Spanish painter Velasquez's *Las Meninas* [See Figure 4]. The painter himself (autoportraited as he paints his canvas) sees only the side of the canvas that he is painting. But the King and Queen (and we the viewers in their place) see only the back of the canvas – with its wooden structural cross-pieces – just as the Cyclops sees only the outside back of the tent in the Lorrain painting. What "we" see – the huddled and passionate lovers in the one case, the back of the canvas in the other – is

Figure 4: Diego Rodoríguez de Sivila y Velázquez, "Las Meninas" (1656)

the obverse of what the main figures in *Las Meninas* and the Cyclops in the Claude Lorrain painting are able to see. So the question for this archaeology of vision is not so much what is seen (the visible—*le visible*—as Merleau-Ponty would call it) nor the seeing (*l'invisible* in Merleau-Ponty's terms) but what "can be seen" (*une visibilité*). What can the King and Queen in the Velasquez painting see? They can see the ladies-in-waiting (*las meninas*), the dog, the dwarf, the nobleman leaving / entering the room at the back, but they can also see themselves figured and imaged in the mirror (if it is a mirror and not a painting) at the back of the room. They can see themselves there – as Cézanne could see himself in the mirrors that he used for the more than sixty self-portraits that he produced during his lifetime.[4] But like Velasquez, who is auto-portraited in the painting *Las Meninas* as "the painter," Cézanne is trying to capture himself seeing, trying to capture his own "visibility" (as Merleau-Ponty would called it in his important and final essay, the 1960 *Eye and Mind*).

In a sense, these archaeologies of vision are an interrogation and hermeneutics of visibility as abyss, of the shifting metaphors of the abyss, of the abyss as metaphorical double vision, of seeing behind the seeing, of the ambiguities of vision, and the indecidabilities in deconstructive thinking. Merleau-Ponty's chiasmatic visibility is neither singular nor plural. Although Merleau-Ponty often appeals to a notion of vision, what he means is the "seeing seen," the visible that is seen by a seer who is invisible to his or her own vision, who cannot see the abyss in his or her own seeing, for whom the metaphorical is inaccessible. It is no accident that Foucault entitled the first main chapter of *Les Mots et les choses* (1966): "The Prose of the World" – the very title given to Merleau-Ponty's posthumous work published only two years prior to the appearance of Foucault's *magnum opus*. Merleau-Ponty borrowed this expression "the prose of the world" – as Foucault did from Merleau-Ponty – from Hegel's claim that the Roman Republic is the prose of the world. Notice that he did not call it the "Vision of the World," for that would have appeared megalomaniacal and single-minded. For Hegel, there was something prosaic (not poetic) about the Roman state,. For Merleau-Ponty, this was his way of accounting for indirect language and expression, ultimately a gestural and expressive language. Merleau-Ponty's work would have been published in 1952 had he completed it. By the time his notion of "indirect language" had transmogrified into a philosophy of the visible and visibility, the notion of "indirect language" was no longer sufficient as an account of the chiasmatic, the abyssal, and the dynamic of shifting metaphors. Shapiro's account of the archaeologies of vision as a theory of multiplicity in seeing resonates well with Merleau-Ponty's last work *The Visible and the Invisible* (that also remained incomplete at the time of his death in 1961). It is not surprising that many of Merleau-Ponty's concerns appear in Foucault's 1966 *Les Mots et les choses* (*The Order of Things*).[5]

Between Velasquez's King and Queen "in" *Las Meninas* and their image in the mirror at the back of the room (or is it a picture of the King and Queen? – one is never really sure), there is (*es gibt / il y a / che*) what Merleau-Ponty called "visibility" and what Foucault would have called the

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[4]   See Hugh J. Silverman, *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), in particular, chapter 15: "The Visibility of Self-Portraiture: Merleau-Ponty/Cézanne," 162-174.

[5]   See Gary Shapiro's chapter entitled "Critique of Impure Phenomenology" in *AV*.

contemporary "postmodern *epistemē*" (although Foucault did not use the word "postmodern" in 1966). In-between, one finds a whole archaeology of vision! For the postmodern *epistemē*, an archaeology of vision will disclose the "modern" as the "empirico-transcendental doublet" – where the whole painting is the empirically constituted world of a "centered subject" in which "man" (the anthropological) is the theme of the painting. Another archaeology ("classical" or "neo-Classical," i.e. seventeenth century French epoch) has the King and Queen, the *Dueña*, the court personages, the painter as "representations" as if (metaphorically) on a stage—but the archaeology itself hides the metaphor. Still another archaeology of vision (sixteenth century Renaissance) reads the painting as containing figures that actually "resemble" "real" people in the Spanish court at the time. In each case, Foucault's archaeologies of knowledge that have become archaeologies of vision.

Thinking this same painting in the context of the past sixty years or so (in the contemporary postmodern *epistemē*), another set of issues arise. The question will be posed: what is going on between the perceiver and the perceived? This would have been the question posed to the phenomenologist such as Husserl or Merleau-Ponty. However, Shapiro's question is personal as well as phenomenological-ontological. With a brief taste of autobiographical textuality, Shapiro recounts that, as a young boy, his two eyes were of such different powers that they had to "learn" to correct each other. (*AV*, 49). This dioptic, binary aspect of seeing (where "two is better than one" and "two corrects the one") also shows how "normal" (chiasmatic) vision is not unitary or "cyclopic." Vision happens between two, between the two lines of sight, where multiplicity "can be seen" (not as an object but in the act of seeing). This does not mean that something in particular "will be" seen. Oedipus did not see well enough what he was seeing. Oedipus's not seeing was a metaphorical abyss of sight that overshadowed his whole life and being. In the Italian Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci's activation of linear perspective in theory and in practice was wonderful for the depth of seeing, for a sense of distance, for a vision of distance through light and shadows, through the drawing of double lines, through three-dimensionality. But Leonardo's vision was also illusory, a *trompe-l'oeil* of sorts, a kind of chiasmatic trick of the art of painting to make it look as though distance could be made to appear in a painting. It took centuries until Leonardo's time to make it appear – not only in painting but also in seeing the world. And now in the twenty-first century, will James Cameron's 2009 3-D vision of Avatars add another layer to the metaphorics of seeing? With Leonardo, seeing all ended up in a focal point, a vanishing point, a place in the distance where all multiplicity resolved itself into one single point. By contrast, the chiasmatic element becomes visible only if one looks at it – as in Dürer's drawing of the painter looking through a grid at the object on the other side. [See Figures 5-7] Notice that the line of sight is singular! Hence, Foucault, in his reading of the Renaissance, for instance, demonstrated that the episteme of resemblance appeared as similitude, convenience, analogy, and sympathy, and this multiplicity pervaded all sorts of artistic, cultural, and scientific enterprises. There was no unifying theme of the period even though the *epistemē* of "resemblance" keeps popping up everywhere – as if in a Deleuzian rhizomal network.

Like Leonardo's (Renaissance) linear perspective (painting shall resemble seeing that ends up at a focal point), Jeremy Bentham's panopticon in the nineteenth century has a single (stand)point of vision. Foucault's interest in Bentham's panopticon was linked to his critique of surveillance and

Figure 5: Albrecht Dürer, "Draftsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Woman"（1538）

Figure 6: Alvrecht Dürer, "Instruction How to Measure with Compass and Straight Edge"（1530）

Figure 7: Alvrecht Dürer, Detail of "Instruction How to Measure with Compass and Straight Edge"（1530）

punishment – as in asylums and prisons.[6] But where Leonardo's single point of vision（the focal point）was at the heart and depth of the painting of linear perspective of distance, Bentham's point of vision is more like that of the King and Queen in *Las Meninas*, read in a "modern" anthropological, empirico-transcendental knowledge framework. But read in a contemporary episteme, the surface of the painting（between the modern singular point of vision and the Renaissance focal point on the other side of the painting）is the place where（as Jean-François Lyotard used to say[7]）desire

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[6] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*［1975］, trans. Alan Sheridan（New York: Vintage, 1977）.

[7] See Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*［1971］, trans.Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon（Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010）. This point about desire passing through the painting perpendicular to the canvas was made particularly acute in a lecture Lyotard gave for Mikel Dufrenne's Aesthetics Seminar in

passes through and perpendicular to the painting, at the point of crossing where the multiplicity of vision takes place.

Replacing the biological "eye," the modern single point of vision is the camera – the *camera obscura*[8] effectively – since it is not seen, but is absent from the scene. The fixed and positioned camera stands outside and in front of / behind (*avant*/*devant* / "*vor*"in German) the manifold that is displayed before it. Bentham's idea was simple: if every nook and cranny of a prison could be surveyed and if surveillance comes from a single point of view, it could observe everything that is displayed before its vision. The prison guard would effectively become "like a god" – omniscient-omnipotent (all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful). This frightening aspect of vision – used for the sake of control, where all information is gathered, checked, reviewed, evaluated, and catalogued – as in the work of a Gestapo, a Stasi, a KGB, or perhaps even a Homeland Security – nothing "evil" will be allowed to escape. But the "evil eye" or the "evil genius" in Descartes's formulation is the one who not only sees all but also potentially "can" deceive all. Have "we" not all seen those wonderful bank robbery films or the exquisite episodes of J J Abrams' *Alias*, where the guards of the prison, or the treasury, or the asylum, or the compound are watching a TV screen in which they are supposed to be given a picture of all that transpires before them – a contemporary panopticon – the ingenious "good guys" or "bad guys" – it all depends on one's "point of view" – can substitute an alternative camera view such that it looks as though nothing is taking place. Then when the prisoner is saved, the valuables removed, or the malicious leader kidnapped, the filmed version is replaced by the "actual" view and the camera observers-guards can continue with their card game without noticing a thing!

The abyss in the painting is transposed to the metaphor of visionary seeing itself, the figure for knowledge as visibility, as rhetorical textuality, as chiasmatic knowledge production. Even in the "modern" museum (which began effectively at the end of the eighteenth century with the birth of the concept of "aesthetics"), chiasmatic vision is controlled by the curator. The curator decides the direction the visit of the paintings is to take place, the way through the labyrinth, the unexpected next room around the corner. Each is carefully controlled so that the paintings are seen in a particular order, in a determinate sequence, in a constituted setting of light and shadows, temperature maintenance for the purpose of preservation, limited access through infra-red beams, glass cases, and even framing, not to speak of juxtapositions of paintings, descriptive labels, narratives painted on the walls, etc. But whether it is the Cyclops, Oedipus, Leonardo, Bentham, the Gestapo, the Stasi, the Homeland Security, or a curatorially-controlled exhibition, modern vision remains single-minded and oblivious to the shifting metaphors of abyss and abyssal seeing / thinking.

Gary Shapiro begins and ends his book with Nietzsche's section on "Vision and the Riddle" from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra is confronted with the possibility that vision is an abyss, a

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the 1971-72 academic year at the University of Paris-X (Nanterre).

[8] See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

[8] See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* [1996], trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

mise-en-abîme that never ends up in a focal point nor comes from a standpoint. This vision of abyss is a critique of both Plato's and Hegel's single-minded vision but also Leonardo's linear perspective and Bentham's panopticon. Shapiro is concerned with a certain "ocular-centrism" that places the "single" eye at its center. Galileo's telescope or Dürer's painting of the painter looking through a grid so that he can paint the little squares that he sees with his "one" eye – something like Sartre's *voyeur*, *le tiers*, looking through the peep-hole – constitutes the object and source of unitary vision. The "seeing eye" conception culminates in what Foucault would call the "modern" *episteme* of the "empirico-transcendental doublet" as with the Husserlian "transcendental ego" that "sees" all – even though it has no eyes, that constitutes all – even though it cannot see, that pairs with other such transcendental egos (the famous Husserlian pairing [*Paarung*] of transcendental intersubjectivity) – even though it has no organs.

Nietzsche's *mis-en-abime* is a discourse of vision – seeing paintings, scenes, and contexts. Some years ago, I was asked to write an introduction to a catalogue of photographs by the Austrian photographer Marie-Theresia Litschauer. Entitled "Nietzsche in Italy,"[9] this work entailed photographs of the many sites in Italy, France, and Switzerland where Nietzsche wrote his books – Nizza, Santa Margherita, Torino, Venezia, and many more. Each image is superimposed with a brief text that Nietzsche wrote when in the place in question. And superimposed on that text is Nietzsche's own handscript of the name of the city. Each layer (*Schichte*) is transparent to the layer below. The links between particular places and particular paintings were especially important for Nietzsche: his visions of places, of sites, of lived spaces preoccupied his writing and thinking. On the French Riviera between Nice and Menton—on the so called "*Chemin Nietzsche*" in Éze (France) – at the time of the writing of Part Three of his *Zarathustra*, the philosopher would take the train from Nice to lower Éze and walk up from the beach to the village at the top of the steep incline. Nietzsche would stop for a while, perhaps write some passages about Zarathustra giving speeches to his animals, then at the end of the day go down the hill (*untergehen* as Zarathustra's end of the day activity is often described). These narrated, inscribed, multiple sites of vision, these mountains and abysses that figured so large in Nietzsche's writings from St Moritz and the Engadine in Switzerland to the Italian Alps to the Ligurian coast and on to the Côte d'Azur come alive in Zarathustra's comings and goings. In these moments, there are of course mountains and water, vision and abyss, riddle and enigma, seeing and seen, dispersal of any focal point, explosion of the moment, a discursive *Lichtung* that would have excited even Heidegger. This *Ereignis* of chiasmatic vision is neither on the side of the seer nor on the side of the seen, Merleau-Ponty's "visibility" and Nietzsche's "*Augenblick*" are joined in the *ewige Widerkehr* that comes back again and again as an eternal recurrence that marks the metaphorical abysses of the moment, of the double vision of seeing-seen. "*Augenblick*" is typically translated as "Moment." Nietzsche's famous "Gate of the Moment" (from "The Vision and the Riddle") that extends infinitely into the future and infinitely into the past concerns the double moment of seeing – the eyes that look infinitely forward

9   See Hugh J. Silverman, "Nietzsche's Italics: Chiasmatic Inscriptions – Between the Sheets/ Nietzsche's Cors(iv)o: Chiasmatische Inschriften/Einschreibungen – Zwischen den Tafeln. In: Litschauer, Maria Theresia, *Nietzsche in Italien: Text-Bild-Signatur. Ein Cross-Over von Kunst und Philosophie* (Wien: Graphische Kunstanstalt Otto Sares, 1997), 68–101.

and infinitely backward.

The blink of an eye (*Auge*) – the moment that happens – *ereignet sich* – is a transitory mark of difference in the chiasm of seeing. Germans will say "*Augenblick*" when they want you to wait for a moment before they address what is at hand. The blink of an eye (*Augenblick*) is also a synechdoche for double vision – the abyssal, momentary, differential, metaphorical multiplicity of seeing and knowing, thinking and understanding. Professor Shapiro translates *Augenblick* as "the twinkling of the eye." Will not this "twinkling of the eye" be a sign of an *ecstasis* (even *jouissance*) that happens in the reading of philosophers looking at and writing about paintings. The event of seeing pictures must not be single-minded, unitary, unequivocal accounts of phenomena, of what appears, for the abysses of painting are also the metaphorical abysses of vision and the thinking of abysses that are uncovered in the archaeologies of vision happen between us (*zwischen uns / unter uns*) – *entre nous*!

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