

Gilles Deleuze

Painting and the Question of Concepts

Session 2, 7 April 1981

Transcriptions: [Voix de Deleuze](#), Part 1, Véronique Boudon (duration 34:58); Part 2, Chloé Molina-Vée (duration 46:55); Parts 3 & 4, Damien Houssier (duration 1:07:04)

Translated by Alina Cherry

Part 1

Forgive my hesitations in advance. So, last time, we started this kind of... I don't know what, about painting and I tried to grasp something that... Because this strikes me. Again, what I say has no value, it goes without saying, no universal value. Every time I would like – it's up to you to see if another painter of whom I haven't thought, if something is suitable or not – anyway, what struck me in a certain number of painters, was the presence on the canvas of a true catastrophe.

And my question was, actually, what is this rapport, not between painting and catastrophe, but this deeper rapport between a catastrophe and the act of painting? As if the painter had to pass through this catastrophe. Henceforth I tried, and this is all we did last time, I tried to see if there was something we could call, I don't know, by a very vague word, a first, not absolute first, but for us, a first concept peculiar to painting, a kind of pictorial concept.

And with the help of texts written by painters, we created a kind of concept, a first concept of catastrophe germ, or chaos germ, as if the painting contained this catastrophe germ from which something would emerge. And, in a certain number of painters, this catastrophe germ is visible. So, that obviously poses a problem. In those where it is not visible, can we say that it is still there, but virtual or invisible? These are things I dare not even address, we must be more solid to even ask this question, without it being completely verbal or completely literary; but anyway, in certain painters, it [catastrophe germ] is obvious. And certain painters tell us about this catastrophe through which they pass, again, not personally, although it can have many personal consequences on their own equilibrium; but it's not about saying that they pass through it personally because this is very secondary; what passes through it is the painting, it's their painting. And perhaps the most striking text was by Paul Klee, when he talks about these two moments: the gray point as chaos and this gray point that leaps over itself in order to unfold as a germ of space, it leaps over itself and I was trying at least to understand or to interpret it as if there were two grays, these two states of gray, the gray black-white leaps over itself, becoming the gray green-red, that is to say the matrix of color.

Fine, is then this chaos germ that through which the painting must pass in order to... what? For the light to be born, or – and here we see all kinds of possible answers – for the color to be born?

Hence, the admirable title of Turner's stacks: "Birth of color," "beginning of color," and this theme that traverses all the painters, that finally the painting, the painter puts himself in the situation of a creation of the world or a beginning of the world. What would that mean if not precisely that he passes through this chaos catastrophe, he introduces it on the canvas so that something might emerge from it, which is what? Which is obviously no longer the world of objects. It can no longer be under any circumstances the world of objects, but the world of light-color. Now, you understand that – I was insisting on this – there is no general formula for the chaos catastrophe, the chaos germ or the catastrophe germ. It's obvious that Van Gogh's chaos germ is completely different – and I'm giving examples from close time frames – from Cézanne's chaos germ. In addition, it is also completely different from Gauguin's chaos germ, all of this is... all the more so from Klee's chaos germ. So, there are chaos germs that are very, very singularized, on which will already play what we'll call the style of the painter; and what will emerge from them will also be very different.

The painters of light, I think that – although the painters of light can be great colorists – I think that the painters of light who attain color through light, and the painters of color who attain – don't know, I believe I've made a mistake -- the painters of light, who attain color through light, and the painters of color, the colorists who attain light through color, well, you see, there are absolutely different techniques, it goes without saying.

So, when I talk about a chaos germ, I don't mean at all something undifferentiated, on the contrary, it is rather signed, there is already the signature of the painter. And so, last time I was just saying chaos germ; it so happens that a contemporary painter has a word that intrigues me and is of great use to me, so I repeat, it's Bacon, when he calls this chaos germ a diagram. He says: "yes, in a painting, there is a diagram", and it was the quote that I had read to you, even in a portrait, well, in a portrait, and what is a diagram? He tells us, "The diagram," and I think we need to pay attention to the word he uses. "A diagram is a possibility of fact," and so what interested me – it almost gives me the idea, finally, of what we're doing here, talking about painting – was a logic of painting, which doesn't mean at all reducing painting to logic, but considering that there is a logic peculiar to painting.

Well, this word, "diagram," would serve me all the more that it is frequently and currently used, as I was telling you, by certain British and American logicians; the theories of the diagram are everywhere, and what I would like to do, among other things, in order to reach more logical or philosophical considerations, would be to try to see if painting can provide us with the elements, some elements in any case, for a theory of the diagram. But you see, for the time being, because I tried to situate this diagram or this chaos germ in the time of the act of painting, and I say: yes, very simply, could we not say this, even if we are to correct it later: well, it's like the second moment in the three moments of the act of painting. It's in that sense that I was saying, you know, in a painting, there is always an implicit synthesis of time.

And what are these three moments? Well, I was saying that the painting is in immediate communication with a before-painting moment (*un avant-peindre*). The painting cannot be thought prior to a before-painting (*un avant-peindre*), that is to say, the painting fundamentally has a pre-pictorial dimension. And I refer to this long text by Cézanne, where he talks about everything that happens before he starts painting. It's precisely this pre-pictorial dimension that

already belongs to the painting. Now, it's according to this pre-pictorial dimension that the diagram positions itself as a second moment, hence this question: "What is it [the diagram] going to do with respect to the second moment?" "What is it going to do, sorry, with respect to the first moment?"

If there is definitely visible or non-visible in the painting, a belonging and a pre-pictorial dimension, we don't know yet in what this dimension consists. All I can say is that the necessity or the chaos-germ, that is to say, the diagram, will find its necessity in a certain function that it performs in relation to this first pre-pictorial dimension. What is it [the diagram] going to do? It is going to act, literally, as a kind of scrambled, wiped-off zone, in order to allow what? To allow, undoubtedly, the advent of painting. We're going to have to clean up, to scramble.

Fine, let's suppose that for the third moment to come out... So, you see, I have my kind of temporal dimension of the act of painting, the pre-pictorial dimension, the diagram that is going to act we don't know yet how on this dimension, in such a way that might emerge from the diagram what? Let's go back to Bacon's words. The diagram is not yet the pictorial fact. Oh, so there would be a pictorial fact? Perhaps there is a pictorial fact.

Why is it that when critics speak about painting, there is always a word that everybody, many people use, the theme of presence? Presence, presence, it is the simplest word to describe the effect of painting on us, and you notice that I'm not making any distinction for the time being, there is no reason for it, whether it is a Mondrian square or a figure of very classical painting, there is no need for it, there is a kind of presence. Presence, what does it mean when critics use this word? It is used to tell us – and obviously what we know well thanks to them, thanks to ourselves, uh – it's not representation. Presence is... what is it? We don't know very well; we know above all that it is different from representation. The painter has brought forth a presence, namely a portraitist, well, he doesn't represent the king, he doesn't represent the queen, he doesn't represent the little princess, he brings forth a presence.

Okay, then it's a convenient word. It's another way of saying that there is a pictorial fact. Where does the pictorial fact come from? Well, after all, all the vocabularies suit us, so my three moments: the pre-pictorial moment, which, in a way, I insist again, belongs to the painting; then the diagram; then the pictorial fact that emerges from the diagram.

Okay, we take this as a point, again it's a hypothesis because it'll have to be revised, all that. Let's speak Latin because it is... I'm thinking of a text by Kant, in a completely different field, where he uses a Latin terminology distinguishing... It's good actually, it is a beautiful passage where he distinguishes the *datum* and the *factum*, that is to say, in French it's less pretty, the given and the fact. And he says: "you know the fact is something completely different from the given." Well, I'd say that my first stage, the pre-pictorial dimension, is the world of the givens. What is given? So, my question becomes more specific, it will help us: what is given on the canvas before the painting begins?

Fine, I emphasize this because there is a kind of platitude, quite recent, which is a catastrophe, it seems to me, it is a catastrophe because it's such a distortion of the real problem – either to write or to paint – that it makes everything childish. And I think it's a theme that, generally those who

support it claim to be influenced by Blanchot – but it’s simply an erroneous interpretation of Blanchot who never said anything stupid – whereas the theme they draw from him is incredibly stupid.

This theme, which is ruinous in literature, is the theme of the writer in front of a blank page. It’s silly, but ridiculously silly, and henceforth the problem of writing is: “my God, how I am going to fill this blank page?” [*Laughter*] So, there are people who write books about this, about the vertigo of the blank page. [*Laughter*]

You understand, we don’t really see why someone would want to fill a blank page, there is nothing missing from a blank page, I mean, I see very few themes as stupid as this one, which is entirely clichéd. The anxiety of the blank page, you can even add a bit of psychoanalysis to this, the blank page... And sometimes people write novels of up to eighty pages, a hundred and twenty, a hundred and forty pages about this relation of the writer with the blank page.

I’m saying that this is of an unfathomable stupidity, because if someone sits in front of a blank page, he is not going to fill it, it’s forced; moreover, this is accompanied by such a stupid conception of writing that, you understand, it’s just the opposite. When you have something to write, or when you estimate, I’m not saying at all... I’m not making a distinction between true and fake writers, it’s more general... if you have something to write you mustn’t think that you are... it’s the third, it’s the one looking over your shoulder who says: “oh, he hasn’t written anything yet...” “Okay, I haven’t written anything yet.”

But what is the difference between... my poor head, my excited brain and the page? None, in my opinion, none. Namely, there are already many things, there are far too many things on the page, there is no blank page. There is a blank page objectively, that is to say, a false objectivity for the third party who is watching, but when it comes to your own page, it is cluttered, it is completely cluttered, and that’s exactly what writing means. That the page is so cluttered that there is no room to add anything at all.

As a result, writing will fundamentally be “erasing,” it will fundamentally be “deleting.” What is on the page before I start writing? I would say there is the infinite world, forgive me, the infinite world of stupidity. There is this infinite world... or rather, how is writing a test? It’s just that you don’t write like this, with nothing in your head, you have many things in your head. But in your head, in a way, everything is on the same plane, namely what is good about an idea and what is easy and clichéd. It’s on the same plane, it’s only when you act through the activity of writing that this bizarre selection where you become “act” happens, I’d say the same thing for speaking. When you have something in your head, before speaking, but there are plenty of things, yet everything is on the same plane... no, in a way not everything is on the same plane, but it’s useless editing in your head, there is the test of acting it out either by talking or by writing, which is a fantastic elimination, a fantastic purging.

So, your page is full. Full of what? I would say of ready-made ideas, and you would have a difficult time finding them original. Ready-made ideas, that doesn’t necessarily mean ideas that others also have, you may very well have your own ready-made ideas, entirely your own, although they are ready-made. They are ready-made ideas. Facile, facile, the type of ideas you

have when you are eighteen years old and of which you are ashamed when you wake up. No, [it's] too facile all that, not serious. You understand, the world of ideas, once again, has never been justiciable of the true and the false. It is justiciable of much finer categories. The important, the essential and the inessential, the remarkable and the ordinary, etc. As long as it is in your head, well, you can take very ordinary things for remarkable things. But it's not innocent, this kind of confusion, when you take something ordinary for something remarkable, it affects the content of the idea. Not just formal stuff, so that's why you always have books about which you say... I don't know if you've had this experience, but anyway, no, this is not ok, it's childish. And we would have a difficult time saying in what respect this is false. No, it's not false, it's nothing. While the guy seems to find his ideas great, there is something in you... and there are no grounds for discussion.

That's why discussions are always shit, you know. This is not the place for a discussion at all. I cannot tell someone why their idea isn't splendid, eh, it's impossible to say. Fine, that's simply what we have in our head, the world of ready-made ideas, either collective ideas or even personal ideas. A personal idea is not a good idea because it's personal... There are some ready-made ideas that are, however, just mine, that are facile; at a pinch, I can mention them in conversation, but if I test them in writing, I say to myself: But what on earth is this? What am I saying, is it worth writing this down? Well, if we ask ourselves that a lot, I'm not saying that we succeed, we can be wrong like everyone else, but we are mistaken less often, we must have urgent questions... [*Brief interruption of the recording*] [22:11]

I turn to painting, that's what interests me: it's also idiotic to think that the canvas is a blank surface, no more than paper. A canvas is not a blank surface, I think painters know that well. Before they start, the canvas is already full, it is filled with what, before they start? Again, this is for the eye of the guy who walks around and sees... so, he sees a painter, he looks and then says: "you haven't done much there, huh, there's nothing." As for the painter, if he has trouble getting started, it's precisely because his canvas is full. Full of what? Full of the worst. And you understand that, otherwise painting wouldn't be a job... the canvas is full of the worst, the problem will be to remove, to really remove these things, these invisible things that have already overtaken the canvas, which is to say, evil is already there. What is evil? What are the ready-made ideas about painting? Painters have always used a word to designate, well not always, but there is a word that's prevailed for designating what fills the canvas before the painter begins, it's cliché, one cliché, several clichés. The canvas is already filled with clichés.

Consequently, there will be in the act of painting, like in the act of writing, that which has to be presented, although it is quite insufficient, a series of subtractions, of deletions. The necessity to clean the canvas. So, would that be the role, at least a role, the negative role of the diagram? The necessity to clean the canvas to prevent the clichés from taking. What's so terrible about clichés? Well, we can say, and in fact people do say that, after all, painters are currently worse than before, and if we had to comment, it's true in a way. I don't want to repeat those analyses on the existence of a world of simulacra, authors like [Pierre] Klossowski, for instance, have done them too well; although Klossowski understands simulacrum in a very erudite way, it also includes this aspect, the cliché, the ready-made. We live, we are often told, we live in a world of simulacra, in a world of clichés. No doubt, it is necessary to question progress, certain technical developments in the field of images, the photo-image, the cinema-image, the television-image,

etc. Oh well, this whole world of images... but this doesn't exist only on screens, it exists in our heads, it exists in rooms, it exists in a room, it's truly Lucretian, you know when Lucretius talks about simulacra that go around the world, that cross spaces in order to come from some place to hit our heads, to hit our brains, all that. We live in a world of clichés, there are posters, there is all that... Fine. In the end, all of that is on the canvas before the painter begins.¹

And what is catastrophic is that as soon as a painter has found something, it becomes a cliché, and very quickly nowadays there is a production, infinite reproduction of the cliché, which makes the consumption extremely quick. Well, war against the cliché, that is the painter's battle cry, I think. Now, the painter knows that there are personal clichés as well as collective clichés, that the painter can have his little cerebral idea, his little idea of something new. But every cerebral idea in painting is a cliché. Even if that's his own personal cliché, it's still a cliché. I don't like very much the phrase by Oscar Wilde that's always quoted, namely, "it is nature that starts to resemble such painter." It's not the painter that copies nature, it's nature that once the painter exists, then indeed, for instance, we start to say of a landscape, oh look, this is a Renoir. To me, this doesn't seem so complimentary to the painter, it only really shows the speed with which an act of painting becomes a cliché. I start saying in front of a woman: "ah, a real Van Dongen," in front of a landscape: "oh, this is a Renoir," cliché, cliché, cliché. Perhaps the painter who struggled... eventually, his clichés, you'll tell me, don't have any objective existence on the canvas. Okay, I'm saying that they have a virtual existence, a force, a weight. How will the painter avoid the clichés, both the clichés that come from outside and already force themselves on the canvas, and the clichés that come from him?

It will be a struggle with the shadow because his clichés don't exist objectively, once again we believe in the blank surface, and yet, they [the clichés] are there. In any case, for the painter, they are there. The one who pushed, to my knowledge... I don't know, all of them had this drama, how to escape the clichés, even a cliché that would be entirely theirs, it's a frightening struggle.

Regarding the rapports between painting and photography about which I'd like to speak later, but for now, I would still launch a theme, because I find it relevant at this point. Regarding the rapports between painting and photography and what painters may have learned from photography, or the relevance of photography in relation to painting, two things seem to me very, very questionable. Um, you understand, you have to distinguish, you have to distinguish because even the painters who use photos, what is this about? What is this about, the painters who use photos today? I'm thinking of a painter, I don't know what you think of him, if um, maybe, he only suffers from an excess of talent.

There is something... it's [Gérard] Fromanger. In one of his periods, Fromanger used photos in a way that seems very interesting to me. This was his method. We'll see if we won't find again our diagram story. What was he doing? During one of his periods, it was the time when he used photos the most, he would go walking in the street – well, it was his way of looking for the motif – he would stroll in the street, with a photographer, a press photographer, a newspaper photographer. And he would photograph street scenes, especially shops, several shots; that's what he was doing and I'm asking you to see where the act of painting starts in this process. He wasn't the one taking the photos, he makes that very clear, and it's obvious that when we see a photo, um, esthetically worthless, [there is] no esthetic claim. Does the photo have the right to

make aesthetic claims? It's a very interesting problem, I think, quite interesting. But that wasn't even in question, since the photos were purposely instant press photos; he would take twelve photos of the same scene or of the same shop. Fromanger would select from the twelve photos, he would select, he would select.

That's where the act of painting was already starting, yet he had painted nothing. There was already an act there, he chose a photo, based on what? He had an idea in his head, what was his idea? There is clearly an intention, what was the intention to paint, and to paint what in Fromanger's case, from the point of view of that technique? Well, what was his idea, his little idea? He would choose a photo from twelve or ten, depending on a color, which had to be, which had to become the dominant color of the painting to be made. Yes, they were black and white photos, oh yes, I forgot to specify that they were black and white photos. Fine, he would select a photo, like this, so he had twelve photos, he would look at the technical quality of the photo, but if needed, he would pick a photo of a lower technical quality because it seemed more compatible with... the scene vaguely brought to his mind a color. Let's imagine a scene that would evoke for him a violet, a very specific violet, he would say: "oh, well yes, that scene, I see it in violet." Then, he would choose the photo that seemed to him the most compatible with – it was already a painter's choice – this violet he had in his head, that the scene had vaguely evoked for him.

What was he doing with it? -- And I can already say: the act of painting began at the level of this first choice. -- He would project the photo on the canvas. Fine, he would project the photo on the canvas. *[Pause]* I like this technique a lot because, I'm not saying that it is a technique that's the most... *[the gap is from Deleuze]* besides, it must be abandoned -- one can make a series, a painter can make a series like that, and if he stops there, it obviously becomes a "cliché" in turn. He had an idea, in fact pop art sometimes had similar techniques, but that specific technique, no, it was a little variation, it was a Fromanger variation.

Okay, so what did he do from that point on? You see, he wasn't painting at all on a virgin canvas, even apparently. There was a kind of truth of painting, which was already emerging, there was the projection of the photo on his canvas. Photo of no aesthetic value, and deliberately worthless. If there had been a photo with even the slightest artistic claim, he wouldn't have been able to work, I think. So, his canvas had to be filled with the image of the image, with the projection of the photo. I think that finally... *[Interruption of the recording]* [35:00]

Part 2

... his idea of a dominant color, well, his violet for instance, and he would make a first scale. He was a painter, that's what being a painter meant. He would make a first scale. Scale that I'm going to call, you'll see why, "scale of light." He would make his scale of light. You see to what extent we are already, it's getting very close, indeed, you will have to ask me the question I won't answer... And he would replace the initial cliché with a new cliché. Obviously, that's why he couldn't carry on with this technique for a long time.

Fine, he would make his scale of light, and what does that mean? He would have the photo projected and he would paint everything in violet, the chosen violet, but going from light zones to dark zones. What did that mean in terms of painting? It means that for the light zones, he

mixed his violet with white -- this is an act of painting -- and for the dark zones there was less and less white and, in the end, no white at all, it was the pure violet that gushed straight out of the tube. Let's see. He would make a scale of light, of luminosity, obtained through the variable mixture of white and this violet. Fine. Then, what was he doing? That was for the background. Or, for example, for the shop. But the photographer had shot a street scene, I made it clear, that is to say, people passing in front of the shop or people coming out of the shop, all that... The violet he had chosen was, technically, for those who know this color, a Bayeux violet, namely, a violet that we call "warm."

Later we'll talk about color more specifically, but most of you already know this, the contrast of colors from the point of view of tonality, the fundamental opposition is between warm and cool colors. Warm generally speaking... all of this is quite insufficient because I'm not yet talking about color, warm being a sort of... defining a color with a vector of "expansion," of movement of expansion; cool with a movement of "contraction." Among the elementary colors, yellow is called "warm," blue is called "cool." Fine.

So, his Bayeux violet was a warm violet. He had thus established his scale of light, and he was moving to a scale of colors. He would make an ascending scale of light, towards the pure Bayeux violet. He would then make a scale of colors. Namely, the dominant "violet" being warm, he was going to paint a man in green, for example, a cool green, since there are cool greens, warm and cool being relative and dependent on hues. He would create a cool green.

So, from a color standpoint, there was this opposition between the cool green, the man in cool green and the dominant "violet." What was its purpose? The juxtaposition of the "cool green" zone in relation to violet was intended, as painters say, to warm the violet even more. Fine, let's admit that. We'll look at all this from the point of view of a very simple conception of colors. You see, when you are, for instance, in front of an impressionist painting, you always have these things, these themes: the complementary relations, the relations between warm and cool colors, how a cool color warms up more, heats up even more a warm color, etc.

Fine, so the cool green warmed the violet even more. Fine. But in relation to the cool green as a new element, what was he going to do? At that moment a whole circuit of colors appears. He was going to paint another man in yellow, in warm yellow. This time, the warm yellow, you see, wasn't in direct relation with the violet, but it was in relation with the violet via the cool green, etc., etc. He was going to do his scale of colors until the entire painting was filled.

What had he done? -- to get back to our theme -- How is there a kind of diagram? Where was the diagram located? From the very beginning it was about one thing, it's a bad case, precisely a bad example and we'll have to ask ourselves if that's not always the case with the painters who have had a relationship with photographs. Far from using the photo as if it were an element of art, he completely neutralized the photo and the cliché. He neutralized the cliché in the following way, he projected it on his canvas (but it was a way of avoiding the cliché, much more than using it) because the act of painting only started from the moment the photo was going to be cancelled in favor of a first scale of light, of an ascending scale of light and a scale of colors. Fine.

So here, we rediscover my three moments: the pre-pictorial moment, cliché, cliché, nothing but clichés. The necessity of a diagram that will blur, that will clean the cliché so that something might emerge, the diagram being only a possibility of fact, the cliché is the given, that which is given, given in the mind, in the street, in the perception, given, given everywhere. Fine. You see then, the diagram acts as that which will blur the cliché so that the painting might emerge. Fine. I find my three moments there.²

But I'm saying that perhaps nobody has waged the "fight against the cliché" as passionately, as – I would say, even if I had to justify this word later – as hysterically as Cézanne. It seems to me that there is an extraordinary conscience in Cézanne: "my canvas is full of clichés even before I start painting" and the kind of exigency that's never satisfied in Cézanne is: "how to get rid of all these clichés that are already occupying the canvas?" It's a struggle with the shadow, only, my question – and we'll see what that can mean – I feel that the true struggles are always struggles with the shadow. There are no other struggles but the struggle with the shadow. The clichés are already there, they are in my head, they are in me, they don't need... and when Fromanger brings them out, to put them on his canvas in order to destroy them and to bring out a pictorial fact, it's already a way of avoiding them. They are already there, and they are already there to such a great extent that I resume the list of dangers.

If you don't pass through the chaos catastrophe, you will remain a prisoner of the clichés and people could say: "oh yes, he has a nice brushstroke." It will be worthless, and the painter himself will undoubtedly know that it is worth nothing. Thus, not passing through the chaos catastrophe, that is, not having a diagram, is very, very unfortunate, it means not having anything to say, not having anything to paint. There are many painters who paint and who have nothing to paint. Fine. But there is another thing: mauling the cliché. Mauling, manipulating the cliché. It seems very close to the diagram, to the chaos catastrophe and yet you must feel that it is... I'm trying to... it's like a premonition of all the dangers, all the practical dangers. It's far too deliberate, "mauling the cliché." Photographers keep doing it. That's not how they become painters. Fine, you can always maul the cliché, manipulate it. [*Pause*] It's not... that's not okay either.

On the other hand, I was saying, the danger that Klee pointed out, if the cliché [*Deleuze corrects himself*], if the diagram, if the catastrophe, if chaos overtakes everything, it's not good either. In other words, we are constantly surrounded by dangers, very formidable dangers. So, I'm thinking of a text, I'm not going to read it because I have trouble reading, I'm saying that I would have liked to read it to you, it's a text by Lawrence, I think I talked to you about it, you'll read it yourselves, it's in the collection of articles that appeared in French under the title "Eros et les chiens" where there is a splendid text on Cézanne.³ Splendid. I find the theme of the text so beautiful... [D.H.] Lawrence, you know, was painting with watercolors, especially towards the end of his life, they are not very good, but he knew it, he knew it, he needed them. Miller also did watercolors, Churchill too but they are even worse. [*Laughter*]

A student [*near Deleuze*]: Barthes too?

Deleuze: Barthes was doing watercolors? Well, maybe they were good. Fine. Lawrence said: "well, there you go, you understand, this is what Cézanne is all about." And that's why I'd like

you to read this text that says: “never has a painter gone so far in the preliminary fight against the cliché.” Before painting. And he says, and that’s where Lawrence’s text interests me a lot: “but you know, Cézanne had his own clichés.” And indeed, he could do... The painter who submits to his own clichés, what is it? It’s when the true painter is missing; as if we were saying: “Oh, this, of course, is a Cézanne, but it’s very close to a fake Cézanne.” You have the feeling that he wasn’t himself. For those who saw it, I was not long ago at the Modigliani exhibition, and curiously, there are Modiglianis, you almost feel... they are admirable, prodigious, but it’s a painter, I don’t know, there was something, forgive me, I feel a little embarrassed, as if he had been too gifted, as if there were Modiglianis at the extreme, [there was] an excess of gift or an excess of ease. Fortunately, Cézanne had no gift. No gift at all.

So then, his fight against the cliché led him to what? To what did it lead him, this fight against the cliché? Lawrence’s passages are very beautiful. At the end, he says: “well, yes... What did Cézanne achieve?” And there is this very beautiful phrase: “well yes, he finally understood the fact pictorially”; what is Cézanne’s fact? What he captured, what he did, what led him to painting is “the fact of the apple.” The apple, he understood the apple very, very well, nobody has ever understood an apple like that. What does it mean, “to understand as a painter?” Understanding an apple, that is going to be our problem, but that means making it happen as “fact,” what Lawrence calls “the appleyness of the apple” (*le caractère pommesque de la pomme*). That’s what Cézanne was able to paint, “the appleyness of the apple.” Fine. At the end of what, what fight against the cliché, what search where Cézanne was never satisfied?⁴

On the other hand, he says: “oh, things are going less well with landscapes, no matter how beautiful they are.” He says the problem with Cézanne was that if he understood so well the appleyness of the apple, he hadn’t really understood, for instance, the feminineness (*le caractère fémininesque*) of women. And no, that... His women... And in this wonderful passage Lawrence says: “Oh well, these women, he paints them like apples and that’s how he manages.” [Laughter] Mrs. Cézanne is a kind of apple, but they are still brilliant paintings, it’s not about... but... and Lawrence says: “it’s excessive, eh, if at the end of his life, a painter will say, like Cézanne: “I understood the apple and one or two pots,” it’s already tremendous.

What did Michelangelo understand? We can transpose, look for... namely, what “fact” they brought? I’d say, well, Michelangelo, among others, didn’t understand much, you know, it’s like everything else, a writer doesn’t understand much, a philosopher doesn’t understand much, we mustn’t exaggerate... they are not people who understand like that... a painter doesn’t just paint anything. Fine, what did Michelangelo understand? He understood, for instance, and it’s quite an accomplishment, he understood “a large male back.” Not a woman’s; a large back of a woman or a small back of a woman would be a completely different thing, that would be other painters. A large back of a man. An entire life for “a large back of a man,” okay, a lifetime for “a large back of a man.” Well, that’s worth Cézanne’s apple. As Lawrence says, these are not Platonic ideas.

Fine, Michelangelo also understood other things, but still, it’s always rather limited, what a painter can understand, namely the pictorial facts that he brings to light. Well, then, what are these since I’m talking about the facts. I cannot say everything I say... it seems to me that it’s sometimes connected to such and such a painter, but there are also things that are valid or not for painting in general.

I mean, it's always been like that, the painter's task, to bring forth the pictorial fact, to fight against the givens; yes, I resume my three moments, which are a bit academic, but let's hope we'll get something out of it: the fight against the ghost or against the givens, the establishment of the diagram or of the chaos catastrophe and, what comes out of it, namely, the pictorial fact.

So, I would almost say, it's not contradictory, it's always existed in painting but I'm saying to myself, well, it has always existed but in a more or less latent way. I was talking about Michelangelo earlier. I would almost say that his importance in painting, for me, is that he is, maybe, maybe, eh, I should nuance all this, one must always nuance a lot, he is the first painter who brought to light in its most raw form what a pictorial fact was. I think that if we had to date this notion, it would date back to Michelangelo.

So, if we try a little... now I take a completely different painter with respect to the periods and the style of those I had considered the last time, I'm saying that "the pictorial fact" is born in its reality, that is, it establishes itself on the canvas with Michelangelo. That would be Michelangelo's unfathomable contribution.

So, if my impression is correct, I'm thinking now is the time to try to specify what we could call the pictorial fact as opposed to the pre-pictorial givens. Again, the pre-pictorial givens are the world of clichés, in the broadest sense of the word, namely, that against which or the world of ghosts, that against which or the world of fantasy or the imaginary world, anything you want, all that, I'm including it... that is the world of the givens, it's with all of that the painter has to break. If he stays there, he's lost. If he stays there, he'll be a pretty little painter and that's all. But then, the pictorial fact... it seems to me that it's Michelangelo who, in a way, invents the pictorial fact, which doesn't contradict the idea that I also have that... it's always existed but it is he who brings it to light, who makes us see it. I'm sticking to anecdotes because it'll help us make headway.

It's first with Michelangelo that the status of the painter really changes. I mean, the painter clearly had to have the right personality, he also had to have the right epoch, the era is good for that, but the painter stops being a guy who executes orders. I mean, the others, it didn't stop them from being great and from doing whatever they wanted, but they weren't arguing, eh, if a Pope... was ordering a commission, they weren't arguing. What's new with Michelangelo, which is very important in terms of pure anecdote?

The first anecdote I remember about Michelangelo is that Julius II told him to do this commission. And Julius II has very specific ideas about what he wants and nothing else. Nothing else. Michelangelo does something completely different. In addition, he talks with the Pope, he convinces the Pope, and finally the Pope is fed up and he gives him, as they say, *carte blanche*. Well, that's something new. Okay, you'll tell me, what does this mean pictorially, this anecdote that would otherwise be of little interest?

Well, what does that mean? I'll tell you a second anecdote. Michelangelo is one of those who exhibit – maybe this existed before, maybe it was less visible – exhibit a splendid indifference to the subject. So, obviously all the painters... we'll see that, is it true? But maybe the subject is part of the cliché. The subject or the object represented may have always been, for all the painters, the

equivalent of the cliché and it's certainly that which always had to be blurred for the pictorial fact to emerge. In other words, the cliché has always been the object. Fine. So, the cliché was blurred, the object was blurred, in order to bring out what? Well, the answer is simple: the pictorial fact that was already light and color. Okay.

But it turns out that with Michelangelo this indifference to the object or the subject takes on a kind of insolence, such as knowing which Biblical scene Michelangelo represents, knowing what the characters in the background are doing, and we are almost ashamed to ask these questions. We're ashamed to ask these questions, and especially with Michelangelo, we are ashamed to ask these questions; we feel really stupid when we say: "but what are these four men in the background?" For instance, four men in the background of the Holy Family, all naked, with an attitude that... from the point of view of figuration we can only call a pronounced homosexual attitude. What are these four men doing? We feel embarrassed to ask a question like that because it is so stupid. Fine. It's... Fine. In the scene, they are doing nothing. What is this scene? It's called the Holy Family. Okay. Fine. Splendid indifference to the subject there.

That's where I want to go anecdotally. He is commissioned to paint a battle, a famous battle. Very well. He says: "okay." And what does he do? He won't do the painting, he won't be able to do it. He does a preparatory drawing (*carton*). What does the preparatory drawing represent? A group of naked young people, in the water, coming out of the water, and in the background, soldiers. People say: "Phew, there are soldiers, that's already something, huh." [*Laughter*]. And a group... what is it doing there? It's a masterpiece by Michelangelo; these young people naked in the water, splendid, splendid, the soldiers on the horizon. Scholars are looking for answers. Nevertheless, people are wondering why he calls it "The Battle of Cascina." Scholars are searching. And there is a commentator at the time who says that in this battle, a small group of Florentine soldiers took a bath... and that their commander reminded them of decency – they weren't surprised at all. Not at all. Fine. Michelangelo is not really interested in the subject. Regarding the battle, he says: "okay, I'm going to paint naked young people in the water." He says: "they want a battle, I couldn't care less..." so he invents; these naked young people who would have been surprised by the enemy bathing in the water is a purely invented episode, that's a bit like a battle. [*Laughter*]

What does this mean? How is this more than just an anecdote? I'm coming back – I seem to be jumping but I'm not. All of this remains quite identical – I come back to this contemporary painter I was talking about: Bacon. In his interviews Bacon keeps saying: "there are only two dangers in painting" – and that's not an original idea because it seems to me that it's always been the idea of all painters – "there are only two dangers in painting, illustration, and even worse, narration." A great art critic, Baudelaire, was already talking about these dangers: illustration and narration. And what we generally call figuration is the common concept that groups these two things: illustration and narration. So, what happens in front of certain paintings? And yes, what is he doing? Oh yes, someone cuts off someone else's head, etc. It's a battle, fine. There is a whole figurative aspect, a whole narrative aspect. Fine.

So, you understand, by dint of making circles and always coming back to my starting point, I'd say that the fight against the cliché is the fight against any narrative and figurative reference. A painting has nothing to show and nothing to tell. That is the basis. If you want to tell something,

you have to choose other disciplines, you have to choose narrative disciplines. A painting has nothing to do with a story, it's not a story. That's good, but at the same time, you understand, narrations and figurations do exist; they are the givens even before the painter starts to paint, they are the givens. And they are there on the canvas, the figurations and narrations.

There are a certain number of paintings that could be very beautiful and that we already know are not great paintings, precisely because you can't help saying: "what happened?" Non only: "what does this represent," that would be... but: "what happened?" For instance, Greuze is a narrative painter in what sense? It's that you feel the need to... There is a very beautiful painting by a Dutch painter whose name I can't recall, which shows a father scolding his daughter. And the daughter is seen from behind, an arching back. We can't see this painting without saying: "but what is the daughter's expression?" That's not good, that's not good. I mean, it can be very pretty, it can be amazing, it's not great painting, it's really a painting that's inseparable from a narrative, right? You understand, that's not okay. What bothers me ... I'm saying this... but you... it's not at all... what bothers me terribly in a contemporary painter who is actually very good, like Balthus, is that... we constantly have the feeling that the image is taken from something that is happening. There is a story in there. I understand that those who like Balthus may find revolting what I'm saying, so I eliminate, I cross out this unfortunate example.

Fine, fine, fine, removing narration and illustration, that would be the role of the diagram and of the chaos catastrophe. So, getting rid of all the figurative givens because figurations and narrations are given. They are given. Thus, making the figurative and narrative givens pass through the chaos catastrophe, through the catastrophe germ, so that something completely different emerges, namely, the fact.

The fact is what? Bacon defines it quite well and it really applies to all painting. The pictorial fact is when you have several – we see it better when there are several – when you have several Figures in the painting, without telling a story. And Bacon gives an example that could touch us: Cézanne's "The Bathers" (*Les Baigneuses*). He says: "it's amazing, he managed to put twelve or fourteen figures," take all the versions of The Bathers, and he managed to put several figures, to make them coexist on the canvas – it is implied, otherwise it made no sense, "necessarily," "necessarily." Fine. I add "necessarily": making coexist several figures, without telling any story. If this coexistence is necessary, you then sense what the pictorial fact is. This necessity peculiar to painting.

I'll give a particularly famous example. A well-known 19th-century painting shows a female nude in a wood. A naked woman and clothed men. A painting that stirred up a scandal, from a figurative point of view, this naked woman and these dressed men. You grasp it pictorially when you eliminate every story. If there was a story, this story could only be disgusting. What's going on with this naked woman sitting in the grass with these dressed men? It would be a story of little perverts, right? How to remove all narrative givens, all figurative givens in order to bring out the pictorial fact of this naked body in relation to the dressed bodies, the scale of colors or the scale of light, etc.?

So, I come back to Michelangelo, to this famous painting by Michelangelo, The Holy Family. It seems that in this painting he is more scrupulous, he represents indeed the Holy Family and at

the same time, the indifference to the subject bursts forth. You understand, it is only from the indifference to the subject that the “pictorial fact” can emerge, namely the painting generates its own “fact.” And what is the “fact?” It’s that there are three bodies. Baby Jesus is on the shoulders of Virgin Mary. The three figures are caught up – there, it’s very well... you’ll see, you have it in mind, you see immediately – in a kind of serpentine movement. This treatment of the figures came from Da Vinci, but Michelangelo carried it to a point... A serpentine movement as if the three figures were literally cast in a continuous flow. [It is] not surprising, after all, that it was a sculptor who brought to light what was to be the sculptural and pictorial fact; perhaps it was easier for sculpture to bring forth a sculptural fact. But as a painter-sculptor, Michelangelo imposes the necessary fact. He imposes the “necessarily” pictorial “fact.” This serpentine movement will, indeed, be prodigious because it gives the infant Jesus an absolutely dominant position which will then completely determine the expression of the figure. The figure of the infant Jesus has this expression figuratively only by virtue of its position in the serpentine. And the three bodies are thus cast in one and the same figure; the same figure for three bodies, that’s it, there is no story. No story, no narration and the figuration itself collapses. At that moment the serpentine will distribute a whole scale of colors. The serpentine plays exactly the role of the diagram, which breaks with the figurative and narrative givens to bring out the “pictorial fact.” The “pictorial fact” is three bodies in one figure.

Fine, “three bodies in one figure,” okay, okay. The “necessity” – I can’t tell you, I can’t find my words, but that’s not a problem – it’s not about saying it, it’s about doing it. There is a “pictorial necessity” of the same figure for three bodies, not a “figurative necessity,” not a “narrative necessity,” a “pictorial necessity,” namely, that can only come from light and color. Thus, I would say that painters are fierce atheists. And at the same time, they are atheists who truly haunt, or at least, the painters... who haunt Christianity... the manner in which they tear away Christianity from all figuration and narration so as to bring out a “pictorial fact.” That’s what we will have learned from this theme, why Christianity seems to them so... or why they experience it as eminently favoring the emergence of the pictorial fact. This goes back a longtime, if you will, to Byzantium. With Byzantium, it’s already in its pure state – when I said that Michelangelo represents the birth of the pictorial fact, it was idiotic, at the risk of correcting myself. Mosaic painting in Byzantium is fundamentally this foundation of the pictorial fact. Fine.

It was mostly in mosaic; as for oil painting, I think that maybe we have to wait, after all. What was the name of the movement that coincides with Michelangelo and to which Michelangelo actually belonged? So, I’m going to say something about this point because it interests me a lot. There is a term for it. The movement to which Michelangelo belongs as founder, at least as co-founder, and which will last long after his death, is called Mannerism. Why was it called Mannerism? It’s because the bodies have very contorted attitudes, at the extreme, they are very artificial. For instance, in the Holy Family, the four characters in the background. [They are] very artificial, very... with sometimes homosexual stances, sometimes contorted stances. Mannerism is very interesting as... [*Deleuze does not finish the sentence*] In a painter like Bacon, if you see paintings by Bacon, you singularly find – I find Michelangelo’s influence on Bacon obvious. If you want to see what it is like to discover a large back of a man... he obviously had to make a triptych, he needed three. There is a triptych by Bacon which represents, seen from behind, a man, a figure that is shaving. I’m showing it to you, you won’t see anything, but it’s

just so you have an idea. I'm turning it slowly – and I'm reluctant to show you images, this really should be a course without images – did you see it? [*Laughter*]

Fine, you see the three male backs. It's interesting because there is a scale... the color of the reproduction is awful, I think, because it's a difficult color. Actually it's... there is a dominant ochre-red, a dominant blue on the central panel and to the right, the co-existence of blue and red. What I'm interested in is... Let's consider a problem because we'll have to come back to it. The question of painting, in accordance with what we've just said, but which you already knew, is not to paint visible things, is obviously to paint invisible things. Now, the painter only reproduces the visible precisely to capture the invisible. What does it mean to paint a large male back? What is it? Well, it's not painting a back, it's painting forces that are exerted on a back or forces that a back exerts. It's painting forces, not painting forms. The act of painting, the "pictorial fact," is when the form is related to a force. Yet, the forces are not visible. To paint forces is, indeed, the "fact."

Everyone knows what Klee says about painting: "it's not about rendering the visible, it's about making visible," which implies: making visible the invisible. To make visible something invisible. Fine, showing the visible is figuration. That would be the "pictorial given," which needs to be destroyed. It is destroyed by the catastrophe. What is the catastrophe? We can therefore make some progress; the catastrophe is the place of forces. Obviously, it's not just any force. "The catastrophe is the place of forces."⁵

The "pictorial fact" is the "distorted" form. What is a "distorted form?" Distortion is a Cézannian concept. It's not a matter of transforming, painters don't transform, they deform. Deformation as a pictorial concept is not just the deformation of the form, it's the form as a force is exerted upon it. The force has no form. It is therefore the deformation of the form that must make visible the force, which doesn't have a form. If there is no force in a painting, there is no painting. I'm saying this because we often confuse it with another problem, which is more visible but much less important. We confuse this with a completely different problem, which is that of the decomposition and recomposition of an effect. Let's take for example, "Renaissance painting: decomposition-recomposition of depth"; after some centuries, "Impressionism: decomposition-recomposition of color"; take next, "Cubism or in another way, Futurism: decomposition-recomposition of movement."

Fine. This is very interesting, but it only concerns the effects. That's not the act of painting, not at all. It's not decomposing, recomposing an effect. What is it then? I say it is to capture a force. And I think that's what Klee means when he says that it's not about rendering the visible but rendering visible.

So, the form will have to be sufficiently deformed for a force to be captured. It's not a story, it's not a figuration, it's not a narrative. And the role of the diagram will be to establish a place of forces such that the form will come out of it as a "pictorial fact," namely, as a deformed form, in relation to a force; it is therefore the deformation of the pictorial form that makes the non-visible force visible.

I'll give a very simple example because there too Bacon has strangely succeeded, it's one of his domains, still in the series of questions for each painter. What did he understand pictorially? What did Bacon understand pictorially? Well, again, no painter understands much, eh. [It's] too tiring to understand something. It is not incorrect to say that Cézanne had it "for life with his apples." Fine, Bacon understood, indeed, "a large back of a man," in a frame, in a triptych. But it's not inaccurate to say that this may not be the best Bacon because Michelangelo had understood the same thing in the same way.

But a large male back, that means including the relationship with forces. What kinds of forces? All sorts of forces. In Michelangelo's case, and this would respond to these very variations of stylistic devices, sometimes it's inner forces... [*Interruption of the recording*] [1:21:57]

Part 3

... the most natural poses according to the invisible force exerted on the body. Bacon is capable of making the most contorted figures in the world. But you have the feeling that they are like tortured bodies. Yet, it's a first impression, which is figurative and narrative, because if you take another look, how can I put it, a pictorial look, you notice that if you come to understand vaguely the force that is being exerted on the body, the body has the most natural position according to this force. Let's give quotidian examples, almost restoring a kind of figuration, but the secret figuration of a painting. Let's take someone who has a backache, a mild one, nothing serious, huh, who has a slightly dislocated vertebra and who has to sit, for some reason, has to remain seated for a very long time. If you look at him outwardly, you'll see that he takes the posture that may seem the most tortured, the most contorted in the world, but which, in fact, and depending on the forces exerted on it, is the most natural, and precisely the one that will allow him to last the longest.

If painting, if the pictorial fact... what I mean is this: the pictorial fact is fundamentally and essentially "mannerist." Why? Because mannerism is exactly the effect that a figure has on us, that a form has on us, a visible form, when we don't see the invisible force exerted on it. If through your pictorial eye, that is, your third eye, if through your third eye you seize the force exerted on the body – because this is the object of painting: capturing the force – at that moment this body ceases to be mannered; it remains mannerist, since we'll have to define mannerism as the rapport of the visible body with the invisible force, and that's what gives it this mannerist attitude. Hence, I believe that mannerism is in fact a fundamental dimension, a consubstantial dimension of painting.

Fine, but capturing a force is not easy, you know. So, you are a painter, and you want to draw a sleeping man. It's nothing, what would a painter do if you, if we... when you're not a genius you can draw surprisingly well a sleeping man! It's illustrative in what case, and it stops being illustrative and even narrative, well then... Narration, fine: this man falls asleep, he was tired. So, the context is narrative: it can be night, it can be day, it's not the same story if I fall asleep during the day, at night, all that. Okay, the lines you draw are figurative: a character on a bed, fine. I'm saying that all that is the world of the pre-pictorial givens. So, it matters very little, after all, that some painters pass through those givens. What does it matter if other painters don't draw them on canvas? It matters very little. Anyway, even those you draw them, they do so in order to

scramble them, to make them pass through the diagram. And what is the pictorial fact that emerges from the diagram? What is it? It would be too easy to say: ah well, it's the body as it relates to the sleep force. "Sleep force" doesn't mean anything, it only reiterates that he sleeps. You understand, a great painter can capture this very well. The sleep force is multiple. Bacon draws a lot... he paints a lot of sleeping characters. These are, in my opinion, some of his great achievements. Bacon's sleepers are extraordinary.

What strikes us? Well, I think there is one thing that strikes us, if you see reproductions or if you have them in mind, it's what he grasped – and I really only see him doing this, there may be others who pulled this off – he has completely captured what must be called the flattening force of sleep. You know, a truly fatigued body, lying down, and we can even grasp it visually! But how can you show that? That's being a great painter. The body that seems to empty itself completely, to flatten out on the mattress. As a result, it's literally not a body without thickness; if I paint a body without thickness, it's worthless, it's a failure. If I paint a body losing its thickness, it's an accomplishment. Fine. The form in relation with a force of deformation, namely, the force that flattens it. However, Bacon's sleepers take... So, then we understand why he flanks them with standing attendant figures. Attendant figures...

And that also allows us to answer questions such as: what is important, what is secondary in a complex painting? You see, for instance, Bacon's sleepers... again this seems to me one of his great achievements. So, sleepers lying on a bed. This can be in a triptych, the other two panels, left panel and right panel, show bulky and very contorted characters. There are Bacon triptychs where the essential element is on an outside panel, right or left, not in the middle. The sleepers can very well be placed on an exterior panel. So, we ask ourselves: where is the force, what force is it? And what is the force that touches you in the painting?

Well, for Bacon this is very curious, it's his way of experiencing sleep, but you understand, it's no longer a cliché. I could have otherwise drawn a sleeping man, a wonderful drawing, a wonder of features, a wonder of colors. I could have drawn the bed, a marvelous bed. Okay, fine, we're moving on to the next painting. No interest whatsoever. When something strikes you, it's the pictorial fact that strikes you. These paintings I mentioned earlier don't have a fact. There is no pictorial fact. There is a fact that concerns sleep, there is a narrative fact, an illustrative fact, there is everything you want, but no pictorial fact. No advent of a pictorial fact.

So, what do you have to do? What do you have to do to be a great painter? Well, you look... I see two forces; in fact, it's always complicated because... Bacon, it's his business, I'm sure he's a man who has a special relationship with sleep. Because that's where we find the rapport between lived experience and painting, we must... I imagine Bacon sleeping a lot, a lot, a lot. He's definitely not an insomniac. An insomniac wouldn't have to paint this. So, under what agent does he sleep? I dare not think about it... but he certainly sleeps a lot. Well, if he was insomniac, it would be a catastrophe, but it doesn't matter. Fine. So, it's very curious for him. Here too, there is something purely illustrative. There are a lot of sleepers in Bacon, since he has made entire series of male or female sleepers, a lot of sleepers who sleep with one or even both arms raised. You see, they are lying down... their thigh raised.

Fine, what I'm saying is figurative. That's what I call the given (*le donné*). I can say to a painter: indeed, this is given, this is pre-pictorial. Perhaps Bacon himself sleeps like that. It's pre-pictorial. Maybe Bacon likes this position, huh, a raised leg, a raised arm, and sleeping like that. There is every possible combination: the pillow can be high, the arm like this and the body like that, the arm leaning on the pillow, but... fine. You see, if I say, well, I can always say to a painter: I'd like you to paint a sleeper with an outstretched arm. Fine. What's the difference with a Bacon sleeper? I was saying earlier: look at Bacon's sleepers and see if you have the same feeling as me, namely, that the form is in fact deformed, even if only slightly, by a flattening force. Henceforth, sleep wouldn't be simply defined tautologically as a sleeping force. Sleep for Bacon, as it is experienced by Bacon, is a force that flattens the body. Flattening induced by fatigue, by sleep.

There is something else that seems to me very curious. I'd say that Bacon also did, you know – we'll see how a painter's different themes can short-circuit – Bacon painted numerous pieces of meat. He even calls them by a particularly sophisticated name: “crucifixions.” Pieces of meat that he calls “crucifixions.” The piece of meat has always existed, few painters have resisted it. [It's] extraordinary for a painter, a piece of meat, because it's such a matrix of colors. Certain painters are particularly well known for their pieces of meat. There is at least a large piece of meat in Rembrandt, which is marvelous, a truly marvelous carcass. And then there are the endless, yet so beautiful, series of Soutine. Now, when you see the pieces of... Figuratively we can say, well, at least three great painters – Rembrandt, Soutine, and Bacon – have depicted pieces of meat and whole carcasses. Fine, figuratively, narratively, no interest so far.⁶

If I ask myself: why is Bacon interested in the piece of meat? [It's] not necessarily the same thing that interests Soutine, or that interests Rembrandt. Well, it seems to me that there is something very interesting in the pieces of meat. They experience the piece of meat, the carcass, as a movement; of course, this is not new! But a movement through which the flesh comes off the bones. The flesh comes off the bones as if instead of an organization – in a living body there is a kind of flesh-bone organization; in Bacon, what distinguishes precisely the carcass from the living body is the flesh; the flesh doesn't become soft at all, it's firm, it's a firm flesh, and at the same time a flesh that comes off the bones. Literally, I cannot think of a better term, it's flesh that descends from the bones. It descends from the bones. Now, if you look – I suppose you look at a Bacon and you agree with me – what interests him in a piece of meat is that the flesh descends from the bones. It must be done, eh! How can you paint a flesh that descends from the bones? [There is] no recipe, it's a force. There is a force of weight proper to meat – that's what interests Bacon in meat – the force through which the flesh descends from the bones. Here! Descent – crucifixion! The operation through which the flesh descends from the bones, that is the crucifixion, or the way in which Bacon experiences the crucifixion.

As a result, he will call these kinds of pieces of meat that look like they are dripping, that descend from the bones, he will call them crucifixions. Fine, this opens new perspectives for us, what is... In other words, the crucifixions that interest him are descents. But the theme of the crucifixion in relation to the descent traverses all painting. Hence the question takes on a new development: and the old painters that we admire, how did they represent the descent from the cross? What were they doing? What interested them in the descent from the cross? Certainly not the same thing that interested Bacon. I'm not saying at all that it was the flesh descending from

the bones, that's not it, but it had to be something else, it had to... wasn't it also a story of strength?

Anyway, you know what I mean. When Bacon paints his sleepers, with an arm raised or a thigh raised, but if you look at the painting, and this is really a question of looking, not reasoning, understand me, it's terrific indeed: it's an entire movement that allows the arm to count as a bone, the raised thigh to count as a bone, and therefore the entire body of the sleeper descends from this quasi-bone, descends from this bone. This is the descent process: all these sleepers are "crucifixions," this is the movement of the flesh that descends from the bones. And he needs... Even if his preference, which is a figurative given, is to sleep like that, the pictorial function of the raised arm is completely different: it is to assign a sleep force, the sleep force. For Bacon, one of the sleep forces is the movement through which the flesh descends from the bones. [It's] a bit like when you put your head upside down, lower, and your cheeks go up. They go up, that is, they tend to go out of orbit. This movement of the flesh that descends from the bones, the head upside down, etc., the body flowing from the raised arm, the body falling from the raised thigh. Indeed, you cannot see Bacon's paintings, these sleepers, without constituting the body as descending from this thigh, as descending from this arm, and that's what I call the pictorial fact.

As a result, I would say that in Bacon's sleepers there is a deformation of the form; the pictorial fact is exactly this: a deformation of the form according to two forces – I only see two, but someone else will see others! I don't think these are the only forces, or maybe Bacon experiences sleep as the place where these two forces operate primarily, a flattening force – flattening of the body – and a descending force. The body descends from the bones. A sleeping body is a piece of flesh because it's a body that descends from the bones. And it's a flattened body. It has no story. When you have reached that, it seems to me that you have reached, I don't know, but you have reached what the painter is showing you, namely, what he makes visible. In this painting he made visible two invisible forces. And if he needs standing and contorted attendant bodies, these bodies, in turn, have forces, they make visible forces, but in my opinion – it's up to everyone to perceive the painting as they wish – in my opinion, it's secondary. The successful rendering of sleep was more important. As a result, the voluminous and contorted bodies are only like witnesses of sleep and only have a secondary value, but we could say something else...

Fine, you see, I always come back to my three moments; you always have figurative and narrative givens. You always have them. It's pre-pictorial, they are already there. It's the photos, the clichés, anything you want. Ideas. It's... why are they already there? This is the intention of the painter. The intention can only be figurative and narrative, even for the most abstract painter, that's why we cannot make any distinction. We'll see when we can differentiate between such and such trend. At this point, there is no reason to make even the slightest difference. When Mondrian paints a square, well, all the ready-made squares are already there. He's exactly in the same situation as the others. When Pollock draws a line that crosses the entire painting, his canvas is already full of all the lines that fail, of all the clichéd lines, of all the ready-made lines. Fine.

So, there is no reason to make even the slightest distinction at this level. So, you have this world of givens, of clichés, and I'm saying that it's the intention of the painter. In what sense? The clichés, the ready-made, are inseparable from the intention of the painter as the painter wants to

paint something. Once again, when you are a painter, you want to paint something. I would say that what makes the cliché unavoidable is that the cliché is fundamentally intentional. Every intention is a cliché intention. Every intention is aimed at a cliché.

And there is no painting without intention. What do I call intention? Well, if I try to give an abstract but at the same time simple definition, I would call intention the difference between an apple and a woman. I mean, Cézanne doesn't have the same intention depending on whether he plans to paint an apple and to paint a woman. And you'll say to me: "and when you intend to paint nothing?" There is no "painting nothing" ... Mondrian doesn't have the same intention when he wants to paint a big square or a little square. Fine. However, it's the intention that already promotes the cliché. Therefore, it is forced that the cliché is on the canvas before the painter has begun. I'd say that the intentional form is always figurative and narrative in painting. It cannot be otherwise.

As a result, the task of the painter and the act of painting begin with the fight against the intentional form. I cannot achieve the intentional form – if there was a dialectic of painting, it would be this – I cannot achieve the intentional form, namely, the form that I intend to produce, I can only achieve it precisely by fighting against the cliché that necessarily accompanies it, that is, by blurring it, by making it pass through a catastrophe. I call this catastrophe and this chaos-germ the place of forces or the diagram. And if this succeeds, if the diagram doesn't fall into one of the multiple dangers that we've seen – now that we've said that the dangers are multiple, we'll come back to this – if the diagram is really operative, as a logician would say, if the diagram is really operative, what emerges from it? The diagram was the possibility of fact, the fact emerges from it. The fact is the form in relation to a force. What will the painter have made visible? He will have made visible the invisible force.

I'd like to give an example that fascinates me, but it's rather so that you can find your own examples. There is a painter from the 19th-20th century who belongs to the great expressionist tradition: [František] Kupka. It seems to me that we could ask: what did Kupka understand if it's true that Cézanne understood one or two apples and then Bacon understood a male back and three sleepers? What did Kupka understand? He understood something that seems much more important, and yet he's not a greater painter than Cézanne or Bacon. He makes a lot of planets that rotate, with colors that are very, very... it's beautiful expressionism, eh. But I don't find... for Bacon, I can comment a little, if you wish, I have the feeling that what I said earlier defined well the forces that Bacon was able to capture with respect to sleep. Regarding Kupka, I feel infinitely more modest, he's an absolute mystery to me: how can we explain that with some small balls – with indications of rotation, etc., of course – Kupka managed to capture a force that can only be called a force of rotation and gravitation. So, a kind of astronomical force. I mean, in the end, I'd like that someone who understands Kupka better than me, or who loves him, uh... I admire this tremendously because I see a very big achievement... in other words, it's a great deal to capture a force of this nature! And it's true that in a Kupka painting, even in a quick one, even almost a sketch, it's, it's... a fantastic thing. In the beautiful Kupka, of course! There too you can feel how much he can fail. What is needed, for the invisible to be captured or not captured, that is to say, made visible?

I'm taking up one of Bacon's expressions, that way I'll flesh this out: at one point he did many series of screaming people. People who were screaming, Popes in particular. There is a marvelous series of screaming popes. It's in Bacon's "popes" series. Fine, fine, a screaming pope, all that. What does it mean? He uses a very beautiful formula, he says in his interviews: you know, one must really look at all of this because what I'd like – he's being modest – what I'd like is to paint the scream more than the horror. Painting the scream more than the horror, that sounds to me like a painter's saying. Yet, he's one of the painters who painted the most horrors. He knows it well. He didn't spare us, it's awful. But painting the horror is still figurative, it's still narrative. Horror is easy. That's the lesson of sobriety. More and more sober. What does this mean: more and more sober? However, it isn't easy, it's so difficult to achieve it that you must go through these kinds of excesses and childishness. Painting the horror. Painting the horror, painting an abominable scene, okay. Maybe he had to go through it... But even when he was already painting the horror, it was certainly so that he could extract something else from it, namely, the scream. Painting the scream is something else. Why paint the scream? The scream, well, what it is? If I compare the scream and sleep, what's the difference between them? Or rather, what is the resemblance? There is at least one resemblance between the scream and sleep, which is the pictorial resemblance, namely, that in every case there are bodily figures – I'm using figures precisely, a bizarre expression apparently, bodily figures – there are bodily figures, to be specific, that only exist to the extent that the body is in relation to forces, either inner forces or external forces.⁷

There's only that which is interesting: when the body is connected with forces. So, the painter may first tend to put the body in relation to unbearable, insurmountable forces, even Michelangelo did it! What does that mean, more and more sobriety? Learning that the secret of painting or that the most beautiful pictorial facts occur when the forces are very simple, very rudimentary. There will no longer be forces that will torture a body, there will no longer be horrible forces, there will be the flattening force of sleep. We start by creating abominable accident scenes, for instance someone who is run over by a bus, and then we realize that the real flattening of the body is not at all the bus that crushes you but the daily fact that you fall asleep. And that in the fact of falling asleep there is a pictorial fact, which may be worth all the sufferings in the world, all the accidents. At that moment you will be able to recover everything, the torture and the horrors of the world, just by painting a man asleep. It's forced. That's what I mean. This sort of search for sobriety, for an even greater simplicity. [It's] what [Samuel] Beckett has achieved in literature, making something more and more sober, which is in a sense all the more striking, all the more overwhelming. But in Beckett's early works there is still too much profusion, there is still a kind of narrative and figurative abundance. Later he'll reach this kind of state, of pictorial fact, which, in his case will become the literary fact, a sort of literary fact in its pure state. Fine. You understand, that is what capturing forces means.

So, the scream more than the horror. The scream, fine. What is it? It's the body in relation to a force that makes it scream. Fine, what is this force? You understand, if I answer as I didn't want to answer earlier, that "the force that makes you sleep is the need for sleep," we wouldn't have learned anything. I would be back in the figurative and narrative realm. If I say, "the force that makes you scream, well, it's the spectacle of the world," I find myself fully in the figurative, then I have to paint a scene which will reflect that the figure I'm painting at the same time in the scene, screams. I will be entirely in the figurative. That is not what I call a force. A force is the

invisible force. That's why I was saying that the only struggle is with the shadow. There are only the relations between the body and the invisible forces, or the insensible forces. There is only the struggle with the forces. And what is the role, what is the relationship between the visible and the invisible? Between the visible and the force that's not visible? The relation between the body and the force seems to me very simple in the end: because the body is visible and will sustain a creative deformation on behalf of the force, then the visibility of the body will allow me to make visible the invisible force.

It is to the extent that the body embraces the invisible force exerted on it – hence the theme of the struggle with the shadow – it's to the extent that the body embraces the invisible force exerted on it that the invisible force becomes visible. How? Everything becomes blurry. Does the body make it [the invisible force] visible as an enemy or does it make visible as a friend? If the painter manages to compel a dying body to make visible the force of death, perhaps at that moment death becomes for us, and for the represented body, a true friend. This means that everything that was facile, figurative, awful, horrible, becomes very secondary relative to a kind of immense vital consolation. In any case, capturing a force is cheerful.

So, the screaming mouth is necessarily related to what? Not to a visible spectacle. I'm thinking of Kafka's very beautiful words in a letter where he says: well, what counts in the end is not the visible, but what? It's capturing, detecting – no, he doesn't say capturing, it comes down to the same thing – detecting, detecting the diabolical powers of the future that are already knocking at the door. In other words, they are already there in some way. But they are not visible. I mean, take for instance, fascism, tortures, all that... there is something visible, but there is also something that exceeds all visibility. You never see what is terrible, it's... it's still something that is, that is what? Underneath? Not visible? The diabolical powers of the future that are already knocking at the door. So, there you go, first stage: I paint a horrible spectacle and a screaming mouth before this spectacle. As beautiful as this may be, it is still figurative and narrative.

Second stage: I erase the spectacle. I only paint the screaming mouth. I had to pass through the diagram, through the catastrophe that triggered all figuration. And painting only the screaming mouth means, in fact I don't just paint the mouth, at that very moment I captured the powers. The powers that make one scream. In such a way that the screaming mouth becomes both the friend and the enemy of these powers. These powers are transformed. All this is very curious.

Thus, we can clearly see that in Bacon's case, I gave this example, well, we'll have to see, everything I say about painting in general, sleepers, people, seems to me so constant... But Bacon has his vanity, painters always have their affectations. He actually deals with horror, or even sometimes the abject. But he follows this path less and less, he exhausted this avenue, he is very hard on himself for having taken this path. But he paints a great deal of hiccups, vomiting. He has a very beautiful painting: "Character at a washbasin." There is a guy who throws up in a washbasin, we don't see the vomiting but the entire attitude of the body, his back. A vomiting back, there! A back subjected to the force of vomiting. You understand that this is not easy to paint, after all. So, he is holding the washbasin as if... Fine. What is there in common between vomiting and a scream? [It's] not difficult. There are two efforts – there too we may find one of Bacon's obsessions. There are two movements through which the body tends to escape from itself. This is curious. To escape, to escape. My body escapes from me. It's a very strong sense

of panic, it's panic. This is the catastrophe. The body has to, well, if the body is to be painted, in Bacon's case, it'll have to pass through this catastrophe of the escaping body: this is Bacon's diagram. It can escape in very different ways: it can escape through vomiting and through the scream. It's really not the same mouth, the mouth that vomits and the mouth that screams. It's not the same thing. To escape, a body that is escaping, that's curious. My body escapes from me.

I don't know if you've ever had surgery but those who underwent surgery have this experience which I think helps people understand things. Well, those who've had a serious operation. It's funny. First of all, the operation, um... if I were a painter, that's what I'd try to... Someone who underwent a serious operation, something formidable. So, figuration would be representing an operation. This is obviously not interesting, not interesting at all. Fine. But in an operation, you know, there is something very odd, which is that even when the operation wasn't life-threatening, the patient who comes out of it – it's enough to look at him afterwards – is exactly as if he had seen – but seen without tragedy, I'm not saying it's tragic – as if he had seen death. I mean, the eyes are amazing, the eyes of a freshly operated patient [*Laughter*], if you haven't been around one, go to a hospital, do whatever it takes, but you have to see this, I think, not even out of curiosity, I'm not saying things out of some deplorable perversion but almost out of tenderness. If you really want to feel something for humankind, go see people who have had surgery. Their eyes are completely washed, as if they had seen something – that wasn't horrible, it's not at all... – as if they had seen something that can only be death, a kind of limit of life, eh. They come out of it with this very, very pathetic gaze, very... Fine.

Rendering that gaze. Rendering that gaze would only be possible if the painter manages to capture the force. But with what deformation of the gaze? It's not as if he had a thesis about the eye. It's something else, something quite different, it's... Fine. [It's] impossible to say. I was able to express it a little in Bacon's case with regard to sleep. I can't, I wasn't able to say anything about Kupka's astronomical forces. That's what defines a great painter, you know? So, in the post-surgical experience there is something quite amazing, it's that your body has a tendency to run away, to escape everywhere at once. To the point that... it escapes from all ends. And it's not at all worrisome, it's even what we call a fine convalescence. You feel that you lost control over your body, that it escapes everywhere. So, that is a funny experience. And when I mention this gaze of people who have seen something, it's a shame they forget so much, otherwise people would be wonderful, they wouldn't forget an operation, they would come out of this fine. One has the impression, after an operation, that they have understood something. But it's not them! It's their flesh that has understood something. The body is intelligent all the same. Their body has understood something that they will then forget so quickly, so quickly. Fine, it's a pity, right? A sort of kindness, a sort of generosity emanates from them, because this death which they saw, and which becomes visible in their eyes – it is very curious – insofar as it becomes visible, it ceases to be the enemy, it is in a way their friend. In other words, it becomes at the same time something other than death. That's what a great painter shows.

Fine. So, in Bacon: the body escapes, vomiting. Vomiting, fine. I'll be reading so I'll grab my glasses. That's it! I'll read you a passage from a great novelist. It's curious, from before Bacon, eh. Here's the story, the narrative. There is a moment in the novel – this is really a novelist whose narrative is excessive. I tell you right away, it's Conrad, Joseph Conrad, in a very beautiful novel titled *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*. Here's what happens: the ship is sinking.

And there is a sailor who writes in a bulkhead – in a... not in a bulkhead, in a cabin! Everything has collapsed, everything is blocked, he can't be saved. And his friends want to save him because he's... he's a fetish, because on the one hand he's black, he's the only black man on the ship, and on the other hand he's sick all the time.

So, among Bacon's obscurities, we want to save him all the more because he is condemned. And the entire crew gets down to business, like crazy, without really knowing why they must save him. They must save him, and they finally get to the cabin after all kinds of efforts and with a device, I don't remember exactly what, with a piece of metal, they smash a bulkhead. They smash a bulkhead. Here's the text: "We watched the crowbar stubbornly smash the joint of two planks. A cracking sound, then suddenly the crowbar half disappeared in a splintered oblong hole" – you see, the crowbar sinks into the wood and the bulkhead suddenly gives way – Archie, the sailor who was holding the crowbar, "withdrew it quickly," and – this is where the amazing passage starts, eh, so, the nigger of the *Narcissus* is locked in a cabin – and "that infamous nigger," why infamous? You'll understand in a moment, so "that infamous nigger rushed at the hole, put his lips to it, and whispered 'Help' in an almost extinct voice..." You see, there is a tiny hole, a very small hole in the bulkhead, and the guy who is locked up and panics, presses his lips against it, at the risk of getting hurt, and whispers "Help" in an almost extinct voice; he pressed his head against the wood, trying madly to get out through that opening one inch wide and three inches long."⁸

Why is this effort infamous? So, I'm trying to define physically – we're not doing philosophy, eh – abjection. Abjection. What would abjection be? I wonder if abjection isn't the constant effort – we are all abject in that case – the constant effort (or from time to time) that traverses the body and through which the body tends to escape through an orifice, either an orifice that belongs to it, namely, that is part of its organism, or an external orifice. That would be it. Why would that be abjection? I have no idea! Someone tells me all of a sudden: "oh, I'd like to pass through the eye of a needle [*passer par ce trou de souris*]." Abject, why? I don't know. There is something abject about it. In fact, why does someone want to pass through the eye of a needle? Because they are ashamed. "Ashamed, I would like to become smaller and smaller." But forget the saying, the ready-made formula: passing through the eye of a needle is abject. How can a person be reduced to passing, wanting to pass through a needle? It's grotesque, right? He who vomits is abject twice, because on the one hand his body is reduced to this... [*Interruption of the recording*] [2:08:43]

... serious, it's not serious. Okay, fine. So, that's what throwing up is about: my whole body, because it's not just what I ate, it's my whole body that's trying to escape through one of my orifices. And the scream? It's the same with the scream. Thus, I call abjection, but with no pejorative meaning, the effort of the body... So, escaping like this. But it [the effort] is ramped up by the fact that... so, I tend to escape through one of my orifices, in fact the effort is always ramped up: I also try to escape through an external orifice, like the guy of the *Narcissus*, namely, Bacon's spasmodic throwing up, clinging to the washbasin, manifestly trying to escape through the drain. His whole body attempts to escape through the drain. Does painting give an account of that, if it gives an account of that? Bacon could have called this painting "Abjection." Because this would have been a highly figurative title, and he's very conservative with his titles, he calls

it: “Figure at a Washbasin.” “Figure at a Washbasin,” okay. This belongs to a series, and we see the relationship with the scream. There too it’s in terms of the rapport “body/force.”⁹

So, you see, all figuration – even if it continues to be present, it can continue to be present – will be neutralized, nullified. It continues to be present in Michelangelo, and it continues to be present in Bacon. In a so-called informal painter, it will no longer be present. In a so-called abstract painter, it will no longer be present. But, present, currently present or not, even when it’s no longer present, it is virtually present. Obviously! Once again, it makes one with the intentional form. Any intentional form is figurative and narrative. But in painting the intentional form is the first moment of the act of painting. The second moment, as we’ve seen, is to introduce chaos, the chaos germ, or the diagram, which will define the possibility of the pictorial fact. And the third moment is the pictorial fact itself.

So, you understand, I’d like to give an example in order to conclude, that way I will have finished what I had to say, for instance, about Bacon. There is this very beautiful text by Bacon. Here it is. But alas, I still have to show you a little bit of painting. But you won’t see anything, so it’s worthless [*Laughter*]. You see, there is an umbrella. I’m telling you there is an umbrella, for those who cannot see. There is a man under the umbrella, but be fair, I hope you are not going to contradict me; anyway, since you cannot see anything, I can say whatever I want. [*Laughter*] We can only see the lower half of the face of the man under the umbrella, with a rather disturbing mouth, a jagged mouth, and this mouth and this entire lower half rise up. In my opinion, they rise up. [It’s] impossible to draw him descending from the umbrella. It’s as if he were grabbed by the umbrella. He rises up into the umbrella as if to escape through a point. Fine. And then, at the top, [there is] a large piece of meat. Additionally, [there are] the colors of Bacon’s fields, which we constantly find in his work. Fine.¹⁰

You’ve gotten this. Referring to the painting titled “Painting” from 1946, in his interviews, Bacon says: it’s very simple, I wanted to paint, I had the intention – there we’ll find our three states, so we’ll be done with... – I intended to paint a bird alighting on a field. A bird alighting on a field. You follow what I’m saying, um, a bird alighting on a field is a good subject, it can arise in the mind of a painter. And he says: I started and little by little something became apparent. Something else stood out. And I painted this man underneath the umbrella, this figure underneath the umbrella. The first reaction – fortunately there is the guy who interviews him, who plays exactly the role of the first reaction, that helps us a lot – the first reaction would be to say: oh yes, I understand, instead of the bird, instead of the bird form he painted the umbrella form. [It’s] very significant. And in fact, if you see the umbrella, it’s kind of like a big bat. Fine, there is a bird theme.

But not at all! Because, to his interviewer who says: “yes, you mean that the bird has become an umbrella,” what interests me is that Bacon replies: “not at all, not at all.” In other words: you didn’t understand anything, right? Not at all, he says, I don’t mean that. What must be related to the bird that I wanted to paint, he says, is the whole that came to me all of a sudden – I quote almost exactly, I summarize a little to go faster – is the whole that came to me suddenly or the series that I made progressively. Wow, that really interests me, understanding how a painter works. And the text is already very bizarre, Bacon’s answer is extremely confusing because he says: you mustn’t connect my intention to paint a bird with the umbrella. You have to connect

my intention to paint a bird with the whole all at once, that is to say, the gradual series. It's one or the other, at first glance. A gradual series and a whole in one go seem entirely contradictory. So, if Bacon means something, and we have every reason to believe that he does, he embraces a point of view that erases the difference between "a gradual series" and "a whole given all at once." In any case, he means the entirety of the painting, considered spatially or temporally. From a temporal point of view, it's the gradual series, from a spatial point of view, it's the painting as it appears to us: the whole all at once. Okay.

So, he says: what you have to connect with the intentional bird form is the entire series or the undivided whole. Fine. What is the entire series or the undivided whole? If we understand what he says, I can define the series from top to bottom. Meat, piece of meat at the top; umbrella, man with the face eaten by the umbrella and open mouth. There you go, that's my series. What Bacon refuses is the analogy between bird-form and umbrella-form. And he says: that's not how I work. In fact, it would simply be a transformation: how a bird turns into an umbrella. It wouldn't be that interesting. At the extreme, it would be like a kind of vague surrealism. Fine. That's not it, he says.

And yet, there is an analogy between the bird-form and the whole painting. In other words, this is the first time that we come across the following idea, even if we'll confirm it only later: wouldn't there be two very different forms of analogy? You see, I can speak about a first form of analogy, if there is an analogy between the bird-form and the umbrella-form. What would I say at that point? I'd say: there is a transport of relations, that is, the same relations exist between the elements of the bird in form 1 and the sections of the umbrella, the elements of the umbrella in section 2, in form 2. There is a transport of identical relations. There is an identity of relations. Fine.

Given relations move from one form to the other. Perhaps there is an esthetic analogy that has nothing to do with that, and that is completely different. What would the esthetic analogy be? Well, let's go back to the painting, in our vague memory: there is the meat that has like two arms from which it hangs from butcher's hooks. There is a kind of, this time it's not a meat that descends... actually, yes, there is the theme of the arms, the meat will descend from the two arms I mentioned. In other words, what has become of the specific relation to the bird "with spreading wings"? It has become the equivalent, it has become, it is... I can't find my words, but it's on purpose. It has changed, it's the relation itself that has changed into a completely different relation. The relation bone/meat, the meat descends from the bones, there are the tiny arms of the meat, which are like bones from which the meat falls, descends. What brings to mind the bird very vaguely is this movement of the arms from which the meat will fall, which evokes very, very vaguely a kind of spreading of wings. Consequently, the meat that falls from these tiny arms falls literally, something like a flow of meat. It falls from the bones.¹¹

Hence, you understand, I'm speaking in terms of the pictorial fact, the meat descends from the bones, it's the first connotation with the bird. The bird that spreads its wings. Second connotation: the meat falls, it falls on the umbrella, it trickles onto the umbrella. Second connotation with the bird, this time the umbrella is like the wings that are closing. Third connotation: only the bottom of the figure, of the face of the figure, is visible. A strange, drooping, and jagged mouth, this mouth like a jagged beak. In other words, the bird is

completely dispersed across the whole or the series. It is completely dispersed to the extent that it no longer exists figuratively at all. We could say at most that the painting contains – how can we call this? – traits of birdness [*oisellité*]. First trait of birdness: the small, raised arms of the meat. Second trait of birdness: the sections of the umbrella. Third trait of birdness: the jagged beak of the figure. Completely scattered all over the painting. The constituent relations of the painting are: the relation of the falling meat with the umbrella over which it falls, and of the figure that is grabbed by the umbrella. These are the constitutive relations of the painting. In other words, the pictorial fact is produced by quite different relations. Wouldn't there be two types of analogy, if you will? One that proceeds by resemblances that are transported, I think we won't be able to see that until later, and another that proceeds quite differently, that proceeds instead by rupture of resemblances. Well, let's assume that.

All I did today was, if you will, confirm – using mostly Bacon as an example – confirm the presence of these three... If I sum up everything, I have at once: this world of pre-pictorial givens made of narration and illustration. The establishment, the truly fundamental establishment of the chaos germ, that is, the drawing of the diagram. There is a diagram in this painting, eh, you can't see here but if you could see a reproduction, you'll see that a little to the left, at the level of the body of the smiling man with the jagged beak who is grabbed by the umbrella, there is a zone that we can properly call “diagrammatical,” which is precisely made of gray, of a kind of very tormented gray. And the whole ascending series – man, umbrella that grabs him, and meat above – sort of comes out of this kind of gray diagram. And then [there is] the pictorial fact that comes out of it. Fine.

So, what I'd like to take away first and foremost is the impression of... how shall I put it, of an applied formula. This is not an applied formula. Think about that fact that everything I say strictly loses all meaning if you standardize this notion of diagram. You have to see, for instance, that diagrams of painters of light have absolutely nothing to do with diagrams of colorists. That is, if there are diagrams in all painters, I'm not even sure that there are, but again, a Cézanne diagram has absolutely nothing to do with a Van Gogh diagram. The diagram is not at all a general idea, it's something operative in every painting. It's an operational category. What I'd like to achieve – yes, that's what we'll do after Easter, and that way we'll get a little closer to problems of pure logic or philosophy – I'd like to arrive at a conception of the diagram that clearly shows the difference between modern terms like “diagram” and the difference between a diagram and a code, in what specific way it's completely different from a code. If it were a code, it's a catastrophe, there would be no grounds to connect it to painting. But it has nothing to do with a code.

And once again, there is at every instant the possibility that the diagram might fail. At that point the painting becomes a mess. But if you don't see in a painting how close it came to a mess, how it almost failed, you cannot have enough admiration for the painter. Courbet is... he is..., but anyone really, I cite as they come to mind, but in front of Courbet's paintings people say: it's a miracle. It really comes out as a miracle. It was so close to failure. And then, no. He makes up for it. Prodigious! Prodigious. All the great painters give this impression. It takes next to nothing for a work by Michelangelo to become a pack of muscles, a pack of muscles that really doesn't... It's the difference between a disciple and a... But regarding Cézanne, it's not even the question of the true and the false, it's the question of the disciples and creators. After Cézanne, yes, after

Cézanne, what has become of Cézanne's fight against the cliché in his imitators? Well, it's inevitably become a cliché. Thus, painting must every time pull away from its state of cliché.

One thing that has always struck me, is... uh... Rauschenberg. At one point in his provocative periods, Rauschenberg, who, in my opinion, is a very great painter, took a sketch of a painting by a painter before him, who was also a very big painter, simply erased it and called it "Painting Erased by Rauschenberg". [Laughter] It's silly, it's silly, but it's the very illustration of this erased or cleaned zone. It's not that the other's painting was mediocre, on the contrary, it was remarkable. It was a very beautiful drawing, eh. But it's true that when the painter has excelled, the painting becomes a cliché extremely fast. So, the reaction of the painter who sometimes... and it comes down to the same thing, when a great painter, you know, does sketches (*études*), that is, copies the painting of another great painter – famous examples – or when he simply erases it, it comes down to the same thing. It comes down to the same thing, there is a kind of will to pass through the diagram so that a new pictorial fact may emerge.

So, what interests me now is how the diagram is quite different from a code of painting. Well, have a great break! Thank you. [End of the recording] [2:29:09]

Notes

¹ Deleuze famously discusses Lucretius and Klossowski, and the simulacrum, respectively, in the appendices II and III of *Logic of Sense*; see also by Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

² The discussion on the cliché and the pre-pictorial phase is situated in *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* (New York and London: Continuum, 2003), chapter 11, notably pp. 86-90.

³ D.H. Lawrence, "Introduction to These Paintings", in *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence (1936)* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), pp. 569, 576, 577, 579-80.

⁴ On the "apple character" in Cézanne as stated by Lawrence, see *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*, pp. 87-88.

⁵ Chapter 8 in *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* is titled "Painting Forces", starting with Klee's statement and pursuing much of the development that follows.

⁶ The title of chapter 4 in *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* is "Body, Meat and Spirit, Becoming-Animal", where Deleuze considers aspects of the following development.

⁷ On the horror-scream distinction and the Pope series, see *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* (Continuum, 2003), chapter 6 "Painting and Sensation", notably pp. 37-39.

⁸ On the body's escaping and also this Conrad novel and this scene, see *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* (Continuum, 2003), pp. 14-16.

⁹ On this painting and figure, see *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*, pp. 15-17.

¹⁰ On this painting and discussion of umbrellas, see *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*, pp. 16-17.

¹¹ On the bird and "birdness", see *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*, pp. 156-157.