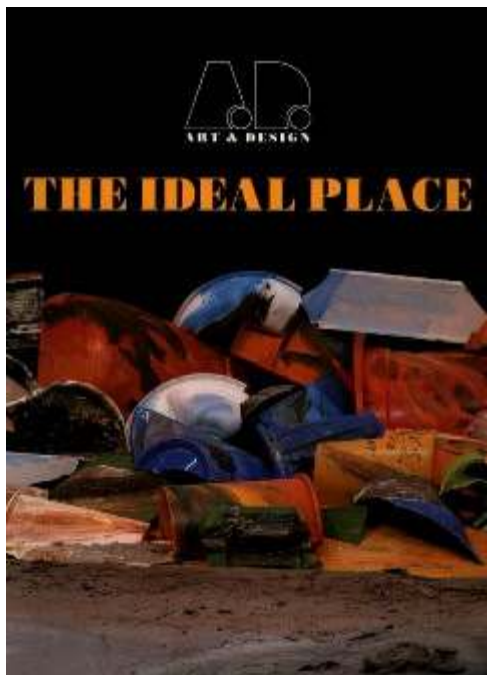


NO(W)HERE AS THE IDEAL PLACE

On the relations between concepts, percepts and affects

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The ideal place constitutes a pregnant void within any culture. Western, democratic tradition has been haunted by it ever since Plato. His speculations on Atlantis and the ideal state have continued to inspire later generations. For instance, Thomas More translated both elements in his Utopia (ou-topos), a 'land of nowhere' which is said to have originated from sheer fantasy. With the arrival of modern times these phantasms acquired a more earthly character. As soon as the autonomously acting, rationally calculating individual was developing into the pivot of history, and the political debate, still determining our present time too, was gradually taking shape during the Enlightenment at the end of the 18th century, the ideal place became a projection in time. As a picture of the future it gives sense and direction to the collective mission of emancipating citizens and workers. In the course of the 19th century artists also start liberating themselves from the rulers' fetters, eventually resulting in art operating as a critical authority within bourgeois culture.

1. The foundation of the political ideal: reflective self-consciousness

In view of this background, the question about the relation between the ideal place and art appears to be linked with a political vision regarding man as a rational, critical creature. He controls his own destiny and reforges it into history. It is in the

philosophy of Kant - and in a critical continuation of this, in the philosophy of Hegel and Marx - that towards the end of the Enlightenment the ideal place turned into a historical task. Whereas Plato still conceived the realm of ideas at the foundation of sensory reality as a transcendent world and believed that the 'political' community described in his *Politeia* (*Republic*) was the purest expression of this World of Ideas, with Kant the Idea is no longer situated beyond but within human consciousness. To Kant Ideas are functions of the ways in which self-consciousness analyses its effectiveness on a transcendental level: that is to say, it reflects on its conditions of possibility coherently and exhaustively. The Ideas - soul, totality of the world, God, freedom - then prove to be transcendental postulates: as coping stones of thought they have no right whatsoever to exist beyond self-consciousness or reason. According to Kant the Ideas are purely regulative. Projected to historical reality they present at most a rule by which the course of events in their coherence can be grasped. However, this theory presupposes a conception of history as a process of increasing freedom, as an emancipatory or collective process of awakening. In this progressive vision, the notion of Utopia plays a guiding role.

The modern notion of Utopia or the ideal place is therefore a political extrapolation of the postulates of Reason. Without this postulate, which from a socio-political and economic point of view was interpreted differently in each case by Kant, Hegel and Marx - and the effective realisation of which also implies the renowned 'end of history' - time as a progressive accumulation of collective learning processes, i.e., as emancipation, is inconceivable. It will be clear that the self-consciousness of the critical avant-garde is also fed by this ideality, for the avant-garde also conforms to history by seeing its artistic labour as a contribution towards a better world. In this sense its labour is political, because community-establishing.

2. Provisional position-finding:

How can this political-philosophical concept be linked with artistic imagination? Three possible versions of this relation present themselves: 1) the ideal place and art, 2) the ideal place in art and 3) the ideal place of art. Given the socio-political meaning, the first version aims at an interaction. This is already inherent in the genealogy of the notion of avant-garde: for after 1870 the political meaning was transferred to the cultural-artistic domain.¹ The emancipation of art, however, causes any renewed subordination of artists to political power to be conservative to say the least, and possibly even suspect in the twentieth century. As soon as modern artists subject themselves to rulers uncritically, the danger arises which Walter Benjamin referred to at the end of his by now notorious essay on the technical reproducibility of the work of art in modern times: totalitarianism.

In the spectacular conclusion of the epilogue the aestheticizing of politics is connected with fascism and the politicizing of art with communism.² Both political systems make use of a propagandist, because politically representative, art in the form of Neo-Realism. The initial embrace of avant-garde during the infancy of the Soviet Union in retrospect proves to have been growing pains. When revolutionary zest died out, here too, any form of non-representative, autonomous art was declared

'ent-artet' in double respect. So if we are to deal with the relation between the ideal place and art at all, we should be aware of the fact that this trap is wide open. For that reason, in order to get round this trap, the avant-garde developing in opposition to bourgeois culture is taken as the point of reference. In that case the relation between politics and art is seen as a field of tension never to be resolved, a fundamentally uninhabitable no man's land, a literal ou-topos.

Aiming at the second version of the theme and dealing with the ideal place in art, we usually refer to the way in which artists have depicted, expressed or dramatised, in brief represented ideal existence in their artistic medium. That this version is related to the first is evident from the distinction that is to be made between confirmative, from an avant-garde perspective conservative and critical representations. The question immediately presenting itself then is the question about the role of non-representative or abstract art. Due to its flatness, i.e. the absence of the three-dimensional illusion, the concept of 'place' acquires a fundamentally different interpretation here.

But possibly it is all much simpler and should we restrict ourselves to the ideal place of art. It may be sufficient to give an analysis, whether critical or not, of ritual or institutional embedding, that is to say the way in which in the widest sense of the word works of art have been exposed in the course of the centuries. This might result in an amusing summing up of the spaces where works of art were placed in order that the members of the community could experience them as a literal reflection of their public spirit. The fact that this second version is also linked with the first is again apparent from the display of power that usually characterised the exposition of works of art. But the distinction playing a part in the second version is also important: the objective of socio-political power relations, consequently, of demonstrating public spirit - which the representation of heavenly or earthly authorities concretely implied - was initially confirmative and only became critical in more recent times. This history of factual expositions ranges from the caves of Lascaux and the scenes of Greek tragedies, through the immense spaces of cathedrals and palaces to the Salons, and finally ending up in the galleries and museums of our time. The being embedded in the mass media, used as a theme by Benjamin, is the last link in this process to this very day.

However, the arsenal of possible interpretations of the theme is by no means exhausted yet. As soon as we further unravel the rather too general term 'art' systematically, the complexity of the question asked increases exponentially. After all, what aspect of art practice are we actually talking about: production, reception or about what in the early 20th century is taking shape as the autonomous work of art. This peculiar material substrate which, passing over the intentions of the artist, ignoring the expectations of critics or other viewers, nevertheless offers a coherence that continues to be significant, in spite of constant shifts. Applying these aspects of art to the first three versions and consequently substituting the term 'art' for 'artist', 'work of art' or 'art viewer', no less than nine options present themselves for the discussion of the relation between art and the ideal place.

Consequently, there is a multiple of subjects for discussion. It is true, one is more

interesting than the other, but because they are mutually interwoven each subject is significant. For instance, the question whether or how artists are politically committed through and in their art is inextricably bound up with the question about the ideal place for looking at art. Questions about the political value of (Neo)realistic and Abstract art, about the function of the museum as an ideal place for the viewer, about the studio or the canvas itself as ideal place for the artist, all these questions merit close analysis, if only because from an art-historical projection each in itself continues to offer a different perspective on the mutual coherence of works of art.³

3. The hypo-critical position of postmodern man

Nevertheless the question posed still requires one radical shift. For is it still possible to talk without restraint about the relation between politics and art without determinedly ignoring the recent discussions on the end of politics, of art and even of history from which we eventually derived categories such as pre-modern and modern? These often technical discussions, arising at the end of the seventies and overshadowing the greater part of the debate on the position of art in the eighties, have at least led to the insight that the question about the relation between the ideal place and art is utterly problematic. After all, due to the fact that since the sixties Western civilisation has become increasingly media-directed and aesthetic, the position of art has changed fundamentally⁴. Are opposed concepts such as conservative/revolutionary and bourgeois avant-garde art still adequate for a 'political' assessment of current art expressions? Doesn't their political impact lie somewhere else by now? Is it still a sincere question in a time in which the avant-garde has expired and the avant-garde range of thought has split up into the supposed trans-, neo- or post-avant-garde?

In my opinion the postmodern condition no longer permits a modernist-critical answer to the question about the ideal place, since with the loss of the actual forms of these places historical perspective has also dissolved. This is precisely what Jean-François Lyotard points out with his thesis that the Great Narratives have come to an end. The Kantian, Hegelian and Marxist legitimizations of political action have lost strength due to their own history. These encompassing conceptual legitimizations in which an attempt was made to reduce science, morality and art - the true, good and beautiful - to one common denominator have blown to pieces. The result is a fragmentary multitude of small tales about separate art expressions. All those art-historians and art critics who are still focusing on this Modernist range of thought, often despite themselves, seem to have ignored this fragmentation. As soon as the temptation to speak in terms of Modernist oppositions again is yielded to, the answer to the question about the ideal place loses its succinct meaning and a repetition of moves is all that takes place.

This may be one of the reasons why artists and philosophers - such as Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida or Gilles Deleuze - are increasingly seeking alliance with each other. The former preferably provide their catalogues with other than art-historical and art-critical analyses, because these are often still focused on Modernist categories and a historical perspective. The latter draws a radical position from art

which feeds their self-disruptive insight that thought can no longer comprise reality. Nevertheless - and here lies the paradox of these forms of philosophising - thought keeps feeling compelled to make this encompassing movement. It is only by using the medium of thought, language, in such a way that it allows its own inadequacy to ring through, that thought can preserve its integrity. In a concrete sense this implies an utterly paradoxical sort of language abounding with all kinds of ambiguous expressions and aporetic phrases. In a sense this kind of aporetic philosophising has inherited the avant-garde intention of showing the obstinacy of its material and its medium in the work itself.⁵ This is one of the reasons why Lyotard and Deleuze were concerned with avant-garde art.

With these philosophers criticism is by definition self-criticism. This is therefore by no means a matter of criticism in the modern sense of the word but of bending this criticism back towards itself: a kind of hyper-reflection. For instance, from this hyper-critical consciousness they write that any criticism should not only bring up the presuppositions themselves for discussion, but that there is also a blind spot in this way of thinking which can never become visible. A blind spot that was probably the breeding ground for the modern Utopia idea. Possibly this is the reason why philosophers focus on the unruly imagination of the avant-garde, hoping to catch a glimpse of this void in another medium than discursive language. The question about this void, however, is no longer critical. A term introduced by Jean Baudrillard in one of his writings may be more adequate. He derives this term from the idea that the postmodern individual has finally achieved the desirable state of freedom and enlightenment. The ideal place of modernity has been realised in the telematically controlled consumer society and constitutional state:

"Si l'art n'était au fond qu'une utopie, c'est-à-dire quelque chose qui échappe à toute réalisation, aujourd'hui cette utopie est pleinement réalisée: à travers les médias, l'informatique, la vidéo, tout le monde est devenu créatif en puissance. Même l'anti-art..."⁶.

In that sense Postmodern man is trans-aesthetic. If the answer to the question about the relation between politics and art is to be meaningful at all, according to Baudrillard's immodest opinion, it ought to be more critical than critical, i.e. hypo-critical.

4. Self-consciousness of art as the end of art

Let me resume the question about the relation between the ideal place or Utopia and art from a hypo-critical perspective. Arthur Danto thinks that "we have entered a period of art so absolute in its freedoms that art seems but a name for an infinite play with its own concept..."⁷. The end of art is supposed to be announced in the work of Warhol. Danto sees a form of 'stage-managed philosophy' in it. Modern art, discharged from representation by the medium of film, had already turned its back on reality: "Modern art is philosophy in the medium that up to then has been treated as transparently as consciousness is supposed to have been in traditional theories of

mind"⁸. To Danto Warhol's Brillo Boxes are the turning point in art: they do no longer refer to 'real' things, but raise the question about their artificiality. This bending back of the work of art towards itself, this self-reflection is also a sign of the end of art. According to him Warhol's Brillo Boxes show an aesthetic self-reflectiveness. Ordinary utensils placed in an aesthetic context immediately raise the question about their artificial status, causing art and a statement on its essence to coincide. Danto does not agree with Lyotard's thesis of Postmodernism. He thinks that Postmodernism "as the celebration of openness" eventually becomes posthistorical "in its explication".

His thesis on the end of art actually concerns the end of a particular conception of art, notably the Modernist conception. The distinction between 'to stop' and 'to come to an end' is instructive if we wish to grasp this at all. In the latter case it is a matter of attaining a goal according to a logic characteristic of, in this case, art. History has come to itself, and thus to an end: nothing new is to be expected anymore. The benefit art has profited by is an infinite pluralism and a relativism inherent in it. With Danto too, art has realised its ideal place by means of a logic internal to its own history: "a given movement of art must be understood in terms of a certain historical necessity..."¹⁰.

There is a lot to be said against this position and particularly against the Hegelianism attached to it. Danto's thesis loses strength, notably because of his consideration that in the development of art a necessary logic developed, ending up in Warhol's work, and turning Neo-Expressionism into a regressive gesture. Not least because in fact it is an externally legitimising story again, applied to concrete art practices. Or to quote Lyotard: behind Danto's statement on the end of art lies another Great Narrative, namely Hegel's. It is not without reason that Danto himself points out that it is better to refer to the end of art history than to the end of art.

Paul Crowther criticises Danto's thesis of a necessary, internal logic. He indicates similarities between what are usually seen as two competing tendencies within modern art: on the one hand the complex of Fauvism, Futurism, Expressionism and Surrealism, on the other hand that which has been composed of Suprematism, Neo-Plasticism and Abstract-Expressionism. The apparent contradiction disappears as soon as we realise "that the art work receives its ultimate authentication as a vehicle for expression of feeling"¹¹. Both tendencies derive their legitimation from "some kind of elevating expressive effect embodied in its creation and reception".

Crowther calls this point of view "the 'legitimising discourse' of art". Alluding to Danto's Hegelianism he comments:

"If, therefore, we are to talk of a 'logic' of modernity in the visual arts at all, it can only be in the loose sense of a radical transformation of the existing legitimizing discourse of art. This, however, should not be seen as a logic of 'necessary' progression; neither must it be viewed as a matter wholly internal to art itself."¹²

Socio-cultural factors also play a part in this. Wholly in line with Lyotard's thesis, according to Crowther Warhol's Brillo Boxes do not so much herald the end of art,

but rather "the transitional point at which modernity begins to pass into postmodernity"¹³.

A continuity can therefore definitely be perceived between Warhol's Brillo Boxes - and in line with this, Minimalism and Conceptualism - and, for instance, the work of Anselm Kiefer and Malcolm Morley, which to Danto are merely moments of pluralism. The difference between the two stages consists in the fact that "whereas the late Modernists question the logical scope of art and take it to and beyond its limits, the Critical Postmodernists question the social reality of art (i.e. the status of the legitimising discourse) from within" ¹⁴.

From these different options it may be evident that the hypo-critical question about the ideal place from a Postmodern perspective is not so simple to answer positively. It is an utterly precarious matter to say anything at all about art as such without falling into the trap of the Great Narrators. For that reason I prefer to explore the question about the ideal place on a more limited scale, however without abandoning Danto's views completely. For to me Danto's stress on self-consciousness and conceptualising, once they have been stripped of their universalist's overtones, seems to be an essential contribution to a new interpretation. His final consideration merits reflection: "Philosophy too comes to an end, but unlike art it really must stop when it reaches its end, for there is nothing for it to do when it has fulfilled its task"¹⁵. His philosophical eclipsing of art, however, is something I want to avoid by maintaining this very field of tension between philosophy and art, between conceptuality and representation. In my opinion it is particularly this field of tension with its inconclusiveness that seems qualified for a radically different interpretation of the notion of the ideal place.

5. Rethinking Kant: philosophy as art or artificial philosophy?

In order to clarify this I had better first concentrate on this rather carelessly used term 'postmodern', which obviously is the stumbling block. For this purpose I join in with Lyotard's self-criticism of the term 'postmodern' introduced by him in *The Postmodern Condition*. In spite of all appearances, in later texts he states that 'Postmodern' is not an epochal but a reflective quality. It does not refer to a period after modernity, but to a hyper-critical or in Baudrillard's terminology hypo-critical consciousness of modernity itself.

According to Lyotard the Postmodern is a modus of the modern. However, it is only as a consequence of the fundamentally different socio-economic and political conditions after the Second World War that this vision could come to light, since it was not until 'after Auschwitz'¹⁶ that it became clear that the pretensions of Enlightenment had been belied by their own history. From that moment the realization of the inadequacy of critical rationality and the uncontrollable technology resulting from it are personally experienced.

Subsequently, Lyotard tried to rethink and rewrite modernity. From his implicit criticism of Hegel, this is done by resuming the Kantian tension between thought and the world of 'Dinge-an-sich' - a subject-object tension which Hegel thought he could solve by the notion of the 'Geist' expounded in history. A rethinking of the problem

of the sublime as it is worked out by Kant in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, plays a central part in this. I won't pursue Lyotard's position and thoughts any further here, but while adopting his initial idea I will now seize upon the range of thought of Gilles Deleuze, developed by him in cooperation with Félix Guattari in the course of 25 years, so as to sketch a different relation between philosophy and art in general and between conceptuality, perceptivity and affectivity in particular.¹⁷ Through this account I will be able to interpret the relation between the ideal place and art I started out with, in a hypo-critical way.

a. idea: problemized conceptuality

In Kant's philosophy, as I already indicated at the beginning of this article, three faculties of the human mind are mutually linked. According to the Kantian outline these are knowing, wanting and feeling, respectively, to each of which a critical analysis is devoted.¹⁸ The concept playing such a central part in modern consciousness philosophy after Kant is thus, by way of the affect, connected with the perception characteristic of art. The question in line with the question about the ideal place in art will be: what is the effect of a combination of concept and representation on individuals? And, as is still claimed among the avant-garde, does this have a community-establishing character or does it just concern a purely individual occurrence here?

In the range of thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari the interaction between concept, percept and affect are central issues. With Deleuze the concept has already been related to the core of the notion of 'ideal', i.e. 'the Idea' at an early stage. His criticism of Hegel initiated in his prominent book on Nietzsche of 1962, is concisely conveyed in his dissertation *Difference & Repetition* of 1968: 'dramatise the Ideas'. For this purpose the experience of a work of art is stressed: "The work of art leaves the domain of representation in order to become 'experience', transcendental empiricism or science of the sensible". Deleuze draws attention to a conception of aesthetics which does not start from what can be represented through the senses, but from "the very being of the sensible."¹⁹

Deleuze makes a strict distinction between concepts and ideas. In a Kantian manner he believes that the movement of concepts - conceptual or discursive thought - is set and kept moving by the Idea, which is not exhausted in concepts. The difference inherent to things, as that which cannot be grasped by conceptual thought because this is by definition identifying and totalising, has its effect in the Idea: "the difference is internal to the Idea; it unfolds as pure movement, creative of a dynamic space and time which corresponds to the Idea"²⁰. Put differently: "Difference is here internal to an Idea, even though it is external to the concept which represents an object"²¹. Formulated somewhat more strictly: 'Idea' is the movable core of the concept, in which a non-conceptual differentiation, staying out of vision like a blind spot, resounds. While with Plato the Idea, in Deleuzian terms, is still a philosophical concept on account of its transcendental quality, with Kant the concepts are 'problematised' in the Ideas: "Kant even refers to Ideas as problems 'to which there is no solution'"²². The core of the Ideas is their problematised and problematising

character: "The 'problematic' is a state of the world, a dimension of the system, and even its horizon, its home: it designates precisely the objectivity of the Idea, the reality of the virtual"²³.

If the core of the 'ideal' is this idea and the objectivity of the idea a tension never to be resolved, the reflection of which is rather the field of art than of philosophy, a new interpretation of the relation between the ideal place and art is beginning to take shape here. In philosophy the idea already transcends the conceptual, but once it had been exposed to its own irreality by history, the conceptual descended into the body, into a sensory and affective realm causing its quality to change fundamentally. Deleuze endorses the urge of conceptuality to grasp the absolute in an Idea. "Die Anspruch der Vernunft auf Totalität", conceptualising aiming at coherence 'wants' to encompass or totalize an infinite fragmentation, started as a result of the power of imagination, in the Idea - "elle a bien un maximum de compréhension simultanée", states Deleuze in his book on Kant²⁴. But at the same time there is the realization that this comprehension is a transcendental illusion, i.e. a regulative fiction.

b. paradoxical conceptuality: the art of thinking

What Deleuze eventually advocates is a transformation of the activity of thinking itself. Although philosophy is forced to make use of concepts, these need no longer be regarded as purely identifying, encompassing totalities, as was the case in modern consciousness philosophy. Through reformulation of the concept on the basis of the Idea Deleuze can gear thought to a task that can never be accomplished: thought of the difference which is characteristic of things. What 'precedes' thought is itself inconceivable. This 'foundation', which gives thought its coherence and in that sense is community-establishing, is of a non-conceptual nature. More than 'a concept that is or can be thought', as it is defined in the book that due to Guattari's death in 1993 had to be the unwished-for conclusion of a long and intensive cooperation, the (abysmal) foundation of thought is "the image of thought, the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one's bearings in thought (s'orienter dans la penser)"²⁵. With the term 'image' a perceptual dimension lying 'in' or 'behind' or 'underneath' thought - depending on topographical imagination - opens up. These images of thought are therefore a kind of 'metaphors of abyss' which in their cultural-historical definition guarantee the coherence between the concepts.

More and more terms, derived from art practices, are being grafted onto this new interpretation of conceptuality. For instance, an interaction between philosophy and art is indirectly alluded to: on the one hand an aesthetic dimension is arising in thought, on the other hand works of art are becoming more conceptual. This development seems to be in line with the developments in avant-garde art: "Abstract art and conceptual art are two recent attempts to bring art and philosophy together"²⁶. Deleuze and Guattari see thought as an activity increasingly as an artistic matter. Philosophy is no longer contemplation, as it was for Plato. Nor is it reflection in the Kantian sense. However, they do not agree with the point of view of Jürgen Habermas either, for whom philosophy pre-eminently is intersubjective

communication. Philosophising in the Deleuzian sense is first and foremost creation:

"La philosophie consiste toujours à inventer des concepts. (...) La philosophie n'est pas communicative, pas plus que contemplative ou réflexive: elle est créatrice ou même révolutionnaire, par nature, en tant qu'elle ne cesse de créer de nouveaux concepts."²⁷

To put it more or less obscurely, after this transformation the concept of 'concept' appears to have become a very stratified concept. As the concept can never hope to realise the illusion of a totality, it is "un paradox, forcement"²⁸.

c. sensation: percepts and affects

Thought becomes 'arti-ficial' in a literal sense. But what is the relation of this conceptuality to art? The idea from *Difference & Repetition* of "the very being of the sensible" recurs in later writings in the 'sensations' in the most literal sense of the word. Deleuze describes the work of Francis Bacon in this terminology and thinks that in this remarkable oeuvre a 'logic of sensation'²⁹ is to be perceived. As soon as these sensations are linked with the concept, it also becomes clear what a hypothetical discussion of the relation between the ideal place and art implies. The concept is widened by adding two other dimensions, notably percept and affect. The work of art turns into an experience that can no longer be explained as representation of reality, nor reduced to the intentions of the artist or the interpretations of the viewer: "If resemblance haunts the work of art, it is because sensations refer only to its material: it is the percept or affect of the material itself, the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of metal..."³⁰. What remains of the work of art as a thing "is a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects"³¹. Even if the material, which only forms a factual condition, "lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself in the eternity that coexists with this short duration".

Nevertheless, Deleuze thinks that art does more than just supplying images and causing viewers to be affected by them. Then our conception of these two dimensions would be too psychological:

"Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of the state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts and affects are beings whose validity lie in themselves and exceeds any lived. (...) The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself."³²

In the original French text it becomes somewhat clearer what affects are: 'des dévenirs', i.e. becomings. Deleuze's early philosophy of differentiations eventually becomes a thinking of happening, of becoming. This 'happening' is unformed by definition - hence the interest in the experience of the sublime, which defies any form whatsoever. It is an expression of the inconceivable differentiation. This

implies that the experience of works of art is first and foremost an experience of the Other and of the Difference. To Deleuze this experience implies that in art reception a change in the viewer or listener is possible: "ceaselessly becoming-other" or: "Sensory becoming is the action by which something or someone is ceaselessly becoming-other..."

It is particularly in the way in which the unruly work fails to correspond to reality and by turning the materiality of the medium into perceptual reality, that the work can effect a shift in the matter-of-courseness of worldly order.

"By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations. A method is needed, and this varies with every artist and forms part of the work."³³

It is not Danto's post-historical pluralism resulting from self-reflectivity, but the paradoxical consciousness of a fundamental differentiation that is characteristic of our time, which is only postmodern in so far as it implies a resumption of modernity and thus also of the notion of 'history'.

If the relation between philosophy and art makes anything clear at all, it is the impossibility of distinguishing between these three dimensions of experience and maintaining a rigid separation between philosophy and art. For according to Deleuze, art does not think less than philosophy: "but it thinks through affects and percepts"³⁴. This radical reformulation of the consciousness philosophy initiated by Kant and Hegel and of the constitutive opposition of concept and perception within the Great Narratives also implies that "in any case, and in all of these states, painting is thought: vision is through thought, and the eye thinks, even more than it listens"³⁵.

6. From Utopian no-where to an atopian now-here³⁶.

Let us return to our original question. In the first place, we may conclude that an interesting shift is to be perceived with respect to both the Modernist vision and Danto's analysis. The ideal place or Utopia has lost its historical quality - and in this I agree with Danto: we have gone beyond art(history). But since it has not become clear from his account what distinguishes one work of art from another and - something that continues to ring through behind the question about the ideal place - where the 'political' impact of a work is to be traced, another, let's call it political, criterion is required. For Danto's pluralism continues to be 'value'less. Besides, we may suspect him of still having a very modern vision of philosophy and conceptuality. Through his still highly metaphysical definition of thought he continues to be bound to a modern vision of art even more as soon as he puts forward self-consciousness and conceptuality as constitutive elements of current art expressions.

With his reformulation of both conceptual philosophising and the experience of the work of art Deleuze offers an alternative. His insight into the elusiveness of

happening, determined by differences, is a point of view from which art and the ideal place can be related in another way. This concerns a post-historical articulation of place. It can no longer be an attainable land of no-where at the end of the horizon. But what it can be is an immediate now-here in which art happens. That is why this is not so much a matter of an ideal place, but rather of an ideal shift from conceptual to perceptual perspectives. The 'political' impact will then lie in the fact that viewers become and continue to be sensitive to the strange and non-reducible difference. What this means in a panic-stricken world relapsing into xenophobic instincts in order to survive as a community, is not hard to guess. In my opinion it is inevitable that this experience is first of all personal, due to the necessity of consciousness to distinguish itself from others in its critical detachment. Nevertheless, it is not wholly inconceivable that this experience may reinforce public spirit.

Thus avant-garde political resistance has been literally transformed into a postmodern resistance: by means of a minimal shift the public is shown the non-reducible strangeness of things again and again. Given the entertainment culture of which art, judging by art tourism, has also become the unresisting victim, this resistance must obviously be entertaining as well. In Deleuzian creating the subversive aspect of current art expressions may come to light, "because to create is to resist"³⁷. Whether we call this work post-, neo- or trans-avant-garde is insignificant. What is more important is that in art the struggle against power still exists. But now it has become force of habit, that is to say the power of the matter-of-courseness with which we still objectify the world with modern eyes and manipulate objects with modern hands. It is only in this way that art, just as philosophy, can still be critical. Nevertheless, any philosopher and artist realizes - and here lies his hypocrisy both from a psychological and a methodical point of view - that his or her 'subversive' counterproposal also implies a seizure of power.

The post-historical aspect presents itself quite differently: in an undermining of any historicity, i.e. a resistance against any historicizing. According to Deleuze art and philosophy have "resistance in common - their resistance to death, to servitude, to the intolerable, to shame, and to the present"³⁸. If in the latter resistance, this resistance against the Present as a transitional stage between Past and Future, a resistance against the moment and against happening can be heard, what may also be heard is a call for the inestimable value of the here and now as an atopic now-here: "it is the now of our becoming"³⁹.

Possibly this is a devious return to the auratic moment of which Benjamin thought that it had dissolved in reproducibility: "Even the most perfect reproduction lacks one thing: the here and now of the work of art - its unique existence in the place where it is found"⁴⁰. This auratic moment, according to Benjamin, presents itself as "a once-only manifestation of a distance, however near it may be"⁴¹. Possibly this is the depth never to be attained, causing the experience of out-of-place works of art to remain abysmal on principle.

NOTES

1. See: Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of Avant-garde*. Cambridge/London 1968, p. 10.
2. Walter Benjamin, *Het Kunstwerk in het tijdperk van zijn technische reproduceerbaarheid*. Nijmegen 1985 (1973), p.42.
3. Thus the last question about the ideal place of the artist results in an iconoclasm kept under control by paintings such as Velasquez's *The Ladies-in-waiting*, Goya's *Family of Charles IV*, Courbet's *Interior of my studio*, Picasso's *A Portrait of a painter*. After El Greco, Bernard Buffet's *Self-portrait* and Richard Schaffer's *Room with Figure*.
4. See Wolfgang Welsch, "Astherisierung - Schreckenbild oder Chance" in: *Kunstforum International*, vol. 123, 1993, pp. 228-235.
5. The thinkers referred to largely derive their inspiration from Nietzsche. For an analysis of his work on the basis of this thought see: Henk Oosterling, "Philosophie als Kunst? Kunst als Poros, Aporie als Kunstgriff", in: *Die Kunst der Sprache und die Sprache der Kunst*. Roland Duhamel, Erik Oger (eds.), Würzburg 1994, pp. 55-83.
6. Jean Baudrillard, *La Transparence du Mal. Essai sur les phénomènes extrêmes*. Paris 1990, p. 24.
7. Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. New York 1986, p. 209.
8. Idem, p. 206
9. Idem, p. 210.
10. Arthur C. Danto, *The State of Art*. New York 1987, p. 208.
11. Paul Crowther, *Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism*. Oxford 1993, p. 185.
12. Idem, p. 186.
13. Idem, p. 187.
14. Idem, p. 195.
15. *The State of Art*. op.cit. p. 218.
16. This Adornian theme is worked out by Lyotard in a strictly methodical way in *The Differend* (1983). In other writings, such as *Heidegger et 'les juifs'*(1988) this inconceivable event is further elaborated from a political-philosophical point of view.
17. For a more detailed account of Lyotard's thesis see: Henk Oosterling: "Het 'denken' van de materie. Aporetisch schrijven en esthetiek", in: *Lyotard lezen*. R. Brons & H. Kunneman (eds.), Meppel 1995.
18. Kant works out their conditions of possibility in his three criticisms, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* and *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. The transcendental foundation of truth, goodness and beauty, respectively is worked out here. In the last criticism, in which an attempt is made at effecting a bridge between knowing and wanting, between science and morality, the focus is on rational art criticism, i.e. the criterion of taste.
19. See: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, London 1994 (1968), p. 56/7.
20. Idem, p. 24.

21. Idem, p. 26.
22. Idem, p. 168.
23. Idem, p. 280.
24. Gilles Deleuze, *La philosophie critique de Kant*. Paris 1963, p.73.
25. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* London/New York 1994 (1991), p. 37. The last phrase once again suggests the analogy with Kant's position. See: I. Kant, "Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren?" in: *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik I. Werkausgabe Band V*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a/M 1977, pp. 267-283. Whereas Kant was gradually liberating himself from the sensory definition of thought, Deleuze/Guattari show the affective and perceptive integration of thought.
26. Idem, p. 198.
27. Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparler*. Paris 1990, p. 186.
28. Idem, p. 187.
29. See: *Francis Bacon. Logique de la sensation*. Paris 1981.
30. What is Philosophy, op.cit. p. 166.
31. Idem, p. 164.
32. Idem, p. 164.
33. Idem, p. 167.
34. Idem, p. 66.
35. Idem, p. 195.
36. Following Samuel Butler, Deleuze and Guattari show, by means of what seems to be just a pun, how attention can be drawn to a hidden aspect in our nihilism from no-where to now-here. (What is Philosophy, p. 100).
37. Idem, p. 110.
38. Idem, p. 110 (*italic, ho*).
39. Idem, p. 112.
40. Benjamin, op.cit. p. 11/12.
41. Idem, p. 15. If Benjamin's observation that 'human sensory observation changes along with the entire way of life of human collectives' (14) expresses a keen insight, this may well mean that a new reflectivity has emerged in artistic consciousness, which can no longer be ignored. And if the question about the ideal place means that, being situated in space, we have always observed this ideal, this necessarily implies a different sensory experience of this space.