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Pipe Dreams: Eternal Recurrence and Simulacrum and Foucault's Ekphrasis of Magritte

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Michel Foucault invokes Andy Warhol at the conclusion of *This is Not a Pipe*; this comes at the end of a chapter entitled 'Seven Seals of Affirmation,' so that the words must be read with a Nietzschean resonance (recalling Zarathustra's 'The Seven Seals'):

> A day will come when, by means of similitude relayed indefinitely along the length of a series, the image itself, along with the name it bears, will lose its identity. Campbell, Campbell, Campbell, Campbell.[1]

I propose to explore the approach to the visual here which proceeds by deploying or presupposing conceptions of similitude, simulacrum, eternal recurrence and affirmation that are variations on thoughts of Nietzsche and Gilles Deleuze. In doing so I will read Foucault's essay on Magritte as an instance of ekphrasis, that is as a verbal text which aims at describing, simulating or evoking a visual work of art. What will be unusual about this variation on the ancient genre of ekphrasis will be Foucault's claim that Magritte's painting already speaks; the consequence is a significant complication in the task of the writer on art.

Foucault's reading of Magritte is by no means the importation of philosophy into an alien context. Magritte's art is from the start a form of seduction and provocation directed towards philosophy. The painting and inscription that find their way into Foucault's title seem to put into question the very possibility of reference and the relationship between language and the world. Another painting, *Hegel's Holiday*, depicting an open umbrella supporting a glass of water, suggests perhaps that the philosopher is above all interested in producing a shelter against alterity and accident; even when on vacation he does not forget his *Regenschirm* ('rain-shield,' more expressive here than 'umbrella').[2] *La philosophie dans le boudoir* echoes Sade's title; its nightgown with breasts of flesh and its high-heeled shoes with real toes also, like so much of Magritte's work, pose an undecidable oscillation between the inside and the outside, appearance and reality, the drapery or covering and the naked truth presumed to underlie it. If there are temptations to philosophy here, it is important to note that they no longer include some of the familiar gestures toward a philosophy of the visual found in earlier

painting. The issue of a reciprocity of gazes that arises in *Las Meninas*, where we are uncertain as to whether and how the positions of model, painter and spectator intersect, is not present. Nor does Magritte play with any of the conventions of self-portraiture which explore the possibility of man attaining self-knowledge. The image now is left on its own.

Indeed, it is this tendency of the image to float free that is implicit throughout the rhetoric of Foucault's essay. In discussing the 1966 painting, *Les deux mystères*, in which a pipe drawn on a blackboard with the inscription '*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*' is echoed, supplemented and contradicted by the image of a larger pipe that seems suspended above it in the air, he speaks of the latter as 'floating,' as a 'simple notion or fantasy of a pipe,' and asks whether it is an 'emanation, a mist just detaching itself from the painting.'[3] This language might appear metaphorical or even whimsical, which it is; but it also stands in a rather rigorous relation to the conception of the simulacrum developed by Deleuze, and by that intermediary Foucault is putting Magritte into dialog with a certain 'anti-Platonic' aspect of Plato and with Lucretius' theory of perception. Deleuze had written of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, proposing to explain its paradoxical logic and texture by introducing certain Stoic concepts of the event and the surface and had spoken of 'the faint incorporeal mist that escapes from bodies, a film without volume that envelops them.'[4] (In general, there is a strong parallel between Deleuze's reading of Lewis Carroll and Foucault's of Magritte: both the writer and the painter emerge as artists of the surface and the simulacrum.) This dialogue continues when Foucault goes on to speak of a form that 'reascends to the ethereal realm,' of similitudes being 'born of their own vapor and ... ris[ing] endlessly into an ether where they refer to nothing more than to themselves.'[5]

An appendix to Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*, 'The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy,' begins by asking what it might mean to follow Friedrich Nietzsche's injunction to reverse Platonism. In going back to a neglected theme in Plato himself and to Lucretius, something of an outsider in relation to the canons of philosophy, Deleuze proposes to excavate possibilities from within the philosophical tradition for valuing a certain multiplicity,

possibilities that have been neglected by the hegemonic form of the tradition itself. Deleuze focuses his efforts at first on a reading of Plato's *Sophist*. In this dialogue an important distinction between the legitimate icon or copy on the one hand, and the wayward phantasm or simulacrum on the other, is illustrated by an analogy drawn from the visual arts As Deleuze observes, 'the Platonic dialectic is neither a dialectic of contradiction nor of contrariety, but a dialectic of rivalry (*amphisbetesis*), a dialectic of rivals and suitors.'[6] The rivalry when vision is in question is not only one between philosophy and its competitors but also one that takes place among various forms of the visual. There is a hierarchy of visual powers, productions and forms of knowledge, including dreams, reflections, illusions, objects perceived in a variety of contexts and perspectives, healthy and diseased eyes, and the eye of the soul. In the *Sophist* the Stranger asks:

> And what shall we say of human art? Do we not make one house by the art of building, and another by the art of drawing, which is a sort of dream created by man for those who are awake?[7]

In what might be called a strong reading of the dialogue, Deleuze sees the *Sophist* as releasing these dreams, as Plato's thought is shaken by the possibility that there may be no absolute model to which various images must be referred:

> .. it may be that the end of the *Sophist* contains the most extraordinary adventure of Platonism: as a consequence of searching in the direction of the simulacrum and of leaning over its abyss, Plato discovers, in the flash of an instant, that the simulacrum is not simply a false copy, but that it places in question the very notions of copy and model.[8]

It is this disturbance that creates an opening for the Nietzschean project, for '"to reverse Platonism" means to make the simulacra rise and to affirm their rights among icons and copies.'[9] And in a move that will echo (or be simulated) in Foucault's essays on Deleuze and Magritte, and in his remarks on Warhol, this rise of the simulacrum is associated with the eternal recurrence and exemplified by the phenomenon of Pop Art. Here the recurrence is understood not as a way of organizing chaos but as the circulation of simulacra; in the eternal recurrence there is no genuine or authentic model of which the infinitely many recurrences or simulacra are copies. The recurrence might be rethought as the reign of the simulacrum itself and the expulsion of the Platonic model:

> .. it does not make *everything* come back. It is still selective, it 'makes a difference,' but not at all in the manner of Plato. What is selected are all the procedures opposed to selection; what is excluded, what is *made not* to return, is that which presupposes the Same and the Similar, that which pretends to correct divergence, to recenter the circles or order the chaos, and to provide a model or make a copy

Modernity is said to be 'defined by the power of the simulacrum' (in 1969, the date of Deleuze's work, there was no talk of the postmodern). In this connection a distinction is made between the artificial, which is in good Platonic terms simply 'a copy of a copy,' and the simulacrum, for which that hierarchy no longer obtains. That which might appear at first as artificial can be transformed or transvalued: 'The artificial is always a copy of a copy, which should be pushed *to the point where it changes its nature and is reversed into the simulacrum* (the moment of Pop Art).'[10] If Warhol's images at first appear to be merely copies, reproductions of well-known images of Coca-Cola bottles, or of photographers' shots of Marilyn or Elvis, this marks their status as artifice; but what appears as artificial from a Platonic perspective can be 'reversed' by a mode of presentation that makes it multiply and proliferate indefinitely so as to erase what would have been its source and center.

Foucault develops Deleuze's suggestions about the role of the simulacrum in pop art in his essay 'Theatrum Philosophicum,' which is devoted to a review of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. Foucault sees Andy Warhol's art as genuinely revelatory in a way that complements his analysis of Magritte:

> This is the greatness of Warhol with his canned foods, senseless accidents, and his series of advertising smiles: the oral and nutritional equivalence of those half-open lips, teeth, tomato sauce, that hygiene based on detergents, the equivalence of death in the cavity of an eviscerated car, at the top of a telephone pole and at the end of a wire, and between the glistening, steel blue arms of the electric chair. 'It's the same either way,' stupidity says, while sinking into itself and infinitely extending its nature with the things it says of itself; 'Here or there, it's always the same thing, what difference if the colors vary, if they're darker or lighter. It's all so senseless – life, women, death! How ridiculous this stupidity!' But in concentrating on this boundless monotony, we find the sudden illumination of multiplicity itself – with nothing at its center, at its highest point, or beyond it – a flickering of light that travels even faster than the eyes and successively lights up the moving labels and the captive snapshots that refer to each other to eternity, without ever saying anything: suddenly, arising from the background of the old inertia of equivalences, the striped form of the event tears through the darkness, and the eternal phantasm informs that soup can, that singular and depthless face.[11]

I suggest that we understand the 'eternal phantasm' as the simulacrum in its recurrence. Repeated infinitely, it liberates the image from its official or original meaning and allows the emergence of a sheer multiplicity.

What neither Foucault nor Deleuze explicitly note in their juxtaposition of Nietzsche's thought of the recurrence to a certain transformation of the visual image, is that this association is already present in Zarathustra's most extended speech on the recurrence, whose title already

indicates an optical theme: '*Vom Gesicht und Räthsel.*'[2] What recurs in the recurrence, let us recall, is the *Augenblick*, usually translated somewhat blandly as the 'moment' but it has the literal sense of a twinkling of the eye or the interval of visual attention between blinkings. Nietzsche sets a specifically visual scene for Zarathustra's confrontation with the dwarf who embodies the spirit of gravity here, describing a walk through 'the deadly pallor of twilight' that leads to a gate that bears the inscription *Augenblick* and at which two paths confront or abut one another. At this gateway Zarathustra challenges the dwarf to say what he *sees* and he replies dismissively (as 'stupidity' responds to Warhol's multiples in Foucault's scenario): ' "All that is straight lies," the dwarf murmured contemptuously. "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle." ' The dwarf voices a certain conception of the eternal recurrence, one that assimilates it to the familiar figure of the circle. He sees both more and less than Zarathustra sees. More, because he claims that straight and divergent lines really do circle around to meet. But this more is also less, less because seeing the paths as circular eliminates the clash and mutual offense that Zarathustra describes. And what of the gateway itself, the site of the clash? The dwarf does not describe it at all, perhaps he does not notice it. For the evil eye that the dwarf embodies (and which is a frequent theme in Nietzsche) everything is to be levelled down: Zarathustra will fall, and each moment will simply be submerged in the uniform figure of the circle, a figure of perfect equality. The circle is inscribed, but dwarf-vision overlooks the inscription as it overlooks everything specific about the scene. Is not the inscription a doubling and a deepening of *this* moment of vision, *this* gateway that Zarathustra wants to see?

Zarathustra's question here is 'Is seeing itself not seeing abysses?' (*Ist Sehen nicht selber – Abgründe sehen?*). To see abysses is to become aware of the absence or failure of the ground, not to pass lightly over the moment of vision but to see it as a *mise-en-abîme*. Sight requires courage in such conditions, since we are constantly threatened by vertigo when looking into an abyss. So Zarathustra asks, in framing his story, 'Courage also destroys vertigo (*Schwindel*) at abysses; and where does man not stand at an abyss?' This is perhaps the courage of vision for which Merleau-Ponty praises Cézanne, the refusal to put up with facile solutions and the resolution to explore the complexity of the visual.

Foucault seems to have taken up something of this attitude into his generalized *ekphrasis* of Warhol, when he speaks of the 'eternal phantasm' or 'the striped form of the event.' Mark Taylor has said that art like Warhol's exhibits a style of thought that he calls 'logo centrism,' that is a stress on the recognizable logo or label of the celebrity, commodity, instantly recognizable symbol, or scene that constitutes the occasion for a multiplication of the image.[3] What Foucault wants to say about these images, apparently produced to infinity, is that it is precisely the form of their presentation, multiplication, and indefinite proliferation that releases them from the circle of the logo and precipitates an abyssal vision that calls for a focus on the moment of vision, just as the thought of eternal recurrence is meant to provoke an attention to experiences that goes beyond fitting them into one or another conventional narratives that we might tell about our lives. This is what Foucault says about that thought, just a few pages after the passage on Warhol:

> As for the Return, must it be the perfect circle, the well-oiled millstone, which turns on its axis and reintroduces things, forms, and men at their appointed time? Must there be a center and must events occur on its periphery? . perhaps like the young shepherd we must break this circular ruse – like Zarathustra himself who bit off the head of the serpent and immediately spat it away. . . Aeon [the Stoic contrast to Chronos, of which Deleuze writes] is *recurrence* itself, the straight line of time, a splitting quicker than thought and narrower than any instant It causes the same present to arise – on both sides of this indefinitely splitting arrow – as always existing, as indefinitely present, and as indefinite future [4]

It is this conception of the recurrence that also contributes to Foucault's analysis of the circulation of similitudes in Magritte, and to his announcement that:

> A day will come when, by means of similitude relayed indefinitely along the length of a series, the image itself, along with the name it bears, will lose its identity.

Foucault's last book before the Magritte essay, *Les mots et les choses* (the title poorly translated as *The Order of Things*), had also concluded with the apocalyptic pronouncement, described again as an effacement or erasure, 'that one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.'[5] These two vanishing acts are intimately connected in so far as it is the same factors that will destabilize the reign of man and that of the representational image. Let us look more carefully now at the argument of *This is Not a Pipe* with these erasures in mind.

At the beginning of Foucault's bravura *ekphrases* of the two versions of the painting that include those words, he wants to insist that the genre presupposed by what we are beholding is not the painting or picture in general, but the calligram. Especially the second painting, the one with two pipes (or their images, their simulacra) must be understood as based on a fusion of the visual and the linguistic, the imaged and the written: 'The operation is a calligram that Magritte has secretly constructed, then carefully unraveled.'[6] From the outset, then, Foucault's essay will have complicated the traditions and conventions of the *ekphrasis*, just as Magritte's painting will have

deformed some of the conventions and traditions of the Western pictorial mode since the Renaissance. For the *ekphrasis* ordinarily supposes that the writer (possibly a poet, critic, or philosopher) makes a painting speak; the account that he or she provides gives a voice to that which is silent (as André Malraux, for example, becomes a ventriloquist for *The Voices of Silence*). But if what is to be described *already* speaks, indeed if it seems to speak of itself, then the writer is not bringing a voice to the voiceless, but entering into a conversation already begun. In the calligram, words and letters are arranged so as to suggest forms that evoke objects or themes that are themselves topics of or commentaries on their text. Eventually Foucault will suggest that Magritte's pipe paintings are responses to one of Apollinaire's calligrams, 'Fumées,' that itself orders some of its words into the shape of a pipe. The calligram then challenges the very conditions that make the *ekphrasis* possible:

> The calligram uses that capacity of letters to signify both as linear elements that can be arranged in space and as signs that must unroll according to a unique chain of sound. As a sign, the letter permits us to fix words; as line, it lets us give shape to things. Thus the calligram aspires playfully to efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read.[17]

Let us recall that Zarathustra's discourse on the abyss involved in all seeing is also based on a vision which, if not precisely a calligram, also mixes inscription and image. The problem of naming or inscribing the moment, which is graphically presented by the word *Augenblick* on the gateway, is a disruption of the *topoi* of reference, index-icality, and temporality in Western thought. Already an ingredient in Heraclitus' sayings is the impossibility of holding fast the passing moment, a theme that received a magisterial treatment from Augustine, who insisted on the impossibility of naming the present, which must immediately escape before its name is pronounced. Hegel, at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, proposes that one who believes in the fullness and cognitive certainty of the moment ought to try the experiment of writing down or describing that realization; experience will teach that 'now it is night' or 'now it is day' will be quickly falsified by the passage of time. The inscription on Zarathustra's gateway offers an affront to these philosophies, by writing the name of the moment, *Augenblick*, in stone. The dwarf produces a variant of the standard philosophical response to the problematic by insisting on the movement or flow of time and neglecting the inscription of the moment, its intensity or *haecceitas*.

Lessing attempted to justify and codify the distinction between the plastic and the verbal modes of art in his *Laocoon*. The former is attached to the privileged or frozen moment, the latter can be dramatic and narrative; from this perspective it is a mistake to tell a story with a picture or to paint with words. Homer is right not to describe Helen's appearance but to let us know the effect it has on the Trojan elders. All of this is broken down in Nietzsche, Foucault and Magritte. The paradox of Magritte's inscription, like Zarathustra's, is that it subverts the function of the 'legend,' that which is to be read:

> ... Magritte seemingly returns to the simple correspondence of the image with its legend. Without saying anything, a mute and adequately recognizable figure displays the object in its essence; from the image, a name written below receives its 'meaning' or rule for usage. Now, compared to the traditional function of the legend, Magritte's text is doubly paradoxical. It sets out to name something that evidently does not need to be named (the form is too well known, the label too familiar). And at the moment when he should reveal the name, Magritte does so by denying that the object is what it is.[18]

In Foucault's *ekphrasis* of *Les deux mystères*, a complicated story is told that involves a variety of actions, voices, and events. The 'pipe on the blackboard,' accompanied by the words '*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*' written in an all too schoolmasterly hand, is taken to be part of a classroom demonstration. In this case the lesson being taught is an essential step in philosophy: do not confuse images and things. The picture of a pipe, for all its resemblance to the real thing, is certainly not smokable or even tangible. Foucault's *prosopopeia* puts this lesson in the mouth of a pedagogue, so that the whole scene of instruction becomes animated by his interchange with his students. As soon as the teacher speaks, he is compelled by the lesson that he would teach to criticize what he has just said:

> But why have we introduced the teacher's voice? Because scarcely has he stated, 'This is a pipe,' before he must correct himself and stutter, 'This is not a pipe, but a drawing of a pipe,' 'This is not a pipe but a sentence saying that this is not a pipe,' 'The sentence "this is not a pipe" is not a pipe,' 'In the sentence "this is not a pipe" *this* is not a pipe: the painting, written sentence, drawing of a pipe – all this is not a pipe.'

At least since Plato's *Cratylus* philosophy has been trying to teach the lesson that one ought not to assimilate words and things, that the order of language must not be confounded with that of the world. And yet as soon as the philosopher speaks, even if the lesson is well taken, questions can arise about that speech itself: the problems that were expelled from the object language may surface in the meta-language. Of course the regress can be brought to a halt by invoking something like Russell's theory of types, so that rigorous distinctions can be enforced between the various levels of language. But this break may seem abrupt and artificial; if the status of the meta-language is left open, the conscientious philosopher may have worries like the teacher in Foucault's scenario.

In all of this concern for precision in speech and the avoidance of error, there is a certain obsession with that which is excluded. We might say that the progressive attempts to evade the false identification of words, images, paintings, indexical signs, and inscriptions with their objects or referents are haunted by the specter that they seek to exorcise. And this is the very scene that Foucault sees Magritte as enacting for us:

> Negations multiply themselves, the voice is confused and choked. The baffled master lowers his extended pointer, turns his back to the board, regards the uproarious students, and does not realize that they laugh so loudly because above the blackboard and his stammered denials, a vapor has just risen, little by little taking shape and now creating, precisely and without a doubt, a pipe. 'A pipe, a pipe,' cry the students, stamping away while the teacher, his voice sinking ever lower, murmurs always with the same obstinacy though no one is listening, 'And yet it is not a pipe.' He is not mistaken ...[19]

And yet he is not completely right either, for what he fails to acknowledge is the 'vapor,' the floating image or simulacrum that complicates his negations and distinctions. The pedagogical scene constructed here (is it Magritte's or Foucault's?) pertains not only to philosophy's concern with language and reference, but to the way in which painting has been constituted. The anecdote told of Zeuxis and Parrhasius is paradigmatic: the first painted grapes so realistic that birds tried to eat them; the latter presented him with a draped painting that was to be the rival of that one, but the drapery in fact *was* the painting, and when Zeuxis asked for it to be unveiled, he had to confess that Parrhasius was the superior painter. Painting has had to flirt with the possibility of producing an illusion of the real or a substitute for it, while at the same time preserving a distance from it (as in the ironic distance of the master of the *trompe-l'oeil*). It is this entire history that is condensed, dramatized, and transformed in Foucault's *mise-en-scène*.

In Magritte, says Foucault, we have 'An art of the "Same," liberated from the "as if." We are farthest from *trompe-l'oeil.*'[20] In the longest chapter of his essay 'Seven Seals of Affirmation,' he brings together a Nietzschean conception of recurrence and affirmation with Deleuze's notion of the simulacrum. Everything hinges on the distinction between resemblance and similitude:

> Resemblance has a 'model,' an original element that orders and hierarchizes the increasingly less faithful copies that can be struck from it. Resemblance presupposes a primary reference that prescribes and classifies. The similar develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction as easily as in another, that obey no hierarchy, but propagate themselves from small differences, among small differences.[21]

It is important to note that Foucault is no longer using the term 'resemblance' in the same way that he did in *Les*

mots et les choses. There, resemblance and similitude were both modes of the analogical thinking of the Renaissance, in which the world is seen as a great web of corresponding parts and aspects, linking texts and things and microcosm and macrocosm. Magritte wrote to Foucault after the publication of the earlier book, urging a distinction between resemblance and similitude, according to which things may or may not have relations of similitude with one another (green peas being his example of such things) but 'Only thought resembles. It resembles by being what it sees, hears, or knows; it becomes what the world offers it.'[22] Magritte seems to be concerned to formulate a general distinction between two relations here and does not attend to the archaeologically specific context of Foucault's discussion of the way in which premodern knowledge was organized. In *This is Not a Pipe* the philosopher uses 'resemblance' to designate a relationship of copying, in which a picture, for example, resembles its original by both referring to it and by looking like it. Similitude, on the other hand, has become strictly a relation among images without any reference to an external model or a primary instance.[23]

The difference between resemblance and similitude could be described in economic terms as a distinction between appropriation and circulation. Resemblance refers back to an original, to which it belongs and to which it remains subordinate. Similitude is a continuous movement that 'circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar.' What has been erased in similitude is any trace of monarchy or sovereignty; when Foucault says that the latter notions have no place in Magritte, there is surely an echo of the essay on *Las Meninas*, in which the position of the sovereign and the claims of representation are intimately bound together. In discussing the ironically titled *Representation* Foucault notes how a smaller part of the painting, framed by a balustrade, repeats precisely the scene of the larger painting. The title and the *mise-en-abîme* structure make this work into a tableau of representation or visual presentation itself (representation here is reduced to the presentation of similitude), analogous to the function that Velazquez's painting has with respect to the classical episteme. Foucault remarks that the two images in their similitude are sufficient to generate an infinite series, and consequently to abolish any sovereign or monarchical principle:

> Even as the exactness of the image functioned as a finger pointing to a model, to a sovereign, unique and exterior 'pattern,' the series of similitudes (and two are enough to establish a series) abolishes this simultaneously real and ideal monarchy.[24]

And he asks 'Is it not the role of resemblance to be the sovereign that makes things appear?'[25]

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We can now begin to see that there is an analogy between more overtly political regimes of vision and the forms taken by visual art. In the age of sovereignty, as Foucault emphasized in *Discipline and Punish*, it is the sovereign, his proxy, or the effects of his power which are put on display; this is also the grand age of the portrait, first of royal or aristocratic personages, second, and by approximation, of the successful bourgeoisie. In *Las Meninas*, as described by most commentators (and Foucault does not exclude this interpretation), the painter and some of the other figures depicted seem to have paused in their activities to give their attention to the king and queen who have just entered the room. They, or their images on the canvas (and we need not decide between these two possibilities) are reflected in the mirror at the back of the room (and that framed image may even be the painting of a mirror[26]); the painting as a whole embodies the aesthetics of sovereignty both in its commitment to resemblance and in its presentation of the panorama of royal power – king and queen, princess, attendants and Velazquez himself who is both an artist of resemblance and an ambitious courtier whose painting has plausibly been read as an attempt to provide a royal legitimization for the art of painting as well as to certify his own position at court.[27]

According to Foucault, sovereignty has been replaced in the carceral society by a structure of power in which there is no central figure on display. There is a uniformity enforced by the architectures, regulations, and protocols of power which circulate without end; the gaze has been mobilized and is no longer exclusively exercised by or directed at any one person. The art of similitude proceeds by means of an analogous circulation of images that have been cut loose from any original. Power, as Foucault likes to insist, is productive and not merely repressive (as the theories based on sovereignty declare); this principle has consequences at several levels. If panoptic machinery produces delinquencies, docile bodies and perversions, the art of circulating similitudes has the power to eviscerate the supposed original meaning of the image and to force upon us the sense of an indefinite repetition. In this mode of repetition and the simulacrum, 'Similitude multiplies different affirmations, which dance together, tilting and tumbling over one another.'[28] The echo of the rhetoric of dancing and affirmation from the descriptions of the eternal recurrence in *Zarathustra* seems more than accidental (see the chapters 'The Convalescent,' 'The Other Dancing Song,' and 'The Seven Seals [or The Yes and Amen Song'). It is in this spirit that Foucault explains how the drawing that resembles a pipe and the text that resembles a text subvert their own resemblance in order to generate 'an open network of similitudes' in which explicit negations are transvalued into affirmations:

Each element of 'this is not a pipe' could hold an apparently negative discourse – because it denies, along with resemblance, the assertion of reality resemblance conveys – but one that is basically affirmative: the affirmation of the simulacrum, affirmation of the element within the network of the similar."[9]

Foucault then proposes to 'establish the series of these affirmations,' by exploring the different voices that speak in 'this is not a pipe.' Affirmation is always multiple because it is beyond limit and restriction. Nietzsche had asked 'Now that God is dead, who is speaking?', suggesting that with the disappearance of the sovereign center there is no longer an authoritative subject to ground texts or utterances (as in the higher criticism of the Bible or the Homeric question that are paradigmatic for his own work as a philologist). In the wake of the decline of resemblance, which is linked to the fate of sovereignty, Foucault asks of Magritte's painting 'Who speaks in the statement?' and proceeds to detail seven speakers: the lower pipe, the higher pipe, the inscription, the text and the lower pipe in unison, the two pipes speaking together, the text and the higher pipe, and a 'dislocated voice' that speaks of all the painting's elements. If the lower pipe insists that it is only a drawing, this insistence is echoed and amplified by the higher one which acknowledges itself to be a 'cloudy similitude, referring to nothing,' and the other voices add their own variations, 'tilting and tumbling over one another.' In 'The Seven Seals' of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, the speaker disperses himself into various voices and functions (e.g. 'If I am fond of the sea ...,' 'If my virtue is a dancer's virtue ...,' 'If ever I spread tranquil skies over myself ...'). What all the voices affirm, in chorus, is the eternal recurrence, the infinite depth of the moment that is experienced as repeated without limit. The moment-of-vision or twinkling of the eye (*Augenblick*) is no longer a mere appearance to be grounded upon or to refer to a more substantial reality; it has acquired its own depth.

This is analogous to what happens to similitude among the seven affirmations – 'seven discourses in a single statement' – that issue from Magritte's painting:

> Henceforth similitude is restored to itself – unfolding from itself and folding back upon itself. It is no longer the finger pointing out from the canvas in order to refer to something else. It inaugurates a play of transferences that run, proliferate, propagate, and correspond within the layout of the painting, affirming and representing nothing.[30]

Let us be careful about this 'affirming and representing nothing.' It is not that there is no affirmation, Foucault seems to be saying here, but that nothing *is* affirmed. It is the affirmation of similitude as sheer image, emptied of meaning and reference. In 'Theatrum Philosophicum' Foucault had spoken of 'the sudden illumination of multiplicity itself – with nothing at its center, at its highest point,

or beyond it.' Foucault might seem to teeter here on the brink of nihilism, recalling Nietzsche's principle that 'man would rather will nothingness than *not* will.'[31] The disappearance of the center could be taken as a cause for lamentation or as the impetus for a series of desperate efforts to substitute another version of the center for the one that has been lost. Or it might be celebrated as it is here in the form of a dance of similitude. Characteristically, Foucault speaks in the passage quoted above of the fold (*pli*) of similitude, 'unfolding from itself and folding back upon itself.' The notion of the fold is somewhat elusive, but it seems to designate what happens when resistance becomes itself a structure of power; it is not interiority in the classical sense of subjectivity, but the inside of the outside, a doubling. As Deleuze suggests, Foucault's late analysis of the Greeks outlines a form of doubling in which one gains mastery over oneself; the *use* of pleasure is not to be driven by it, but to take it as an occasion for self-regulation.[34] Magritte's or Warhol's folding of similitude means that images are no longer simply the product of external forces to which they refer or which cause them, but that they exhibit themselves as images, achieving a relative independence from what is outside. Foucault makes some analogous observations about the photography of Duane Michals in an introduction to a book of his work:

> For Duane Michals, grasping reality, capturing movement, taking from life, inducing to see ... are the traps of photography: a false compulsion, a clumsy desire, having illusions about yourself. . For a long time the photographer's gaze has monopolized the practice of photography and imposed its own law

The fold practiced or embodied by Michals is that he 'undertakes to cancel out what one might call the ocular function of photography' by means of 'a whole series of more or less complex games in which the lens constantly allows the visible to escape it.' These consist in such strategies as photographing the evanescent, the ghostly or the invisible; or in complicating the visual by adding written inscriptions or painting over part of the photograph.[33] The cancelling of the ocular, like the avoidance of resemblance, is the folding of an art. Foucault's short essay on Michals appeared in 1982, just two years after Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, which also asks the question whether photography can be an art, but which holds to the principle that a photograph is necessarily the record or trace of an actual event or stimulus (the exposure of the film) and never confronts the possibility that the photographic work could be folded in on itself.

In praising Magritte, Warhol, or Michals, Foucault appears to embrace Zarathustra's dictum that 'all vision is seeing abysses,' summoning up a world in which the identity of the image disappears in a vertigo of repetitions, along with the figure of man who would have served as the stabilizing center of the *video*. The 'I see' seems to have gone the way of the 'I think' (the *cogito*). But we may still wonder whether some trace or shadow of the viewer remains here and, if so, what that observer looks like in turn. Notoriously, Foucault thematized his efforts to evade identification in the form of a brief dialogue at the close of the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Here the unnamed and disembodied voice of the writer speaks of preparing a labyrinth for himself, one:

> . in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write.[34]

And when we look is implied by the visual figures here, which conjure up the image of the voyeur, who sees from the depths of his labyrinth, appears only fleetingly to eyes that will never reinspect him and who manages to shed his face. But Nietzsche, who preceded Foucault with a rhetoric of the labyrinth and the mask, did not always imagine that such an escape from the gaze could be effected, for he issued this cautionary note: 'when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.'[35]

NOTES

1 – Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, trans. James Harkness (Los Angeles, 1983), p 54
2 – Jacques Derrida, *Spurs*, trans Barbara Harlow (Chicago, 1979)
3 – Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, pp. 16–17.
4 – Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans Mark Lester (New York, 1990), p 10.
5 – Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, pp. 22, 54.
6 – Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 254.
7 – Plato, *Sophist* 266.
8 – Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 256
9 – Ibid , p 262
10 – Ibid , p 265.
11 – Michel Foucault, 'Theatrum Philosophicum', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, 1980), p. 189 See also Gary Shapiro, 'Art and its doubles· Danto, Foucault, and their simulacra', in *Danto and his Critics*, ed Mark Rollins (New York, 1993), pp 129–41
12 – Gary Shapiro, 'In the shadows of philosophy Nietzsche and the question of vision', in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, ed David Michael Levin (Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 124–42.
13 – Mark Taylor, *Disfiguring. Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 178–84.
14 – Foucault, 'Theatrum Philosophicum', pp. 192–3.
15 – Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York, 1970), p 387.
16 – Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, p. 20.
17 – Ibid., p. 21.
18 – Ibid , pp. 23–4.
19 – Ibid , p. 30
20 – Ibid , p 43
21 – Ibid., p. 44
22 – Magritte to Foucault (23 May 1966), reprinted in Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*, p 57, the English translation also includes a second letter from Magritte to Foucault

23 – Guido Almansi, 'Foucault and Magritte', *History of European Ideas*, 3 (1982), pp. 303–9; Silvano Levy, 'Foucault and Magritte on resemblance', *Modern Language Review*, 85 (1990), pp 50–6.

24 – Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, pp. 44–5.

25 – Ibid , p. 46

26 – George Kubler, 'The Mirror in *Las Meninas*', *Art Bulletin*, 67 (1985), p 316.

27 – Jonathan Brown, *Images and Ideas in Seventeenth Century Spanish Painting* (Princeton, 1978); idem, *Velazquez Painter and Courtier* (New Haven, 1986)

28 Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, p 46.

29 – Ibid., p 47.

30 – Ibid., p 49.

31 – Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1969), III.28, p. 163

32 – Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans Sean Hand (Minneapolis, 1988), pp. 94–100

33 – Michel Foucault, 'Thought and emotion', in *Duane Michals. Photographies de 1958 à 1982* (Paris, 1982), p. x Foucault also notes that 'Duane Michals met Magritte and worshipped him. We discover he uses a number of Magritte techniques ....'

34 – Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1976), p. 17.

35 – Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1966), para. 146, p 89