Heidegger, Schapiro, Derrida: the three-in-one, and a pair of boots

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ABSTRACT

Jacques Derrida's (2000 [1987]) meditation on "inside and outside" in his paper "Restitutions of the truth in pointing (*Pointure*)", and his reflections on "the frame" in his paper "The *parergon*" (1979), are brought together here in a consideration of representations of the Trinity. The conception of the three-personed god was at the centre of theological dispute in the early modern era, and the aesthetic traditions play a major part in constituting an icon that has allowed the Trinity to be a founding principle of Christian belief, despite all of its contradictions.

Keywords: Trinity; Derrida; early-modern; theology; aesthetics; Kant.

Jacques Derrida's (2000 [1987]) celebrated paper "Restitutions of the truth in pointing (*Pointure*)" engages in a series of exchanges with Martin Heidegger's (2002 [1950, 1957, 1960]) important aesthetics paper, "The origins of the work of art", a piece that undertakes a close reading of a van Gogh painting of a pair of old boots. Heidegger suggests that the image of the old boots provides a motif of peasant labour, and that the artwork makes the conditions and meaning of labour apprehensible to the viewer. Heidegger's paper had provided the point of departure for an essay titled "The still life as a personal object", first published in 1968 by art historian Meyer Schapiro (1994 [1968]), who argues that the boots represented were not those of some peasant or worker, but were van Gogh's own, and hence those of a bourgeois city dweller. The exchange precipitated Derrida into a subsequent debate, in which he posits the multiple modes of attachment and ideological inflection in the Heidegger/Schapiro dialogue, and the models of representation, mimesis, and affect, that underpin the terms of their dialogue.

In his response, Derrida looked askance, too, initiating terms of a debate not arising from the Heidegger/Schapiro dialogue: his question (a third term) explores the ostensible tripartite structure implicit in van Gogh's image. As Derrida explicates

it, the painting is sufficient unto itself, yet also points to an elsewhere, the materiality of those boots, in a curious multiplication that is somehow not a doubling, but a tripling. Let me recapitulate Derrida's thinking. On the one hand, the painting 'resembles (*gleicht*) the thing pure and simple, referring only to itself; yet it also refers to its lack – it must point to the shoes' (Derrida 2000:437); and yet there is a something more, he suggests:

> [W]hat, to Heidegger's own eyes, limits the legitimacy of this arithmetical triplicity … if the thing 2 [the product] is between thing 1 [naked, pure and simple thing] and thing 3 [the work of art], thus participating in both of them, the fact nonetheless remains that thing 3 is more like thing 1, also further on, the picture will be presented as a thing and it will be allowed a privilege in the presentation made in it [in presence and self-sufficient] of thing 2 [shoes as product]. These "three" "modes" do not entertain among themselves a relationship of distinction, as Shapiro thinks. (Tight interlacing, but one which can always be *analyzed*, untied *up to a certain point*. Like a lace, each "thing," each mode of being of the thing passes inside then outside the other (Derrida 2000:298-299, *square brackets in the original*).

Derrida's discussion of the work of art (and the pair of boots) shifts from invoking a binary model of mimesis, to a three-fold enigma about representation and interpenetration (*pointure*). And this is where Derrida's metaphysics become of particular interest to me.

It is just that Trinitarian structure that anchors western art in the Christian era. The Holy Trinity is both a theological certainty and an aesthetic quandary. On one hand, it grounds a Church doctrinal "fundamental" that has for millennia provided the premise upon which heterodoxy and orthodoxy have been tested. Its claim to truth seems to be directly proportional to its incomprehensibility. It is as if representation itself is in question here; that a radical challenge is implicit within habits of mimetic thinking. How is an image adequate to a thing; and what is the circuit between them, and what "third term" partaking of both, allows for that slippery elision? Through his discussion of van Gogh, it is *as if* Derrida loops twentieth-century philosophy and aesthetics into a conversation with centuries of theological enquiry.

Van Gogh's image of a pair of roughly-made and well-worn shoes is, on the one hand, intensely naturalistic, evocative of the "shoe-in-the-world" that it figures; however, the shoe has a soul as well as a sole. The painting "stitches together" the base materiality of the object and the metaphysical presence of the absent owner of the shoes. The banal (somewhat crude) shoes stand in for, gesture towards, the integrity and industry of their implicit owner. The shoes as pure materiality evoke the consciousness of the person; of personhood, by gesturing toward the wearer.

It is almost inevitable that the dispute that arises in Schapiro's response to Heidegger concerns whose shoe this might be, in that the essential being of the wearer is somehow suggested through the material presence of the shoe.

But as Derrida indicates, this is not a doubling. Between the "shoe as shoe" and the "shoe as painting", there is the conglomerate that makes that exchange possible: a third term. That is the "shoe as both shoe and painting".

These questions precipitated my own thinking again, about the Trinity as figured in western art, a unified three-in-one image of Father, Son and Holy Ghost as aspects of a single "person". The figure of the "three-in-one" of the Holy Trinity is a trope that provides a scaffold for much of the art of the western visual tradition. The mystery of a single "personhood" that is at once the originary Father, as stitched into a dyad (that is both "wholly flesh" and "Holy Spirit") gives rise to a complex theological dispute that proves, over centuries, to be murderous, as the orthodox and the heterodox are defined as absolutes. Differences in the interpretation of the Trinity provide a cleaver that sunders many individuals and communities.

The Nicene Creed (adopted at the First Council of Nicaea in 325) becomes the instrument through which to define "inside" and "outside" in distinguishing sacred truth from heresy. Conformity is an obligation for all who would claim to be Christian. Accusations of "Arianism" (the suggestion arising in the fourth century but recurring across the following millennium, that Christ was not coeval with God the Father, but created and mortal) were lethal.

In other words, the Christian tradition has at its centre a complex figure of a complex idea: that is, the three-in-one, with each of the "persons" of God being somehow in the same place yet of different substance. The visual representation of the Trinity provides an instrument for making a theological, a philosophical and an aesthetic set of claims. The legacy is enormous, as artists, theologians, and philosophers are obligated to "think around" the problem.

In meditating on *pointure*, then, I am interested in considering the habits of "piercing-through" and "lacing-together" as philosophical instruments arising from, and productive of, the western Christian mind.

This is not the place for a detailed scrutiny of the intellectual lineage of thought on the Trinity, but it is worth gesturing towards some key moments. Saint Augustine's *De Trinitate* (1887 [400-416? CE]) is a founding text for Anicius Manlius Severinus

Boëthius's (2004 [c. 1250]) (hereafter 'Boethius') treatise on the same subject ; it in turn provides the pretext for Thomas Aquinas's meditations in the thirteenth century. For Aquinas (1963 [1260]), the profundity of the Trinitarian mystery arises from the fact that it cannot be apprehended rationally. He cites Saint Ambrose to make the assertion that, 'the deepest mysteries of faith are free from the reasonings of the philosophers'.

In the discussion that follows, I interpret Masaccio's *Trinity* (c. 1425-1427) (Figure 1) in the church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, in order to open up some ways of thinking about philosophy's engagement with representational practices and the aesthetic. Derrida's enigmatic comments are certainly in the background, as I try to consider how questions about person, number, and substance, inform western artistic practice, and what insights may arise that help in thinking about *pointure*. Masaccio's *Trinity* stages an art historical moment of tremendous significance.

A shift in conventions disrupts and transforms modes of seeing. In the celebrated painting from the fifteenth century, the increasing power of three-dimensional perspective is evident. The painting is evidence of both a formal and a philosophical/theological innovation. Here the timeline is instructive. Masaccio's painting is executed between 1425 and 1427; Leon Battista Alberti's celebrated treatise on perspective, *De pictura* (1970), is written in 1435, and first published in 1436. The façade of the basilica of Santa Maria Novella that houses the painting was designed by Alberti, and built between 1456 and 1470. It is as if Masaccio is precipitating a set of aesthetic and philosophical enquiry, though I do not imagine that lineage (from Masaccio to Alberti) is narrowly causal. Rather, it is the Florentine context of aesthetic, political, and theological enquiry in the fifteenth century that impels the question about perspective and personhood. (The great Florentine architect Filippo Brunelleschi's panel paintings illustrating linear perspective, made in the early 1400s, are part of this particularly regional lineage. The aesthetic achievement is integral to the civic pride emerging in the region.)

Before examining its theological implications, I would like to consider the aesthetic aspects of the painting. Masaccio's fresco is caught between the idiom of a familiar hieratic medieval figure without manifest perspectival modeling on one hand (here I refer to the triangulated figure of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost); while at the same time Masaccio's art is striving towards the naturalistic, three-dimensional representational practices that will be associated with the newly emerging perspectival art of the early Renaissance (the illusionistic vault in which the icon appears to be suspended). The contradictions in the form point to an upheaval in fifteenth-century thought, about the nature of God as coevally absolute spirit and wholly flesh. No wonder that ghosts abound. Much of the revolution that would

FIGURE **Nº 1**

Masaccio, *Trinity*, 1425-1427.

Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

attend the discovery of oil painting arose because that new medium seemed to attain the thee-dimensional materiality of the object or event represented.

Certainly a combination of technological and philosophical factors would have conjoined to make the shift possible, or necessary. Aesthetic revolutions are of course themselves also instances of *pointure*, as one visual language penetrates another. The period of experimental transformation will often bear the trace of the "residual" (or archaic) style while it struggles to give rise to the "emergent" (the anticipated or revolutionary) form. In other words, the interpenetration of historically distinct art practices can itself perhaps fruitfully be apprehended as an instance of *pointure*, with a "new cloth" being woven which binds emerging conceptions and idioms into those already existent.

How is this explored in Masaccio's scheme? The artist's experimental exploration of perspective and dimensionality includes the rather unlikely combination of the Trinity suspended within an illusionistic barrel-vaulted niche. The latter element introduces a new visual language that aspires to a representational naturalism, signaling a modernity that will come to be associated with Albertian perspective. Yet, at the heart of the painting is the mystical figure of the three-in-one personhood of God. That motif is the ostensible subject of the painting, the Trinity floating outside of time, beyond naturalistic space, hanging suspended as a conglomerate, with the Father figured as a planar abstraction, and the Son a rather more naturalised three-dimensional figure. It seems as if the work reaches beyond its limits to represent the unrepresentable, a metaphysical mystery embedded in what will become an increasingly conventionalised visual idiom, is stranded, as it were, when a new imperative to capture "the real" comes to dominate aesthetics. In the Masaccio painting, the Trinity straddles shifting modes of representation, theological contests, and changing relations of production.

The contradictory aesthetic language of the painting is, I suggest, a testimony to a philosophic upheaval in ideas about the limits of personhood. Recent criticism has celebrated Masaccio's painting as a radical formal exploration of volume and perspective; no doubt that is true. With his consummate rendition of the illusionistic recess, Masaccio was doing something significant. The representation of the vault draws one into the space that holds the Trinity. That this is so much celebrated in commentaries, is largely because the painting is taken as one of the early markers of what will become the dominant aesthetic arrangement, along Albertian lines, of three-dimensional space figured within two dimensions. Many genres are unthinkable without it – still life, domestic interiors, landscape and religious iconography will shift to the psychological and social realism of Rembrandt, or

Caravaggio or Artemesia Gentilesci. As Norman Bryson (1983) argues, the viewer's body is addressed in a particular way by Masaccio's *Trinity*; the existential manipulation of space will eventually become one of the signifying characteristics of Caravaggio's religious canvases: for example, his *Conversion of St Paul* (1600) and his *The Supper at Emmaus* (1606) are both paintings that destabilise the viewer through the manipulation of the viewing plane, and the action is, as it were, thrust into the field of the viewer. Foreshortening, as well as the manipulation of space, sucks one in even while the events upon which one gazes are exploded through the canvas at the viewer.

My understanding is that Masaccio's *Trinity* is caught in a set of contradictions that have profound significance for aesthetic practice. The planar properties of the conventional "icon" here meet a representation of illusionistic depth that in itself must have been experienced as mystical. Christ is no longer merely the subject of the viewer's Gaze; He is taken into the believer, assimilated within through meditation and prayer. In viewing the Trinity, the hierophant at the foot of this cross is drawn into God's side, jeopardising anew the horizon between event and representation. Figured in the painting is the barrel-vaulted ceiling of an illusionistic recess (within which God holds the crucified Christ on the cross). This *faux* realm creates the impression that one is enclaved, as believer, inside a space with the Trinitarian God, who nonetheless Himself exceeds the containment, because He is Himself not rendered within the naturalistic language of the architectural elements. The Trinitarian "person" strains at the limits of naturalistic possibility. Thus the arch overhead is one "order" of containment (within the human world); yet the magnificence of the Father's universal embrace and the crucifixion, by contrast, situate the believer's body inside an eternity. The devotional self is summoned here to meditate on the suffering Christ, a non-controversial and universal subject of reverence; that scene, though, makes the claim that the Christ crucified is co-extensive with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is a contested, and in ways, an ideological claim. Nonetheless, the call to pious contemplation of the crucified Christ makes it all but impossible to question the theological evidence for the scene as imagined. And here it is provocative to think with Derrida's comments on the *parergon*, an essay that is part of the volume that contains the essay on *pointure*. It is a meditation on the false distinction between the work of art (proper) and that support which holds, or frames the work of art. His thoughts arise as a critique of Emmanuel Kant's *Critique of judgement* (1952 [1790]):

> Even what is called *ornamentation* [*Zierathen*: decoration, ornamentation, adornment] (*Parerga*), i.e. what is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of an object, in augumenting the delight of taste does so solely by means of its form. Thus it is with

frames [*Einfassungen*] of pictures, or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of a beautiful form – if it is introduced *[simplement appliqué]* like a gold frame [*goldene Rahmen*] merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm – it is then called *finery* [*parure*] [*Schmuck*] and takes away from the genuine beauty (Derrida 2000:54).

Derrida (2000:54) continues to expound on this *parergon* as conceived by Kant:

A *parergon* comes against, beside, and above and beyond the *ergon*, the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board [*au board, á bord*].

Derrida's critique of Kant's *Critique* seeks to point out that Kant's attempt to distinguish the inside from the outside (of the work of art) is misguided; that there is no absolute distinction between the picture and the frame: as he notes: 'There is no natural frame. *There is* frame, but the frame *does not exist*' (Derrida 2000:81).

This is precisely what the Masaccio *Trinity* reveals. The vaulted ceiling, rendered in three-dimensional perspective, within which the Trinity is suspended, is *not* the frame to the (proper) *subject* of the painting. Rather, it is precisely in that dialectical interplay between experimental illusionistic rendering of Albertian perspective, and the hieratic iconographic representation of the three-persons of the Godhead, that the painting takes its meaning. It is a work about the *pointure*, about the penetration of one representational idiom into another; about the stitching together of world views, of theology and science, of faith and reason.

The technological revolution that is evident here is one effect of an emergent rationalism; however, it is taking place inside a theological context. That context has its own aesthetic meaning. By the fifteenth century, the idea of a "three-personed" God had been consolidated as one of the cornerstones of orthodox theology, largely owing to a return to Augustine. Augustine held absolutely to a principle that God was three-in-one, and that all of the manifestations, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were co-extensive. The so-called "great Schism" that divided eastern Orthodox and western Catholic traditions between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries was contested largely in terms of differences in the interpretation of the Trinity. The formula for invoking God in the Catholic Church included "and the Son" (the so-called "*filioque*"), a phrase that was a sticking point. The Council of Florence in the 1430s, the decade following Masaccio's painting, was preoccupied with the question: Was Christ fully God? Masaccio's work engages with the

ideological and theological interpretation of Person. In what does the individual consist? Where does each of the persons of God begin, where does each end? Boethius, Peter Abelard and Aquinas had all been engaged with reconciling philosophy and theology, and the question of "individuation" had been a testing ground for debate in the attempts to draw on both Aristotle and Augustine. What is identity? Could "place" be one of its determinants? Was identity of matter in some unique way signified by the "place" it occupied? If so, no two beings could occupy the same space. What, then, of the Trinity? And how could it be represented?

The church which houses the Masaccio is Dominican, and as such would be integral to a particular theological interest in the representation of the Trinity. Dominicans had, in the thirteenth century, challenged the Cathars or Albigensians – a Manichean sect who held that the body was evil and only the spirit was good. Such a belief threatens (and is threatened by) the fundamental Trinitarian principle that Christ, as God-made-flesh, is co-eternal with the Father.

Masaccio's painting tackles the question of volume and perspective, as I have indicated. The artist contrives a fully dimensional space to create the illusion that the viewer is gazing into a chapel. That naturalist imperative is somehow at odds with the theological commitment to show the three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) as one Being, each having its own extension and material presence. Here, despite the dimensional treatment of space and iconography, the artist has to contrive a way for the three "persons" to exist simultaneously in one space/time set of co-ordinates.

As a result, the Holy Spirit is embodied as a kind of sublime neck-scarf around the throat of the Father, who holds the tormented Son aloft in his arms. The visual effect of the whole is something not unlike a puppet, with an almost paradigmatic conjunction of body, agency and spirit producing one Being that is somehow three persons.

The question about number and identity was persistently at the forefront as the Church reformed itself. Heresy and orthodoxy were sharpened upon one another. The Church's consideration of number becomes bloody business of a particular kind. So, for example, a century after Masaccio's great painting is completed, the brilliant anatomist, mathematician, geographer Michael Servetus was burned at the stake for heresy. Both his philosophical study and his anatomical exploration persuaded him that there was no evidence that three-persons-as-one had any claims to truth. In 1531, he published *De Trinitartis erroribus (On the errors of the Trinity)*, and the following year, his Dialogorum *de Trinitate (Dialogues on the Trinity)*. His *Christianismi Restitutio (The restitution of Christianity)* (1553) was both anti-

Trinitarian and anti-predestination. His writings began to provoke an antipathy from John Calvin, and there has been substantial ongoing scholarly discussion of whether Calvin can ultimately be held responsible for Servetus's death. The facts of Servetus's case are recounted in chilling detail by Calvin (1835). The intellectual and theological dispute struck Calvin as a personal assault; his vitriol against Servetus is evident even though he tries to assert his disinterest:

> Servetus has just sent me a long volume of his ravings. If I consent he will come here, but I will not give my word, for if he comes here, if my authority is worth anything, I will never permit him to depart alive.

There is thus a theological puzzle inside the representational question, how to figure, in a single picture plane, the Three-in-one of Father, Son and Holy Ghost? Could the religious argument be sustained visually within an Albertian universe? It is as well, when considering these questions, to remember the conventional aspects of medieval representation. I recently came across a devotional image by the "Egerton Master" (1410) (Figure 2).

The image, in an illuminated manuscript, is of the Trinity, and it reveals the same striking fundamental elements as the Masaccio painting, with a conglomerate of Father, Son and Holy Ghost as a single person, yet with a naturalistic modeling of the architectural ceiling, figured through very deliberate and precise receding lines that suggest perspectival figuration. I am curious at the conjunction of elements here, that the modeling of a perspectival, three-dimensional architectural space, is somehow embedded with (*productive of*, if you will) the image of the three-in-one as an eternal mystery that escapes rational perspective. No doubt there are significant differences between the Egerton Master and Masaccio that arise from matters of sensibility, aesthetic inclination, and psychology.

There is also, of course, a substantial range of modes for representing the Trinitarian figure. One of the more striking is Andrea del Castagno's *The Holy Trinity St Jerome and two Saints* (c. 1453) (Figure 3). Here the Trinitarian conglomerate is a visitation revealed to a triad of figures, as if to underscore the differences between natural geometry and metaphysical coordinates of space and time. Even here, though, the barrel-vaulted frame for the image is implicit in the form.

Again the artist is wrestling with the enigma of the three-in-one, through a radical exploration of foreshortening and depth perspective. The figures of Christ and of the Father are rendered as anamorphic distortions. (The anamorphic arts arose during the Renaissance era as radical experiments in perspective.) As if arising from within the visual field of St Jerome, the "persons" of God are rendered not
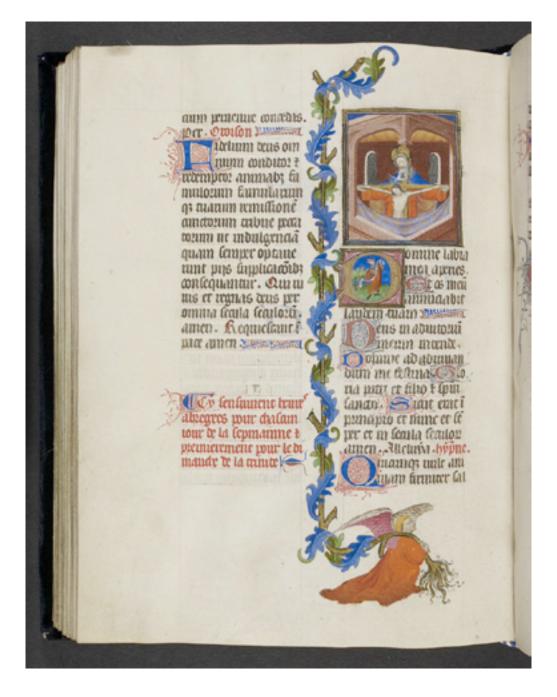
FIGURE Nº 2

The Egerton Master, Miniature of the Trinity, with partial foliate border carried by an angel, 1410. 220 mm x 165mm (135 mm x 105 mm) in two columns.

Book of Hours, Use of Paris ("The Hours of René d'Anjou"). Attributed to Master of Mazarine 469.

FIGURE **Nº 3**

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Andrea del Castegno, *The Holy Trinity, Saint Jerome and two Saints*, c. 1453.

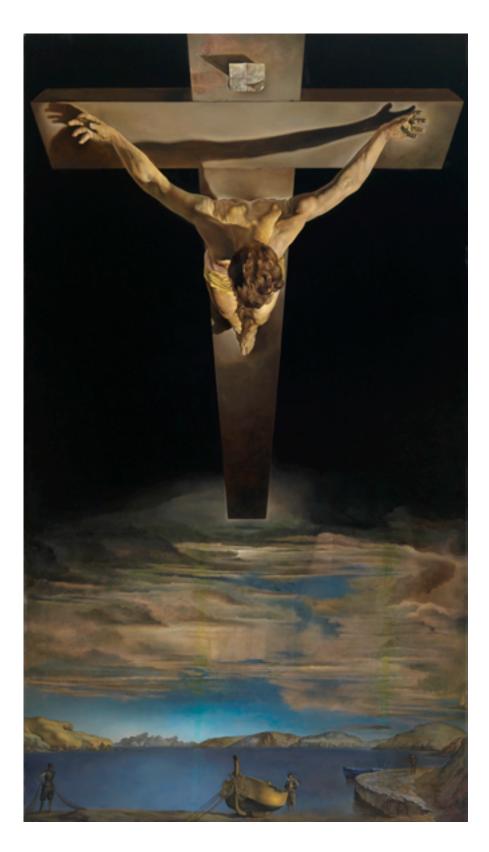Fresco, Santissima Annunziata, Florence.

FIGURE **Nº 4** ‹

Salvador Dali, *Christ of St John of the Cross*, 1951. Oil on canvas. 205 cm x 116 cm.

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow.

as an objective fact, but as a vision. There can be little doubt that the artist is trying to find an idiom for framing the Trinity within an Albertian representational field. These unique aesthetic experiments suggest how artistic sensibilities and religious convictions mingle with convention and tradition. The intersection of theological, philosophical and technical exploration, somehow, is the surprising inside the known.

For a twenty-first century viewer, the image is in a dialogue with Salvador Dali's *Christ of St John of the Cross* (1951) (Figure 4), a work of radical perspectival experiment. Dali's painting, though, does not reveal the figures of the Father and the Holy Spirit: they are suggested through the vehement triangulation of the image, and the lonely Saviour seems all the more alone, a kind of prefiguring of the cosmic travelers who will populate Stanley Kubrick's film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, by the late 1960s. Remarkable in its figuration of the gravitational pull of the hanged body, the image does not look upon the face of suffering; this too amplifies the isolation of the "Body in Pain" providing something of an allegory for twentieth-century torture. Rather enigmatically, the barrel-vaulted shape in Dali's conception is below the feet of the crucified figure, and is provided by an outer-space conceit of a balloon-like cloud hovering over a fishing village where the curvature of the earth seems just detectable. That perspective has become all too common in twentieth century post-satellite imaginings, but must surely have been a rarity in 1951. The effect is a curious inversion of heaven and hell, with a blue dome below the feet of the suffering Christ.

The problem around identity and number becomes pivotal throughout the early modern era. In the 1690s, the question of number would get the philosopher John Locke into a furious public debate with Edward Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester. Stillingfleet sees a dangerous, potentially heretical theological claim sheathed inside Locke's marvelously modernist philosophical enquiry about Identity and Diversity. Let me quote Locke (2000 [1694]) to give a sense of what is at stake here:

> For we never finding, nor conceiving it possible, that two things of the same kind should exist in the same place at the same time, we rightly conclude, that whatever exists anywhere at any time, excludes all of the same kind, and it is there itself alone.

Provoked to outrage, Stillingfleet writes his rebuttal to Locke, as *A discourse in vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity* (1697). This had been the terrain framed in the middle ages, around the *filioque* (and the Son) that had dominated the Schism of the early Church, and the Trinity was an Augustinian fundamental. Locke, with his argument in defense of Toleration, may have wanted to imagine

that in the intellectual climate of the Restoration, philosophical questions about number would be defensible if kept distinct from theological debate which he, after all, held to be a matter of private conscience.

But in January 1697, Thomas Aikenhead, an anatomy student at Edinburgh, was hanged for heresy. His heterodoxies seem several, but chief amongst them was his alleged railing against the Trinity. There was no Biblical substance to the claim, he argued, and it was indefensible. It is thus significant that it is in the month of Aikenhead's execution that Locke writes his response to Stillingfleet's *A discourse in vindication*, that attack on Locke's *Essay* written the previous year. Locke's celebrated formulation, in his "Letter on toleration" (1689) is that 'every man is orthodox to himself'. This implies a strikingly modern conjunction of psychology, theology and performance theory: we are, as it were, a theatre to ourselves in which we can test our motivations.

In this article, I have suggested that the mystical imagination holds onto an idea of the interpenetration (a *pointuring*) of forms despite the rationalist imperative that arises in the modern era, that would allocate only one space to each thing; only one thing to each space. That itself provides a figure for the modern conception of the subject as multiple, contradictory, capable of change, rather than fixed, singular and typologically stable. Masaccio's "Trinity" is looking for an idiom for what will become one of the most significant questions of the following century, the representation of spirit in flesh. The rise of the great Renaissance portraiture tradition, with its attention to nuances of the unique mentality of the sitter, entangled in the details of period costume, is one strain of the enquiry; the "new" portraiture posits an equivalence between the psychology of the individual person and her manifest "husk" – the literal "embodiment" of that self. Similarly, landscape painting becomes the site for the projective identification between figure and ground, consciousness and matter. What I am suggesting here that the highly over-determined iconography of the Trinity, (in fact Trinitarian thinking generally), is mobilised for the representation of the "emergent" Cartesian human subject, constituted as it is at the intersection of material and non-material being. Certainly this would make sense of the dispute over the Trinity that arises between Locke as philosopher and Stillingfleet as theologian.

What seems evident is that new philosophical and theological conceptions of the subject and identity are, in part, emerging in early fifteenth century Florence as an aesthetic problem. The enigma of how adequately to figure such a complex multiple human subject arises at that very moment that the non-contradictory "Self" is being consolidated. In formal terms, I suggest, the problem of how to represent the Trinity within the new conventions of art practice, will precipitate a contradiction.

What is this relation between "inside" and "outside"? In Masaccio's painting, the Holy Ghost, as pure spirit, does not animate the flesh; rather, it hovers between Father and Son, partaking of neither.

Van Gogh's painted boots are indexically marked as "portraits" of a Cartesian subject – it scarcely matters which one, whether a peasant worker or the artist himself. The boots are "sensible" in this sense – they are marked by "sensibility": the sensibility of the wearer. What is more, the two boots are notably asymmetrical: one is folded open to reveal its inside, the other is more prim, holding itself upright, presenting a decent exterior. It is the third term (as Derrida sees it) that is not wholly material nor pure spirit:

> if the thing 2 (the product) is between thing 1 (naked, pure and simple thing) and thing 3 [the work of art], thus participating in both of them, the fact nonetheless remains that thing 3 is more like thing 1, also further on, the picture will be presented as a thing and it will be allowed a privilege in the presentation made in it (in presence and self-sufficient) of thing 2 (Derrida 2000 [1987]:298-299, *square brackets in the original, extract cited previously*).

The aesthetic image demonstrates that material forms can exist *as* idea through an art of representation. Derrida's enigmatic assertion that, 'There is frame but the frame does not exist' (Derrida 2000 [1987]:81, *extract cited previously*) has also been translated as 'There *is* framing but the frame *does not exist*.' The tension, in these two translations, between the *nominative* reiteration of "frame"; to that slippage from nominative to the *verbal* "framing", is productive. "The frame" is an idealist conception, while "framing" is an intellectual pursuit, an ordering activity suggestive of habits of mind. The enigmatic figure of the Trinity as the Three-in-One (as categorical contradiction) is suspended through a process of naturalisation, inside a three-dimensional space, which we take as its frame, but that "frame" is precisely what "frames" the figure(s), calls it/them into being, accuses them/it of their impossibility, yet holds the icon in place. It is at the point of *pointure* that the contradictions in the changing regimes of representation become possible.

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