

Cézanne's Practice of Painting and the Ethics of Epicureanism

by

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"So may the relation of each man be clipped."
-- Wallace Stevens, "Comedian as Letter C"

"Think of the earth's history as dating from the day when two atoms met, when two whirlwinds, two chemical dances, joined together. When I read Lucretius, I drench myself with those first huge rainbows, those cosmic prisms, that dawn of mankind rising over the void. In their fine mist, I breathe in the new born world" (Gasquet, 153). With these words, attributed by Gasquet to one of his conversations with Cézanne, it is possible to pursue a long and speculative line of thought: granted that many commentators have noticed the affinity between Cézanne's interest in Lucretius and the "atomic brushstroke" of his color-hatching technique, could it be possible that Cézanne not only accepted Epicurean physical theory but also the entire system of Epicurean ethics as well? Could a belief in the "day when two atoms met" also entail a belief in the Epicurean ideal of ataraxy? I would like to pursue this thought in a manner which is, essentially, speculative.

Considering the small amount of literature on Cézanne and Lucretius, the exception being Katherine Tuma's dissertation *Cézanne, Atomism, and 19th Century Science*, I have little choice but to proceed in this manner. I will try to construct a picture of Epicureanism to show how this image can be used as a key to interpret some of Cézanne's portraits. In so doing I hope to touch on the following areas: 1) to show how the ideal of ataraxy and its relation to Epicurean physics and theology can help to explain the odd comportment and dispositions of Cézanne's sitters, 2) to distinguish a particular kind of Epicurean materialist project at work in Cézanne's practice of painting from other materialist readings of his work and, 3) show how these various types of materialism are embodied in different paintings. In no way will I try to present a generalized theory that accounts for all of Cézanne's various phases and pictures, rather, the paintings that strike me as particularly Epicurean present interesting case studies that, as I will try to show, present important questions about the formal act of painting and its relation to the world's ontology.

I

In the chapter on "Cézanne's Symbolism and the Human Element in his Art," Kurt Badt describes the attitude of the "Old Woman with a Rosary", as "imperturbable repose" (149).

Commenting on Venturi's observation that the old woman gives a "tragic impression of a life in dissolution," Badt replies:

But in fact this alleged "dissolution" turns out to be a unique firmness; the old woman's attitude expresses imperturbable repose; she is indeed bowed, but that is on account of the burden of her years, and is therefore something permanent. She is not oppressed by the feeling that bodily and mental powers are failing, she is also not just a good old woman who is upheld by faith alone and babbles the rosary without meaning or understanding; that is not how Cézanne saw her. We may rather say that her essential attribute is that she too is a lonely person, yet one who demonstrates that she has a bond with the transcendental, quite candidly yet at the same time with the deadly earnestness of an infinite detachment. (Badt, 149-150)

Essential loneliness, deadly earnestness, infinite detachment, a bond with the transcendental. It is obvious to any reader of Badt that the old woman is a thinly veiled disguise for Cézanne himself. And, for Badt, this constellation of attributes is inextricably bound up and conveyed through the old woman's "imperturbable repose."

But something in Badt's reading seems to be amiss. And I will bluntly say what makes me uneasy: I'm unconvinced that the old woman with the rosary is actually reposed. In fact, she seems to be racked with anxiety, especially her hands; her bowed posture seems to convey none of the relaxation of repose; she seems highly involved and integrated into her surroundings, having none of the detachment of repose. Could it not be the case that Badt and I merely hold different assumptions about what is or is not

repose? Possibly, but we are working from the premise that Cézanne was an Epicurean, and Epicureanism is not indifferent to the significance of repose. Given Cézanne's familiarity with Lucretius, I think it is possible to speculate that Cézanne may have been interested in repose of a fundamentally different sort from Badt's. Moreover, the "ethical consequences" tied to the Epicurean concept of repose have a very different trajectory from Badt's alignment of "imperturbable repose" with "essential loneliness."

How well does the term "repose" describe Cézanne's figures? According to the Winston Dictionary repose means: "to place in a position of rest; lay (oneself) down in a posture of rest: generally reflexive. To lie at rest; be calm or peaceful; hence to sleep. Freedom from anxiety or uneasiness; calmness; hence, composure." The term fits quite nicely when we choose a figure like the Oslo "Seated Man": he appears to be calm and peaceful, at least more so than Badt's Old Woman with her anxious hands clutching at the rosary. In contrast, the Oslo man's hands are formed into relaxed fists -- we can't quite call them fists, they are comfortably curled into orbs resting on his lap. His eyes look slightly askew, but I think one would be hard pressed to motivate a deeply psychological or physiognomic reading from his glance. This is in contrast also with the

Guggenheim "Man with Crossed Arms", whose hands register more anxiety than the "Seated Man": not only because the right hand is deeply tucked and cradled into his elbow, but also due to the manner in which the right hand seems to extend phantasmagorically from the end of his sleeve and under his other arm. The angularity and distortion of the "Man with Crossed Arms" is also mapped onto the molding on the wall behind him, repeating the jarring rhythm of his eyes, face and hands. After a prolonged look at this uncomfortable man, the Oslo "Seated Man" seems of another world.

The Winston continues, "To lie or rest on a support, as the statue reposes on the pedestal." Well, this definition is less applicable: what kind of support is the Oslo man resting upon? He seems to be securely placed upon the seat of a chair that possesses no legs. And, in Cézanne's typical manner, the more we begin to look at the posture of this man the more we begin to find it impossible to determine whether he is standing or sitting. Although many of Cézanne's figures may be statuesque in their immobility and stature, none seem to be reposed quite like a statue on a pedestal. Exactly how Cézanne's figures fit into their surroundings is mysterious. They seem to be disconnected from the world they inhabit, as if they exist somewhere between the background and foreground.

The mire begins to grow in other respects: repose, etymologically, possesses two distinct possible Latin

origins: 1) "re-, back + ponere (positus), to place...to lay or place...with in or on: as, to repose one's faith in God," (also the root of the word repository), versus, 2) "re-, again + pausare, to pause", connected to the word "pose" and meaning a temporary stoppage of time. The two origins refer back to two distinct phenomena -- one spatial, one temporal. As if this weren't strange enough, the Winston appends a large paragraph after the entry with synonyms for repose like "rest, sleep, calm, peace, relaxation." Yet, "repose" should also be distinguished from "rest":

Rest is a ceasing from exertion, a stopping of that which has wearied or worn one; we may crave rest from social activities as well as from painful drudgery. Rest, too, may be obtained by change, either for mind or muscles; one may feel the refreshing rest that comes when the mind is relieved from worry; one using his eyes on close work may afford them rest by glancing now and then at distant objects. Perfect rest, like perfect repose, is sleep; but repose is a far deeper, more complete relaxation than rest. Repose connotes not only a ceasing tranquility from toil, but a flooding of the being with tranquility and peace, refreshing and harmonious in effect. Repose is a composure that springs from an understanding view of life.

By the end of this gloss we begin to see the contours of the concept of repose. Rest is physical, repose is spiritual. But it remains obscure how this concept of repose would appear in a painting. I assume that on first view one would have a difficult time associating "tranquility and peace, refreshing and harmonious in effect" with, say, the melancholic figure in Cézanne's "Young Italian Girl".

As I said before, Epicureanism is not indifferent to the concept of repose. "Repose" is often the used to

translate the Greek term, ataraxy. Normally, Epicurean ethics is characterized by its effort to attain a state of ataraxy. A simple definition of ataraxy is this: "Ataraxy -- in ancient Greek ethics -- tranquility. In Epicurean ethics -- the ideal of life; state of the sage who has attained inner freedom through knowledge of nature and deliverance from fear of death" (Marx, 736). But to capture ataraxy's full resonance it is necessary to investigate the relationship between Epicurean atomic theory and ethics. Epicurean atomic theory is inextricably tied to the ethics of ataraxy through a term which inflects itself in both atomic and ethical dimensions -- declination, or "the swerve".

I'll start at the beginning of the world. For Epicurus, borrowing from Democritus, the world is composed two permanent entities: 1) atoms and 2) the void through which atoms travel. According to Epicurus, before the world came into being, atoms were falling through the void, downward, in a straight line and, due to an utter lack of resistance, at the exact same rate. But this leads to a problem: when did the atoms first collide, producing the accretions and lumps of matter that form our world? This is where Epicurus departs from Democritus, by introducing the "swerve".

Lucretius writes, in book II of *De Rerum Natura*:

When the atoms are travelling straight down through empty space by their own weight, at quite indeterminate times and places they swerve ever so little from their course, just so much that you can call it a change of direction. If it were not

for this swerve, everything would fall downwards like rain-drops through the abyss of space. No collision would take place and no impact of atom on atom would be created. Thus nature would never have created anything. (Lucretius, 66)

So, nature requires the swerve in order to *become nature*; given that atoms and void exist, the swerve is the necessary third component for nature to have produced anything whatsoever. Some atom must have swerved off its course ever so slightly to have started the concatenation of collisions and rebounds that, eventually, sediment into the world; but rather than making the swerve into a law, like the law of atoms and voids, its indeterminacy is postulated. If we conceive of nature as a determined, causal chain of events, then the indeterminate swerve is the necessary condition of determinateness.

How is the swerve ethically inflected? Just following this passage Lucretius connects the swerve to free will, and critiques determinism:

Again, if all movement is always interconnected, the new arising from the old in a determinate order -- if the atoms never swerve so as to originate some new movement that will snap the bonds of fate, the everlasting sequence of cause and effect -- what is the source of the free will possessed by living things through the earth? What, I repeat, is the source of that will-power snatched from the fates, whereby we follow the path along which we are severally led by pleasure, swerving from our course at no set time or place but at the bidding of our own hearts? There is no doubt that on these occasions the will of the individual originates the movements that trickle through his limbs. (Lucretius, 67)

Man, being no more than the sedimentation of matter, shares matter's own inherent property to "snap the bonds of fate"

and produce free will. The swerve of the atom, which initiates cause and effect, is also the way to exit causality's "everlasting sequence." Here we see that the swerve, in Epicurean philosophy, is not only a principle of atomic motion but also the grounding for the ethical question of "free will". But "free will" takes on a wider scope in Epicureanism than it does in humanist ethical discourses, where free will is ascribed only to man because of man's capacity for rationality. In Epicureanism, both man and animals are accretions of atoms, hence both are subjects of "free will". In Lucretius' illustration of "free will" he begins, tellingly, with a horse:

Observe, when the starting barriers are flung back, how the race-horses in the eagerness of their strength cannot break away as suddenly as their hearts desire. For the whole supply of matter must be mobilized throughout every member of the body: only then, when it is mustered in a continuous array, can it respond to the prompting of the heart. (Lucretius, 67-68)

The volitional act of the race-horse charging forward begins when the movement of one atom, colliding into another, initiates a larger chain of movements which "mobilizes" the matter in the horse's limbs. This is Lucretius' image of free will. He contrasts this with determinism:

Quite different is our experience when we are shoved along by a blow inflicted with compulsive force by someone else. In that case it is obvious that all the matter of our body is set going and pushed along involuntarily, till a check is imposed through the limbs by the will. Do you see the difference? Although many men are driven by an external force and often constrained involuntarily to advance or to rush headlong, yet there is within the human breast something that can fight against this force and resist it. (Lucretius, 68)

Determinism then, in the most literal sense, is having one's atoms moved by an outside source rather than internally. The distinction between free will and determinism boils down to a distinction within the sphere of atomic motion: movements that originate independent causal chains versus movements that continue previous causal chains. Free will, unlike determinism, requires the swerve. Thus "free will" is a consequence of the swerve, a quality of matter in general, and not specific to human beings.

So also in the atoms you must recognize the same possibility [of resisting blows from outside]: besides weight and impact there must be a third cause of movement, the source of this inborn power of ours, since we see that nothing can come out of nothing. For the weight of an atom prevents its movements from being completely determined by the impact of other atoms. But the fact that the mind itself has no internal necessity to determine its every act and compel it to suffer in helpless passivity -- this is due to the slight swerve of the atoms at no determinate time or place.
(Lucretius, 68)

The close of this passage makes the most explicit connection between the Epicurean physics and ethics. The swerve, as the indeterminate condition of the possibility of determinacy, is both the initiator of determinacy and determinacy's transgressor. The "mind", being nothing more than a particular kind of accretion of matter, discovers the grounding of its freedom in the swerve of atoms. Thus, the mind itself is compelled by nothing, suffers no internal necessity, so long as it remains independent of externally given causal chains. A mind, self-contained in the sense that it determines its own motions and avoids the

"collisions" and "rebounds" of externally given circumstances, would be in the Epicurean state of ataraxy.

Of course, "collision" and "rebound" are being read not merely as the "dancing of atoms", but as the constraints and binds that are imposed upon the subject by the world. For a deeply Epicurean philosophy, the binds and constraints that tie us to the world, whether they may be social relations, fears, anxieties, or obligations (to name a few), are not just metaphors of atomic motion; rather, literally, they are merely particular movements of atoms working on a large scale. A parallel is seen at the level of the subject: an Epicurean subject is, literally, "atomistic" in the sense that some sociologists use the term. The Epicurean ideal presents an atomistic subject, avoiding the "rebounds" and "collisions" of the surrounding world in favor of a self-determined, tranquil, and contemplative ataraxy.

The Epicurean gods, famous for their self-absorption and disregard of man's concerns, represent the ideal of this state of ataraxy. Rather than acting like the Christian God, who guarantees the divine providence and ordering of the world through being its originator, creator, and redeemer, the Epicurean gods, "having a total affinity for their own virtues...are receptive only to those who are like them, and consider alien all that is not of that kind." (Epicurus, in Sedley and Long, 140) They do not provide relief to the important epistemological realization that the world, being grounded upon the swerve, is really grounded upon

contingency; rather, they are an image of the most refined ethical comportment possible in the face of such contingency. Karl Marx, in his dissertation, *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*, succinctly describes the tie that binds the atomic swerve to human ethics, and the comportment of the gods:

The declination of the atom from the straight line is, namely, not a particular determination which appears accidentally in the Epicurean physics. On the contrary, the law which it expresses goes throughout the whole Epicurean philosophy...The purpose of action is to be found in abstracting, swerving away from pain and confusion, in ataraxy. Hence the good is the flight from evil, pleasure is the swerving away from suffering. Finally, where abstract individuality appears in its highest freedom and independence, in its totality, there it follows that the being which is swerved away from is all being; for this reason, the gods swerve away from the world, do not bother with it and live outside it. (Marx, 50-51)

The swerving away from "all being" allows no place for the gods in this world. In the famous dialogue *On the Nature of the Gods*, Cicero tries to draw out the consequences of this belief in the god's habitation of the *intermundia*. Cicero puts into the mouth of Velleius, an Epicurean, a discussion about the god's unusual appearance:

But if the human shape is superior to the form of all living things, and a god is a living thing, then certainly he has that shape which is most beautiful of all. And since it is agreed that the gods are most blessed, but no one can be blessed without virtue, nor can virtue exist without reason, nor can reason exist except in a human form, one must concede that the gods have human appearance. But that appearance is not [really] a body, but a quasi-body, nor does a god have blood, but quasi-blood. (Cicero, in Inwood and Gerson, 40)

Inhabiting the intermundia, the Epicurean gods are forced into a paradoxical position of being both are human and not-human. It is precisely this characterization that infuriates Cicero:

You Epicureans do this all the time! You say something implausible and want to avoid criticism, so you adduce something which is absolutely impossible to support it!...For example, when Epicurus saw that if the atoms moved by their own weight straight down nothing would be in our power, since the atoms' movements would be certain and necessitated, he found a way to avoid necessity - a point which had escaped Democritus' notice. He says that an atom, although it moves downward in a straight line because of its weight and heaviness, swerves a little bit. This claim is more shameful than the inability to defend the point he is trying to support. He does the same thing in his debate with the dialecticians. They have an accepted teaching to the effect that, in all disjunctions which have the form "either this or not this", one of the two disjuncts must be true; but Epicurus was afraid that if a statement such as "Epicurus will either be alive tomorrow or he will not" were admitted, then one of the two disjuncts would be necessary. So he denied that all statements of the form "either this or not this" were necessary. What could be more stupid than this?...He does the same thing with the nature of the gods. While trying to avoid saying that [the gods are] a dense compound of atoms, so that he will not have to admit that they perish and dissipate, he says that the gods do not have a body, but only a quasi-body, and that they do not have blood, but only quasi-blood. (Cicero, in Inwood and Gerson, 42)

Cicero, by pointing to the impossibility of the Epicurean position has managed to place his finger on the nerve of the Epicurean philosophy. Both the swerve of the atoms and the paradox of the gods in the intermundia are, for Cicero, instances of the Epicurean denial of disjunction: instead of accepting the consequences of a logical dilemma, and granting that only one side of the disjunction can be true,

the Epicureans continually maintain a position of "both/and" in the face of contradiction. It is precisely this "both/and" that characterizes what is particularly Epicurean. When Marx states that the swerve is no accidental characteristic of the Epicurean physics and, in fact, runs through the whole of the Epicurean philosophy, I take it to mean that the entire Epicurean philosophy is, in a deep sense, the project of maintaining the denial of disjunction. More specifically, the "both/and" character of Epicurean philosophy can be developed in a few specific regions that have been previously mentioned but still need to be consolidated.

1) What I have called the "both/and" character of Epicureanism is an explicit denial of the necessitated disjunction of the "either/or". Cicero, in his disgusted exasperation with the Epicureans, recoils from the force with which this denial of necessity is enacted. Repeating Epicurus, Diogenes Laertius states, "Necessity, introduced by some as the absolute ruler, does not exist, but some things are accidental, others dependent on our own arbitrary will. Necessity cannot be persuaded, but chance is unstable. It would be better to follow the myth about the gods than to be a slave to the heimarmene [destiny] of the physicists. For the former leaves hope for mercy if we do honor to the gods while the latter is inexorable necessity" (quoted in Marx, 42-43). Explicitly focusing upon the distinction between "necessity" and "chance," Marx differentiates the

Democritean and Epicurean systems, which are identical in many other respects. The goal of ataraxy is to maintain an ethical position such that "to live in necessity in not a necessity" (Marx, 43). Moreover "chance," in the narrow sense, hardly covers the entire realm of necessity's antithesis: "chance" here must be seen in a broader context, which includes in a constellation of terms like indeterminacy, contingency, the swerve and free will: "chance" is the Epicurean "both/and".

2) This is reinforced at the level of the atom: as Catherine Anne Tuma has argued in her dissertation on *Cézanne, Lucretius and Late 19th Century Crisis in Science*, Lucretius designates the atom by the term "figura", rather than by a translation of the Greek word for atom. From this evidence, in conjunction with an investigation of the role of the atom in 19th century scientific discourse (and especially illustrated with the origins of modern chemistry), she argues for an understanding of the atom as "the figurative atom", "as the unsubstantial figure of substantiality which supports the material world, of the atom which, in its invisibility, informs the visible." In other words, Lucretius, like scientists who rely on a presupposition of atomic action and interaction to explain physical phenomena, view the atom as both literal and metaphorical. This same phenomena of the "unsubstantial figure which supports the material world", of "invisibility

which informs visibility" is also the indeterminacy at the heart of determinacy, revealed by the swerve.

3) The swerve is responsible for both originating determinate causality, and for granting the escape from it. I have tried to argue that "free will" is, basically, a property given to atoms, namely the property of swerving ever so slightly at an indeterminate time and place. "Free will", which in humanist philosophies is viewed as the highest responsibility of acting, rational subjects, is here given to matter. Matter itself is given a strange kind of subjectivity - a kind of subjectivity without subjects.

4) Finally, the gods present the culmination of the rejection of logical disjunction: they are both human and not-human. Under the aspect of humanity, of gods of Epicurus represent the highest ideals of ataraxy.

They spend their time in such a manner that nothing can be conceived which is more blessed or better supplied with all kinds of good things. For a god is idle, is entangled with no serious preoccupations, undertakes no toilsome labor, but simply rejoices in his own wisdom and virtue, being certain that he will always be in the midst of pleasures which are both supreme and eternal.
(Cicero, Inwood and Gerson, 41)

For the gods to be so, they must clip all constraints to the world; this "swerving away from all being", connected to the supremacy and eternality of the gods, takes them almost entirely out of the material world. The material that comprises the gods is composed of a finer atom than our world; these rarified atoms are like the ones which, for Lucretius, compose the human soul, penetrate the entire

human body, and are respired out of the human body at its final breath.

This picture of the gods dwelling in the intermundia with quasi-body and quasi blood rests on more than the mere dismissal of the necessity of disjunctive judgement. Cicero, almost gets it on the head when, speaking about the gods' quasi-corporeality, says: "I could understand what this would be like if we were talking about waxen images and earthenware figurines. But I cannot understand what quasi-body and quasi-blood are supposed to be in the case of a god. And neither can you, Velleius, but you don't want to admit it" (Inwood and Gerson, 42). Where Cicero goes wrong is in thinking that the gods are distinct from aesthetic images and figurines. Quasi-corporeality is embodied precisely in the Greek work of art, in particular sculpture. Marx, in the dissertation, responds to Cicero: "These gods have often been ridiculed...and yet they are no fiction of Epicurus. They did exist. *They are the plastic gods of Greek art*" (Marx, 51). This view echoes Winkelmann's ideas regarding the relation of Greek sculpture and the Epicurean gods in his *History of Ancient Art*: In describing sculptures of the Greek gods, Winkelmann writes:

The beauty of the deities in their virile age consists in the combination of the strength of mature years and the joyfulness of youth, and this consists here in the lack of nerves and sinews, which are less apparent in the flowering of the years. But in this lies also an expression of divine self-containment which is not in need of the parts of our body which serve for its nourishment; and this illuminates Epicurus' opinion concerning the shape of the gods to which

he gives a body, which looks like a body, and blood, but which looks like blood, something which Cicero considers obscure and inconceivable. (Winkelmann, quoted in Marx, 736)

The claim that the quasi-corporeality of the gods is equal to the quasi-corporeality of artworks has dramatic consequences. Works of art, no matter how closely they represent reality, are, ontologically, both *corporeal*, i.e. things amongst things in the world, with their own materiality, as well as *representations of corporeality*. Through a refinement of material and technique, works of art can begin to approximate corporeality. They present ideal images of how we desire the material world to be. Yet, this infinitesimal calculus of approximation and refinement will always announce its own limit conditions: works of art are *both* material (and thus, non-illusory and self-contained) *and* transcendent. Artworks attempt to transcend their material condition by becoming matter's other - representation. As representations, artworks are products of "aesthetic impulse", redemptive and illusory. But not only are the gods of Epicurus akin to works of art, works of art are akin to the gods of Epicurus:

Inherently every artwork desires identity with itself, an identity that in empirical reality is violently forced upon all objects as identity with the subject and thus travestied. Aesthetic identity seeks to aid the non-identical, which in reality is repressed by reality's compulsion to identity. *Only by virtue of separation from empirical reality*, which sanctions art to model the relation of the whole and the part according to the work's own need, *does the artwork achieve a heightened order of existence* (Adorno, 4).

This passage from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, on the relation of the work of art to society, emphasizes the peculiarly Epicurean features of art's likeness to the gods. The work of art tries to avoid the compulsion to identity that inheres in reality, in favor of existing in a self-identical and distinct realm, which is more refined and heightened than reality. Yet, Adorno also claims that, "There is no aesthetic refraction without something being refracted," meaning that without reality there can be none of the self-identical and critical distance of artworks. Art is *both* a product of the compulsion of reality *and* the attempt to image the escape from this compulsion: artworks are quasi-corporeal images.

At the end of a long declination through Epicurean philosophy, we have suddenly returned to the question of artworks. Given Cézanne's familiarity with Lucretius and Cicero, given the long passage in Gasquet on the "chemical dances" and "cosmic prisms rising over the void," we are now in a position to look at some of Cézanne's portraits, and discern the lineaments of Epicureanism inhabiting their physiognomies.

II

On Attic steles, did not the circumspection
of human gesture amaze you? Were not love and farewell
so lightly laid upon shoulders, they seemed to be made
of other stuff than with us? Remember the hands,
how they rest without pressure, though power is there in the torsos.
The wisdom of those self-masters was this: we have got so far;
ours is to touch one another like this; the gods
may press more strongly upon us. But that is the gods' affair.

The figure in the "Woman with the Coffee Pot" has all the characteristics of repose: more important than being restful per se, she seems self-contained or held within. As argued previously, the Epicurean concept of repose is distinguished from mere restfulness as a deeper kind of self-containment and tranquility. The expression on her face seems to be a sublime, unreadable indifference. Her glance gives us no indication of the revelry of self-absorbed day-dreaming, nor is it a scornful glance. She appears as neither pleased nor angered, rather, she seems observant of something. Attached to her arms, her hands show none of the anxiety of the Old Woman with the Rosary; they rest comfortably in her lap, neither clenched nor splayed but rather supple and calm. But, at the same time, the hands appear rubbery and inhuman, having none of the refinement of motion of the highly developed, expressive human hand. The clothing supports this reading; it encloses her body, leaving only openings for her head and hands to pop out through this "body armor". But the clothes imply a kind of inhuman rigidity, contradicted by the dangling arms. The painting produces none of the mysterious fascination before one of Degas' sitters with its free play of metaphorical suggestiveness; still, we find the painting fascinating not because of the eternal mystery of its subject, rather because of the uneasy contradictions we experience in front of it. Viewing the ease with which this painting appears to

have been produced, we must assume that Cézanne intended the profound "neither/nor" we receive from this figure. The determination with which these various attributes contradict and negate each other produce not a sadly mediated and unsuccessful work; rather, the painting seems to revel in its ability to produce such dialectical extremes and ambivalences. Cézanne, completely in control of the motif, shows no traces of effort, no buildup of paint on the surface as in some of his earlier still lifes and portraits.

Formally, the woman is tightly integrated into a iron system of nearly vertical lines. This emphasis on verticality structures the painting in both form and content. The tabletop is flattened out so as to be nearly parallel to the picture plane. The ruddy browns and reds of the tablecloth are a substitute for the painter's palette - a fantastic site of pure pigment, conjuring the sheer potentiality of image-making. We see this potential mysteriously realized in the "panelling" immediately behind the woman, which can neither be securely interpreted as panels, nor as paintings, nor windows. In the rectangle to the right of the woman's head we see a triangular mass that could just as easily well be an image of Mont. Sainte Victoire, as of a ship. The panel immediately above this one has a large brown stripe at the bottom that could be one of Cézanne's "entry-delaying" walls (emphasized by Wollheim in his account of Cézanne's landscapes) or, considering the light blue immediately below this brown strip, the prow of a

large boat. It also has a mysterious triangle that is as easily a mountain as it is a sail. In either case, a definitive reading is impossible; the panels are, pardon the pun, both elusive and allusive. They evade the closure of systematic identification, leaving continually open the endless possibility of indeterminacy.

These panels are stacked up in threes, their edges producing another nearly vertical line, parallel to the line that reaches from the top of the canvas down to the woman's left shoulder. The edge of the table continues the lines from the panels on the right, then curves in toward the bottom right corner of the canvas. To the woman's right, a series of painted roses articulate the same downward rhythm that is captured in the line of panels, and the edge of the table. Of course, the most prominent vertical is dark black line of the dress, splitting the woman in half, and continuing its path through the dramatically lit halves of the woman's face and the tightly parted hair. This bisecting line is identified with the vertical of the coffeepot and the spoon in the cup, both of which impossibly sit on the table. All the stage property colludes to emphasize the strict vertical system.

A tight spatial configuration encloses the woman: the deep contour around her body detaches her from the paneled backdrop while the extremely black, thick contour emanating from the table keeps the woman forcibly recessed from the foreground. In fact, the spatial system of the painting

seems very much akin to a puppet theater: a row of cutouts in front, a painted backdrop behind, while the action takes place in between. The uprightness of the woman, and her peculiar posture also convey the impression that she is a marionette. The peculiarities of her posture can be explained away if we imagine a series of strings holding her up in space: a string attached to her head accounts for the strange way in which she is sitting and standing at the same time, transforming her legs into dangling ornaments. Her arms are moved at the hands, causing the strange bend in her elbow. In fact, the strong vertical lines could be read literally as the strings that move the woman with the coffee pot.

But these strings are not quite vertical; in fact, they swerve ever so slightly from left to right as they descend. And this swerve makes all the difference: the woman in blue presents, at the same time, repose and rigidity. To integrate her into a completely iron system of strict vertical lines would tip the scale of toward the determinate, mechanical, and puppet-like. Yet, the hands and the countenance of the woman are too convincing as loci of expression and subjectivity to be merely the appendages stuck onto a marionette's body - they counterbalance the rigidity of the body armor. Wholly within the figure of the woman we are given two contradictory phenomena placed together which, much to our amazement, produces a convincing and legible figure. The lines or strings of the background

swerve ever so slightly, epitomizing and, in a sense, emblemizing the union of contradictory phenomena - literalizing a "both/and". The slight swerve of the line gives it a dynamic and subjectivized aspect, which is almost negated by the near verticality of its placement. The assertion of both sides of the contradiction produces the bizarre doubleness felt before the canvas. Even though disjunctive judgment would like to force a conclusion, we can neither assent that the woman is human nor inhuman. Subjectivity, held in the grips of stillness, radiates from some mysterious place in the picture, which cannot be located definitively in her hands, nor face, nor body. She appears to be partly subjective and partly objective. The "swerving verticals" which pour downward "like raindrops through the void" are not merely the strings of the puppet, they literalize the descending and swerving atoms, "subjectivity without a subject", which have accrued and sedimented into the woman. The downward momentum of the descending lines is opposed to the upward motion of the woman, who rises up slowly, like a pile of sand. The upward motion is re-enforced by her sitting/standing posture, and the broad base of her dress upon which her torso securely rests.

But the woman is not the only sedimentation of matter; she shares this with the cup, spoon and coffee pot, which sit at her side and share her rigidity. Rather than view this comparison of subject of object as a cynical critique

of the woman - namely, that her object-like rigidity is the result of her mechanized, repressed and ventriloquized activity - I think Cézanne might be making a different point entirely. The painting suggests a way in which both object and subject are similar, namely, an attempt by Cézanne to picture the "non-sensuous similarity" of the mimesis between subject and object. In other words, based on the Epicurean presupposition that both things in the world and the people who inhabit the world are merely sedimentations and accretions of atoms, the rigid pole between "subject" and "object" is shown to be not an irresolvable antinomy, rather a series of gradations. What we have come to think of as the pristine subject, is merely a highly refined, differentiated, and developed object, who has learned to master the swerving "free will" implied in the materiality of the atom.

The work of art, even representation in general, has been conceived as the site where mimesis can unabashedly show its face. How much more explicit must Cézanne be for us to get the point when he has surrounded this woman with indications of artworks? These include the flowers behind her (either printed on wallpaper or painted directly on the wall and baseboard), the odd panels that obviously suggest framed paintings (especially the one immediately behind the coffeepot), and the tablecloth resembles a painter's palette. However, the most striking mimetic moment is the correspondence of the woman with the coffeepot, cup and

spoon. This spoon, whose rounded handle copies the woman's head even down to the part in her hair, imitates the woman's upright comportment. The coffeepot, with its dark vertical shadow and wide horizontal band positions itself like the dark vertical line of the woman's dress, including the intersection of her belt. Far from being a cynical metaphor, the "puppet theater" opens up an intermundia between foreground and background, where subjects and objects reveal the characteristics they share.

Other canvases of Cézanne's handle atomic materiality in distinct ways. For example, in the Oslo "Seated Man" the most extraordinary feature of the picture is the strange triangular piece that cuts across the upper right hand corner. Mediating the connection between the monumental figure of the man and the strange corner, hangs a piece of decorative drapery in the background. The dark lines that ostensibly represent the folds in the drapery perform a similar role to the swerving verticals of the "Woman with a Coffee Pot". Falling through the void in the corner, the atoms pour into the figure of the man; his body, even more than the rigid woman, appears like a sedimented pile of atoms built from the bottom up, reposing comfortably. The man is both strongly associated with, and demarcated from, the drapery: the curved line above the man's head articulates the curve of his skull, the lines which almost touch his ear are continued in the man's right shoulder, the extreme left edge of the drape is picked up by the contour

of the man's right sleeve against his coat. At the same time, the strongly articulated, broken contour that surrounds the man pulls him away from this background and sets him squarely in the intermundia. The monumentality of this figure, looming so large in the canvas yet entirely indifferent to his setting, has all the trappings of a god: the line above his head indicates a halo and the one that emanates into his ear turns him into a St. Gregory, a receiver of some divine annunciation from out of the void. The drapery, in addition to containing the swerving lines, metaphorically binds the declination of atoms to the idea of contingency. The carpet, symbolically, is an image of contingency; its threads, woven together, present the classic image of the weaving of fate; its decorated surface, and patterning, images the veil of appearance begun at the initial collision of the atoms, and perpetuating itself through inexorable causality. The meaningless sensuous particularity of sheer decoration presents the perfect foil for the reposed detachment and indifference of the man, who, in turn, melancholically looks upon the world's course as a mere concatenation of particularities without depth.

The "Woman in Blue" goes even further in its representation of the swerve, causality and repose. Here the woman, who sits at table covered by a garish and unusual tablecloth, is placed between the foreground and background like the "Woman with the Coffee Pot". Again, we have the declination of the atoms given in the nearly vertical line

of the wall behind her, as well as an imaginative, fantastic space, much like the panels of the "Woman with a Coffee Pot," in the hollow area to the left. The declination of atoms and the symbolization of contingency are, in this painting, separated into the wall and the tablecloth. The strong verticals intersect the body of the woman, who is distinctly detached from both the background and the table by a thick, dynamic contour. In multiple ways, the woman mediates the extremes of background and foreground: although the table phantasmagorically stretches and transforms into the background behind the woman's resting arm, the arm itself connects the tabletop to the background. Across the woman's body diagonally, the garish tablecloth and the hollowed-out space behind and to the left of the woman have an affinity with one another. If we see this void as a space of imaginative aesthetic projection, like the panels in the "Woman with a Coffee Pot", then the tablecloth, which acts as a palette in the previous picture, is actualized as color, the pure material of painting. In fact, this tablecloth is balanced between two distinct orders: on one hand it is clearly legible as a table covered by a tablecloth. Although it is typically distorted by its curve in the back and an odd sloping forward in front, in terms of its phenomenality, the table and cloth are relatively solid and legible as specific, identifiable objects existing in space alongside others. On the other hand, it presents a

site for Cézanne to revel in the sheer material of paint, to present explosive decoration and color.

If the "Woman in Blue" emphasizes the tablecloth's phenomenality, the same tablecloth, as painted in the "Young Italian Girl" emphasizes its materiality. Here the girl leans on something much less solid and identifiable as a specific object in space. In a discussion in front of the painting, the suggestion was put forth that the girl is leaning on the back of a small couch, or chair. Although I do not agree with this interpretation, it clearly shows that the legibility of the cloth is far less clear as compared with the other canvas. The "Young Italian Girl" seems to emphasize the sheer sensuous particularity of materiality, over some easily legible, stable phenomenal system of organization. Where the "Woman in Blue" securely supports her weight, the "Young Italian Girl" rests her body in a less secure fashion. For all the weight and solidity of her body, especially in the clearly articulated head which rests on her right arm, the limbs don't actually appear to press down on this tablecloth. Whether we look at her rubbery flipper of a left hand, which rests on the already obscured edge of the tablecloth, or at the right elbow, obscured by the bizarre union of her white shirt and the pattern of the tablecloth, there is no easy way to imagine how this girl sits in space. She exists in the intermundia, but here with a difference: instead of placing the figure squarely in the front and using a thick contour to set it off from the

background, the "Italian Girl" is ostensibly interacting with her surroundings, like the "Woman in Blue" and the "Woman with a Coffee Pot". But, unlike those two pictures, the "Italian Girl" is not placed between foreground and background, rather, she looms so monumentally inside the frame that she begins to overshadow both the foreground and background, forcing the wall behind her to barely contain her figure and crushing the table into a mass of decoration. If the phenomenal ordering is reduced in order to emphasize the inexorable particularity of the tablecloth's materiality, then we find the same trouble in the body of the girl. How exactly are we to understand the blue mass of the girl's skirt, or the large hump of fabric on her back in relation to the tiny frame of the girl's torso? The typical sitting/standing posture of Cézanne's portraits is even harder to distinguish here, considering we are given what could be the tiny back of a chair behind the girl but no sense at all of where her legs might be in space. Although the "Italian Girl" absorbs so much more room than the "Woman in Blue" - both canvases are almost identical in size (35 3/8 in. X 28 3/4 in. vs. 36 1/4 in. X 28 3/4 in.) - the girl is much less self-absorbed in her expression. She seems to look on at something outside the canvas as a melancholic observer rather than a vacant participant. Her glance emanates from out of her large eyes like the icy blue coloring that emanates from the contours of her face. Can it be possible that this Italian girl, fixed in her posture of

repose and filled with ataraxy, looks on at the procession of appearances with a melancholic glance? Feeling the contours of contingency and literally resting upon a foundation of sheer materiality, could she be the emblem of an ethics of counteractive resignation?

There must, obviously, be an objection to this kind of description: has all this talk of Epicureanism led us merely to this - to an iconography of Epicureanism in Cézanne? Do I really expect to convince anyone by looking for all the possible instances of Lucretian imagery in these pictures? Of course, the answer is no. But I want to pursue this line of thought a bit further, in hopes that it may lead to a more important conclusion. What I have been identifying here as typically Epicurean icons obviously forces the question of Epicureanism on the painting's content as a kind of thought-experiment. But in moving from the "Woman with the Coffee Pot" to the "Italian Girl" an important transformation has occurred: we have moved from identifying and labeling parts of the canvas as "the void" or "the swerve" to the question of materiality and contingency in painting, and I would argue that this is a move from the level of content to the level of form. If I can be indulged for a few more pages of speculation about Epicurean epistemology, by centering on the question of contingency, I will try to make these considerations bear on a single, crucial feature in Cézanne's system: the contour.

III

...And shall the earth
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?
The sky will be much friendlier than now,
A part of labor and a part of pain,
And next in glory to enduring love,
Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

-- Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning"

Can we possess secure knowledge of a world constructed upon a contingent foundation? Can epistemological claims have any weight in the face of such sublime, and total contingency? Is there a path beyond skepticism without undermining the critical insights that skepticism produces? The philosopher George Santayana wrote *Skepticism and Animal Faith*, in 1923, as an answer to such questions, and as the introduction to a systematic philosophy grounded upon contingency.

Santayana, in a sense much like Badt and Merleau-Ponty, begins with a skeptical critique of belief and convention, to arrive at a *prima philosophia* based on intuition, immediacy and indubitable presence. Intuition, suspending its belief in the actual existence of exterior entities, comes to the conclusion that "nothing given exists."

Santayana argues:

In the critic, as in the painter, suspension of belief and of practical understanding is favorable to vision; the arrested eye renders every image limpid and unequivocal. And this is not merely an effect of physiological compensation, in that perhaps the nervous energy withdrawn from preparations for action is allowed to intensify the process of mere sensation. There ensues, a logical clarification as well; because so long as belief, interpretation, and significance entered in, the object in hand was ambiguous; in seeking

the fact the mind overlooked or confused the datum. (Santayana, 67-68)

For Santayana, "bracketing" belief in the existence of givens produces the logical clarification of entities given in intuition: the "limpid and unequivocal" presence of phenomena. Intuition, unconcerned with the real existence of its objects, is quite happy to deal in data, rather than facts.

Badt and Merleau-Ponty ascribe a similar operation of bracketing and reduction to Cézanne when they try to describe the profound ontological and epistemological project contained in Cézanne's practice. For Badt, solitude is the condition of modern man, and the project of painting depends on the reduction, and clarification, of objects apprehended by the lonely artist: "Cézanne was the only modern artist who experienced loneliness to the ultimate depth and tasted it to the full and so...attained a new insight into the nature of the appearance of objects such as can emanate only from the acceptance of loneliness" (Badt, 144). The true artist experiences the ultimate loneliness, and accepts it, and its deathly consequences, rather than fleeing loneliness by retrenchment into the "business" of "society". Loneliness, for Badt, produces the melancholic gaze that pierces and exposes the contingent relations of the world and its reified temporality; loneliness reduces the world to its meaningful and ontological core, where temporality, and its fatalistic grip on man, becomes the sheer presence and transcendence of Being. Badt illustrates

his concept of the reduction to Being, a trial by fire that progressively reaches its goal, by moving from Impressionism to Van Gogh, and culminating in Cézanne. Recoiling from the ego-destroying threat of solitude,

The impressionists escaped into the shortest period of time that could be experienced, into the moment, which they illuminated and immortalized. They tried to disguise the true nature of time with their cry: 'How beautiful is the shortest moment!' Already Van Gogh could no longer bring himself to do this. His ardent nature pictures, his glowing colors show the world on fire with its own transience and at the same time give voice to his cry of fear at the thought of solitariness. Once Cézanne had successfully passed this most critical stage without either fleeing [i.e., Impressionism] or being afraid [i.e., Van Gogh] and had submitted with resignation, he was no longer filled with fear at the thought of time rolling away, he was liberated from the influence of time and he perceived the timelessness of the world, its deeper independence of all association with time...He had a revelation of the world in a state of timelessness and unchangability, forever existing and preserving itself in existence, and paradoxically enough, he saw it in phenomena which reason had no difficulty in proving to have come into existence and be destined to perish. (Badt, 145)

In sacrificing himself to the essential solitude, Cézanne is able to capture and picture Being. Cézanne illuminates the deep ontological structure of the world, within the midst of the ontically temporal. The presence and transcendence of Being are recovered in the sacrifice to solitude.

For Merleau-Ponty, in his essay "Cézanne's Doubt," a similar achievement occurs. After describing Cézanne's interest in the painting of geometric forms, of the landscape's geological structure, of anatomy and design, Merleau-Ponty writes,

But what motivates the painter's movement can never be simply perspective or geometry or the laws governing color, or, for that matter, particular knowledge. Motivating all the movements from which a picture gradually emerges there can only be one thing: the landscape in its totality and in its absolute fullness, precisely what Cézanne called a 'motif'. (Merleau-Ponty, 17)

What leads Cézanne to the core of his painting, to the totality and fullness of the motif, is the bracketing of "particular knowledge". Merleau-Ponty elaborates on this theme:

The task before him was, first to forget all he had ever learned from science and second, through these sciences to recapture the structure of the landscape as an emerging organism. To do this, all the partial views must be welded together; all that the eye's versatility disperses must be reunited; one must, as Gasquet put it, "join the wandering hands of nature." (Merleau-Ponty, 17).

In opposition to mere science, Merleau-Ponty posits Cézanne's "intuitive science."

Both Merleau-Ponty and Badt share a three-part schema of sacrifice and recovery: for Badt, 1) the subject in the grip of ontic temporality, 2) sacrifices himself to solitude in order to, 3) recover and picture ontological Being in the midst of the ontic. For Merleau-Ponty, 1) science, as "particular knowledge", 2) is sacrificed to the intuition of "totality and absolute fullness", also called the "motif", and 3) recovered and reconstructed via a new science, now "intuitive". The landscape is reconstructed "all at once" in its fullness and plenitude. Merleau-Ponty describes this final step as such:

Forgetting the viscous, equivocal appearances, we go through them straight to the things they

present. The painter recaptures and converts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearance which is the cradle of things. Only one emotion is possible for this painter -- the feeling of strangeness -- and only one lyricism -- that of the continual rebirth of existence." (Merleau-Ponty, 18)

Like Badt's three-part schema, Merleau-Ponty believes that the recovery of the "vibration of appearance", or what is elsewhere called "primordial perception", captures the fullness and plenitude of the ontology of objects. The feelings associated with this ontology, buried deep in the subject, are revealed in Cézanne's strange lyricism. In both Badt and Merleau-Ponty, atemporal, ontological Being is revealed as the fundamental truth-content of Cézanne's practice. Painting is an investigation of the deep ontological structure of the world as it is experienced by human subjects.

Is the immediacy of primordial perception, or solitude, absolutely and ontologically certain? Is Cézanne's practice really a sort of grim existential celebration of the sheer presence of Being, shining forth in the midst of an arbitrary, contingent, particular, and ontical world? Santayana gives us a slightly different conception of the world: a naturalism to counteract the existentialism of Badt and Merleau-Ponty. Although Santayana goes through a process of reduction and bracketing to arrive at the realm of intuition (where every image is "limpid and unequivocal"), intuition is only the particular, immediate, subjective

absorption in contingency phenomena of the world motivated by the interests of the "animal subject". In his conception of the relation of intuition and essence, Santayana describes a naturalist epistemology without the recuperating presence as the ontological foundation.

Clear and unequivocal intuition of things comes only at the apex of scepticism:

It was the fear of illusion that originally disquieted the honest mind, congenitally dogmatic, and drove it in the direction of skepticism; and it may find three ways, not equally satisfying to its honesty, in which that fear of illusion may be dispelled. One is death, in which illusion vanishes and is forgotten; but although anxiety about error, and ever positive error, are thus destroyed, no solution is offered to the previous doubt: no explanation of what could have called forth that illusion of what could have dissipated it. Another way out is by correcting the error, and substituting a new belief for it: but while in animal life this is the satisfying solution, and the old habit of dogmatism may be resumed in consequence without practical inconvenience, speculatively the case is not as all advanced; because no criterion of truth is afforded except custom, comfort, and the accidental absence of doubt; and what is absent by chance may return at any time unbidden. The third way, at which I have now arrived, is to entertain the illusion without succumbing to it, accepting it openly as an illusion, and forbidding it to claim any sort of being but that which it obviously has; and then, whether it profits me or not, it will not deceive me. (Santayana, 72-73)

What we hold before us is the realm of intuition: by suspending all judgements and presuppositions regarding objects in the world, openly entertaining the illusion as an illusion, we arrive at intuitions that can be posited no exterior existence beyond the sheer immediacy with which they present themselves to us. They cannot be said to exist

nor not to exist; they are wholly particular, lucid and unequivocal; they are wholly subjective and unable to be shared; they without significance for the claims of "transitive knowledge"; they are entirely "surface".

The sceptic, then, as a consequence of carrying his scepticism to the greatest lengths, finds himself in the presence of more luminous and less equivocal objects than does the working and believing mind; only these objects are without meaning, they are only what they are obviously, all surface. They show him everything thinkable with the greatest clearness and force; but he can no longer imagine that he sees in the these objects anything save their instant presence and the face-value. Scepticism therefore suspends all knowledge worthy of the name, all that transitive and presumptive knowledge of facts which is a form of belief; and instead it bestows intuition of ideas, contemplative, aesthetic, dialectical, arbitrary. (Santayana, 70)

The painting of pure presence, for Santayana, would be merely the representation of a chain of disconnected sensuous particulars, arbitrary and contingent, without relation to one another and without significance as a whole. In the realm of intuition there can only be a series of particular intuitions that follow one another, each replacing the last without connection and each being only present and then vanishing without a trace - esse est percipi. The presence of particulars in intuition cannot guarantee their transcendence into Being. But the presence of particulars, when skepticism has touched bottom, rests in the indubitability of intuition. When intuition is entertained merely as intuition, as surface, and as appearance, then,

The unintelligible accident of existence will cease to appear to lurk in this manifest being, weighting and crowding it, and threatening it with being swallowed up by nondescript neighbours. It will appear dwelling in its own world, and shining by its own light, however brief may be my glimpse of it: for no date will be written on it, no frame full or of empty time will shut it; nothing in it will be addressed to me, nor suggestive of any spectator. It will seem an event in no world, an incident in no experience. The quality of it will have ceased to exist: it will be merely the quality which it inherently, logically and inalienably is. It will be an ESSENCE. (Santayana, 74)

Essences, for Santayana, are the fixing of intuitions in memory and cognition; they are the particles used in transitory knowledge. In order to rebuild the edifice of the world upon a foundation of merely present particulars, essences, holding fast to these particulars, become the particles from which the chain of transitive knowledge is constructed.

I anticipate the next question: after critiquing Badt and Merleau-Ponty for their sacrifice of particularity in order to recuperate Being, why is the realm of essence not just another recovery of universal knowledge, based on sacrifice of particular knowledge to ultimate skepticism? The difference is this: if intuitions are merely indubitable particulars that are wholly arbitrary, contingent, and interested, then the realm of essence, built on these intuitions, supports no universal cognitive claims, and acknowledges its contingent foundation. Furthermore, the connections formed within the realm of essence know themselves to be merely arbitrary, instrumental tools for

conceptualizing with the world. The "transcendence" of the realm of intuition to the realm of essence is founded upon the "animal faith" of a subject, who is interested in the world, constantly altering and manipulating its conceptualizations to accommodate and assimilate the shocks and ruptures of the world.

Of course, the choice and the interest of essences come entirely from the bent of the animal that elicits the vision of them from his own soul and it adventures; and nothing but affinity with my animal life lends the essences I am able to discern their moral colour, so that to my mind they are beautiful, horrible, trivial or vulgar. The good essences are such as accompany and express a good life. In them, whether good or bad, that life has its eternity. Certainly when I cease to exist and think, I shall lose hold on this assurance; but the theme in which for a moment I found the fulfillment of my expressive impulses will remain, as it always was, a theme fit for consideration, even if no one else should consider it, and I should never consider it again.
(Santayana, 76)

Built on the foundation of the wholly contingent, immediate, inner-subjective, interested particulars of the realm of intuition, essence projected and constructed the faithful extension of these particulars into abstract mediation, utility, and transitive knowledge: in other words, the "surface" of the realm of intuition is extended into the "depth" of the realm of essence. This move initiates the process of filling out a philosophy which Santayana calls Naturalism.

Naturalism is a philosophy of observation, and of an imagination that extends the observable: all the sights and sounds of nature enter into it, and led it their directness, pungency, and coercive stress. At the same time, naturalism is an

intellectual philosophy; it divines substance behind appearance, continuity behind change, law behind fortune. It therefore attaches all those sights and sounds to a hidden background that connects and explains them. So understood, nature has depth as well as surface, force and necessity as well as sensuous variety. (Santayana, *Three Philosophical Poets*, 38-39)

Here is the crux: where Santayana clearly demarcates the realm of intuition from the realm of essence, arguing for the persistence of the contingent, and interested particular within transitive knowledge, holding the two realms in a tense, static and dualistic relation to one another, Merleau-Ponty and Badt conflate the two, collapsing of intuition's immediacy with essence's permanence, and promoting the virtues of preservation in existence, and intuitive science.

In contrast to Badt and Merleau-Ponty's, accounts of Cézanne's practice, Santayana's naturalism enhances more recent accounts of Cézanne's practice that center around the restitution of allegory in aesthetics through an analysis of artworks in terms of their phenomenality and materiality. "Surface" and "depth", which align with the realm of intuition and the realm of essence, are also Santayana's terms for materiality and phenomenality: materiality here understood as the concatenation of wholly immediate sensuous particulars upon which the world of transitive phenomenal relations are built. These relations mediate the material order and give it meaning, they are the archetypes built upon inscriptive materiality.

As Paul de Man has argued, the attempt to produce the symbol, which identifies the phenomenality of meaning with the materiality of stuff, produces a continual allegorical "flight and return" (de Man, 159): phenomenality, never quite able to totalize and dominate its material counterpart, will produce continually attempts to circumscribe its other, and produce the transformation of quantity into quality, texture into structure. The repetition of this flight and return can be read as the allegorical narrative of the ever-frustrated attempt at domination. For Cézanne criticism, the stakes of the game are such: we can understand the doubleness produced by Cézanne's pictures in two nearly identical yet fundamentally different manners. 1) The attempts by Badt and Merleau-Ponty to argue for the permanence of immediacy can only account for the contradictions in Cézanne's practice through the temporality of the *all-at-once*. The flight and return between phenomenality and materiality is forcibly halted in the contradictory descriptions *intuitive science*, or *preservation in existence*. These terms are intended to embody doubleness all-at-once, in a single blow, by combining the contradictory orders of "intuition" with "science" or "preservation" with "existence." 2) On the other hand, the Epicurean "both/and" is a denial of the necessity of the all-at-once, presenting the vicissitudes of doubleness in a different manner. Instead of forcing the union of immediacy and mediation, Epicureanism distinctly

divides intuition and essence, materiality and phenomenality into two non-identical realms; neither immediacy nor mediation is denied, rather the relation between the two is explicitly thematized. An ordered system of relations is built faithfully upon the foundation of immediate, and meaningless, sensuous particulars, which derive their value solely from the arbitrary interest of the subject. Moreover, the sensuous particulars take on none of the meaningful weight of materiality, the force of the letter, unless a system of phenomenal relations has already been structured. Epicurean ethics tries to translate this epistemological position into a physical comportment, by acknowledging the continual pulsation of these two non-identical realms. Cézanne's practice of painting, with its deeply positivist commitment to the investigation of objects, at its very best captures explicitly this knowledge and resigned ataraxy towards the world.

In a brilliant description of contour in Cézanne's "Compotier", Roger Fry shows exactly how difficult it can be to distinguish between the symbolic "all at once" and the allegorical pulsation of "flight and return". The contour, representing a series of planes so extremely foreshortened so as to be "reduced to a line," causes a "certain anxiety":

The plane which has no extension on the surface of the canvas has yet to suggest its full extension in the picture-space. It is upon that that the complete recession, the rotundity and volume of the form depends. The very fact that this edge of the object often appears with an exceptional clearness complicates matters by bringing the eye

back, as it were, to the surface of the canvas.
(Fry, 50)

The contour is exactly the location where the various orders must come together - where the clear edge of a object, emphasizing the literal surface of the canvas, pushes itself back into the picture-space to create depth. We are trapped between the articulation and continuity of objects, and the contour must act as the transcendent principle of both surface and depth. To say it is the cause of a "certain anxiety" is the understatement of the year.

For the pure Impressionists this question of the contour was not so insistent. Preoccupied as they were by the visual weft, contour had no special meaning for them; it was defined more or less - often vaguely - by the sum of the indications of tone. But for Cézanne, with his intellectual vigor, his passion for lucid articulation and solid construction, it became an obsession. (Fry, 50)

To reconstruct and articulate the realm of essence, and its foundation upon the visual weft of intuition, is precisely Cézanne's theme; the entire question of an Epicurean painting rests upon exactly how far this double articulation goes. Fry continues:

He actually draws the contour with his brush, generally in a bluish-grey. Naturally the curvature of this line is sharply contrasted with his parallel hatchings, and arrests the eye too much. He then returns upon it incessantly by repeated hatchings which gradually heap up round the contour to a great thickness. The contour is continually being lost and then recovered again.
(Fry, 50)

Here Fry has reached the pulsation of allegory. Its "flight and return" is explicitly characterized: we read the allegorical narrative of the "loss and recovery" of

phenomenality, continually trying to circumscribe materiality, in the pile-up of paint at Cézanne's contours. This allegorical pulsation is experienced visually in front of the painting:

At first sight the volumes and contours declare themselves boldly to the eye. They are of a surprising simplicity, and are clearly apprehended. But the more one looks the more they elude any precise definition. The apparent continuity of the contour is illusory, for it changes in quality throughout each particle of its length. There is no uniformity in the tracing of its smallest curve. (Fry, 51)

The smallest negotiations of painting are a struggle between continuity and articulation, between surface and depth, between contingency and permanence, continually played out between material and phenomenal orders. At their best, Cézanne's paintings, articulate the inability of the phenomenal order to phenomenalize materiality. They arrive at the uneasy position of affirming a strange Epicurean "both/and": painting is both the re-construction of a clearly apprehended world, and the acknowledgement of this world's contingent foundation. If Fry were only to stop here in his description we might too call him an Epicurean but, like Badt and Merleau-Ponty, recoils from his own observation of allegorical flight and re-entrenches himself back in the comfortable world of the symbol:

By reason of these incessant affirmations and contradictions similar results follow from quite different conditions. We thus get *at once* the notion of extreme simplicity in the general result and of infinite variety in every part...In spite of the austerity of the forms, all is vibration and movement." (Fry, 51)

The simultaneity of austerity and variety seen together, one shot through with the other, contradicts Fry's own allegorical description of the alternation and pulsation of continuity and change. But we cannot blame Fry too much; even Cézanne has trouble maintaining the difficult task of keeping the realm of intuition distinct from the realm of essence.

Comparing Badt's beloved "Woman with a Rosary" with the "Italian Girl" reveals the difficulty of this task. The former presents a completely closed phenomenal system of signification that goes so far as to recuperate its own materiality in the name of metaphor. Badt's description of a woman who holds herself at the pregnant moment between the travails and mutilations of the past, and the impending resignation towards death, is embodied in her hands, which clutch at the rosary, pulling it in two opposite directions. Her blue dress, forming an arrow-head points to the spot where the rosary binds together the forces of the contingent world and deathly temporality into an icon of permanence and presence. Her posture is hunched over, a thick black smear of paint pressing down on her back and neck. It verges on overwhelming her tiny frame and foreshadows her impending, unassailable fate. She sinks into the background, which shares the same palette as her upper body, with only her head and hand struggling against the succumbing to death. But even within this head the lineaments of death are visible: her headdress is the color of bleached bone, her

vacant eyes are like the hollows of a skull and the emaciated skin reveals a death's head underneath. Even the build-up of paint around her head and hands becomes a metaphor in this picture: the dab of paint is pulled back into the phenomenal order, metaphORIZING her furrowed and weathered old age, signifying death. The system of signification is unstoppable. It ruthlessly surpresses any possible rupture of pure material inscription. Badt is correct when he says:

Completely prisoner of her solitude, this woman represents what is permanent and eternal; a human being who is more than a human being because, believing in her loneliness, she experiences her ultimate union with God. This woman is not obsessed by the dissolution of her life; she obsesses us by the mystical withdrawal which is snatching her away from all that is temporal.

Badt correctly interprets this picture a symbol.

But the "Young Italian Girl" is another story. This painting functions along the lines of the denial of disjunctive judgement: never has there been such a determinate fixing of the parts of a painting into their specific and articulated positions, yet never has the relation of these parts been more problematized. In front of the canvas, we move from the extremes of the phenomenal ordering of the realm of essence (as we totalize and force the painting into perspectival and recognitive structures), to the concatenation of the sensuous material particulars of the realm of intuition (as we focus in on the unrecognizable masses and shapes in the tablecloth), and back again. Never has the contour with its emanating blue, to paraphrase

Hegel's remark on allegory, been more "icy and cold". If Badt's "Old Woman with a Rosary" is a thinly veiled disguise for Cézanne, the lonely artist heroically resigned to be the master of death, the "Young Italian Girl" presents the other side of this mask: a figure reposed and in the state of ataraxy, filled with the melancholy tranquility of a knowledge both committed to totalized recognition of the world, and the contingent foundation of knowledge's own project.



Old Woman with a Rosary



Oslo "Seated Man"



Man with Crossed Arms



Woman with a Coffee Pot



Woman in Blue



Young Italian Girl

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