Two Notions of Vulnerable and Intensely Affected Body: Gilles Deleuze and Alphonso Lingis

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Summary. Two different approaches towards Francis Bacon’s painting are analysed in the article: postmodern and phenomenological. The problematic and multiple status of such concepts as sensitive body, intensive sensation and the affect common for both Gilles Deleuze’s and Alphonso Lingis’ philosophy become most visible in regard to Bacon’s painting that displays the reality of the vulnerable and intensely affected body as his main subject. The article follows the main intrigue which inspires their studies, i.e. the article aims to explain what determines the suggestibility of Bacon’s canvas: is there the violence of line and colour, which negates the role of figuration (Deleuze) or the violence of life, that on the contrary, affirms representation (Lingis)? The author maintains that such different interpretations are determined by different notions of experience. Lingis emphasizes actual experience which allows to find the link between creation, lived body and life world, while Deleuze stresses virtual experience, impersonal life, body without organs and creation of new perspectives.

Keywords: Bacon, body, figure, sensation, phenomenology, experience, violence.
Alphonso Lingis: from Embodied Subjectivity towards the Plastic or Transgressive Body

The challenge to Deleuze’s experimental study of Bacon’s painting was posed by the Lithuanian-American phenomenologist Alphonso Lingis (b. 1933). Despite his attention to the concept of sensation being freed from the perception, the experimental and nomadic style of philosophizing, which at first sight makes him very close to Deleuze, Lingis questions the Deleuzian approach in his text *Concepts and Colours* (2014). It appears to him as too formal and reductive, ignoring a lot of real aspects and circumstances of Bacon’s creation. Contrary to Deleuze, who emphasizes the significance of listening of what a painter is saying (“We do not listen closely enough to what painters have to say” [Deleuze, 2003, 99]), Lingis offers to invoke only the painter’s oeuvre (“the reader finds Deleuze’s account of Bacon’s paintings tamer than Bacon’s paintings when he or she turns to them” [Lingis, 2014, 89]). According to him, conceptual constructions, in this case the concepts created by Deleuze, construct our experience rather than let us capture what really follows from the essence of things. Lingis does not directly offer a new study on Bacon’s painting. On the contrary, he raises controversial questions and presuppositions that invite us to rethink or rather confirm anew some outcomes of Deleuze’s research (Lingis, 2014).

An American philosopher of Lithuanian origin, Alphonso Lingis substantially oversteps and expands the limits of classical phenomenology. When he started from the translations of Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s books, Lingis developed an original approach towards problems of classical philosophy and phenomenology. He does not only have an academic attitude, but is one of these rare philosophers who directly involve themselves in the process of understanding the world and the cognition thereof. Deleuze disliked travelling and agreed to do so only for academic purposes. On the contrary, Lingis travels around different most exotic regions of the world till now: Kenya, Madagascar, Peru, Papua-New Guinea, India, Nepal, Mali, Brazil and others, not only risking his own health and life, but also the identity of a Westerner. Experiments of the openness to otherness are reflected in his poetic texts that are full of rich experiences. His first book *Excesses: Eros and Culture* (1982), in which he introduces a critique of the main ideas of Western philosophy and culture, is conditioned by a deep impression after seeing the sculptures of the Kajurah temple in Northern India. To Lingis (1983) it reveals the meaning of the cosmic erotica

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1 The main aspects of this approach were investigated in the article “Alternative Overcoming of Representation: F. Bacon, G. Deleuze” (Laura Junutytė) in *Man and the Word*, Nr. 4, Vol. 16, 2014.

beyond any demand of expedience, sexual reproduction and sublimation. Exploring this idea in his later books of a more academic style, *Libido: The French Existential Theories* (1985), *Phenomenological Explanations* (1986), and *The Imperative* (1998), Lingis presents an alternative for the holistic principles of Western philosophy. These books, like all Lingis’ subsequent intellectual trajectories, that are reflected in the monographs *Sensation: Intelligibility in Sensibility* (1995), *Dangerous Emotions* (1999), *Body Transformations* (2005), *Violence and Splendor* (2008), and others, are mostly influenced by the presuppositions of Levinas’ and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology (the translations had an impact) and the experiences of his travels. Lingis absorbed the concepts of otherness [*altérité*] and responsibility [*responsibilité*] from Levinas’ philosophy and extended it passing from the Other as a person toward the Other as an animal, a plant or even a formation of nonorganic matter. The encounter that breaks up the limits of our closed ego is possible with whatever thing of the surrounding world that emits a sensually experienced meaning of its material being. In this respect, Lingis appears very close to Deleuze and to his concept of encounter that he developed for the reason that the concept of the fold [*le pli*] in Deleuze’s writings reveals not only the problem of the subjectivity as an effect of the interiority folded on the surface, but also an absence of any transcendental distinction between organic and nonorganic matter. Lingis is grateful to Merleau-Ponty for the concepts of sensation and lived body that is the condition for experiencing the sensual world. In Deleuze’s philosophy, the life world and lived body are strictly rejected, yet Lingis in this case noticeably extends the limits of these concepts as well as of the classical phenomenology. In Lingis’ philosophy, the embodied subjectivity and the lived body become the plastic or transgressive body that admits not only the sedimentary cultural meanings but also the unrecognizable and exceeding forces – the signs, which do not have any discursive meaning but witness the most intensive being instead. In this way, Lingis trespasses Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception as he emphasizes the autonomy of the sensual experience. In his book *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (2005), Graham Harman, one of the main developers of speculative realism, presenting Lingis, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty as three carnal phenomenologists, insists that Lingis is a unique exception as he seems to be the only phenomenologist who gives importance to the material, which is freed from human consciousness. According to the author, the way Lingis trespasses Levinasian understanding of the imperative and Merleau-Ponty’s concept of flesh is best seen from Lingis’ concept of the levels of the world, which is developed in the book *The Imperative* (1998). “What is most characteristic of Lingis’ levels is that they are not a feature of human perception that follows us around wherever we go, but a feature of reality itself. The human being merely explores them, without being responsible for generating them” (Harman, 2005, 67). In his article *Bodies in Transit: Plastic Subject of Alphonso Lingis* (2007), Tom Sparrow, a professor at Duquesne University where Lingis also taught, maintains that Lingis develops a phenomenology of sensation “combining
rich philosophical training with an extensive travel itinerary” (Sparrow, 2007, 99). To his mind, we can treat Lingis as a post-phenomenologist as much as he develops the concept of sensation in the framework of ontology. The author sees certain similarities between Lingis’ and Deleuze’s philosophy. As much as Lingis is “a phenomenologist of the sensitive body, the materiality of subjectivity, and the disarming effects of travel” (Sparrow, 2007, 100), he is very close to Deleuze and to the principles of his nomadic and experimental philosophy. There is no clear evidence that Lingis and Deleuze (when the latter was still alive) could ever have met each other face to face or in the intellectual space. But to Sparrow’s mind, under the unconfirmed information that comes from the lips of students, “Deleuze was a secret admirer of Lingis” (Sparrow, 2007, 100). However, this fact is impossible to be directly detected in his texts or in his speech.

Lingis Contra Deleuze

Lingis reacted to Deleuze. The first occurrence appears in the text **Defenestration**³, which was presented in the “Deleuze Conference on Media and Movement” at the University of Berkeley, California (USA) in 2006, and the second – in the text **Concepts and Colours** (2014), where Lingis questions Deleuze’s concept of the sensation that was applied investigating Bacon’s painting in the book **Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation** (1981). It is not surprising that the problematic and multiple status of such concepts as sensitive body, intensive sensation and affect become mostly visible in relation to Bacon’s painting, as his main subject displays the reality of the vulnerable and intensely affected body. At the beginning of the text, Lingis talks about concepts and presuppositions that come from the volumes **Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus** (1972) and **A Thousand Plateaus** (1980), written by Deleuze and Guattari, and that enable the understanding of Bacon’s painting as revealing “that we experience our environment as a field of chaotic intensive forces and, secondly, the notion of different states of the body” (Lingis, 2014, 83). Lingis agrees that the subject of Bacon’s painting discussed by Deleuze – the meat descending from the bones and the bodies deformed and mutilated by various forces – has a really very immediate impact on our nervous sensibility, especially as they reveal that there are “states of the body that we share” (Lingis, 2014, 85). Deleuze points very clearly that this sensibility is not qualitative – the colour, the odour, tension, pleasure, pain, but rather quantitative: sensation is intensive and in the infinite movement that Deleuze explores by invoking the concept of rhythm. What is invisible and qualitatively untouchable acquires consistency through the modulation of colour and the manipulation of chance. Chaos is harnessed and it is

made sensible by invoking the intensity of the line and the colour that namely creates a sensation of a haptic space. Therefore, when Deleuze talks about the violence inherent in Bacon’s painting, this is not the violence of the represented object or what can come from our relation with the life world, but rather the violence and intensity of the line and the colour itself that constitute the Figure as a fact. Lingis does not negate the fact that Bacon’s modulations of colour are really very suggestible and “everyone is fascinated, captivated by the brilliance, the gorgeousness of his colours, for example, in his portraits” (Lingis, 2014, 88). But is it enough to state that the suggestibility of the sensation that is related to Bacon himself, with the aim to “unlock the valves of feeling and therefore return the onlooker to life more violently” (Sylvester, 1987, 17), lies in the intensity of the colour and line and in the haptic vision that is created by the means of the latter? How can something non-representable become visible and affect our nervous system? Lingis remains sceptical about all the conceptual constructions through which Deleuze, appealing to the process of creation, seeks to explain the source of suggestibility.

A common problem among the arts “is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces. For this reason, no art is figurative”, says Deleuze (Deleuze, 2003, 56). However, according to Lingis, Bacon first and foremost is a figurative painter. Contrary to the majority of painters of that time, mostly abstractionists, Bacon painted human bodies and faces, animals, furniture, details of the interior and others, everything that despite a certain degree of deformation and abstraction was recognizable. As the central participants of the canvas, they exposed their own reality that was always preserved through the contour.

According to Deleuze, the Figure necessitates for the force to be exerted on it. The force is the condition of experiencing sensation. Invisible in itself, it becomes captured and attains a certain consistency through the Figure that sustains it. Precisely capturing it this way guarantees the demanded sensation rather than recognition of the Figure or the possibility to relate it to the contents of the actually experienced world. Nevertheless, Lingis sees totally different things in Bacon’s painting, namely that the factor of figuration is very strong in it. Lingis writes: “He (Bacon – L. G.) believed that figures of human bodies were essential to produce maximum effect” (Lingis, 2014, 89). And Deleuze “takes seriously, literally, Bacon’s assertion that his paintings illustrate and narrate nothing, mean nothing” (Lingis, 2014, 89). First of all, according to Lingis, figures in Bacon’s painting are recognizable. We can see if there is a man or a woman, a human or an animal. We recognize moods, expressions, postures, and parts of the body. Deleuze once stated that despite their grotesque character deformed in various ways, Bacon’s figures reveal “the most natural postures of our body” (Deleuze, 2003, 59). Lingis notices that painting screaming monkeys, slinking dogs, owls, elephants or setting a pig’s head on a human body in his painting, Bacon was seeking not to open up the reality of becoming an animal, as Deleuze stated, but to capture, to fix “these
recognizable styles and rhythms of movements typical of other species” (Lingis, 2014, 90).

Photography plays a very big role in Bacon’s painting. Having a position that pictures suggest more than represent, he was looking for inspiration from the works of Eadweard Muybridge. Usually there are fixed movements of a naked human body in various situations: two men wrestling, performing gymnastic exercises, a repenting child, etc. It is not only that the painted bodies, postures and motions are recognizable.

Lingis emphasizes that Bacon mostly painted not anonymous persons, but actually the persons he knew: friends, lovers, colleagues, and it is possible to recognize all of them. Moreover, Bacon did not avoid naming them: Portrait of George Dyer Riding a Bicycle (1966), Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne Standing in a Street of Soho (1967), Study of Henrietta Moraes Laughing (1969), Portrait of Michel Leiris (1976), etc., and a lot of self-portraits. As a matter of fact, Bacon most often painted not from the direct impression (because he hated somebody staying in his studio) but rather from the pictures of these persons or from his own memories. The significance of a particular person testifies Bacon’s choice to paint a series of popes under the portrait Pope Innocent X, which was “depicted by Velasquez with singular austerity, assurance and ruthlessness”; as an individual “he also functions in an ecclesiastical and political institutional machinery and in a certain conjunction of European history. That it is this pope who is screaming conveys a supplement of violence to the painting” (Lingis, 2014, 89–90). It seems that particular individuals that were painted lacked identity and assumed grotesque features, yet the real purpose of Bacon was to attain resemblance: “there’s no point in doing the portrait of somebody if you’re not going to make it look like him” (Sylvester, 1987, 146). For Bacon, resemblance was not a specific feature that should be transferred to the canvas with great precision, but rather the pulsation and emanation of that particular person.

An attempt to capture the expression of a particular individual is characteristic to Lingis. During his travels, once Lingis started to capture portraits of the people he saw or met in these countries with a camera. At first he did it very reservedly because it seemed for him that pointing a camera at people was something “invasive and objectifying” (Lingis, 2010, 5). Later he saw that taking a picture of those pure people from faraway countries, where many of them had never seen a camera in their lives, or never could get on the list of people worthy of being captured, made them happy and provided them with honour and appreciation. After many years he came back to those photographs and was astonished that he remembered all those people, places and circumstances. “I am dumbfounded that these people from so far away, many of them now dead, continue to face me, with their joy and grief, wisdom and bewilderment, questioning and trust. How pure my life now would be without them” (Lingis, 2010, 5), writes Lingis in the preface of Contact (2010), the album of these photographs. According to him, those photographs are their preserved emanations. The core of reality is captured in these photographs what is considered as ‘the given’
in science. Contrary to scientific propositions, ‘the given’ does not suggest the inert being available to our manipulations and usage. ‘The given’ is lively, expressive and actively giving of itself. People who are captured in photographs even “deliberately control how they look, they are emanating from themselves perceptible materializations of themselves in all directions, without conscious intention of purpose, gratuitously” (Lingis, 2010, 5). While they live and act, human beings actively send signs of their existence – expressions without any discursively understandable meaning and purpose. When their vital powers are exhausted, they die but life in this case is inseparable from death. Their images, even though they are not here anymore, still affect our sensibility. “To sense something is to be sensitive to something, to feel contact with it, to be affected by it”, writes he in Phenomenological Explanations (Lingis, 1986, 59).

His concept of contact is very similar to the concept of encounter by Deleuze. At the moment of contact, we encounter something, the meaning of which we are not able to open discursively, which overwhelsms our powers, but mainly which affects our subjectivity in a very intense way, as well as constitutes and enriches it. In Lingis, the concept of contact was born under the influence of Levinas’ philosophy. Levinas wrote about encountering the other Face, which is “signification, and signification without context” (Levinas, 1992, 86). However, “Lingis has replaced Levinas’ radical otherness with a radical immanence, but without giving up the exigencies of responsibility” (Sparrow, 2007, 111). In Lingis’ philosophy, radical immanence emerges as the supreme sensibility for the substantiality and materiality of others (man, animal, plant, stone or any other thing). “To sense is to sense the substantial” (Lingis, 1986, 67). Thus, Lingis breaks with phenomenology as he affirms the existence of objective reality independent from our consciousness or the meanings provided by it. The only place where we can see a clear difference between Lingis and Deleuze – this materiality or substantiality – is individualized and affects us through particular expression. These are not de-individualizing forces: they appear in a saturated way through the phenomenon which, even though it does not convey any discursively understandable meaning, affects us and obliges us. We see a stone resting silently in the field, a soughing tree, a roe running frightfully through the forest, we feel the touch of the fallen leaf on us – everything is a sign meaningless in itself, but which assumes its meaning mainly through the intensity and suggestibility of sensation.

It seems that Lingis wants to say that Bacon was very sensitive to the emanations of all of those people and things he had ever met and seen in his life. And he tried to capture them, to strengthen their reality and substantiality as the intensity of the

Deleuze is also a philosopher of radical immanence and this is manifested in all his books written alone or together with Guattari. If we compare him with Lingis, they both give priority to naturalism and materiality, to the inhuman, but Deleuze completely abandons the phenomenological and ethical attitude towards reality, while in Lingis it remains the most important feature.
sensation. It is very important that Bacon painted in series. There are a series of 45 screaming popes, a separate series of portraits (20 of Lucian Freud and 24 of Henriet Moraes), a series of self-portraits, and a series of crucifixions. One can state that Bacon did this in order to paint the chosen object in a more suggestive way. Yet, there could be the moment of contact – even nine years after his beloved George Dyer’s suicide Bacon still painted his portraits. The moment of repetition (refrain, ritournelle) does not only appear in respect to Bacon’s works – Bacon also repeated the history of art. The motif of meat carcasses is taken from the paintings of Harmenszoon van Rijn Rembrandt and Chiam Soutine, though Bacon was as well directly affected in the butcher’s shop. The series of popes came from admiring Velázquez’s portrait Pope Innocent X (1653), which was considered as the greatest portrait in art history by Bacon. The scream that Bacon was mostly obsessed with painting came from Nicola Poussin’s Massacre of the Innocents (1628).

Bacon looked for inspiration and suggestive models not only from the creation of the past, but also from the cinema. He was amazed by the shot of the screaming nanny from Sergei Eisenstein’s movie Battleship Potemkin (1925). Painting in series was also characteristic of French postimpressionist Cézanne who painted apples, pots, and the same landscapes. Bacon was recording other things in series much more brutal and dark than those of Cézanne. Yet, it seems that a primal impression exists in the painting of both of them, the sign that is unfolded through the pictorial repetitions. The only question is: what reasons determine the kind of signs the painter is more open to?

According to Deleuze, Bacon’s paintings illustrate nothing, nor do they narrate anything. The plane of composition inherent to Bacon does not really conform to the canons of narration of classical painting. It is non-contextual and without a place. Even in the triptychs, the relationship is established not through a narrative but through the rhythm that was already premeditated. However, Lingis notices that Triptych August 1972 (1972) or Triptych May–June 1973 (1973) directly refer to the suicide of Bacon’s lover Dyer that occurred in a hotel bathroom in 1971, on the eve of the opening of Bacon’s exposition in Grand Palais in Paris. In the second triptych, the body of a male

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5 Bacon and Dyer’s love affair started in 1964. Dyer’s portraits were some of the most important sources of inspiration for Bacon. It is thought that Dyer’s suicide was provoked by his feeling less and less important in Bacon’s growing celebrity. At first this raised increasingly growing problems of alcoholism and complications of interrelations, while at the end, in 1971, the strongly overdosed alcohol and barbiturates with which the dead Dyer was found in the common bathroom of their hotel room. That the suicide was committed from revenge and desperation is supported by the fact that it happened on the eve of the opening of Bacon’s most important exhibition in Grand Palais in Paris. There are rumours that during the Dyer’s funeral his friend blamed Bacon for this. Nobody knows if this was for the blame he felt or not, but Dyer’s final exit was a big shock for Bacon. After it, he could not recover for nine years and in his mourning he painted more than a few series of triptychs. Bacon’s relationship with Dyer and the impact on the painting of the latter are revealed in John Maybury’s movie Love is the Devil: Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon (1998).
is represented in three positions: crooked and sitting on the toilet; suffering agony and profiled; vomiting and leaned above the sink. In this case, it is difficult to deny the role of representation or documentation in Bacon. Is it possible to state that these bodies are anonymous bodies and that the relationship between them is constituted not through narration or documentation?

Contrary to Deleuze, the analysis provided by Lingis reveals that the moment of representation in Bacon’s painting is really strong as a greater part of his painted portraits, images and triptychs maintain a direct reference to the individuals and events that are represented in them. A larger discussion would arise over what concerns the triptych *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion* (1944). Monstrous figures represented in it are unrecognisable and shocking, overwhelming any understanding. But according to Lingis, “unidentifiable is not the nonfigurative” (Lingis, 2014, 91). These figures still illustrate and represent something, as well as have a well-defined contour.

Emphasising the significance of the primal models and of representation in Bacon’s painting, Lingis, nonetheless, does not deny the significance of the diagram which is considered as the most significant factor for disrupting clichés by Deleuze. Although far from a mode of cliche, Bacon illustrates and represents, and thus generates the most intense sensations. Both of these aspects are undeniable and strongly dominate in Bacon’s painting. Much more important for Lingis is the answer to the questions: what is the relationship between “the organism thus represented and the body without organs into which it falls”; how can one “understand the violent sensation produced when we are confronted with the recognized figure painted as he had never before been represented” (Lingis, 2014, 91)? These are the questions that Lingis poses from the position of a phenomenologist. What relationship does there exist between the represented and the non-represented? Is it possible to state that a painter starts from abstract forces and not from particular individuals? What is prior and more important? Where does the perception related to a recognisable figure end and the sensation opening up something unfamiliar begin?

When explaining the principle of how the diagram works in Bacon’s painting, Deleuze indicates that the way of Figure continues using analogical language which is inseparable from the agency of deformation. Deformation is inseparable from something having a form. Therefore, it is impossible to absorb any definite form in the case of a manual diagram (abstract expressionism). However, at the same time it is totally opposite to the transformation of form which occurs in abstract painting using the language of digital code. The form is transformed and combined in various ways but chaotization does not occur. Everything returns to the same without undergoing invasion of the unknown. As Deleuze states, analogical language does not mean that a painter (Bacon in this case)

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6 When it appeared in 1945 after the Second World War ended, this triptych made Bacon a famous painter in the world.
does not have any preconceived idea of what he wants to paint. Although he does not make sketches, he starts from something that is recognisable and representable, but the acting of chance introduces chaos which destroys the coordinates of our familiar world and shows the other plane of our reality – the difference. Analogical language indicates that, as a result, the figure reminds us of something and has a semblance of something, but this similarity is obtained through non-resembling means, i.e. identity, form, and consistency appear under the condition of chaos, through accident and difference.

Following Deleuze, such a strategy is chosen in order to show that everything what we call the given has become under the conditions of difference and chaos. And everything that is given is inseparable from the side that has generated and constituted it – the becoming, which, according to Deleuze, is a genuine reality. The organism that is usually treated as something given is actually just a result, a repressed structure that imprisons life. But a body without organs opens up the reality of liberated vital forces, which is impossible for the lived body to experience. Therefore, revealing such a plane is shocking and very violent, inseparable from sensing something unknowable and inconceivable, existing in the knowable and perceivable. The anonymous forces of nonorganic life are in no way visible, but they become visible through the involuntary, spontaneous motions of a painter freed from the control of the eye. The hand, which feels from the perspective of the body without organs, brings the difference to the world and frees the sensation. An eye defines the contour with moderation, in this way showing the becoming in the given. It is the chaos that has assumed a certain consistency.

Lingis would explain this relationship in a different way. The significance of the represented figure is its emanation, its actively devoting presence, and its trace, which is developed by a painter through colours and lines. The phenomenology of art shows that aesthesis depends not on the relationship with the illustrated or represented thing, but rather on the moment of the primordial encounter with things coming to light. The essence of art is not the representation of art, but self-involvement in it; not the illustration of things, but of their appearing. Phenomenologists relate the concept of rhythm, which is so important to Deleuze, to aesthesis. Rhythm refers to participation in the world, highlighting the moment of how things appear to our consciousness. Perception of things has become banal, whereas meanings faded and rigid. For this new technique of depiction, other colours and vibrating lines are needed in order to bring us closer to things, to emphasize the constitution of their meaning and our being in the world. A certain awakening is needed in order to bring us close to things, so that we will look at them as if from the first sight, that they will appear for us with all their intensity and beauty. It is not only a discursive meaning (what is it for? why is this? what is it about? what does it mean?), but rather an intense experience of the sensible being and enjoying such an experience. Cézanne and van Gogh discovered bright and vibrant colours, intense lines and rich brushstrokes in order to show us mountains, sky, trees, sunlight, apples, sunflowers and wheat fields anew. It is also the intense being of
things in our everyday life that has become so banal and almost invisible. Through his paintings, Bacon opens the phenomena of a very brutal nature – the forgotten and non-reflected reality of our body, its temporality, vulnerability, and sensible substantiality. It The ‘brutality of fact’, the words chosen by Sylvester for Bacon’s work, could have a different meaning for Lingis: to highlight and to intensify the sensation of vanishing substantiality and the experience of the material, whose meaning manifests itself through a particular individual. So perhaps the deformed lines of portraits Bacon painted are intended to open up the meaning of the vulnerability of human existence?

The Virtual and Actual Experience: The Painter and His Life

It is not only the problem of individual consciousness or giveness that is eliminated in Deleuze’s approach to Bacon’s work. Deleuze emphatically rejects the problem of any meaning or sense. He thinks that Bacon’s paintings do not only illustrate and narrate anything; moreover, they do not mean anything. There is only the intensity of an affect, of a sensation that is beyond of any meaning that could be interpreted. Lingis, contrary to Deleuze, is convinced that namely an intersubjective, recognisable and interpretative meaning determines the suggestibility of Bacon’s painting. Lingis’ embodied subjectivity is dependent on the life world and the horizons of meaning it opens. The creator is in the world, so primarily he is affected by everything that surrounds him from his first days of life.

A lot of research on Bacon’s oeuvre points to the relationship between Bacon’s painting and the circumstances of his personal life. Born in Ireland, to a family of an English captain and rich inheritor (the last child of five), Bacon suffered from asthma attacks since his early childhood. His relationship with his father was always complicated, as the latter noticed early on his son’s effeminate manners and how he enjoyed dressing up. Bacon’s contact with his family was broken when in 1926, still not yet 18 years old, he was thrown out by his father. Bacon even confessed that he felt a sexual attraction to his father. The only connection which later still related Bacon to his family was his nanny Jessie Lightfoot. Their relationship lasted for his entire life. When he went to live in London, Bacon was destitute and even engaged in petty theft in order to survive. The time he spent living in London and afterwards in Berlin and Paris, though under difficult conditions, placed some background for his later creative intentions. In Berlin, he saw the Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein’s movie Battleship Potemkin, and in Paris he was captivated by Poussin’s painting Massacre of Innocents. Returning to London in 1928, Bacon started to work as an interior designer. Supposedly, this period also left a certain imprint on Bacon’s oeuvre – we can see solitary human figures that are accompanied by furniture and other interior objects in his paintings. The idea to paint
came while he visited exhibitions in Paris, but his first canvases were publicly shown only in 1933. Unfortunately, his painting did not receive any good reviews, so Bacon abandoned his creative intentions for an entire decade. Only in 1945, when the Second World War ended (Bacon also participated in it as a volunteer) his publicly presented work *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion* (1944) evoked overall sensation and they proclaimed Bacon as one of the most famous post-war painters. Despite the success that came quite early\(^7\) and the large circle of friends, Bacon usually felt solitary and all his love affairs were very stressful and painful. The suicide of his lover Dyer that occurred after a seven-year relationship increased his long-lasting suffering. Bacon died in 1992 while holidaying in Madrid from cardiac arrest. Asthma, which plagued him his entire life, developed into a respiratory condition: he could not even talk and breathe well anymore\(^8\).

Art critic Sylvester, who conducted an interview with Bacon in his other book – album *Francis Bacon: The Human Body* (1998), noticed that Bacon was a unique case in the context of other famous painters of the 20\(^{th}\) century: Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), Fernand Léger (1881–1955), Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), Paul Klee (1879–1940), Max Ernst (1891–1976), Joan Miró (1893–1983), Rene Magritte (1898–1967), Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), Andy Warhol (1928–1987), and others, all those who “have produced witty or humorous works of art. The twentieth century likes its art to be jokey. Bacon, who was famous for enjoying and engendering huge hilarity in his social life, created an art that was always resoundingly solemn” (Sylvester, 1998, 21). Sylvester indicates that such solemnity and sublime are inherent only to Barnett Newman (1905–1970), Mark Rothko (1903–1970), Clyfford Still (1904–1980) and Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), who according to Robert Rosenblum, are representatives of ‘The Abstract Sublime’. Reacting to such a division, “Bacon’s role in painting has been that one great exponent in our time of the Figurative Sublime” (Sylvester, 1998, 21). The figurative sublime of Bacon’s works is existentially heavy and anguished. It does not provide us with comfort and joy, it does not offer any irony or game. It immediately captures the onlooker and suggests the pending cruelty, brutality and accidental nature of our reality. Is it not what Bacon really had in mind when he talked about the brutality of fact and his intention “to unlock the valves of feeling and to return the onlooker to life more violently”? (Sylvester, 1987, 17). Expressing his admiration for the film directors Sergei Eisenstein and Luis Buñuel, he also indicated

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\(^7\) Bacon was a painter who did not have to wait long for recognition. When he was alive many exhibitions in the most important galleries of Europe were held permanently and his works never lacked customers. After his death Bacon became even more popular. In 2013 an auction of his work *Three Studies of Lucian Freud* (1969) broke the record as the most expensive piece of art ever auctioned. It was sold for more than $142 million. This record was exceeded by Pablo Picasso’s *Women of Algiers* (1955), which was sold in 2015 for more than $179 million.

that cruelty that appears in their creation is the subject he shared with them. “Is it real cruelty in Buñuel? Anything in art seems cruel because reality is cruel. Perhaps that’s why so many people like abstraction in art, because you can’t be cruel in abstraction” (Sylvester, 1987, 200). Somehow the same idea was very precisely expressed by the abstract painter Kandinsky, who maintained that the more the world becomes frightening the more the art becomes abstract. To Bacon’s mind, the decorativeness of abstract painting operates as anaesthesia – it minimises the pain which reality brings. True art has to help a human encounter this inexhaustible violence of existence, to confront what is unbearable in reality. Violence is not created and there is no need to imagine it. It is given. Is there any other way for the reflection of such a violence of life to emerge than a creator’s own existential experience?

Friedrich Nietzsche emphasized the unity of life and creation. According to him, creation always comes from the strong sensation of the intensity of life. Thus, the creator is completely open to life as well as to the suffering from which it is inseparable. Nevertheless, the creator is able to provide life with form and worth, discovering the new perspectives present in it. The creator even makes a work of art from himself as he overcomes what is in him, namely “fragments, abundance, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos” (Nietzsche, 2002, 117). The suffering and pain that the creator experiences in life is the greatest creative material. Nonetheless, the creator chooses suffering not as the negation of life but rather as the affirmation of life. Life is affirmed with everything that it is and that it offers – it is a worth in itself as it is a power of renovation and the possibility of infinite becoming. Such an affirmation of life is confirmed by Nietzsche himself – despite his unfulfilled relationships, disability, illness and madness. In creation, he overcomes all the limitations of his existence.

Deleuze shares the same attitude with Nietzsche towards the relationship between life and creation. One can state that for the first time this position was expressed explicitly in the text Nietzsche (1965), in which Deleuze tried to defend Nietzsche from stereotypes that misinterpret and devalue his oeuvre. One misunderstanding raises a really serious threat of devaluing all of Nietzsche’s inheritance because of madness that occurred at the end of his life and his constant health problems. When creation becomes the expression of illness and disability, it ceases to be valuable. Deleuze notices that many creators – artists, philosophers or scientists – were of very poor health, but very strong with their creative power. If they suffered, this was because of the excess of life, of the forces that exceeded their power of providing with structure, just because there was too much life for them.

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9 Deleuze discusses other misinterpretations about Nietzsche, giving his explanations: “the will to power” in no way means the apotheosis of the authority or the will to dominate; the weak and strong in Nietzsche’s philosophy should not be interpreted in the context of social power; the Eternal Recurrence does not refer to a cycle, it is not the returning to the Same or returning of the Same (Deleuze, 2001).
What life does Deleuze have in mind? Obviously, not the individual, personal one. According to him, no writer writes books from his own experience, no poet creates poems invoking his personal feelings, and no painter paints what he sees or experiences directly. Similarly, philosophy is not a matter of personal experience. The creator, Deleuze states, always creates from other sources that always overstep his personal life. In the book *What is Philosophy?* (1991), Deleuze and Guattari write about the significance of conceptual personae in every philosophical system. The philosopher invents conceptual personae, which carries and enhances the meaning of the created concepts. But the conceptual personae is not given, it is not identical to the personality of the philosopher. It has to be invented. The invention of the conceptual personae amounts to the creation of a new style of existence, as well as to the opening of new worlds and perspectives. Nevertheless, Deleuze and Guattari consider this moment as very dangerous. This is always an experiment. The thinker risks his identity and even his psychic health because in his radical experience he becomes somebody other than he has been before. He becomes open to the forces that surpass the limits not only of his personal life, but also of the possibilities of an individual as such. He encounters the world “before and after the man”, which disorganizes all the coordinates of the recognizable and controlled reality. The same structure also appears in art. Artists create aesthetic figures, conveying precepts and affects which enable us to sense what has never been sensed before. In creation, the artist enters into the field of anonymous forces and confronts the chaos invading him; and only because of this encounter, is he able to bring a piece of chaos that now has become consistent to the world. Chaos for Deleuze has a positive meaning – it is immanence, life, and a source of all vital values. This life, nonorganic and non-personal, is too strong and intense, and even intolerable for an individual. Yet, it is intensely sensible in the canvas line, in the word, and in the sound of music. Such a notion of life determines Deleuze’s affirmation that the violence that appears in Bacon’s painting is the violence of the sensation, and not the violence of the represented (Deleuze, 2003, 39). This is the intensity and excess of the nonorganic and impersonal life that appears through the violence of colour and line and has nothing in common with the violence we experience in life. Therefore, Deleuze rejects any possibility of somehow relating Bacon’s aesthetic figures with the facts of the painter’s personal life. This would merely be a reduction to the perversions inherent to a painter’s individuality, his personal experiences, fears and desires, to what Lawrence once called ‘his little dirty secret’.

To Lingis’ mind, the violence in Bacon’s painting essentially interrelates with the painter’s life: many facts show that Bacon’s life was full of violence and cruelty. When Sylvester asked about the motif of violence that predominates in his painting, Bacon replied that violence and brutality surrounded him from his childhood. “So I could say, perhaps, I have been accustomed to always living through forms of violence – which may or may not have an effect upon one, but I think probably does” (Sylvester,
1987, 81). Later in the interview with Michel Archimbaud he said: “Life is so violent; so much more violent than anything I can do” (Archimbaud, 1999, 151). It seems that Bacon wanted to say that art is incapable of adequately exhausting and expressing all the violence that consists in life. As opposed to Deleuze’s ideas, it is not the creation that exceeds personal life, but the life itself and the experience itself that exceed creation. Art can approach life but it will never completely be able to express it. So according to Lingis, the intensity and suggestibility of a sensation depends exactly on the fact that Bacon’s oeuvre comes from his own existential experience. It is not only Bacon’s personal experience, his created visual signs appeal to everyone’s own experience. Though shocking and overwhelming, these signs are inter-subjectively recognizable and understandable.

As an example, Lingis takes one aspect of Bacon’s life, which is directly reflected in his works and which determines the intensity of the sensation. The painting *Two Figures* (1953) was painted after Muybridge’s photograph with two wrestling men, but as a result there is a double act – men are wrestling and having sex. And “this [happens] in England at a time when homosexuality was a criminal offence. Is it not the recognition of what they are doing, sexuality as combat and violence, and that it is a criminal act that gives the painting its violent impact on our nervous sensibility?” (Lingis, 2014, 90). Being homosexual and condemned by his family, Bacon was the first painter in art history who presented the subject-matter of homosexuality in his works. Another very important motif of Bacon’s painting – the scream, which was tied to the painting of forces by Deleuze – can really mean the direct reaction to violence and cruelty thus experienced. When life becomes intolerable, absurd and cruel, we want to scream. Analysing two principle images that could inspire Bacon’s ‘scream’ as the subject-matter – the screaming nanny with cracked eyeglasses and bloody face on the stairs of Odessa from Eisenstein’s movie *Battleship Potemkin*, and the screaming mother who tries to protect her baby from the soldier’s sword in Poussin’s painting *Massacre of the Innocents* – Sylvester draws the conclusion that these images are associated by the same subject-matter – “the threat of infanticide by soldiery” (Sylvester, 1998, 17). Of great importance is the link with Bacon’s childhood experience. Both Bacon’s father and grandfather were soldiers, and Bacon was always afraid of his father, who considered him weak, and Bacon probably experienced some kind of physical violence from his father. The screaming woman trying to defend the helpless child from the brutal power of the soldier could be a prototype of his nanny Jessie, who for Bacon probably served as a mother and gave this little portion of tenderness which was so measured in his life. Their relationship lasted for his entire life. On the other hand, the scream could be the expression of enormous aggression and brutality. The gaze and posture of Pope Innocent X in Velázquez’s painting radiate ruse and ferocity. Historically, the pope was not only a spiritual but also a political leader. Religion did not only bring salvation but also violence. It is not only a great love, but also a war, a struggle, a power. Some
art critics envisage a hidden religiousness in Bacon, but he was an atheist and his atheism probably started from experiencing the accidental being of his own and the violence existing in the world.

Where Deleuze sees the flows of forces experienced by a body without organs, there can be no impersonal forces, but the forces that are seen as the expressions of a mauled body. Where we see deformed bodies stretched by convulsions, men vomiting at the sink, excreting in a bowl, do these not refer to a direct experience when Bacon saw Dyer after his suicide and perhaps all these times when he failed? Are these deformations of the body not a metaphor of an individual’s suffering, when he is incapable of finding peace in himself? The asthma attacks that plagued Bacon permanently can also appear as the physical experience of a vulnerable body (a cough stretching and mauling the body) and existential experience (the fear of death). Solitude, alienation, anxiety – the permanent constants of Bacon’s life – hardened the painter, but strongly hurt him as well. All this made an imprint not only on his visions and images and could determine his choosing it in his art, but also in his lived body, in the movement of a hand making a brushstroke on the canvas. Violence and cruelty experienced in life may affect the violence of colour and line.

Different notions of life that determine such different attitudes to Bacon’s painting could be perfectly revealed when noticing the principle of nomadism in the philosophies of both Lingis and Deleuze. In the two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari oppose two modes of thinking – sedentary and nomadic. Classical metaphysical thinking is called sedentary because it works under the model of recognition or representation. The truth is identical, stable, and constant. The territory is strictly delineated, its limits are strongly protected. Nomadic thinking is related to a permanent search for and the trespassing of former limits, the disrupting of clichés, and the openness to otherness. However, these modes of thinking do not have anything in common with real life. Though maintaining the need for creation and novelty in philosophy and art, Deleuze really lived a life of a very sedentary manner and not somehow exclusive. He stayed married to the same woman, had children, supported permanent and long-lasting relationships with his friends, taught at university, lived in the same district of Paris for all his life and was not accustomed to travelling at all. When Deleuze talks about an encounter or experiment, he points not to a real event, but to a virtual event in the mind. Deleuze understands nomadism as the wandering of the mind, as mental events and discoveries that do not depend on any place and time. Perhaps he lived a very quiet and unremarkable life, but he lived it very intensely in his creation. In the text *Letter to a Harsh Critic*, reacting to his ex-student Michel

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10 When he started to live in London after his father had thrown him out, Bacon started reading a lot of Nietzsche. He could take from the philosopher the belief in the power of creation as well as the ideas of God’s death, the genealogy of morality, and others.
Cressole’s reproaches that he lives a very banal bourgeois life which has nothing in common to his exhortations to experiment and that he does not have any right to talk about things he has never experienced himself, Deleuze responds: “If I stick where I am, if I don’t travel around, like anyone else I make my inner journeys that I can only measure by my emotions, and express very obliquely and circuitously in what I write. And what do my relations with gays, alcoholics, and drug-users matter, if I can obtain similar effects by different means?” (Deleuze, 1990, 11). And continues: “You’re a pretty unimaginative realist. ... Arguments from one’s own privileged experience are bad and reactionary arguments” (Deleuze, 1990, 12).

Lingis’ ‘philosophy of travel’ is inseparable from the real journeys, events and encounters which happen in it. The reflected impressions and discoveries are described in the text. The text arrives from the direct experience inseparable from the lived body in different life-worlds – the farthest countries of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America. According to Lingis, the experiment means bringing forth directly the sensitive lived body to all the dangers occurring in travel that disrupt the former schemas. One can read texts of Levinas, Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty, but the concepts used by them find its meaning only through the actual experience. It becomes clear that when Lingis talks about the formal and reductive character of the Deleuzian approach, he has in mind that it obviously lacks the relationship with the actual experience. Conceptual constructions generate the other plane of experience which is at odds with the real experience – namely what we really experience when we encounter Bacon’s canvas and what these intense sensations mean to us. Deleuze’s research moves in the plane of the virtual experience by seeing in Bacon’s painting the creation of possible worlds and the opening of new perspectives.

**The World in Collapse: The Artist as a Symptomatologist**

“Instead of seeing in Bacon’s paintings violence, degradation and pain, Deleuze sees primal and superabundant life”, states Lingis (Lingis, 2014, 86). Lingis, as the majority of art critics do, sees a direct parallel not only between the motif of violence in Bacon’s painting and his personal experience, but also between his works and the collective experience of humankind: “this is not simply Bacon’s sadomasochistic world but also a cross-section of our world – our world, which we now see and feel more intensely, more violently” (Lingis, 2014, 93). Humankind that had survived two world wars – the First and the Second, Hiroshima and Auschwitz – discovered the world as incomprehensible for its atrocity and absurdity. It is not only the collapse of the world but the crisis of humanity, too: instead of reason and consciousness that we were seeking, we have groped inside us an immeasurable and an incomprehensible source of cruelty. It is in such a context that Bacon’s first work was exposed, which made him famous – *Three
Studies for Figures at the Base of Crucifixion (1944) which presented three monstrous figures. The shock the contemporary society experienced when they saw this triptych can be connected with a reflection of what had happened, is happening and yet will happen. “Isolation, alienation, sadomasochism and a premonition of impending doom pervade this world. It is an atheist world where individual human life has no intrinsic meaning. It was the world Bacon knew from his childhood in the extraordinary violence of his father’s house, with the IRA uprising storming about them, as well as the vast conflagration and slaughter of World War II” (Lingis, 2014, 93). In Bacon’s canvas, we see bodies injured, mutilated and crushed by life. Body, meat – it is an allusion to our vulnerability and accidental being. There is no essence, nothing substantial in what is happening to us. We cannot resist it, neither can we escape or find a meaningful explanation for this. According to Bacon, “the greatest art always returns you to the vulnerability of the human situation” (Sylvester, 1987, 199). And “man now realises that he is an accident, that he is completely futile being, that he has to play out the game without reason” (Sylvester, 1987, 28). The same reflection emerges in the novels of existentialists Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, and writers Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka. Bacon’s painting resonates strongly not only with the post-war feelings; it also expresses the fundamental constants of modern man’s being: his solitude, his alienation, his fragmentation, his anxiety, and existential despair. It is not by accident that Bacon’s painting became the main source of inspiration for the Italian film director Bernardo Bertolucci, when he was producing the very controversial Last Tango in Paris (1972). Before the movie starts, two of Bacon’s paintings, Double Portrait of Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach (1964) and Study for a Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne (1964) are demonstrated. It is a direct reference to the movie, starting from the composition and colouring (Bertolucci called it the “orange” movie) to the mood of existential despair, appears as a direct transference of Bacon’s painting plane to a cinematographic space. While producing the movie, Bertolucci visited Bacon’s contemporary exhibitions in Grand Palais in Paris from time to time. First, he took the cinematographer Vittorio Storaro and later Marlon Brando. He said to the latter: “You see that painting? Well, I want you to re-create that same intense pain”\(^\text{11}\). Brando succeeded – in many shots his face appears as mutilated and deformed by the existential suffering he experiences, as in many of Bacon’s portraits. Meeting each other accidentally, the two protagonists of the movie – Paul (Marlon Brando) and Jean (Maria Schneider) – start a very intense, anonymous and torrid love affair for different reasons: Paul wants to repress the strong pain after his wife’s sudden suicide, whereas Jean out of curiosity and boredom. Enjoying a very exciting, or even perverted experience and erotic experiments does not help the lovers get closer to each other. On the contrary, it brings them to a tragically absurd end. When Paul breaks with anonymity and wants to go closer to Jean, she shoots him. The

movie that required supremely brave erotic scenes and empathy in the mood strongly affected the actors: Schneider stated that this role was a big mistake that ruined her life, while Brando said that he “felt raped and manipulated by the film”\textsuperscript{12}.

Bertolucci is not the only creator who understood and responded to Bacon’s oeuvre. One of his famous admirers is the Czech novelist Milan Kundera, who wrote \textit{The Painter’s Brutal Gesture} and related Bacon’s painting with his own experience\textsuperscript{13}. Many characters in his novels experience various dramas, are accompanied by states of self-fragmentation, deformation, isolation, bodily vulnerability, desire and shame. So Bacon was a creator who was appreciated and very interesting for the many. It seems that he had expressed something essential about his living time and modern subject who lost his essence. But at the same time, Bacon was a solitary and retired creator not seeking to identify himself with other popular art trends of that time. He even did not like to be compared with Beckett\textsuperscript{14}, something that critics were doing very often. According to Wieland Schmied, Bacon’s “view of human existence was even bleaker than the vision of Samuel Beckett” (Schmied, 2006, 8). Bacon had proposed “raw facts of the human condition”. Bacon’s painting “was alert to the evil in human nature and the cruelty of fate, and regarded both as equally inevitable” (Schmied, 2006, 8). What positive content can possibly be lent to Bacon’s painting if it really brought to light the most brutal and cruelest layers of reality?

When Deleuze talked about the relationship between life and creation, he indicated that the creator cannot be judged and valued by the psychoanalyst who treats his creation as an expression of a certain pathology. On the contrary, the creator himself is a physician and symptomatologist as he is able to feel the wounds of humankind, to


\textsuperscript{13} In this text, Kundera remembers his life in Prague in 1972, when he constantly feared being interrogated or imprisoned. Once he was visited by a young girl, his familiar, who was interrogated about him two days earlier. She wanted to coordinate all the details for no contradiction to be detected. The girl was pale and the shock she had experienced was still upsetting her bowels and she was leaving the room many times to go to the toilet. “She was reduced to her fear … She was gaping wide before me like the split carcass of a heifer hanging from a meat hook”, he wrote. He knew her as a very intelligent person that always had fine emotional control, and now, seeing her fear and vulnerability, he suddenly had the urge to rape her (Kundera, 2008, \textit{The Painter’s Brutal Gesture} (Introduction to France Borel Portraits and Self-Portraits, 1997), http://dilipnarayan.blogspot.com.es/2008/09/milan-kundera-painters-brutal-gesture.html). The motif of bodily vulnerability, which denudes an individual, is noticeable in almost all of Kundera’s novels. Conversely, like in the classical novel, priority is given not to the conscious and self-controlling individual (the subject, soul), but to the vulnerable and treasonable body.

\textsuperscript{14} Deleuze compared Bacon and Beckett, too. In his interview with HERVÉ Guibert \textit{Painting Sets Writing Ablaze}, he insisted that Bacon, Beckett, and Kafka are authors of Figures. “Several levels need to be distinguished. First, they present us with unfathomable suffering and profound anguish. Then you recognize a certain “mannerism”, in the artistic sense of the word, À la Michelangelo, full of force and humour. And you notice that far from being excessive complication, it comes from pure simplicity. What first appears to be torture or contortion refers to very natural postures” (Deleuze, 2006, 182).
diagnose and heal them. Bacon was one of those symptomatologists. But it seems that he did not try to provide a cure to make the reality better than it is or to create new perspectives. His mode of curing is brutal, like cutting with a scalpel and letting us face the raw reality and making us settle with everything that happens in it without any moralization, evaluation and judging. Perhaps for this reason Bacon called his works ‘facts’. Although Bacon brings to light a certain symptomatic of his life world, it is hardly possible to treat him as a timely creator as Georg Friedrich Hegel, or following the latter’s saying that individualities and creators are those who express the spirit of time. According to Deleuze, the great creators are always untimely as they always overstep the living time. It is precisely for this reason that there are no references to a concrete historically or socially significant event in Bacon’s painting. Even Bacon’s favourite painters, such as Francisco Goya, who painted The Second of May 1808 (1814) and The Third of May 1808 (1814), or Pablo Picasso’s Guernica (1937) or Massacres in Korea (1951) could not avoid it. What Bacon calls a fact corresponds to Deleuze’s concept of the Event. Deleuze opposes the Event to a historic or actual event. The Event is always in the middle, it captures virtuality, becoming what gives the basis to all the other events. Deleuze calls the work of art the monument, but such a monument, which “does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event: the constantly renewed suffering of men and woman, their re-created protestations, their constantly resumed struggle” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1994, 176–177). Such an event is neutral – it is beyond experience providing it with meaning and evaluation, good or bad. Deleuze would treat Bacon as a symptomatologist because he opens up the plane of the body without organs, thus liberating the imprisoned life. It is not equal to opening up the violence as the phenomenon of life. According to Lingis, violence and cruelty are certain expressions that affect us as much as they are captured as phenomena. Though without evaluating or judging, Lingis nevertheless talks about the violence as it is experienced in the life world, which reveals itself through various events and experiences. It is for that reason that such a grasp shocks us as much as Bacon’s painting is able to open up this phenomenon. Deleuze develops another plane: the violence of inorganic life presents itself as the intensity and the excess of it. Such a life is valuable in itself: beyond any reason and purpose, and beyond any good and evil. This ‘violence’ cannot be estimated with the help of moral categories. Conversely, as vulnerable we are, how many encounters and events we are suffering, shows how vital we are, as much life we experience. Deleuze wrote very poetically about the meaning of the event conveyed with all its neutral beauty in the book The Logic of Sense (1969): “To the extent that events are actualized in us, they wait for us and invite us in. They signal us: ‘My wound existed before me. I was born to embody it.’ ... Either ethics have no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us. To grasp whatever happens as unjust and unwarranted (it is always someone else’s
fault) is, on the contrary, what renders our sores repugnant – veritable *ressentiment*, resentment to the event” (Deleuze, 1990, 148–149). According to Deleuze, the factor of deformation in Bacon’s painting presents not a negative (“in this world individual human life has no intrinsic meaning”), but a positive event: when we become non-individuals, bodies without organs, we liberate our imprisoned life. An atheistic world is not a degraded world; on the contrary, it is full of new values and possibilities. But first the restitution of believing in this world or, more exactly, of believing in the link between man and the world is needed.

In the second volume *Cinema 2: The Time–Image* (1985), Deleuze indicates that the link between man and the world is broken. The modern condition is displayed as a time when we find the world as fragmented, as lost – the world is not the meaningful whole any more. It cannot convince us any more, it does not stimulate, does not excite us. It reminds us of a bad and banal movie. But the belief that it “is no longer addressed to a different or transformed world” should be restored; it should become a “belief in this world, as it is” (Deleuze, 1989, 172). The world such as it is, *immanence*, appears to us as intolerable, but not for this reason that it would be bad, terrible or degraded, but because the mind cannot capture and reflect the world that now has become multiple and chaotic. It is this situation that inspires modern philosophy, science and art. The main task for them is to find new modes of the involvement in the world, and to restore intense relationships. Bacon identically defines his mission: “I believe that realism has to be re-invented” (Sylvester, 1987, 172). But in what way? “We believe in a world in which individualisations are impersonal, and singularities are pre-individual”, Deleuze writes in the book *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze, 1994, xxi). It is precisely the body without organs, pre-individual and non-personal, opened to the new forces yet inexperienced that, according to Deleuze, is presented in Bacon’s painting, that enables our belief in the world. In such a way, as Deleuze would say, the importance of Bacon as symptomatologist is testified.

If Lingis sees a cross-section of our world in Bacon’s painting, opening up the phenomena of violence that outline the suggestibility of a painting, Deleuze, on the contrary, emphasizes the opening up of the plane of immanence as the invention of the new ways of intensity.

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15 Bacon also said: “We nearly always live through screens – a screened existence. And I sometimes think, when people say my work looks violent, that perhaps I have from time to time been able to clear away one or two of the veils or screens” (Sylvester, 1987, 82).
Literature


Dvi jautraus ir pažeidžiamo kūno sampratos:
Gilles’is Deleuze’as ir Alphonsas Lingis

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojamos dvi prieigos prie Francio Bacono tapybos. Tiek Gilles’io Deleuze’o filosofijai, tiek Alphonso Lingio postfenomenologijai būdingos jautraus kūno, pojūčio ir afekto sąvokos, o jų probleminis statusas geriausia išryškėja būtent per jų santykį su Bacono tapyba, kuri kaip savo pagrindinį objektą pateikia pažeidžiamo ir intensyviai afektuojamo kūno realybę. Straipsnyje koncentruojamas į klausimą, kuris inicijavo abu tyrimus. Kas iš tiesų lemia Bacono paveikslų paveikumą: linijos ir spalvos prievartingumas, paneigiantis figuratyvumo faktorių Bacono tapyboje (Deleuze’as) ar, priešingai, paties gyvenimo žiaurumas, patvirtinantis reprezentacijos reikšmę (Lingis)? Straipsnyje teigiama, kad tokias skirtinas interpretacijas lemia skirtingas patirties samprata. Lingis akcentuoja aktualią patirtį, tai leidžia pagrįsti kūrybos, asmeninės kūrybos patirties ir gyvenamojo pasaulio ryšį. Deleuze’as kalba apie virtualią patirtį, beasmenių gyvenimą, kūną be organų ir naujų perspektyvų kūrimą.

Eminiai žodžiai: Baconas, kūnas, Figūra, pojūtis, fenomenologija, patirtis, Žiaurumas.