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## Doubt and Indifference: Threshold Conditions within the Work of Art

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**Abstract.** The project of this paper is part of a larger attempt to develop a philosophy of art. Integral to that project is the distinction between aesthetics and a philosophy of art. It is always possible to consider affect as an end in itself if what is at stake involves a series of psychological claims. Equally, it is possible to engage with such claims philosophically. However, there is no clear connection between either possibility and a philosophy of art. In the latter the presentation of affect is always located within images. Images are produced by the work of materials. Images have to be understood in terms of that production. They have a material presence. If there is a failure to insist on the complex materiality of art's work as comprising a locus of philosophical inquiry, then any subsequent theory of the image is unable to contribute to the development of a genuine philosophy of art. Moreover, within the history of art images are informed form. The informing of form has two elements. Form is informed firstly by the history in which those images are located, and secondly by their capacity to be reworked. The latter can be understood as a futural coming-into-relation and thus the possibility that images and the elements from which they are comprised are able to have an afterlife. The afterlife is forms' capacity to continue to be informed. It is this latter possibility which necessitates that hermeneutic concerns supplant aesthetic ones in the creation of a philosophy of art.

**Keywords.** Doubt, Indifference, Gesture, Threshold, Deposition, Rosso Fiorentino.

The presence of doubt, uncertainty and indifference, at least at the beginning, cannot be differentiated from the realm of feeling. At the outset, therefore, they are aesthetic. Descartes for whom doubt provided the possibility of a radically new beginning – another point of departure for philosophy, this time one grounded in certainty – had to start with a form of awareness inextricably tied up with doubt. The affective has priority insofar as it yields an opening. There is an accompanying form of perception. And thus, an awareness, on Descartes part, that he had been deceived. The initial principles on which he had based his earlier beliefs were at best uncertain. He had taken «the false for the true (*falsa pro veris*)» (Adam, Tannery [1985]: VII, 17). This perception and its initial connection to doubt opens the way, for Descartes, to a rethinking of the self. Within it the passage from doubt leads to the centrality of the subject and with that centrality to the primacy of thinking. Within

the movement of the *Meditations* the possibility of certainty is then linked to the redescription and thus the reconceptualization of the subject as that which thinks and thus to a generalised conception of the subject as *res cogitans*. Nonetheless, the point of origination has a different quality. Doubt and an accompanying form of awareness that is bound to the realm of feeling, and thus to the aesthetic, once taken together, identify then delimit the point from which the philosophical can start. Note Descartes language. In the French translation of which he approved he wrote «*je me suis aperçu*», while the original Latin, which is of course the opening word of the *Meditations* proper is *Animadverti*. Descartes writes in an autobiographical mode; he «noticed». What he «noticed» was the presence of the doubtful or the uncertain. (Though it should be added that the registration of this uncertainty was a feeling, which is inextricably bound up with the presence of doubt). There is a founding relation between feeling and doubt. Even though that relation does not itself lead to certainty and the overcoming of doubt – both of which will always have to be methodological – nonetheless it prepared the way for that overcoming. What is important in the context of the *Meditations* is that “noticing” or “remarking” are modes of perception. They lead to a situation in which doubt will have been overcome. Nonetheless, the key point is that as modes of perception they have to be radically distinct from the mode of perception that will be named by Descartes, by the time he reaches *Meditation 4*, as «clear and distinct perception (*claram & distinctam perceptionem*)» (Adam, Tannery [1985]: VII, 61). Perception has two different qualities therefore. In the move from one to the other a threshold will have been crossed. The significance of doubt in this context is that doubt does not just occur at a threshold. More is at stake, doubt as originating in a feeling also works to constitute the threshold. Taken together, feeling and doubt establish what might be described as the fleeting primacy of the aesthetic.

In sum, both doubt and the feelings and perceptions that occasion doubt as well as mark its

presence, occur within the domain of the felt and thus the realm of experience. At the beginning therefore doubt has an inherently aesthetic dimension. And yet, as has been suggested, what is constructed is a threshold condition. And it is precisely because doubt occurs at the threshold, while simultaneously constituting and sustaining the threshold, that doubt cannot remain tied to a purely aesthetic occurrence. Even if the aesthetic were repositioned such that its equation with a form of cognition would allow for claims concerning universality (no matter how putative such claims may in the end actually be) the aesthetic always opens beyond itself. This is the point at which it is possible to approach the role of the aesthetic within a philosophy of art. Such an approach has a certain exigency. It emerges once it can be argued that if there were to be a genuine philosophy of art for which one possible locus of engagement would be the work of figures within art’s work, (knowing, of course, that the philosophy of art has greater extension, hence the figure is simply one domain of philosophical inquiry amongst others), then the presence of a threshold condition would be central because bodies, thus figuration which is the movement of bodies, have an already present affective dimension that occurs at the threshold. The occurrence works equally to sustain the threshold. The threshold condition however is not the simple coincidence of the aesthetic and the ideational (or the conceptual). Rather, it is the point at which there is the demand that they be thought together. If this were taken as the point of departure for a philosophy of art, then it follows that such an undertaking would be dependent both on the recognition that the aesthetic constitutes a threshold condition and that thinking art occurs with the necessity of that which occurs at the threshold; i.e. thinking is conditioned by the relation between the aesthetic and the ideational. A philosophy of art therefore cannot remain on one side of a threshold. The threshold as constituted by the aesthetic is an opening rather than a limitation. The initial difficulties inherent in such an undertaking are part of what is of concern here.

There are two positions that arise in this context. Both demand consideration. As a beginning, it might be thought, in opposition to the possibility of the incorporation of the threshold within the move from the aesthetic to the philosophy of art, that each domain could have been able to function as an end in itself. There would then be two positions to be considered. The first would involve the claim that the affective would have been overcome completely. From within this purview the affective would then be understood as having yielded completely to thought, a positioning which would lead to the effacing of the affective in the name of the conceptual. As a result, what this would entail is that the threshold, rather than being thought, is in fact effaced by the effective removal of an aesthetic dimension in the name of the conceptual. The second is the converse. A position that involves holding to the affective – thought, for example, in the realm of figuration in terms of the singularity and purity of gesture – as the presence of pure self-expression<sup>1</sup>. As though what was located on the other side of the threshold was pure affect. Then there would be a commitment to the expression of the affective as though it could be extracted from the possibility of its traversal. In the first instance the aesthetic remains unthought. In the second, there is the refusal to allow for the possibility that the aesthetic, understood as incorporating the movement of the body, thus the body as expressive, hence the presence of a certain conception of gesture, is itself already the site of the ideational. In regard to the latter formulation what is excluded is the possibility that form is always already informed; in other words, the claim is that form cannot be held apart from either the already present registration of the conceptual or the ideational, or their potential registration. The primacy of the aesthetic therefore is premised on the exclusion of the possibility of the already present informing of form. (The broader consequence is, of course, that the aesthetic as having priority is a produced

state premised on a founding exclusion). Both positions, present as a type of either/or, are structured by exclusions and modes of delimitation.

The exclusions, which are limitations, within both of these positions have to be noted. As with all limitations, and this despite an intention to circumvent thought, they provide openings. The project here involves distancing the either/or noted above and then working with the retention of the threshold. Working with its retention means accepting the presence of the threshold as integral to the role of figuration within and as the work of art. Figuration, as has already been intimated, is the presence of form as always already informed. The problem to be investigated here, once the threshold is maintained, concerns how the copresence of the affective and the ideational, as a workful presence within works of art, is to be understood. The question has a particular locus of concern. Rather than investigate the question in the abstract, as though it could be reduced to a question both posed and answered abstractly, it will be pursued here by looking at two specific paintings; two 16th Century Italian figurative paintings. Both are Depositions from the Cross. Each painting forms part of an established genre. Each one stages therefore, as the work of art, differing responses to the event of Christ's crucifixion. What is important about both is that they open up the possibility of an engagement with the threshold since they both inscribe affective positions within them. In addition to lament and mourning, which are both direct and emphatic, there is also the presence of doubt, uncertainty and indifference. Hence the important point is that the event, which as indicated means the Crucifixion as an event, does not yield an unanimity of affective responses. Two points need to be argued. The first is that the plurality of responses which in the end are both affective and conceptual define the quality of the Crucifixion as event, while at the same time introducing the problems that the retention of any singularity as a singularity will always have. (The contention is that this retention is both undone and sustained. Unity is both demanded and refused demanding thereby a rethinking of what consti-

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<sup>1</sup> This paper continues and draws on earlier work of mine on gesture. See: Benjamin (2016), Benjamin (2017), Benjamin (2019).

tutes an event). The second is that doubt, uncertainty and indifference as responses to the event work through the body. The indifferent body, for example in the context of a Deposition, acquires its force as a result of its relation of non-relation to the lamenting bodies or to the bodies who witness the event. As such, not only is any singularity already relational, singularities acquire meaning within and through those relations. While this position is true in principle, and thus accounts for the way in which singularities are meaningful, its force as a position can only be addressed on the level of the singularity itself.

These affective states are incorporated from the start into the history of gesture precisely because they are modes or instances of the body's comportment. Doubt and uncertainty, which define the stance of bodies and thus are inherently gestural, are affective states that take place in relation to the Deposition as event. Indifference becomes the refusal to allow the event to be present as an event, (were the event to be a singularity to which there would be a correspondingly singular response). In the overall context, doubt, uncertainty and indifference mark and sustain threshold conditions. In so doing, they allow for forms of reflection on the necessity of the affective; that necessity is gesture's ineliminability within the work of figuration. The necessity however is not to be located in the equation of works of art with affect or the aesthetic but with the fact that the affective is itself only possible as the marker of a threshold condition. Emerging as impossible as a result is any possible evocation of the equation of the gesture with pure expression. What demands consideration in this context is how doubt and indifference work as threshold conditions within (and as) the work of art.

1.

Both of the paintings under consideration are now located in the Pinacoteca in Volterra<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> I want to thank Dr. Alessandro Furiesi, director of the Pinacoteca Civica di Volterra for the informations on both works.



Figure 1.

The first painting is a Deposition by an unknown Umbrian-Sienese painter, though it has been attributed both to Bartolomeo Neroni and equally to an anonymous «seguace del Sodoma»<sup>3</sup>. [Figure 1] (Henceforth the *Anonymous Deposition*). It dates from the early 16th Century. The second is the famous *Deposition* by Rosso Fiorentino. [Figure 2] The latter dates from 1521. Rosso's painting was originally located as an altarpiece in the *Cappella della Croce di Giorno* which was itself located in the *Cappella di San Francesco* in Volterra, while the earlier Deposition was transferred to the *Duomo* in Volterra from a what is now assumed to be an unknown location<sup>4</sup>. The *Anonymous Deposition*

<sup>3</sup> Corrado Ricci attributed it to Bartolomeo Neroni. The catalogue of the Pinacoteca lists the painting as having been done by a «seguace del Sodoma».

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of the history and location of Rosso's Deposition see Smith (1976): 67-70.



Figure 2.

contains few surprises. It is positioned from the start within what would be the formal structure of a Deposition. In the painting itself there are differing locales of activity, each with its own affective dimension. The question that arises concerns how the relation between these locales within the painting is to be understood. The methodological question concerns the possibility of their unity and thus the possible conditions under which the painting is a unified singularity.

In the *Anonymous Deposition* Christ's body is being lowered gently from the cross. The figures lowering and receiving it are therefore implicated in the event. The lamenting female figures, dressed

as nuns with exception of Mary Magdalen, are to the left of the cross. One gazes at the figure of Christ; the one whose death has occasioned different degrees of lament. Lament opening to mourning comprises a necessary response; moreover, it is one that concedes the humanity of Christ. Christ is the figure who is not simply able to die, he dies as a human and thus it is a death that can be lamented. He can be mourned. The figures on horses to the right of the Cross balance the painting. More significantly they function as witnesses to the event. Witnessing, here, is an act whose incorporation within the frame forms part of the event's constitution as an event. There is the inscription of spectator as witness. Though as will emerge what is equally as significant is what they do not witness yet which is equally part of the event. What this means, of course, is that the event *qua* event cannot be equated directly with what is witnessed. (This is of course what the painting's viewer actually «witnesses».) The recognition here of both the necessity and the limitation of witnessing within the frame will further an understanding of, firstly, what maintaining the threshold entails and then secondly of the complexity inherent in the construction of the event. The final element within this particular work, though the one that will be central for the analysis to come, is the presence of the young man or boy with his hand on the ladder. Even though a similar figure is also there in Rosso's painting the difference between them is of fundamental significance.

In the *Anonymous Deposition* the young man is positioned within the frame. [Figure 3] Neither witnessing nor lamenting, he is equally uninvolved in the process of the body's actual deposition. Neither witness nor witnessed with the logic of the frame, and yet he is there. He stands beneath the cross. His hand is on the ladder. His left hand is cocked and placed on his hip. However, it is not as though his right arm could be exerting any force. It is simply placed on the ladder. His weight is taken by his left leg. The right foot is raised; it casts a shadow. His leg bends at the knee. The raising of the foot and the bend of the knee make it clear that the leg is not bearing any weight. Neither the

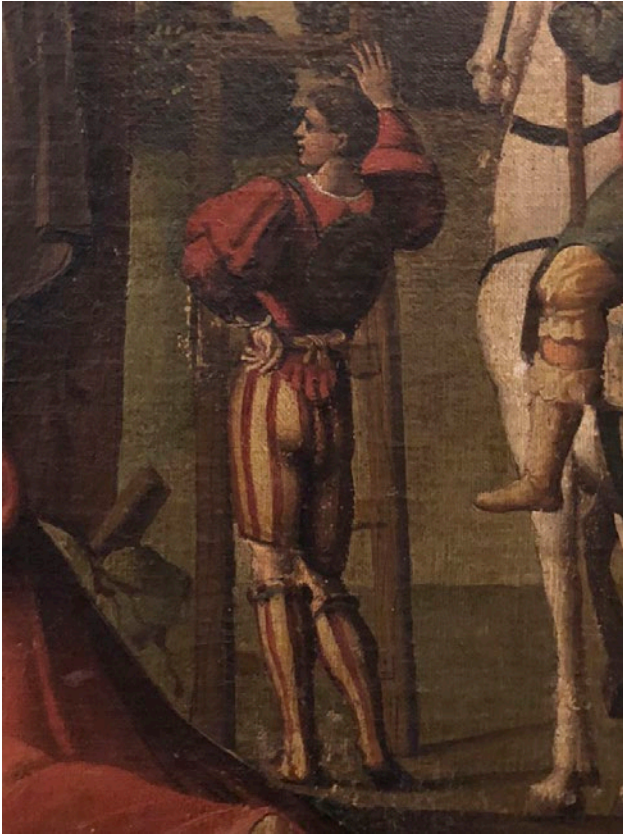


Figure 3.

weight of the cross nor the real or symbolic weight of Christ's body register on his body. His stance is other. He strikes a nonchalant pose. He is looking neither at Christ nor at any one group of figures. He looks across the frame. Neither out of frame nor into it. No eye returns his. He is the figure of indifference. His eyes – specifically their directionality – are integral part of his presence as indifferent. The presence occurs at the threshold. While his indifference can be noted, noticing cannot be separated from the presence of indifference as a question: what then is indifference?

Within both of these paintings each group is defined by their activity. Witnessing, lamenting, engaging the body of Christ (an act in which Christ is equally engaged) are all activities. Each one has therefore a specific economy. The economy in question is positioned in relation to what has already been identified as the threshold. Lament is bodily. Equally, of course, lament is a

form of affect. Affect and the position of bodies are the work of that economy. Taken together they create form. The same position can be developed in relation to the other groups. In each instance, it is possible to identify the presence of affective states, a presence held in place by the movement and position of bodies. This is, of course, the place of gesture. Gesture within paintings of this nature comprises the threshold condition. The particularity of the work of art has to be maintained. The threshold in Descartes' *Meditations* is the point at which the affective opened the way to the conceptual such that what was significant philosophically was the impossibility of restricting that movement. Moreover, philosophy then can be understood as the passage from affect – the realm of the aesthetic *stricto sensu* – that incorporates the affective. Both obtain. Then taken more generally this claim about the philosophical needs to be understood as the claim that the threshold at which doubt and the affective are at work can never retain the affective as an end in itself. Figuration within art is art's presentation of the truth of this proposition. There is a double movement; affect occasions thought, and, affect can be thought. Thinking affect is not the elimination of the affective. Rather, it is the recognition that affect is always already the site of meaning. Again, this is the opening to a reconceptualization of gesture as informed form.

Despite its misleadingly restrictive quality and thus its inherently problematic nature the movement of reconceptualization has to start with the proposition that gesture might be pure expression. Were it to be then it would be expression expressing itself. Gesture thus construed would then be the locus of the purely affective. Gesture begins as the body's turn. And precisely because it is the turn of the body, gestures cannot be equated absolutely with the affective and thus identified with the strictly aesthetic; indeed, the contrary is the case. What has to be argued is that gesture understood as expression and thus as a form of expression, gestures as form, is always already informed. There is an additional point that has to be made. Namely, if affect's figured presence is form as always already informed, it is the informing of

form that allows gesture to be expressive. The related point is, of course, that the informing of form is the affective. (Hence, there cannot be the affective as such). As has already been suggested – though the analysis integral to its demonstration awaits – arguments for the purity of expression, and thus arguments for the purely aesthetic, are premised upon the refusal of that original informing. And it is precisely because what is at stake is gesture that what then has to be taken into consideration is the relation between gesture and meaning. While lamenting, for example, may be an affective state in regard to which the interplay of the ideational and the affective is clear, the possibility of responding to lamentation necessitates a certain form of recognition; that recognition is an occasioning, one held in place by the interplay of the affective and the ideational. The lamenting body is informed form. The more complex form of presence is however indifference. Thereby raising the question of the status of indifference. The question needs to be asked again: what is indifference?

In the *Anonymous Deposition*, the boy stands beneath the cross. While his clothing identifies him as holding a specific position within an already established social hierarchy, what matters here is his body. How does his body register? Its own specific determinations were noted above. The body betrays nonchalance. He is indifferent. It is not just that nonchalance and indifference are contextual, the position is more complex than it appears. Indifference has to be located in relation to that which is taking place around him; namely, the differing economies of depositioning (*Apokathelosis*), lamenting, witnessing. While singular individual figures may have a discernible set of particularities, any singularity is already located within the economy sustained by that singularity. Moreover, it is not just that economies are relational, the painting's work, in this instance, is established by a network of relations. The question of what indifference is needs to be posed within this exact context. In other words, even the question of indifference has to be thought in relation to the insistent presence of the threshold. Indifference is not automatically disavowal. Indiffer-

ence might be described as the possible relation of non-relation that attends any event. The quality of indifference depends upon the demand made by the event. Here the Deposition cannot be radically disassociated from what is more generally understood as the Passion. As occurrences they create a setting in which central to each is, firstly, the identification of the insistence of Christ as having a specific quality (i.e. human and the son of God) and then, secondly, that the event involves the actualization of that which has universal force. The description of Christ in *John* 1.14, «the word become flesh» (ο λογος σαρξ εγενετο) attests both to the necessity of the interplay of universality and particularity on the one hand, and the equal necessity, on the other, that the interconnection of particularity and universality be recognised. Namely, that the flesh be recognized not as just flesh, which would be the form of flesh, i.e. flesh as mere body. Recognition, in both its positive and negative dimension, brings form as already informed into play. The latter point is essential. Integral to the constitution of this occurrence as an event is the recognition of its universality. What is problematic therefore does not lie in the universality but the dependence of that universality on its being recognised as such; which here amounts to informed form having a specific determination. (This will be the case even if the body becomes the locus of conflicting interpretations and thus is present as an already plural locus of signification). Here, lamenting attests to the suffering while underscoring the quality of the one who has suffered; witnessing reinforces the reality of the event. Refusal or disavowal would demand specific forms of activity. All these positions are defined by the event. Indifference, as exemplified by the bodily stance of the young man in the first of the paintings under consideration, defers having to respond.

While the continual registration of deferring creates an opening, the central point is not just that its creation is effected by a set of relations, deferring responding is only explicable in terms of those relations. Indifference however exerts complex demands. Its complexity resides

in the fact that indifference need not be intentional. Rather, the expression of an indifference to the event necessitates the presence of a position from which what is seen, namely the bodily presence of the young man, be seen as indifference. Seeing him standing beneath the cross leaning on a ladder is to encounter indifference. There are two possibilities here. Either indifference is unintentional; indifference would be present then as a form of distraction. Or, there might be intentional indifference. If the latter obtained, then indifference would be a stand taken in relation to the event, which could be understood as *being-indifferent*? These two different conceptions of indifference should not be seen as suggesting abstract possibilities. They only emerge as a result of an observation of the young man's body. The body is present as gestural; almost, as its own economy of gestures. The hands, the feet, the distribution of weight – and details could continue to be added – are such that the boy evinces indifference; his stance is nonchalant. The question concerning the possibility of the state of *being-indifferent* is of great importance since it allows for indifference to be understood as an affirmed mode of existence. However, what then has to be argued is that the attribution of indifference, and this will be to allow indifference to be present as a form of resistance and thus allow the young man to be resisting, though equally it still allows for indifference to be no more than an aesthetic disposition, are identifications made in relation to the location of the boy (the boy, equally, there as his body) within a network of relations that are themselves structured by the presence of interrelated and complex economies. As a result, even if indifference and nonchalance were to be understood as modes of existence in which *being-indifferent* as intentional is there as a continual possibility, it remains the case that observed indifference, and what is observed will retain its ambivalence, is an after-effect or relations that position indifference at a threshold created by those relations. In other words, indifference as a mode of resistance, or as the merely aesthetic, acquires the power that it has because of the interplay of the ideational and the

aesthetic; i.e. its power results from the threshold condition. Moreover, looking at the young man, which has to entail perceiving his body as a locus of gestures, means that observing the site of indifference is itself dependent upon recognizing the threshold. What is recognized, thus its conditions of recognizability, do not just demand the threshold condition, recognition depends upon it. Recognition is the threshold as an object of thought.

## 2.

Rosso's 1521 *Deposition* warrants a long and detailed investigation in its own right. Here, however attention will be given to what might be taken as two of the marginal figures within the overall work. The first is the figure of the young man or boy beneath the cross. [Figure 4] The second is one of the lamenting women. [Figure 5] A start will be made with this woman. She is one of the mourners. She laments. She is positioned within an overall of economy of lament and mourning. However, specifically, she is looking out of the frame towards the viewer. What has to be argued is that the direction of her look, even the stance of her body, fractures the overall economy in which she is positioned. This occurs because she cannot be located within it if location means complete definition. And yet, of course, she is quite literally located within it. She is lamenting, though she is not given over completely to that affective stance. Neither mourning nor lament complete her. She looks at the viewer. What however is the nature of that look? The first thing to note is that she too is supporting the Virgin. As such, she is initially defined by an economy of lament and mourning. She is a part of it. However, while she touches others her gaze is elsewhere. Her cheeks are red. A colouring held in place, firstly, by the line of white along her nose, highlighting it and then secondly the gradual pinkening that is the creation of her nostrils. While tears are absent she has been crying, however as she looks out she is crying no longer. Something else is at work. Colour, the effect of colour, is central to the



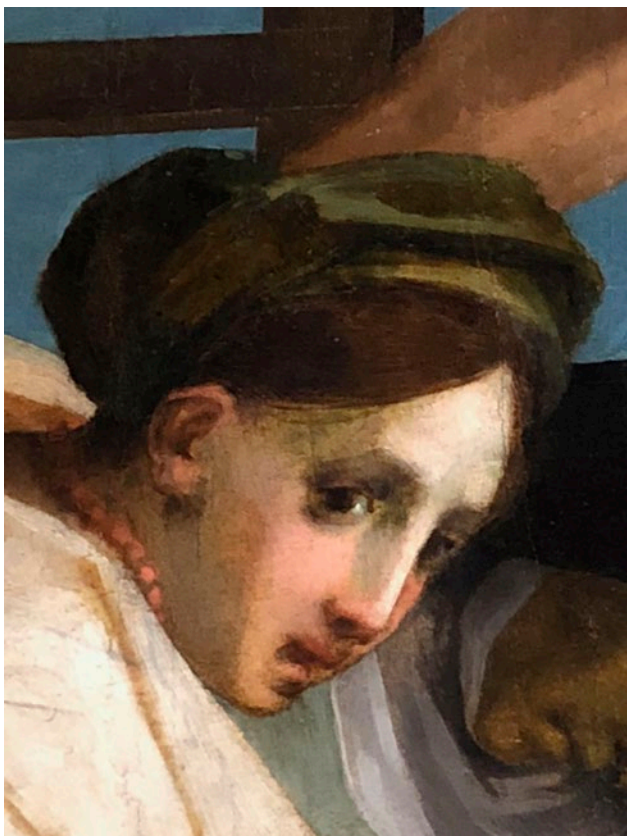


Figure 4.



Figure 5.

movement of location and dislocation. Her face acquires its particularity as a result of the work of colour. Colour is part of meaning. Her face is there. It is as though her eyes, and the effect of her having cried, define her gaze in terms of an anxious plea. It is as though she is pleading that what has occurred become the event. It has to register as what it is. Though, and this is what turns her gaze into a plea, her face having become the face of doubt, the gesture of doubt, there is the accompanying fear that what has occurred might not be recognized for what it is. Were it to be a mere occurrence, rather than an event, it might then slip back into history. And thus, in slipping back, what occurred becomes no more than a moment in the passage of historical time. Recognition, which is the move from occurrence to event, would, however, allow it to be lifted out of mere time. The latter, namely “mere time”, is the identification of historical time with chrono-

logical time. Overcoming that identification of time with chronology allows the event to be that which announced another time. Her gaze marks the presence of the continual threat of the event's disavowal. The problem is clear. Her anxious plea grounded. Since the event *qua* event cannot control let alone obviate the possibility of disavowal. Control will move beyond the singularity of the event and then come inscribe itself within the complex continuity of the policing of the event. A policing whose project is to hold the event apart from its presence as just an occurrence; as just another crucifixion. Her head turns. She looks out. The plea for the event's recognition, the related and ineliminable doubt, knit together the lines of possibility noted above. Her face is, of course, the threshold condition.

Again, there is a young man next to the ladder. He is holding on to the cross; clinging rather than leaning. The muscles in his arms are flexed.

(Consciously or not will always remain an open question.) He is clearly looking at Mary Magdalene. Almost indifferent to the Virgin's presence, thus he is indifferent to an economy of relations defined by lament and mourning, Mary Magdalene holds his attention. In looking at her comforting the Virgin, the registration of a unified economy of lament is, once again, unsettled. He seems distracted. Mary Magdalene's tunic is a deep red and while there are obvious symbolic reasons for the use of this particular colour, its use still leaves open the question as to whether the young man was aware of the symbolic dimension of the colour. (The symbol's immediacy is undone in advance by the possibility of such a question). Could it be that his eyes were diverted by the colour alone?<sup>5</sup> Was he distracted? His thoughts, though not his eyes, would be flitting between her presence, the colour of her garments and her place kneeling before the Virgin. In other words, what he registers, what therefore is registered on his face thus what his face presents, his face as gesture, is a state of distraction and thus a founding lack of surety. And yet, distraction does not have a single or unified single quality. As a result, there is an opening in which what endures as a question is the extent to which distraction may be a form of ambivalence. The possibility of ambivalence is a position staged by the painting in terms of the physical indifference of his head in relation to his body. The turning of the head makes the use of the arms almost effortless (though the way they are painted indicates that this is not the case since muscles flex). In addition, his own lack of engagement in the task undertaken by his arms, leaves him free to be distracted. He does not need to look in order to hold the ladder. Equally, he can look while forgetting or remaining oblivious to the fact he is indeed holding the ladder. Distraction and ambivalence introduce into what would have been a stable economy of mourning and lamenting another figure that works to destabilize its overall effect. What can be described, more gener-

ally, as the boy's ambivalence, and this is a position maintained by his body, once understood within the context of the painting as a whole, fractures the economy sustained by lament and mourning. There is a further point that needs to be made concerning the boy's presence. If the space beneath the unity of activity occurring in the top half of the painting in which Christ and those lowering his body figure was intended to have been replicated beneath the cross, then it is clear that the ambivalence of the boy undoes that possibility or expectation. Both his gaze and his body understood as threshold conditions: i.e. as the opening in which the affective opens to the ideational revealing the already informed nature of form.

The boy's body as well as his face evince a specific form of distraction and ambivalence. Gesture has therefore an already present and specific determination. The woman who turns and looks from the frame, while positioned within a more general economy of lament and mourning, equally has a specific determination that while related to that setting is not, as has been mentioned, defined by it. She is pleading. Equally, her face maintains a prevailing sense of uncertainty. Her uncertainty is set both within (and against) the certainty and unity created by mourning and lamentation. The latter comprises an already defined and unified interplay of location and activity. The boy's ambivalence has to be set, in addition, against the activity of Nicodemus and the others as they orchestrate the lowering of Christ's body. There is therefore the presence of a complex setting. The question pertains to how this complexity is to be understood. A lead is given here by the way Nagel and Pericolo define a project that is linked to what they term the «aporetic». They argue the «goal» of an «aporetic methodology» is to understand within a «work», what they describe as its «contradictions and non-resolutions» and thus how the latter «participate in its identity even as they render a fixed identity questionable» (Nagel, Pericolo [2010]: 10). The project here has been to follow a similar trajectory. The presence of the young man in the *Anonymous Deposition*, coupled to the pres-

<sup>5</sup> Colour is an important topic in its own right in Rosso's work. See in this regard: Carson (1998): 355-378.

ence within Rosso's *Deposition* of the boy holding the ladder and of the woman who looks beyond her location in an economy of lament and mourning can be understood in terms of the construction of an aporetic presence. What that means here is that each affective state located at, and as, a threshold condition. To the extent that such a possibility can be maintained – and the project here has been to help secure this position – then the methodological demands involved the necessary presence of gesture, now the coincidence of the movement of the body and meaning, and thus never the gesture “as such”. Precluded therefore is the reduction of gesture to the presence of pure expression. Gesture as part of the threshold condition stages the necessary presence of form as informed.

#### CODA

The project of this paper is part of a larger attempt to develop a philosophy of art. Integral to that project is the distinction between aesthetics and a philosophy of art. It is always possible to consider affect as an end in itself if what is at stake involves a series of psychological claims. Equally, it is possible to engage with such claims philosophically. However, there is no clear connection between either possibility and a philosophy of art. In the latter the presentation of affect is always located within images. Images are produced by the work of materials. Images have to be understood in terms of that production. They have a material presence. If there is a failure to insist on the complex materiality of art's work as comprising a locus of philosophical inquiry, then any subsequent theory of the image is unable to contribute to the development of a genuine philosophy of art. Moreover, within the history of art images are informed form. The informing of form has two elements. Form is informed firstly by the history in which those images are located, and secondly by their capacity to be reworked. The latter can be understood as a futural *coming-into-relation* and thus the possibility that images and the elements

from which they are comprised are able to have an afterlife.<sup>6</sup> The afterlife is forms capacity to continue to be informed. It is this latter possibility which necessitates that hermeneutic concerns supplant aesthetic ones in the creation of a philosophy of art.

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<sup>6</sup> For the development of this argument see Benjamin (2015).