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François Jullien

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4308-6361>

Paris Diderot University

FRANÇOIS JULLIEN ART AND DE-COINCIDENCE – AN INTRODUCTION

Abstract: The subject of this text is the relationship between art and de-coincidence understood as *arts operandi* that promotes innovation, creativity and the rediscovery of possibilities. This issue is examined against the backdrop of a comprehensive analysis of philosophical discourse, especially positions expressing a departure from the philosophy of being and the relationships/differences between the category of difference in the works of Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault and the category of de-coincidence introduced by Jullien. In order to familiarise the reader with the concept of de-coincidence, the author cites a number of examples of the *de-coincidental* in art, such as the emergence of impressionism, which can be understood as the discovery of new possibilities in painting, or the construction of the Eiffel Tower as an example of a processual transition from coincidence in architecture and the model of ‘beauty’ to *de-coincidence*. This narrative develops the main thesis, which emphasises the liberating significance of the *de-coincidence* attitude in art, which, through enlightenment, enables the discovery of new possibilities and promotes awareness of the enslaving significance of coincidence, which reassures the subject in the reproduction of established forms and meanings.

Keywords: art, de-coincidence, difference-de-coincidence, coincidence, rediscovery of possibilities

De-coincidence touches on art at both sides of its “creation”, or of what convenience would so have us call it: the sides both of the “artist” and of the “work of art”. On the one hand, how can the artist innovate, introduce “newness” in art, if not by opening a divide (*écart*) with present-day art: by undoing the coherence that has borne the art but also, and by the same token, brought it into conformity? How if not by fissuring the assurance and unfitting – “de-coinciding” – with it? On the other hand, how can the work of art promote its

capacity as a work of art, supply some new way of seeing or hearing, if not by fissuring the coincidence of what we see or hear, the coincidence of what has, in and of itself, dulled our ability to perceive at all? For this is no matter of time-worn or “customary” perception only. And it is thus by shifting away (*décalant*) from the adequation of the seen or the heard, where experience lies shut in, that music and painting (or theater, cinema, and so forth) can get newness to emerge – anew – in the realm of the sensible.

At issue in the one case are the work of art’s conditions of possibility in their effective character, and not just their character of a projected, or even trumpeted, rupture (break with the past). In the other case, we must pass from ontology, with its grounding in the “stability” of Being, to phenomenology, with its probing of the conditions of appearance. Yet a continuity exists between the two “sides,” and *de-coincidence* is the very link between them, deep down, bringing them into communication within a single logical frame.

Philosophical argument

The concept of *de-coincidence*,¹ then, proceeds from most general logic. When things “coincide” – when they cover each other completely, overlap completely, join together perfectly, in the primary, geometric sense of *coincidence* – the adequation is of course satisfying: “it fits” (« *ça colle* »). The result therefore forms a legitimate bond to its adequation, adheres to itself, comes to rest in its coincidence, and consequently becomes fixed and stable in it. It no longer detaches, so it bogs down, and then becomes paralyzed, sclerotic and sterile: there is no more play in its joint (*elle ne travaille plus*) and it becomes inert. “It fits” now takes on new meaning, for, unbeknownst to us, the adequation has turned glue-like, and we no longer disengage (*dégage*) from it. Once a positive, the coincidence has on its own turned into positivity: a positive that has set and deactivated, and can no longer work². We must therefore open a divide (*ouvrir un écart*) with respect to an adequation that has imposed itself but lives no more and serves as a dam: must *fissure* what has walled itself into an opacity that we do not see and that obstructs all deployment³ – be it in thought, art, or society. To treat art separately is thus a dubious procedure, which amounts to shutting it into a bad ideality. We must invariably de-coincide from what has reified by coincidence and is no longer open to question, what for that very

¹ F. Jullien, *Dé-coïncidence, d’où viennent l’art et l’existence*, Grasset, Paris 2018, “Livres de Poche” edition, Paris 2020. F. Jullien, *Rouvrir des possibles*, Éditions de l’Observatoire, Paris 2023.

² Jullien’s special term *travail* has the double sense of play (wobble room), as in a carpenter’s joint, and work (perform labor, fulfill a function, serve a purpose, be useful, etc.). (Translator’s note).

³ In the literal sense of unfolding (Translator’s note).

reason no longer works, if we are to muster initiative and *reopen possibilities* or “re-possiblize” (« *re-possibiliser* »), if we are once more to call forth emergence.

Singularity of *de-coincidence*

It all begins, it seems, with a *dis-* or an *un-* to mark an inaugural separation and reopen the future. If I found a need to forge the neologism *de-coincidence*, it is because de-coincidence would reduce to no other similar term with the same prefix (*dis-* in Latin). De-coincidence is not limited to *dissonance*, which is brought forth by *rupture* (a break with the past); or to *dissidence*, which dissociates by rupture, disjoins from the established. After all, Rupture is already something of a result, isn't it? None of these elucidate the whence or the how of the divide, nor what it liberates in terms of “possibility”. Moreover, these notions remain local, limited to the aesthetic or the political, and lack a more global understanding.

Difference, meanwhile, is the grand, dominant concept of the previous generation's philosophy, notably in France, and it served powerfully to overturn the reign of the metaphysics grounded in the Same and the One. It helped Foucault free the order of discourse from the illusion of *continuity* conveyed in terms of “tradition” or “mind,” and did so by restoring discourse to its effective “distribution” and dispersion. It helped Deleuze free the philosophy of Being from the illusion of the *foundation* (*fondement*), by bringing into view a swarm of more fundamental differences affirming themselves as such, permitting themselves to be neither subsumed nor exceeded, and yielding intensity. And it helped Derrida denounce the illusion of *presence*, through an elucidation of the sign's structure of reference and the deferment implied therein. Hence the conception of *difference* opens unto the philosophy of “games,” of the “system,” of “networks” and of “fascies” (« *faisceaux* »), in contradistinction to the monolithic nature of oppositions, the facile nature of synthesis, the mythic nature of the origin, or even the sovereign nature of Consciousness and the Subject.

Difference and de-coincidence

Difference and *de-coincidence* thus overlap in their project to leave ontology behind. Just as [Derrida's] *différance* “is” not, de-coincidence undoes what finds stability in “being,” gets blocked in it, and is no longer at work: we must set aside the philosophy of Being and think in terms of *operativity*. *Difference* and *de-coincidence* agree also in denouncing the ambiguity of the origin: just as *différance* is originary but bereft of an original state, because it is not a prime “being” (« *étant* » *premier*), de-coincidence comes “after,” because it undoes, but is itself endowed with initiative, and is truly creative. Both, moreover, free us from “beginnings” and “ends,” from the *arche* and the *telos*;

both agree insofar as they drive a crack through compacity, introducing play, tension and productivity. In fact, the French gerundive of *différance* is valid for de-coincidence (which would gain from a respelling with an *a*); and, likewise, *différance* is elucidated, in its structure of reference, as a decoincidence continuous with a present that never “presents” itself as such and thus can never coincide.

There remains the difference in perspective between the two concepts. While *différance* casts doubt on an impossible *presentation*, de-coincidence casts doubt on a sterile *adequation*: the former denounces the illusion of assignable presence, the latter – the illusion of satisfying coincidence. In general, philosophies of difference never erect the *divide* (*écart*) into a separate concept: it comes into play only in support of difference. For de-coincidence, however, it serves as a trigger and engine, or as the source of potential. De-coincidence takes on the perspective not of analysis or *distinction* but of un-jamming and *un-blocking*; it is a matter not of *description*, even of the most effective variety (this would still be difference), but of effectivation: it accounts for an advent’s condition of possibility, elucidates the negative interior that engages a new soaring – in other words, the *neg-active* – while at the same time being an “art of operation” (« *art d’opérer* »).

This results in a difference in the philosophical strategy. Difference is thought of as the great war machine sent forth against metaphysics. For we must “overturn everything” (Deleuze): favor “discord” over concord, the “nomadic” over the fixity of essences, the “dark” over the light, etc. – but it comes at a risk: that the overturning will, in a way, reestablish the same in inversion: “difference is behind all things” restores the background of hinter-worlds. By contrast, to *de-coincide* is not so majestic; it is discreet. The purpose is not to *overturn* but to *open a divide* (*ouvrir un écart*) that in and of itself destabilizes, to shatter the basis of set coincidence, and to let it crumble on its own. Nor is the purpose to subvert the sovereignty of consciousness and the subject, as the philosophy of Difference has dramatized it, but, instead, to consider the manner in which, *through de-coincidence*, a *realization* (*prise de conscience*) is operated, or an initiative of the subject’s is promoted. This realization of initiative would be “cracked,” or even “traversed by difference”. Difference proves fertile for Deleuze, enabling him to denounce “representation” in art as in thought, free it from its single perspective, and de-center it, remind us of the fervid, intensive differences that stir *beneath* representation, differences that representation tends to mask. This renders a good account indeed of a modernity in art. But when Foucault or Deleuze or Derrida thinks through art in itself, especially painting, it is not difference that sheds any light. De-coincidence, by contrast, makes of it a chosen land, first by casting doubt, because what is at issue with de-coincidence is *effectivation*, the old myth of Creation.

How can art innovate?

One is quick to say that an artist has “new ideas” or by invoking Rupture. But these new ideas or ruptures, however provocative, are not prime; the representation of Creation as a grand initial gesture is fascinating but largely mythical. For the artist must begin by fissuring the coincidence in which art presents itself to them: by de-coinciding with what is recognized today in art and as “art” – with the form of adequation that art has reached at present, and that earns it appreciation, but where it is already becoming immobile and “academic”. The painting selected for Salons is forever already on its way to coincidence.

If “ruptures” and “innovation” remain largely utopian as representations, it is because they are *projected*: we fail to see what could make the novelty *effectively* possible – what, that is, is in the conditions of its *effectivation*. To detach from the past we must undo the internal, and thereby justified, coherence in which the past has become immobile and that constitutes the established concord: in other words, the past’s “coincidence”. This, I think, is in fact the question an artist asks every morning, the question at the root of their anguish: how will I manage to fissure the artistic adequation that I achieved yesterday, and that therefore satisfies me, but that will lull me into complacency and cause me to repeat myself? It is already no longer operative and has ceased to work. To put my work back to work, take it back into the shop (*en chantier*), enable new possibilities to emerge, I must begin to move away – in both senses of the term “*décaler*”: I must shift, however slightly, from the acquired, immobilizing position and thereby enable myself to remove the “wedge” (« *cale* ») that holds the art fast and has let it find stability.

We can generalize this: a thinker – s/he who, by adhering to his adequation, settles into her/his “truth” – thinks only insofar as s/he de-coincides from the already thought. I think only insofar as I de-coincide from what I have already thought: from the adequation that I have reached in my thinking, and that therefore satisfies me, but where my thought, forming and shutting itself into a system, begins already to bog down. Yet, if this is a commonplace fact of experience, or even the very thing that constitutes “existence”, is it not also something we always struggle to consider? I live only insofar as I de-coincide from the lived, from the adequation of life that I have achieved. Otherwise, my life already folds in; its possibilities begin to *retract*. To “ex-ist,” in the literal, rigorous sense of “abide outside of”, is to extract oneself and *ex-apt oneself*, from the adequation in which life finds stability, tends to its homeostasis, and thus disactivates, begins to invert, beneath our notice, into inertia.

Of the “Impressionists”, or how to re-possibilize painting

In mid-nineteenth-century France, pictorial coincidence was still stable and assured: it still rested (“was wedged snug” (« *se cale* »)) on resemblance, perspective and dominant subjects: a herd of sheep with its shepherdess, mythological subjects, scenes from History, portraits. It was art whose adequation was approved as “art”, recognized and sold. There was evolution, of course, but the adequation endured and obstructed painting’s renewal. Painters entertained at the time no notion of a new art, but they sensed the blockage and began to fissure and un-seal (*dé-sceller*) the academic coincidence. And while this internal de-coincidence silently destabilized the established coherence, there were also de-coincidences from the outside: the discovery through travel (by train) of another landscape (the forest, then the seaside); technical competition from photography; the invention of the paint tube, which enabled outdoor painting. And so, painters began to paint the vibration of the air, the halo generated by light, the evanescence of contours and shapes, and shifted away or un-wedged themselves (*se dé-caler*) from representation; and perspective too ceased to dominate. Resemblance and perspective came to seem reassuring but gross, falsely evident, a matter of instruction; they came to seem modes of coincidence. And the new painting, with its shift away or un-wedging from the established coincidence, could only be “refused”, and its painters exhibit only on their own. But this is when painting did indeed get back to work, when it *emerged* and was *re-possibilized*.

“They ask me for a title, for the catalogue, because it really cannot pass for a view of Le Havre; I reply: put in *Impression*” (Claude Monet). The word was at first tossed off, a stopgap: there was yet no sense, no awareness, of how bold it was, but it was all the newer for remaining unknown. Of course, once “impression” became “impressionism”, began to gel into a system, was erected into truth, painting once more ran the risk of settling into coincidence: any “-ism” leads fatally to re-coincidence. Painting immobilized itself into assimilated, typified art even as it found a market at last. Painters must drive a new fissure through anything that was veering into academism: open a divide with respect to what now seemed but a first step into modernity and bring forth new “-isms” (pointillism, fauvism, cubism, etc.), one after another, at an ever-faster rate. Every *-ism*, by virtue of establishing itself as a settled thing, disactivates art and leads it to ruin. This is true also in philosophy.

The Eiffel Tower: from de-coincidence to super-coincidence

If ever a nineteenth-century work served to consecrate modernity, that work is what we call the “Eiffel Tower”. In it we see a new era, laud an

incredible stroke of daring: there is a new idea, sketched elsewhere but never before realized, and sufficient to split the history of architecture into a Before and an After. That tower, we say, reflects an “emancipation” of millennia of architecture. But can there be *emancipation* without the previous – effective, objective – work of de-coincidence to render “innovation” possible? Through dis-adherence and a shift (*dé-calage*) from the state of affairs: Eiffel was trained not in architecture but in engineering (he built bridges and train stations); he worked not with stone, the noble material *par excellence*, but with iron. From this ensued a de-coincidence with what had been the inveterate Coincidence of the “Beautiful,” the “Beau” in the “Beaux Arts”: the rival proposition of Bourdet, an architect then at the summit of his glory, was a traditional tower of stone but of exceptional height, and supplied, of course, with the ornament of statues – for what architectural beauty could there be without statues? This powerful *shift* in manner, or in the *art of operating* (*art d’opérer*), although not at first conceived of as such, was required to undo conditions of architecture that, to no one’s notice or shock, had been stuck in a rut: conditions under which architecture was admired but fixed. It was required for new conditions of possibility to emerge, call forth the invention of new forms and overturn the aesthetic.

Examining the tale behind the structure, however, we learn that the project was selected out of ministerial malice and saved from destruction by the margin of a single vote... Not only was the outcry against the tower general, but some of the most talented and modernist artists of the day (such as François Coppé and Guy de Maupassant) joined their voices to it. This goes to show how needful it is for *dis-adherence* to make its prior, patient way with respect to a coincidence that has frozen the canon of the Beautiful if we are once more to cast off and “set off” (*dés-amarrer et « démarrer »*) in art: so that a new aesthetic can *thereby* arise. The Eiffel Tower is no longer an iron pylon imitating a stone column, as it was designed to be. There rises instead, from its four massive feet, an invention, the openwork form of a thrust. This is why it remains unsurpassed by all the towers that have since risen to greater heights and entered into rivalry. But the monument, now imposed, has of course led back to coincidence, even to *super-coincidence*, the Eiffel Tower having become the established symbol of Paris, of France, of Modernity.

La Tourette, architecture of de-coincidence, or fissuring coincidence yields access to “mind”

If here there are concrete formations set up to face the big windows of corridors – “concrete flowers,” as they’re called – as if to obstruct any view of the

outdoors, it's because a window giving directly on to a "view" would soon make us forget the view, and we would find ourselves unable to pay it any heed: the screen obliges us to de-coincide with the expected view, to step back from the customary convenience, so that we can accede to the landscape *at an oblique* (*de biais*). The Couvent de La Tourette, Le Corbusier's last great architectural work, is remarkable for more than a contrast between geometry and the gentle harmony of its surrounding hills, more than the way the harsh, bare concrete serves as a foil for the delicate play of light – things for which the site has received much praise. We would expect to find a dominant belfry, piercing the sky and of an extolling height, but there is none: the bells are relegated to a niche. Instead, the imposing mass is set on piles and allows the void – "sky" – to pass underneath: so deliberately is the architecture organized here, *in virtue of de-coincidence*. If the window is divvied up into various "undulating" patches, rather than exposed in continuum, in one piece, as a "bay window"; or if the light penetrates only through fissures, aslant, rather than spreads out and illuminates all equally; or if we must descend to reach the church rather than ascend, in accord with the correct movement of elevation; or if the entrance door is off axis or the oratory door offset to the side, or if we must swerve (*se déporter*) to reach the altars of the crypt, it's because all of these shifts (*décalages*) open a divide between us and what is planned and admissible but therefore de-primed (*désamorcé*) – all this so that we might *accede* (*accéder*), but accede to what?

The matter is no longer that the divide (*écart*) disengages (*dégage*) adequations that have been bogged down and gone sterile, that a virgin space is freed up once more upon the initiative, and that new possibilities can emerge within it. We go a step further. *As these things are occurring*, through the very operation of de-coincidence, by the dis-adherence that it provokes, the voiding that it produces, the "mind" (« *de l'esprit* ») activates or operates (*opère*) anew. This finds exemplary justification in the case of a convent, but doesn't the Eiffel Tower already express this with its form of openwork thrust and eradication? We could say, in the most general fashion, that *mind* is the *product* of de-coincidence. At least if we understand that when I say "mind", I mean it in the partitive, in the manner of "some bread" (« *du pain* ») or "some wine" (« *du vin* »), and thus in contrast to "Mind" (« *de l'Esprit* ») as the subject of metaphysics, over which much ink has been spilled in philosophy and from which "spiritualism" derives as a marked form of idealism. *Some* "mind" (*de l'« esprit »*) has no relation to another order or level of the real, as dualism would have it⁴. Rather, it is – this "is" demands immediate correction – what disengages and is promoted by de-coincidence. Promoted, first of all, by de-coincidence with the "letter", and

⁴ See F. Jullien, *Raviver de l'esprit, un diagnostic du contemporain*, Éditions de l'Observatoire, Paris 2023, ch. VII, "De l'esprit, concept de combat."

then with what sets and fits into its adequation, conforms to and takes comfort in it, sets to become a “thing” or *reifies*: immobilizes in its sterile *being-there*, soars no more – becomes some “being”. Mind “is” not, but deploys and radiates, takes us from slackness (*l'étalement*) to soaring (*l'essor*), spills over from the bounded and the confined, dis-excludes and de-opacifies: propagates and renders communicative through *disengagement*. This is undergone the most within the sensible, and art is forever activating it.

Being is coincidence, or why to be-present is to bog down (why dispense with ontology)

So, we mustn't shy away from what is becoming the most radical of questions as we confront coincidence established in Being: that is, ontology. For Being, insofar as it “is”, is in perfect adequation with itself. “All is self-similar always”, in the words of Parmenides⁵, Being's first philosopher. It is “one continuous one” and therefore compact, for “thou shalt not separate Being from clinging to Being.” It is immobile and “sated with Being”, remains “the same”. “Self through itself it reposes,” being throughout “the same in the same”. It is shut and sealed in itself – in “self-sameness” (« *en-soi* »), one will say – and knows neither crack nor future: nothing befalls it. It is in Being, then, that Coincidence finds its foundation. It is, Plato logically says, “itself by itself”, *auto kath'hauto*, in cohesion and complete adhesion with itself; because it is “beingly being” (*ontôs on*), with no difference or only distance to give it play, it is blocked in its reassuring “stability”. It therefore needs the introduction of the negative of a regarding “non-being” to shake off its identity and enter into a dialectic: to open itself up to the “other” (Plato) or bring forth “becoming” (Hegel). Being in perfect adequation with self-sameness, or, in other words, coinciding with itself, is dead: it bogs down in its being-there, the snug fit of its self-sameness (*emboîtement de soi en soi*) has walled it in and disactivated it.

This is indeed what we feel in the flesh, through experience, from the phenomenon of presence, whose literal meaning is “be before” (*prae-esse*): by coinciding with itself, by setting up in self-sameness, in its “being-there,” *presence* disactivates or *de-effectivates* (*se dés-effective*). Only against the ground of absence, or when permeated by the void, can presence, de-coinciding and unfitting from itself, come forth again and become sensible. No one, I think, has put it better than Lucretius: for nothing could be more marvelous than the color of the sky and its heavenly bodies in the “incomparable light” that surges suddenly to our eyes – that would exceed all imagination. Because the

⁵ All English translations of Parmenides derived from Thomas Davidson, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, ed. E.P. Grey, F. Roeslein, St. Louis 1869. (Translator's note).

sky is forever spread before us, always present before our eyes; however, we are weary, sated, with the sight of it, *fessus satiate videndi*, and deign to look at it no more. Ever present before us, it sets itself in its presence and ceases to appear: coinciding with its being-there, it is withdrawn from the apparent and *emerges no more*.

Art in de-coinciding renders apparent

Yet “to be” is “to be present”, as we have said since the Greeks. But isn’t this *be present*, so serene, so trusting in itself because it is settled in Being, threatened from within by the serenity and security of “being”? Presence withers in its slack, stifled by its continuity and contiguity alike. No longer de-marking itself, being goes unnoticed and bogs down in its coincidence. Not, however, that it risks disappearing, for its disappearance would serve on the contrary and, by opposition, bring out its arrival into presence and appearance. What it risks, I would say, is “dis-appearing”: in other words, and by inversion, a withdrawal from appearance through the saturation and satiety of its appearance. The sun disappears in the evening over the horizon because its presence steals away and is hidden. But Being, on the contrary, *dis-appears*, because it is settled in its presence, never comes unstuck or shifts from it: it is erased from perception by virtue of exposure to perception or coincidence with its perception. While disappearance is the withdrawal pure and simple of presence and appearance, *dis-appearance* is the death in situ of appearance, presence bogging down in presence and appearance being erased within appearance itself, because it detaches no more and permits its own absorption.

This is what art is forever struggling and revolting against. It is forever defying this erosion of appearance by burial coincident with emergence-stifling being. Or, let us say, in the most general terms, that art’s function is to fissure the adequation and conformity of Being with itself, whose yield is a paralyzed presence that appears no more. Rather than to “represent” or, under cover of representation, to *open a divide* with respect to a *dis-appearance* in which Being (presence) succumbs on its own by adhering to itself and in which it demobilizes and becomes sterile, art’s function is to yield the *de-coincidence* of the fatality of Being, which, when overlapping perfectly with itself, when fitted snug into its self-sameness, leads to its own burial and succumbing. What we ordinarily think of as the “weariness” of perception is but the subjective corollary, so needful it is to fissure and spill over from the coincidence into which our perception has settled – but to what end? So as to be able to hear what I will call its “un-heard” (« *in-oud’* »): not that of the “extraordinary,” as the dictionary would have it, but indeed that of the *most ordinary*, which is not “heard” because it is too well settled in the perceived⁶. All of the *divides* that the arts

open, various as they are, and achieved with the most diverse strategies, serve to yield the renewed emergence of this *un-heard*, which apprehension can no longer feel – just as the “poetic divide” (« *écart poétique* ») already serves to do with respect to the convention and expectation of language.

Arts elucidated by de-coincidence

The relation is thus reciprocal: the arts are elucidated from the revelation within them of decoincidence, and they in turn elucidate logic. Accordingly, I would like to thank here the artists who over the past few years have used the concept of *de-coincidence* to present their work, putting its operativity into play and thereby promoting and reinforcing it⁷. If the landscape artist Florence Mercier opens a furrow of pebbles all the way across a meadow, end to end, like a brook, it is to use the effect of a divide and dehiscence to yield a de-coincidence of the expanse from its flatness and spread, force the expanse out of its dis-appearance (see the *Grand Mail du Parc des Lilas*). If the painter Henri Darasse conceives of “effect” in painting as de-coincidence, it is because he is attentive to the moment of that tiny shift or un-wedging, the moment when the effect begins to emerge and, without our being able to predict it, to determine whether it will be productive or not. But suppose it does turn out to be productive and fertile; doesn’t the pictorial practice, becoming repetitive in its exploitation (*exploitation*)⁸, risk a reversion to coincidence (as explored in his work *Faire Forgé* at the Château de Cassan)?

This is not the matter only of being’s bogging down in its being-there spread (*étalé*) before our eyes and of the visual. How can we get people today, in a de-Christianized world, to hear a religious composition like Johann Sebastian Bach’s *St. John Passion*? In the staging of Sasha Waltz and conductor Leonardo García Alarcón, part of the stage is at first occupied by actors, men and women, who advance nude and then busy themselves with sewing machines, making an ever-louder din; the choir is dispersed throughout the hall. It is necessary to begin with this coincidence of the world with itself, with nude humanity condemned to alienation in labor, so that the sacred melody can afterwards begin to *be heard* – *by de-coincidence* – in its un-heard. Because the world, in the weft of its interests and closure in “worldness”, is by nature coincident. Hence the de-coincidence demanded of the audience, who have come ritually (or sociologically) to “hear some Bach” and who pass first from surprise to stupefaction, or even to sniggers: now they are themselves prey to the *work of de-coincidence*, which

⁶ See F. Jullien, *De l’inouï, l’autre nom de ce si lassent réel*, Grasset, Paris 2017.

⁷ See F. L’Yvonnet and M. Guillaume, eds., *Pratiques de la dé-coïncidences*, Éditions de l’Observatoire, Paris 2023.

⁸ In the sense of use, yield, or operation, not of abuse (Translator’s note).

will permit the music to emerge. This is opposed also to *counter-coincidence*, so readily in fashion, which is nothing more than provocation by inversion, aesthetic or ideological, and for this very reason disturbs no one. The same goes, of course, for politics.

Likewise, when the composer Aurélien Dumont transcribes a musical work by modifying its components (harmony, instrumentation, or form, in what he calls an “arrangement”), it can of course not be a matter of adequation coincident with the anterior music, even by different means, or else the *soaring* (*essor*) that makes the work would be lost. It is a matter of opening a divide with it, and even of de-coinciding with its harmony, so as to bring the original work into perception (listen to Webern’s transcription of Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Musical Offering* or Aurélien Dumont’s own transcription of Barbara’s song “Gauguin”). Are these not, more generally, the very requirements of any musical interpretation? As Stéphane Gaulier has shown at the harpsichord, the interpreter’s task is to *de-coincide* with the previous interpretation – now the subject of agreement and no longer heard – so as to open a divide with respect to it, thereby *reopen possibilities* (*rouvrir des possibles*) in the work and bring out the non-heard (*l’in-entendu*), the literal “un-heard” (« *in-oud* »). For the danger is always re-coincidence, the bogging down and un-priming of perception. Also, if tradition already calls for an “uneven” metrical execution to bring out a piece’s tonality, this unevenness, risking a return to *coincidence*, itself calls us to conceive of an “uneven unevenness” that dares to jut forth from the very unevenness within the prescribed unevenness and thereby leave behind the expected de-coincidence even as it returns to heard coincidence.

The same goes for players on the stage. As Cyril Desclés has shown, it is a matter of undoing the coincidence that establishes itself between the scenic and the textual, and ends up covering what is fundamentally “at play”: when in *Don Juan* Monsieur Dimanche is invited to take a seat in an armchair, if there is no armchair onstage, the divide opens with what the text seems to postulate, raises more latent dramatic stakes and thereby brings *some un-heard* back into earshot in what has become a hackneyed theater-school scene. Nor can we neglect the extent to which cinema is in itself a *device for de-coincidence*, as Jean-Michel Frodon has explained. There is a shift between the time of the shoot and the time in which the film is viewed; between the “subject” of the image and what we see of it; between the player on the screen’s modes of presence and the script; and, finally, in the relation to the “real” that cinema proposes and is not to coincide – far from it – with sensorial realism: consider, for instance, cinema’s resistance to 3D. Aside from being a device for de-coincidence, however, cinema de-naturalizes the mechanisms of representation and narration, upstream from any “message”. Cinema is therefore made to *produce de-coincidence politically*: to serve as a tool and weapon enabling us to set aside ideology, which as such is always coincident. That is ideology’s very

definition: any idea becomes “ideology” when it is collectively assimilated to the point of no longer eliciting any doubt or even suspicion, and is thus no longer dis-adhered from. It is therefore by decoinciding with this settled pseudo-obviousness, itself generating adherence, that art can yield a “realization” (*provoquer une « prise de conscience »*) or *de-ideologize*.

De-coincidence yields realization

If contemporary philosophy has cast suspicion on all ideology around the sovereignty of Consciousness, if it has waged steadfast battle against the principle of a “constitutive” consciousness paired with the “founding” status of the Subject (Foucault, Deleuze), as in the basis of idealism, it must instead cling to the capacity to “become aware” (*« prendre conscience »*) in its effective operative character. In French we would *take*, *grasp*, or *seize* awareness (*prendre conscience*), whereas in English we *become* aware or “realize”. We might in the end posit the two as alternatives – *realize* or *represent*: “represent” is coincident, because it implies adherence to the representation; but it is by *means of a divide* that we become aware of a reality or “realize” – even in psychoanalysis, which requires de-coincidence with the settled form of consciousness if a patient is to escape *dis-appearance*, the buried, or the repressed.

De-coincide, in sum, with respect to what? To the coincidence of the mind, we might say, this time taking “mind (*« esprit »*) in its codified, ordering, normative, even hypostasized sense, and thus curbing consciousness in its capacity; and not, as before, in its rebel usage, in the partitive, disengaging – by dis-enclosure (*dé-clôture*) – from the stuff of reification. Because now that we have defined consciousness as “the mind’s immediate being-there,” *unmittelbare Dasein des Geistes* (Hegel), the *taking* of awareness detaches from the coincident logic of the mind on which truth has traditionally rested. Or let us say that that I “take” awareness and yield *emergence* by de-coinciding with the coincidence through which the mind finds satisfaction and justification in its being-there, regularly “present” and in conformity with itself – but that in so doing, the mind passes from consciousness into lethargy.

After all, to what extent is the coincidence required by the mind and not, in effect, a reassuring illusion of the mind? Already at the most elementary level of my experience, that of perception, there can be no proper coincidence between the world and me. I do not possess even my vision, because it escapes into the thing seen: “already my body, as *metteur en scène* of my perception, has shattered the illusion of a coincidence of perception with things in themselves,” says Merleau-Ponty. Or, to put it in ethical but still phenomenological terms, if self-coincident Being seals itself in its mute *in-self* (*en soi*), then the for-self (*pour soi*) of the human – not through which the human “is” but through which

the human “exists” – comes from the fact that consciousness *ex-ists* as an escape from self, “the being of consciousness not coinciding with itself in its whole adequation” (Sartre). Because, to give it at last its most general statement, what became “human” became human, in nature, by *de-coinciding* with “nature”: an impalpable *fissure* slipped, through the human, into the world, to get Being out of its being-there, which was opaque and becoming compact in its coincidence. Hence the *coming* of consciousness to the self, and the origin and possibility of art. But this effect of consciousness is always at risk of being lost and the world of dis-appearing. It is therefore by *fissuring* the coincidence in which consciousness bogs down and sleeps, and thus by opening a divide with respect to the regime of coincidence established by the mind, that art, in de-coinciding, yields *emergence*: gets the work to emerge within the world and at the same time before the perception of the subject. But is this not even truer of our modernity?

De-coincidence and modernity

There have undoubtedly been two eras of art, as of philosophy and of society. The first one, which extends into France’s *Âge Classique*, is the era in which Coincidence reigned. We believed at first in a world of “order”: “Being” was the seat of its stability, “God” its creator and guarantor; it had “Nature” to “agree” with. There was therefore *something to coincide with*, and art’s vocation was essentially to “move” and “instruct” by “representing”, to be source at once of *pathos* and of *ethos*; and the “beautiful” was still legitimately the “beautiful representation of a thing” (Kant, in the opening of his *Critique of Judgment*).

But with the fissuring of this world order, origin of modernity, and the unitary concept of a “world” suddenly becoming untenable (already in Kant), the world must accept that it is no longer an order but a “game”: *Weltspiel*, as Nietzsche said. Here representation loses its foundation, there is no longer anything to coincide with, and coincidence becomes fraudulent or imposed through violence: imposed by dictatorship or, in a softer way, by the media, the market and hyper-technicity. And so, de-coincidence is today required to fissure ideological blockages, in society and philosophy alike, and recall art to its vocation by accounting for the one thing as much as for the other: for the capacity of the artist to produce newness and of the work of art to bring the un-heard into earshot.

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FRANÇOIS JULLIEN SZTUKA I DE-KOINCENCJA. WPROWADZENIE (streszczenie)

Przedmiotem tekstu są związki sztuki z *de-koïncydencją* ujmowaną jako sztuka działania sprzyjająca innowacyjności, twórczości – ponownemu odkrywaniu możliwości. Zagadnienie to rozpatrywane jest na tle pojemnej analizy dyskursu filozoficznego, zwłaszcza stanowisk wyrażających odejście od filozofii bytu i związków-odmienności między kategorią różnicy w pracach Deleuze, Derridy czy Foucaulta a kategorią *de-koïncydencji* wprowadzoną przez Julliena. Przybliżając czytelnikowi pojmowanie tego konceptu *de-koïncydencji* autor przytacza szereg przykładów postaw *de-koïncydentnych* w sztuce, jak np. pojawienie się impresjonizmu, który można inaczej pojmować jako odkrycie ponownych możliwości w malarstwie, czy też konstrukcję wieżę Eiffla jako przykład procesualnego przejścia od koïncydencji w architekturze i modelu „piękna”, do *de-koïncydencji*. W tej narracji rozwijana jest główna teza zorientowana na podkreślanie wyzwającego znaczenia postawy *de-koïncydencji* w sztuce, która poprzez olśnienie umożliwia odkrycie nowych możliwości oraz sprzyja uświadomieniu zniewalającego znaczenia koïncydencji uspokajającej podmiot w odtwarzaniu utrwalonych form i znaczeń.

Słowa kluczowe: sztuka, *de-koïncydencja*, różnica-*de-koïncydencja*, koïncydencja, ponowne odkrycie możliwości

François Jullien – French philosopher, Hellenist, sinologist, who develops original concepts of transformation suspended between Chinese and European thought in his numerous books. In his works, he reflects on interculturality and the philosophy of existence and life. He proposes a different approach to change, which he situates as thinking about transformations. He is one of the contemporary French thinkers whose works have been translated into more than 20 languages. He is the founder and president of the Association De-coïncidence (L'Association Décoïncidences).

François Jullien's work is known to Polish readers thanks to existing translations of his books into Polish: *Pochwała nieokreśloności. Zapiski o myśli i estetyce Chin*, transl. B. Szymańska,

A. Śpiewak, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2006; *Drogą okrężną i wprost do celu. Strategie sensu w Chinach i Grecji*, transl. M. Falski, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2006.

In June 2024, at the invitation of the Łódź Scientific Society, François Jullien visited Poland, giving a series of lectures at meetings with readers of his latest book in Polish: *Ponownie otworzyć możliwości: kolejne życie, de-koincydencja. Wybór tekstów*, transl. and ed. E. Marynowicz-Hetka, Łódź 2024, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, in which he develops the category of *de-coincidence* understood as *ars operandi* /the art of action/life, oriented towards reopening possibilities and noticing the cracks of transformation.