“Metaphors, tropes, and figural language in general have been a perennial problem and, at times, a recognized source of embarrassment for philosophical discourse and, by extension, for all discursive uses of language including historiography and literary analysis.” In his well know and frequently cited essay from 1978, “The Epistemology of Metaphor,” Paul de Man depicts a simple contrast in writings from John Locke to Immanuel Kant. Philosophy, according to de Man:

“either has to give up its own constitutive claim to rigor in order to come to terms with the figurality of its language or... it has to free itself from figuration altogether. And if the latter is considered impossible, philosophy, could at least learn to control figuration by keeping it, so to speak, in its place, by delimiting the boundaries of its influence and thus restricting the epistemological damage that it may cause.” (34)

Of course, according to de Man, philosophy, historiography, and literary analysis cannot control their metaphors; they cannot escape the figurative power of language. It is as if all attempts to develop a language of exactitude are doomed to fail. Figurative language, it seems, is therefore unavoidable. Metaphors and tropes infiltrate philosophies precisely because these discourses seek to avoid them. Not
even the distinction between a rigorous, precise language and metaphorical speech is possible without drawing on metaphors.

The deconstructive mechanisms of Paul de Man’s readings are well known, and I will not tempt to reinforce them. I believe that more than three decades after his first publication at least some of de Man’s assumptions should be questioned. How are we to understand, for instance, the terms “metaphor” and “figurality” with which de Man seems to summarize the rhetorical tropes of philosophical discourses? Are they synonymous? Shouldn’t we at least put the term “metaphor” into the plural in order to caution and remind ourselves that the roles and theories of metaphors can be approached from different perspectives? More importantly, shouldn’t we also question de Man’s demarcation of rigorous and literary languages? Even the history of mathematics and science cannot be dissociated from the history of aesthetics. Even the sciences—say, for instance, Quantum Physics—are dealing with the representation of “unrepresentable” and inaccessible objects, which have always been a part of the philosophical discourses de Man is referring to (see Plotnitsky). And the recent interest in poetics of knowledge in the humanities seems to suggest precisely this: that is, that the boundaries between scientific and tropical languages have become porous, that both languages are inextricably intertwined. These poetics of knowledge, or at least one of the most important proponents of this topic, Michel Foucault, will be the subject of my talk. What, then, is the role of metaphors in Foucault’s epistemological writings?

But first I would like to return to a philosopher that de Man analyzes extensively in “The Epistemology of Metaphor” and in several other essays. For Paul
de Man, Immanuel Kant’s writings are exemplary for his thesis that philosophy is condemned to be literary, and that the distinction between a rigorous language and literary tropes is itself metaphorical. Indeed, one finds numerous passages in Kant where he seems to delineate two different forms of representation: that is, he distinguishes a precise language of the sciences from the ambiguities of metaphors. In his *Critique of Judgment*, for instance, he recounts the brief anecdote of a shipwreck landing on an unknown coast. Not knowing whether he has washed up on inhabited or deserted land, the castaway suddenly notices geometric figures in the sand. It is a comforting sight. According to Kant, the existence of the figures signifies that the island is inhabited: geometric shapes are signs of human reason:

> “If in a seemingly uninhabited country a man perceives a geometrical figure, say a regular hexagon, inscribed on the sand, his reflection busied with such a concept would attribute, although obscurely, the unity in the principle of its genesis to reason, and consequently would not regard as a ground of the possibility of such a shape the sand, or the neighboring sea, or the winds, or beasts with familiar footprints, or any other irrational cause.” (§64; 216)

The anecdote is but one example of the numerous geometric figures in Kant’s critical philosophy. Triangles, circles, or simple straight lines abound in his writings as symbols of pure reason or rational humanity. But Kant has a particular inclination for another element of Aristippus’ anecdote: the raw, imponderable sea, which denotes the opposite of reason. An image of the irrational, it warns his readers not
to stray too far from the safe shores of rational thinking. For Kant, “the straight line of truth” is a purely terrestrial phenomenon.

The anecdote is worth mentioning here because it obviously contains the two different forms of representation Paul de Man is referring to. On the one hand, the raw sea, a site of danger, is the dominant metaphor. On the other hand, the geometric figure, clear and precise, denotes the exact, rigorous language of the sciences. The figure of a hexagon or triangle is not an arbitrary image, but the shape of a calculable mathematical form. Kant writes elsewhere that the philosophical language is discursive, and as such it relies on metaphors, on a language that can be ambiguous, ambivalent, and threatening like the imponderable sea. One must “venture from the bottomless abyss of metaphysics,” he writes in his 1763 *Demonstration of God*, a “dark shoreless ocean, marked by no beacons. One must proceed as the mariner proceeds on an unnavigated sea”. (A5) It is precisely for this reason that Kant sees in geometric shapes a model and ideal of exactitude for which the philosophical discourse needs to strive, even if it might never be able to achieve the same kind of rigor, even if philosophy’s metaphors can at best imitate the exactness of geometric forms. Kant’s geometrical images are part of a linguistic program (his poetics, so to speak) in which he seeks to find analogies of a precise language. One of the most prominent examples in this context is the drawing of lines that Kant repeatedly describes. I quote from his *Critique of Pure Reason*:

“But in order to cognize something in space, e.g., a line, I must draw it, and thus synthetically bring about a determinate combination of the given
manifold, so that the unity of this action is at the same time the unity of consciousness (in the concept of a line), and thereby is an object (a determinate space) first cognized. The synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective condition of all cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand in order to become an object for me, since in any other way, and without this synthesis, the manifold would not be united in one consciousness.” (B137-8)

The line is an image that man has not copied from nature, but generated independently. It is not a mimetic imitation, but rather the product of the rational subject, and thus an object capable of being reliably cognized. As Kant illustrates in this passage, the line is a form that the subject can be conscious of because reason itself generated the line. In drawing a line, the synthetic effort of the faculty of reason is illustrated quite literally. It is the expression of a controlled imagination. For this reason, drawing a line is also never purely subjective; on the contrary, in drawing a line the hand of the subject seems to be guided by reason. Just as geometry dictates how to construct a triangle, it is the task of metaphysics to show how a subject can only recognize what its own laws have previously contrived; the line is not a romantic arabesque, but a shape resulting from controlled reason.

But the line does more than make its own a priori visible. Precisely because Kant is so fond of repeating this example, it seems to be one of the foundational motifs for Kant’s writing. Here is another example:
“We cannot think of a line without drawing it in thought, we cannot think of a circle without describing it, we cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without placing these lines perpendicular to each other at the same point, and we cannot even present time without, in drawing a straight line (which is to be the external figurative representation of time), attending merely to the action of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine the inner sense, and thereby attending to the succession of this determination in inner sense. Motion, as action of the subject (not as determination of an object), consequently the synthesis of the manifold in space and attend solely to the action in accordance with which we determine the form of inner sense, first produces the concept of succession at all.” (B 154–55)

As far as the content is concerned, this passage resembles the one cited above, with the addition of time—namely the time taken to draw the line, which makes succession visible as a form of synthesis. Yet it is also revealing that Kant’s line connotes something else. It stands for space and for the time that elapses in producing a line. One could, therefore, read the line as an expression to which Kant assigns several meanings. In the end he argues here specifically that the line should be the conception of time. The line is not merely a mark; it “describes” the circle, portrays time, and thus comprises an abundance of meanings—or better, a series of meanings—that Kant links in their description. The movement Kant describes is not
just the “I think” with which the subject accompanies his synthesized perceptions, nor just the thinking subject, but it is also the writing subject. When a line is drawn, a chronology emerges, a linearity that unfolds like the text, which ends and is deferred in the process of addressing further connotations of the line. In this way, Kant’s text enacts a movement that begins with the line as a physical stroke and an empirical image, and that extends into perceptions—that is, into meanings that can only be evoked indirectly. And yet at the same time, it is a concrete image, a drawing and a sign for the text and its temporality, a sign that portrays the literal unfolding of the very scene of writing. The line, therefore, represents the linearity of the text, the course of a certain path, and, insofar as it has two endpoints, also “stands” for a passage in a text, a figure. It represents the unity of an object that emerges from the path of the text. The path of this text now leads into a deeper consideration of the concepts of the figural line and the linear text through taking a look at Kant’s turn toward language.

The drawing of the line does not only illustrate the rational subject, it is also a motif for Kant’s writing in which he develops his theory. It is an image for Kant’s poetics, the writing of his philosophical discourse. The line illustrates a rigorous discourse that needs to be distinguished from most metaphysics. It is his own writing hand that Kant alludes to, and it is his writing that delineates his discourse from philosophical metaphors in a quite literal sense. In his short essay, On a Newly Raised Tone on Philosophy, for instance, Kant writes about the expressions of effusive philosophers, their mythical language, and their purely figurative vernacular that replaces concepts with metaphors. These exemplify a language that
cannot control its figurality. In his *Logic*, Kant writes: “The first philosophers, by the way, clothed everything in pictures. For poetry, which is nothing but thoughts in the clothing of pictures, is older than prose. Therefore, even for things that are solely objects of pure reason, one had to avail oneself at first of a picture language and poetic style.” (A31f) For Kant, poetic metaphor remains permanently precarious by virtue of its imagery; metaphors are as imponderable as the raw sea. It is, then, no coincidence that Kant illustrates the faculty of reason and its rigorous discourse with the drawing of a line rather than linguistically; metaphors and language in general do not have the same cognitive function, according to Kant. Ideally, philosophy can see through the trappings of its own medium and keep its metaphors in place.

Kant’s perhaps most explicit and elaborate theory of language can be found in §59 of his *Critique of Judgment*, a section in which he defines two different kinds of representation, the schematic and the symbolic hypotyposes:

“All hypotyposis (representation, *subiecto sub adspectum*), or sensible illustration is twofold. It is either *schematic*, when a concept comprehended by the understanding the corresponding intuition is given, or it is *symbolical*. In the latter case, to a concept only thinkable by the reason, to which no sensible intuition can be adequate, an intuition is supplied with which accords a procedure of the judgment analogous to the rule of this procedure, not to the intuition itself, consequently to the form of reflection merely and not to its content.” (255)
Kant’s conception of hypotyposis has been much discussed. Of particular interest was Kant’s concept of the symbolic representation upon which all philosophy depends because concepts like the moral law cannot be illustrated in concreto, as in geometry. For the philosophical discourse metaphors are inevitable; they function indirectly and "by means of an analogy (for which we avail ourselves even of empirical intuitions) in which the judgment exercises a double function, first applying the concept to the object of a sensible intuition, and then applying the mere rule of the rule made upon that intuition to a quite different object of which the first is only the symbol. Thus a monarchical state is represented by a living body if it is governed by national laws, and by a mere machine (like a hand mill) if governed by an individual absolute will; but in both cases only symbolically." (256)

Symbolic hypotyposes, or metaphors, stem from analogies. They are terms that deploy an expression where no image is possible, attempting to fill this gap with an expressive resemblance to the concept of reason. Whereas symbolic representation—and thus the discourse of philosophy—depends on metaphors, the schematic hypotyposis is a representation of a concept and its corresponding intuition. Like the geometrical line or a triangle, these representations are concrete because their images are directly related to their objects: the triangle is what it means. In order to understand a triangle, one needs to know how to draw it. Like a diagram it entails the rules of its own construction and can therefore symbolize the faculty of reason.
As in the previously quoted anecdote of the shipwrecked man who finds geometrical figures inscribed in the sand, here Kant distinguishes two different modes of representation: a language of exactitude, of calculable, schematic forms, and a language of symbolic representation with an entirely arbitrary relation between the representation and the concept it stands for. But whereas the anecdote seemed to depict a clear delineation between both modes of representation—the geometrical shape and the raw, imponderable sea—, Kant’s theory of hypotyposis suggest a slightly different view. Despite the fundamental difference and split between the two different modes of representation, it is striking that for Kant symbolization shares a procedure with schematization. According to Paul de Man at least, even in schematic representations the images or geometric shapes are attributed to rational concepts, they, too, are substitutions. The only difference, then, between symbolic and schematic representations is that metaphors are not as closely related to the concepts they represent. Although the schematic representation is the more reliable trope, it is not opposed to metaphorical language. But as a specific case of representation, metaphors are clearly relegated to a secondary position. To put that in a different way, Kant describes the schematic hypotyposis as an origin of semiotics and as the foundation of symbolic practices. Geometrical figures (like lines and triangles) are first signs, but as representations (like metaphors) they become forms of substitution.

One can conclude from this reading, like Paul de Man does, that metaphors abound in Kant’s writing, and that Kant cannot maintain the delimitation of the figurative power of language. If both forms of representation are based on the same
process of substitution, then the distinction between rigorous and the metaphorical language seems to become obsolete. “All philosophy is condemned,” Paul de Man writes “to the extent that it is dependent on figuration, to be literary and, as the depository of this very problem, all literature is to some extend philosophical” (50).
But rather than finding an incoherence in Kant’s language, one could also conclude that Kant’s theory of representation is an epistemology of metaphor in a more literal sense. By subsuming the linguistic sign under a more general theory of representation, Kant enables us to see metaphors in their epistemic context. Metaphors not only have a history (a history of their usage), they are historical, which means that the metaphorical form of substitution can be related to other epistemic practices. The geometric images Kant chooses are images of a specific geometry, figures which we have to imagine in a Euclidean coordinate system. To be sure, Kant drew on Euclidean geometry precisely because he believed it to be ahistorical: the meaning of a triangle cannot be altered. At the same time, however, he was well aware that other non-Euclidean geometries of higher dimensions or curved spaces were possible, and that these spaces would, of course, also change the drawing of lines and geometric shapes.

Kant’s spatial a priori is Euclidean. His examples are related to a history of science, and he thus opened the possibility of thinking about metaphors epistemologically. If we were to modify Kant’s condition of knowledge, the Euclidean space, we might also conceive the practice of substitution in a different way. Because Kant’s epistemological writings are not based on a linguistic theory of language, but rather on the assumption that symbolic significations are just one
possible form of “language” in a broader sense, Kant’s theory of hypotyposes might also serve as an introduction to the contemporary interest in the poetics of knowledge. In Michel Foucault, for instance, we find a similar attempt to demote the linguistic paradigm. The sentence, according to Foucault in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, cannot serve as the foundation of our cultural analysis because we have to consider other forms of signification, too. Tables or graphs are likewise forms of knowledge that we cannot neglect if we want to understand what constitutes our epistemes. Before I turn to Foucault’s *Archaeology* and to his poetics of representation, I would like to first introduce some of his concepts and his mode of writing in a brief comment on his earlier book, *The Order of Things* from 1966.

Foucault describes spaces of analogy and difference in order to connect knowledge of biology, economics, and language with philosophical reflections from the same era, in order to make visible the structures of knowledge of a period. In order to do so, borders of our conventional histories must be redrawn, “things usually far apart are brought closer, and vice versa” (x), so we can see the appearance of figures peculiar to the different epistemes. Foucault describes “spaces of knowledge,” the “totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences”. Instead of a historical designation of an epoch, which showcases movements and trends in chronological order, Foucault outlines epistemic spaces, structures of knowledge. Rather than explaining, for example, the history of knowledge against the backdrop of historic events, Foucault seeks to avoid a narrative that smoothens out the discontinuities between the different
epistemologies and instead grounds his archaeology in three simple spatial figures: a circle, a square, and a triangle.

The Renaissance, which is the earliest period he examines, had a circular structure because its knowledge was based on correspondences: every sign seemed to correspond to another; the microcosm mirrored the macrocosm. The walnut, for instance, promised to ease headaches simply because its shape resembles the brain. The following period, the Classical Age, is based on a different model: Foucault’s reconstruction of this period’s theories of language, of money and natural history shows that the knowledge of the Classical Age was organized as a tableau or, to put it more simply, a square. The actual content of Foucault’s description is less relevant here than the fact that his own writing meticulously follows these structures: Foucault describes axes and their intersections and sketches these peculiar figures. The writing of his archaeology, his poetics, is what interests me here, particularly in regards to his description of the nineteenth century, the third episteme he analyzes in *The Order of Things*. The new sciences of the nineteenth century, philology, biology, and political economics, do not establish themselves in lieu of the structure Foucault described for the Classical Age; instead, these new disciplines occupy a space that did not exist in this form in Classicism. Foucault’s description of this new episteme does not follow the pattern of a circle or a square, but is rather based on a triangle. Three different dimensions define the thought of the nineteenth century: analytical thinking (which we, for instance, find in mathematics), synthetic thinking (which defines empirical disciplines like biology), and philosophical reflection
(Kant’s transcendental philosophy, for instance, that analyzes the conditions of our knowledge).

In contrast to the circle and square of the previous epochs, the triangle described here is not a planar figure: it does not resemble a plane. Foucault delineates the three dimensions three-dimensionally and unfolds the triangular structure to a “trihedron” of knowledge. If one follows Foucault's description closely, which I cannot do here, one would realize that this trihedron depicts a three-dimensional body, a kind of pyramid with one open side, or, more simply, a three-dimensional coordinate system.

How are we supposed to read and understand this peculiar narrative, a book on a circle, a square, and a triangle, which unfolds to a three-dimensional coordinate system? What is the status of these figures—are they images, metaphors, arbitrary structures that Foucault invented? Rather secretive about his own methods, Foucault never revealed much of his poetics, which was not surprisingly one of the main reasons why The Order of Things was criticized very harshly. And yet, if one considers Kant’s thoughts on the hypotyposes, Foucault’s description is more systematic than it seems at first glance. Like the schematic hypotyposis, Foucault’s descriptions of the different epistemes follow geometrical figures and keep their comments in line with these structures. But are these thorough, detailed, tedious exercises a rigorous discourse? Is Foucault’s language exact and precise? Aren’t these figures purely arbitrary, metaphorical? How can we explain and justify the relation between these geometric images and Foucault’s project?
Foucault’s third figure in particular, the trihedron, might show that the shapes he describes are not arbitrary at all. As I mentioned a few moments ago, the trihedron is a three-dimensional coordinate system; it structures the knowledge of the nineteenth century, a period that begins with Kant and ends with Bergson, according to Foucault. To be sure, the Cartesian coordinate system is much older than Kant. Yet one could argue that Kant’s apriori of space has a three-dimensional, Euclidean structure, whereas Bergson, who marks the end of this period and the threshold to the twentieth century, writes about the theory of relativity, which deploys a non-Euclidean geometry. In other words, if one turns to the history of science and the history of spatial thought and geometry in particular, one finds indeed evidence for Foucault’s proclivity for this particular form. Foucault not only follows schematic representations to keep his metaphors in place, his selection of geometrical patterns is also based on historical considerations. The trihedron, I would argue, is an “epistemic metaphor,” a substitution for an abstract concept that can be directly related to the epistemic period it represents.

Foucault’s *The Order of Things* is a book about the poetics of other periods, the poetics of the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and the nineteenth century. His *Archeology of Knowledge*, which appeared just a year after the *Order of Things* in 1967, entails a poetology, if you will, of his own writing and method, one comparable to Kant’s deliberations on the hypotyposes. It is “a discourse de la methode”; it is, according to Deleuze, a “poem,” in any case a methodological meta-reflection on *The Order of Things*, in which he tries to explain the formation of the images of his earlier work. As a meta-discourse, the *Archaeology* is written from a
different perspective, a point of view which reveals the process of his image-making. According to Deleuze, it is a book one cannot comprehend without knowing the mathematic theories of Bernhard Riemann or Albert Lautman.

Foucault begins his attempt to make the incremental formation of these images comprehensible by describing the smallest unit of discourse as the statement. The statement is the raw material, the most elementary component of discourse, and for that very reason so difficult to grasp, since every view frames the past according to its own conceptions, integrating it into a space that may have a very different structure than the historical event itself. For that one would require the purest description possible, which would contain the actual, true facts. No subject can guarantee such purity, no primordial experience, no cogito, no pure consciousness (54). The statement must not be confused with a logical proposition, Foucault says, since it cannot be reduced to the logic of what was said. Nor is it a sentence, since diagrams, tables and graphics are also statements; it cannot be mistaken for a speech act, for a speech act often requires multiple statements. A different method, a poetics of knowledge, is required if statements are to be designated as elementary units of discourses. He must first constitute the statement as an object within and together with a description that distinguishes itself from the representations of historians.

The poetics that Foucault develops are particularly revealing with regard to space. For Foucault, space must be described in multiple dimensions. Every statement belongs to a “collateral” space, which is an associated or adjacent domain, a space that is formed by other statements; and then also to a “correlative” space, in
which the statement is incorporated with subjects, objects, or concepts; and finally also to a “complementary” space of non-discursive formations. What, then, are these collateral, correlative, and complementary spaces, and what is their purpose in Foucault?

In order to determine the rules for what can be stated, the collateral space specifies rules about what can be stated based on vectors. As unintuitive as they might initially seem, one must try to visualize these descriptions. If the statement were a curve, then collateral space would determine the surroundings of this curve—that is, illustrate a space piece by piece. With vectors this could be grasped with greater precision, and this would also determine how the curve could be formed. It is as if one were to define the coordinate system in which the curve is inscribed. Collateral space is the concrete environment of the statement.

The second form of space, correlative space, is different. It does not describe the surroundings of a statement, but rather its relationship to a subject or object. Hence statements do not find their origin in a subject; rather, the subject is derived from the statement. Reading a novel with regard to an author is just one mode of reading, according to Foucault, and by no means a privileged mode. To use the metaphor of the curve, the correlative space is “derived” from the curve. It is a space that belongs to the curve which is not identical to it. Mathematically speaking, the derivative function would describe the course of the curve differently. There is also a mathematical analogy for the third form: complementary space. It defines an extrinsic space that is occupied by the institutions which do not belong to the discursive order but to its conditions. Metaphorically speaking, in this space it is a
question of the limits of the functions that the graph approaches, with which it converges and from which it breaks away. One could render Foucault’s description as a simple mathematical sketch, as a curve that has derivative functions and limits in a particular vector space. To put it more simply: knowledge is defined by the limits, interpretations, and contexts.

As I mentioned earlier, Foucault painstakingly avoids the narratives of historians, teleological models or any kind of explanation that draws connections from one event to another. To define the historical dimension of his archeology he again describes a spatial structure:

“We are now dealing with a complex volume, in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed, in accordance with specific rules and practices that cannot be superposed. Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements of events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call archive.” (AK 128)

Foucault historicizes the a priori, or in other words, sketches a space that does not simply follow a third dimension in a straight line one-dimensionally into its depth, but instead follows a space with a dimension of time that is multiplied into various
vector spaces, each of which defines the field of statements in its own way. History can, therefore, take on different forms. In other words, “history” must be seen as just one of many spatial constellations. Like Kant, Foucault describes his archaeology, a term borrowed from Kant, as a surveying of land, as mapping (116), “its purpose is to map” (155), as an analysis of “grids” (42), the surveying of an “archaeological territory” (184), and as in the history of cartography, the “white spaces” (157) are particularly alluring. But whereas for Kant the progress of reason is distinctly oriented on a horizon, by which given perception is nothing other than the projection of a space oriented on the seeing subject, Foucault follows a different spatial logic in his Archaeology.

The never completed, never wholly achieved uncovering of the archive is what forms the general horizon to which descriptions of discursive formations belong. The term archaeology does not imply the search for a beginning; it does not relate analysis to geological excavation. It designates the general theme of a description that questions that which has already been said at the level of its existence. The timeline of progress does not proceed one-dimensionally into a future that opens up before the subject, “archaeology maps the temporal vectors of derivation” (169), of temporalities in the plural. Foucault describes the move into this other “more general space” (26) as a striding into the unknown: “one is forced to advance beyond familiar territory, far from the certainties to which one is accustomed, towards an as yet uncharted land and unforeseeable conclusion” (39).

Evidently, the Archaeology is a book of images, of curves and series, a book about seeing and about the space which, owing to its title, is not to be understood on
the basis of geological metaphors, for example. We must not plunge discursive objects “into the common depth of a primal soil” (48); rather, Foucault defines a “space of dissension” (152), a “space of multiple dissensions” (155), which requires a new kind of mapping, the description of “limits of a process, the point of inflexion of a curve, inversion of a regulatory movement, the boundaries of an oscillation, the threshold of a function, the instant at which a circular causality breaks down” (9).

According to Deleuze, this “archaeological territory” (184) cannot be understood without taking Riemann and Albert Lautman into account. One must leave Euclidean space and think beyond consistent measurement in order to recognize this other, archaeological depth. Foucault shows how mathematical images can be drawn; his mappings are diagrams, Deleuze writes. Yet, what status do these “images” of mathematics have, and what status does mathematics have at all? Is Foucault’s *Archeology* a rigorous discourse? Or does he just write in mathematical metaphors?

What I hope to have shown thus far is, first of all, that Foucault, like Kant, demotes the linguistic paradigm, which is also the paradigm of Paul de Man. Secondly, that Kant’s and Foucault’s reflections on images and languages are based on a scientific discourse: in Kant’s case the Euclidean geometry, in Foucault’s the topology of Bernhard Riemann. What Kant and Foucault also have in common is, thirdly, a poetics and a poetology of knowledge. Not only do they describe how knowledge is produced, but more importantly for my purposes is that they also reflect their own writing, their own poetics in the context of scientific models: Kant uses the Euclidean geometry as a model for his writing, Foucault the more complex spaces of Riemann. The crucial difference between Kant and Foucault is, fourthly,
that Kant believed Euclidean geometry to be a universal and ahistorical language, whereas Foucault historicizes the apriori. To put it differently, Foucault’s language is always hypothetical, provisional, temporary, and experimental. His focus, then, is not so much on the image he produces, but the process and rules of its production. In conclusion, I would like to describe both poetics as diagrammatic and also to delimit their discourses from a purely metaphorical language.

As I mentioned earlier, for Kant the triangle functions as a forceful example of a schematic hypotyposis and diagram because its concrete form could not be separated from its construction. In order to understand a triangle, one must know how triangles are drawn. Peirce defined the diagram as a sign that does not represent its object by means of analogies, nor does it use colors or forms to denote its object, but instead—more abstractly—it indicates the relations or proportions of the object of reference. A diagram belongs to the group of iconic signs, but in contrast to a picture icon, which represents its object with simple qualities, and also in contrast to a metaphor, which uses relations of similarity to denote its object, the diagram depicts the basic relations, the configuration of a thing. Unlike an image or a metaphor, the diagram thus also marks the border of representation and visibility. A diagram puts forth the rules that one must follow in order to achieve an image of a concept. It provides a process of conception and recognition according to which a concept can be visualized. The diagram is not concerned with the similarity to an existing object, but with the conception and the process necessary to create object relations. The diagram is, then, a special case of the iconic sign because, in contrast to an image or metaphor, it reflects the production of the sign as such. The diagram
provides the principles of visualization. Not merely substitutions, epistemic
metaphors are the images and outcomes of such diagrammatic processes.

Paul de Man writes that "Philosophy either has to give up its own constitutive
claim to rigor in order to come to terms with the figurality of its language or... it has
to free itself from figuration altogether. And if the latter is considered impossible,
philosophy, could at least learn to control figuration by keeping it, so to speak, in its
place, by delimiting the boundaries of its influence and thus restricting the
epistemological damage that it may cause." Epistemic metaphors, I would like to
conclude, are rigorous and they show that a controlled figuration is indeed possible.

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