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The Redemption of the Theological Ideal in the Baroque: An Analysis of Donne, Herbert, and Marvell's Poetry

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Abstract

The baroque is a term that its meaning, apart from its etymology, is not by any means clear. There are a lot of inconsistencies in the descriptions which have been given of the characteristics of baroque art. One of such disagreements is regarding the kind of mentality that it supposedly represents. Whereas a lot of critics—if not the majority of them—seem to believe that baroque art represents the kind of mind that was overwhelmed by existential fears, Gilles Deleuze represents the baroque subject as being capable of resolving such fears. He believes that baroque artists and philosophers were able to redeem the theological ideal, or the idea that the world is meaningful. They did so, he explains, by inventing new principles that were capable of proving that the world is perfectly harmonious despite the existence of evil. The aim of this study is to establish a correlation between, and provide new readings of, some major seventeenth-century poems, namely Donne's "Anniversaries," Herbert's "Virtue" and Marvell's "The Garden," by showing that they indicate a struggle to save the theological ideal, or to prove that the world is perfectly harmonious–which is according to Deleuze characteristic of the baroque.

Keywords: Gilles Deleuze, Seventeenth Century Poetry, Baroque, Theology

1. Introduction

It is a rather popular theory that seventeenth-century Europe was a place that was torn between contradictory values. Louis Menashe (1965) observes that "[T]he seventeenth century represented perhaps more than any other epoch of European history this duality of spirit and reason, of piety and secular authority" (p. 335). This observation seems logical enough; especially regarding England. During this period, the nation experienced "an expansion of literacy," while the industry was rapidly growing (Greenblatt, 2006, p. 1236). Such developments increased "the faith in technology as a means of improving human life, and a conviction that the future might be better than the past" (p. 1238). But still religious faith was a highly important aspect of the life and identity of the subject. The seventeenth century was an age of extreme diversity of religious beliefs. This diversity was directly influential in the production of different poetic sensibilities during this period. David Loewenstein (1997) explains that whereas Donne and Herbert were influenced by "the Protestant emphasis on spiritual doubt, introspection, and inward struggle," Crashaw, who was a Roman Catholic convert, was instead interested in "saints, sacraments,

the cult of tears, and the worship of the Holy Name of Jesus" (pp. 16-17). The huge influence that a poet's faith had on his work is a good indication of its importance for the seventeenth-century subject.

As Gregg Lambert (2004) testifies, there has been little agreement among scholars about what the term "baroque" signifies in visual arts, literature, culture, and other areas (p. 1). The only unanimity, although "provisional," between literary critics and historians is that "the French adjectival term, *la baroque*, is derived from the etymology of the Portuguese ... word, *barroca*, which means 'an odd and irregular-shaped pearl'" (p. 1). Nevertheless, the idea that seventeenth-century Europe was torn between contradictory values have caused some to believe that baroque art represents a mind that was full of uncertainties. For example, Helmut Hatzfeld (1955) observes that "behind the brilliance of Tasso, the optimism of Cervantes and the urbanity of Racine there is also lurking a tension .... It is the prototypical tension between Galilean experience and Tridentine faith" (p. 60). In other words, the contradictions of secular and spiritual values caused the baroque subject to feel insecure. René Wellek (1946) brings several other examples of critics who believe that baroque art represents a troubled mind that was torn between contradictory desires. For example, he says, "Emil Ermatinger describes the baroque as a conflict between asceticism and worldliness, the spirit and the flesh"; or "Hankamer ... describes the tension as that between Life and Spirit, out of which the baroque knew only two ways of escape–ascetic denial of life or irony" (p. 93).

Despite their merits, such evaluations of the baroque aren't conclusive. Although Gilles Deleuze also assumes that the seventeenth century was an age full of tension, his views of baroque art and philosophy are different from those of Hatzfeld or Hankamer. The tension that he focuses on is that between the theological ideal–or the idea that the world has a perfect order–and the "proofs" of the early modern world against it. The baroque art and philosophy apparently came to the rescue of this ideal: "That is where the Baroque assumes its position: Is there some way of saving the theological ideal at a moment when it is being contested on all sides, and when the world cannot stop accumulating its 'proofs' against it ...?" (Deleuze, 1993, p. 67). In Deleuze's theory, in order to redeem this ideal, the baroque artists and philosophers of the period came up with new principles and strategies that could justify the existence of evil (p. 68). By doing so, they were able to fulfill their spiritual need for the assurance that they live in a perfectly harmonized world.

The aim of this paper is not to prove that Deleuze's theories of the baroque are definitive or even more accurate than the ones proposed by other critics. But instead, the goal is to show that some of the works by various English poets of the period indicate a struggle to prove that the world is perfectly harmonious–which is according to Deleuze characteristic of the baroque. Thus, it is attempted to establish an affinity between these poems while also to provide new readings of them. In the end, it is demonstrated that seventeenth-century poets, or at least the ones whose works are analyzed in this study, were concerned about redeeming the theological ideal.

2. The Theological Ideal in a Fragmented World

Baroque artists and philosophers were no longer able to treat the theological ideal–or the idea that the world has a design–as a given, since it had turned into a contested idea or theory that they needed to somehow defend. Previously, it was a truth or a law that people believed in without hesitation. But, in the seventeenth century, it became a concept that required a lot of effort to be redeemed. According to Deleuze (1993), theodicy, or the vindication of god in view of the existence of evil, has always been "a philosophical commonplace" (p. 68). However, he explains, "the Baroque is a long moment of crisis, in which ordinary consolation no longer has much value. There results a collapse of the world" (p. 68). This "collapse" is apparently resulted by the collapse of truth, which Deleuze refers to later on in *The Fold*. According to Egginton (2010), for modern philosophy–i.e. the philosophy of the period from the late sixteenth century till today–the relation between truth and illusion turns into a "troubled relation" (p. 39). Deleuze seems to agree with this theory, although he perceives in the baroque a resistance against the fragmentation of the world, which is apparently resulted by the deterioration of the distinction between truth and illusion:

> For some time now the idea of an infinite universe has been hypothesized, a universe that has lost all *center* as well as any figure that could be attributed to it; but the essence of the Baroque is that it is given unity, through a projection that emanates from a *summit* as a point of view. For some time the world has been understood on a theatrical basis, as a dream, an illusion–as Harlequin's costume, as Leibniz would say. (p. 124)

The world has become fragmented and decentralized, since the legitimacy of the old metanarratives has become suspect. However, the baroque poet refuses to accept that the world is meaningless. Although the world has lost its form or shape, he gives it a form that he himself has invented. Deleuze says, "Baroque is abstract art par excellence .... But abstraction is not a negation of form: it posits form as folded, existing only as a 'mental landscape' in the soul or in the mind, in upper altitudes" (p. 35). Hence, in his theory, the baroque becomes the birthplace of individualism or relativism. He explains that the baroque "lawyer" reconstructs the world in a way that it becomes meaningful again: "the lawyer has to rebuild it, exactly the same world, but on another stage and in respect to new principles capable of justifying it" (p. 68). In order to "rebuild" the world, the baroque lawyer has to create new principles based on which the world can be justified despite the existence of evil.

3. The justification of the World in Baroque Art and Literature

As it has been mentioned, for Deleuze, the baroque is abstract art; i.e. it represents the world based on the impressions of the individual. This feature of the baroque is in line with the fact that in a world without a center there is no reality except for the one perceived by the individual. Although the world loses its unifying laws in seventeenth-century Europe, the baroque

represents the world based on perspectives that find new principles or harmonies in it: "It is the accord of singular points of view, or harmony, that will replace universal complication" (Deleuze, 1993, p. 24). While the world is full of contradictions, or complications, baroque artists try to find a way of resolving them. For Deleuze, in baroque paintings and statues, the strategy for compensating for the corporeal incongruities of the figure is to cover it up with intricately folded costumes. He says that the folds of clothing in baroque paintings and statues go through a "liberation," so that they no longer reproduce the shape of the "finite" human body with all its "bodily contradictions" (p. 121). He explains that this is because "a go-between–or go-betweens–are placed between clothing and the body. These are the Elements" (p. 122). In other words, in baroque paintings and statues, the human body becomes united with fire, air, water and earth, which Deleuze says have "infinite folds" (p. 122). Hence, based on Deleuze's theory, the baroque painters' and sculptors' obsession with intricately folded costumes is due to their extreme sensitivity to the inconsistencies of the body. By means of these folds they meant to represent an image of the subject as perfectly harmonious. This obsession with showing the subject as congruous in every detail can be seen in the philosophy and the literature of the period as well. The baroque poet shows that the world has a perfect order despite the existence of evil, such as death, suffering, corruption, etc. In order to do so, he invents principles to prove that everything in the world has a reason to exist and that everything contributes to the perfection of the world. Hence, he seeks to substantiate the rule of sufficient reason which holds that "[e]verything has a reason" (p. 41). His refusal to regard evil negatively sets him against conventional thought. According to Colebrook, "All traditional philosophy–all unthinking morality–begins within an opposition between life and death: the good is what furthers life, while evil is the destruction of life. Evil is opposed to or outside life" (2006, p. 3). But the baroque poet goes against the tradition of seeing death, or evil in general, as the opposite of life, or as its imperfection. He instead tries to prove that they play their part in making the world harmonious.

4. The "Anniversaries"

In Donne's "Anniversaries," the speaker represents a world that has become utterly corrupted, so that it appears incorrigible. These poems supposedly attribute the cause of this incident to the recent decease of the fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Drury–the daughter of Donne's patron Sir William Stafford–whom the speaker represents as a magnificent person. In one of his extravagant praises of the girl, the speaker claims that she had "all Magnetique force alone / To draw, and fasten sundred parts in one" (Donne, 1994, p. 191). Thus, she was apparently what was keeping the world from falling apart and losing its coherence. It has been considered by many readers, ever since the poem appeared, strange, or even blasphemous, that the poet gave such extravagant descriptions of an ordinary girl. Ben Jonson, for example, criticized the poems for being "prophane and full of blasphemies," and he said to Donne, "if it had been written of the Virgin Marie it had been something" (as cited in Warnke, 1964, p. 458). Donne's response to this criticism was that the girl represented "the idea of a woman" (p. 458). In line with this defense, some have associated Elizabeth with such an abstract entity as the "soul" (Warnke, 1964, p. 458), or the "heart" (Love, 1966, p. 127), of the world. But Martz's description of the abstract entity that Elizabeth supposedly represents seems good enough: the girl stands for "the 'Idea' of human perfection and the source of hope" (1947, p. 252). Besides praising this idea, the two poems, especially the "First Anniversary," contain a lot of scornful descriptions of the world. While acknowledging the coexistence of both praise and condemnation in the poems, Dennis Quinn (1969) argues that the main focus of the poems is on "praise of Elizabeth Drury and her virtue, which is truly the ordering principle, the soul, of the universe" (p. 103). However, he adds that "This emphasis is especially clear in the *Second Anniversary*, where it is shown how exactly the virtue of Elizabeth nourished a harmony, beauty, balance, and proportion in this world" (p. 103). But why is it that the praise of the virtue of Elizabeth has a much stronger presence in the "Second Anniversary" compared to the "First Anniversary"? The answer may be that the emphasis of the poems is not really on celebrating the virtue of Elizabeth; nor is it on satirizing the world. But rather, together, the poems form a story in which the speaker who is disgusted by the condition of the world manages to find a justification for it. The poems describe the fall of the world from the moment of its inception and its increasing level of corruption and decay. At the present time, according to the speaker, the world has become utterly full of corruption, so that, he says, "all cohaerence [is] gone" (Donne, 1994, p. 191). The reason for this incident is the loss of the source of hope which the death of Elizabeth Drury stands for. The bleak descriptions of the state of the world falsify Quinn's claim that the main focus of the poems is on praising virtue. Nor is it, as it has been mentioned, on condemning the world. Rather, the speaker is struggling to justify the world despite the existence of sin and corruption. In the "First Anniversary," the surge of decay has apparently caused the world to reach a completely hopeless state. The utter hopeless condition of the world which the "First Anniversary" represents causes Martz to say that it "lacks the firm religious center of the *Progresse* [i.e. the 'Second Anniversary']" (1947, p. 268). Martz suggests that the "Second Anniversary" is a successful religious meditation, since its focus is almost always on giving the reader "the hope of salvation" (1947, p. 264), whereas the "First Anniversary" fails to do so due to its obsession with the bleak condition of the world. The reason for this may be that it is simply wrong to categorize the poems as religious meditations, as Martz does. The poems, instead, focus on fabricating a narrative in which the existence of corruption becomes justified. As mentioned, the speaker argues that the world has been increasingly decaying since its inception, so that finally its condition has become utterly hopeless. The loss of the old values which is supposedly caused by man's excessive pride is represented as one of the manifestations of the surfeit of vice:

'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:
Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,

For every man alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phœnix, and that then can bee
None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee. (Donne, 1994, p. 191)

The speaker is obviously disgusted by what he considers man's utmost moral depravity. However, this deplorable condition plays a crucial part in the grand scheme of things, as he represents it. The increase in decay from the time the world was created and its climax in the present moment through man's total depravity gives him an idea for justifying the existence of corruption. In order to implement this idea, he creates an imaginative analogy between the world and a living being in the process. Just like a living thing, or rather a human being, the world can become sick and experience death. The amount of corruption represents its well-being. Since this amount has reached its peak, it means that the world is finally dead. Hence, through this analogy, the speaker is able to show that the world is advancing towards the apocalypse. He explains the reason why life hasn't stopped yet by saying that just like in the case of a decapitated human whose corpse remains in motion: for example, his eyes "will twinckle, and his tongue will roll" (p. 199), after the death of the world, "some shew appeares, / And orderly vicissitude of yeares" (p. 200). Thus, we are only one stage away from the termination of life as we know it. Of course, this is good news for the speaker. By fabricating a story about the history of the increase of corruption from the creation of the world and its culmination in present time, he's been trying to prove that the world, as it is foretold in Abrahamic religions, will end and it will be in turn resurrected. The reason why, as critics such as Martz and Quinn have noticed, that the "First Anniversary" focuses a lot more on the bleak condition of the world than its successor is that in the former poem the speaker tries to fabricate the story of the past and present of the world in a way that its future is proved to be bright; or according to the Divine's plan. By showing that the world has been all along advancing towards its death and has finally reached it, all of the signs indicate that indeed it has a design, or a purpose. Thus, in the "Second Anniversary," the speaker feels relieved about the condition of the world and can finally focus on his bright future in the afterlife. It is of course corruption that has helped bring about the death of the world. Thus, the existence of corruption is proved to be justified in the poems. In line with the law of sufficient reason which says that everything exists for a reason, corruption is proved to play a crucial part in making the world perfectly harmonious. Despite turning the world into an abominable place, corruption is in the end necessary for helping the world reach its destiny:

The world is but a carkasse; thou art fed
By it, but as a worme, that carkasse bred;
And why should'st thou, poore worme, consider more,
When this world will grow better than before,
Than those thy fellow wormes doe thinke upon
That carkasses last resurrection.
Forget this world, and scarce thinke of it so,
As of old clothes, cast off a yeare agoe. (p. 200)

By proving that everything that happens–including the surge of corruption in the modern world–is indeed according to God's plan, the speaker can move on from thinking about the world and instead concentrate on the blissful future which is to come in the afterlife.

5. "Virtue"

At first sight, Herbert's poems may appear very simple and unsophisticated. Indeed, among the things that the modern reader may wonder about his poetry, according to Wilcox (1997), is whether it is "closer to prayer than art, and therefore best read by Herbert's fellow believers and not by students of literature" (p. 183). But recent critics have divulged the hidden complexities of his poems; thus, showing that they have much more artistic value than a prayer. "Virtue" is among the most famous works by Herbert whose complexity despite its simple appearance has been examined by recent critics. According to Jonathan Goldberg, "Not so very long ago, the poem would have been read as the direct and simple expression of an untroubled faith in God, devoutly registering the facts of transience and the equally strong reality of eternal life" (1983, p. 53). Unlike what a superficial reading of "Virtue" may indicate, the poem is not mainly arguing for a denial of worldly pleasures and a wholehearted devotion to the afterlife. The focus of the poem is instead on a more sophisticated matter. The poem may be regarded as a parody of 'seize the day' poetry in that it uses the form or style of such poems only to eventually deliver a very different message. But what is that message? Again, it may seem to be the opposite of what 'seize the day' poems generally advocate; which is to relish in the pleasures of the world while there is time. But there are complications in the poem that drive one to think that the main subject of the poem may be more sophisticated. The first three stanzas of the poem discuss the transience of everything beautiful. The three "sweet" things that are mentioned in these stanzas are respectively a day, a rose, and springtime. The speaker emphasizes on the short life of each one these. But the fourth stanza mentions a "sweet and virtuous soul" which never dies, but "though the whole world turn to coal / Then chiefly lives" (Herbert, 2012, p. 121). Again, nothing appears to be strange about this poem, knowing that it is written by a religious poet. But as it has been observed by critics such as Goldberg and Vendler, one of the peculiarities of the poem is the repetitive use of the word "sweet," especially seeing that it is used to describe the virtuous soul that the speaker valorizes in the last stanza just like the mundane things of the previous stanzas. It seems that by doing so, the speaker wants to show that the worldly objects of the initial stanzas and the virtuous soul share a similar quality. According to Helen Vendler,

> The customary Christian view is that to the seducing sweetness of the world must be opposed a stern and resistant power of the soul. Herbert is not unwilling to see the truth of this view, but he does not wish to adopt it at the cost of placing the order of nature and the order of spirit in radical opposition to each other. He wants to attribute to the soul a sweetness too. (1975, p.16)

But what is the reason behind this? In many of his poems, Herbert celebrates God's immeasurable power. For example, in "The Flower," the speaker praises God for being able to rejuvenate life or hope after every sign of either of them has seemingly vanished. "Virtue" is also a poem that celebrates God's "wonders." At first, the speaker is representing a dark aspect of life, which is the fact that "all must die" (Herbert, 2012, p. 121). But then in the final stanza, he celebrates God's power by arguing that in spite of the transience of everything, a virtuous soul doesn't die, but it in fact lives the most prominently when everything else ceases to exist. Again, it seems unlikely that the poem has any new argument. But, as mentioned, the fact that the same attribute is bestowed upon the virtuous soul and mundane things indicates that the poem may be more complicated than it appears to be. As critics have noticed, the sweet mundane beings that are mentioned in the initial three stanzas aren't picked randomly. The day has a serene kind of sweetness whereas the sweetness of the rose is rather stern, because of its "hue, angry and brave" (p. 121). Spring is the accumulation of both kinds of beauties. Why is the virtuous soul described as sweet? Although spring seems to contain a combination of every possible kind of sweet quality that this world has to offer–it is a "box where sweets compacted lie" (p. 121)–the speaker suggests that the virtuous soul has "all these qualities and more" (Wilcox, 1997, p. 191). Thus, the survival of the virtuous soul when the world burns to ashes means that none of the various sweet qualities that the world maintains goes to waste, but in fact more of such qualities are created. Since it is when the whole world is destroyed that such an entity that embodies these qualities can "chiefly live," then it can be argued that it is indeed better if the world dies. Hence, through its destruction the world loses nothing of its sweetness due to this "residue" (Goldberg, 1983, p. 55) that it leaves behind. Herbert's painstaking effort to represent the world as perfectly harmonious, or without any flaws, signifies his baroque sensibility.

6. "The Garden"

The celebration of the pleasures that one could experience by spending time alone in nature may seem to be the main theme of Marvell's "The Garden." But upon further investigation, one may see that the real focus of the poem is on a very serious issue. The speaker explains that after searching for innocence and peace in "busie Companies of Men" (Marvell, 2012, p. 149), he has ended up finding them instead in a garden. In that place, he apparently experiences such extreme pleasures which he himself describes as matching those that the first man enjoyed before God created a mate for him. But it appears that the enthusiasm with which the speaker enters the garden vanish by the time his euphoric experience in that place reaches its conclusion. This, as it will be explained, does not mean that he has pessimistic feelings by the time he leaves the garden. By drawing a comparison between Adam's experience and his own, the speaker points out, and in turn attempts to justify, one of the flaws of being human, which is that one simply cannot live in repose forever.

The speaker describes society as a place in which men do "uncessant Labours" to get the highest achievements in various fields, although these achievements, in the end, can bring them little repose (p. 149). Thus, he decides to take refuge in a garden in order to find what society lacks. Upon finding tranquility and innocence in the garden, he cannot help but feel contempt for society as a whole: "Society is all but rude, / To this delicious Solitude" (p. 149). He finds the beauty of women inferior to that of trees and claims that the classical Greek gods Apollo and Pan chased after their mistresses because they intentionally wanted them to turn into plants (p. 149). The reason why he finds the beauty of nature as exceeding that of women is perhaps because of his view that romantic love raises "cruel" passions in lovers, whereas by being alone in nature one can experience true peace, which is what the speaker is after. The tranquility of being alone in nature is so satisfying to him that he describes his emotions through some fantastic images that represent perfect satiety. In order to describe his corporeal satisfaction, he claims that nature was literally trying to feed him delicious fruits, thus evoking the myth of "the lost golden age" (Friedman, 1997, p. 285). Regarding his mental satisfaction, he asserts that his mind is able to transcend "pleasures less" and create "[f]ar other worlds and other seas / Annihilating all that's made / To a green thought in a green shade" (Marvell, 2012, p. 150). The abstract nature of these lines makes it difficult to interpret them. It is unclear, as Friedman says, whether the mind "lose[s] touch with the world we live in" (1997, p. 285); or as Empson remarks, the lines could mean that the mind is either "contemplating everything or shutting everything out" (as cited in Warnke, 1964, p. 460). Regarding his spiritual satisfaction, he represents his soul as having discarded his body, becoming thus free to go wherever it pleases to, "like a bird" (Marvell, 2012, p. 150). Through such descriptions, the speaker wants to show that there is no experience which is more satisfactory than the one he has in the garden. But in the next stanza, he suggests that like Adam's, his own "happy garden-experience" has proved to be evanescent. Therefore, we see him in the last stanza, apparently looking at the garden from the outside, getting ready to move back to society. Hence, despite the fact that he manages to find true bliss in the garden, something doesn't let this experience last. This something seems to be related to human nature. It is not because of the experience which is commonly known as the Fall, i.e. the eviction of the first couple from Heaven because of committing the original sin, that man cannot live in eternal peace. It is rather because of a different Fall. As Hyman says, "The Fall in this poem dates not from the eating of the apple, but from the moment that God took out Adam's rib" (1958, p. 14). This is evident in the eighth stanza in which the speaker argues that Adam's perfect tranquility which he enjoyed in Eden was halved upon the creation of Eve: "Two Paradises 'twere in one / To live in Paradise alone" (Marvell, 2012, p. 150). This is apparently because unqualified peace can only be enjoyed when one is alone in nature.

The speaker denies the common belief that God created Eve so that she could help him with tending the garden, since Adam apparently was not in need of anymore help: After a Place so pure, and sweet / What other Help could yet be meet!" (p. 150). The creation of Eve meant that Adam could no longer spend all his time alone in nature. Thus, he no longer had the privilege of living in repose for eternity. But, why did God create Eve, if Adam was perfectly happy alone and did not need help with tending Paradise? The speaker argues that this was owing to the fact that Adam was mortal; thus, he didn't have the right to have all the pleasures of Paradise for himself: "'twas beyond a Mortal's share / To wander solitary there" (p. 150). Marvell is here justifying God's decision to multiply humans, and thus take away Adam's perfect repose, based on the notion of the chain of being. But of course, he is using it in a way that suits his own purpose. Hence, being a mortal means that one cannot be solitary and, as a result, one isn't supposed to live in eternal repose–or to live like an immortal being.

The first stanza of the poem depicts humans as being obsessed with excessive labors which bring them little joy. The speaker is fed up with society's obsession with labor and wants to have peace. He finds what he is looking for when he spends time in a garden alone. Although he doesn't mention why he has to leave that place, the reason may be that he has to take care of his social responsibilities. He obviates pessimistic feelings upon leaving the garden by inventing a principle that justifies the world, so that he no longer has the aversion towards society and its obsession with labor. Thus, he can look at the garden while he is apparently outside the place and is ready to go back to his duties without feeling morose. In fact, in the last stanza, he acknowledges that it is due to the work of the "skillful Gardner" that such a wonderful place as the garden can exist and he also admires the "industrious Bee" who "Computes its time as well as we" (p. 150), thus showing that his feelings toward labor has changed. In the end, although the speaker no longer has his initial enthusiasm, he manages to justify the world by proposing that man's position in the chain of being as a mortal means that he cannot be solitary, and, as a result, he has to be content with the inevitability of getting entangled in various social engagements that make it impossible for him to live in repose for eternity.

7. Conclusion

There are many contradictions in the descriptions that have been made about the baroque. One of the popular theories of the seventeenth century is that it was an age which was full of tension. While Deleuze agrees with this, his views on the baroque diverge from those who believe that baroque art represents a mind which was overwhelmed by anxiety and uncertainty as a result of the dualities of the age. He focuses on the tension that supposedly existed between the theological ideal–or the idea that the world is coherent and has a purpose–and the evidence that the modern world brought against its legitimacy. He believes that in order to redeem this ideal, the baroque poets attempted to justify the world, or to show that it has a unity, based on the principles that they invented. These principles showed that everything, even the things that are considered evil, plays a part in making the world harmonious. In this study, it was shown that some of the poems from the seventeenth century indicate a struggle to save the theological ideal, or to prove that the world is perfectly harmonious–which Deleuze considers characteristic of the baroque.

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