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Three times.

For: ART FORUM.

Fel 14/12 Februar 91

One upon a time the world was a wheel: day was followed by night and night by day, winter by summer and summer by winter, birth by death and death by rebirth. About three thousand years ago that wheel changed into a stream: everything flowed, nothing ever repeated itself, and every oportunity lost was lost forever. Nowadays that stream is changing into a sand heap: most of the grains tend to be distributed ever more evenly, but here and there some of the grains tend accidentally to form improbable clusters. We know the wheel by heart and from looking at watches. We have learned about the stream at school during history classes. But as for the sand heap, we might have heard about it in scientific discussions but we do not know what to do about it. This is a pity because that sand heap is the playground for artists. Art is about forming improbable clusters of grains not by accident but on purpose. This is why this article will try to speak about it.

When the world was a wheel, justice was the problem. Everything had its appointed place within the wheel, and it was a crime to leave it. Time circled within the world to put everything back to its just place. Time was the judge and crime was punished. He who left his appointed place was a hero and he could not avoid punishment by time and in time. The wheel world was a tragedy: one coul not escape fate which was the same as time the judge and the hangman. When the world was a stream,freedom was the problem. Everything was the effect of some causes and the cause of some effects, everything was determined. But it was possible to learn about that chain of causality with the hope to somehow manipulate it. The question how science and technology can liberate us from the chains if they are themselves determined has never been satisfactorily answered. The stream world was a drama: time flowed from the past toward the future, it established the chain of causality, and man tried to act within it. Since the world has become a sandheap, accident has become the problem. This merits some consideration.

There can be no doubt about the fact that there is a general tendency toward an ever more uniform distribution of the particles the world consists of. The Second Principle of Thermodynamics says so, and if we were to doubt that Principle we would have to stop believing science which we cannot do because it is our only source of knowledge, and because our daily life is dependent on it. In fact: the Second Principle tells us what time is. It is precisely that tendency toward an ever more uniform, ever more probable distribution. And it allows us to measure time: the more evenly distributed the particles are, the newer is the situation they form (the carbon test comes to mind as an example). Still: improbable clusters of particles do emerge from that tendency as if they were loops within which time is inverted. Some of those clusters are very ancient, like hydrogene and helium atoms, and like the spiral galaxies they form. Some of them are much more recent, like the biomass on Earth or like the human

nervous system. It does not help much to say that those loops wherein time is inverted will in the end return into the general tendency, that they are "negatively entropic epicycles" which sit upon the entropic straight line. Nor does it help much to say (as some people are now saying) that the entropic straight line itself may prove to be a segment of a circle: that the "Thermic Death" which will follow from the "Big Bang" may give rise to a new "Big Bang" and so on forever. This does not help much for the following reason:

The problem the sand heap poses is not whether time is a straight line (like it was in the stream world) or whether it is a circle (like it was in the wheel world). The problem is that time may invert its course and run in an opposite direction. If time is now understood to be the tendency toward ever more probable situations, the problem is: how can improbable situations arise (as in fact they do), and how can those situations become ever more improbable with time (which of course cannot be the same time as we now understand it). For instance: what "negative time" is it during which the hydrogene and helium atoms gave rise to other atom types, those to ever more complex types of molecules, those again to the biomass, and that again to our nervous system? There is an obvious answer to this question: there is no "negative time", and the whole problem is not a real one, but only the result of our muddled thinking. The answer goes as follows:

There is the general tendency toward an ever mor even distribution of the particles the world consists of. The sum of those particles is very big, but it is finite (the world is a "closed system"). We know more or less how big the sum is (the mass of the world) and how old it is (the age of the world) and those two measures imply each other. Now the sum being very big and the age of the world being very great it is not at all surprising that the particles while tending toward an ever more even distribution, collide accidentally with each other. This is not surprising, but is on the contrary to be expected. In fact: in such a game which consists of so many pieces and which goes on for such a long period all the possible combinations must necessarily come about, all the possible accidents must necessarily happen. Probability calculus can formulate this exactly. To speak about a "negatively entropic" tendency when considering those accidental clusters of particles (like our brain) is to have missed the whole point about the sand heap world. Such accidents are necessary in a heap as big as this is. There is no "negative time", there is no problem.

This might be an obvious, but not a satisfactory answer. Because it begs the question "what is an accident?", by saying that it is necessary. It might be a statistical fact that accidents must happen in the long run, but this in no way cancels out the other fact that each single accident is an unexpected event, something that used to be called a "miracle" in previous contexts. For instance: if one takes the overall view of the sand heap world, the series of accidents which finally resulted in the emergence of the human brain is seen as a necessary sand heap aspect, but if one looks at that brain as an isolated cluster that series of accidents appears to have been so extreme-

ly highly improbable as to force us into admitting that our brain is a miraculous organisation. It forces us into admitting that from the point of view of our brain that series of accidents must be seen as cumulative "negatively entropic" process, as an "evolution". That is to say: as a process which unrolled in a time opposed to the time of the sand heap.

However: one thing must be retained from the obvious but unsatisfactory answer to our question. Although we may admit (inspite of that unswer) that there are negatively entropic, evolutionary processes within the sand heap, we can no longer maintain that those processes have a purpose. The evolution which has resulted in our brain is so extremely improbable as to be miraculous, but it is still an accidental evolution. The result of that evolution is miraculous, but it is still an absurd process, one due to a blind and mindless game with a big number of point-like pebbles. It is true that time inverts its course in several places within the sand heap and that, as a result of such an inversion, miraculous situations arise (unexpected "informations"), but it is equally true that those unexpected and unexpectable situations are meaningless clusters. Thus although the sand heap world does not exclude miraculous events (as the stream world did, within which "miracles" were effects of provisionally unknown causes), it does exclude a purposefull Creator. The sand heap world as it presents itself to us is the result of blind chance, not of a creative project.

Now consider the three times which have been roughly sketched within this paper, and do so from the point of view of what is called "values". The time of the wheel world ("magic" time) imposes ethical (moral) values: crime and punishment, just retribution. It is a time for holiness and for fear and trembling. The time of the stream world ("historical" time) imposes epistemological values (the values of knowledge): science and technology, emancipation through enlightened explanations. It is a time for disciplined action. The time of the sand heap world ("post-modern" time) imposes aesthetic values: the rise of unexpected, miraculous situations. It is a time for creative artists. The "perfect man" in magic time is the sage, in historical time it is the scientist, in post-modern time it is the artist.

To see why the artist is the perfect man of our time (and not of the Renaissance), consider the meaning of "creation". It means the production of unexpected, improbable situations, of "informations". Within the sand heap world all unexpected situations, all "informations" come about by accident, by pure chance. The artist is a cluster within the sand heap where accident is turned around and becomes purpose. How this can happen is due to chance: the human brain is accidentally a cluster wherein accidents are changed into purpose. This is so highly improbable as to be a miracle, but it is so. Thus this is the definition of an artist: one who accidentally may turn accident into purpose and thus produces deliberately unexpected situations. Or (if you prefer): one who deliberately turns time around and have it point at ever new informations, at an ever less probable distribution of the sand grains. Within the sand heap it is the artist who is the only conceivable creator.

Of course: the three times outlined in this paper do not constitute a sequence. They overlap within our mind, our thinking and feeling. We have not "overcome" magic time, but on the contrary it is that circular time which beats the rhythm of our daily living. Historical time is the one that governs our decisions and the acts based on those decisions. As for the time which has here been called "post-modern", it is at best an uncomfortably confusing concept which we are as yet uncapable of incorporating within our experience and thinking. Stil this paper wanted to suggest that it is precisely this new timeform which shapes artistic creation. And thus help to render artists more conscious of what they are committed to: to the inversion of the absurd tendency of the world toward entropy, toward ever more probable (and therefore ever less interesting) situations. Which is to say that artists are committed against the mindless stupidity of the world.