

The statement " $1 + 1 = 2$ " is what Plato would have called an immutable eternal idea. It can be localized neither temporally nor spatially: it is meaningless to declare that it shall be true on my writing desk at four o'clock in the afternoon. Neither can it be explained in the world of "appearances": it is useless to question the psychological, social or economic motive which inspires its formulation. If one views this statement with the inner eye ("theoretically") one turns one's back on the world of phenomena and lives in the leisure of philosophizing. That, according to Plato, is the reason why philosophers must be kings of the republic: they see the immutable truth, hence all that is good and beautiful, and politics is to be guided by this vision.

But what happens if this statement is fed into a computer? If this vehicle is duly equipped and programmed a form will appear on the screen. If we are to remain with Plato, is the observation of this phenomenon a theoretical view or is it a self-entanglement in the phenomena? Is such a viewer in the Platonic heaven (*topos uranikos*) or in the Platonic hell? The Platonic argument against the artists is that they distort the eternal forms when attempting to press them onto the phenomena when they "produce" works). A triangle drawn in the sand (for example) no longer has the exact angle of 180° ; its observation therefore does not lead to the truth but to the opinion ("*doxa*"); and that is why artists must be banned entry into the republic. Does this apply also to the computer artist?

If one were to feed the statement of " $1 + 1 = 2$ " (or a triangle coded into digitals) into a computer, one has buried these forms not in the sand but in an electro-magnetic field. This has been done so that the computer should play with these forms according to specific rules (they vary), and should reveal all that can be done with these forms (what has been concealed in them and what emerges in the course of the game). This can be put more or less in the following terms: the immutable (mathematical) statements fed into the computer are not *pictures* but *fancies* of forms, and that is why they do not distort these forms but enable them to expand. Hence, the computer people resemble more the Platonic philosophers than his artists. Does this mean that they must be kings of the republic? That they are "wise" and not "orthodox"?

Tables have been preserved from the early bronze age in which lines are engraved which represent river canals. These tables are not a depiction of canals

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since these canals were only dug on the basis of these tables. The tables depict imaginary canals. Early surveyors who produced these tables were not artists in the Platonic sense but rather philosophers. The people in the republic of the time were grubbing in the mud, they dug canals and, in doing so, were guided by these tables. Yet this does not mean that the surveyors were kings. On the contrary, they seem to have done their drawings by order of a "big man" (a king of priests or God). It may well be that the position of the present computer artist is comparable to that of the surveyors of that time. Which raises the question of who or what nowadays holds the position of the "big man".

Let us change from Plato to Kant. For him the statement " $1 + 1 = 2$ " is an *a priori* analytical judgement. It is true because it says nothing: " $2 - 1 - 1 = 0$ ". It only becomes a statement once phenomena are fed into it. And these phenomena are perceived in the "spatial" and "temporal" perceptual image. "Pure reason" is a machine wherein the wheels are running idly until perceptions are fed into it. However, if one fed the statement " $1 + 1 = 2$ " into a computer one does precisely the opposite: one feeds the wheels of "pure reason" into the perceptions. Does this make reason impure ("practical")? Are the computer images soiled judgements or, on the contrary, ones that have changed from analytical to synthetic judgments of pure reason (hence "synthetic images") thanks to Kant's conversion? Are they still (or again) mathematics? This is a question even more confusing than the Platonic question, because:

Enlightenment hence (also Kant) was of the opinion that reason would be able to detach itself from all sensuousness (and from all that is connected with it, i.e. from all emotions), and thus dominate our conduct downward from above. It can illuminate all our darkness. This pedagogical mission of the enlightenment was bound to misfire: today we know (thanks not only to Freud) that reason always remains entangled with unreasonableness. Our century will, in fact, probably go down in history as an era of mental disturbance. And yet the enlightenment (in the form of natural science) has succeeded in widely clarifying the dark objects of our environment (our "natural conditions"). This shining success has been clearly visible, for example, in Chernobyl. The success has been possible because in the process of enlightenment reason has become increasingly "pure" (mathematical). We are now

feeding this successful pure reason into the computer. That is where it appears with brightness on the screens. It has become perceptible (thought differently than the nuclear mushrooms but as radiation nevertheless). Does it engage in explanations there, or that is it actually doing there? Does it dominate emotions there or is its task there to arouse emotions (does it want to appear in a good light there)?

Let us, very briefly, go from Kant to Marx. Marx maintained that the world was not to be explained but transformed. " $1 + 1 = 2$ " would be meaningful only if it permits to be decoded into labour. Today, we know better how this is to be done. We feed " $1 + 1 = 2$ " into a computer which controls a robot and the latter then transforms the world (builds cars, for example). Hence, what appears on the screen is a model (an illusion) of future labour. The computer artist (similar to the bronze age surveyor) is a designer of blueprints: he places pure reason in the service of practice. This more or less corresponds to the Marxist view on "artists". The question is: does it correspond to the intention of the computer artist?

If one observes (after such a brief excursion into the history of philosophy) what is actually going on the screen, one understands why traditional concepts of "theory", "pure reason" and "labour" pass the matter by. This is how one is to conceive all that is going on there: the mathematical statements which were earlier divided into punctiform elements (bits), are perceivable there since these bits are being gathered up (computed) into forms (such as lines, surfaces, coloured surfaces, moved surfaces) on the basis of specific rules. One and two-dimensional "phenomena" (and also three and four-dimensional ones, thanks to the computer-driven holograph), are being created, manufactured, produced from zero-dimensional elements (strictly speaking from "nothing"). To use the mentioned three traditional concepts: worlds of phenomena are being blueprinted from a theoretical vision, phenomena spring from pure reason, and it is no longer a question of transforming the world thanks to labour but of creating alternative worlds. Or: " $1 + 1 = 2$ " changes from an idea into a phenomenon, from a judgment into a thing, and from an explanation into alternative materialities.

This creation, production, and manufacturing from nothing into something (or, rather: from the potential into a real) has a traditional name. In Greek it is called "poiesis". So that (if we wish to remain with the tradition) all that is happening on

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the screen, may be called *visual poetry*. Computer artists can be regarded as Platonic philosophers, Kant scholars and Marxist workers only if these three notions are to imply that these are three variations of visual poetry. Or, to put it differently: when observing what is happening on the screen, one notices how philosophy, science, and labour have cancelled each other out.

But such thinking, entangled in tradition, is not really suitable to capture the processes on the screen. Ever since it has been possible to project alternative realities from algorithms thanks to instruments, a better point of departure as seen on the screen would be not to regard philosophy, science and labour as suspended and hence as no longer operative. Such visual poetry makes philosophy unnecessary since ideas are emerging automatically; it makes science we ourselves are drafting the laws governing phenomena; and makes the transformation of the world unnecessary since we are able to create many (perhaps even innumerable) other worlds instead of this one world. Hence: visual poetry as the computation of bits towards perceptible phenomena is outside tradition (even though based upon it), and with it a new field opens up, requiring new categories.

This radical statement gives rise to a significant objection: visual poetry depicts merely illusory realities that do not possess the same concretization as the one world (allegedly "given" to us), yet at the same time that do not determine us in the same way as the latter. As a result we shall most likely continue to have to philosophize, engage in science and work so as to be able to face up to this one, uniquely concrete world. This objection, thought seemingly convincing, is not watertight. What do we really mean when we claim that the "given" world is concrete, a condition given to us? We mean that on our road towards death we are disturbed by it. That it is standing in our way, that it is "objective" (in the sense of "throwing against" = "ob-jicere"). But why are we disturbed by it? Because we can and must perceive it with all our mammal sense. And the illusory realities are less concrete (in fact illusory), since we are able to perceive them with only some of our senses (the eyes and ears). We are unable to bite into a synthetic image of an apple, sit on a hologram of a table, and copulate with a synthetically moved hologram of a human being. This is the essence of the mentioned objection that the illusory realities,

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projected thanks to visual poetry, must not be taken as seriously as the old world in which we are required to philosophize, engage in science and work.

But as soon as one formulates the seemingly convincing objection in this way, it becomes evident that the difference between the illusory worlds and the given ones is a difference in degree. The illusory worlds are less concrete than this one. And this difference in degree is accurately measurable: the more dense the dispersion of the bits, the more concrete is the matter. I cannot sit on the hologram of a table nor on a table since in the table the elements are more densely dispersed. This difference in degree is not an ontological but a technical issue. Visual poetry is facing the technical task to disperse the illusory worlds at least as densely as is the case in the allegedly "given" world. This task (as all technical tasks) is soluble in principle. It is technically feasible (though not in the immediate future) to create illusory apples into which it is possible to bite, tables around which one can sit and human beings capable of copulating. And this all the more so since we know that the allegedly "given" world, as it appears, is in fact not given but consists of point elements our senses which have computed by our senses in some way to perceptibility. In brief: either the illusory worlds are as concrete as the allegedly given ones or they are equally illusory.

It is only now (after refuting the seemingly convincing objection) that the radicalism of the above mentioned bold allegation - according to which we are in the process of advancing from the occidental tradition into a new field - becomes comprehensible in its outlines. The allegation says that we are no longer subjects of objects (subordinates of conditions) but that we are starting to become projects for alternative realities; that we are commencing to lay out facts which no longer determine us but testify us. We are able to do this because we can shape the most abstract thinking (mathematical statements) perceptible with our senses, as an experience and enjoyable. This can be done because thanks to "visual poetry" we are able to design illusory worlds substituting that world we have hitherto imagined as a given world. This becomes evident by observing the computer screens.

The allegation as it stands here sounds like a fantasy. Because all that can be seen on the screens are no more than first clumsy steps in the claimed direction. We are more than likely to stumble. All that has been called "visual poetry" and

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"illusions" is nothing but an as yet immature way of thinking and technique. It is difficult to foresee the consequences (if the whole matter continues). Yet the screens reveal that the whole thing has started, and that consequently it leaves behind all that has preceded. All preceding questions (for example, those raised in the course of an excursion into the history of philosophy) must be posed in a new and totally different manner. As a result, in our present transition period only fantastic allegations are of interest. All that is not fantastic must be attributed to the context of that which has been surpassed. In this connection, our position is reminiscent of that of the renaissance, when first attempts were made to break into a new field. Leonardo (and later Galileo) spoke of a "fantasia esatta". And the Cusanus maintained that though God may be omniscient but that he could not know better than we do that "1 + 1 = 2". Thus these considerations have returned to the point of departure in order to continue to turn in the head of those who write and read. Perhaps something centrifugal will be projected from these and similar whirls?