

presence. The soul-and-body, 'conductor' model seems up to date because it has to do with management, ownership and all kinds of things associated with the notion of private property that influence a lot of what we do on this Earth. But this turns out, as we have seen, to be a retweet of a Neoplatonic Christian concept.

Furthermore, the 'on switch' model of action depends on a mechanical theory of causation that requires some kind of god-like being at the start of the causal chain, to get the ball rolling. After that, the ball hits the next ball in a mechanical way. So the mechanical theory is really just a variant or upgrade of the 'conductor' one. And this is therefore merely a modification of our Neoplatonic retweet: the soul is the driver, the body is the chariot . . .

Let's make a new word: *alreadiness*. This word is going to come in very handy, because now I don't have to resort to a suggestive but rather clunky phrase from one of my favourite philosophical regions: deconstruction. This would be the famous *always-already* employed by Heidegger and then by Jacques Derrida, the inheritor of Heidegger's approach, which he called *Destruktion* ('de-structuring'), and which Derrida calls deconstruction.

Alreadiness hints at our tuning to something else, which is a dance in which that something else is also,

already, tuning to us. Indeed, there are some experiences in which it simply can't be said which attunement takes priority; which comes first, logically and chronologically. One of these is the common experience of beauty. We can learn a lot from it: let's go.

You are Being Tuned

We could talk about our current historical phase in many ways: entering an ecological era, learning how to cope with global warming, and so on. But what all these labels have in common is *transitioning to caring about nonhumans in a more conscious way*. This talk is about that, and as you'll see it's a lot stranger than it sounds.

In November 2015 I participated in *Ice Watch*, Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson's installation outside the Panthéon in Paris. *Ice Watch* was designed to be seen by the delegates representing the nations of Earth in the COP21 negotiations, otherwise known as the global warming summit, which was held over thirteen days. Eliasson and I recorded a public dialogue about it in Copenhagen about one week before *Ice Watch* was installed, at the CPH:DOX film festival. One thousand people attended, eager to hear about ecology and art.

Ice Watch consisted of something like eighty tons of ice harvested from Greenland and shipped intact to Paris, where it was installed in twelve gigantic chunks, in a circle. From above, it readily resembled the little bars that stand for hours on a wristwatch. The chunks of ice were large enough to climb on to and sit in, or even lie in, and as there was no barrier protecting them, this is just exactly one of the things that people did. Part of the project was documentation of all the different ways in which you could access the ice. You could walk past it. You could ignore it. You could touch it. You could reach out towards it. You could talk about it. You could give a conference paper about it at a conference called *Façonner l'avenir*. You could sleep in it. This was especially easy once the sun had melted the ice enough for it to form smooth pockets and contours.

Part of the point of *Ice Watch* was an obvious visual gag: look, ice is melting and time is running out. But that was just the hook. What actually happened was much more interesting, and in a way that seriously stretched or went beyond prefabricated concepts, in a friendly and simple, yet deep way. Watches are things that humans read. But they are also things that flies land on, things that lizards ignore, things that the sun glints off. Dust settles on the glass shell of the front of the watch. A dust mite

traverses the gigantic overpasses and caves on the underside of the watch between the watch and my wrist. And let's return to something I just said about *Ice Watch*: the sun melts it. The sun is also accessing the ice. The pavement is also accessing the ice. The climate of Paris is also accessing the ice.

And the ice was accessing us. It seemed to send out waves of cold, or suck our heat, whichever way around. This kind of access was how Eliasson was thinking about it – the encounter with *Ice Watch* is in a way a dialogue with ice blocks, not a one-way human conversation in a mirror that happens to be made of ice. We've been having that kind of conversation with nonhuman things for thousands of years. It's exactly the reason we are in this mess called global warming. And the climate factoids we hear on the news are echoed by much of the art that tries to address global warming and extinction. For example, several artists have compiled massive lists of lifeforms that are going extinct. But the risk here is of becoming just like those factoids: just a huge data dump. Art is important to understanding our relationship to nonhumans, to grasping an object-oriented ontological sense of our existence. Art fails in this regard when it tries to mimic the transmission of sheer quantities of data; it's not artful enough. This isn't just a matter of effective persuasion. As a

matter of fact, that's the trouble with ecological data art. The aesthetic experience isn't really about data – it's about data-ness, the qualities we experience when we apprehend something. (As I mentioned earlier, data just means 'what is given', and isn't only about numbers and pie charts.) The aesthetic experience is about *solidarity* with what is given. It's a solidarity, a feeling of alreadiness, for no reason in particular, with no agenda in particular – like evolution, like the biosphere. There is no good reason to distinguish between nonhumans that are 'natural' and ones that are 'artificial', by which we mean made by humans. It just becomes too difficult to sustain such distinctions. Since, therefore, an artwork is itself a nonhuman being, this solidarity in the artistic realm is already solidarity with nonhumans, whether or not art is explicitly ecological. Ecologically explicit art is simply art that brings this solidarity with the nonhuman to the foreground.

Eliasson wanted to do something that was logically prior to collecting data, let alone spreading it around. To collect data, you have to be receptive. You need the right kind of data-gathering devices for your project. You need to care. A global warming scientist needs to care enough about global warming for her to set up the experiments that find out about it in the first place. In the beauty experience, there is

some kind of mind-meld-like thing that takes place, where I can't tell whether it's me or the artwork that is causing the beauty experience: if I try to reduce it to the artwork or to me, I pretty much ruin it. This means, argues Kant, that the beauty experience is like the operating system on top of which all kinds of cool political apps are sitting, apps such as democracy. Nonviolently coexisting with a being that isn't you is a pretty good basis for that.

Since the being that isn't you is artwork, and so not necessarily human, or conscious, or sentient, or for that matter alive, we're talking about the possibility of being able to expand democracy, from within Kantian theory itself, to include nonhumans. Which is a pretty scary thought for some people – Kant himself, for example, which is one reason why he is so careful to police the magic ingredient, the beauty experience, that actually makes the rest of his philosophy work (like Heidegger, he pulls back on his own thought, not carrying it through to its potentially radical conclusions). Instead, he sort of introduces a little tiny drop of it to flavour the anthropocentric – and pretty much bourgeois – soup – too much and the soup is ruined; it ceases to nourish anthropocentric patriarchy. It's funny that the way to undermine Kant, as with Heidegger, is to take him more seriously than he takes himself, a

tactic I've definitely inherited from deconstruction. And you do it by increasing the amount of the very ingredient that makes the soup so tasty.

When you encounter the beauty experience, it's not about anything in particular. If it really was a bowl of soup, you might want to eat it. Then you'd know what the thing was about: it was about future you, with a nice full belly. In a way, you would know the future of this entity, this object, this bowl of soup. But because beauty soup isn't for eating – because it's just this weird slightly telepathic mind meld between me and something that isn't me – you don't know the future. There is a strange not-yet quality built into how you access the thing you are finding beautiful. And because, from my point of view, beauty is sort of like having data, but the data isn't pointing at anything but itself – I'm just experiencing the givenness of data, of what is given. I'm experiencing the way data doesn't quite point directly at things. That's why you need scientists, right? They figure out patterns in data that hint at things. That's why science is statistical. That's why the sentence *humans are causing global warming* is actually not at all like *God created Earth in seven days*. You don't need to believe it in a firm sense. You can just accept it as pretty much true. You can be 98 per cent correct, and that's better than threatening me with torture unless I admit that

you're completely right, because there's no other way for you to *be* right than to hit me until I agree.

I'm also experiencing something magic and mysterious about myself when I have that beauty experience. The ice is a sort of Pandora's box with an infinity within it. And so am I. It's that mouthfeel again. I'm experiencing the texture of cognitive or emotional or whatever phenomena. I'm experiencing *thinkfeel*, or better, since I can't tell whether it's about thinking or feeling but I know it's real and it's happening, it's *truthfeel* that I'm experiencing. It's as if I could magically see around the corners of myself to the part of me that's having the thoughts, because when I try normally, I just find another thought. I can't see all of my phenomenological style, how I manifest in a complete way, all at once – that total happening called 'me' is only accessible in slivers. Some people call this thing that keeps disappearing around the corner *consciousness*, Kant calls it the transcendental subject, but as we've seen, there's no particular reason to hold on to these concepts.

I magically see the unseeable aspects of a thing, including the thing called Tim Morton. I grasp the ungraspability of a thing. Which is another way of saying, I see the future, not the predictable one, but the unpredictable one. I see the possibility of having a future at all: I see *futurity*.

And in the case of the *Ice Watch* hunks of ice outside the Panthéon in Paris, Eliasson set this up so that you could see this future isn't a container for the ice block. It's coming directly out of the ice block itself – the ice block is creating the future. The ice really is a watch. And not a watch being set by humans. Or even better, it's a certain kind of time structure – it is a temporality structure. It allows you x and y and z kinds of past and future. This is the paradox. Futurity isn't some grey mist that is the same for a block of ice as it is for an excited proton underneath Geneva. Different objects, different futurities. Unspeakableness or ungraspability can come in all kinds of flavours. It only sounds paradoxical because we're used to time and space being box-like containers in which things are sitting, where we place and try to contain them (no matter whether this effort is an illusion or not), whereas for Kant, and those who come after him, time is something posited, it's part of aesthetic experience, it's in front of things, ontologically, not an ocean in which they are floating, but a sort of liquid that pours out of a thing.

So we have to be careful what we humans design, because we are *literally* designing the future, and that future isn't in our idea of the thing, how we think it will be used and so on – that's just our access mode. The future emerges *directly from the objects we*

design. Right now, many, many objects on Earth are designed according to a one-size-fits-all, very old, way past its sell-by-date temporality template. It's one we have inherited from Neolithic agriculture, that's how ancient it is. And it's the one that has given rise to industry with its fossil fuels and therefore to global warming and mass extinction. So designers should be careful what they design. Maybe they need to think at least on a number of different temporal scales when they design something. A plastic bag isn't just for humans. It's for seagulls to choke on, and now we can see that thanks to photographers such as Chris Jordan who photographs beings who get caught in the Pacific Garbage Vortex. A Styrofoam cup isn't just for coffee, it's for slowly being digested by soil bacteria for five hundred years. A nuclear device isn't just for your enemy. It's for beings 24,000 years from now. This Diet Coke isn't just for me. It's for my teeth and my stomach bacteria, and the latter may get slaughtered by the acids in there. This is why I created the concept of the *hyperobject* in my book *The Ecological Thought*. A hyperobject is a thing so vast in both temporal and spatial terms that we can only see slices of it at a time; hyperobjects come in and out of phase with human time; they end up 'contaminating' everything, if we find ourselves inside them (I call this

phenomenon viscosity). Imagine *all the plastic bags in existence at all*: all of them, all that will ever exist, every-where. This heap of plastic bags is a hyper-object: it's an entity that is massively distributed in space and time in such a way that you obviously can only access small slices of it *at a time*, and in such a way that obviously transcends merely human access modes and scales.

Time Flows from Things

Everything emits time, not just humans. So when we talk about sustainability, what we're talking about mostly is maintaining some kind of human-scaled temporality frame, and this is necessarily at the expense of those other beings, and it's very likely we didn't factor them in at all. What exactly are we sustaining, if not the one-size-fits-all agricultural temporality pipe that has sucked all lifeforms into it like a vacuum cleaner, pretty much, over its 12,500-year run? And in the end, which means already, designing stuff according to that template is going to damage humans as well, in a very obvious way, because of the unavoidable interconnectedness of everything we know and understand, and even everything we can't know or see, too. When the

Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels heard the word culture, he reached for his gun. When I hear the word *sustainability*, I reach for my sunscreen.

Everything we've been exploring in the last few pages occurs to you as ethical and political fallout from the Kantian beauty experience; as wonderfully open-ended, because the kind of futurity a piece of artwork opens up is unconditional: in other words, it doesn't have a rate at which it decays to nothing. You don't ever exhaust the meaning of a poem or a painting or a piece of music, and this is another way of saying that the artwork is a sort of gate through which you can glimpse the unconditioned futurity that is a possibility condition for predictable futures. Art is maybe one tiny corner in our highly (too highly) consciously designed – and way too utilitarian – social space where we allow things to do that to us. What would it look like if we allowed more and more things to have some kind of power over us?

This isn't quite the same thing as saying, along with the socialist William Morris, that functional things should be beautiful. That's because, on this view, things are just lumps without some nice decoration. But we're saying that there are no lumps. There are blocks of ice, humans, sunlight, the Panthéon, polar bears. The goal is not to take existing