

MES

Polidori?

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Destroying the Perceptual Mechanism

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WOODY: Joh was asking me the question what I mean by ~~xx~~ "I'm just trying to destroy the perceptual mechanism as the only possibility of perceiving "reality." Polidori brought me to a certain kind of objection. . . Do you remember what objection?

ROBERT: Yes, it would be exactly the opposite of what you say here. It would be how "I'm trying to destroy the perceptual mechanism as the only possibility of perceiving "reality" . . . I's saying it is the only possibility. If you don't have that, how can you do it?

001 WOODY: I have in a way been objecting. As long as we're going to look at the surface only as ~~xxx~~ quality of image, then we will be bound to discuss the qualities of that surface, which of course are very ambiguous to define. What I was trying to say is that, for me at least, there is a possibility to understand the principles of organization behind the surface of the image and elect that as an esthetic principle. So I have the privilege to commute between the surface, which may be the only way to perceive unspecifiable elements like mood, and emotions, /feelings . . . and I have also the privilege to commute from that one _____, into the different logic sphere--not rational-- in which I suddenly could also realize the process. Because I object to be confined into the perceptual, surface-perception --surface perception only--and that was probably the wish I had projected. Because I do believe that esthetic appreciation can be also beyond the perceptual one, and then the inner architecture of a particular event, even if it's dynamic, takes precedent over the perception of the

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surface.

I guess my answer is that it is a hierarchical decision. That you don't say that what you really perceive is the utmost information or utmost content you can get. ~~XXX~~ There is another level in which ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ the image becomes referential so that you start looking into the other principles behind it. The slogan I have is that the control is the message. (over) THE CONTROL IS THE KEY

ROBERT: Okay. But then I would say if the control is not exhibited on any object, you can't get to the control. It completely bypasses any perceiver and you're left with nothing transferred.

002 : WOODY: But then I can object and say since this rule has been established as a status quo, then there is so much escaping to the new audience from electronic imaging. Because people just look at it immediately the way you say: if it's not/perceptually ~~xxx~~ obvious, there's no reason even to try to look beyond that. So if you make it into perceptual imperialism/?/, then there's no hope that we can ever encode additional messages beyond what the surface says. Of course, ~~that-may-be-the-first-demand~~ clarity may be the first demand, but ^{more} I'm ~~xxx~~/interested in these other thingsx beyond the simplicity of superficial image understanding.

JON: One of the problems with this is that you're speaking in a tautology of perceiving. The perceptual mechanism is perceiving.x You ~~xxxx~~ do not mean perceiving, but conceptualizing, rationalizing, categorizing. These are higher level functions.

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I mean this
WOODY: Being more specific, /in the sens of traditional syntax going
a
through a vocabulary such as /fade-in of the image or a dissolve
between two images which has been celebrated topically in cinematic
esthetics~~X. I have~~ I have found out-much-more what are to me
what are not only more interesting or more powerful transitions
in electronic imaging, but more poetic substances. In the substance
of appreciation of such an effect which I call a kind of contribution-
new syntactic expression, I've found these aspects of electronic
imaging ~~are~~ extremely powerful and persuasive sources of poetic
appreciation. But looking at the image and decoding it on
this perceptual level . . . that's when it becomes challenging.
When the electronic transition or syntax become extremely relevant
to the recognition of the perceptual event or mechanism of
this
decoding, I think that's where ~~the~~ point is. ~~Where the electronic~~
human
~~processing is very close to perceptual decoding~~ I think these
two systems, the human and the electronic, recognize the point in
which the ~~the~~ latter is very close to human perceptual decoding so
that you, as maker or viewer, don't even have to rationalize it.
At least that is my personal mythology. I believe there's a meeting
of two great qualities regardless of our slavish contemporary ego,
our traditional sense of image recognition. I might even say
there's a conspiracy within us which is much greater than we
understand.

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ROBERT: Right, but I think that's because if you're working on it yourself you've already established a certain set of terms of what things mean. You've worked out your operant vocabulary.

So, in a sense you're your own audience and you already know, but to communicate it to another person you have to put it out in a certain way so that they can input into your rationale.

JON: What's the purpose of ^{*}looking at the organizational principles?

WOODY: I would say that it depends on what we name as the content. I am ~~saying~~ saying that our product, our composite "works" ~~maybe~~ maybe should only indicate certain new structures and ~~maybe~~ maybe should not utilize the structure to attach other meanings to it. That means materiality and mythification. But we can also speculate about the material. The material does not ^{beyond} bind/the primary level. You can take a material and use it in a highly speculative way. And, as Politdori says, we can even use it to negotiate our relationship to the audience. IN that case, we have to tell the audience in some direct way what we're doing. But these are assumed obligations--~~we~~ of course, we don't have to. We can violate this or simply disregard this.

JON: There's this constant reference to the product now, and I think to deal specifically with the product puts a set of considerations that are important but are not precisely what we're talking about right now. I think it is important now

to talk about the process of examining and analyzing and understanding these organization principles and organizational materials both in the hardware itself and in the procedures/^{and ~~xxxxxx~~ principles} we may bring to it.

WOODY: Okay. So let's continue what you've been suggesting because I happen to agree at this particular time that just to identify those elements and just to learn how to control them takes precedence over any other speculation or any speculative possibility. Let's say if you go into composition you already do speculate . . . in fact, negotiate the whole context of the culture. But if you're on this particular level in which you try to identify each component and use it . . . not necessarily use it . . . even just foreseeing its use . . . not even indicating the use, just trying to put it into some hierarchic order. That, for example, for me, is totally enough. I am busied by it, baffled by it. I would still call it a creative process. In a way I would never exclude it from the process of creation or the process of art, yet the attention that I pay services other people on a different level. It shares in fact this first responsibility of understanding those elements which I have elected^a as ~~the~~/content of my work.

JON: ~~There is no such thing as traditional art~~
I'm not sure that what you'd call traditional art is necessarily so different in kind. It is different in its direction, perhaps. Almost all art has been rationalized by some kind of analytical procedure. With the impressionists it was to examine

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light. With Italian painting of the 16th century it was perspective, which is indicative of a whole new way of perceiving reality. I was reading Alberti this morning, and he says "I will speak of the mathematicians what the mathematicians have to say" which deals with linearity and geometry, and "I give to the painters what ~~they have~~ ~~to say~~ is their's, which is a more sensible wisdom" /find precise quote/ Both of these areas were shared. So that there is frequently some kind of analytical framework ~~xx~~ having to do with the materials. or with the visualization--the world out there--and it's often a fundamental way questions are posed in art. What seems to distinguish it here is that we're dealing with tools that are technologically based and we are not ~~xx~~ engineers just as the renaissance painters were not mathematicians. ~~And what's~~ What's more, these tools present to us certain paradigms, certain microcosms of interaction that don't exist for the painter or the sculptor. So we're confronted with a set of questions to examine these mechanisms, to find some kind of systematic methodology for relating it in some general way to our view, or what may become, our view of the world. And then we're confronted with this really sticky and awful problem which is the human perceptual mechanism. We exist in a time in which psychology has only very recently become--how to say--precise. It's only been sixty years that psychology

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has had any kind of intricate meaning, any kind of genuine analytical function. So we're here in a time which, in dealing with all these systems, we also have to deal with our own. We have to say not only that there's that system which technologically mediates my encoding of "reality", but also that there's this system here which I look through, I imagine from it, I take ideas through it and what are these inherent properties of my perception and cognition? Both function in ways which sometimes seem ~~na~~ analogous and both are, in their turn, as much a part of the visualization of "reality" as the other. And so we have this double layer. And this also has many modalities in quantum theory which is interesting also. It's an interesting historical connexion that a double level of experimental equipment was brought into psychology at almost ~~the~~ precisely the same time in psychology as in analytical physics. The atomic physicists were in the position of having to say "Well, there is this subatomic world and I'll deal with one ~~exper-~~imental and philosophical model there, but at the same time I must keep most of my experiments in ~~xxxxxxxx~~ the framework of classical mechanics. That I must assume that ~~this~~ there is an inherent double level to the complete rendition of reality and that I have to operate within an experimental model which is both closed and open at the same time." So they were confronted with a ~~strongly analogous problem~~ problem strongly analogous to ours. In a modal sense, it's precisely

the same problem. So there are all these aspects that work
various
into it, that in ~~some~~ ways are of immense concern to us.

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WOODY: I would put it this way. The more the external systems
develop, the more we become linking ^{LEAD TO} them to our own per-
~~ceptive~~ ^{WE KNOW THAT} ceptional ~~events~~ ^{PERFORMANCE}. The vidicon behaves very much as certain
events on the retina, so that seems to us to be modelling

our thoughts towards ~~that as~~ a possibility of somehow
^{ITSELF} understanding the perceptual events. Further, if

you go into the computer it also seems to be challenging this
neural biological structure of nervous system or even ^{THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF} processing ^{BIOLOGICAL}

of information. So I don't think we are really in command of
those processes, we are just in a time in which those

other processes, those technological ones, seem to be very
much relevant to our way of interpretation of those myster-

ies which we could have never thought about before they
existed. So again, the priority. What we are talking about

is if man's ability to interpret the world is primary, or
his dependency
~~is xxxxxxxx~~ upon those technological processes which

help ~~in~~ him to progress. So this bondage toward technology
is totally obvious. But the interpretation of it differs. Some

people feel it's infringing on their evolutionary ideas.

JON: This brings us back to what we started the session with,
with alternate modes of perception or modes of realization what
have-nothing-t are outside our presently constituted ac-

customs perception. And what seems ~~xxxxxxx~~ to be given

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not only in scientific research, but in almost everything we do is that ~~an~~ aspect that as you look deeper and deeper and wider and wider, there has to be an absolute consistency in basic parameters of "how things work." And also, the bondage that we feel in technology is that ability to experience realms of which we otherwise would have no experience or a radically different experience. ~~We would still think that~~ ~~the universe is~~ If we did not have telescopes, we would still think the universe is a crystal sphere with lanterns imbedded in it. Now we are confronted with major challenges to thought that exist on the very small level, the subatomic level, because our instruments have shown to us paradigms that question the consistency of all the assumptions we previously held. And so here we are, confronted with this; that everywhere we look our assumptions are challenged. All of a sudden we have to ask ourselves whether there are other modes for which you can completely account for various aspects of our experience in ways different from "normal" and whether that ~~is~~ very basic assumption of the/consistency of a single model can really be supported. We have these various modalities of rationalizing, of understanding, which in a sense have only a relative aspect to them-- that each works only within its own territory. We use ~~the~~ classical dynamics to deal with celestial mechanics and we use quantum theory--satisfactory or unsatisfactory as it

is--to deal with subatomic physics. That htere is in fact no single answer, no single comprehension. So we're confronted with this ambivalent paradigm, and with this knowledge and understanding, we are confronting other areas of understanding for ourselves ina more personal way than experimental methods. It makes us ask about the veracity of our accustomed modes of understanding, and whther there are other ones as viable as those we've come to accept?

005 WOODY: So then, let me ask you this question. What you say brings me this particular image. That we are surrounded by a certain complexity in which/^{the}more we look at it, the more we see of it. But we are not proportionally able to develop theories or methodologies to understand it. We are continuously re-learning or restructuring our methodologies, our vocabularies. In fact the knowledge is available at such a magnitude that we cannot even process it in a certain human sense, to that's how ^{MM}the specialized branches thrive. But of course there's no communication to a general set of humanistic code or human codes of exchange. That's why we found these principles continuously amazing and new and surprising. Another way you put it, in the tradition of art as if art could have answered a lot of questions in the past up to modern art, which would continuously examine those other areas, and in fact developed

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certain styles and methods to understand them. But it seems to be disproportionate now. Art as we know it cannot any more answer so many questions because it may not even be a function of art. Art has the theory that it always ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ overcomes all the obstacles of understanding, will live forever. It has eternity, which is the closest conceptual relation in which God is omnipresent, omnipotent and all, which cuts across the bound of time and energy totally. So that; s a priori said, that's the way it is and art comes the closest of a discipline I can recall to the perfect model. And it seemed to be always working. Because after all, people always elect certain eras and masterpieces to represent this absolute model and even if it's dynamic it accomodates that need. So I guess it is the continuous rivalry between the religious and art ~~kind~~ concepts to accomodate the need, or permanent quality, or ideal model of beauty.

JON: What do you think of the absolute inhumanity of the kinds of approaches we are practicing?

WOODY: -It's-transitory-because-there-are-periods-in-which-... .
What do you call humanity? Is it a certain quality a priori that lays within, which says human kind is positive?

JON: I think it has been violated so many times by various crusades or various political movements or nationalisms, or racism. These things have been questioned probably since the beginning . . . there's no true quality in anything we