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Munich author and philosopher Thomas Palzer wrote an essay for the current exhibition „Echo of untouched matter“, inspired by the topic and the works presented in the show.

Tube Steak

Logic was the belief system of the Greeks. Today's science is heir to that belief system; its individual disciplines carry this logic in their names: theo-logy, bio-logy, anthropo-logy. However, there are other cultures that believe or have believed something else. Reality is – despite what one might think – not in fact synonymous with the realm of reasons that logic creates. Everything has a reason. But love has no reason, nor does art. Love and art do not have a reason, they provide reasons. Reality is, therefore, not a continuum of rationality. Rather, reality consists of discontinuities, of folds. After all, the proposition of reason (upon which logic is based) has itself no reason.

We, as concrete, living beings, see a flaming sunset in the evening. The physicist, who strangely only considers real and true that which he or she cannot see, discerns in the flaming sunset only a mass of atoms and electronic charges. That is why he is a reductionist. He takes something away from reality. Colors, scents, dreams and thoughts do not exist for him. He considers them to be hallucinations, products of the mind. Artists, poets and philosophers, however, add

something to reality.

Reality is inscrutable, for something is always *s-huh?-mthing*. Europe has made itself into a slave of rational fiction since the beginning of the modern era – it characterizes itself, therefore, as a civilization, whereas everyone else is primitive. Primitive peoples – people living in a state of nature – do not have a word for civilization; nevertheless, they naturally have the thing. Plants and animals also form civilizations, even if they do not naturally have a word for them. And the infrastructure that makes up any technology (cars need highways, networks, electricity etc.) is just another word for civilization.

In contrast to the Western concept that divides the world into Manichean-like categories of culture and nature, there are cultures in which, as the French ethnologist (ethno-*logist*) Philippe Descola says, the organisms, the tools, the artifacts, the gods, the spirits, the plants and animals, the technical processes etc. are not perceived merely as environmental, as resources and mines to be exploited and used, but as actors with equal rights that operate alongside human beings in certain situations.

When fire burns paper, it communicates with the flammability of the material. It does not normally come into contact with paper's describability or crumplability. It is missing the appropriate sensorium for that.

We communicate with paper about its describability or foldability as well as its distinctive tendency to crumple. Thus, phenomena like fire, paper, elevators, rabbits

or fields of flowers only reveal themselves to us from one or maybe three – at the most, four sides. They never completely show themselves to us. Never. They vanish behind what they reveal.

Reality loves not being observed. It is shy. Not just the trees, also the rest of reality leads a secret life. We only ever see that part of reality that lies above the surface. We never see the greatest part of the iceberg. It is even the case, that the iceberg increases in size under the surface of the water when more of it becomes visible above the surface. With every definition the halo of indefiniteness grows. We call this the bifurcation of reality.

The British astrophysicist Arthur Stanley Eddington is known for the following parable: "I have settled down to the task of writing these lectures and have drawn up my chairs to my two tables. Two tables! Yes; there are duplicates of every object about me – two tables, two chairs, two pens." It is about the familiar, commonplace table on the one hand and the table of physics on the other, about the familiar flaming sunset and the the sunset of physics that is aflame. It is about the rabbit of biology and the rabbit that we know, the so-called false one. But how does the rabbit look to the tree? And to the sun? The rabbit obviously comes into contact with both the sun and the tree or can, at least, come into contact with both of them.

What does the third rabbit look like? How do a current and a fish communicate? A current and the sun? The speculative metaphysicist Graham Harman has dealt with this topic more extensively in his essay for *DOCUMENTA(13)* „The Third Table“ (*100 Notizen – 100 Gedanken No. 085*).

The world cannot be equated with the one that is familiar and discernible to us. The world is bigger, much bigger than that which we consider it to be. Those who dismantle the historically acquired understanding of the self in favor of a method of description that is external to the self – as is the case in *bio-logy* – those people are reductionists. We – artists, philosophers, poets – add something

to the world. The real table and the real rabbit and the real tree are not the stuff of physics, chemistry or of everyday life.

They are not the stuff of logic, nor that of sensuousness – of scents and appearances etc. Things like rabbits or aluminum ladders – they are the stuff of art. Art creates a space in which the third rabbit is shown – the rabbit that comes nearest to the real thing.

Reality is a tightly woven network. Everything is in contact, but not every individual thing with every other thing. There is a relationship between us and phenomena like paper. When we sleep, the paper is gone. In reality, it is on the table. Where is the real paper? There is an enormous difference between relation and reality.

Thomas Palzer, January 2016