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## Attending the hand

Certain forms of action do not appeal to the recompenses of time, do not solicit the generosity of which time can dispense. In this respect, such forms of action aren't intended as *projects* – they do not defer their accomplishment and meaning to a later moment in time.

Thus, the future, understood as all that is to come, is not unsettling in the way a promise might be, because a promise, if it were unfulfilled, would condemn action to a loss of meaning. The peacefulness, perfection, and lack of purpose which these forms of action communicate to the observer are a reflection of their surprising autonomy from time.

It is often said that time moves forward: the future is the moment of its constructional extasy, of its distinctive anxiety. And yet, for instance, the pious gesture of arranging someone's remains for burial is an act that does not appear to be looking to the future. Immuneised by a surplus of passivity from the contagion of hopefulness, action, in this as in other circumstances, amounts to a gesture that asks nothing of time, whilst effectively making use of it. Such forms of action do not, therefore, elude the hardships of labour, its toils.

At the outset, though, this disposition to *doing* implies that one has intentionally surrendered, relinquished, let go of the notion of outcome. This renunciation (of knowledge, of possession), is ultimately to be understood as the inescapable horizon all such acts are inscribed within. The work of art, therefore, is unlike all other things; it must surrender its claim to value (the all-too-human ambition of being a bearer of salvation). And yet, by humbly persisting *as a presence*, the work of art attests to a transcendence, thereby finding its very substance in time, not its refutation.

## Palm horizon

Pointing towards an imaginary sky, in the act of a possible (and yet constrained) elevation, or extatically suspended in uncertainty, the images are like relicts or rafts, revealing the fundamental gratuity of time, as well as the apocalyptic dimension of their floating condition. As mere presences, they are of themselves eloquent, capable of manifesting, without extasy and with in all dedication, their hidden cultural worth.

We should not misunderstand their condition of *pointers*. They are uninclined to blot themselves out, leaving the entire stage to that which is signified by them. The torment of writing, the affliction of being crucial to signification, and yet inessential, is quite unknown to them.

Whether they be lying on their backs, in a state of rest, contiguous or superimposed one another, these images are not mere evocations of that which *doesn't* appear in their place; in their wait is reflected the wait itself of that which they seem to be waiting for. It is though they were looking towards an indeterminate elsewhere, thereby also pointing the observer's gaze towards it, and that elsewhere were in wait of that minding gaze to finally become itself. Because they are aware of their strength, of the justice (in the Greek sense of *orthotes*) of their presence, misery does not affect them like a disease; rather, it has the paradoxical effect of lending them perfection.

This mutual waiting marks the space of a pure interval, of a remote, reciprocal belonging of the image and the elsewhere, and this is the only possible horizon for a liturgy that is devoid of theological interpretation – as if the secular mystery of presence could only be celebrated at the very root of time.

## **Certain countenance**

To those who regard the product of their actions as being confined to radical finitude, the work of art ceases to appear as a window opened onto transcendence, or as something born of the tension between the finite order and infinity. When the fragment affords no consolation, there is no room for metaphysics, nor for the subtle art of irony. In its misery, the work of art amplifies a seemingly ephemeral force towards history which, whilst going unacknowledged, derives the measure of its completeness from inaction.

*Our languages seem to have established the mutual exclusion of finiteness and truth, thus ingenerating a profound aversion towards everything which, being transient, cannot have truly deserved its right to existence. All forms of violence have derived their most ancient legitimation from this fundamental variance. Action, therefore, involves the obliteration of the blind spot which all existing entities necessarily create, because of their intrinsic gratuity. And yet, in its devotion to universals, our language also betrays an inexplicable nostalgia for presence in the absence of apparent reason, and shyly admits to it when it finally gives up on action.*

To attend to the present, give prominence to the supporting element, attain truth and not disregard the fundamental opacity of being is a form of ascetism, a way of sheltering from the force of our passions the place we have departed from, of protecting the forms of our taking leave.

*The antecedent of all liberty is an obedience to that which is perfectly manifest to the heart but resists analysis by the evaluative intellect. Whatever the intellect is able to grasp, no matter how negligible, becomes an unavoidable presence, and the work of art the ceremony through which it is received.*