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Dear Dr. Bisaccia;

Perhaps, before undertaking to comment on your question, it would be best if I set up a context. The following statement, on language, conflict and repetition (which really I consider to be my last words on a disagreement with the strongest among my contemporaries), states some of my most fundamental aesthetic convictions (as I had formulated them around the time I finished making *Et resurrectus est*, the last film in *The Book of All the Dead*.

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With *Et resurrectus est*, I bring to completion a cycle of works that I embarked upon nearly twenty years ago. Completing this cycle of works, that I have entitled *The Book of All the Dead*, is an occasion to recollect and reflect upon some of the issues that stimulated its making.

Like every work, *The Book of All the Dead* sought to transform the space that predecessor works had opened up. Surveying the field of avant-garde cinema as it was when I came to it, one could not but be impressed that, for the most part, the forms of avant-garde films presented models of consciousness. The key split in the avant-garde cinema divided those who used the energy of film's movement and its capacity presenting speed to suggest the ever-changing contents of consciousness and those who developed spatial and temporal structures to reflect upon the structures of consciousness. It was my singular good fortune to chance upon the avant-garde cinema just at that time when these two practices had found paradigmatic exponents, the first in Stan Brakhage, the second in Michael Snow and Hollis Frampton.

While every work follows in the wake of its predecessors, it must also mark out its own space. I began, doubtless, with the idea (which I articulated in critical writings on the works of other avant-garde filmmakers, but did not see it really applied equally to my own work) that film's organizing forms ideally derive from the nature of thought itself and that only habit or (what is almost the same) lack of original, imaginative thinking accounts for the almost universal recourse that "feature filmmakers" have to the least inward and truthful of any commonly used artistic forms, the narrative; my great, immodest ambition (undoubtedly unattained) is to create, in *The Book of All the Dead*, the work that Dante's *Commedia* might have been, had Dante lived in the latter half of the twentieth century, after the Holocaust, and so have been in the position to know that narrative is a discourse of power. But I could accept either the phenomenological or the structuralist understanding about thinking. The forms I have developed I have developed from that difference.

Dante's great poem is embraced within Saint Thomas Aquinas' rich theology. His theology is that of *novitas mundi*, a metaphysical discovery that revolutionized medieval theology. This was that Being itself is really an act-of-being that occurs at the root of all that is real. While Aristotle's *energeia* (or pure actuality) is the divine activity of pure contemplation, Aquinas' actual is actuality of being in itself, the centre of the real as real. The new world of the *novitas mundi* was to see true existence not as thought but as being.

This is the thought that has presided over the making of the final (*Exultations*) region of *The Book of All the Dead* (which region corresponds to the final cantos of *Purgatorio* and the whole of the *Paradiso* in Dante's *Commedia*). After all, only the richly imaginative dare transmute the dross of modern syncretic theologies into the gold of art; we who come second must rely on a thinking that is more sound. So, what follows are parallel meditations that might, I hope, reflect on *Exultations* generally, and in particular on *Et resurrectus est*.

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A work of art is a truth-event, for the essential task of the artist is to open him or herself to being touched by Be-ing. In our time of growing disillusionment, spreading devastation, and debilitating academic decadence such disclosure can only take the very un-Greek, very Wagnerian virtues such as are possessed by the *apeiron*—the unlimited, the discordant, the overflowing. It must be an art become weightless, of pure motion only, not exchanging for the real (as some self-sufficient representation) but an exchanging wholly within itself, in an uninterrupted circuit of energies and transactions, a present-for-seeing that seeks for no thing. Only such uncontrolled energy can rescue life. It cannot be an art of regulation and proportion. For with the Pythagoreans, the mystery of number receded, pushed into obscurity by determinateness and enframing representation. It was they who took the fateful step of taking only measure from things. They shone the light of reason on beings and the reflections were radiant, but these shining appearances only rendered yet more obscure the dark mystery of the Be-ing of beings. To discover, even in the traces and echoes that the powers and practices of Be-ing leaves in beings, one must accede to blindsight. We need an art of heterogeneity, of dissociation and disintegration, of multiple and inherently confrontational elements, for only such an art can rend open routine and reach through to embrace us. We persist in the mode of distraction, our consciousness grasped by the qualities of beings that show themselves. But this work is an economy of differences. Each event that comes to pass here is absolutely singular. Every framing here is a name that summons forth a being, but each name is a proper name because each event is singular. It must be an art that shows the transcendental identity of life and death, that identity which the *missa jubilaea* reveals, for, as the region's title, *Exultations*, the section of *The Book of All of the Dead* serves that holy rite. The transcendental identity of death is to become the eucharist substance of the communion of believers, the living bread for the body of those who know. In the Final Resurrection, to be sure, all of the living join with those already in the realm of the dead, and there is no longer a difference between the living and the dead. It is the time, not when the Word is made flesh, but when the Word and the flesh become identical, when all that is appears truly in its character as the bodying forth of Be-ing.

The Book of All the Dead, does not express, nor does it provide any discourse upon a topic. This is true of any work of art but, I hope, it is more than usually true of the *Exultations* region of *The Book of All the Dead*, and especially of *Et resurrectus est*, for these works make fundamental that concepts can grasp beings' coming to being. Rather, these works are formed so as to provide a site for something to happen. If I have served well, and if you open yourself to it adequately, it will clear away what you see and do not know. It opens a tear in routine where a future world might come to pass. If I have served well, and you open yourself to it adequately, your vision will be made strange, unfamiliar, uncanny, indefinite, and—yes—unlikeable and troubling. Every artwork begins with a confrontation with a disquieting strangeness. This confrontation is an event that prises open a clearing in which something new can come forth. If I

have served well, and if you open yourself towards what transpires here, then you might encounter the beings that you see not as a resources available for use, but as beings that have a relation to something more primal.

The event through which such beings emerge from never discloses itself; still the tear in routine is an uncanny occasion, that forces routine things away and allows strangeness to stand forth luminously. Tearing an opening in routine is required of any thing that might fulfil the tasks required of a work of art. As the work breaks routine and opens a new space for the eye, ear and mind, you, if you allow yourself, are drawn to encounter the luminous beings that occupy this space of the Strange. Art break open a place where everything appears otherwise than usually—this is what increasingly through *The Book of All the Dead*, and especially in *Et resurrectus est*, I sought to make manifest. The more clearly the work cuts its ties with what you have known hitherto, the more abundant this new space becomes; the more powerfully the work thrusts itself into the rend it opens in routine, the more you are drawn into that uncanny space. In encountering the uncanny, we sense the power of the negative, the strange, terrifying no thing. This encounter brings us to the frontier of the New Advent. As *Et resurrectus est* suggests, all the formerly was appears after the New Advent, as non-being. But, as it also suggests, The New Advent does not stand before us, but above us.

Like every human occupation, art conjures up its own finitude—is own limitations and its own Nothingness. But its tears, its fissures and holes that have the nature of forgetfulness and oblivion, has its own strange, if clumsy, beauty. Its form is that of history becoming fate. Its holes are the absences in which being can come to presence. The strangeness of art derives the unfamiliarity of nothingness. Its intimacy with nothingness grants it the power of disclosure. This nothing is the primal that every strong artist encounters frequently in loaning his or her service to making a work.

Art is a disclosive engendering that guards and protects things. Art brings things forth into their own. Truth, in any work of art, is a singular event that reigns within the opening the work rends in domain of routine and nowhere else. Here truth takes possession of the rend in space that forms a illuminative clearing you are invited to attend to, but that truth does not happen elsewhere. Here truth stands out a figure against a contrastive background of its own making. But that truth is still an event of figuration. The illuminative clearing reveals the truth only partially; this partial shining forth alters what is stands out in the illuminative opening to the point of tranfiguring its being. This is a process that every work of art acknowledges, each in its own way.

In Book VII of *Confessions*, Augustine having progressed from the Dark Wood to the wooded hilltop, from which he can glimpse the City of God, and “having been admonished by [the unnamed] books of the Platonists” [i.e., likely, by the writings of Plotinus] “returned to my self and I entered into my being, led by you, [God.]” That is, Augustine turned to ask himself about the mind or intelligence that can know immutable God.

The argument that the venerable Bishop offered there is often taken to have the prototypical form of the ontological argument. It is not, I believe. Rather, I believe, Augustine suggests that knowledge of the truth is possible only if truth is intelligible. He argues that the fact that we can know the truth of the statement “the apprehensibility of meaning reveals the intelligibility of being” ensures there exists a harmony between mind and being. The very fact that we can apprehend the significance of this claim that the apprehensibility of meaning reveals the intelligibility of being makes it true. Augustine was not alone in his belief that thought and being have an ontological integrity; this doctrine is commonplace of Medieval philosophy. Duns Scotus also suggested that thinking has an inner harmony with and belongingness to Be-ing. Duns Scotus pointed out the interplay between *modus significandi* and *modus intellegendi*, and between *modus intelligendi* and *modus essendi*—by showing that the forms of language reflect the pure categories of thoughts and that the categories of thoughts reflect the ways of being. The structure of meaning, a structure that not only derives from the very character of thinking but also, reciprocally, shapes thought, depends upon the forms under which beings are given to

us. Meaning determines the aspects under which objects come to presence for us. Thinking belongs to Be-ing, and in the inwardness of thought we discover the power that brings all things to be. This principle is transcendental—it exists above our thought, for no thinking could be were it not true. The meaning of the originative Word gathers together the primal stuff that is the spirit-stuff of language, the one who issues the call that the word announces and the one who hears and understands. This triune must accord in their being in order for the call to be heard and understood. Unless the one who hears the call were fitted for understanding the word, whose uncanniness is nowhere surpassed, understanding would not be possible. The Word gathers the triune in a comprehending unity. Dante himself (on whose works I have meditated to make *The Book of All the Dead*) hints at the belonging together of thinking and being in the final canto of *Paradiso*, where he prays:

*O Light Eternal, who in thyself alone
Dwell'st and thyself know'st and self-understood
Self-understanding, smilest on thy own!*

Indeed Dante's *Commedia* is in some form an Odyssey, a depiction of what (concerning 1857: *Fool's Gold*) I described as "the wounds of returning." Dante suggests that divine intelligence is man's natural home, where the poet at last finds rest.

The togetherness of thinking and being makes intelligibility and truth events. The happening of the empowering togetherness of disclosive human comportment and the appearing of entities accounts for the movement that takes place here. This movement, elemental and presencing, is abundant and hospitable for it grants meaning its very possibility. The movement here names Be-ing. Be-ing is a round dance, who charity presences beings and brings them into the light. It is just as Dante intimates in *Paradiso*, that great hymn to light, when he presents the three Florentines, stripped naked as wrestlers, with hands clasped, engaged in a celebratory dance. The art of Paradise truly is spontaneous, a will-less bringing forth of good of Be-ing, that moves to uncover and display its abundant hospitality. Dante's naked, dancing Florentines puts us in mind of another characteristic of the Gothic art that embodied Aquinas' *novitas mundi*. Recall the sculpture of *Christ Teaching* on the south portal of Chartres cathedral: it makes Christ's body stand forth as a fully natural, fully human body. The Body of Christ, the Body of Glory, stands forth as the human body at once fully natural and truly holy; the Incarnation is made incarnate and bodied forth. It is this that makes Solomon's Song the most sacred of all texts. The goodness of natural human body was a corollary of Aquinas' celebration of existence as Be-ing, and this value I have strived to make manifest in *Exultations*, from *Flesh Angels* on. It reminds us that the resurrection is the glorification of existence as essential non-essence. The Word becoming flesh figures Be-ing's coming to presence in the open clearing of the world, while the passion and resurrection together figure the continual passing from and into existence of the embodiments of Be-ing, that is, of the continual worlding of beings. Thus, Aquinas' celebration of existence as Be-ing reminds us that Eye of Be-ing is no far off point, but an Eye that sees in our own eye, which is an eye that Be-ing uses to behold the bodying forth into presence of beings.

The call that coming the presence issues is covenantal, for the addresses to us reveals that responsiveness to Be-ing that moves things towards presence is ontologically constitutive—it forms what it means to be human. The reason for making of a work is to strive to render homage to the covenant. For the covenant can never be broken, for only through it are humans granted a world. But it can be misrepresented and distorted, as it is when one represents the world (as most films do) as a standing reserve of beings external to consciousness. Dante again knew of the constitutive character of this covenantal process, for in canto XVII of *Purgatorio*, he writes:

You apprehension draws an image form

*a real object and expands upon
that object until the soul has turned towards it;*

*and if, so turned, the soul tends steadfastly,
then that propensity is love—it's nature
that joins the soul in you, anew, through beauty.*

*Then, just as flames ascend because the form
of fire was fashioned to fly upward, towards
the stuff of its own sphere, where it lasts longest*

*so does the soul, when seized, move into longing,
a motion of the spirit, never resting
till the beloved thing has made it joyous.*

A charitable perception of beings unfolds their being within us; a love that responds to Be-ing's call within beings allows beings to come to presence within the open space of our own existence. It is eros that moves beings to presence within us. As those final words of the Dante's *Paradiso*, quoted in *Et resurrects est*, have it:

*But then my mind was struck by light that flashed
and, with this light, received what it had asked.*

*Here force failed my high fantasy; but my
desire and will were moved already--like
a wheel revolving uniformly—by*

the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.

By reason of the belonging together of beings and things, the bodies and the depths of consciousness become indistinguishable. Once actual Be-ing was real only at the moment of consecration, but in the *missa jubilaea* of attentiveness to coming to presence, it becomes a universal epiphany. This universal epiphany inaugurates the New Advent, which realizes the eucharistic transformations that take place within the presencing of beings. The *missa jubilaea* is in many ways the mirror-image of the *missa solemnis*, for the eucharistic transformation of the *missa jubilaea* does not make the body and flesh into spirit; rather the flesh of the Body, which is worlding manifesting itself as *existere ipsum*, annihilates death by making life and death identical.

Beings come to presence within a world. Therefore they bear meanings. Because they bear meanings, they address a call to us, one that we are fitted to hear because that world embraces us as well. This hearing of the sayings of beings grounds every proposition that can be announced. Every utterance responds to the hearing the primal saying of beings. Language is assembled by Be-ing so that beings might come to pass therein. Yet Be-ing withholds itself from language—from the very place where Its powers make themselves manifest. Dante, too, was acquainted with the paradoxical knowledge that language builds the world into which beings, by being named, come forth, yet the Be-ing which moves them to presence withholds itself from language, as well as with the intimate interpenetration of thinking and the worlding of the world. For in canto XXXIII of the *Paradiso*, concerning his vision of the Tenth Heaven, the Empyrean, he writes:

What little I recall is to be told,

*from this point on, in words more weak than those
of one whose infant tongue still bathes at the breast.*

*And not because more than one simple semblance
was in the Living Light at which I gazed --
for It is always what It was before --*

*But through my sight, which as I gazed grew stronger,
that sole appearance, even as I altered,
seemed to be changing. . .*

*How incomplete is speech, how weak, when set
against my thought!. And this, to what I saw
is such—to call it little is to much.*

*Eternal Light, You dwell within
Yourself, and only You know You; Self-knowing,
Self-known, You love and smile upon Yourself!*

Thinking constitutes itself as by coming to be through a transcendence towards Being. Or, at least, “Apprehension and being are identical” is true, so long as one as one understands apprehension not as the activity of humans, but as the activity of that which has humans as subjects (i.e., that throws humans under its subjugating categories.) Language is fitted to reality as much as it is to the understanding. Reality is fitted to language in appearing for us. What moves towards the opening, the opening itself, and what stands forth illuminated in the opening belong together.

Thoughts come to us; we do not think them up. Thinking is a form of grace, an event that overtakes us, and address visited upon us. Thinking is a call to you, but it is not without you. The voice, that sounds as though it calls from the an unknown place, actually calls from heart of inwardness. Though it comes from what is nearest, is nonetheless unfamiliar, uncanny, distant, indefinite, reticent. It calls from the Beyond—from Before but not from Away—for what moves beings to presence cannot itself be a being. It must be no thing, an abyss pure of all being that we can discern only in the clearing that self-abandonment opens i.e., only through a nihilism that, unlike that of the sociologists is sufficiently thorough-going to pass over into the realm of the ontological; hence the images in the *Exultations* region of *The Book of All the Dead* are kenotic. None the less, the abyss and chaos *is* simply language and the word and not different from it, since its obscurity is the shadow cast by that which comes to presence in language. (With the New Advent, Be-ing as *existere ipsum* would be identical with the word—the self-realization of the perfection of Be-ing in the actuality of pure existence would manifest itself as Be-ing’s complete disclosure as *logos*. But for now, the Word is as much pure darkness as pure light.)

The call that beings issue summons you originatively and constitutively; it addresses you simply to call you into being so as to open a clearing for beings. For you are an opening towards thinking. The structure of the mind establishes the possibility of being claimed by the Word. Through hearing and seeing, Be-ing seizes us. *The Book of All the Dead* uncovers something which It passes on, and gives us to understand. Language is our dwelling-place. Furthermore, in the *missa jubilaea* (some poor sense of which is the most I can hope that the *Exultations* region of *The Book of All the Dead* imparts, especially by provoking the insight that grasping beings through concepts little avails us) the call harmonizes with the form of the body of the covenant, the body of *existere ipsum*. Then the call issues no idle word, for every word arises within the depths of existence itself.

The illuminative opening is more real than what appears, illuminated within it, just as possibility is higher than actuality; nonetheless, in the *existere ipsum* attainments of *missa jubilaea*, the transcendentality of existence identifies possibility and actuality. But the attainment of this identity is only a limit that we asymptotically approach, but can never make real (at least without the intervention of a Higher Power.) The ideality of that identity means that while thought opens itself towards Be-ing, what appears within the opening is not necessarily true. For us, actuality can never be entirely factual—further possibilities may reveal themselves in time. “To open to” is to be opened by the bleeding trace of the wounding Word that calls us to err(ancy.) Even in this, the power of the Word to make a world, which, however damaged and mutilated lingers in every speech-event as a sanguinolent trace, preserves the capacity for truth. The illuminative opening encircles all that comes to pass within it.

The rend or tear in routines into which being emerge into clarity is not unlimited. There are no possibilities except what can come into this limited space; your awareness of what happens here is not a selection from all-inclusive totality. Nothing ever oversteps its rightful bounds, for each being is allotted only the needful sufficiency of all emerging and perishing within the rightful sphere of its own proper be-ing. Each shining appearance presents itself only within the possibilities of its time. In its coming forth, it temporalizes. The energy of a work of art surges against fixed, commonly shared appearances of things and rends a hole in that appearance in which the new stands forth. This transfigures what has been, and endows it with futurity. When we creatively encounter the New of the Future coming forth into presence, we freely grant it the right to such as it is. We allow to emerge into presence and shine within us. Any attempt to grasp and fix the meaning of what comes to pass here closes down the possibilities that the work might open. The attentive graciousness of heeding the process by which things come to presence liquifies the world that otherwise presents its as rigidified. It dissolves the boundaries that we create as we attempt to grasp beings as objects set outside ourselves, in whose meaning we have no role to play. Opening the field of mutual interpenetration of humans and beings is what I strived to elicit in the *Exultations* region of *The Book of All the Dead*, and especially in *Et resurrects est*. But opening in which the new world comes to pass was also Dante’s theme in the *Paradiso*; so in canto XXX he associates the lighted clearing with spring:

*And I beheld, shaped like a river, light
Streaming a splendour between banks whereon
The miracle of spring was pictured bright.*

*Out of this river, living sparkles thrown
Shot everywhere a fire amidst the bloom
And there like rubies gold-encrusted shone.*

Occasionally my films have been accused of “overloading”—of saying too much at once. To this I answer that there is no normative apprehension of the movement that appears in any of my films, and least of all *Et resurrects est*. There is no all-comprehending understanding that grasps all possible meanings. Pure openness and complete access to possibility are simply illusions since they defy the reality of temporality. Every event of coming-to-presence is a limited event, and there is no totality of which it is a part. But these possibilities do have a definite character; possibility is not something initially indefinite that we close down upon and thereby render definite. Neither is any event of coming to presence determinative, for there is always something else, and something more, to be revealed. But there is no totality, just because there is no end to meaning. Meanings come to be only for a time, and there is no point from which we apprehend all meanings for all times. Beings can call out differently, and we can always hear their sayings otherwise.

Be-ing solicits us, through the call of being. Our response is attention, that opens a clearing where things come to presence. Awareness of this process requires our cooperation, our letting things come to be. Grasping objects through concepts enframes them, renders them static, and so makes it impossible to grasp their movement towards being. It is just as Dante suggested (in *Paradiso X*):

*As of thy will Thy angels unto thee
Make sacrifice, singing hosanna
May men make of their will a sacrifice*

Just as the angels sacrifice their will to the end of praising God, so men, through a similar sacrifice, gain familiarity with spontaneous art and will-less creativity, releasing their desire to bring forth truth to follow wherever Be-ing would have it go.

III

Repetition: beginning again and again, ever more originatively, by preserving the strangeness and uncanniness that marks every true beginning. What happens here happens for the first time. If I have served well, this remains true for as often as you allow yourself to go forth and encounter it.

The films *The Book of All the Dead* at once rest within themselves and projects themselves forth luminously as a going to the encounter. There is, even within the acts of self-disclosure that occurs in these films, that which secludes and occludes itself. In the force with which a work tears an opening in routine thinking, in its strength to encourage you to participate with it and in its capacity to cooperate with what you are to form a new thought—in this rending, which is never violent—there is the trace of that which never comes into the Open, of that which hides behind what is revealed. If meaning determines what aspects can come to presence for us, it also ensures that that which is without language, can be no thing at all. It must always lie beyond (before, not away from) representation and even before thought. The harmony among language, thought and being ensures that nothing can come into the open of givenness without language. Still, there remains the mark of that originality that is the Beyond, of a Be-ing that constitutes the being of what transpires within the work. What withholds itself in unconcealment is unrepresentable as it is no thing that can be. It comes forth only in the interstices formed by repetition, yet it withdraws behind what actually comes to presence in the repetition. Thus, the pattern of repetition traces out the conflictual movement of opening and withdrawal. This opening and withdrawal is the source of conflict—conflict which drama provides only in the form of a dissembling misrepresentation. The presences of beings engenders a forgetfulness of their disclosure—forgetfulness that presence is really a process of events emerging in the clearing lit by meaning. Repetition, precisely because no identical disclosure ever takes place, calls us back from that forgetfulness and harkens us to what is more primal. Repetition thus brings us to stand within true time, and so makes the event of coming to disclosure more meaningful. The nonidentity of what is repeated reminds us that meaning is a floating abode, without grounds anywhere. It makes us know Be-ing as an abyss, just as Beatrice suggests in the twenty-eighth canto of the *Paradiso*.

Augustine himself recognized the absent presence of what withdraws behind what actually comes to presence. In Book VII of *Confessions*, he writes:

*Then indeed I thought of you, O life of my life,
as a greatness which throughout space and which penetrated
the whole mass of the world and outside of the world
existed in every direction through immense space without
limit so that the earth possessed you, the heavens
possessed you, all things possessed you, and all were
contained in you but you were not limited anywhere. Just
as the light of the sun is not blocked out by the body of
the air—I mean this which is above the earth—so that
it cannot get through it, and just as light penetrates the
air without bursting or ripping it but by filling it
completely, so in the same way I thought that the body not
only of the heaven and the air and the sea but even of the
earth also was possible to you and that you could penetrate
all parts of these bodies, both the greatest and the
smallest parts so that they could receive your presence
since, as I then thought, by a secret inspiration both
inwardly and outwardly of all things are governed which you
made.*

Repetition, too, by rending routine and enframing beings differently, sounds with echo of the uncanny. The uncanny momentarily arrests the moving to presence of what the work frames; as Beatrice says of the blessed of angels in the passage just referred to, “their sight plumbs the abyss/Of truth, where the intellect is stayed at rest.” Repetition shows that the future steers the present just as it gives no meaning to the past. Repetition, too, figures the thought of the Eternal Return which brings the thinker into an ever closer relation to what is thought within a thought. Within repetition, humans forget themselves, because within repetition there is no time. In repetition, the unflinching quality of our remembrance of those in the heavens is persevered. The enthusiasm of repetition brings forth the fury in which humans and God couple. We become like the gods because we enter entirely within the unfading moment. Repetition traces the advance of thinking under the Unthinkable. The caesura that breach repetition figure the abyss that separates humans from gods.

The actual, physical making of the work only opens a distance between the energy that withdraws from disclosure and the dissembling representations which, are, for all the dissimulation, are nonetheless an event in truth’s appearing. Making temporalizes, and so allows us to know ourselves as human, as being on this side of the abyss that separates humans from gods.

The image, as representation, endangers this coming-to-be. It threatens to fix the energy of Be-ing by framing it. What withholds itself from the image has originative primacy. It can be known only primordially, and what is known primordially is no thing. The meaning of what withdraws from appearance nonetheless emerges. It emerges in the presencing of what comes to life here. But there is no thing—neither core nor substance, no central insight nor total, synoptic view—that binds all that appears here into a whole. No infinity grounds the finite possibilities that disclose themselves here; it is this finitude of actually available possibilities that makes time necessary. There is no absolute pure space or ecstatic time that gathers together everything, both present and absent. But a work of art measures the finitude of the space in which beings come into the open, the space that is the home of humans, the sacred space in which divinity discloses beings but conceals its own Be-ing. Every moment and every experience that occurs here is momentary, uncaused and, as an end in itself, complete and lacking nothing. The ephemeral moment attunes us to the memory of Be-ing.

This is what is revealed in the confrontation with death and finitude (portrayed in *Burying the Dead* and *Et resurrects est.*) It is that appearance of reality as an assembly of fixed objects,

grounded in some infinite, unchanging Existent is an imposture. Death animates the sense of the intimacy of life whose measureless flow is a danger to the stability of things. We deceive when we imagine that the real order is composed of things but the confrontation with death reveals the brilliance of life that is no thing. Through death we learn that life is death and that death is life, and so accede to most intimate knowledge of Be-ing. And death reveals that lack of Eternity unleashes time—thus death grants time to beings. It is time that requires the dionysiac revel I have so often (as in *Et resurrects est*) strived to evoke.

But nothing that appears here at one instant “causes” something else to happen at another—this is no story. Neither does something that happens “here” cause something else to happen “there,” where you are—the time in which the occurrences in this work transpire issues a call, to which you may or may not listen. If you heed the call, you are as much involved in the process of bringing forth meaning as what occurs here is. You, provide the opening into awareness of what occurs here; in your receptive interweaving of the experienced time of the work, you are creative. You pick up on the destiny of what occurs earlier and project that opening into the future. You apprehending the meaning of the present as framed in the past. You cooperate with it in making meaning.

Every artwork obtains its power from a barbarous element recalcitrant to light and form, which exposes itself not phenomenally but only by establishing limits to forms and meanings that might come to pass. This frame is also a name, and this naming allows a being to appear. A work of art manifests the process by which a name summons a being to be; its shows how a word and what withdraws from the meaning cooperate in moving beings to appearance. The Be-ing that brings beings to be is indefatigable, as the flow of its current makes possible an inexhaustible plenitude of beings that only conceals Be-ing’s involvement in making a world.

The eucharistic transformation of the presencing of being that follows the New Advent is characteristically the continuous repetition of creation—a cosmic, universal, unending passover in which beings manifest themselves as a coming to presence within the Body of the Lamb, that is, where no thing is distinguished substantially from *existere ipsum* (existence itself.) To manifest something of unceasingness of beings’ coming forth required that *Et resurrects est*, like so much of *The Book of All the Dead*, be a bricollage, that it be assembled by disruptively joining pieces break apart the texture of the work at each temporal seam. Only such disturbances in the flow of time can suggest the continual renewal of Be-ing, of the incessant coming forth of beings. And if such an assemblage seems strange, one might recall that Dante’s *Commedia*, constant rereading of which inspired and re-inspired *The Book of All the Dead*, is similarly peculiar, even in the *Paradiso* region. There, where we might expect Dante to use a uniformly lofty style, he has Cacciaguida and Peter Damiani use a vocabulary that ill-fits a lofty style and humorous onomatopoeia that is out of keeping with the *Paradiso*’s elevated theological subject-matter. Dante regularly shifts the tone of his writing, lest the style become too uniform, and so lulling.

What emerges here comes to be in being framed, but something else leaves a trace by being discordant with what appears here inasmuch as the motion of life contends with the stasis that framing produces. Be-ing allows what shines forth here to come to appearance—what appears here does not come to appearance from itself or simply with itself, but only by contending with what withdraws from appearance. The belonging together of the opening in which beings come to presences and the beings that come to presence within that opening does not arise from some more primal thing from which both import their nature. What is more primal is no thing, only a movement towards disclosure. Only Be-ing, and Be-ing cannot become one more entity present among others. Besides what appears and mis-appears within the world, there is also that which disappears in withholding itself from representation. That which withholds itself from presentation is what moves every being that does appear towards a presencing self-disclosure. So there is more here than what appears; what does not appear is more primal than what does. This work is a call, addressed through the beings that appear here, to a more primal attention to what withdraws from representation. Attention is required, because

what withdraws from representation is no thing and has nothing to say for itself. Nor is this withdrawal, as an absence, something that we present by changing our thinking. No social reformers actions help us on this, the crucial matter. We can come to some awareness only by recognizing how what it leaves behind claims us, by feeling that being is an event in which we participate. Through attention one can prepare a readiness for the event of disclosure.

The New Advent as a future possibility is heard in the echo of what is primal, of what contends with what appears here as it withdraws from appearance. Along with any emergence into appearance there is that which refuses any use or representation, a hiddenness of the primal whose meaning has not yet entirely faded away. The New Advent that Dante suggested in his letter of 1310 had dawned with the coronation of Emperor Henry VII, the new son of Jesse and the Lamb of God, thus remains as a future possibility.

IV

The ultimate contest set the soul, the end of all our tasks and troubles, is not to be left without a share in the best of all visions.

V

To turn to your questions:

1) In your films you use a lot of computer graphics, not as a way of creating special effects but as a language. What's the idea behind this project.

My interest in computer graphics has many sources. First, if one works at a low-enough level (and avoids the fancy modelling programming of which designers have become enamoured), computer graphics is a mathematical art. I have many reservations about the formulaic approaches that so often have resulted from applying mathematical methods in the arts—nonetheless, the idea that the beauty that an art object possesses resembles the beauty of a mathematical derivation I conceived during my years in high school and is an idea that I have never relinquished. One similarity is that, like a mathematical theorem, an art object is subject to higher laws that humans have no part in making—principles that impose themselves on us and we must, willy-nilly, obey. The analogous beauty of art objects and of mathematical theorems explains why dramatic effects bankrupt the arts, as they threaten to do in our own times. There is no contest of wills in a mathematical theorem, but only the stark beauty of watching a proof unfold. We watch truth unfold itself, just as it does in Shakespeare's comedies of mistaken or concealed identity (which are similarly nondramatic.)

So as to avoid the danger of succumbing to a formulaic application of mathematics in the arts (such as that which Ficino produced) I have tended to employ stochastic approaches such as that of Xenakis, i.e., approaches that involve constrained randomness. The approach that Xenakis takes, and that I favour, rests on a principle that John Cage's work has made widely known and appreciated. When John Cage used chance operations, he exposed the artwork to shaping forces that lie beyond what he can predict. Thus he suggested that nature has productive capacities that outstrip those of the limited, confined intelligence that humans possess and that it is better for humans to cooperate with nature to bring forth works of art than to produce them out of our own heads. By doing so, we open the works we make to structuring principles that are richer than our limited intelligence can conceive. These are ideas with which I

agree—primarily for their anti-voluntaristic implications.

For years I have said, half-jokingly, that I like to work with film because film is not a creative art. We shoot best when we empty our heads of all preconceived ideas (the adherence to preconceived ideas is what makes scripted, story film so execrable) and accept the gift of what is given to us, in the moment of shooting. Shooting film is more an act of cherishing than of creating. My work in computer graphics simply extends this cooperation with a domain that is higher than human being.

The exciting developments that have taken place in contemporary mathematics in the wake of Benoit Mandelbrot's work is another influence. His work has elevated experimental mathematics to a new respectability and has legitimated interest in non-deterministic methods. (The idea of the results being non-deterministic needs some clarification. The results are deterministic in the sense that if the procedure is run on the same turing machine more than once, identical results appear every time. However, these procedures are non-deterministic in the sense that if we introduce a slight change in some parameter, the extent or even the direction of the resultant change in the output of the turning machine is unpredictable. In the classical mathematics this is not so: that bane of every engineering student, a course in numerical methods, teaches us how, when there no closed-form method for calculating a result—or when there is no method that we can put in the form of an algorithm that we can code to run on a turning machine—we can ever more closely approach the theoretical result by tweaking variables. Homing in the correct result by reiteration is an essential tool of numerical methods. In this new experimental mathematics, there are no similar numerical methods.) There has been a sea-change in the philosophy of mathematics, as sweeping as that we saw with work of Frege, Cantor and Peano.

Finally, my overall model for *The Book of All the Dead* forced me take up this new technology for producing images. As I have mentioned to you, *The Book of All the Dead* was inspired (and reinspired) by reading (and rereading) Dante's *Commedia*. The *Exultations* region of that work, the region in which I have used computer graphics corresponds roughly to the *Paradiso* section of Dante's poem—actually it begins with the last cantos of Purgatorio, from the point where Virgil bids farewell to the poets and leaves him to encounter Beatrice. It is easy enough to figure out how, in 1994, one can make an *Infero*: one simply points the camera anywhere in an urban environment to record a scene as chilling as anything that arise from Dante's vivid imagination of horrendous suffering and bone-cracking torment. Images of Paradise, however, are another matter. In our time, such images must to be brought forth from the imagination -since they are images of what does not exist in reality. They must be artificial images, depicting imagined scenes. Hence the quotation that appears several times in the *Exultations* region: "*le paradis n'est pas artificiel.*"

I point out, in this connection, that I like the comparatively poor quality of video images—their lower resolution, the comparative lack of subtlety in colour, their poor chiaroscuro relative to photographs. These features suggest that these images derive from a realm that is not continuous with that which photographs depict.

2) Do you see in you work a tendency towards a dynamic and concrete abstraction?

Absolutely. I consider filmmaking to be, above all else, the practice of sculpting movement. A film is good or bad precisely in the measure that movement—and as importantly, something that makes movement possible, viz., time—is well or badly sculpted. Another way of saying this, perhaps a bit more accurate, is that film is an art of rhythm and that film is good or bad in the measure that its rhythms are well or badly created.

3) How are you using painterly elements in your films?

Painterly constructions appear primarily in the *Exultations* region of *The Book of All the*

Dead, the sections that include computer graphics. The visual forms one produces with a computer can, and should, resemble painting more than do those one produces using a camera—and this is more true of forms produced using a movie camera than of those that derive from a still camera. For a computer image is conspicuously a pointillistic construction that articulates form by chiaroscuro. Texture has a similar importance in computer graphics as it does in painting, but it has little importance in cinematography. I have tried to develop this comparison between computer image and painted forms in my computer graphics. Of course, there is something of an irony that my computer generated images end up on film, with whose nature they do not accord. Of course, the resulting tension is interesting to work with.

Furthermore, the painted forms that I used in those films in *The Book of All the Dead* that appear before the *Exultations* region—that appear in *The System of Dante's Hell* and the *Consolations* regions—introduce a different type of visual form into the work. I have wanted to work with many types of construction, to emphasize the films' collage character. Collage interests me for its potential to create disruption, to dismember a work's surface. Breaches and tears in the surface of a work have experiential effects—they jolt us out of our routines. An artwork itself is an occasion for the happening of truth, for truth to emerge into the opening in routine that the strangeness of a work of art creates. Only such a bricolage construction that disturbs the flow of time can suggest the continual renewal of Be-ing in the incessant coming forth of beings. (Of course, a book, in the Biblical sense, is similar: a motley collection of records of diverse sorts: poems, prayers, history, legal edicts, theological speculations, visionary records, anecdotes, allegories, parables, tales, etc.)

4) Do you use the body as a way of connecting inorganic and organic matter?

I am not sure that “organic” and “inorganic” are the key terms here. But I do use the body to form “a between” which I believe the fundamental unit of any viable ontology—the paradox of “a between” that does not span any two, more fundamental givens being fully acknowledged. For we, who are, after all, bodies, form the opening into which beings come to presence. But, I have noted elsewhere, the belonging together of the opening in which beings come to presences and the beings that come to presence within that opening does not arise from some more primal thing from which both import their nature; the “between” is primary. The worlding of the world, its coming to presence within the clearing illuminated by Be-ing, unfolds within the body. I have tried to do everything I can think to keep us in mind of the body when responding to what appears within my films. Picturing the body, and, more especially, through the pictured body evoking the sensations of the tactile body, is one such means.

5) What relation do you see between the body and film language?

I remarked above that I believe that film is an art of organizing movement. The phenomenon of movement interests me because kinaesthetic sensation is so interior, so unbounded, so indefinite, and lies so close to our primordial apprehension of Be-ing, on which beings are not differentiated and the boundaries between beings are fluid, and in which the role of body in the prehension is evident. Primordial awareness reveals that perception is a process in which the world unfolding itself within the body, and that the body itself forms the opening in which beings come to presence. The cinema, as an art of organizing movement is an art which has the capacity to elicit the primordial form of awareness.

Too, in Western art, divorce from one's body, as occurs in madness, is a form of death. To be resurrected is to be reunited with the body. Hence the *Exultations* region of *The Book of All the Dead* attempts to reconstruct the flesh (out of the pixels of computer image process) and to reanimate it; so the *Exultations* region includes imagery of body taking on form (even as two bodies which form the primary subject matter of the region move to form one flesh.) All of this is an effort to enact the idea of the resurrection.

The eroticized body gives itself to perception in a manner that has some similarities with the way that a work of art presents itself. For the carnal body is always a site of multiple determinations and multiple meanings. The shifting unstable character of carnal significance, embodied in the never-immobilized character of the carnal body, resembles the indeterminate meaning of an artwork. The carnal body is always agitated; it continually forms and reforms itself in a series of poses offered as much to itself as to any other. It presents a nudity that is always equivocal, gratuitous, excessive, allusive and shifting. In this proliferation of suggestion, it resembles a work of art. Small wonder, then, that the nude has been a commonplace in Western art, and that artists have created “the artist and his (up until recently it was always his, though not any longer) model” imagery in a discourse on the artist’s relation to his art.

6) What is the significance of the themes of journey and landscape in your work?

Both have plural significance. Several years ago, the critic Michael Dorland remarked about me that I was an artist of “belatedness.” At the time, I felt that there was a slight implicit in the remark—for nostalgia is a sentiment that the horde of pseudo-Nietzschean sociologists were condemning at the time. But I have to admit that, whatever he intended (and I think he meant nothing negative), his point was correct. I am conscious that my films appear after three millennia of antecedent work, and at the time when, likely, art is in its death throes. The archive is closing—perhaps it is already closed. My filmwork acknowledges that it comes at the end of, or perhaps after the end of, a long and, to my mind, venerable tradition. It points towards antecedent works, such as Homer’s *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Dante’s *Commedia*, Bunyon’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Joyce’s *Ulysses* and especially Pound’s *Cantos*. All these are works of nostalgia, works about the pain (*algia*) of returning home (*nostos*). Homer’s *Odyssey* provides the type-form: it recounts the tribulations of man as he attempts to return to Penelope (rather as Dante recounts the trials of a man who returns to the light which is our home, and to his beloved Beatrice.) To come home is to return the originary site, to the place where Be-ing emerges in full disclosure. The affect of nostalgia, the “wounds of returning,” arises from the recognition of what narrative constantly operates to deny --that “you can’t go home again” as the title of Thomas Wolfe’s novel has. The quest to return “home”—to the site where Be-ing comes fully to presence—is ill-fated because Be-ing reveals itself only in the traces and echoes it creates as it withdraws behind the appearance of beings; it nowhere emerges into full disclosure. *The Book of All the Dead* is really about this. Coming to that insight is the central topic of *Lamentations: A Monument to the Dead World*. The ensuing parts, *Consolations: Love is an Art of Time* and *Exultations: In Light of the Great Giving*, are about what we do after that recognition has dawned, and we are bereft of Paradise. The response I frame to that question is conceived in terms of the imagination’s activity and, as I have noted, the primordial awareness that our bodies grant us, if we can just lose our minds. (Hence the themes of madness and the presence of psychiatrists in *Lamentations* and *Consolations*, etc.)

Too, from the outset, I have strived to make clear that the journey is steered by sovereign conditions of the sky and the sea that adjoin it. A journey is also a form of restlessness, of a failure to dwell with the slowly unfolding beauty of the given. It is many things.

The theme of the landscape is more complicated yet. Let it suffice here that landscape is the body’s dual. Furthermore, when the mind falls down, we can discover the ontological identity between nature and consciousness.

7) Somebody said (Innis) that ‘communication is the technological habitat of conscience.’ Do you think that something similar is happening in your films?

Technology is the mode in which Be-ing reveals itself in this era of deprivation. The view that the implements of technology lie around us, as so many objects that we can put to good or evil use, is false—it is even, I would say, an item in the inventory of modernity’s ideology.

Technology does not simply lie outside us; it is also within us. Technology has entered the deepest recesses of our being and shaped its nature. Our conception of will—the centre of our philosophy really from the time of Augustine, but even more evidently from the time of Nicholas of Cusa, and more evidently still from the time of Descartes, and yet more evidently (since we really are tracing a rising historical arc) from the time of Nietzsche—is really that of technology. This notion of will, *statu nascendi*, produced the regime of technology, and the hegemonous power of that regime refined and strengthened that conception of will, and that refinement and strengthening, in its turn, furthered the development of the technology which further developed that conception of will. So the cycle turned. Technology has remade human being in its image; it has, essentially embraced us. So it is not true to say that technology provides us with the implements which we use; rather, we have become tools of technology.

Technology erects our world; it is technology that creates the conditions under which Being discloses itself in our era. Values are always intramundane. Hence, technology, for good or ill, has become the habitat of value, and it is from the habitat of value that the call of conscience issues. But it might be that the language in which that call is uttered is a language of deprivation—I believe that it is. This requires that the thinker listen for intimations of deprivation within the buzzing positivism of the discourse of science and technology. We are deprived because the gods have flown, because science and technology have expelled the sacred. But within the intimations of deprivation, perhaps we can discern, just ever so faintly, the beating of their wings.

My work attempts to do what all genuine works of art do: to call the gods to nearness and to give them a place to dwell, and to prepare humans for their return.

8) What is the meaning of the connection between the words taken out of literary works and images in *Illuminated Texts*?

I am ashamed to admit (but must own up to the fact) that the words taken out of literary works and the images in *Illuminated Texts* are evidence of a grandiose ambition that I harboured for *The Book of All the Dead*. We live on a cusp of history, when art is dying (if it is not already dead) and literacy is declining—If you don't believe me, consider this change that has taken in the few years since I was a university student. In my time, we judged other students by what they had read (and by their ability to form strong arguments). If you encountered someone who had read more than you, in a classroom or in a coffee-shop, you felt ashamed. Young people made themselves sick staying up all hours of the night, trying to jam in as much reading as possible. My classmates nicknamed me "Bibliography Bruce" and I took that epithet as the highest honour. It has been a good ten years since I last met a student who seemed at all impressed at the amount a person has read.

In a time when love of literature and philosophy has fallen out of respect, "the last historian" will attempt to construct as comprehensive an archive as he can, to preserve that which he loves. *The Book of All of the Dead* is an effort (bound not to succeed) to create a compendium of the most valuable thoughts produced by the greatest minds of our civilization—by the greatest minds of the culture that is about to disappear.

The texts superimposed into the images in *Illuminated Texts* reflect on the same theme as the images of that film do—nature's falling away from its pristine, paradisiacal state, the fate of nature that has been enfolded within the system of technology—to become material for the production of nutrition-free bread and for the production of corpses in the universal catastrophe. Yet the words and pictures that appear simultaneously are out of phase with each other, as each represents a different stage in history's working itself out.

Furthermore, the texts in *Illuminated Texts* introduce an intertextuality into the work, and so opens the work. The idea of the open form work appeals to me, because the open form work reveals the process of its coming-to-come. This intertextuality also suggests the relation between *Illuminated Texts* (and, more generally, of all the films in *The Book of All the Dead*) and

antecedent works. The inclusion reveals that *The Book of All the Dead* is a dialogue with antecedent works. This is an aspect of Dante's *Commedia* as well. And that great work, one might recall, frequently shifts style, so as to imitate the writing of the people that the poet along his way. That imitation is nearly a form of quotation.

9) How do you structure/organise sound and colours in your films?

I have used different organizing systems in different films. *She is Away* is a pure colour film—it is, as I subtitled “an arrangement in pink and blue.” It is a tone-poem of absence, and the colours have affective roles. For *1857: Fool's Gold*, I set up a matrix of colours versus image-classes (the types of images in the source material—the “found footage”—I varied) and uses a random process to generate the path through the matrix. In this way, I guaranteed that each image-class would undergo a colour-variation of each available tone. However, on top that structure, I superimposed another, more arbitrary structure: I stipulated that there would be a generated move towards lighter and more golden images. That colour system relates to the film's soteriological commitments. In *Illuminated Texts*, I moved systematically from natural colours (blues and green and solar yellows) to more artificial colours emphasizing (especially) red—a colour that in both film and video always ends up looking artificial (presumably because film manufacturers want to make starlets' lips look moist and sexy.)

For *Lamentations: A Monument for the Dead World*, I sought for the hard, primary colours I associate with the fantasy of recovering the lost origin, the primal site that will reconstitute meaning in beings and that will remake us—will give us back the face we had before we were born, to adapt that phrase of Yeats'. *Consolations: Love is an Art of Time*: used a more subdued palette, in keeping with my efforts to suggest the dawning of a new, more accepting relation with finite beings.

Generally, more materialist considerations have determined the colours in the films that belong to the *Exultations* region. They involve a great deal of overprinting—perhaps the most technically complex in the history of cinema. For these films, my concern was, first of all, to establish a palette that seems right for film (the golds of the region's eponymous film, *Exultation's: In Light of the Great Giving*) and to choose images that can be overprinted with one another while preserving that general cast—to choose images and colour tints that won't grey one another out, or create large areas of too-great density, etc. I should point out that there is great deal of colour tinting in films that belong to the region.

10) How do you interpret nature?

Nature is not something more primal than that which appears it experience. Both nature and the self belong together, for they are co-created from “the between.” Nature and ourselves arise together, as mutual conditions for beings' coming to presence. This implies that nature is no more pristine than language is, for nature appears as always already worlded, and it is language that erects the world. That language worlds nature and that the universal language of moderns is the language of technology entails that, for moderns, nature is always already enfolded within the language of technology. We cannot hope that we might turn to a pristine nature in order to be released from the domain of technology, for technology has rendered nature as nothing more than a resource for endless making and remaking. It is our fate that our understanding of nature is encompassed within a productionist metaphysics.

We, moderns, conceive nature primarily as a domain of stored energy. The conception of nature as energy is not, however, a conception of a more primal reality. Moderns conceive energy not as Being's likeness, but rather as a standing reserve—as something that they can reshape and reorder according to their interests and their will. Nature's difference from Being,

on this conception of nature, is nowhere more evident than in the fact that the conception of nature as energy is a conception of something given, of has come to appearance; what is more, it is the conception of something that has come to appearance within the domain of technology. Thus nature, on this conception, is something that can be secured, owned, apportioned and appropriated.

The conception of nature as a reserve of stored energy, to be reformed according to our interest, has given us licence over nature. Thus we hybridize plants, create seeds which produce more resilient plants, bring forth grain that is ever less nutritious, crossbreed our grapes to bring them to ripeness sooner and with higher sugar content, we blend our wines so they hardly taste of the minerals of the soil where they grow, the variety of grape of which it is made, or the sun which ripened the grapes of which it is made. In our time, nature is even more remote from Be-ing than are the implements that evidently belong to the domain of technology.

11) Are your films interactive?

Almost all my films contain a surfeit of materials—comprise more elements than anyone can take in any particular viewing. They include narration, supertitles, music, and many, many images. The surfeit of material requires that someone looking at and listening to one of my films must pick and choose amongst the elements presented—must choose to attend to this or that element, and let other elements recede into the background. She must make up her own film as she goes along. In this sense, they are interactive.

I initially framed my reasons for constructing such plural forms as a reaction to the manner that the dominant narrative cinema constructs its spectator. It proceeds by constantly calling forth a spectator who asks “what is going to happen,” by answering the question and then raising the question again. Though it is actually the film that is in control—the film awakens the questions in viewer’s/listener’s mind—an illusion is created that the spectator is in control, for the film answers to the spectator’s demand to know “what happens next?” The fact that elements in my film exceed the spectator’s/listener’s capacity to grasp means that he or she no longer feels in control—no longer feels him or herself to be the master of the text. I considered this deconstruction of the illusion of spectatorial omnipotence to be salutary for moral (i.e., non-aesthetic) reasons.

In time I became intrigued with other features of this form of construction. I came to realize that such a form evoked the sensation of a non-actual horizon, a horizon of possibility, in which the unity of all the elements would come to immediate presence. When a spectator/listener has watched one of my films several times, she will notice relations that she had not recognized on previous viewings; it is a tendency of our character to extrapolate from such differences and to form conjectures about an occasion in which one might grasp all the elements of the film simultaneously. But of course that hope is no different from the hope of Western metaphysic—that of making Be-ing fully present, of grasping Be-ing within the net of our understanding. But just as any disclosure of Be-ing is always partial and always dissembling, so it is with experiences of unity that my films engender—that experience is always partial, and always dependent on the interaction of the spectator/listener with the work. I want to bring that interaction into the experience of the work.

For exactly this reason, I am interested in what the phenomenon of attention reveals. For my films are polyphonic --they involve the interweaving of several lines, none of which is subordinate to any other. As one does when one listens to polyphonic music, one picks up this line or that line at any given moment, and this attention (and not necessarily anything intrinsic in it) brings that line to the fore. These rhythms of procession and recession fascinate me because they mirror Be-ing’s disclosing itself even as it withdraws behind beings.

All that said and insisted upon, I think there is another way of attending to my films, and that is through a scanning perception which prehends, if not the film’s totality, then at least

something more than is apprehended by focused attention. Such experience is like that one has when he listens to an exquisite performance of, say, a Bach cantata, and goes into a trance, hearing a great deal all at once. In such a trance, one responds kinaesthetically to the movement of the various line, though on coming out of the trance one hardly “knows” what one has heard. Such trance perception, which can apprehend many elements simultaneously, seems to me to close to the primordial form of awareness I referred to earlier. Most of my films have extended durations exactly because I hope to engender exactly that form of awareness.

12) Do you really think that in our hypertechnological era we will not need our body?

Not exactly. I believe that technology will not need human bodies, and because human bodies are inefficient, assessed by technological standards (as they require considerable amounts of energy to do relatively little work), that technology will dispense with human bodies. But these machines, lacking the form of the human body, cannot possibly have the characteristics of human beings, for what we are depends on how we are embodied. New productions, with modular construction that will enable the parts of these objects to be interchanged and so will enable these objects to outlast the life span of human being, will be created that will perform, more efficiently, the intellectual labour of human beings. Such machines will be self-reproducing. After they have become dominant, a development that will not take a long, they will permit only a few humans to survive, probably in a zoo-like environment. I think the subconscious recognition that this is a real possibility is the primary reason for the rise of “animal-rights ethics.”

That is, I believe that the potential for more efficient machines—machines that consume less energy to do the intellectual tasks that human beings do—already exist, and that soon the disparity between the relative inefficient of human beings and the efficiency of machines will assert itself with ever greater force until it becomes a force whose self-assertion cannot be halted: It will demand supremacy, and will prevail. This time will be far separated from the time when these machines become self-reproducing and self-sustaining (when they learn to programme and to repair themselves), and I do not think that that time is far distant. And I think that it is vain to imagine that we will kindly watched over by machines of loving grace.

Already the process of “evolution” (devolution?) towards such beings has begun, as technology already has remade us in its own image. I cannot imagine what the meaning of our own self-loathing—of the arrogance of the belief that we have sullied that planet and irredeemably damaged the existing eco-system—and of the abandonment of the idea that humans are the image of the Divine, unless it be to formulate the moral propositions that will justify the destruction of humanity. Already we can see that it is those with the most complete contempt for human beings who most eagerly embrace the arts of the machine. And already we are, as the Canadian philosopher George Grant announced his darkest, but truest prophesy, “We are being changed from creatures of flesh to objects of metal.” This is the fate that technology imposes on us. Only the development of the utmost charity towards human bodies could spare us that fate, a charity commensurate with apprehending the human body as holy, and that development of that consciousness lies outside the progress of technology. For this reason, it is true to say that only a god could spare us that fate. And all we can do is to pray, and to create works of art that prepare humans to issue that prayer. Artists should either prepare us for such prayer, or prepare to celebrate the destruction of humanity. The sociologists can furnish them with assistance for the latter role.

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I hope these responses meet your needs. I did find the questions interesting.

Sincerely

R. Bruce Elder