

PAUL LAFFOLEY (b. 1940, Cambridge, Massachusetts)

THE VISIONARY POINT, 1970

Oil, acrylic, ink, and hand applied vinyl letters on canvas.

73 1/2 × 73 1/2 in./185.4 × 185.4 cm.

Subject: The Connection between That Which Has No History and That Which Has Only History.

Symbol Evocation: The Instant of Revelation.

Comments:

Plato (428–346 BCE) in *The Timaeus* (425 BCE) describes the three elements that compose the universe. These elements suddenly appeared out of nowhere as a result of the titanic clash between the two most cosmic principles: reason (*nous*) and necessity (*ananke*). Reason as causal predictability attempts to overrule necessity by persuasion. Necessity as brute fact attempts to resist reason by the unpredictability of its wandering or errant cause. The nature of the collision is somewhat similar to the thought experiment of Romantic nineteenth-century physics, which only hints at what happens when the irresistible force finally meets the immovable object.

While this cosmology purports to explore fully the implications of the initial explosion, there immediately arise rejoinders on the part of the interlocutor, Timaeus of Locri. He recognizes the sublime terror one experiences approaching the very heart of revelation. The Triune that emerges is, first, the realm of the unchanging forms; it is the domain of the uncreated, the indestructible, the unmodifiable, the uncombinable, and the imperceptible to the physical senses and is known only by thought—in essence, that which has no history. Second, the realm of the copies which bear the same name as the form, but detected by the physical senses, comes into existence and vanishes from a particular place and time, and during its existence is in constant motion. This realm is apprehended by opinion aided by sense data—in essence; it is that which has only history. Third, the nurse of becoming, the receptacle, or space which is eternal and indestructible and provides a position for everything that comes to be, but unlike time which is ranked among the works of the intellect and has a form or archetype (eternal duration or aevum), space has no archetype and exists in its own right as does the realm of form.

There are, however, two direct portals to revelation in the exposition of *Timaeus*: First, the nature of the relationship of being with becoming or the forms and their copies. It is spoken of as follows: “and the things which pass in and out of it (space) are copies of the eternal realities whose form they take in a wonderful way. That is hard to describe—we will follow this up some other time.” *Timaeus* never does! Second, the way in which we as humans know about space “which is apprehended without the senses by a sort of spurious reasoning and so is hard to believe in. We look at it indeed in a kind of dream and say that everything that exists must be somewhere and occupy some space, and that what is nowhere in heaven or earth is nothing at all. And because of this dream state we are not awake to the distinctions we have drawn and others akin to them and fail to state the truth about the true and unsleeping reality.”

Timaeus is not indulging in metaphor. The dream state being referred to is the lucid dream brought to such a primordial and tupiodal (manifesting) state that we are placed in a position to witness universal creation and destruction

directly. In the eighteenth century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) took Plato’s ideas of time and space and placed them on the same footing or ontic status. To the raw data of sensation, Kant held that we contribute the forms of space and time. Space is the form of the external sense, and time is the form of the internal sense. We never experience anything, said Kant, except that it is in space and time.

Yet we never *experience* either space or time. Space and time in which we order phenomena, therefore, must come not from sensation but from within. We are literal co-creators of the universe utilizing this capacity for revelation. I suspect that lucid dreaming or its variations is involved in how the copies are made from the platonic forms, thus explaining how becoming unites with being.

The Visionary Point, therefore, is that moment in time when a viable time machine begins to operate and has the capacity to access the entire past and future of human history from that fatal present. It is an instant of time that can be described as the meeting of time moving forward and time moving backward, and it becomes the point in time, which exactly precedes the beginning moment of the mystical experience of the entire earth.

Exhibitions:

Paul Laffoley: Secret Universe 2. Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2011.

Literature:

Kittelman, Udo, and Claudia Dichter, eds. *Paul Laffoley: Secret Universe 2*. Berlin: Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Cologne: Walter König, 2011, pp. 134–35, ill. p. 71 (color).