

Michel Senes - The Parasite - Noises

We are buried within ourselves; we send out signals, gestures, and sounds indefinitely and uselessly. No one listens to anyone else. Everyone speaks; no one hears; direct or reciprocal communication is blocked. This one here speaks learnedly; he is as boring as the last course he gave; he doesn't care if people hear him. Another, more jovial, plays a strong role that he dearly holds onto: he spreads his good humor through his discourse. The third, an irritable pipsqueak and always on his high horse, terrorizes those around him; they all play their favorite instrument, whose name is their own. All that should produce cacophony; I admit that it makes noise. And Leibniz is right, monads are closed; they neither hear one another nor listen to one another. And yet, sometimes, there is agreement. The most amazing thing in the world is that agreement, understanding, harmony, sometimes exist. Leibniz supposed God for this law-miracle.

He said: here is an orchestra. Each musician plays his instrument as if he were alone in the world. He likes only his English horn, this English horn is he himself in person. He plays his part of the score, and when he has finished, at the very end of the page, he puts down his things and leaves the theater. But only to die. How could the first viola be in harmony with him, for the first viola has never thought of anything but his four strings? Leibniz answered: God created the viola so that at a certain predetermined and well-fixed time, it would produce the note preformed harmonically to that of the English horn. God foresees harmony and God is harmony. History is programmed; everyone has a score. Others say that they are in the same linguistic milieu together. Words have to find each other, since they are part of the same set. And this is the same solution: there is a conductor or a common text to play. Someone or something always precedes.

That doesn't resolve the problem but only gives the answer. We give ourselves the answer in the form of a person or a pre-text. The probability of harmony is weak in the multiple distribution of senders and the qualitative weakness of reception. Harmony is not a law; it is not regularity. Harmony is rarity itself. It is, quite precisely, a miracle. I call a miracle a very great improbability. When the miracle occurs, from an improbable accord, it produces a new song, so very rare that it is forbidden for repetition to have ever occurred for as long as the period of time was before the meeting. This agreement is negatively entropic; it is a producer; it is perhaps production itself—its definition and its dynamism.

In any case, repetition is death. It is the fall into the similar, like the fixed identity of the too-well-known. "

We know nothing of composition, of the product, of the sum, of the integral of monads or of individuals, however their society or association is named. We know nothing of the simplest or most direct operations—addition, multiplication, composition, combination—when it has to do with us. Alas, we can only subtract, analyze, kill. The collective is a black box. The set makes noise. Even if each element plays in tune or sends meaning, the set together produces a false, dangerous, senseless clamor. The collective is white noise itself; we do not know what an orchestra is or how a chorus harmonizes. The collective is not a preestablished harmony, or to put it another way, it is not the always already there. Noise comes out of the black box. Noise and shivarees.

The politician pretends to understand, as do the scientist and the theoretician. The religious man pretends to understand, as do the soldier, the inspector, and the militant. Each social function is a known and pinpointed variety of black ignorance intelligently disguised as white expertise. But the reversal of real noise into theatrical harmony, of the killing of meaning and sound into an accord that is at least represented is not the only benefit here. Every social function from the judge to the professor and from the artist to the president, every function that is classified or classifiable in some theory of classes or functions, every function, I say, eats and lives on the aforementioned ignorance. It appears as soon as the black box must be closed. And this operation is paid for rather dearly, so that the holder of the key lives well off it. The one who holds a key does not necessarily have knowledge as well; he can also guard a lock and forbid it to be opened. Each social function is the guardian of a door of the ark, and of a dangerous door, so it would seem.