

Entropy Moves

Time travel comes naturally, like a neurosis.
He obtains help from the future.

– David Roden,
Letters from the Ocean Terminus

Here is the great riddle of physics: why does it seem that time moves only in one direction? Why are there records of the past but not of the future? Why is it that we can say 'now,' 'before,' and 'after' without flinching at the absurdity of it all? Why is it that we can cause events to move 'forwards' but not 'backwards'?

Classical physics—before the industrial revolution of the 19th century, when machines allowed us to study microscopic layers of temporality and scrambled causality once and for all—was timeless. It allowed us to make constant and reliable predictions, no matter if the events happened in the present, the past or the future. Truth could be calculated inside an absolute, unchanging time. A pendulum swung, and it did not matter whether it went forwards or backwards: you could predict its movements all the same.

But even back then—before computers, quantum mechanics, simulations, and multiverses—we already knew that this stability was a lie or some kind of a trick. We knew because we are a species that relies on the transmission of information for the creation of our culture, and nothing is as cruel to information as the passage of time. Time *must* have a direction, we feel, because chaos increases towards 'the future.' Eventually, sense itself will not survive. Destruction—entropy—is the way in which we measure the motion of time. The way it all makes less and less sense, the way stories unlink and certainty crumbles—this is how time moves forward.

Information wants to carry a stable message but it must do so across time, across the distance between you and I. This is no innocent crossing. In the expanse of time, each movement invites more disintegration. Entropy moves through meaning and meaning does not survive unscathed. Such longing and such violence—information carves itself into time, time dismembers it. Language and matter are only the aftershocks of it all.

The name we have for information that arrives too soon is technology. Technology wants you on its own time. It moves in a distributed manner, overlapping past and future, making everything true and false all at once. It is already here, a heavy machinery on our bodies, but the message is unclear. Its complexity needs to be weighted down by time, so that we may begin to piece it all together. We can only make sense of it by untangling ourselves from linear logic, by moving towards chaos. The threads of cause and effect untangle. It becomes impossible to know if you are using the tools or if the tools are using you.

Bogna Konior