



The Swallow's tail

Dali's last painting

On the plane of philosophy properly speaking, of metaphysics, catastrophe theory cannot, to be sure, supply any answer to the great problems which torment mankind. But it favors a dialectical, Heraclitian view of the universe ... It is a fundamentally polytheistic outlook to which it leads us: in all things one must learn to recognize the hand of the Gods. Just as the hero of the Iliad could go against the will of a God, such as Poseidon, only by invoking the power of an opposed divinity, such as Athena...so shall we be able to restrain the action of an archetype only by opposing to it an antagonistic archetype, in an ambiguous contest of uncertain outcome.

One will perhaps be able to demonstrate the inevitable nature of certain catastrophes, such as illness or death. Knowledge will no longer necessarily be a promise of success or of survival; it might just as well mean the certainty of our failure, of our end.

Thom, on catastrophe theory.