

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.

The emperor has no clothes

"I remark only that articles on catastrophe theory are distinguished by a sharp and catastrophic lowering of the level of demands of rigour and also of novelty of published results."

- Vladimir Arnold

Abstract

Several representative attempts to apply catastrophe theory to biological and social science problems turn out on close analysis to be characterised by incorrect reasoning, far-fetched assumptions, erroneous consequences, and exaggerated claims. Catastrophe theory seems to have made no significant contributions to biology and the social sciences, and to have no advantage over other better-established mathematical tools which have been used to better effect.