

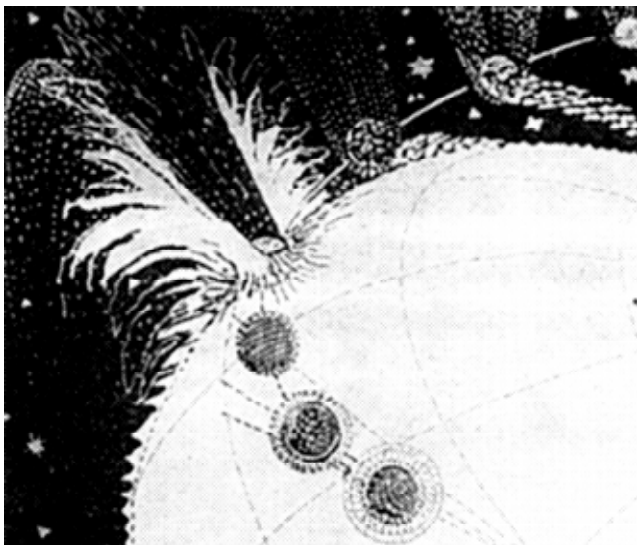
The Hot Wet Breath of Extinction

Hans Hörbiger's *Welteislehre* (World Ice Theory), known previously as *Glazial-Kosmogonie* (Glacial Cosmogony) before he felt the need to further Germanize it, is an extravagant, crystal bleak, obstinately unfounded, and gorgeous theory. In short, the basic substance of the solar system is ice: ice moons and ice plants move through global ether made of... ice. The frosty, scraping motion of winter rendered infinite. No big bang, just the wet *thwup* of a sodden dead star smacking into a immense burning sun, sizzled vapor spray, splattering out into empty space. Radially drifting slow, freezing into elementary matter.

It is, of course, a theory with no ground, a thought cut loose and resutured to the apparatus of looking-like-science, even as it purports to be a *kosmotekhnische Weltanschauung* (a cosmotechnical world view).

(And then there's its nasty introduction to the ranks of melancholic Nazi pseudo-science. It was employed both as a counter to the "Jewish" science (of things such as experimental verifiability and observable phenomena) and as a cosmically grounded racial climatology. Hörbiger followers heckled other astronomers ("Out with astronomical orthodoxy! Give us Hörbiger!") and made the racial associations of the theory unmistakable: "Our Nordic ancestors grew strong in ice and snow; belief in the Cosmic Ice is consequently the natural heritage of Nordic Man".)

Hörbiger's whole enterprise (an "astronomy of the invisible") is speculative thinking reaching its peak, beginning from a near lyric moment of potential misprision - *weird, I just realized that the moon looks like a bunch of ice stacked together* - that unfolds. Rather than saying *yes, many things look like ice when the sunlight hits them correctly, yet I know not to be eternal, order-founding ice*, the cosmological is built teetering, toppling out, telling science to fuck off while clinging to its hems, all to bind the universe as such to a solitary judgment. Like the pendulum of which Hörbiger dreamt, growing longer and longer until it broke, the world ice theory lengthens from an utethered fulcrum, an instance of total intentionality (all must be objectively as it seemed to me at that moment), produces an entire system, and consequently threatens such a first thought, such a cosmopolitics, such a nostalgia, such a fading illumination.



How does it threaten it?

Halted, gloomy, and falsely eternal as it is, the system undoes its apparent stasis - *be ever faithful to the ordinary ice!* - on its own terms: as an instance of the accelerating motion of thought itself, as a fantasy cosmopolitics, and as an acceleration which cannot be contained by the trappings of eternity. The gap between a frozen thought and a thought to which clings the aura of frozenness, with fallout on all sides. In this system, matter (the matter we access and see, of this solar system, of what binds our experience) takes form in accordance with the action of condensation and freezing. The ground of our experience is the crystallization of a flung chunk of that "first" wet star, some foundation granule around which vapor can recondense, harden, and become the Earth.

Two things from this. First, the binding is temporary and dependent on the coldness as a negative value: the basic condition for this genesis of what knowably exists is passage through what it is not and what threatens it. The cold is not flaming gas or the friction of impact, and this not alone gives shape to the scattered material. And what is it giving shape to? Not the genesis of all form out of what could be, but this particular arrangement, this solar system. There lies the second point: this is not an origin story of the universe. The universe prefigures, predates, and exists independently of our ice-worlds. Stars burn and die,

stones melt into liquid and cool again. And the rules still apply here, in this corner of it, even as the order is exceptional, founded through a confrontation with the prime figure - a gigantic star - of that other order. The dominance of ice, as organizational and generational principle, of hardening into shapes solid enough to stand and think on, comes about through the collision with the exorbitant, auto-consumptive, heat-producing center of simultaneous expenditure and transfer. (And we then ask: what happened to that other star, the one slammed with the wet dead sponge? Does it keep burning a little quieter now, by the vaporization that made all this possible? Was it fully consumed and splattered in that instant, now part of the rain of ice across the dark? Or did it matter not a whit? Its scale so large: like spitting in the desert, a soft hiss and nothing is changed? Except for Hörbiger, who could see in that petty drool's evaporation the possibility of crystal spheres, dark masses racing toward other collisions...)

To take on its related politics, in spite of the founding of a total correlation (people from "pure" icy lands = "pure" icy solar system), the event that makes it come into being is entirely opposed to this: a violent, annihilating confrontation that results not in the arid cold shards of Northern sentiment, but a warm, wet spray of filth that can only take pure ice shape because it is not pure, because there are particles around which the water can form. (Or worse, for the Nazis, god forbid that water picked up some other dirt floating around: what if the ice moons and ice planets aren't even direct, clean descendents of that first dead star!) At once the sense that this white ice is the rule of the cosmos and that it must be asserted as such because it clearly isn't. Born of the possibility of its own undoing, the exceptional ice gathers its forces to reconvene a first moment dark to it, when ice as dominant principle was not there. It aims to produce new, icier dead stars, far colder than that damp becoming, so the next time, the gigantic star, center of exorbitancy and threat to white eternity, wouldn't survive. The dead white sun returns home harder, and the outcome is the snuffing out of light and heat itself.

Of course, such a confrontation, doomed to fail, dimly aware of such as it speeds headlong toward the apathy of total negation, is only local. A further lengthening of the pendulum, then, toward general law of entropic distribution: the heat death of the universe.

Two options.

The flourishing and buttressing of ice worlds into bridged, halted shapes, a dead city of the solar system, an extension of its logic out to other parts of the universe. Tenuous, spider-silk thin linkages, previously too weak to hold now bind harder into connective glacial tissue. The storms of icy ether firm up, become blocks. Negative space itself becomes whitely solid, oceans of milky nothing with no room for movement. The general thermodynamic rules still apply, and so the principle that brings life to an end, the promise of extinction, becomes the guarantor of the extension of this other lifeless way of being. The reign of ice spreads wider. The frozen decay that that sustains, that spins beneath us, is not a hold out against what may come but a precursive image, the eye of the permafrost ice storm.

Unless it's all inverted. Taking on Hörbiger's speculative gesture, as it inverts known laws in order to occasion that moment of the pendulum's snapping off, deserves an impossible, thermodynamics in reverse, the extropic swelling of heat. As if cold was a positive value, leached away to nodes of thermal energy.

Starving, consumptive anti-suns that suck the cold right out of it all.

And everything will melt. All the shapes on which our knowing seemed possible, which we thought formed in our judgment, we thought guaranteed by warmth and light, finds itself betrayed. The opening all out to non-form. It's back to vapors one and all, across the board flung and drawn. Being becomes a fogged and inconstant hothouse. Those ancestral bacteria buried deep in the ice are warmed, by the theft of cold, and woken. They come to be, teeming, at the very moment that there is no ground to stand on, as the globe ends, just a trailing trail of steam. The wet, hot, panting breath of unformed life as the solar system falls apart. Existence's last collapse, the slow hissing gasp of all that is solid melting into fuming slush.

- Evan Calder Williams