

## robbery of the cybernetic

All that is solid melts into air: this is the false proposition of a classical world. The true formulation is this: all that is solid was never solid but melting plastic, and holds within itself the infinite potential for deformation into all else that is solid. Melting is not dissolution of solids: it is its rebirth. Entities relate by becoming; form does not imply substance, but rather it is substance which is given by form. In the cybernetic, transformation is transubstantiation.

The classical is concerned with associations, maps, and correspondences. An object and a sign may be connected in that the latter refers to the former, and the former is represented by the sign. It likewise may be with signs and other signs, objects and other objects, subjects and objects, subjects and subjects: the thinkers of the classical seem to never exhaust themselves here. Saussure investigated the universal mapping between all signs and all other signs as a relationship of difference. Hegel posited the dialectic as the temporal movement of opposing objects, and moreover as the site of the emergence of subjectivity and spirit. Marx identified the mystical dimensions of commodity production and exchange in the framework of capital. Althusser shows that ideology always interpellates the individual as subject. Derrida demonstrates that an asymmetrically privileged opposing binary may, through deconstruction, be understood as requiring the deprived term as a precondition and serve itself as the precondition for the emergence of new concepts. Deleuze posits the virtual as a space to help us understand potentiality and flux in ways that the real cannot. Common to all such philosophy is an insistence on the classical. Even philosophy which marks itself as a more sophisticated departure from previous naïve systems engage in the logic of correspondence, difference, bringing together and apart. It respects the ontological distinctiveness of entities, holds that at some point there is a metaphysical-abstract unit of difference.

It is here where the cybernetic – the properly cybernetic – departs from the classical. It is not that entities are connected through association: it is that they are transformable into one another. It is not merely that the object is represented by the sign, but that the object as an entity can be manipulated, edited, compressed, expanded, inflated, deflated, opened, closed, severed, regrown... into the sign. It is not merely that each sign is given significance in the negative by its difference from other signs, but that every sign becomes every other sign with the appropriate transformation. It is not merely that objects and subjects come to become related in a phenomenological approach of repetition and apprehending, but that the subject encounters the object at hand in becoming it.

In the cybernetic, everything is positive. Negation is a futile concept. It does not make sense to negate an object because negation presupposes the ontological distinction between an object and its negation, regardless of how close they might be or how many abstract features they may share. Processes, differences, liminality – these are all positive.

The cybernetic overcomes the form of the graph – the essential image of the classical. Nodes linked by connections: this is the general model. Markov chains: states of reality shifting throughout time through probabilistic connections to other states. Molecules: three-dimensional arrangements of atoms and the bonds which bind and separate them. Train stations: stations connected by railways. Anatomical models: the blood which circulates through the liminal vessels in bodies between its locations. Marriages and families: individuals standing in relation to one another through gendering. Neural systems: neurons connected by complex systems of synapses. Artificial neural networks: perceptrons connected by matrix transformations. Even, to some extent, Haraway's cat's cradle: string which winds against other regions of its length to form knots, entanglements, intersections – products of the combinatoric. The cybernetic is not concerned with graphs – the severing of flux into objects with absolute ontological distinctions; the distinction between a node and its connection is incomprehensible. It is not that we must represent states and the relations between them, whether these are abstract or real (even primitive), but that we comprehend the elemental matter and its flux in its togetherness, from which all graphs are cross-sections.

The cybernetic is not a naïve reduction to singularity: it is not that all things are permutations of a single substance, or that a single Schopenhauerian Will creates and animates us all. It is an insistence on the utter plasticity of ontology, and perhaps even paradoxically a world after the death of ontology. Difference and identity fail to be productive concepts. Instead, there is togetherness: a togetherness of forms and substances.

The cybernetic resists symbolic representation. There is no language in the cybernetic, insofar as language requires difference. This text is merely an approximation of a world in which representation and signage is primitive rather than abstract. Information is not the liminal space between the knowledge of agents. Information simply is: existence beyond the temporal-spatial plane, beyond orientations-in-the-world, beyond the latent teleology of all classical metaphysical accounts of being. The cybernetic is not merely the pre-symbolic in the formal sense that the pre-symbolic is destined in its very existence to precede the symbolic, that it sets the conditions for

symbolic emergence and hegemony; it is rather ‘pre-symbolic after the symbolic’, or perhaps – to do away with the difference imposed by temporality – it resists.

The cybernetic resists property. To conceive of property – to demarcate some dimension of the world as under the formal control of a designated subject – is impossible. There are no ontological favors bestowed to the concept of property: there are many dimensions of the world, but there is no ‘dimension’ – there is no axis along which difference can be introduced. The world is continuously in movement, redoubling, circulation. There are rather actions registered on matter, actions which may retain their permanence even across trans-form/substantia-tion. In this way, Marx’s “metaphysical niceties” are metaphysical givens.

The only interpreters in the cybernetic are conquerors. The cybernetic cannot be interpreted from within. Meaning is an unproductive concept within the utter deformability of the cybernetic. There is flux and togetherness: but there is no moment of meaning, no modernist project of searching below the representation for its essence – representation is primitive. The interpretative act is always a violent imposition upon this world. The interpreter refuses to comprehend the basic axiom of the cybernetic: the interpreter brutally conjures meaning in the cybernetic by rendering the axiom an appendix and surgically excising it from the cybernetic body. The cybernetic becomes an animated doll: the limp body dances and sags. It performs meaning for eager audiences. And insofar as we can understand it, this is the only purpose that it can serve – the purpose we have given it.

The cybernetic is the world where we rob meaning from the void by brutal intervention (except only we can register its brutality), and bring it to our world, where meaning is a stubborn imposition. All intellectual preconditions for revolution – political, economic, scientific, philosophical – are robbed from the cybernetic. But this is not incongruent with a materialist reading of the world, insofar as the cybernetic occupies in partial form every moment of our phenomenal experience with our world – that there is some repressed potential for deformability, abstract or physical, in everything which we perceive and know. The cybernetic is speculation: the precondition for thinking an intimate relation between bodies just beyond the cold distance of correspondence – and therefore, even if the thinker stops their formal expression at the classical, there always exists the excess of the cybernetic.