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Doing Cybernetics

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Doing Cybernetics

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Doing Cybernetics means languaging with a distinct vocabulary that brings forth certain realities while discouraging others.

Languaging is the process of being human. Speaking *and* listening or writing *and* reading constitutively involves coordinating of human bodies. Through conscious participation in this process we can come to know each other. “*Everything said is said by someone in the expectation of someone else responding to it in kind*” defines languaging as a social phenomenon. Languaging does not require a concern for what it brings forth. For example, scientific theorizing takes place without permission by the theorized. Living beings have existed well before the invention of autopoiesis, can live without knowledge of that theory, and have no voice in how biologists view them. By contrast, as a social phenomenon, doing cybernetics brings forth the very realities in which cyberneticians are at home and those roped into their languaging come to live as well, intentionally or unintentionally. Doing cybernetics entails joint choices of what to realize and how.

Doing *science* typically though not exclusively relies on a vocabulary that denies its speakers a part in what its languaging does. It brings forth material systems of artifacts (machines, compositions and works of art that cannot language by themselves) and their conveniently detached (scientific) observers and designers. This languaging encourages *I-it* relationships among speakers who treat each other as causal structures, as more or less trivial mechanisms. Moreover, by adopting a vocabulary that is regarded as a medium of representation, detached observers think they command that vocabulary without realizing how their *language speaks them*.

In defiance, *doing cybernetics* relies on a vocabulary that attempts to include the speaker in what languaging does. It brings forth practices of living among human constituents who acknowledge each other as similarly competent speakers: as participants (not as detached observers), open to dialogue, continually searching for meaning in their involvement, accountable to each other for their actions, and enacting what they know, especially of each other. Doing cybernetics entails an awareness of languaging, which becomes experientially manifest in an understanding that embraces an understanding of the realities that others are concurrently constructing in theirs. This recursive embedding of different kinds of understanding encourages *I-you* relationships to emerge among speakers who respect each other’s differences. Doing cybernetics thus turns observers into participants, into constituents of cybernetics and returns language to *being spoken* by its speakers.

Science and technology has expanded our ability to control our environment by inscribing causal constructions into its construction, making our life more efficient in our own terms. First-order cybernetics grew out of this concern but pursued theories that undermined this praxis from within. Now, second-order cybernetics opens our realities to the diversity of others’ reality constructions and thus enriches us at a rate exponential to the number of others whose otherness we respect.

Doing cybernetics takes a position against position-less theorizing. It brings forth embodied intelligences in place of objective and disembodied knowledge (the temptation of a God’s eye view). It creates heterarchies that challenge the rule of hierarchy (the temptation of completeness). It introduces diversity where beliefs in a shared universe (the temptation of coherence) demand obedience. It encourages conversations in the face of monologue (the temptation of speaking as authority). It pitches reflexivity (self-referentiality) against the dominant representationalism (one of the temptations of the Cartesian dualism). And it holds us accountable for our languaging.

Doing cybernetics is a crazy but socially responsible wisdom.