

Patterns

Newsletter of the American Society for Cybernetics

Fall 2008

FROM THE EDITORS:

This issue of PATTERNS is co-edited with Thomas Fischer, PhD who teaches design throughout the world. He lives in Hong Kong with his wife and young daughter and I met him at the May 2008 ASC conference in Urbana, Illinois. He writes that his contribution to PATTERNS is framed in Hong Kong's East/West context which is a wild mix between Socratic (positive feedback) and Confucian (negative feedback) ideas of how individuals relate to society. There is a general need for an understanding of how positive and negative feedback loops play together to maintain the social balances that are needed in this crazy world of globalization, democratization, etc. Learning to think holistically, the natural way, pattern recognition, etc.

Tom: In the Western tradition, Aristotle (384-322BC) had a profound impact on the utilitarian, goal-oriented cause-and-effect thinking that permeates our globalizing societies today. His contributions to logic aim at achieving and maintaining all-roundedness and balance—words we see frequently in curriculum documents. Aristotle's ideas of logic and balance were based on two-valued contrast, most notably between *truth* and *false* and other binary, mutually-exclusive opposites. Traditional Eastern logic is different from that. In Eastern thinking, perceptions of difference are also reduced to a two-valued essence, but with an acknowledgement of mutual interdependence. A coin cannot have one side only; it needs two to exist. You cannot successfully fight to eliminate *evil* because without it you will lose your ability to see *good*. In traditional Eastern thinking, two contrasting states of affairs can very well co-exist. While Western minds know this from experience ("I am happy you got the job, but I am also sad that you will move away"), we tend to ignore conditions of this kind as our formal

(continued on next page)

Onion Rings You Cannot See and a Theremin I Cannot Play

by Thomas Fischer

Thomas is an Assistant Professor at the School of Design at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University where he leads the Product and Industrial Design discipline. He holds PhDs in Education and in Architecture and Design. Thomas likes searching for ways to talk about how we make what we make and how what we make makes us.

In a way they look like blurry onion rings. But at the same time it is hard to tell what they *look like* because they are very difficult to *look at*. Like jellyfish? Or like the circular waves spreading on the surface of a lake when pebbles are thrown into it? I am about three years old. Having just been instructed(!) to fall asleep, I lie in darkness trying to entertain myself to sleep. There is a flurry of patterns going on in my eyes. When I rub my eyes, the patterns get more exciting. So I squeeze harder. Those patterns that catch my attention most, the onion rings, tend to appear to the upper left and to the upper right of what is called the field of vision. But there is no point in rolling my eyes into these directions to see the onion rings more clearly. They keep moving away and are never clearly *there* to look at. Like other things around me in my almost entirely dark room, I see them more clearly the less I try to look *at* them. This flurry of patterns never disappears entirely. Even in a brightly lit room with my eyes wide open the flurry of patterns is still there, like an always-changing layer of noise to which I do not pay much attention most of the time. I am clearly the only one who can see my flurry of patterns with my onion rings while at the same time I can never see them clearly. Others also have eyes, which can be rubbed. Maybe they have their own patterns? I try to talk to others about the flurry of patterns and about the onion rings, raising bewildered eyebrows. I quickly give up talking about this.

I am four years old now, enjoying short trips in our family's car and dreading long and boring ones. I am now tall enough to comfortably look out of the car windows (in 1977 the average car doesn't have head rests) and soon grow tired of looking out through the wind screen in the front. Not only is the road ahead often blocked with obstacles that require great care such as traffic lights and road works. I see so many options in front of us but I cannot make my own choices. At intersections we rarely move in the direction that I find most interesting. Looking out to the front may be fun to the one who is making decisions. But I am not. So even though it is uncomfortable in the long run, I find it more enjoyable to look out the side window where no options offer themselves, so choosing is not an issue. Out to the side there is an unpredictably changing scenery of traffic, streetscapes, shops, pedestrians, some with dogs, cyclists and many unforeseen stories. So while looking out to the front tends to disappoint me, looking out to the side tends to surprise me. This difference is small in as far as I am still in the same car traversing the same environment. At the same time, however, it is to me the difference between being bored and enjoying myself. It makes perfect sense to me that parents drive and look out to the front and kids sit in the back and look out to the side since being a parent is all about deciding and controlling while being a kid is all about enjoying surprises.

(continued on next page)

INSIDE

From the Editor	1
Onion Rings	1
Passage Works	16
Education/Transformation	17
ASC News	17

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From the Editors: (continued from page 1)

logic does not accommodate them. Westerners who take the Ying-Yang symbol as a sign for universal, mutually-exclusive oppositions are mistaken. Socrates (469-399), who taught Plato, who in turn taught Aristotle, was almost a contemporary of Confucius (Kong Zi, 551-479) in China. Independently, both Socrates and Confucius investigated human nature, and the principles by which the societies of their respective civilizations should be governed so as to ensure prosperity and stability. They arrived at two different answers, which are still present and which can result in misunderstanding or conflict where people from the East and from the West come together. Confucius promotes the individual's contribution to cohesive communities by discouraging difference (negative feedback) while Socrates promotes individual achievement of knowledge, which encourages difference (positive feedback).

Barbara: This is useful in view of our need to develop a different world view that fits better with a world that is rapidly changing due to the technological inventions which (we should always be aware) have been based on a different way of thinking and seeing the world, namely, Cybernetics. As I see it, the shift from the traditional linear viewpoint to also include a circular perspective is at the very bottom of the chaos we see in our traditional educational systems.

Tom: We can draw a parallel here between educating and designing, which are today approached as entirely linear endeavors both in the East and in the West. Consider Heron's steam engine. We are usually taught that James Watt invented the steam engine in the 18th century, which triggered the Industrial Revolution. Heron (10-70AD) invented a much earlier steam engine called the *Aeolipile*. Interestingly, this ancient Greek steam engine was not used and improved to harness its mechanical utility. This can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, the Greek had slaves and thus little need for machines that make physical work easier. On the other hand, the ancient Greek notion of time was as traditional Eastern ones, cyclical and not linear. Progress, inventions intended to change the status quo for a better future and the improvement of quality of life through technology are only conceivable with the linear under-

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Onion Rings You Cannot See... (continued from previous page)

"Don't stick your tongue out!" I am a five year old now who is learning to write. In order to achieve a beautiful handwriting, I am asked to fill pages after pages of A3 paper with large, countless re-drawn circles and eight-shapes in a random choice of wax colors that quickly mix into a brownish black mess (which is described to me as "rainbow colors"). And soon thereafter, being slightly more advanced, I am asked to fill pages after pages of A3 paper with the latest letter I have learned. Upper case, lower case, many times, one after the other letter in the order of the alphabet. Filling many pages with Hs or with Js is unlike anything written I have ever seen and obviously not meant to be read. Why do I need to do this? Because this is how it's done, I am told. Unfortunately, I do not look like the smart five year old student that I am supposed to look like when I am filling pages with letters. I concentrate and for some reason that makes me stick my tongue out every now and then. This is considered wrong and it shifts to the center of attention. "Don't stick your tongue out!" I try my best. Today, my handwriting is a mess but I can, making a conscious effort, write without sticking my tongue out.

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"Pay attention!" I am thirteen now and once again instructed to learn attentively. I am making an effort to stop entertaining myself by disassembling stationary and coloring my hands while trying my best to pay attention. Biology class, the five senses, evolutionary adaptation. Eye positions of predators and those of animals of prey. I must be a predator, my eyes are in the front. My thoughts drift off: It seems useful to have my eyes in the positions they are in. Animals of prey, with their eyes pointing into two different directions should be incapable of focusing on anything. I realize that despite being a predator with eyes that allow focused attention I find it yet difficult to pay attention to these (and many other) lessons. As my thoughts are drifting off it dawns on me that I may be an animal of prey after all. And there I get caught again: "Pay attention!" It is also ironic that paying focused attention, requires one to cross eyes - perhaps the most effective expression available to caricaturists and clowns to create an idiotic expression (next to, and best combined with, sticking the tongue out).

Now I am 23, preparing for my examinations to become a high school teacher majoring in German and the Humanities. Apart from a thesis the examination procedure requires passing a total of twelve written and oral examinations over the course of about one month. Each of these components is assessed numerically, then averages of fields of study are formed and from these a final numerical score is calculated. This averaging makes it difficult to get a very low or a very high final score. Failing any component, however, results in an overall fail grade. The number and frequency of examinations effectively prohibits preparing well for each examination so my fellow students and I resort to choosing some simple subjects that we hope we can "play by ear." As one of those I choose an oral examination on dyslexia even though I have never taken any subjects on this topic. Dyslexia subjects are geared towards primary and secondary level teacher students and I am in the high school level stream. (Somehow, magically, and quite probably by natural selection, dyslexia is expected to disappear from students that make it into high school!) My reason for yet choosing dyslexia is that I find myself right at the center of all the commonly known "dyslexia symptoms." This, I believe, should sufficiently qualify me for this examination. In it, I state that I find it not acceptable to judge a person's ability to learn on that person's ability to produce expected observable behaviors, nor to label a person who does not display expected behavior consistently as "disabled" and that I am less concerned about students with learning disabilities than I am about

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Onion Rings You Cannot See... (continued from previous page)

teachers with teaching disabilities. This did not go down very well and I consider myself lucky for getting off with a bare pass and a slap on the wrist.

I am now 28. Sometimes, at the end of my working month there is some money left that I can spend as I please. In one way or another I tend to invest it in music. I flirt with a variety of instruments only to find myself disappointed by their learning curves -- in particular where things go polyphonic. The theremin catches my attention. I watch recordings of the most beautiful theremin performances. The player does not touch the instrument. Music comes from body movement in space alone. I draw an analogy to whistling tunes and convince myself that this is exactly right for me. I order a theremin kit and assemble it, ready to surprise myself with a latent talent. Beginning to play I am indeed surprised -- but only by the magnitude of my disappointment when I try to hit notes or to play melodies. How could I be so naïve to think perfect freedom would make me perfectly capable? Abandoning the theremin, I find new pride and appreciation of my ability to whistle tunes.

I am now 33, studying architectural design as a part-time post-grad with the rare privilege of having capable teachers. They are less interested in my ability to regurgitate what I already know in the perfect form of academic exchange. It takes me a while to realize that they are more interested in me reflecting myself as a learning human being who is what he makes and makes what he knows. Every semester my fellow students and I present our developing work to changing, but always demanding panels. On two previous occasions of this kind I tried to "sell" my essentially designerly investigation as "objective and scientific" only to see it thoroughly criticized and dismissed. In their responses my critics point increasingly towards the philosophy of science. On this occasion, one of them suggests I take a look at the distinction between the *context of discovery* and the *context of justification*. As I will find out later, these notions were introduced by logical positivists to distinguish between the historical and creative settings in which new scientific hypotheses, experimental designs, methods, theories and so forth are ideated on the one hand and the arguments by which their validity is established on the other hand. Logical positivists are not interested in the prior, which has to take into account the self-observing subject. Self-reflection, circularity and subjectivity have no place in the logical-positivist view of science. Logical positivists are interested solely in the latter, which they believe can be approached objectively and without involving circularity. At the moment of this panel presentation, the contexts of discovery and of justification are new to me and trying to make meaning from this recommendation I wonder how discovery and justification are relatable to my work and suddenly have a profound insight into my own research attitude: I realize that in this project my research approach and rhetoric are geared entirely towards justifying what I believed I should *find out* from the beginning while not allowing myself to arrive at insights of which I was previously ignorant: the new. I now see what an opportunity I am about to miss. I change my attitude at once and assume that this is what the commenting panelist aimed for. Later, once I will have caught up on logical positivism I will realize that this was not the case. This important turning point that made this five-year project worthwhile came about through a misunderstanding. What a lucky mistake!

I am now 35 years old, writing this article. Much of what I wish to express about education here has been described numerous times before. It took (and continues to take) me years of challenging conversations and reading to get to these ideas. I thus wish to write about them here as simply and as easily relatable as possible, without any

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From the Editors: (continued from page 2)

standing of time that we find in the later Western tradition. Today, theories of both education and design are cluttered with linear, goal-oriented processes, models. Product "engineering design" looks at a linear product life span that connects the sourcing of energy and material in Middle-Eastern oil fields to low-wage manufacturing in Asia to mostly silly plastic objects like Happy Meal toys etc. to landfills that poison the water we drink, the air we breathe and the food we eat. Problems from end to end. We have only recently begun to consider recycling and sustainability, which will hopefully re-introduce (at least some benefits of) a circular understanding of time. Educational models, likewise, look at how social values are to be translated into classroom activities, ignoring that classroom activities, in turn, determine social values. Only when you perceive this as a cycle, you will realize that it only takes one half of it to improve or deteriorate significantly. The whole process turns into a feedback spiral of either desirable strengthening or of terrible decay.

Barbara: So what are the implications for designerly and educational practice if we want to achieve "real" social change? Remember the old Einstein quote: "We cannot solve a problem with the same kind of thinking we used when we created it."

Tom: Both design and education are said to aim for better futures. But this usually implies betterment and advantages for the consumerist, growth-driven socio-economic context at large and not so much for the participating individual. Translating linear and circular notions of time into models for action in educational and designerly contexts, we arrive at the alternative between circular conversational exploration (giving and taking) and linear instruction (domination, exploitation). I like to think here of how my 2-year-old daughter Lily, my wife and I act when Lily is out exploring new territory. She plays a perpetual what-if game, trying out everything in ever more daring ways while, more often than we like it, our role is to limit and to stop her for what we believe is her own good. We are back to positive and negative feedback. Good designing, good education and an ideal world altogether would have to find an intelligent mix of childish and grown-up

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behavior so that there can be fun and invention but also trust and sustainability. Unfortunately, their social and institutional contexts give teachers who are childish and who encourage childishness a very hard time.

In my article I try to show how childish personal experiencing and introspective curiosity can be seen as superior to obedient agreement with educational authority. "Think and do for yourself" versus "Do as you're told." Both approaches have merits and shortcomings. I hope that in my own teaching I find a balance between the two in ways that benefit from the merits and avoid the shortcomings of both.

Barbara: Your perspective has been growing in popularity I feel, since the early 1960's and I am so glad. Having been born in 1924, I was relieved to see bumper stickers on cars that read: *Question Authority*. We don't live in a world of socio-political-economic theory. We live in a world of individual thinking, feeling and acting people. More recently the bumper sticker message reads: *Question Reality*.

Tom: Yes. So the question is this: How do you get someone else to the point of realizing in their own terms that authority and reality deserve challenging? In our present educational systems, how do you get learners genuinely interested in owning this kind of bumper sticker? A while ago I was walking through our university campus and noticed a motto printed on a sign. It was a quote from Sydney J. Harris that read: *"The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows."* Reading this, I had a strong immediate feeling that I suspect could resonate with other cyberneticians.

Barbara: How does this fit into the piece you are writing for this issue of PATTERNS?

Tom: There are different ways in which the Harris quote can be interpreted. In my reading of it the learner's perception is initially seen as a mirror, so that through it she perceives merely herself. The teacher's responsibility is to turn that mirror into a window so that the learner can look out through it and perceive the world as it truly is. In this second interpretation we have a doctrine that prioritizes the material (outside) world over the ideal (inside) world. The

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references to published material (look for Heinz von Foerster if you want to find more). It would be great if I could pass on these ideas as well as my appreciation of them in just one small and easily digestible text. Unfortunately, we cannot accomplish this. The futility of any attempt to convey thoughts through language is in itself the most essential idea that I wish I could convey. My thoughts will never be yours. My thoughts are based on my perceptions which I correlate with my own action. You do the same. Recollections of my previous experiences are naturally more profound and closer to me than they can be to you. Your recollections of your previous experiences are naturally more profound to you than they can be to me. When we exchange words and sentences we have to assume an overlapping between your and my thoughts and ideas. Moreover, the language I am using to convey my thoughts does not allow bringing them to life faithfully and in this way, to some extent, words necessarily ruin what they are to express. Language merely allows me to draw sparse pictures of some selected moments and glimpses. I hope I do these ideas justice by trying to show rather than explaining them. I am remembering my experiences. But using language I am also dismembering them, hoping that you will pick up some of the pieces and assemble from them something vaguely similar to what I wish to convey. This depends on you (if you wish) while I must not force my ideas onto you (no matter how much I may wish to).

Education depends on one's readiness to listen to others as well as on one's confidence to listen to oneself. Listening to others allows benefiting from what others have to offer and thereby to question one's own preconceptions. Listening to oneself allows benefiting from what one has to offer oneself and thereby to question the authority of others. We do not hear about this at school for as long as organized education depends on its authority (which is mainly exercised through its power to determine the economic and social fate of its learners), the questioning of authority will not be found near the top of curricular priorities. This renders any attempt to educate ethically responsibly unorthodox. Such orthodoxy is not easy to get involved with as it requires the questioning of basic cornerstones and values as well as of generally accepted ideas that we are usually taught to trust and to believe in. The unorthodox and ethically responsible teacher appears to the orthodox learner as a question-raising charlatan who ignores what is known to be objectively true and is unable to offer clear and definitive answers. Let me try this out using the human senses as an example that is both commonly encountered in classrooms and relevant in the context of the modesty and confidence necessary to learn: The pathways of our perception, the human senses.

Our senses allow us to pick up (some of the) differences around us, to make distinctions and thus to relate to our surroundings. Through our senses we distinguish bright from dark, soft from hard and so forth. And by relating these differences to our actions, we position ourselves in the environment that we re-create inside ourselves.

How many senses do he have? If your answer is "five," then I guess that you did not give it because you are in good health, capable of counting the pathways of your healthy perception and able to articulate the result. If your awareness of your senses is similar to my awareness of my senses, then I guess you gave this answer because you have been trained (educated) to give it. That is as a result of that training where you trust textbooks and organized education more than yourself and that you do not always think for yourself when maybe you should. Having been trained to give the correct textbook answer myself, just recently I have come to believe that I have more, quite possibly many more senses. Maybe now you think the claim of having more than five senses is the ridiculous claim of a charlatan because everyone who paid attention at school knows that humans have five senses. Good.

Let's count: I can (1) see, (2) smell, (3) hear, (4) taste and I can feel (5) touch. So far so good. But I can also feel (6) temperature. I can do so perfectly independently from my sense of touch. When I hold a cup into which I pour hot tea, for example, I will feel a change in temperature, without any change to my touching the cup. I can also feel the (7) humidity of the air, for example when I arrive in Hong Kong coming from distant places. When I am on an airplane, I can sense (8) altitude changes of the plane. This happens without visual clues, even at night with closed window shades or with my eyes closed. I can also feel (9) pain independently from all the other sensations mentioned here. A medical doctor once told me that there are dedicated pathways in the nervous system, just for signaling pain. These perceptions (6, 7, 8, 9) are just as physical sensations (some are stronger) as those I encounter via those (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) that I am granted by the text

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Onion Rings You Cannot See... (continued from previous page)

books. It is impossible to explain my sensations of temperature, humidity, spatial orientation and of pain as coming to me via vision, smell, hearing, taste and touch. I could feel a slight pain in my scars for a while after a surgery every time (10) the weather changed quickly. As a student I supported myself by donating (quite a lot of) blood plasma. In this procedure blood is taken from the body and spun in a centrifuge to isolate the plasma from the blood solids, which are then pumped back into the body suspended in a saline solution. This solution also contains a small part of citric acid, which prevents blood cells from coagulating. As this mix is pumped back into me I have a distinct (11) sensation of lemon, which I would neither describe as taste nor as smell because it is located clearly inside of my shoulder (on the side where the needle is in my arm). Interestingly, I have this sensation only while I inhale, and not while I hold my breath or while I exhale. Some plasma donors say they have this sensation, others say they do not. This reminds me of the carcinogenic substance phenylthiocarbamide (PTC), which, in a test encouraged by our evolutionary psychology professor, some of my fellow undergraduates could not taste while others (including myself) could. I could furthermore mention desires, impulses, urges and so forth, all of which I perceive, but which I believe cannot be adequately explained in terms of vision, hearing, smell, taste and the sense of touch. These could be dismissed from the list of senses as emotions; as matters of the mind and thus distinguished from bodily perceptions. Without further considering sense and nonsense of the mind/body distinction here, and without considering the various urges and impulses that sometimes come to me in detail, let me just point at my urge to eat when I perceive the sensation of (12) hunger. This sensation is known to be at times so overwhelming that it pushes humans to kill, sometimes even each other. Is the perception of hunger not, at least to some extent, a bodily affair? The really fascinating question now (at least for me) is this: If our (supposedly five) senses are the devices by which we sense difference, then which is the sense by which we perceive the different qualities of the five senses? For example: Which is the sense (13, 14, 15, 16,...) that tells you that your sense of vision is different from your sense of touch? And if senses are nested self-referentially in this way, then how could one possibly count and label them?

Through the experiences recalled here, and with the unflinching rigor of some teachers, I have unlearned much of my previously learned unreserved trust in some of the cornerstones and values of rational thought: Objectivity, (institutional) authority, control, correct form, focus at the expense of panoramic awareness, expertise, rigid methods, tools, categorization, exact communication, avoidance of error, language, logic and even the trust in boundless freedom. These cornerstones and values of thought affect much of our societies, most importantly in education itself: They thus define how new generations encounter them. If I had a wish to shape this encounter I would wish that learners and teachers (that is: everyone of us at any time) always meet as equals, that they both have the readiness to listen to the other, the confidence to listen to oneself and the wisdom to choose between the two so as to maximize the number of their options.

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I am less concerned
about students with
learning disabilities
than I am about
teachers with
teaching disabilities.



From the Editors: (continued from page 4)

message to the learner: 'Don't pay attention to yourself, pay attention to what the others say' - is in my view very problematic, albeit understandable with the context of reward-oriented hierarchies. It is almost as if a call for obedience is justified by dismissing self-reflection for being narcissistic.

Barbara: That is definitely how I was brought up in the U.S., influenced by the Puritan ethic. As a 'good girl' student, it was conditioned to think that if I reflected on my inner self, I was being 'selfish'. Expressing inner thoughts could be punished. Those who did that were the ones who went to the Principal's office. This was during WWII and I dutifully became a nurse, married and had four children, 2 boys and 2 girls. How perfect can you get? If there was any mirror at all, it was of the kind that drives all those 'Better Homes and Gardens' magazines and other Glamour stuff that keeps the economy going. Eventually I began signing identity papers: 'Occupation: Consumer'. I realized that was how I had been trained to be the most use to society. It wasn't until I returned to school at the age of 40 in the 1960's after raising a family and having been exposed to the horror of the Viet Nam War that I found myself having been a 'window' and starting to reflect critically upon my conformist mind.

Tom: This makes it very clear that we are talking about emancipation. Thus, it is the responsibility of education to support learners' self-transformation. What I realized only through living in Asia is that learners' self-transformation can hardly happen in an Aristotelian mind-frame in which A transforms B (while A stays the same). In this pattern of causality A leaves B only one option, like a knife cutting bread. This leads to problems down the road: What is B going to do when it is her time to teach? At this point, a slice of bread will be expected to cut another loaf. An education that encourages emancipation depends on the individual's capability to self-transform. A stimulates B to transform B (while A may change, too).

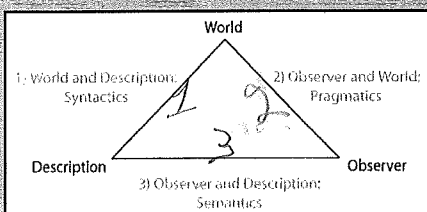
Hence the B's need for a mirror. If the mirror is gone, B's transformation depends on A and there can be no emancipatory self-transformation. A must be open for B to self-transform in unexpected ways, thus A must be ready to self-transform, too. This is a conversation in which causality is of a contrib-

From the Editors: (continued from page 5)

uting kind that we encounter in Asian (in particular Buddhist) philosophy. It leaves a multiplicity of known and unknown options.

Barbara: So do you believe Asian approaches to education are more suitable to support learners' self-transformation and emancipation? Should they be preferred over the Western ones?

Tom: I should clarify that the cultural foundations I am referring to are currently disappearing in Asian cultures. Especially Hong Kong is globalized and modern. Much ancient wisdom of the East is now watered down with Western ideas or downright alien to the average person, in particular of post-Cultural-Revolution China. Even when we compare the "pure" traditional approaches or Eastern and Western education, the question of which is better is moot because the point of each is to make sense within its own cultural framework. If you are asking me which way we should go in the education for a globalizing world that merges Eastern and Western cultures, then I suggest taking a look at Stuart Umpleby's "Epistemological Triangle". This model goes back to Heinz von Foerster and further to Gottlob Frege. Umpleby uses it to compare research cultures and their philosophical underpinnings but I believe it has merits beyond that.



The triangle relates Observer, World and Description and thereby establishes very interesting relationships in any knowledge-generating endeavor, including designing and education. Learning by oneself or teaching by analogy (dance, riding a bicycle, surgery, designing etc.) one can pragmatically do without explicit descriptions of what is going on. This is edge 2) of the triangle. If one wishes to teach knowledge that is encoded in descriptions, then there are in principle two approaches: Edge 1) relates descriptions to the world and thereby prioritizes correct form (syntax, negative feedback, window, being grown-up). Edge 2) relates the observer and descriptions and thereby prioritizes experience and meaning (semantics,

(continued on next page)

Article Review

By Anne Adams, PhD

In her article, *Welcoming Soul to Our Schools*, Rachael Kessler, contributes uniquely to *Patterns: Newsletter of the American Society for Cybernetics* on multiple levels. She invites us to experience her PassageWorks Institute curriculum for young people, which reveals how much they "care extremely, not about episodes, but about the patterns of their relationships; with where they stand in love, hate, respect, dependency, trust, and similar abstractions. This curriculum of the heart is a response to the *mysteries* of our young." These are the themes that are at the heart of what it means to be a human being.

Kessler's programs address what was the focus of the Spring 2008 issue of *Patterns*: "How Can We Trust One Another?" PassageWorks programs honor the patterns of relationships students experience, which provide the foundation for trust. Over many years of interactions with youth, Kessler recognized that these emerging patterns belong in seven gateways which connect to the soul.

PassageWorks Institute's purpose is to provide a safe environment in which young people can engage in and share experiences in these gateways: 1) the search for meaning and purpose; 2) the hunger for joy; 3) the creative drive, 4) the urge for transcendence; 5) the call for initiation; 6) honoring silence, stillness and solitude; and 7) deep connection. These accesses to the soul of our young people transform what it means to be a human being. e.g., being genuinely listened to brings forth the sense of significance as a human being; being seen and known and having feelings of belonging reveal the deep connection among people. "Students who feel deeply connected and known want to be in school. They do not need danger to feel fully alive; they don't want to hurt others or themselves, balance and a rich inner life opens up new ways of relating to the world – opening outward to "the other."

Kessler and her colleagues are educating youth to relate to themselves, their peers, their families, communities and the world from a transformed perspective. Young people are provided the opportunity to be observers of themselves through these seven gateways, which root them in experiences of their power and responsibility for creating a new worldview. New patterns are being woven through these programs. Students experience a new level of flexibility and choice in their thoughts, behaviors and attitudes.

This article can be found in *Shift Magazine*:
At the *Frontiers of Consciousness*,

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When we look into a mirror we think the image that confronts us is accurate. But move a millimetre and the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-ending range of reflections. But sometimes a writer has to smash the mirror – for it is on the other side of that mirror that the truth stares at us.

I believe that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to define the real truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation which devolves upon us all. It is in fact mandatory.

If such a determination is not embodied in our political vision we have no hope of restoring what is so nearly lost to us – the dignity of man.

Pablo Neruda: Selected Poems, published by Jonathan Cape, London 1970. Used by permission of The Random House Group Limited.

Education: The Transformation of Living Together

Excerpts from an Interview with Humberto Maturana by Barbara Vogl

I asked Humberto Maturana about his work with improving education in Santiago, Chile and discovered that it began with the support of UNICEF. They agreed that he would only work with teachers and administrators, not with the students, and that he would teach them the biology of cognition and the biology of love.

Humberto: My unspoken intention in doing this was to create a situation in which these teachers, through an understanding of the human condition, might discover self-confidence and self-respect.

These were teachers who worked in a very poor area of the city where there was much violence. They felt very poorly about themselves, had lost confidence and felt there was very little they could do. So the Ministry of Education opened a space for this work to occur and eventually, in recognition of taking a course of this kind, there was an upgrading of their salaries. The course lasted about six months, two sessions a week. This consisted of thinking about humanness, language, emotions, evolutionary history of human nature, how emotions participate in social phenomena from the particular perspective that the theory of Biology of Cognition provides. The result of this was that the teachers' attitude about themselves changed and as they grew in self-respect and confidence their relation with their students changed. This process caused the students to become supportive of their teachers because as the teachers trusted themselves, the self-sustaining dynamics in which the relationship became one of mutual respect allowed the students to trust themselves. The students then can go to the streets and not necessarily enter into the competing, difficult situations because their attitude about themselves had changed.

Barbara: So instead of dealing with the symptoms of problems in the school you get to the root of the problem which is, basically, problems in relations between teachers and students.

Humberto: Yes, and also thinking that the solution of the problem is in the teachers themselves. They have the ability to solve this. You don't have to provide an external thing for a solution but only change their attitude about themselves without telling them what to do. If you tell them what to do it doesn't work. This is important! If you tell them they have to love their students they will say, "Yes, but we do...it doesn't work...nothing happens." That is because they do not know about the evolution of love. They know how to talk about love but they do not know what love is in another. So this is important...to understand about our human past and to cover the basic conditions of self-respect and self-love.

Barbara: We are so caught up in testing mania in our schools, trying to get the best out of our teachers, when actually it strikes me that works against what you are talking about.

(continued on next page)

If you
tell them
what to do
it doesn't
work.

From the Editors: (continued from page 6)

positive feedback, mirror, being childish). Broadly speaking, I have the feeling that Asian and in particular Chinese education focuses on edge 1) while education in the West focuses on edge 2). In either case, however, this happens so that hopefully later in life learners can move on to learn about the respective other edge: Young Westerners are educated to *understand*, so as to *act correctly* later in their lives. Young Chinese are educated to *act correctly*, so as to *understand* later in their lives. In a global context, the trick again seems to lie in going back and forth between being childish and being grown-up. If we want education to go this way, then introducing teachers to cybernetics should be an excellent way to start.

Tom Fischer, PhD

.....

This collaboration with Tom Fischer and the collaboration with Lee Worden for the next (Winter 2009 issue) marks the beginning of the end of PATTERNS, first published in January 1996 featuring an interview with Mathematician Ralph Abraham. It was titled, "The Chaos Revolution: A Major Social Transformation." The purpose for introducing this new network, titled Systems Thinking and Chaos Theory, to the members of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the largest professional society in the field of education in the United States, was to explore the "New Sciences" in an effort to see how they might be introduced into the curriculum of our educational systems.

The stated aim was to encourage understanding "between educators and new scientists that would tease out our hidden assumptions; the competing unquestioned beliefs woven into the fabric of the many cultures of our shrinking planet. In this way we might free ourselves to explore new patterns that have a better fit with the reality our times.

As an example I noted evolutionary biologist Stephen J. Gould's suggestion that most of us in the western world still imagine evolution as a ladder of the species with the little one-celled organisms at the bottom, more complex animals developing from them. And ultimately, at the top, the most complex animals of

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From the Editors: (continued from page 7)

all, those we call human. This equates with some notion of progress, usually inherent and predictable, and leading to a human pinnacle.

Seen as a subject of controversy among those parents religiously inclined, few of us have taken the time to see how this basic premise of progress, for example, colors the spectrum of all our thinking and teaching in the western world.

Seymour Sarason, in his book, *School Change: The Personal Development of a Point of View*, writes that we tend to "do many things to improve education which are basically unrelated to each other. Parts remain parts. Some call it a crazy quilt approach. That's wrong because a crazy quilt has one purpose; to keep you warm in bed." He insists that we need a vision; a central idea, a big idea that radiates out and magnetically attracts and interconnects a lot of other ideas.

Gregory Bateson, a Cybernetician and path-finder to the new sciences, used to say that we must look for the patterns that connect...the whole patterns emerging in nature that give us guidance and the warmth of meaningful connections.

Sarason says, better than I ever could, why I felt this ASCD STCT network was particularly needed at this time. He writes in his book, *School Change, that "What is at issue is the nature of our world view, a problem in cultural change and social-intellectual history, not in narrow psychology.*

Today, the more I am learning by virtue of my involvement in the production of PATTERNS (presently the quarterly Newsletter for the American Society for Cybernetics) I see the incredible depths of understanding required if we are to truly absorb the evolutionary aspects of what has been called "the new sciences."

Looking back at the September 1999 issue of PATTERNS in which I was privileged to talk with Humberto Maturana, about the priority of Teacher Education, I am struck with how all nature plays a part in the development of human understanding. Prompted by the current shock of the devastating earth-

(continued on next page)

The Transformation of Living Together (continued from previous page)

H: Yes, because if you have a system of tests what you do is satisfy the system of tests. So the test doesn't test you, but tests the test.

B: This is hard for us to understand. I find that testing contributes to what I have noticed in teachers; that is they have to be on the defensive, caught between their students and the administration, somewhat like being "caught between the devil and the deep blue sea."

H: That is why in this course the administration personnel *must* participate with the teachers. This is a very fundamental requirement because, if not, the contradiction you just mentioned exists and whatever the teachers want to do is immediately denied. There is no mutual respect.

B: You talk about the biology of cognition and I've often wondered how this differs from Piaget's theories of constructivism in the process of learning.

...the test
doesn't
test you,
but tests
the test.

H: The biology of cognition began with the question about perception. I was studying visual perception, color perception, and in the process I realized that the standard approach which thinks that to know is to know something external to itself, does not work. You can't explain vision that way. And when I saw that, I took seriously something that, of course, everybody knows which has to do with illusion. When you have an illusion you do not know that you have an illusion.

B: That's a contradiction in itself.

H: But you only know afterwards. You say, "Oh, that was an illusion." So you cannot claim that you can say something about something external from you because that something has to be validated by another experience. An experience of perception is validated by another experience. And an experience of illusion is invalidated by another experience. But at the moment you do not know whether you are going to validate the perception or invalidate it. So when I took this seriously then I realized that I had to deal with the question of the nervous

system in a different manner. And then the biology of cognition arose as a manner of explaining cognition, perception, the operation of the nervous system without thinking that you have to deal with an external reality.

Now for Piaget there is a background of external reality that somehow confronts you. I claim that you cannot stick to those terms. This is a limitation. It is from the ground of the development of the biology of cognition that I claim that education is the transformation of living together. Children do not learn any subjects but learn to live with their teachers whichever way this happens to be, with the teacher or against the teacher, it doesn't matter. They become conformed in the space of living with the teachers. This has nothing to do with an independent reality.

So in that sense this view is different from Piaget's. I think that the very stages in which Piaget separates the transformation of the communitive processes of children are not really stages of development but are cultural moments in the growth of children which are based not necessarily on particular age but depend on how the cultural situation is. This is precisely because the world that the children begin to live is the world of the interactions

(continued on next page)

of the adults. And the children need these adults if they are going to live to develop and respect themselves.

B: Are you saying that the relationship with the teachers is what children learn in?

H: Yes. The teachers create the space in which the children will grow with the teachers.

B: In the process of transformation?

H: In the process of interaction. And this transformation will conserve the relation with the teachers. Now this relation can be satisfactory or not from the perspective of other persons. But this is what is going to happen. So whatever the teachers do is fundamental. In that sense, the task is to create the space of interactions in which these children will be conformed in a way in which they become self-respecting and respectable adults.

B: And self-organizing learners, life-long learners?

H: Oh yes, if the teacher lives with the students in a way such that the children develop the habit of learning by themselves. But if the children develop the habit of looking down upon themselves then this is the kind of being that they are going to be. This will depend on how the teacher looks at him or herself. The teacher who does not respect him or herself cannot respect his or her students.

.....

At another time Humberto and Heinz von Foerster are in conversation.

Heinz: One of the points of our conversation yesterday that is the most intriguing¹ is that the world in which we live is not external from us; it is not independent from us, it is a world which we construct. This is a very profound shift. The question which arose is what is the implication of this shift of position for education?

Humberto: I think the most significant consequence for education is that it tends to look back at what happens with the teacher in the relationships.... If it is so that the world arises in the interplay of our living together, then which way do we live together so that the world that arises is the one that we want to live in?

Heinz: My observation regarding this point is that people have become more interested now in learning instead of teaching. The shift in the interest is in what takes place when children learn. My interest is in the position of *discover* or *invent* as a very important shift because if you discover, you already have an "out there," but if you invent then you are

¹ *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, with Francisco Varela. Published by Reidel, Boston, 1980

When you
have an
illusion
you do not
know that
you have
an illusion.

From the Editors: (continued from page 8)

quake in Turkey I was moved to share my experience of the California Loma Prieta earthquake that occurred ten years earlier.

I found that the news from Turkey triggered kinetic memories of the feeling of terror at the aftershocks that had me sleeping in my car for days following the quake; re-experiencing the sense of malaise, anger and shock that prevented me from cleaning up the mess for a long time afterward.

As I contemplate these feelings, these "emotionings," I realize at a deeper than "linguaging" level how very interconnected we humans are. I am being affected "holistically." I sense a shift in my understanding of the word "responsibility" a shift in my ability to respond.

Upon reflection, the popular phrase, "Think Globally, Act Locally" holds deeper meaning for me now. "Think globally" becomes the experience of Earth shifting as a living system and "Act locally" becomes the experience of the shift in myself as an embedded living system. There is no "out there." There is no "me" as separate from "the all." To truly appreciate the beauty of nature is to experience nature appreciating back.

I share this realization of a personal paradigm shift in order to emphasize that the "systems thinking" we speak of in PATTERNS is not only about intellectual understanding of cybernetics, living systems theory and systems dynamics, but about the experience of **being**; the experience of interconnect-edness with all the sadness and joy and ability-to-respond which that entails.

In a way that I am not quite sure of yet, I believe that this is what Humberto Maturana's *Biology of Cognition* and *Biology of Love* is all about. On Page 7 we have some excerpts from our conversation with this seminal thinker who sees what we call "Education" as "the transformation of living together."

Barbara Vogl, MEd.

(continued on next page)

creatively active in producing the universe in which you like to live. So I think it is a stimulant for the children to invent with their teachers the mathematics, the geography, the world or something like that in which they want to live. There could be cooperative games amongst children where they are allowed to do things by themselves.

...education
is the
transformation
of living
together.

Humberto: Yes, but that inventing of the world together should occur in a rather innocent manner; not necessarily speaking about there being no independent world from us, but about inventing it, because one needs to see a world.

I think that the central theme would be the awareness that the students would be conformed in living together with their teachers. And the question would be, how do I behave as a teacher such that in the transformation of the children living

with me, a world arises which is pleasant to live in and in which these children acquire the abilities to do certain things? It could be mathematics, geography, biology_ whatever it is.

Heinz: It is not so that knowledge is transferred from one brain to another, but in a participatory game in which both the teacher and the students learn together about whatever they create during the learning procedure.

.....

Humberto tells of a teacher he knows in Santiago, Chile who is teaching a class of 12 to 15 year olds who are very unruly, moving about all the time, making her very uncomfortable. She realizes how she feels so she says to the students; "I do not like to be where I do not like to be so I imagine that you also do not like to be where you do not like to be. Now, I see that you move around so much that you must not like to be where you are seated. Please sit together where you wish."

So the children move around and sit here or there wherever they want to be and that changes the whole atmosphere such that the relationships change and they have created a new universe in which they are free to talk. This is an essential thing. The teacher

listens to the emotions. Children must be free. If you listen to that, then they are free.

How do we teach teachers to become a teacher? One has to teach teachers to listen; to themselves, to the children and to others.

Now the same teacher found herself, shortly after this, with the following situation. The Inspector came, opened the door, and found the children were not seated the way they should be seated. He asks what has happened here and all of the children look at the teacher. She says, "We're doing an experiment." The Inspector says, "OK. For today its OK but tomorrow you must be seated in the proper place." And he went away.

So the children ask the teacher, "What are we going to do?" and she says, "Well, we must be intelligent. We must invent a way which satisfies the Inspector and allows us to do what we want to do. So let's talk about it."

They talk about it and they decide that they will work in groups. So she said, "Well, arrange yourselves in groups whichever way you wish." Again, they move around and arrange themselves wherever they want to be in groups of 5 to 6 students. The teacher says, "OK, now each group will be a team and one of you, each day, will report and talk with me about the difficulties you may be having in whatever task you are performing which we have assigned the day before." So, each day one of the students from each group would be in charge of the reporting and then explain to the other students.

The next day the Inspector returns and asks, "What is happening here?" and the children say, "We're having teamwork, Sir"...

"Ohhh, very well," he says and he walks away.

Heinz comments; "That's not easy to make that bridge but if you do it you are a very good teacher. Your story shows the consequences of your basic idea; that we live in a world that is not external and not independent from us. It is a world that we construct, that we create."

...whatever
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teachers
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fundamental.



American Society for Cybernetics:

News and Announcements



October 25, 2008

Dear Members and Fellows,

There have been many developments in the ASC, though many are not very visible. Nevertheless, they merit reporting back.

Trustees and other nominations

In terms of member action, the society's most important business is the election of Trustees. You will be aware that the society has a board of trustees. However, when we took over, our trustees' periods of office had expired. President Lou Kauffman asked the old trustees to stay on, while we sorted the matter out. Pille Bunnell, along with other members of the nominations committee, have now compiled a list of outstanding nominees which they will send you around mid November. We invite you to vote for these candidates. As incoming president, I would ask that you keep in mind our wish to have active trustees who will bring connections and outreach to the society, to help us grow. It may be that those candidates less known to the membership will be the more helpful.

Following the Trustee elections, Pille Bunnell (pille@interchange.ubc.ca), as chair of the Nominations Committee, will be seeking nominations for our two awards, The Wiener and McCulloch awards, and also for Fellows of the society. More about this at a later date.

Web services

Our web services have undergone big changes, Randy Whitaker found a new service provider giving us a vastly better service at a much cheaper price and ported our web site over. That no one noticed is a reflection on Randy's professionalism. We were also informed that sporg would cease trading at the end of September, so Rebecca Hibit and Philip Guddemi have found us a new membership services provider (Acteva) and we have now moved our business there. This may be a temporary arrangement while we decide on whether we need further services. If you have any problems with membership issues, please contact Philip Guddemi, VP Membership (see end of message).

American Society for Cybernetics:

News and Announcements

Membership charges

As announced in my previous letter, membership fees will go up on 1 January. However, you can rejoin now for next year, saving the cost of the increase. This applies for all types of membership, including life membership, so you may want to take advantage now.

Conference 2009

The next conference has been booked for the period of March 12 to 15 and is being organised by Arun Chandra of Evergreen College, Olympia, Washington, and will be held in Olympia. The theme is "Cybernetics Dance Talk Anticommunication".

Arun has sent this poetic call:

now to link all these
and generate a temporary web that holds our
multi-various-many-sided-eyes-and-ears-and-fingers together

where your eye notices and winks
while mine is just bleary and blinks

and so the need of one for the other came about

and one brain saw a bird and fled
and the other saw the stain and laughed

and the two inhabited different worlds at the same time and in the
same place

seeing each other as each wanted to see
and avoiding the glance that might have suggested something else

and this cybernetic, dragged down by talk and raised up by talking
sought shelter in a dance

that kept moving out of reach

as the dancer knew what she could not say
and talker said what she did not know

and so a partnership was born --- the papers signed, the notary
notarized the incorporation incorporealized

and what was two was lost to one, and the alternatives dwindled

American Society for Cybernetics:

News and Announcements

until at last and long last past they had a disagreement, and needed each other again,

so long as the next agreement threatens,
the need of anticommunication remains.

come to the conference!

Future Conferences

Meanwhile, I am in negotiation for a fully funded workshop conference on Art, Cybernetics, Design, Maths to take place in January 2010, with a big international conference to take place in New England in August 2010.

The workshop will be an ASC conference, but, will have very limited places that will be awarded in competition. The idea is to raise some important questions and develop new answers and approaches. We hope to publish an outcome (which will include time based material) somewhat in the style of Mary Catherine Bateson's "Our Own Metaphor", which will provide inspiration for the international conference and be an important document in its own right.

The international conference will be an ASC conference in collaboration with a major university, but we will also schedule time for a more homely ASC event for those who are less interested in the theme.

The Cybernetic Coalition that the ASC helped found will be holding a small workshop in Vienna, November 14 to 16, to work on how to do second order cybernetics in a second order cybernetic manner. Attendance has been kept small so each member society can feel it has a significant place in the event. The theme was originated by the Slovenian society, Autopoiesis.

Publications

Barbara Vogl came to the ASC some years ago with her news journal, Patterns. Gradually, this has become our in house society news journal. Barbara has indicated that she wishes to retire from editing Patterns. She will edit 2 more issues with other ASC members. We are unsure what will happen after that, and would welcome suggestions. Please send any you have to Lou Kauffman (asc-president@asc-cybernetics.org)

A number of interested people will meet in Stockholm (during the Cyber 2008 conference, November 10 to 11) to discuss Jason Jixuan Hu's Cybernetics 101 suggestion. I can imagine all sorts of possibilities coming out of this.

American Society for Cybernetics:

News and Announcements

Our other publishing ventures and associations remain unchanged,

Hand over and contact


The new administration you elected at the start of the year will take officially over on January 1, 2009. I say that, but many officers are already in place, filling roles that have been vacated or left empty.

Randy has made emails available for the offices of the society. You can contact officers through the following email addresses:

role	current	elect	email
president	Lou Kauffman	Ranulph Glanville	asc-president@asc-cybernetics.org
vice president	Ranulph Glanville	Elizabeth Simpson	asc-vice-president@asc-cybernetics.org
secretary	Thomas Fischer	Thomas Fischer	secretary@asc-cybernetics.org
treasurer	Rebecca Hibt	Rebecca Hibt	treasurer@asc-cybernetics.org
membership vp	Philip Guddemi	Philip Guddemi	membership@asc-cybernetics.org
e-publishing vp	Randall Whitaker	Randall Whitaker	webmaster@asc-cybernetics.org
nominations	Pille Bunnell	Pille Bunnell	nominations@asc-cybernetics.org

Your officers are are working hard both to get the society functioning properly again (for instance, in our hunt for trustees) and to generate ways forward. We hope that slowly, things improve. Your suggestions (preferably with suggestions for how to effect them) are always sought and welcomed. This is a challenging time, but we also believe it is a time of opportunity.

Best Wishes,



Ranulph Glanville, ASCF
Vice President

ASC Annual Conference

The next meeting of the American Society for Cybernetics will be held on

March 12-15, 2009

in Olympia, Washington.

The title is

“cybernetics talk dance anticomunication”

Three people have been invited to give keynote addresses:

Tom Moritz (*Associate Director of Research at the Getty Institute*)

William Fox (*novelist*)

Dr. Humberto Maturana (*biologist*)

A number of former students and friends of Herbert Brun have been invited to give presentations on Brun's musical, literary and graphic works, and the works they engendered.

Performances of music, theater and poetry that manifest a concern for or reflections on imagined and existing systems, their composition, decay, and development, will be held every evening.

• Suggestions for paper presentations, panel topics, or guided conversations are welcome, and should be sent to:

Arun Chandra

arunc@evergreen.edu

COM 301

The Evergreen State College

Olympia, WA 98505 • (360) 867-6077

The deadline for proposals is Monday January 19, 2009.

Attendees will be housed at the Governor Hotel (Olympia), and the day events will be held at the Olympia Community Center (6 blocks away). Evening events, including the keynote addresses, will take place at The Evergreen State College and at the Washington Performing Arts Center.

A block of 50 rooms has been held for attendees at the Governor Hotel.

Single rooms are \$89 per night, and double rooms are \$99 per night.

The rooms will be held until February 19, 2009
(three weeks before the meeting).

The phone number for the hotel is (360) 352-7700,

and their web address is:

www.olywagov.com

Further information will be forthcoming.

ASC Communication System

Randy Whitaker, VP electronic communications, has ported our web site to a new ISP. The result is a far better range of tools. Consequently, we can hope to see the development of a number of web-based tools. Randy and Tom Fischer (secretary) are currently going over the old web site, considering improvements, which include role based email addresses for ASC officers. ASC members are encouraged to send suggestions. Please note and use these new email addresses:

webmaster@asc-cybernetics.org (Vice-President Electronic Publishing, Dr Randy Whitaker)

asc-president@asc-cybernetics.org (President, Prof Louis Kauffman)

asc-vice-president@asc-cybernetics.org (Vice-President, Ranulph Glanville)

treasurer@asc-cybernetics.org (Treasurer, Ms Rebecca Hibit)

secretary@asc-cybernetics.org (Secretary, Dr Thomas Fischer)

membership@asc-cybernetics.org (Vice-President Membership, Dr Phillip Guddemi)

Finding our new ISP, and porting our site, was an enormous task, and we are grateful to Randy for his tireless devotion to our society.

Randy writes;

"I think central to Klaus'es suggestion is to involve the broad Cybernetics, Systems, Semiotics communities, not just the ASC. As I mentioned in my recent post, the discussions / planning for the current 'upward and outward' online developments have included consideration of how ASC's online presence could foster, facilitate, and / or directly support such a broader community. As such, this technical effort is related to Ranulph's social /organizational efforts in establishing the Cybernetic Coalition. This inaugural 'reach-out' activity has focused on other organizations dedicated to cybernetics. This is an ongoing 'first step', and it could in principle serve as the exemplar for additional, wider-ranging affiliations and collaborations as time goes on. Though playing out in different 'dimensions', these efforts are proceeding with reciprocal cross-consideration. For example, in setting up the first phase of our 'My Cybernetics' exercise this past spring, I established the separate CYB-COALITION forum for both (a) the immediate purpose of hosting the pre-conference My Cybernetics discussions and (b) the longer-term purpose of establishing a communications venue for the Coalition. Above and beyond that, the My Cybernetics exercise was also designed to proactively foster an increase in online interactivity in the ASC population."

American Society for Cybernetics:

News and Announcements

Dear American Society for Cybernetics Members,

It is once again time for our annual membership drive. Membership to the ASC runs from January 1 through December 31. Therefore, I would like to extend a warm invitation to join us again for 2009. Simply go to the link below and choose "Join ASC."

<http://www.asc-cybernetics.org/index.htm>

The executive body voted to increase dues starting January 1, 2009. The prices will be \$100 for Regular memberships and Fellows, \$40 for affiliates and students, and \$750 for lifetime memberships. Our membership dues will be increasing on January 1. However, if you renew your membership before January 1 you will be able to renew at the old prices of \$80, \$35, and \$600 respectively.

Benefits of membership include a discounted rate to our own conference in the Spring; our quarterly newsletter, *Patterns*; an online discussion forum which has had some interesting conversations this past year; and periodic announcements concerning our society and developments in the cybernetics community in general.

Also we will be providing as an additional, special benefit to members the book *Pask Present*, which is about a museum installation honoring the cybernetician Gordon Pask. This book normally sells on the retail market for \$20 (or 15 euros) plus shipping. We are giving it to our 2009 members as a special benefit. Over the years we have had many such mailings of cybernetic tutorials and lectures, as a benefit for our members, and we intend to continue that practice.

Another benefit extended to our members is an opportunity to have your name and a brief personal description listed on the ASC Cyberneticians webpage. Please check this feature out at the following link and, if interested, submit a picture and resume to Randy Whitaker (enolagaia@aol.com).

<http://www.asc-cybernetics.org/links/cyberneticians.htm>

This year we are using a new company for our computerized registration procedures. The former company, SPORG, went out of business, and we have chosen ACTEVA in their place. We are trying to make the transition as seamless as possible. If you have any problems with the registration procedure please e-mail me, Phillip Guddemi, at pguddemi@mac.com, and I will do what I can to help.

Thanks for your time and here's wishing you a strong, healthy and happy New Year!

All the best,

Phillip Guddemi

Vice President for Membership,

American Society for Cybernetics