

Eros and the Matrix

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In "The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace", Michael Heim asserts that cyberspace is "more than utilitarian or aesthetic; it is erotic". Eros is the drive to extend beyond the physical self, either through the desire to create offspring or to formulate and concretize ideas and information. This exchange of information is found in the matrix. Since we are only attracted to things in the physical world which reflect our incorporeal ideas of true forms, virtual reality is the ideal place for this higher concept of Eros. In the physical world, chromosomal information is exchanged so that humans can live on through their offspring. In the matrix, constructs can literally achieve immortality through the maintenance and exchange of neural information.

However, Heim also notes that cyberspace also destroys the capacity for desire. Cyberspace gives godlike, instantaneous knowledge; nothing is lacking; nothing remains to be desired. This undermines the human quest for information. Dixie's personality is reassembled through all the bits of information that once existed in his brain. He is dead in the physical sense but he exists in the purest form, the form of information. However, this all-inclusive, ever-present form is undesirable and even unbearable :

When the construct laughed, it came through as something else, not laughter, but a stab of cold down Case's spine. "Do me a favor, boy."

"What's that, Dix ?"

"This scam of yours, when it's over, you erase this goddam thing."

The immortal permanence found in the matrix involves the neglect, if not the destruction of physical space. One example is the polluted environment in this future world. It is unclear how Case feels about this.

The landscape of the northern Sprawl woke confused memories of childhood for Case, dead grass tufting the cracks in a canted slab of freeway concrete.

The train began to decelerate ten kilometers from the airport. Case watched the sun rise on the landscape of childhood, on broken slag and the rusting shells of refineries.

His confused attitude towards the ugliness of industrial waste indicates his indifference towards physicality. Although technology makes all space accessible -- a train which decelerates 10 km away from its destination is obviously travelling very quickly -- it also makes this space unattractive.