**Code and Poetry: Information 10-13-14**

* Two common definitions of information – both problematic in the sense that they’re transhuman
* Humanist bias is not a political bias, bias instead is toward empowerment/freedom – you as a human/citizen can make your own choices (whatever they may be)
* There’s a definition of information that depends on freedom
  + Shannon/Weaver
* Intelligent design argument/panspermia
  + Viewing animals/biological beings as communications from another world
  + The odds that a code will be arranged in a certain intelligible way are very slim, so they must be intelligently put in place
  + The universe is a message for me
* Bateson and Weaver/Shannon make the same strange definition
* Shannon/Weaver
  + Entropy: random movement of molecules. Shannon – information is entropy (the chaos in the system is information)
    - Gates are not so chaotic (just one bit), but the communication potential of air is very high (more than one bit – lots of molecules moving around)
    - Some physicists believe that information is the basis of energy, some disagree
    - State-based definition of information
      * Counterintuitive in defining info as chaos
      * By this definition, there’s no difference in information between a chunk of wood and a novel, as they occupy about the same amount of space - also unintuitive
* Problem with formal definition of information – defining information with formal qualities
  + Information instead is that which is used in a particular way – human categories defined by usage, not by formal qualities
  + P1 > media>P2
    - Anything that enters into this mediation is information
    - Can information in this model be coerced?
      * If I’m communicating something someone else wants me to, then it’s not information for me (it’s misinformation or something), although it will seem like information at the other end (P2) – can be intentional/information for one person but not for the other (the sender or the receiver)
      * Shannon/Weaver – if information is very free then there’s lots of information, coercion prevents freedom which prevents information
      * Convincing is not the same as coercing – you’re consenting of your own accord
  + This isn’t about the freedom of the system (like the Shannon/Weaver model), as this doesn’t seem to make/break information
    - The universe is very entropic, but that doesn’t seem to indicate that there’s lots of information
      * Plenty of capacity, but not as much info
    - About freedom of the will rather than freedom of the medium
  + Man in the middle argument: P1>x>P3>y>P2
    - The message changed by the man in the middle
  + Messages sent to ourselves: P1>media>P1
    - Also seems to work out (if uncoerced)
  + Intentional stance: information has to be intentional in some way by someone who has free will
  + To what extent is information transhuman? How do animals fit in?
    - Tick can’t detect rain, but a deer walking by registers as an event – so Uexkull considers it information (but Tennen doesn’t because there isn’t intentionality)
      * If animals have intentions then they can participate in information transmission
    - How does a system (the universe) produce symmetry? Bateson
      * An egg receives information from the outside (it knows which way is up and down)
        + Are the physical forces acting on the egg actually information?

Bateson – yes, Tennen – no

Just the physical state of the universe, not information for the egg (just as wind isn’t information for a mountain)

Non-thinking beings – things happen to them, no intentional state, just sensory data (but arguable depending on faith – whatever you think has intentional stances/freedom fits into discussion of information)

* + - * + System based arguments about information take away freedom (no intentionality) – information travels without intentional objects
        + How should we legislate information based on what we believe about it?
  + Latour – taking the physical world and moving into informational world
  + Kantian humanism – have to proceed as if freedom of the will exists (even if it might not), because otherwise it makes various moral issues impossible (would be impossible to go to court)
  + Transhumanism – animal rights/environmentalist movement (humans aren’t that special, goes beyond the human), God’s will (state of universe is message from God), body augmentation (transcend human condition)
    - Ideas oriented against humanism – transcend or extend beyond humanity
    - Cybernetics – humans are part of system, don’t study the individual, study the system (systems approach to study of culture) – dehumanizing or transhumanizing philosophy
    - Is freedom of expression limited to humans, or can corporations have it too? (Political consequence of this issue)
  + Common agency – consensus, deliberation have to do with exchanging information/discourse – communal vision of information/agency, but must be with other humans (can’t reach consensus with a squirrel/computer)
  + Can pretend to legislate systems, but you’re really legislating humans
  + Extended cognition – “How does a cockpit remember its speed?”
    - Classic cognitive model – thinking happens in the brain
    - Latour and others – no it doesn’t – we couple brain activity with technology (writing, typing) – not bounded by skin, bone, brain, but rather part of a system
    - When a plane is landing, who is landing it? Traditional model: the pilot
      * But there are two pilots, constant interaction between them (already a system), plus lots of instrumentation (information exchange between the instruments and pilots) – the system is landing the plane rather than the individual pilot
      * Problem (related to panspermia): but what about the controllers in the tower on the ground? Part of system as well. And what about the runway and lights and the people who built and control them? And the national weather service?
        + Who is landing the plane? The universe – everything participates to an extent. This breaks down our ideas of agency – who is to blame when the plane crashes? We draw boundaries on the system in terms of agency, so we don’t stick with this.
* Intentionality/agency essential to information and the political implications of it.