

# **Compiled Works of the Transdisciplinary Cybersophic Society (TCS)**

## **Compiled Works of the Transdisciplinary Cybersophic Society (TCS)**

*Compiled by the Friends of TCS, December 2021*

### **Introduction**

It is difficult to determine the exact reach and constitution of the Transdisciplinary Cybersophic Society. At various stages of its life it was a university society, research organisation, underground community, front for money laundering, and quasi-religious proponent of various fringe beliefs that would later be grouped under the heading of “New Age”. It oscillated between these states as an unstable mixture, its members obscure not only due to the relative lack of notoriety possessed by the American organisation but also its focus on what medieval scholars will recognise as *auctoritas*, an abnegation of authorial accreditation in favour of citing precedent and historical authority. Nevertheless, various parties have followed the TCS’ development with interest since at least the 1950s. During the McCarthy era it was seen as dangerously Communist-adjacent, and in the 1980s it seemed to understand the development of what was then called “cyberspace” with much more prescience than most existing bodies.

As a summary of the works produced by such an amorphous and ill-defined organisation, this archive will certainly not be comprehensive. Nevertheless, we feel it is our responsibility to assist in some way with the effort to reconstruct the pre-1989 history of the group by providing a cursory index of various specialised, cryptolectic terms devised by the society to communicate between its members. This is that document, which also serves as an introduction to this archive.

### **Dictionary of Internal Terms**

What follows is an incomplete and partial record of terms used by the members of TCS until its dissolution in 1989, alongside approximate historical dating for each term.

## **Convention, Principle of**

*In use between: 1970-1989*

Intellectually, presumably derived from the theories of Foucault which suggest that language is a product of historical and cultural convention, rather than *ex nihilo* genesis. Generally used in form i.e. *In violation of the Principle of Convention (...)*.

In the Sophist period, members of the organisation that would become TCS often refused to identify themselves in their publications, instead naming themselves as (depending on gender) Mme. or M'sieur K.S. The appellation "K.S." was also used without a form of address when members did not prefer to reveal their gender. Later on this became a semi-standardised principle, formalised in the doctrine of Recentralisation as the Principle of Convention (one of the three primary Leading Principles adopted by the Third Committee of 1970). Thereafter, members entirely and wholly committed to anonymising themselves, following a strict set of stylistic standards to ensure that no favour was given to any member for any reason except for the superior quality of their ideas. This included minimising sentence length, standardised terminology and diction, rigorous signposting, adoption of philosophical Standard Form rather than free-form essay writing etc. Where individual works required grouping a numerical identifier was provided not for the author but for the series, to minimise identification with a particular label.

A method for circumventing this emphasis on anonymity was pioneered starting in 1980, when certain influential members started creating and utilising pseudonyms using their philosophical or intellectual influences. This period also saw the reintroduction of stylistically and methodologically divergent essays, and is thus referred to as the Second Romantic Period. While never formally repealed, this principle's influence declined rapidly in this period and never recovered.

## **Cooperation, Principle of**

*In use between: 1970-1978*

A major Leading Principle forwarded by the Third Committee as part of broader efforts to reform TCS. The most malleable and least stringently defined of the three, the Principle of Cooperation (used in title case form) was used to suppress dissent and dissatisfaction within the ranks of the TCS membership. Members with grievances were held to violate this principle and either required to cease

their “uncooperative attitude” or leave the society, leading to a rapid decline in society membership and revenue during the Third Committee period, factors which contributed to the eventual end of the Third Committee and the introduction of devolution. This principle was finally definitively rejected in the Emergency Meeting of 1978 by a 89% majority vote.

## **Cybernetic Research Group, The**

*In use between: 1950-1955*

The second name adopted by what would become TCS. In no form or fashion connected to Williamson College, the CRG was originally formed as an independent Californian research journal and discussion group in response to the Macy Conferences establishing the then-nascent field of cybernetics. Its chair was Soviet refugee Boris Malenkov, then working as a junior mathematician in the University of California state university system. Eventually, however, he would come to meet and form a close relationship with John Harrison, and the two would attract many of the original members of the Sophists. The planned journal was scrapped and the group reincorporated itself as the Transdisciplinary Cybersophic Society in 1955, having published no research and received no grants.

## **Devolution**

*In use between: 1976-1989*

A concept borrowed from political theory, suggesting a process by which centralised powers are distributed to subsidiary legislative bodies while ultimate authority is maintained by the government. In the context of TCS, it refers to the series of constitutional reforms that marked the end of Committee rule and instituted the Fellowship system, while still nominally preserving the organisational structure of the original 1955 Constitution. While these reforms were formally adopted in the Emergency Meeting of 1978, discussions had become widespread almost 2 years earlier due to general dissatisfaction with the draconian rules and anti-democratic inclinations of the Third Committee. These discussions, while officially disavowed and vehemently suppressed, eventually garnered the requisite number of society members to call an Emergency Meeting, deposing the Third Committee and replacing them with an avowedly neutral caretaker general committee that passed no motions and effectively suspended both the Fundraising and Appropriations Committees by not appointing any members to those positions. This laissez-faire attitude towards governance allowed individual stylistic choices to become resurgent once devolution became secured and power decentralised, leading directly to the start of the Second Romantic Period.

## **Eusocialisation**

*In use between: 1963-1989*

A broad term denoting any process which attempts to “by diverse and heterogenous means induce positive associations with and conformity towards what may be deemed the broad mainstream of Nonsophic Society”, according to Harrison. Can be used either capitalised (for emphasis or clarification) and non-capitalised (as a functional term). While in principle eusocialisation can refer to any social process which resists the aims and methods of TCS, eusocialisation in practice is almost exclusively American and any reference to the “Forces of Eusocialisation” generally refers to the United States government and establishment.

## **Eusocialisation, Forces of**

*In use between: 1963-1989*

A catch-all term for non-sophont organisations or missions that actively resist the research of the TCS. In practice, a perjorative term for the American government and any agencies directed by it, in particular the House Committee on Un-American Activities, largely due to a 1962 investigation into the activities of TCS under the First Committee which lasted 3 years and was one of the factors that contributed to Harrison’s resignation as President and TCS member. Due to national security reasons, many factors surrounding this investigation are still unclear. It is known that members of TCS participated in the 1960 May 13 protest at San Francisco City Hall, and for their participation were brutalised alongside students by the police. This may or may not be connected to the HCUA’s decision to subponea Harrison and Malenkov in 1962 as part of a broader investigation into sociocultural movements in the Bay area. Price, who testified in their favour, reported that Malenkov in particular was incensed by what he viewed as Soviet-like oppression now being imposed upon him. The trial and investigation lasted three years and ended inconclusively, although large amounts of the group’s early correspondence, documentation, and records were confiscated and subsequently either discarded or classified. Freedom of Information Act requests in this regard have not yielded significant results.

Shortly after the trial’s conclusion in 1965, Malenkov published his own radical “Manifesto for a Cybersophic Society”, marking a souring of his relationship with the older Harrison. His increasing calls for ideological radicalism would lead Harrison to resign in 1967, paving the path for Bergman’s ascendancy.

## **Fellows, Group of**

*In use between: 1978-1989*

A term used to denote a self-operating unit of TCS members, established after the Emergency Meeting of 1978. A Group was capable of determining its own research goals, applying to the General Committee for additional funding above a discretionary limit, and publishing independently under the TCS masthead. While the Committee theoretically maintained the ability to direct members to work on specific research projects, independent Groups produced the vast majority of the work TCS published until its dissolution in 1989.

## **Fellowship**

*In use between: 1978-1989*

A term with multiple meanings, denoting both all members of the society as a whole (as in *This Fellowship of members*) as well as the structure TCS became formally organised (as in *The Fellowship system*) under after the rejection of the Third Committee and the establishment of devolution as the guiding governing philosophy of TCS.

## **Kuberniskos Sophists, The**

*In use between: 1930-1941*

The first name adopted by what would grow into TCS. Founded in 1930 as a philosophical discussion group within a small New England college by John Harrison. The exact origins of the name are unclear, but it is etymologically obvious that the first word derives from Greek κυβερνισκος, a given name meaning “guiding or steering” (the same root word with a different suffix, κυβερνήτης or kubernetes i.e. captain/helmsman later becomes “cybernetics” and spawns the “cyber-” prefix that the society proper would adopt). The second word, σοφιστής, draws from trained professional philosophers in Ancient Greece. With this understanding the name is not dissimilar from student societies like the Adams Society in Cambridge University, except we are uncertain to whom Kuberniskos refers.

The society generally discussed various aspects of philosophy as well as mathematics and science, with a particular focus on figures such as George Berkeley as well as the Catalanian scholar Ramon Llull. Of particular interest in this period are minor monographs published by members on the subjects of idealism and combinatorics. Due to the relatively free and open (if obscure) nature of the society in this period, this is usually referred to by post-1989 researchers as the First Romantic Period of TCS. The use of the name ended with the dissolution of the society in response to the general draft as the United States entered World War II.

## **Nonsophic**

*In use between: 1962-1970*

A derogatory term referring to any individual or group that lacks intellectual curiosity, empathy, or willingness to reason. Coined immediately after the launch of the 1962 HUAC investigation as a result of persecutorial sentiment, which had become prevalent within TCS' upper echelons. A year later Harrison penned "The Price of Learning", formally codifying both the definitions of nonsophic actors (nonsophonts) and their initiatives under the broad umbrella of eusocialisation. The term was officially retired by the Third Committee as part of a general initiative to reduce the paranoid tendencies of the Society, although its offshoot terms (such as eusocialisation) remained in common use until 1989.

## **Openness, Principle of**

*In use between: 1970-1976*

Always utilised in title case form, usually accompanied by exhortations such as "you have nothing to fear if you have nothing to hide". Possibly the most egregious of the three Leading Principles established by the Third Committee, the Principle of Openness was used to justify violations of member privacy. Allegations against the Third Committee from members such as Price included that they hired private investigators to inspect the correspondence between members and supposedly tapped landline phones belonging to dissidents or ex-members who spoke out publicly against TCS. In 1976, the birth of the devolution movement and widespread dissent lead to the Third Committee's repeal of this principle as an attempt to reduce dissent, but this did not stop their eventual downfall.

## **Recentralisation**

*In use between: 1970-1978*

The self-proclaimed agenda of the Third Committee. Always capitalised, and standing in for an amorphous set of ideas expressed through the three Leading Principles taken from Section 1.a of the 1955 Constitution: Openness, Cooperation, and Convention.

## **Transdisciplinary Cybersophic Society, The**

*In use between: 1955-1989*

The final, stable corporate form of TCS until its dissolution in 1989. The Society Constitution of 1955 (adopted with a 100% approval rating from all 23 members) established the following goals:

1.a The promotion of openness, cooperation, and respect for convention amongst the Members of the Society 1.b The development and encouragement of research into human-machine interaction, the totality of the human mind, a theory of mind, and any related field of research as the President of the Society sees fit to investigate 1.c The collection and administration of funds and resources for the furthering of the aforementioned research

In response to these aims, three internal committees were established:

1. The **General Committee**, consisting of a President, Chief Financial Officer, General Secretary, Communications Officer, General Research Director, and Cybernetic Research Director. Most references to “The Committee” refer to this group.
2. The **Fundraising Committee**, consisting of an Fundraising Officer and Fundraising Secretary.
3. The **Appropriations Committee**, consisting of an Appropriations Officer and Appropriations Secretary.

Since all members were expected to contribute to active research, no Research Committee was established. In the early days of the organisation the Society resembled the ad-hoc nature it possessed before the Constitution was adopted, with Harrison holding the posts of President, Chief Financial Officer, General Research Director, and Communications Officer. Malenkov held all other General Committee posts, and together the two formed the First Committee. The Fundraising and Appropriations Committee positions were unfilled for the first few years of the Society’s history, until the arrival of Jane Price who became the first Fundraising Officer, Fundraising Secretary as well as (later on) Appropriations Officer and Appropriations Secretary.

## Dictionary of External Terms and References

What follows is a dictionary of terms used by researchers of TCS to refer to various parts of its history and constitution, as well as various specialised references to people or locations that may aid in your understanding.

### **Bergman, Rutherford**

Shortly after his presidency ended Bergman was arrested on a series of financial fraud charges, eventually culminating in a 10 year prison sentence from the Southern District of California in 1972 after multiple convictions. It is suggested that he embezzled up to 10,000 USD from society funds as part of “investments” into Trinity Engineering.

## **Black Book Period, The**

*Relevant Period: 1967-1976*

While usually associated with the period of the Second Committee, the Black Book Period lasted until the middle of Third Committee's grasp on power with the end of the Principle of Openness. The term itself refers to the keeping of "black books" i.e. undisclosed financial and internal records by Committee members, a practice started by Bergman to hide the evidence of his money laundering from common society members curious as to the use (or, in this case, misuse) of society funds. Various obfuscatory tactics up to and including the generation of false invoices and other financial records were used to mask the extent of this corruption until the ouster of the Second Committee in 1970. While the Third Committee's ascension involved the publicisation of a raft of documents concerning Bergman's financial crimes, this secretive attitude to internal records was maintained by the Third Committee as it began expelling from the society everyone it deemed insufficiently loyal to its mission. The true end to the Black Book period began, ironically, with the devolution movement that fostered the end of surveillance on society members under the name of Openness and forced the Third Committee to make its internal votes and deliberations public. Soon afterwards, with the end of the Third Committee (and indeed, organised direction in general), the Black Book Period also came to a permanent end.

## **Committee, The First**

*Relevant Period: 1955-1967*

The pioneering committee of TCS. Formed from the initial alliance of Malenkov and Harrison, with the later addition of Price filling for the first time all committee positions in 1959. The period would end with the transfer of power from Harrison to Bergman, who would lead TCS into the Black Book Period.

For most of the reign of the First Committee, TCS was run as an informal, ad-hoc organisation. The Constitution had no requirement mechanism for official meetings or even limits on terms, only specifying that an electoral mechanism involving a First Past the Post method be put in place in the event two thirds of the members wanted a change in leadership. Since most of the members at this time were former students of Harrison's or research associates and friends of Malenkov's, this was highly unlikely. Records revealed by Price show that throughout the 12 years of First Committee rule there was on average less than 1 official meeting every month, and most recorded votes were attended only by 12-14 members, 12 being the minimum to form a quorum. All votes passed with



either 100% approval or one or two dissenting votes, usually in abstention, and afterwards it was common for Harrison to buy everyone a round of drinks at the local public house as compensation for attending the vote.

In this period TCS, having lost its institutional affiliation with Williamson College and relocated to the west coast, operated out of a small, now demolished building in Berkeley, California. Very few documents or records survive from this period, largely due to the efforts of the House Committee on Un-American Activities investigation of 1962.

## **Committee, The Second**

*Relevant Period: 1967-1970*

By the time of Harrison's resignation in 1967, largely bolstered by the publicity boost offered to the society thanks to the 1962 investigation, the society's ranks had swelled up to 108 members, and the days of First Committee triumvirate rule were no longer viable. The 1967 General Meeting which announced Harrison's voluntary termination also introduced a number of constitutional changes such as regular elections, formalised rules for monthly meetings, as well as stricter regulations on the acquisition and allocation of funds. Price became the society's second General Secretary, while Malenkov relinquished all of his roles except as Cybernetic Research Director. For the first time in the society's history all committee posts were filled by separate members, except for the roles of Appropriations Officer and Appropriations Secretary which were filled by newcomer Rutherford Bergman. Within six months, however, he had earned the trust of the inner circle. Then-President Jim Walters voluntarily stepped down, and Bergman was confirmed as the third TCS President with just over 82% of the vote. This marked the beginning of the Second Committee and the Black Book Period.

A charismatic and passionate speaker, Bergman was reported to have been extremely enthusiastic about the mind-expanding and revolutionary capacities of human-machine cooperation. Using his triple role as President, Appropriations Officer and Appropriations Secretary he pushed the society to invest heavily in various forms of electromechanical computing technology, including a company that claimed to be able to produce a ternary computing device, going so far as to publish a syncretic thesis arguing that "The Future is Ternary". What he neglected to inform the rest of the society of, however, was that the company (Trinity Engineering) was owned by his friend, and was in fact a shell corporation they used to launder the proceedings of various criminal enterprises through "legitimate business transactions". When, after two years of continuous

payments, the promised devices did not materialise, popular sentiment within the society turned against Bergman and the General Meeting of 7/7/1970 marked the end of his reign.

## **Committee, The Third**

*Relevant Period: 1970-1978*

Elected as an anonymous collective of TCS members rejecting the blatant graft and corruption of the Black Book Period, the Third Committee marked a complete changing of the guard from the founders of TCS to what some older members derisively referred to as “The New Management”. The last group to claim *de facto* and *de jure* control of TCS, they passed sweeping reforms intended to eliminate any possibility of cults of personality or infiltration from malign actors, turning the society’s focus entirely back onto theoretical cybernetic and humanist research. These included what they referred to as “a process of Recentralisation, i.e. reorienting ourselves around the meaning and intent of the founding document of this Society”.

It is widely disputed whether Price was originally part of this Committee, but she would become one of its strongest opponents, arguing instead for a process of devolution starting from as early as 1974, eventually leading to the downfall of the Third Committee in the Emergency Meeting of 1978.

## **Harrison, John William**

Founder of the Kuberniskos Sophists and later co-founder of TCS with Malenkov. Famous for his “fireplace speeches” when, while he was still a fellow of Williamson College, he would gather the Sophists around a fireplace in the Parlour Room and give long, unconnected thoughts about various issues and topics in science, mathematics, and philosophy. Transcripts of notes from these speeches later underpinned much of the initial work of the TCS. Sidelined in the organisation he founded as Malenkov’s charisma became dominant, he supported Bergman but soon found himself a tool of his machinations. Unable to control his supposed successor, he became further isolated from other members in the organisation, leading to his eventual voluntary resignation in 1967.

After stepping down, Harrison distanced himself from the society and focused on his other work, publishing several papers on various aspects of information theory and philosophy. He died in 1975 in relative poverty, and few society members attended the funeral.

## **Malenkov, Boris Ivanovich**

A young son of refugees from the Soviet Union, Boris Malenkov first settled in California and developed a strong interest in mathematics. Founding the Cybernetic Research Group after hearing of the Macy Conferences, he soon came into contact with John Harrison and inspired him to reform the then dormant Kuberniskos Sophists as the TCS. By all accounts a highly energised and charismatic speaker, Boris quickly came to sideline the supposed President, taking over much of the research conducted by the society and personally co-authoring more than a dozen papers, including the controversial treatise Thoughts on the Development of Digital Devices. Initially suspicious of Bergman, Malenkov was rapidly won over by his personal charisma, even threatening to dissolve the society if the Second Committee was deposed. However, the will of the society forced his hand, and Malenkov proved unwilling to tear down his life-long work.

After his eviction from the society Malenkov retired into obscurity, and moved from the United States. The state of his last years is as of now unknown, and we welcome any information into this matter.

### **Price, Jane**

One of the architects of both the rise of the organisation under the First and eventually the downfall of the Third Committee, Jane Price is one of the least well-understood members of the TCS. Originally a pure mathematician from the United Kingdom, she participated in much of the highly mathematical work of the TCS and in the practical development of the much-maligned ternary computer project under the Second Committee. She also demonstrated noted multitasking and management capabilities, simultaneously filling in for many members of the First Committee in its later period. Her role in the rise of the Third Committee is disputed, but she eventually came to argue strongly for the concept of Devolution that characterised much of the final period of the society.

### **Romantic Period, The First**

Scholars have come to identify two main periods of creative and research output in the society, and have accordingly deemed them the First and Second Romantic Periods. This period roughly corresponds with the rise and fall of the Sophists in Williamson College, and includes the publication of important papers such as On the Manipulation of Symbols.

### **Romantic Period, The Second**

This second period of creative output follows the downfall of the Third Committee, and sees a renewed focus in philosophy, literature, and art. It ends with the general dissolution of the society in 1989.

## **Trinity Engineering Corporation**

An external company hired by Bergman to construct prototypes of the ternary computer, which supposedly also prepared models for commercial application to boost the financial prospects of the TCS. It was soon revealed that he had extensive financial ties to the company, facts that contributed to the downfall of the Second Committee in 1970.

## **Walters, Jim**

A short lived interim president between the First and Second Committees. Known to be a jovial and noncommittal person, and voluntarily stepped aside as Bergman rose to power.

## **Williamson College**

A small New England college, mostly notable for the disappearance of its founder John Williamson during an arctic expedition after founding the college in 1895. An early pioneer of merging the community college model, the technical school model, and the liberal arts model of higher education, Williamson College provided full-sponsorship scholarships to many underprivileged students but suffered significant downsizing during the Great Depression. Eventually shuttered in 1952 after World War II amidst the first wave of McCarthyism, but only after giving birth to the Kuberniskos Sophists.

## **Bibliography**

An incomplete bibliography of works published by and documents created by TCS members.

## **On the Manipulation of Symbols (1934)**

Published in 1930 under the name “K.S.”. A brief overview of combinatorics as pioneered by figures such as Ramon Llull. Suggests the creation of a “Symbolic Philosopher” which would be capable of the following features:

- Identifying a symbol’s “type, class, and constitution” (these terms are not specified)
- Applying rules for logical transformation to that symbol i.e. “the addition, removal, or alteration of symbols”
- Storing the results in some medium i.e. “on paper, clay, or metal”

Some readers have argued that the Symbolic Philosopher is roughly analogous to a Turing Machine or a class of string rewriting machines, but due to the loss of the original paper this cannot be confirmed.

### **Society Constitution (1955)**

A document laying out the basic constitution of the Transdisciplinary Cybersophic Society, whose many elements would later be contested. Of note are the three principles (Openness, Cooperation, and Convention), first formulated as guidelines for behaviour by the founder John Harrison, as well as a leadership structure that did not forbid members from holding multiple roles simultaneously and not defining regular elections.

### **Thoughts on the Development of Digital Devices (1957)**

A wide ranging survey paper proposing many possible developments for digital devices, including mentions of digital minds, visual displays, as well as their use for simulations to enable both entertainment and commercial applications, as well as a further enhancement of their capabilities in warfare. “The machine that wins the war before it is fought” is a particularly memorable line.

### **The Price of Learning (1963)**

An angry denunciation of mainstream society written by Bergman after the investigation conducted by House Committee on Un-American Activities. Notable for coining terms such as nonsophic and eusocialisation which would later be weaponised as part of the group’s internal ossification and conspiracy-making during the Second Committee.

### **Manifesto for a Cybersophic Society (1965)**

Malenkov’s last significant work as a member of TCS before the end of the First Committee era. Obvious within the text are undertones of loss and bitterness, a sense that what he has created has been stymied at every turn by an uncaring and capricious society. Extending Harrison’s arguments within “The Price of Learning”, Malenkov further proposes that an uncaring and ignorant society must be “completely reset” in order to achieve cybersophic enlightenment, a process which he describes as “the total atomisation and destruction of all existing social structures in favour of new spheres of mind pioneered by and in conjunction with cybersophic principles”.

### **The Future is Ternary (1968)**

A rambling, incoherent thesis written by Rutherford Bergman to defend the creation of a ternary calculating device (in contravention of the binary paradigm which spawned modern information theory and most digital computing). Notable for its references to many figures including the early 20th century Chinese philosopher Tseng Tse as well as Voltaire, Descartes, and Isaac Newton. Later investigations revealed that many parts of the thesis were plagiarised or edited from other sources.

### **General Minutes (07/07/1970)**

One of the few internal records to survive the dissolution of the society in 1989. Details the (widely disputed) election of the Third Committee on a broad reform platform in 1970, despite heavy opposition from old guard figures such as Malenkov, who was by then well over 70 years old. Due to the anonymous nature of the committee, many members argued that allowing them to stand in the election would violate the 1955 Constitution, while supporters argued that there were, in fact, no regulations regarding the public identity of the candidates at all within that document. This led to the infamous “Malenkov Ultimatum” fifteen minutes before the final vote-casting:

**Malenkov:** There will be a renunciation (unintelligible) or there will be a dissolution. **Price:** I’m sorry? **Malenkov:** I stand by my words. This is my life, it won’t be taken from me.

Shortly after the election of the Third Committee Malenkov and most of the other remaining founding figures resigned after a failed emergency motion to dissolve the society. It is widely speculated that Malenkov and many other founding members had been entirely convinced by Bergman’s arguments, investing large sums of personal savings in Trinity Engineering, leading to their loathness to reject Bergman and the Second Committee.