

Toward a New Cybernetic System: The Dance Between Abstract and Concrete

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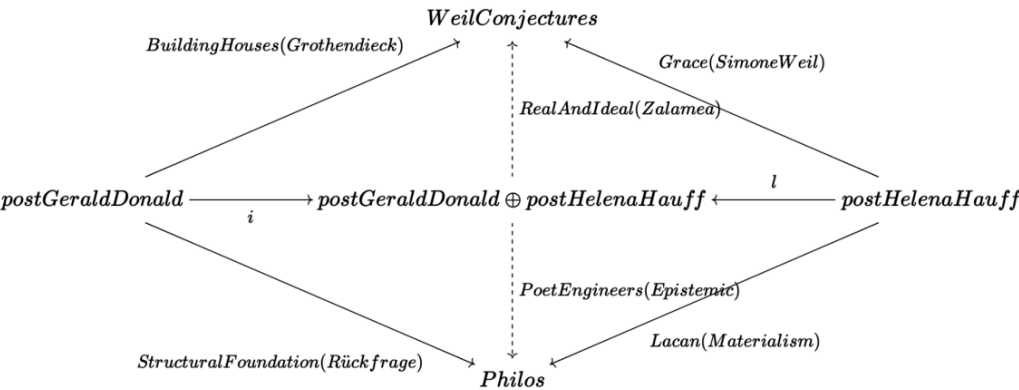
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Abstract

In the intersection between theoretical abstraction and lived reality, we find a call for a new cybernetic system—one that bridges the gap between the houses we build in thought and the spaces we actually inhabit. This system emerges from two distinct yet intertwined paths: the abstract-theological realm of building theoretical frameworks, and the concrete domain of love and philosophical questioning.

1 The Architecture of Thought

At one pole, we have the construction of theoretical houses, exemplified by Grothendieck’s mathematical structuralism. These are the abstract frameworks we build to under-



stand reality, the mathematical scaffolding that supports our comprehension of the world. Yet these structures are perpetually outstripped by grace—that ineffable element which, as Simone Weil reminds us, “fills empty spaces, but can only enter where there is a void to receive it.” This tension between structure and void creates a productive dialectic.

The metaphor of “building houses,” drawn from Grothendieck’s reflection, serves as more than mere analogy. As he notes in *Récoltes et Semailles*, mathematicians often inherit a “large and beautiful fully-furnished house,” complete with its tools and conventions. But the true builder-pioneer must venture beyond these comfortable confines, must risk the solitude of open air to construct new dwellings for thought.

2 The Material Ground

At the other pole lies the actual reality of desire and materiality, approached through two methodological vectors: Husserl’s “questioning back” (*Rückfrage*) and Lacanian materialism. The former provides a phenomenological method for interrogating the foundations of our experience, while the latter reveals how desire structures our relationship to reality through language and lack.

Rückfrage, as a methodological principle, suggests that we must constantly return to the origins of sense, to the *Lebenswelt* (lifeworld) that grounds all scientific and theoretical construction. This “questioning back” isn’t merely historical or empirical but transcendental—it seeks the conditions that make experience possible.

The Lacanian perspective complements this by revealing how desire structures our relationship to reality. Our desires are themselves as separated from our actual bodily needs as the phallus is separated from any biological penis. This gap, this separation, is precisely what allows for the construction of new theoretical frameworks.

3 Two Subjects, One System

3.1 Gerald Donald and the Afrofuturist Vision

Gerald Donald’s work with Drexciya represents more than mere musical innovation. By creating a complex mythology of underwater dwelling descendants of drowned slaves, he demonstrates how theoretical frameworks can process historical trauma through abstraction. The “Drexciyan” mythology serves as what we might call a “dimensional jumphole” between African roots and contemporary America.

This mythological construction isn't escapism but rather a sophisticated theoretical framework that allows for the reimagining of historical trauma through technological means. Donald's later work as Arpanet, referencing early computer networks, further develops this theme of technological mediation of historical experience.

3.2 Helena Hauff and Technological Ambivalence

Helena Hauff embodies a different relationship to technology and abstraction—one that sees in electronic music both utopian possibility and apocalyptic potential. Her approach to electronic music reflects what Zalamea calls the tension between the real and ideal. Her raw, hardware-based approach to electronic music production represents a direct engagement with the materiality of technology, while still serving abstract, theoretical ends.

4 The Direct Sum and Its Implications

4.1 Mathematical Formalization

The use of direct sum notation (\oplus) isn't merely metaphorical. As defined:

Let U, W be subspaces of V . Then V is said to be the direct sum of U and W , and we write $V = U \oplus W$, if $V = U + W$ and $U \cap W = \{0\}$.

This mathematical formalization suggests that the combination of these two approaches creates a new space that preserves their individual characteristics while generating something novel.

4.2 Toward the Real and Ideal

The first morphism moves toward what Zalamea identifies as the tension between real and ideal. This isn't a simple opposition but rather a productive dialectic. Scientific truth corresponds to the correct adequation between facts and the representation of those facts. The direct sum of our two positions generates a new way of approaching this adequation.

4.3 Engineering Poetic Reality

The second morphism points toward what we might call "poet-engineers." This figure combines technical expertise with poetic sensibility, suggesting a new way of

engaging with reality that is both constructive and imaginative. Engineering qua Plato's idea of craftsmanship is already the ultimate form of poesis.

5 The Role of Technology

Technology serves a crucial mediating function in this cybernetic system. As Donald notes, "Technical devices allow the rank and file to express their ideas and to move forward in the socio-economic continuum more effectively." This isn't merely about tools but about the creation of new possibilities for thought and action.

5.1 The Digital Interface

The role of digital technology in this system isn't simply instrumental. Rather, it creates what we might call "dimensional jumpholes"—spaces where different realities can interface and interact. This is evident in both Donald's mythological constructions and Hauff's raw engagement with electronic hardware.

6 Grace and the Void

The system is perpetually haunted by what Simone Weil identifies as grace—that which "fills empty spaces, but can only enter where there is a void to receive it." This suggests that our theoretical constructions must maintain certain voids, certain spaces of indeterminacy, to remain vital and generative.

6.1 The Role of Desire

Lacanian theory helps us understand how desire functions within this system. The *objet petit a* serves as an organizing principle for desire, creating what we might call coordinates for our own desire. This structuring of desire is crucial for both theoretical construction and practical engagement.

7 The Cybernetic Resolution

What emerges is a cybernetic system that doesn't merely oscillate between abstraction and concrete reality, but actively synthesizes them. It suggests that the houses we build in theory must be inhabited by grace, while our questioning of reality must be structured by desire. This creates a feedback loop where:

- Abstract frameworks are constantly “questioned back” to their phenomenological origins
- Material reality is continually restructured through theoretical intervention
- Grace and desire serve as the operators that move between these domains
- Technology functions as both medium and message, both tool and terrain

8 Practical Implications

This theoretical framework has practical implications for:

8.1 Artistic Practice

The integration of technical expertise with poetic sensibility suggests new approaches to artistic creation, particularly in electronic music and digital arts.

8.2 Theoretical Construction

The emphasis on “questioning back” while maintaining rigorous formal structures suggests new ways of building theoretical frameworks.

9 Conclusion

This new cybernetic system suggests that the path forward lies neither in pure abstraction nor in pure materiality, but in their dynamic interplay. It calls for a practice that is simultaneously theoretical and concrete, mathematical and poetic, structural and graceful. The direct sum of our subjective positions doesn’t resolve their tensions but makes them productive, generating new ways of building houses for thought while ensuring they remain habitable by love.

Like the electronic music that serves as our model, this system oscillates between structure and freedom, pattern and noise, the ideal and the real. It suggests that our theoretical frameworks are not mere abstractions but living spaces that must be continually rebuilt and reinhabited, while our concrete reality is not mere matter but a field of potential waiting to be structured by thought and grace.

In the end, this system points toward a new way of being in the world—one that recognizes the necessity of both rigorous theoretical construction and open spaces for

grace, both technological mediation and direct engagement, both historical memory and future projection. It suggests that the path forward lies not in choosing between these alternatives but in finding ways to hold them together in productive tension.