

Spark #1.17 -hypertypes

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Some of you may recall an earlier SPARK, where I ranted on and on about Polyhymnia and Euterpe, the Muses of Sacred and Profane Music from ancient Greece. I examined how people can work in the service of one or both of them, and the results that obtain.

With the lesser-known Aeode, Polyhymnia and Euterpe were the musical Muses of classic antiquity. We can see how each of these has worked its way into our cultural programming, and my previous article discussed that. There are some interesting paths of thought regarding this transformation process, but I have not found much of use in the short time I've had to research this. I doubt that it is because there is a dearth of information- it is more likely that my research has been substandard. Therefore, if I am re-inventing the wheel, kindly email me and let me know where I can find the information.

I've re-read my books on and by Jung, and for the most part, I've found that they've been less than useful. Jung was, first and foremost, a doctor, interesting in healing people. I am not a doctor and frankly have a skeptical view of psychology in general and psychiatry in specific. My interests and concerns are cultural analysis and critical thinking, not the quixotic pursuit of chimeric psychological well-being or the pathologisation of human nature.

However, I do find properties and structures of the mind very interesting. An interesting work in this regard that I highly recommend is the book, "The Number Sense" by Stanislas Dehaene. In it he demonstrates how we have an innate sense of number and quantity - it's part of our brain's wiring. But higher mathematics - calculus, algebra, etc. are more part of our number sense working with our language center. The argument he shies away from, and one that I believe is part and parcel of his findings, is that the universe is fundamentally not mathematical, and that we are mathematical beings who bring quantitative order to it, but the universe, in and of itself, is not a mathematically understandable object. I call the belief that the universe is mathematical the Pythagorean Fallacy, and it will likely be the subject of another SPARK some day.

My point in mentioning Dehaene is this - if we accept that our brains are wired for simple quantities, then we, as creatures that demand meaning and who gleefully attribute meaning to everything, will naturally attribute meaning to these very quantities - thus we have numbers like "1", but meanings like MONAD, a number like "2" but a concept of DYAD, etc. From this various logically derivative concepts result. Bizarre fictions like Numerology and Pythagorean Mysticism can develop as well as more refined mythologies, such as J.G. Bennett's ideas of Systematics. In any case, we can agree that low value fundamental quantities do carry meaning that more complex numbers (π , e , and i) presently do not, and that these basic quantities are routinised into the neurological structure of our brains, and are thusly part of our make up as human beings. That is one extreme.

So are wariness of heights and the unpleasantness of the odor of sulphur, for instance. People who are not naturally wary of heights and find sulphur pleasingly aromatic would be less likely to propagate their kind, and pass down such preferences. So with the number sense. An inability to distinguish small quantities would lead to an untimely demise in the natural world.

But what lies between the hallowed archetype and a passing idle idea on a Wednesday afternoon? What lies between Calliope and a laundry list? Between some daydreamed whistle in a subway hall for the sake of the reverberation and some profound symphony of musical effort done for the glory of Polyhymnia or the ineffable godhead? What is an archetype before it becomes an archetype?

My answer: a hypertype. There are types of thought, where ideas exist in a free flow of our language centers- words, ideas, perceptions, re-arrange and configure themselves through time and the landscape of our brains. Think of this landscape like a house. Ideas come and go, like visitors. They sit and have tea in the furniture of archetypes. Some ideas come to stay for longer. After a while, as they acquire a sense of residency, they cease to be visitors, and also come to live in this world of archetypes- reading in the Chair, sleeping in the Bed. At that point they are more than a mode of thinking, greater than a simple type of thought, but are less than archetypes, "merely" cultural and thusly a part of our brain's operative structure -these are the Hypertypes.

We live in and with the world of our pets, possessions, and furniture, like hypertypes live in and with the world of archetypes. How exactly a hypertype becomes an archetype is something I am not exactly clear on. As I do not think that the exact functioning of archetypes in the structure of our brains is fully understood. How they arrive through principles of natural selection is even more dimly understood, from what little research I've been able to gather, and furthermore, lead to very contentious conclusions that are often more politically motivated than devoted. Suffice to say, at some point over time, hypertypes become increasingly fixed and more like furniture/archetypes, and less like visitors or resident alien thought patterns.

As this is so, I think we can see many cultural currents and icons slowly ossifying into archetypes, and these are all throughout our cultural activities. I believe it is necessary for us, as artists, to distinguish between the prefab icons of our media culture and the deeper archetypes and the growing hypertypes resident in our cultural works. I believe a present hypertype, and possibly the most important one of our present age, is that of the robot/cyborg - the Man Machine. It began, suitably, in literature with Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. As a hypertype of industrialism, it came with its own manufactured mythology and has been described over the past few centuries by Frankenstein, Maria of Metropolis, Data and the Borg of Star Trek, and Decker and the Skin Jobs of Bladerunner. As the Man Machine solidifies in our culture, it will turn into the furniture in our consciousness, in the living rooms of our minds.

Without consciousness of this hypertype, electronic music becomes the soundtrack of Frankenstein, the siren song of the Man Machine, the bird song of the cyborg. When western technological culture completely supplants native pre-industrial cultures, the Man Machine will shortly thereafter ascend

from hypertype into archetype. The struggle between the industrial age and cultures based in previous traditions is nearly over. "Traditional" cultures are being rapidly supplanted, eroded, and eradicated under the steel wheel of industrialism. In return, the Native cultures affect the local flavour of the expression of industrialism; just as a tank tread leaves a different kind of mark in the muddy clay of Indonesia compared to the sandy valleys of Southern Peru, so too, the native cultures will look different under the pressure of the Man Machine archetype. And their cultural expressions will reflect this change.

Some decry this as a kind of global homogenization. I find such arguments patronizing and demeaning. I think that people are much more creative and clever than that, and will always find cogent and coherent ways to express themselves in an authentic manner, regardless of the instrumentation or tools they choose for such expression.

From my research, we can't go back to a time before machines without a level of destruction and suffering that could easily end the human species. We are stuck with our devices, and must now manage the creative integration of them into our lives. The destruction of Native cultures has been going on for centuries. Preservation is crucial, but when we speak of preservation, we are already speaking of the dead or comatose.

We can wake up and live with our hypertypes -struggle and play with them as conscious partners in the configuration of our minds and the arrangement of our furniture, the archetypes. Or, we can go back to sleep, and be ignorant of them, and unconsciously live out the Man Machine hypertype by actualising the Oedipal struggles of Frankenstein, the re-humanising struggles of Data, the Orwellian fratricide of Bladerunner, the valiant self sacrifice of Maria's revolution, and finally descend to the infantile fantasy of the interstellar pillage of the rapacious Borg.

We are not the Robots. The Robots are becoming Us.

In our own imagination, and in the very structure of our imagining, the hypertypes rearrange the furniture of the archetypes in our mind. They are the stories we tell about ourselves, and the structures by which we understand and attribute meaning to the stories. They are the dreams of our life and times, and, in the case of the Man Machine, they express both the promising hopes and the inhuman fears of the industrial hypertype. The future doesn't just happen - we invent it. Our dreams show us the way. And our hypertypes inform our dreams and desires. They are like spirits- angels or Muses or lesser gods - immanent forces in the mind. But, unlike the embroidered spirits of the religious age, the hypertypes are much more mercurial and undefined. They are the containers of stories, the box that a myth inhabits - larger and more abstract than the old world of angels and their heavenly hymns.

And as we examine and creatively reflect on the signature hypertype of our age, our music sings the body electric. From Leon's Theremin and dance synthesizer to motion detector synths like the Alesis AirFX or AirSynth, or electronic data gloves, and the musical mix-mastering of turntablism, we are integrating the machines into our motions and actions. We electronic musicians are in a unique

position: rather than be run-over like innocent bystanders in the ascent of the machine, we can point the way to a personal and expressive relationship with the Man Machine hypertype.

We can invent the heart of this Man Machine. We can sing the voice electric. We can provide the components to its psyche - for example, the joy and the guilt it must feel in the fact of its own existence. Indeed, it is our responsibility to do this, and to do it well. If left to others, the results could likely prove catastrophic.