Tabla de Contenidos

Faucher K X, Metastasis and Metastability. A Deleuzian Approach to Information (2013)

Faucher K X, Metastasis and Metastability. A Deleuzian Approach to Information (2013)

There has been an explosion of books published on the concept of information, differing to the degree and effectiveness that they might elect answer the ontological question of what is information? The struggle is not only philosophical, but also lexical and semantic, with wide disagreement over what should be included or excluded in the definition. This is not an issue that will be settled in its entirety any time soon, nor do we need to feel the anxious pressure to have done with the task if it closes down meaningful exploration. I am generally suspicious of terms that achieve definitional consensus too soon since it shutters the term and concept from further consideration, leading in part to a crystallization that owes more to discursive agendas than to a more significant problematic. Fixed definitions quickly become our blind spots, that which we take for granted, and to build upon the unquestioned assumptions of a definition can lead to unfortunate consequences in theoretical reasoning and concrete practice. The highly energetic field of information as an object of study proper is relatively new, and a lack of agreement in creating a fully persuasive unified theory of information or how we ought to conduct a philosophy of information actually places the very word information in good company with a heritage of other terms that we have not been able to agree upon for millennia such as Being, World, Cause, and so forth. It is in this way that information becomes philosophically interesting rather than a rigidly inert term belonging to technical fields.

It is under these conditions of awareness that I will not promise the reader a final definition of information, which would only be immodest and simply "yet another" definition among the many that are already in circulation. I am interested in the very ontological and ontogenetic questions of information, and as a thought experiment I hope to apply a modified Simondon-Deleuze approach to those questions. Too often, domain-specific uses of the term information are used as a hand wave to ensure compliance, or otherwise employed in a fashion that is so broad as to encompass far too many disciplinary fields at the expense of providing a more operational or refined descriptive definition. However, an insistence on providing an operational definition might force us back into the field of mathematics. I wish to treat information in a very special, yet careful, way where a metaphysics of information can emerge without ontologizing the term, and without exacerbating information theorists who have long since developed parallel ways of understanding and measuring information.

ot everyone is in agreement over Deleuze's unique ontology, and even among those who count themselves among the converted, there are points of disagreement that generally concern matters of textual interpretation and their consequences. Deleuze is not a postmodern philosopher despite how he might have been appropriated by that camp, or otherwise how his concepts, and those of his collaborator Félix Guattari, were smuggled into different disciplines eager to weave Deleuzian insights into their working programs and practices. The seemingly fresh insights and evocative cascade of neologisms emerging out of such key texts as A Thousand Plateaus, especially once the book had been translated for an anglophone audience, provided a wealth of concepts that were eagerly embraced by a new generation of francophile or continentalist scholars in the humanities that were not entirely at home in deconstruction or other more new language-based forms of philosophy. It was during this time that the works of Deleuze was seen as a clarion call for engaging in more multidisciplinary pursuits.

The fact that there is disagreement is a sign of robust academic health, and it may also be argued that despite accusations of distortion or simplification issued against those who have (mis)appropriated Deleuze's concepts into their own disciplinary repertoires, these occasional mergers of the disparate may be less misprision and more an attempt to honour Deleuze's view of

generating the new. Whether this becomes based on Deleuze's occasional complicity with certain terms or their compression is a matter for interpretation to decide, and for others to contest. The history of Deleuze's reception in the anglo-American world, and the enthusiastic applications of his insights, would provide for an intriguing history unto itself. There is no doubt that Deleuze's appropriation of terms from mathematics, biology, physics, and biology are bound to outrage scholars in those fields––and it may be the case on occasion that Deleuze simply gets the terms wrong. This book may indicate such points, but that is a peripheral matter compared to the main task of exploring the prospect of a Deleuzian theory of information––if that is at all possible.

In addressing Deleuze's ontology of the virtual-actual with its intensive circuit, it may be more "blasphemous" or simply arrogant to make the claim that there may be something missing in order to truly make the ontology operational in all its aspects. However, no philosopher can be burdened with the assumption of infallibility or absolute clarity; there are still terms used by Deleuze that are disputed partially on account of their not having been thoroughly clarified. When Deleuze invoked the term "intensive" to describe the movement from the virtual to actual, there was no shortage of examples he could provide. However, reverse engineering from examples may not always lead us to the proper precursors.

We will not say that there is a missing piece in Deleuze's ontological continuum, but instead call for a closer elaboration on what is meant by intensity in Deleuze, what role it plays in the virtual-actual distinction, and attempt to give it a descriptive operator – in this case, metastasis as it pertains to a nascent construction of information theory. Those already familiar with Deleuze's ontology understand that it functions as a dynamical and realist philosophy, refusing to admit the transcendent or essentializing aspects found in other ontological projects. In addition, the highly rigorous nature of Deleuze's work does not permit us to dismiss it as simply a rhapsody enamoured with its own terminology. For our restricted purposes in this book, it will be of utility to provide a conceptual roadmap as to the particular features and landmarks that identify Deleuze's domain of the virtual, and then proceed into the territory with our primary objective of how we can re-imagine information and, to a related degree, a library science of the future. In order that this may be done appropriately, it will also be of some interest to pursue the issue of metastasis and metastability as part of what we understand as information.

There is no shortage of possible contenders for creating synonyms for the process of actualization in Deleuze's ontology, of which it would seem that I am simply adding another. We may name this process active force, intensive generativity, dynamical invention, determined eruption, reticular unfolding, or even an expression of kairotic development. However we decide to name this process of actualization, it ultimately concerns what in classical ontology bridges the gap between Being and Nothing: Becoming. It is, for Deleuze, not a question of asking how Being endures in time, but to shift the emphasis to how Becoming endures in time, and perhaps to push this question further to ask how things become, and by what processes, and furthermore what vital (and possibly vitalist) role this occupies in understanding information in its motley contexts from the conceptual to the material basis. What may appear to already be an answer in Deleuze's ontology may still be opaque to some readers, and this we aim to render more transparent for those not already intimately familiar with Deleuze's ontology.

The question of how things endure or come to be is not the sole province of ontology, but also a vital concern to cybernetics which, in its inaugural days, was concerned with deferring entropy. That the second law of thermodynamics made this inevitable did not prevent cybernetics from finding ways of deferral by means of feedback mechanisms. There is, in a way, a kind of tragic heroism in such a task. Norbert Wiener himself somewhat poetically likens the human condition as being on a metaphorical island surrounded by entropy. Moreover, we must consider the second-order cybernetic theories of

emergentism and self-organizing (autopoeitic) behaviour as a possible parallel in discussing how generativity of new information, and new beings-of-becoming.

Any author that relies heavily on the works of Deleuze (and Guattari) does risk a certain over-reliance, if not to also assume a dogmatic posture by using Deleuze and Guattari as a theoretical shield.[1] The line between critical homage and mere emulation is a fine one. Advancing beyond Deleuze and Guattari is essential to any project, and yet this must be done with some degree of fidelity to their texts and to resist stopping short at the preparation of a nostrum for philosophy and information.

SCOPE AND AIMS OF THIS BOOK

I hope here to advance a step further toward settling the question of information's ontological status without subordinating it to Being, but also without relegating it to the transcendent or mind-dependent status of the immaterial or abstract by respecting the possibility of information's material autonomy. In order to do so, we have elected to understand the specifi c problem through a Simondonian-Deleuzian lens so that therefore we can understand the specifi c character of Becoming as a replacement for the fixity of Being, and apply this to our exploration of information as that which might be expressed in Deleuzian terms as part of a process rather than a state (although in some cases information does say something "informative" about states). We aim here to pose, and perhaps not necessarily settle, a cluster of questions that guide our inquiry:

- How might a Simondonian-Deleuzian metaphysics address the question of information in its multiple connotations and contexts without resorting to a hypostasis or essentialization of the term itself?
- How might a Simondonian-Deleuzian metaphysics function as a possible solution to the problems presented in library sciences with respect to categorial versus dynamical regimes of classification?
- Would a merger of Simondonian-Deleuzian ontology and the "mechanisms" of metastasis/metastability provide for a new perspective with respect to information and reality?
- Precisely where are there points of agreement and disagreement between the Deleuzian metaphysical project and that of cybernetics in its successive incarnations?
- How will Deleuze's philosophy of the virtual and transcendental empiricism elucidate new directions for an understanding of information?

Our provisional statement on the matter might be summarized in this way:

[1] Difference and information are synonymous

One starting point might be the following statement:

[2] Information, as the relative degree of organization, facilitates the very differences that define the relative degree of organization in that system

However, without a full and critical exploration of both terms (difference and information), and their relation to support this claim of synonymy, the phrase remains largely empty. However, I assign myself the task in this volume to construct a passage from the statement of information as relative degree of organization to:

[3] Information is the relative arrangement of the assemblage where its accidents condition the problematic of that assemblage, whereby singularities emerge as problemata distributed upon the plane of consistency

[4] Information occupies and augments diffeomorphic space, and this by the rhizome it forms within

and between matter (both formed and unformed) and energy.

Such a passage will entail a variety of detours, false exits, feints, and some conceptual trapdoors. It may not always be entirely clear to the reader precisely what connection the discussion has with information, but like what Deleuze and Guattari say about nomad science, it is the accidents and problems along the route that will set the direction.

As a necessary housekeeping item and to better familiarize readers with the domain of inquiry, the initial chapters are dedicated to providing a selective historical summary of the definitional scope of information, the core concepts in Simondon's philosophy, Deleuze's ontology of the virtual, transcendental empiricism, and the philosophical context in which these are embedded. With these key concepts in hand, I will then proceed to discuss metastasis and its role in the virtual, before bringing to the fore the relationship between a metastatic virtual and information. Subsequent chapters address the tension between the Deleuzian and cybernetic understandings of the real, and from there we discuss how a Deleuzian-metastatic virtual may be a source for rethinking information and library systems in the move from informatics to rhizomatics. This book functions as a bridge: as a means of introducing those in information theory and information science to the features in Deleuze relevant in discussing information, and to attract more Deleuzians to the field of information. It is this author's view that a study of information should not exclude a Deleuzian perspective.

My task with this book is double: to apprise those involved in information theory and information science of Deleuzian features that may be of some utility in rethinking information itself, and to inform Deleuzians of the key features and consequences of information theory. Although I will attempt some degree of diplomacy between these two disparate domains of thought, it is unlikely that all the contradictions can be satisfactorily resolved, and so some incompatibilities will remain as problems for others to take up.

To avoid confusion and maintain precision of sense in the terms employed, this text will use capitalization for the concepts of Being and Becoming when referring to them as philosophical terms. In addition, references to information computer science as ICS; information communication technology as ICT; and the mathematical theory of communication as MTC.

Starting with Information

In these days of neoliberal discourse, being a "thinker of growth" has fallen into unfortunately narrow economic definitions of the term "growth" that is largely indexed on GDP and jobs. I say unfortunate because it is not the production of the new (as much as the apostate defenders of neoliberalism tend to market their nostrums of "innovation" which is geared toward technocratic understanding of the term) but the extension of a rigid practice descended from a blend of economic mysticism and free market libertarianism powered by a techno-regulated distortion of cybernetics. One of the major turns in philosophy has been a preoccupation with the production of true newness and investigating the "milieu" of a pre-individual basis for reality (from Simondon up through Deleuze). These are revolutionary to philosophy, overturning thousands of years of assumptions on the foundation of what is reality, although the history of philosophy has had its "Isaiah"s such as Heraclitus and Nietzsche among others. This has been given an added validation from developments in physics that seem to confirm that we live in an uncertain universe where the future is entirely open and only subject to a few constraints. There is no doubt that a philosophical interest in instability versus stability (as well as structures of meta-stability) are so heavily featured since they are also the concern of everyday life: from the uncertainty of global markets to the apparent increase in environmental crises, from the redrawing of the political landscape in terms of the state's relation to a direct and participatory public enabled by digital technologies to the very emergence of synchronous digital environments

themselves, from intergenerational strife to the conflict arising between the multitude and the possible resurrection of aristocracy in a corporate key. Crisis and change are hardly new. The challenges we face individually and collectively are daunting, and we may feel at the mercy of a cosmological throw of the dice that will decide our ruin or salvation. A Heraclitean world indeed.

We add to this what has been called the "informational turn," and by that we can include under this banner the attention at all levels to information society, living in an information age, using the instruments of information technology, and all the associated concerns that arise from the social, political, economic, and global impact this has had in both radically transforming our relation to the real as much as it has simply extended already existing mechanisms and problems. Information and uncertainty are very much the watchwords of our day.

We have moved away from the debates as to whether the universe is stable or unstable, discrete or continuous, since the terms of those arguments prove an oversimplification ill-suited to a reality indexed on complexity of relations. Even in the territorial disputes in philosophy as to whether a philosophy of becoming represents chaos and catastrophic uncertainty seem like anachronistic fear-mongering when it is entirely possible that we can have both a universe of perpetual, somewhat deregulated unfolding without insisting on first terms that fixate on the equilibrium of Being where stability is in effect the exhaustion of potentiality. It is neither an issue of stability or instability, but of a dynamism between the two, manifest in micro- and macro-levels as so eloquently put forth by Prigogine and Stengers. Our level of understanding, courtesy of paradigm-shattering developments in physics and mathematics in the last century, is far more complex as it is refined with attention paid to manifolds and phase-shifts, quantum mechanics and mathematical topology.

Change, difference, growth, complexity, fluidity, dynamics, and the uncertain: these are what interest me, and they do so at a specifically philosophical level as particular problems and areas of fecund investigation. I have chosen to approach the questions of information and crisis from a metaphysical perspective, making only a very open and modest attempt to build another room in an already large and impressive edifice. Many years ago someone was surprised by a remark I had written: "no one's metaphysics has ever hurt anyone–at least not directly." The statement can easily be interpreted as a defensive means of protecting my engagement with metaphysics as an innocuous and safe pursuit, a celibate preoccupation that concerns itself only with abstractions. I did not mean to suggest that programs built from a misunderstanding of metaphysics and hastily applied in revised form to political and social agendas have not led to catastrophe, the death of millions, and the impoverishment and destitution of many more millions. Speculation enjoys the freedom that application does not given the concrete constraints that application demands. I still believe in the remark today, although for different reasons. When I first wrote it during the very preliminary steps to describing meta-state and metastasis, I was taking a defensive posture; today, I see it as a necessary guarantee of freedom and invention.

In 2010 and 2011, I was appointed to teach a first-year course on information. It was probably then that I truly discovered that, despite every ounce of confidence one can summon up to convey something informative about information, its multiple connotations present a vertiginous field that leaves one scrambling for the proverbial punchline to the joke, "what is information?"

This book emerges as a culmination of interests and studies performed that share a common bond even if their objectives were disparate. My preoccupation with a concentrated study on metastasis necessarily "metastasized" in the domain of information theory where I can say I still feel more a tourist than a citizen. My adoration of Deleuze's philosophy happens to be one of the possible prejudices I should note in this "ad lectorem," and I do not think there will come a time when my apprenticeship to his concepts will be at an end. I should also clarify that I am not an oncologist, a biologist, a computer scientist, nor a mathematician, and so my use of these disciplines and the

possible errors or imprecision that may arise in my use of their terminology remain my own.

July, 2013

[1]

This is further problematized when we take Deleuze on his own versus Deleuze and Guattari. For an excellent overview of that problem, see Levi Bryant's book, Difference and Givenness.

From:
http://filosofias.es/wiki/ - **filosofias.es**

Permanent link:
http://filosofias.es/wiki/doku.php/proyectos/tfg/bibliografia/faucher2013

Last update: **2018/03/11 17:12**