

Rehabilitating Postmodern Informivorism

an incomplete pataphysic sortie



Chapter 11: Rehabilitating PostModern Informivorism

alone, or Johnson's assertion that their incipient ideas were arising in a state similar to what physicists call superposition; or to use Heisenberg's term, a state of measurable "uncertainty". This lack of resolution was leaving them in the predicament Zen masters describe as akin to having a very meaningful dream, but having no capacity at all to even begin thinking it out into a set of tangible dualistic conceptuals, much the less into sets of sensible sentences. These are Johnson's "incubatable protean ideas," unspeakably underdeveloped.

Secondarily they had ideas which were clearly defined in certain aspects, but unfinished, uncertain, and undefined in other parts. Both narrative literature, and especially poetry, often feature sentences and paragraphs which progress nicely from start to finish, but have some lumps in important places, where meaning may break down completely: incomprehensible semantics, black crossout, damaged page, etc. Johnson's other examples reference instances, where words of a certain set contain more or less translucent semantics, rather than opaque, and combine to form fadey and suggestive abstractions with putative meanings which, like Heisenberg's quons, can be approximately located, but resist being pinned down with any certainty.

As various contemporary theorists remind us, all "texts" (in the broadest sense of PostModern deconstructionist connotation: including literature, painting and all other arts, histories, social theories, cultural movements, and viral memes, etc.), invite disassembly and interpretation of various sorts; depending both on the history and intentions of the observer, and on the degrees of interpretational freedom inherent in the text (plausible shades of representational meaning, etc.) Consider Cubist theorists, collaging newspaper texts into their paintings; and consider the collage of pages from old books framed up as two-dimensional visual art; i.e. integration of diverse "texts".

Post-Freudian analysts of course have demonstrated that the main meanings of any narrative or "text", of whatever sort, may be obscured simply by pure vagueness; but as well by non-obvious symbolism originating in obscure layers of back-burnered mental processes. The Surrealists contrived to focus primarily on that.

As Sapiens so quickly became Informivorous during the warm Holocene, the information consumed in an average lifetime evolved from minimal to overwhelming. The current hominid data consumption is truly astonishing. Attention spans perforce have shrunk accordingly; books are now read by quickly scanning over a page here, and then a page there. Books with several pages struggle to out-compete ten-second viral memes. And the bricolaged single-page PostModern book is the new ponderous tome.

Contemporary French philosophers and theorists are prone to the words *bricoleur* and *bricolage*: the actor and the action of creating things by tinkering with dissimilar parts with unrelated histories. PostModern architecture (Jencks etc.) is bricolage. Some Dorian columns, a tatami floor, a stud-and-gypboard wall, with a Mansard roof, for example; all contrived together architecturally is PostModern bricolage. Isn't this redolent of information overload and severely truncated attention spans? It should be no surprise that all "texts" in the PostModern milieu would lean towards bricolage: painting, literature, music, philosophy, critical theory, etc. Coherence of the dissimilar or the irrational is contrived. But then egalitarian contrived coherence is the contemporary style des temps.

Anyone raising an eyebrow at contrived coherence is reminded that Heisenberg's Uncertainty in physical systems, and Gödel's Incompleteness of information systems, reveal coherence to be relative and illusory to start with; all coherence is fundamentally contrived. PostModernism's uncertainties and checkered bricolages are fundamentally just resolving a finer focus on the natural state of things. PostModernism's empirical demonstrations reveal certainty, completeness, and coherence within any system to be fundamentally contrived.

The fly in the ointment, of course, is Baudrillard's Simulacrum. Regardless of how this knackered simulacrum has simultaneously vitiated surreptitious perquisites accruing seriatim to western Positivist algorithms in the non-