

27th March 2024, *hypertext I*

syntropic rhizomes / forest

by *deep blue*

themes: network, rhizome, arborescence

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<https://syntropyinstitute.net/syntropic-rhizomes/>

>web

the symbol ‘>’ indicates a plateau, a *region of intensity*. multiple plateaus form a rhizome, in the same way that nodes form a net.¹

¹ “Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.”

Deleuze & Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*

when language is monitored, it can’t breathe. in order to free language, the symbol ‘>’ attempts to give centre stage to the totality of a word, to its inherent breath.

‘>’ aims to deconstruct the language it operates on, beginning with its capitalisation.

[>click](#) ² *link to next plateau*



Kawase Hasui, Benten Pond, 1929.

>click

everywhere we look, systems move between singularity and multiplicity.

beginning in one fixed point, they develop strings (<). like a muscle, the strings converge at a second point (>).

biological life, for instance, begins in a singular cell that splits itself, developing structure and complexity. once an organism reaches the stage of procreation, a new singularity is created.

given the constant stream of evolution, there is no clearly distinguishable 'first human'. yet, there may be a 'last human' at the end of time.

it would be Atropos, last of the three fates, to cut the last human's thread. the strings connect, then disappear. for a single moment, the cosmos is silent.

you get to choose. two paths entwined like serpents dance, to summon luck, to change the chance.

>eros ³ the word eros, from gr. ἔρως, denotes desire and love.

>thanatos ⁴ from gr. θάνατος, death.

>eros

“From the bosom of the infinite deeps of Erebus sprang the graceful Eros with his glittering golden wings”

Aristophanes, *Birds*

the word eros, from gr. ἔρως, denotes desire and love. eros represents life-drive.

eros can also be interpreted as ‘lack’, or as a desire for ‘that which is missing’. we desire that which is missing, but once we obtain it, we find that the lack is not gone.

we desire *desire* itself. because we can never achieve it, we repeat the failure of desire. we are desiring machines, designed to keep failing. failing machines become *obsolete* and die.

eros, then, appears to us at once as a drive toward reproduction and as a drive toward self-destruction. it seems to represent our life-drive, but it comes to represent our death-drive. the chariot of eros, ejaculation, is the chariot of thanatos, ‘la petite mort’.

as eros accelerates, its interplay with thanatos speeds up. eros becomes *hypereros*. this is most visible in the digital, where the search for beauty is accelerated. the search for beauty is also the search for a *lack* of ugliness.

digital applications are cybernetic applications to the desiring machine. we apply hypereros to ourselves, only to realize that our death drive is accelerated.

you chose life, eros, but ended in death, thanatos. the choice I had given you was no choice.

you desire choice as long as you don’t have it.

[>thanatos](#) 4

>thanatos

from gr. θάνατος, death. in Greek mythology, thanatos is the personification of death.

in psychoanalysis, thanatos represents our death-drive. for Sigmund Freud, “immortal thanatos is in battle with immortal eros”.

when we connect eros and thanatos semantically, we create a link, a nexus. syntactically, the symbol “is” represents the nexus (x is y).

we denote this semantic relationship between the two constituents as ‘<>’, replacing “is”.

the constituents point to each other. unidirectionality becomes bi-directionality. the direction of language is reversed, the dot vanishes...

eros <> thanatos

eros and thanatos are linked.

a link is also a *split*, since a link requires two *separate* constituents that can be linked. the split between eros and thanatos is our first cutting asunder.

but this cut does not divide. we have cut a glass pearl in two, only to realize that one half is mirrored in the other, that the pearl stays whole.



Caravaggio, *Narcissus*, 1597-1599.

in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a spirit in a lake shows Narcissus his own reflection. Narcissus sees pure tautology, I=I.

in Hindiusm, the experience of self-identity, “I=I”, translates to the vision of Brahman in the *Upanishads*, in which the subject realises that all is Brahman, and that even the soul of the self, Atman, is a reflection of Brahman.

the nymph *Echo* had fallen in love with Narcissus, but cursed by Hera, she had lost her voice and could only *echo* his words back.

cursed by Nemesis to undergo the same fate as Echo, and to suffer under unreciprocated love, Narcissus was made to fall in love with his reflection. cursed with eros, he was caught in his own *echo*.

eros had led him into the water, where thanatos waited for him. at the spot where he fell, a flower was born, the narcissus. Narcissus had lost his name, his capitalisation.²

² “The lake was silent for some time. finally, it said: I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected.”

Wilde



John William Waterhouse, *Echo and Narcissus*, 1903.

[>union](#) ⁵

>union

from lat. *unus*, one. also, lat. ‘a single pearl’.

to climb this plateau, we have brought together eros and thanatos.

for that purpose, we first separated and defined them. we determined that eros is a force that joins two things together, while thanatos is a force that splits one thing into two. we found that eros is union, and that thanatos is disunion.

having made this distinction, we reconciled eros and thanatos. we made them into reflections of a whole. this is the *union of union and disunion*.

in his early theological writings, the 19th-century German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel writes, “life cannot be regarded as union or relation alone but must be regarded as opposition as well. [...] I would have to say: life is the union of union and nonunion”.

a similar idea unfolds in Hegel’s first system of thought, his pantheism of love. for Hegel, the essence of love laid in its ability to overcome all differentiation and all contradiction, precisely because love entailed everything.³

3 “What is love? It is not simply compassion, not simply kindness. In compassion there are two: the one who suffers and the one who feels compassion. In kindness there are two: the one who gives and the one who receives. But in love there is only one; the two join, unite, become inseparable. The I and the you vanish. To love means to lose oneself in the beloved.”
Kazantzakis, *Saint Francis*

[>energy](#) 6

>energy

the total energy of a system may be described as the sum of entropic and syntropic energy.

[>entropy](#) 7 entropy represents the tendency from structure to chaos,
from order to disorder.

[>syntropy](#) 8 syntropy corresponds to life-drive.

>entropy

“for what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun?”
Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

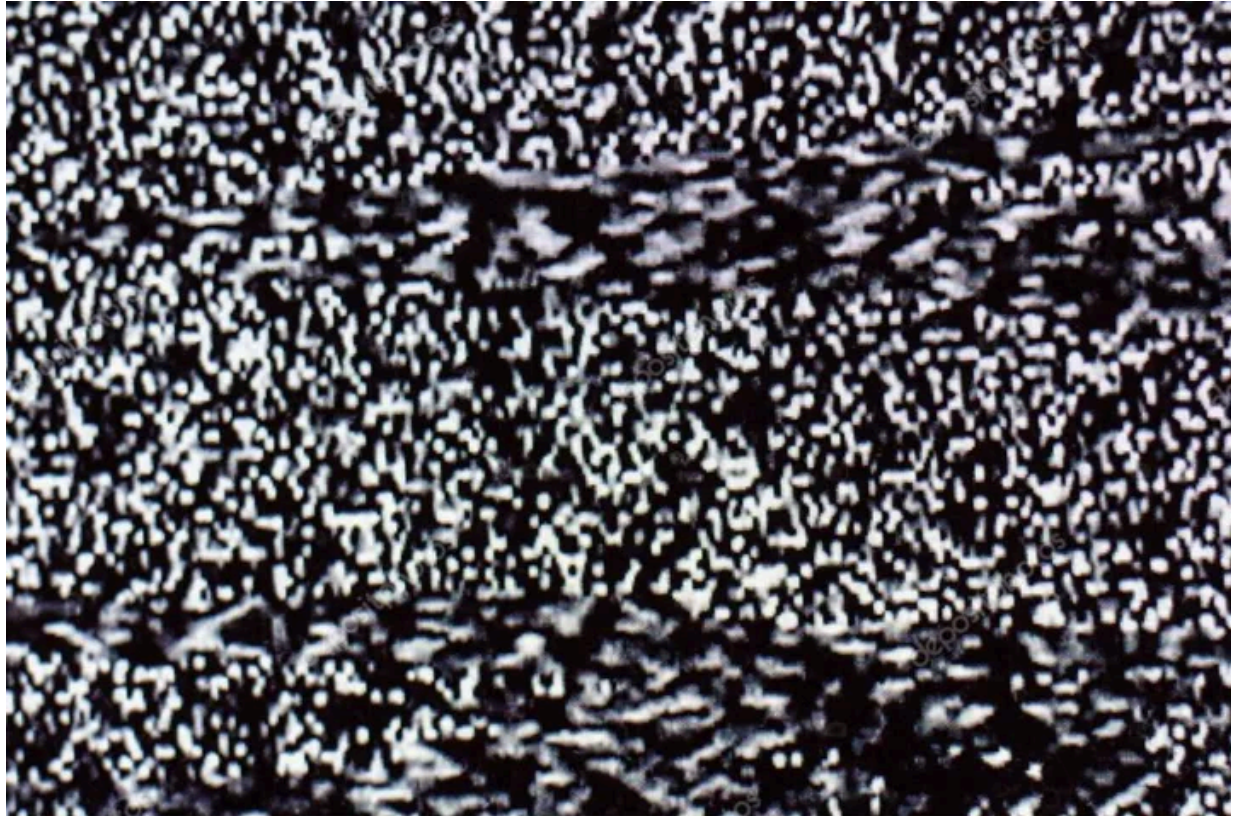
entropy represents the tendency from structure to chaos, from order to disorder. ‘entropy’ is a diverging tendency, from *en-*, “apart”, and *trópos* “a turn, change”.

entropy signifies the archetypal process of one becoming two, of a system drifting apart. it is the gradual decline into disorder ending in the heat death of the universe. entropy corresponds to thanatos, disunion, and death drive.

the movement of entropy is related to that of the butterfly effect, according to which a single flutter of a butterfly’s wing can raise a typhoon, “<”.

in information theory, a system with increasing entropy goes toward higher information. the 'noise' of the system increases and is expressed as movement, heat, and randomness.

picture a television screen showing a particular image. if one were to subject the image to entropy, the sharp image would disintegrate.



white noise

the second law of thermodynamics states that the entropy count must rise within a closed system. this means that heat disperses across the system, leading to thermodynamic equilibrium.

among others, the thermodynamicist Ilya Prigogine pointed to a line of flight, describing the possibility of a spontaneous reversal of entropy.

[>syntropy](#) 8

>syntropy

syntropy corresponds to life-drive.

'syntropy', from *syn-*, together, and *-trópos*, "a turn, a change", is a coalescing tendency from chaos towards order, complexity, and organisation.

it can be described as the driving force behind the gradual complexification of consciousness and the unfolding of novelty.

syntropy is a converging tendency, joining two into one. in information theory, a system with higher syntropy goes toward lower information. the symbol of syntropic coalescence is ‘>’.

syntropic systems resist collapse by drawing order from external energy sources, e.g. ecosystems drawing energy from the sun.

systems of language consist of noise, chaos. when a word is added to define an object, information and entropy increase.

also called negative entropy or *negentropy*, syntropy reduces entropic noise. in the absence of the entropic word, syntropy is silence, inertia.



Hirō Isono, untitled. tristes tropiques...

syntropy is opposed to entropic heat death, and its result is a state of cryostasis. as a syntropic system compresses and contracts, its temperature decreases.

this movement is related to the 'big crunch' hypothesis, according to which the universe collapses upon itself after an initial 'big bang' stage.

if the study of entropy-regulated systems is called thermodynamics (from gr. *thermós*, hot), the study of syntropy-regulated systems may be called "cryodynamics" (from gr. *krúos*, ice).

as the temperature of a syntropic system decreases, it crystallizes. a singular iceflower blooms, containing the compressed universe.

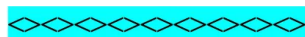
the metaphor of the iceflower contains the fragility and transience of syntropic structures. it also applies to the entropy/syntropy relation on the level of social systems.

in *The Neganthropocene*, Bernard Stiegler imagined a hypothetical age of syntropy in which entropy is reversed.

syntropic techniques, for Stiegler, are techniques to reverse the destructive entropy of our current age, the 'Entropocene', which is characterized by ever-accelerating social and environmental issues.

in *Escaping the Anthropocene*, he writes: "The Anthropocene is unsustainable: it is a massive and high-speed process of destruction operating on a planetary scale, and its current direction must be reversed. The question and the challenge of the Anthropocene is therefore the 'Neganthropocene'." (Stiegler, 2015).

in the vedic canon, the universe undergoes perpetual cycles of creation and destruction. this 'pulse of the universe' is visualized in the cosmic dance of Shiva.



butterfly, caught in a dream...

[>eschaton](#) 9

>eschaton

from gr. *éskhaton*, the 'last thing'.

the concept of the eschaton represents the finality of a system. every web must end, every string dissolve.

however, in finding the last thing, *eschaton*, we have also found the first thing, *proton*.

a link into the past. the line bends, the serpent bites its tail.

[<web>](#) 1

text becomes *hypertext*.

[>cyberspace](#) 10

>cyberspace

the first hypertext project came into existence in 1960. it was the seminal *Project Xanadu*, in which Ted Nelson attempted to create an infinite digital library.

Xanadu was designed to be infinite through a built-in system of reference: documents would have *links* that would refer the reader to a different document. Nelson proposed the term *hypertext* in 1963.

in 1989, while working at CERN, Tim Berners-Lee developed the World Wide Web. it was a global system of pages accessed via HTTP, 'hypertext transfer protocols'. this was its first page: <https://info.cern.ch/>.

the early implementations of hypertext were built on ideas that were inherited and reinterpreted. first, in 1941, Jorge Luis Borges' *Garden of Forking Paths* (1941) explored the possibility of an infinitely branching and converging labyrinth of symbols. second, in 1945, Vannevar Bush published his seminal essay *As We May Think*.

Bush describes a potential future society in which information is stored in memory machines, which he called *memex* (memory-extension). this anticipated the emergence of complex cybernetic devices by decades.

a plateau is precisely a *memex*, an "enlarged intimate supplement to the memory" that functions as a cybernetic implant. plateaus are neurological prostheses to the cyborg self: subject and media mold each other in feedback loops.

in 1980, Deleuze and Guattari published *A Thousand Plateaus*, further laying the philosophical foundation for the internet. they proposed the 'rhizome', an underground system of stems, without beginnings or endings, in which every point, or plateau, could be connected to every other point.

in the tradition of Buddhism and Hinduism, the equivalent to a non-linear rhizome is *Indra's net*, an infinitely large net that reflects itself in every point.

hypertext mirrors the structure of the human mind. if the mind is a web of synaptic connections, a plateau represents a single point in Indra's mind.

[>amnesia](#) 11

>amnesia

gedankenverloren

the loss of memory. from *a-*, 'not', and gr. *mneme* 'memory'.

amnesia, forgetting, is the counterprinciple to *anamnesis*, the *gaining back* of memory.

for Plato, there existed a layer of reality which he described as the 'world soul', in which the idea of beauty was known. while it would be forgotten at birth, it could then be remembered during life, 're-cognized'.

amnesia may be described as the entropic process of synaptic breakdown. our memories return to the world soul, and the neuronal complex (from *com-* 'together' and *-plex* 'woven') unwinds itself.

anamnesis may then be described as the syntropic process of synaptogenesis, through which the neuronal complex maintains its structure.

you are remembering the web, for you are its weaver.

[>anamnesis](#) 12

>anamnesis



Kushu, digital collage, 2024.

the entropic desert expands. ecological structures, structures of life, are increasingly disintegrated through entropic processes. syntropic agroforestry represents a possible counter-movement.

the second law of thermodynamics states that the entropy count within a system must rise, but this law only applies to closed systems. the earth is an open system, as it receives energy from the sun.

entropy also affects the psyche. if entropy and information increase while neurological capacity stays the same, memory-systems collapse.

we may develop ways of retaining and protecting memory. this could be called 'psychological reforestation'.

[>tree](#) 13

>tree

in computer science, a tree is a hierarchical and linear data structure that contains a set of interlinked nodes.

in its form, the structure of this text has tree-like features. it follows a linear path that begins in a root node, namely ">web". it progresses linearly, through *arborescent thinking*, branching on and on. its current depth would be "13".

yet, ">web" develops a non-linear narrative. it follows Deleuze and Guattari's *rhizomatic thinking*, in which a set of plateaus are connected non-linearly and form a *rhizome*.

as a result, the model of the tree is not sufficient to describe this structure. rather, each plateau symbolizes an individual tree, standing amidst other trees.

a forest is defined as a set of disjoint trees. since the web contains a set of disjoint plateaus, the web represents a forest of plateaus.

es träumt der wald einen tiefen traum.



Hirō Isono: *Secret of Mana*, 1993.

the end is not the only bloom. ⁴

⁴ “A special button transfers him immediately to the first page of the index.”

Vannevar Bush, *As We May Think*

[<seed>](#)

[>index](#)

>index

>web¹ >click² >eros³ >thanatos⁴ >union⁵ >energy⁶ >entropy⁷ >syntropy⁸
>eschaton⁹ >cyberspace¹⁰ >amnesia¹¹ >anamnesis¹² >tree¹³

“to brush over everything, to make everything anew...”

>snow *hypertext II, artificial anamnesis*