

## The Allure of Machinic Life

### Chapter 2 The In-mixing of Machines: Cybernetics and Psychoanalysis

楊乃女

#### A. Introduction

- a. the emergence of a new kind of liminal machine, “which was associated with life, inasmuch as it exhibited many of the behaviors that characterize living entities—homeostasis, self-directed action, adaptability, and reproduction” (1)
- b. the purpose of ALife: “In strong theories of ALife these machines are understood not simply to *simulate* life but to *realize* it, by instantiating and actualizing its fundamental principles in another medium or material substrate” (1; Johnston’s emphasis).
- c. the influence of cybernetics: “The conceptual reorientation this requires—that is, thinking in terms of the complexity of automata, whether natural or artificial, rather than in terms of a natural biological hierarchy—is part of the legacy of cybernetics” (2)
- d. the definition of life: the rigid oppositions like organic versus nonorganic gives way to “sliding scales based on complexity of organization and adaptability” (3)

#### B. Cybernetics and Psychoanalysis

- a. Lacan’s encounter with cybernetics
  - (a) the second seminar: redefinition of the ego, distinguishing between the symbolic and the imaginary orders (68)
    - (b) a new notion of the machine: no longer relying on any particular form of material embodiment, the new concept and revolutionary concept of machine consists in **computability** (69)
    - (c) abstract machines: “their functions are not defined by the specific behavior of the materials from which they are constructed; rather, this behavior is used to physically instantiate a symbol system with its own independent rules or syntax” (71).
    - (d) the operation of the symbolic order as a machine
      - \* the ego and consciousness (71)
      - \* what is the ego? (73)
      - \* a symbolic regulation of the encounter of two machines, each one jammed on the image of the other (73)
      - \* two kinds of repetition: restitution (homeostasis) and repetition (the death drive)
- b. The Machination of the Subject
  - (a) the encoding of the real in the symbolic order
    - \* the autonomy and self-organization of the symbolic order (77)
    - \* within this play of the symbol, the subject will always find his or her place (78)
  - (b) “it is the symbolic order’s encoding of the real in numbers, that allows the recording and integration of data, which in turn gives rise to a syntax of different combinatorial possibilities” (79)

- c. Computational Media: A New Discourse Network
  - (a) the correspondence of Lacan's triple registers of the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic to the separations of technical media, that is, gramophone, film, and typewriter (81)
  - (b) Lacan's concept of the machine reflects the contemporary conditions of mediality (82)
- d. Language and Finite-State Automata
  - (a) the symbolic order as a finite-state automaton: the autonomy of the symbolic function
  - (b) natural language
- e. A Conjectural Science Redefines the Real
  - (a) the relationship of cybernetics to the real (91-92)
  - (b) a symbolic order is emerged when the real is tied to a syntax (93)
  - (c) the autonomization of the symbol, that is its being set free from the constraints of nature, is at the heart of the symbolic function and its relationship to the real (94)
  - (d) it is in and through numbers that nonbeing comes to be (96)
- f. Playing against a Machine
  - \*Lacan: "The question of knowing whether the machine is human or not is evidently well decided: it is not. But it's also a matter of knowing if the human, in the sense in which you understand it, is all so human as that (319).