

us. But if my designing and your designing are tolerated only as long as they will not attempt to influence the designing of society, and if "our design", on the level of society, is just a euphemism for the emphasis given the collection of designs that prevent the designing of society, then the joke is on us, and the joke is on you, and the joke is on me, day after day, precisely whenever we hope for, and sometimes make, designs that could influence the design of society.

As it now is, in society, my designing flounders and withers; your designing, too; and our designs are continuously stuck in a design that thwarts your every attempt to design society, time, after time, after time. It is this problem, I understand, which is addressed by your call to design society.

I want to suggest a corollary for one of Ashby's laws: Any increase of control in a system, without an increase of control over the design of the system, either leads to the progressive elimination of alternatives or leads to catastrophic instability. In other words, if I want to increase control but prevent changes in design, I must either eliminate more and more alternatives or watch the system commit suicide. So where does the cybernetician stand: Helping to gain control over the design process of society? Or helping to increase control in society without changing the design of society?

When I imagine the working of the "socially beneficial information processor", I have a notion, at least, where the cybernetician could stand, and I can imagine being in the presence of a state of affairs that I desire.

I want to confront an image of the existing state of formulating desires, and I want to watch that image as it changes, develops, and is transformed. In our present society, many desires are abandoned or concealed, especially whenever the chance for their fulfillment seems slight; and to even admit to having desires is considered a loss of status. This image would change and be transformed dramatically when everyone involved with the "socially beneficial information processor" becomes actively involved in declaring their desires, and the fear of doing just that dwindles to nothing. Whoever wants to conceal a desire merely refrains from declaring it. But such persons would lack the power to lure others into a state of muteness of desire, and would, of course, also forego the opportunity of having their desires heeded. SBIP could, thus, create conditions in which closet desires could come out.

My first entry into SBIP would be a list of my desires in order of their priority; my second entry would be a list of questions:

What is the existing range of formulated desires?