

Being present to yourself on tape is not simply a matter of "seeing" yourself doing this or that—it is a neural phenomenon. This is a perception that McLuhan repeatedly tried to get across, especially to those who thought the difference between film and TV was only a matter of scale. TV is no more a visual medium because you see an image, than perfume is a visual because you can see it in the bottle. Electricity is an extension of the central nervous system. The TV image is an electric image, that "imbues the soulskin . . . sob consciously". It is like a pointillist painting—dots on a screen, similar to the points on the body known to the practitioners of acupuncture. As the hands relate to working clay, so the nervous system properly responds to the video mosaic through a "Lekton dance".\* The basic motif of the dance is participation through imitation or converse response to the image. Variations become increasingly possible as one comes to know one's own and others' repertory of neural gestalts.

"Putting on" the body of another through imitation of video image opens up the possibility of cybernetic acupuncture as a mode of stabilizing intimacy, as opposed to mutual crucifixion. Rather than a professional interpreting the bodies' pathology in terms of an abstract cosmology and piercing the nervous system to achieve homeostasis, it becomes possible to share psychic stability through an electric intercoupling of nerve nets. Patterning complementary neural gestalts, is, of course, a delicate procedure and requires proper mapping of the "relevant informational pathways", of which the "selves" are part. Any form of "standing outside self", of ecstasy such as this, needs the objective correlative of proper mapping if the system is to maintain homeostasis. This does not mean an abdication of uniqueness. Bateson, in discussing the relations between members of Alcoholics Anonymous and the "power greater than themselves", has the following passage critical to an understanding of cybernetic acupuncture.

*"This Power is felt to be personal and to be intimately linked with each person. It is "God as you understand him to be". Cybernetically speaking, "my" relation to any larger system around me and including other things and persons will be different from "your" relation to some similar system around you. The relation "Part of" must necessarily and logically always be complementary but the meaning of the phrase "part of" will be different for every person. This difference will be especially important in systems containing more than one person. The system or "power" must necessarily appear different from where each person sits. Moreover, it is expectable that such systems, when they encounter each other, will recognize each other as systems in this sense. The "beauty" of the woods through which I walk is my recognition both of the individual trees and of the total ecology of the woods as systems. A similar esthetic recognition is still more striking when I talk with another person."*

From "The Cybernetics of 'Self': A Theory of Alcoholism," by Gregory Bateson as printed in *PSYCHIATRY*, Feb., 1971, 35:1-18.

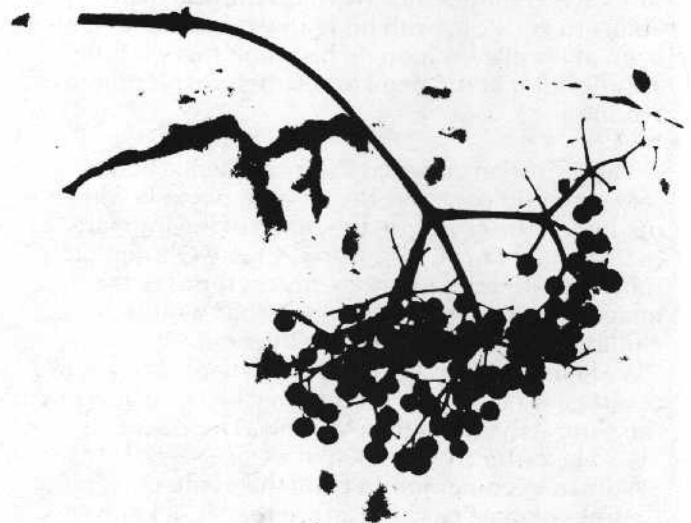
\*Lekton—"that in the mind like a fist in the hand." See Avery Johnson's article "Infolding Paul Ryan" *Radical Software* #4, Summer 1971.

Given the syntax of kleinform, any "part" consciously participates in the process of balancing the whole through moving in complementary modes of containing, being contained or being uncontained. The aggregate of "parts contained" provides the system with the needed redundancy set.

In Thom's terms, we can be "figures of regulation" for each other within greater "figures of regulation". The limits of this procedure, simultaneously self-referencing and participatory, seem to be in the mutual knowledge of one's own and others' unique Lekton language. Kleinform can provide stable closed mappings of the particular system within which corridors this electric intercoupling might take place. Proper mappings are necessary, otherwise pathology contains pathology in subjectively self-correcting inspin. Proper mapping can insure a synapse of Lektons that include the signal system of "pain" in an ecstasy that converts with appropriate electric figures of regulation.

This putting on of another's pathology or disequilibrium to heal is not new. It is the traditional role of the shamen in tribal society. As anthropologist Ted Carpenter points out, the electric rock music of today enables musicians to take on the role of shamen. Elvis Presley put on for purging the most characteristic pathology of the late fifties. The pitch of the head, the slurred speech, the roll of the eyes and the body movements were quite similar to those found in any patient in a mental hospital suffering from catatonic schizophrenia.

Currently Joe Cocker bodily puts on what McLuhan calls the "spastic search for feedback" of a world crucified by its own meaningless industrial hardware. Working with the driving power of the rock music, Cocker shatters the hardware hold into rhythms of released fullness. Similarly, in what might have been a complex double bind crisis, I have known the cross to dissolve into ecstatic gestalts of cybernetic acupuncture.



Excerpted from *Birth and Death and Cybernation: Cybernetics of the Sacred* by Paul Ryan. Gordon and Breach, New York. To be published in April, 1972.