

LONDON

metalogues.

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Metalogues are a series of conversation pieces based on exchanges between the anthropologist and cybernetician Gregory Bateson and his daughter Mary Catherine Bateson while she was still at a young age. Presented as a part of the introduction to his book *Steps Towards an Ecology of the Mind*, (1972) the conversation pieces instigate a meta-level that relate the structure of the piece to the subject matter while it serves as an educational model for both Bateson and his daughter. We have applied this format here because the metalogue also represents a meta-patriarchal structure in the production of knowledge.

CONTEXT: She is putting the pen to the paper but she is incapable of writing anything – the underlying reason is that what she finally will commit to the page will be published.

The fear of public humiliation and the fear of failure is described as an experience of temporary paralysis that undermines ones ability to and even mere attempts at trying to perform. The phobia is common, and it is often so strong that it brings about the very failure that was feared.

the metalogue:

DAUGHTER: Why do I feel like a failure?

FATHER: Well, in an economy based on productivity, feelings of failure are common.

DAUGHTER: What is productivity?

FATHER: Productivity can be the effect of physical work, and it can also be the making of profitable connections between different people and things. What is central to the idea of productivity is the concept of labour power as a physical and psychic source of energy that can be valued and exchanged as a commodity.

DAUGHTER: Do you mean there is a relationship between failure and productivity?

FATHER: That's right, progress is the key to capitalistic society – if you fail to be productive you're generally not seen as successful.

DAUGHTER: So if I'm not doing anything I'm not a part of society and there is no way for me to be successful?

FATHER: In a way – but its not as straightforward as that.

DAUGHTER: I'm confused...

FATHER: ...That is because there are various counter-productive elements in attempts to be productive, and the drive towards productivity can also be the trigger for contra-productivity. Progress always performs a double bind. *(see reverse)

DAUGHTER: Does that mean that it is possible to be a failure and a success at the same time?

FATHER: Yes and no, it means that feelings of failure are part of establishing productivity as an ideology because human capability and potential are defined according to these principles.

"If all is underlined, nothing is underlined."

What strikes me as a beautiful clinging on to interactions of an analogue past is the traces of furtive underlining of text that can be found in numerous library books. Thick blue ballpoint pen lines, fluorescent blocks, thin squiggly pencil lines – each line attempting to lure you away from studious activity by evoking an aura of the books' previous reader, that allusively guides you along the way. Those that allow such divergent side-tracking and are receptive to it, will know of the potential that lies here in the possibilities for meta-narrative.

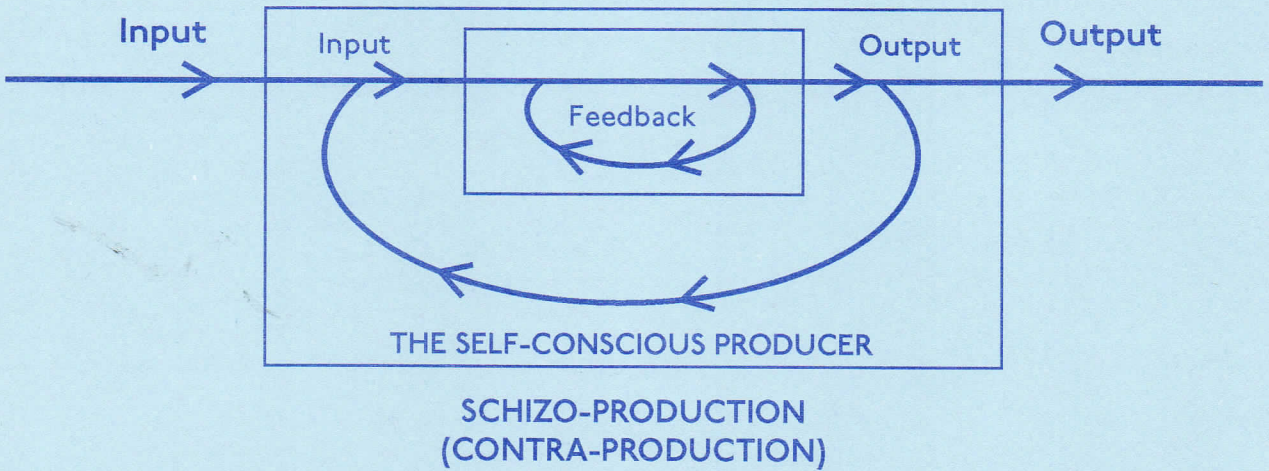
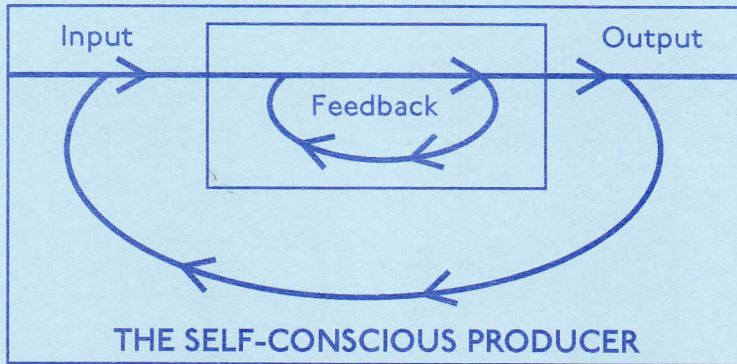
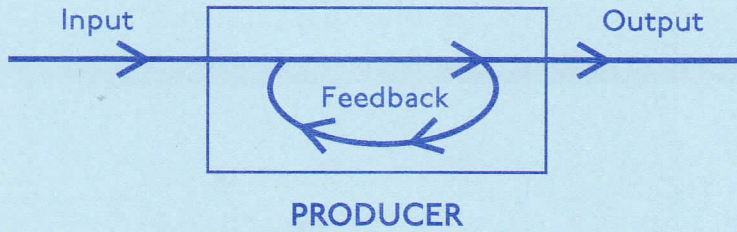
On the other hand, if you are not the type for whom such possibilities incline to constant and diverting distractions, you will undoubtedly find yourself disturbed by the effects caused by the underlining of text in library books. These notations are bound to literally delineate your flow of reading in an uncontrollable manner, and whatever concern or point of study the underliner had when underlining, you will have to give in to the fact that it is bound to become yours as well.

Consequently fragmenting and reassembling the authors' intentions to a more efficient body, perhaps it is these extracted parts that actually are the most read part of a book. The underlined becomes that what you are tempted to believe is the important stuff – someone, after all, has done the toilsome work of going through the text before you.

Through the appearance of such a side-tracking effect and the possibilities for meta-narrative I would like to address the underlining of text in shared books as a form wherein the terms 'productivity' and 'contra-productivity' meet; here, one man's productivity forms another's contra-productivity and vice-versa... Perhaps as a model it provides a comprehensive example to illustrate the relevance of contra-productivity in production?

Marlie Mul is an artist whose practice deals with the conceptions that lie behind such terms as 'making', 'process' or 'innovation', to thereby pose questions in relation to skill and autonomy in artistic production. By doing so, she addresses art in relation to value, art as the production of production itself, or art in the prevalent situation wherein time spent on making is a non-value. She is also a graduate of the AA MA Architecture Histories & Theories, a First Year HTS and Media Studies tutor, & co-initiator of the online publishing platform www.xym.no.

Sidsel Meineche Hansen is an artist & researcher who recently obtained her MA from the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths in London. Here she examined the role of models (conceptual, architectural, scientific, and diagrams) as tools in designing or translating the relations between material and immaterial culture. In her current work titled 'Towards a Physiological Novel' she is considering the production of noise & nervousness via critical, scientific and fictional accounts of how information is embodied and consumed in current society.



* Double binds are often applied as a means of control that by use of confusion makes them both difficult to respond to and to dismantle. This means that it is easier to perform or illustrate the double bind as a mechanism rather than having to explain it. The term Double Bind came out of

Gregory Bateson's research on schizophrenia.

He describes the Double Bind as a conflict that arises when an individual receives two contradicting messages. The two messages cannot both be true which means that one has to reveal or identify the other. This places the individual in a dilemma.

The individual will attempt to decode and respond to the messages but the logic of the double bind (similar to a catch 22) is that neither confirmation nor negation exists as a part of this system.

The first two diagrams shown here were used by Bateson and his colleagues to illustrate first and second

order cybernetics – we have used the setup of his original diagram but have replaced the words 'engineer' and 'anthropologists' with the word 'producer'.

The third diagram is our own creation in an attempt to illustrate what a paradigm of contra-productive production would look like.