

occupy, cybernetics, social transformations jLombardi@jlombardi.net, Winter 2012

After four months of being involved in occupy Baltimore as a participant, video-ethnographer and facilitator at General Assembly (GA) meetings, I think (we) need an alternative premise to the old paradigms that guide our thinking, language and doing. Cybernetics offers me a way of thinking about different ways of thinking that might be helpful in this endeavor.

[Why cybernetics](#)

cybernetics is not success oriented, it is resource oriented
cybernetics is not interested in causes, it is interested in constraints
cybernetics is not about perfection, it is about how one thing flows into another

Cybernetics is distinguished by the questions it asks:

How can [peace as a need](#) satisfy tension and conflicts?
When is listening for anomalies relevant to performance?
How as a unity might (we) design (our) Desires (not goals)?
Is there a self-organization that entails a unity other than one?
When is conversation a form for composing social transformation?

I will generate responses for each question based on my experiences through my studies of cybernetics. *Cybernetics a way of thinking about ways of thinking and languaging about what one knows.*

How can peace as a need satisfy our tensions, conflicts, and differences?

At the core of the occupy movement is the GA, usually run by a [consensus model](#) in favor of a horizontal rather than hierarchical decision-making processes. Consensus model is designed to encourage participation by all present which opens space for differences, tensions and conflict to emerge.

Then what?

When attending General Assemblies I regularly notice that when conflicts emerge many participants appear to want to cease the moment rather than seize the moment as an opportunity for conversation. I think avoiding our differences, the tensions and conflicts that coincide with them, is problematic to the GA process and to the occupy movement overall. So I make the following offer. (Note, for each segment below there is a video link on the left that coincides with the statement on the right.)

When addressing Occupy Wall Street (OWS) Angela Davis asked:

"How can we be together? How can we be together in a community that respects and celebrates the differences among us? How can we be together in a unity that is not simplistic, that is not oppressive, BUT rather complex and emancipatory? Our unity must be complex and emancipatory."

[OCCUPY MOVEMENT](#)

She evoked the words of the Black, Lesbian, Feminist Audre Lorde:

"Differences must not be merely tolerated BUT seen as a fund of polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic."

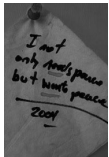
How do (we) change our attitudes toward conflict and tension so that they may become dialectic opportunities for addressing our differences? One possible alternative: peace is a need

In order to understand this alternative way for thinking about peace it might be useful distinguish needs from wants and desires.

NEEDS if not met, I won't need them anymore, I'll be dead. Needs are cyclical conditions that have to be met so that they can happen again and again. For example, hunger has to be met by food. Tiredness has to be met by sleep. Thirst has to be met by drink. What if peace were a need? It would have to be met with our conflicts.

WANTS even though I want it I will survive without it, although I prefer not to live without it. For example, not only is peace a need, people want it to be the case and act so it is the case.

DESIREs awarenesses, including awareness of the of distinctions between needs, wants and what I don't want. (Generating desires is an element of designing social transformations.)



Needs must be met so they can happen again and again.

When you investigate the current language spaces in our schools, holy places and the media, you will notice the term "peace" is often mentioned as a reward -- something to be achieved -- rather than something we have. Imagine if peace were one of our needs that has to be met unconditionally and continuously so that they can happen again and again. Our conflicts would become a necessity so that peace could happen again and again.

PEACE IS A NEED

Just as hunger has to be met by food. Tiredness has to be met by sleep. Thirst has to be met by drink. Peace has to be met with our conflicts.

When peace is a need we have to invent a new language that does not assume peace as a reward but rather a languaging that assumes peace is a condition for our conflicts to emerge, so they might generate something unique.

We would understand that we have to meet our need for peace with our conflicts, our differences our tensions so that our need for peace be satisfied again and again. - Herbert Brun

How will I know we have peace as a need?

Do (we) want and desire peace as a need? If so, how do we do peace as a need so that it might generate a new language? How do we do peace as a need as an element of consensus modeling? How would one recognized peace as a need? What would it look like? How might it emerge in our languaging spaces?

DIALECTICS

We will know peace is a need when we celebrate our conflicts without violence and war.

War prevents us from having our conflicts.

When peace is a need conversation becomes an invitation to dialectically dance with our conflicts, tensions and differences. In this context conversation begins with asynchronicity and moves toward synchronicity so that something new might emerge.

How can I perform peace is a need?