

Information and religious sensitivity

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Overview

- Information and language
- The encounter of two freedoms
- Religious 'sensibility' and the importance of art
- Latour on religion
- Concluding reflections

Real presences

- ...any coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feeling is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the assumption of God's presence
- (George Steiner 1989: 3)

Ingestion/consumption

- The electronic volume and fidelity of the computerized data bank and of processes of automatic retrieval ...weaken the sinews of individual memory. Stimulus and suggestion are of an increasingly mechanical and collective quality. Encountered in easy resort to electronic media of representation, much of music and of literature remains purely external. The distinction is between 'consumption' and 'ingestion'.
- (Steiner 1989: 10)

The two freedoms

- The manifold of possible meanings... is the exponential product of all possible sense or non-sense worlds as these are constructed, imaged, tested, indwelt through the intersection of two liberties: that of the text, in movement across time and that of the receiver. The internalized energies of reciprocal communication and suggestion, the 'quantum jumps' in this encounter, are entirely beyond computational analysis, let alone predictability.
- (Steiner 1989: 83)

Latour's embarrassment

- “[Religion] always appears untruthful in the eyes of those seeking either to convey information without distortion – the adherents of double-click communication – or to preserve intact the meaning of those utterances without reviving them, in another form, for another time, for other people”
- (Latour 2013: 118).

The religion machine

- ...a form of speech whose sole characteristic is to constitute those it is addressed to as being close and saved; a kind of vehicle that differs absolutely from those we've evolved elsewhere to accede to the distant in order to control information about the world.
- (Latour 2013: 118)

A tentative conclusion

- Something of the tentativeness and tact invoked by Steiner seems to be essential to a 'pro-religious' position, Latour's debunking of this is complacent
- Latour's candour about religion (and God) as human creations is, nonetheless, profound and may represent the best ground for religion to stand on, given the circumstances Steiner describes?