

Manifeste monotone/Monotone manifesto

Eric Watier 2011

monotonepress.net is a free website for online display, distribution, and publishing.

From the moment an object is turned into a digital file, any digital medium is suitable for its distribution.

What discretization offers is not so much new forms of images or sounds (since the digital often copies from ancient forms of presentation or representation), than an extraordinary ability to circulate objects to be rematerialized.

Any new technology involves objects and processes which until then had been unthinkable, the most difficult exercise being to get rid of the very habits induced from previous objects.

Up to now, any intellectual or conceptual work necessarily materialized into a fixed physical medium and was protected by its copyright which preserved the originality of the idea through the originality of its inclusion into a single form. The two were inseparable.

With the digital object, we are faced with a separation between concepts or processes and the various media into which they can be translated.

To benefit from a digital object, it must first be reactivated.

While at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was the reproduction of an object which led to its consumption, today it is the desire to consume that generates the need for reproduction: consequently, in order to consume one must reproduce.

Yet, while downloading deprives no one, because it eliminates no object but on the contrary keeps reproducing it, the industry tries to make us believe that doing so constitutes theft even though nothing has disappeared. On the one hand they organize consumption—selling all kinds of machines for the reproduction of works—on the other they limit—legally and technically—the proliferation made possible by these very technologies.

In addition, by monopolizing the debate on copyright, they justify the very shortage that they themselves organize and from which they try to get maximum profit.

Yet the question posed by the digital remains: how to evaluate economically an object when consuming it doesn't lead to its depletion but on the contrary to unlimited proliferation.

The industry of subjectivity more than actively participates in the reduction of what is on offer, while trying to make us believe the contrary. It claims to participate, organize and protect the diversity of our subjectivities, we know full well it is not true. It is a fiction self-created and sustained by the industry.

Why should this industry ban the piracy of poor cultural products when these products contribute to the very creation of a market and a global monolithic subjectivity from which they harvest all their profits? For a unique and simple reason: in order to sustain the myth of a rich, diverse, and independent artistic production while smashing it to pieces. And to make us believe that what they sell is Art, whereas what they manufacture are financial products.

What Hadopi (and the cultural industry via Hadopi) do not want is films without the film industry, publishing without the publishing industry, and music without the music industry.

What is threatened by the digital is not art, but the art industry as it prevails today. That is to say, as it dominates our subjectivity.

Once again what they are trying to steal is the possibility of our freedom.

If what characterizes the digital is a permanent separation between content and form, we can only come to the conclusion that contents must remain free, absolutely free, for the benefit of all. That only the singling out of such content into specific objects can be owned or "proprietary," as Richard Stallman would put it. And only those objects that have become "proprietary" (because of their translation into a physical object, for example) may be subject to trading (if one wishes to trade).

Therefore, we must envisage a new economy where the objects are fully available and at the same time can be materialized always singularly and unlimited.

We must also recognize that this economy of intangible, immaterial abundance is, at the same time, an economy of successive nonexclusive appropriations.

Thus, to make things perfectly clear, we thought it necessary to create an independent structure for the diffusion of content, in which anyone can go and search for what is needed to achieve one's interest (if one is interested): books, posters, cards, and other printed matter.

This is the very structure of Monotone Press.

Monotone Press exists under French law. That is to say the moral law. There is no higher one.

All other rights (copyright, copyleft, creative commons) are only impoverishments of the moral law.

Whatever its form, the Anglo-Saxon law remains the right of the object but never the author's right.

Under French law, "the author of an intellectual work shall – from the mere fact of its creation – has exclusive immaterial property right against any other."

French law does not conceive of a separation between the author and what he produces. What he makes is inseparable from who he is.

In this context, the moral law is a law where the degree of freedom depends on the author. It may be totalitarian or totally free. It may be totalitarian for some and free for all others.

The moral law thus determines the social political and economic relation, which the author may entertain with his public.

So why decide a priori of what one can or cannot do with Monotone Press? Why not just decide later? A priori, everything is allowed. We will see later whether some uses will be considered scandalous or dishonest.

Consequently you can do whatever you like with Monotone Press (except what is not appreciated).