

# Physics and Information: Structures, Symbols, and Self-Organisation



**Rainer Feistel**

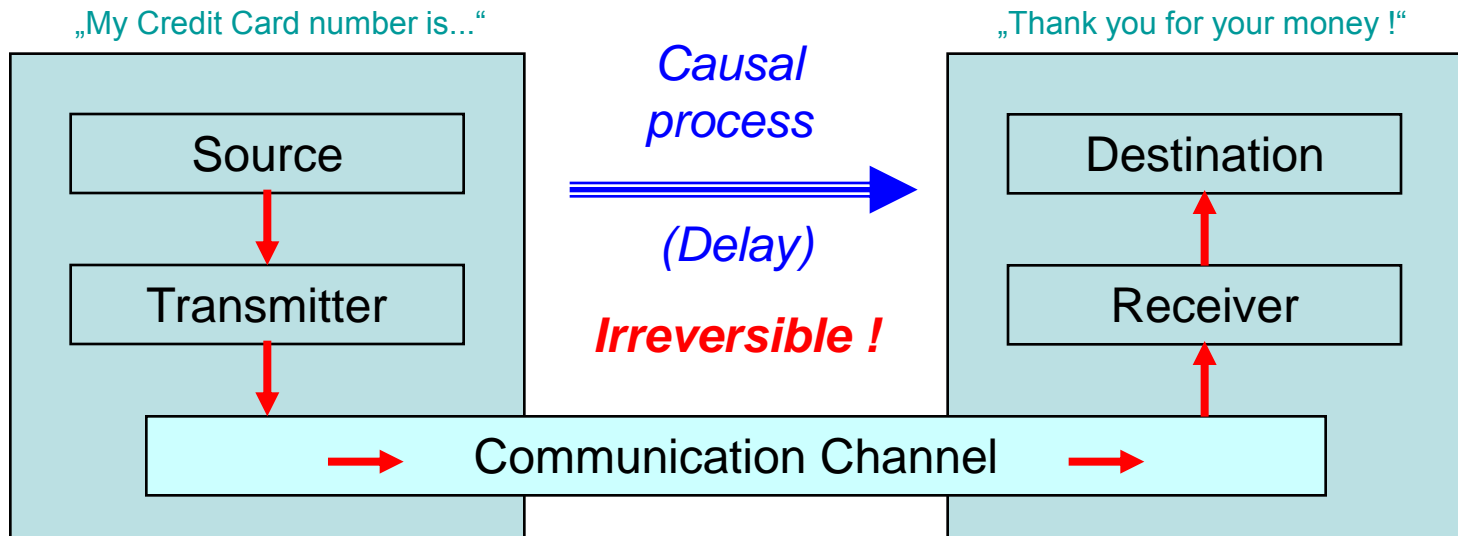
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# Shannon's Concept

Information theory **founded in 1948** by Claude E. Shannon:  
"A **Mathematical** Theory of Communication",  
Bell System Technical Journal, 27 (1948) 379-423, 623-656

## Information Transfer by Signals



***What are the Physical Processes, Laws, Conditions or Limitations?***

*(Still subject to research)*

# Communication Channel

- Stores information **temporarily** from transmission till reception by means of a physical structure
- **Spatial** communication distance is physically only little relevant:  
There exists always a reference frame in which both happen at the same place
- **Temporal** communication distance is physically very relevant:  
Reception is always after transmission in ANY reference frame (causality)
- Physical structures (= storage media) have only **finite life times**

Examples:	Books about 1000 years
	Sound waves about 1 second
	RAM capacitor matrix about 1 ns

➔ Physics of Information is Closely Related to Entropy & Dissipation

# Storage Media = Physical Structures

Many alternative patterns must persist over the required life time  
under the same boundary conditions

## A) Equilibrium (e.g. crystal):

1 Macro-state =  $W$  Micro-states (molecular structures)

## B) Macro-states near the equilibrium (e.g. CD, print):

Sluggish frozen-in structures

„Critical“ states

## C) Macro-states far from equilibrium (e.g. computer, brain):

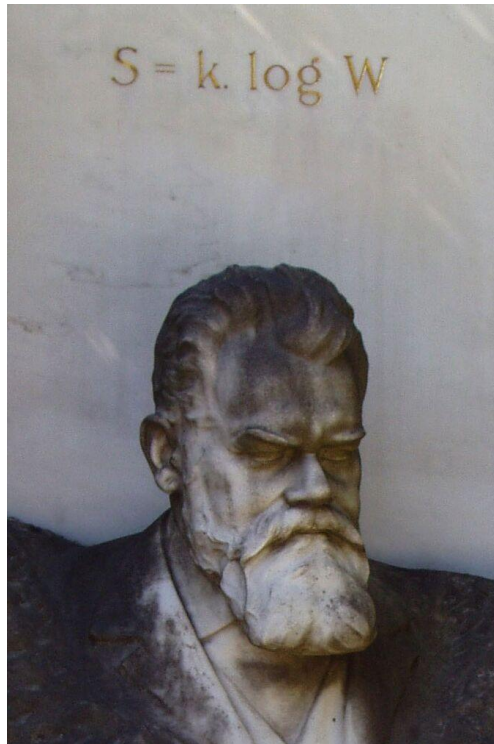
Dissipative Structures

Critical States

Multi-stability

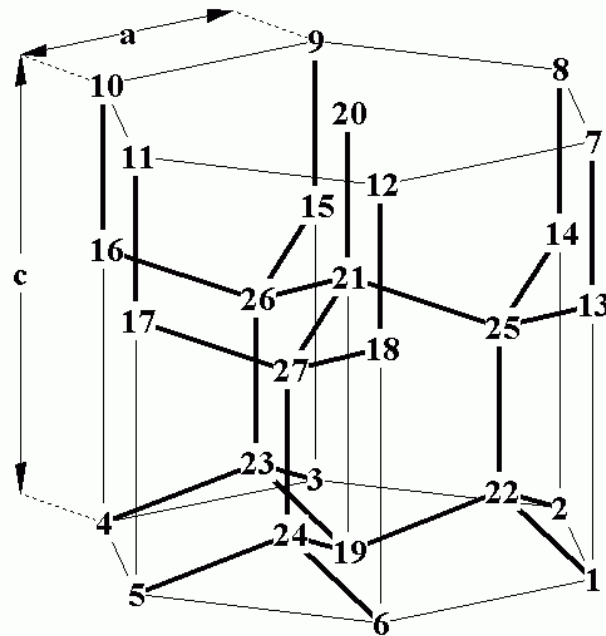
# Equilibrium Micro-states

(must persist over the required life time)



Wiener Zentralfriedhof

Hexagonal ice Ih



Degenerate  
Ground State

Residual Entropy  
(Linus Pauling 1935)

$$S_0 = k \ln W = 189 \frac{\text{J}}{\text{kgK}} \cdot m$$

$$W = 2^{\text{bits}} \Rightarrow \frac{\text{bits}}{m} = 2 \times 10^{25} \frac{\text{bit}}{\text{kg}} \approx 2 \frac{\text{Terabyte}}{\text{Nanogram}}$$

# Equilibrium Micro-states

## Residual Entropy

- Cannot be measured thermodynamically
- Is NOT equivalent to heat,  $dQ = dS/T$
- Is a macroscopic state quantity, not an exchange quantity
- Is related to heat, as relativistic rest mass is related to energy
- Requires Statistical Mechanics, i.e. particles, ensembles...
- **Is the closest link between physics and information**
- Was discovered long before information theory

# Macro-states Near the Equilibrium

(must persist over the required life time)

Baltic Sea – layered sediments



This century

LIA

Recent 500 years



Littorina Sea  
8000 years

Ancylus Lake  
9500 years

Yoldia Sea  
10 300 years

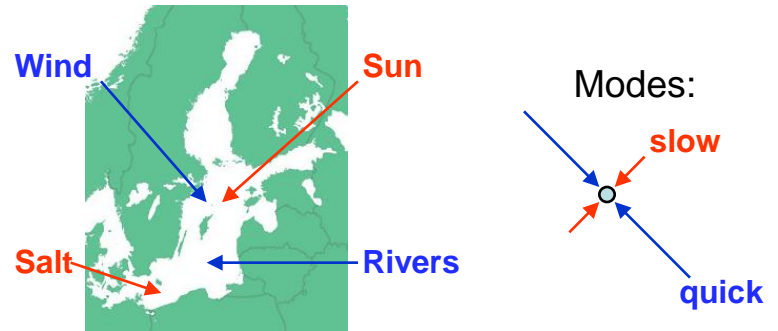
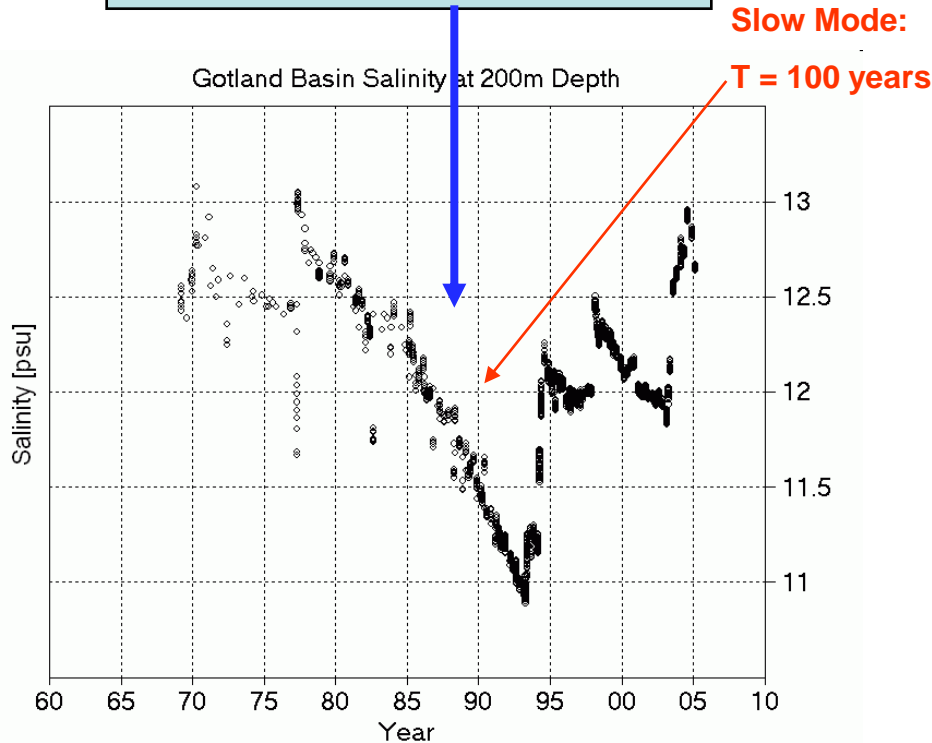
Baltic Ice Lake  
14 000 years

Traces of the particular physical history

# Macro-states Near the Equilibrium

(must persist over the required life time)

Decay toward equilibrium



Critical „Neutral“ Stability:

Decay Time  $\gg$  Observation Period

1. Vertical Exchange:  $T = 100$  years
2. Surface Water Residence:  $T = 30$  years
3. Deep Water Residence:  $T = 20$  years

Entropy production =  
Destruction of information

$\Rightarrow$  **Fluctuations Persist for Decades**

$\Rightarrow$  **Information on Climate is „encoded“**

# Macro-states Near the Equilibrium

(must persist over the required life time)

Text printed on paper (1982):



Physical pattern: **Traces of the general cultural history**



Phoenician  
pictography:  
**Aleph = Ox**



Phoenician phonetic  
language:  
**Aleph = Ox**



Roman  
Capitalis:  
**Alpha**



Reality / Picture



Symbolic  
Picture



Symbol



**Evolution of  
Symbolic  
Languages**

# Information Stored in Physical Structures



## Native, bound, analog

- Meaning is inherent to the carrier
- Cannot be copied loss-free
- Does slowly degrade
- „Encoded“ by natural laws
- Different structure = other meaning
- Obeys physical laws

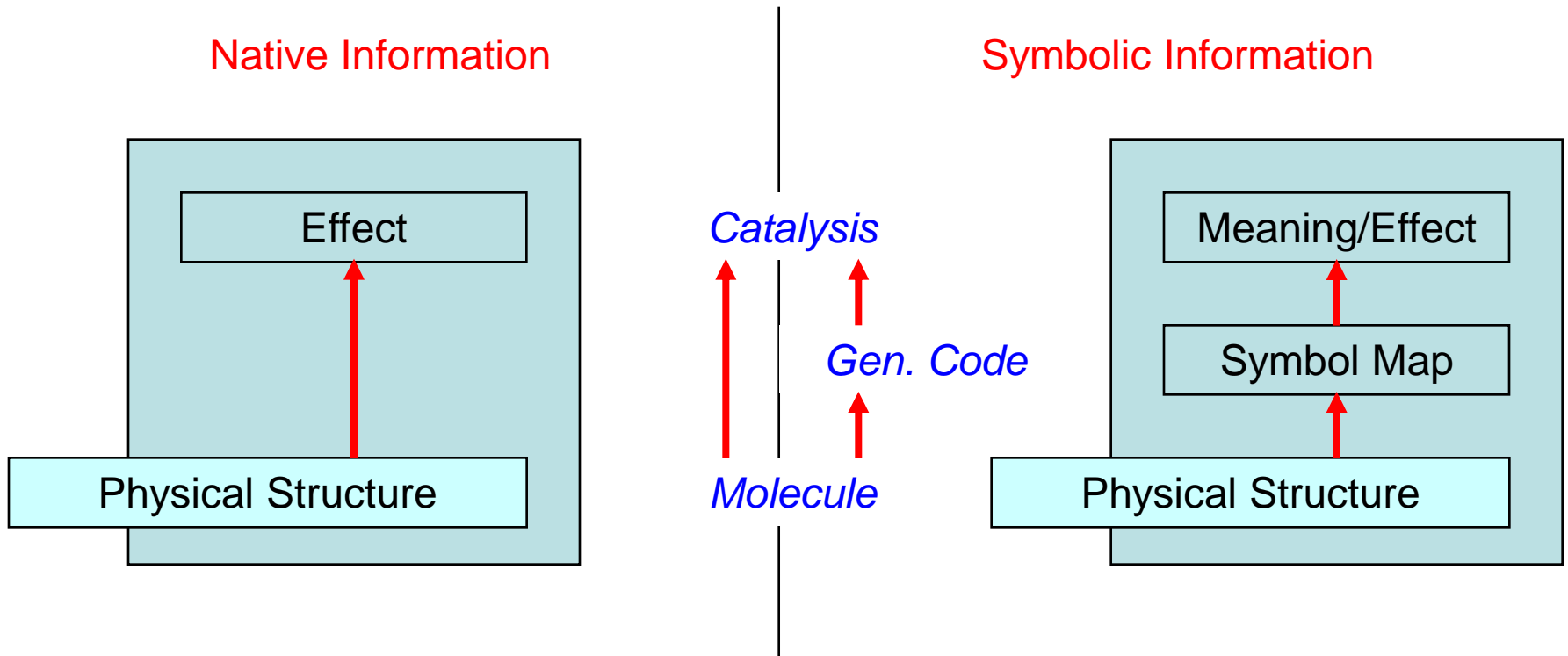
## Physik der Selbstorganisation und Evolution

Von Werner Ebeling und Rainer Feistel

## Symbolic, free, digital

- Meaning is independent of the carrier
- Can be copied loss-free
- Does not degrade („quanta“)
- Encoded by „conjugate“ „ciphers“
- Possesses a new symmetry:  
„Code invariance“
- Obeys „higher“, „emergent“ laws

# Emergence of Symbolic Information



Kinetic Phase Transition II Kind

Symmetry Change:

Appearance of a Neutral Mode, „Code“

# Ritualisation: Emergence of Symbolic Information

**Sir Julian Huxley, 1914:**

I mean the gradual **change of a useful action into a symbol** and then into a ritual; or in other words, the change by which the same act which first subserved a definite purpose directly comes later to subserve it only indirectly (symbolically) and then not at all.

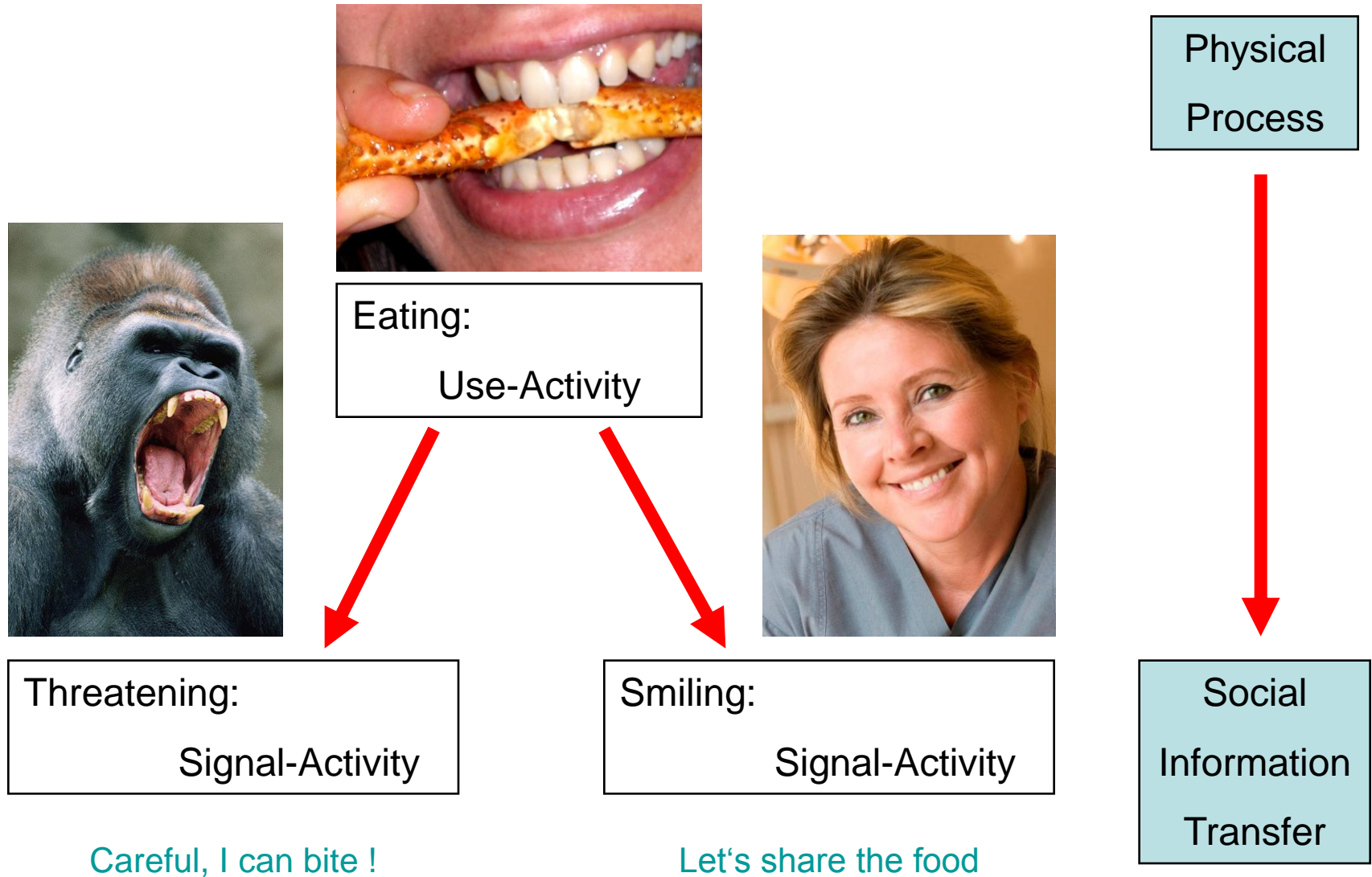
**Konrad Lorenz, 1963:**

... die anderen objektiven und subjektiven Zwecken dienende **Handlungskette** **wird** zum Selbstzweck, sowie sie **zum autonomen Ritual** geworden ist.

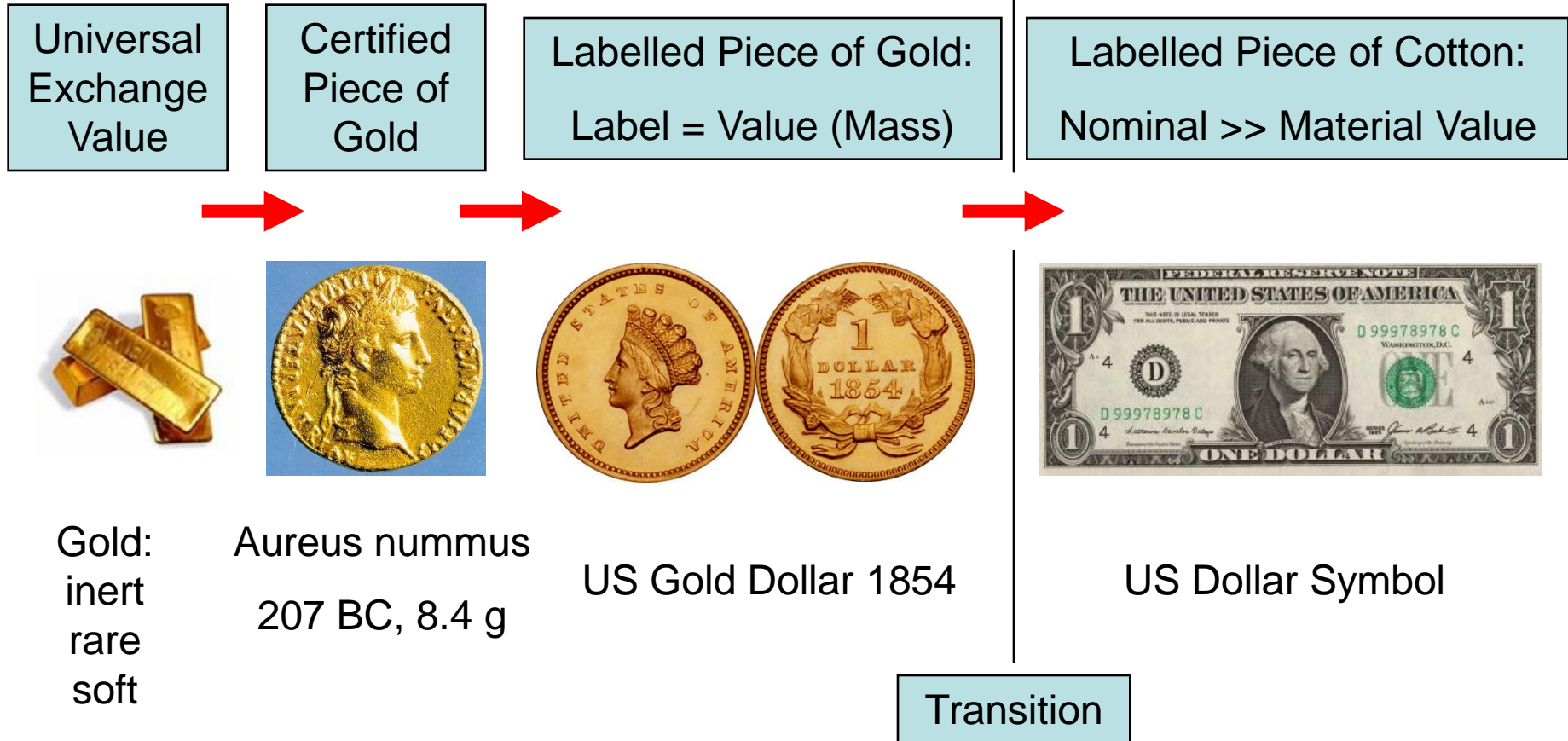
**Günter Tembrock, 1976:**

Stammesgeschichtlich leiten sich Signalsysteme von Gebrauchssystemen ab. Die Ethologie bezeichnet mit Huxley die **Entstehung von Signalhandlungen als Ritualisation**.

# Ritualisation Example: Showing Teeth



# Ritualisation Example: Society / Economy



It costs about four cents to produce a one-dollar bill -- a pittance, compared to the greenback's influence on the world's economy.

# Physical Properties of Symbolic Information:

- Loss / Weakness of physical restoring forces  
(Neutral or critical mode)
- New symmetry: Coding invariance
- Surge of fluctuations at the transition point
- Dualism of digital symbol and its analog carrier structure
- Historicity of the emergent structures
- Symbol structures keep information about their own evolution history

Analogy to Kinetic Phase Transition of II. Kind

# Ritualisation:                      Historicity

Symbol structure is always an analog information carrier:

Traces of its evolution history in native form



**Joachimsthaler**  
**Guldengroschen**,  
coined in Sankt  
Joachimsthal  
(Bohemia) 1520



**Thaler**  
Brunsvices et  
Luneburg, 1799

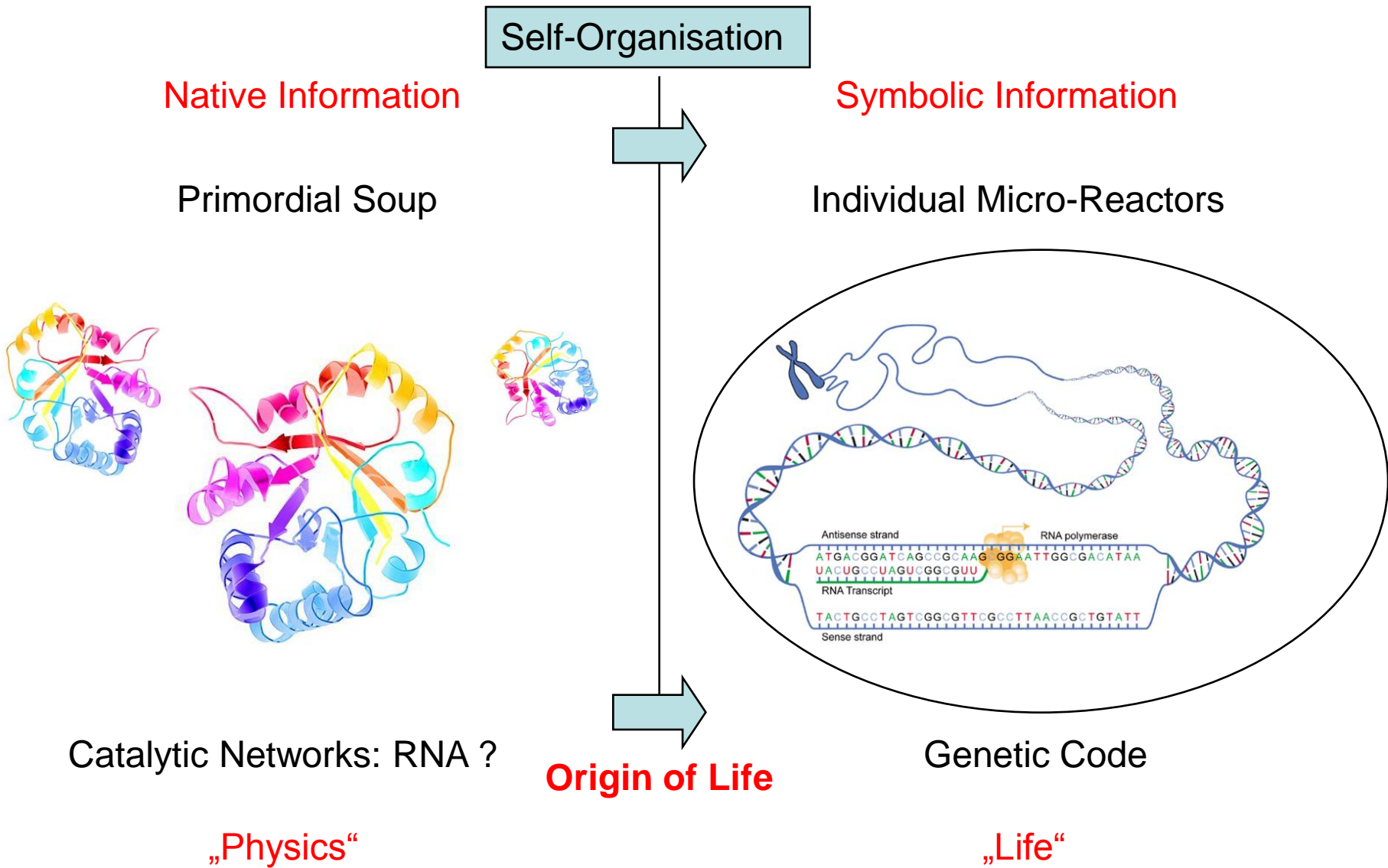


„Dollar“

„Aleph“

Arbitrary Dye Pattern  
Sluggish Dissipation  
Currency Changeover  
Inflation etc

# Very First Emergence of Symbolic Information



# Macro-states far from Equilibrium: Life

Standard Codon Table

2. Base

		2. Base						
		U	C	A	G			
U	UUU	Phenylalanine	UCU	Serine	UAU	Tyrosine	UGU	Cysteine
	UUC	Phenylalanine	UCC	Serine	UAC	Tyrosine	UGC	Cysteine
	UUA	Leucine	UCA	Serine	UAA	Stop	UGA	Stop
	UUG	Leucine	UCG	Serine	UAG	Stop	UGG	Tryptophan
C	CUU	Leucine	CCU	Proline	CAU	Histidine	CGU	Arginine
	CUC	Leucine	CCC	Proline	CAC	Histidine	CGC	Arginine
	CUA	Leucine	CCA	Proline	CAA	Glutamine	CGA	Arginine
	CUG	Leucine	CCG	Proline	CAG	Glutamine	CGG	Arginine
A	AUU	Isoleucine	ACU	Threonine	AAU	Asparagine	AGU	Serine
	AUC	Isoleucine	ACC	Threonine	AAC	Asparagine	AGC	Serine
	AUA	Isoleucine	ACA	Threonine	AAA	Lysine	AGA	Arginine
	AUG	Methionine	ACG	Threonine	AAG	Lysine	AGG	Arginine
G	GUU	Valine	GCU	Alanine	GAU	Asparagic ac.	GGU	Glycine
	GUC	Valine	GCC	Alanine	GAC	Asparagic ac.	GGC	Glycine
	GUA	Valine	GCA	Alanine	GAA	Glutamic ac.	GGA	Glycine
	GUG	Valine	GCG	Alanine	GAG	Glutamic ac.	GGG	Glycine

1. Base

Symbol

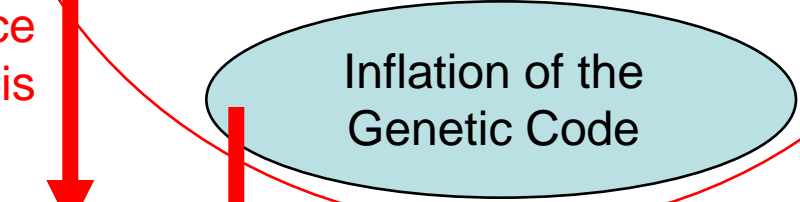
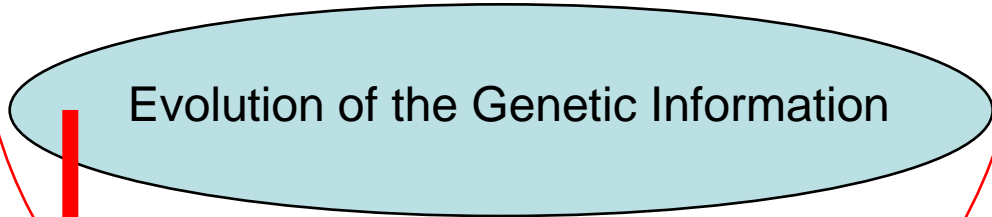
Code map

Meaning

Genetic Code:

Traces of the chemical history during Ritualisation

**Biological Models**



**Emergent Laws**

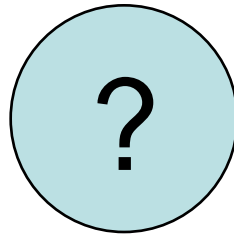
**Fluctuation Phase**

Sequence Analysis

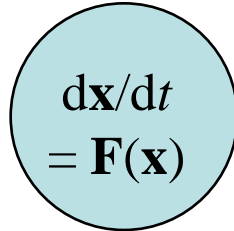
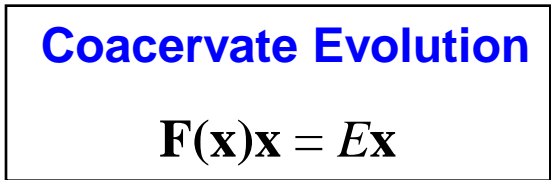
„Bio Big Bang“

**Ritualisation Transition**

Historicity

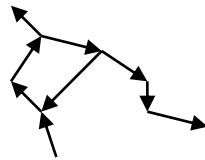
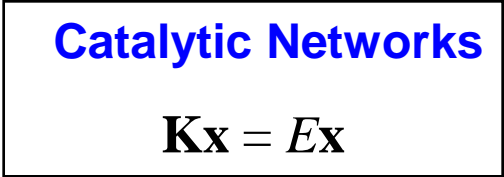


v. Neumann 1966,  
Eigen & Winkler 1978,  
Ebeling & Feistel 1982



Ratner & Shamin 1980, White 1980,  
Feistel et al. 1980, Redko 1986

**Physical Models**



Perron 1907, Frobenius 1912,  
Harary et al. 1965, Eigen 1971,  
Eigen & Schuster 1977,  
Ebeling & Feistel 1977

# How Could the „Molecular Automaton“ Look Like ?

Physical Model with **Minimum Complexity**: John v. Neumann?

<b>Shannon machine</b>	<b>Physical system</b>	<b>v. Neumann automaton</b>	<b>Molecular automaton</b>
Carrier (storage)	“Critical” microstate	Linear storing chain <b>L</b>	Polynucleotide matrix
Receiver (reader)	Microstate amplifier	Constructing automaton <b>A</b>	Translation enzyme
Sender (writer)	Microstate preparator	Copying automaton <b>B</b>	Replication enzyme
Instance (exemplar)	Spatial compartment	Controlling automaton <b>C</b>	Splitting during growth

(adapted from V.G. Redko, 1990)

# Symbols: Some Theses

1. Symbols are physical structures with non-physical properties, subject to „higher“ laws in their processing context

2. Symbols are critical physical structures possessing coding symmetry

3. Symbols have a purpose and exist only in the realm of life

4. There is no life known without symbolic information

5. The origin of life was the very first Ritualisation transition

6. Ritualisation is the Self-Organisation process of symbolic information