Twitter Thread by Malcolm is back by the ■cean!



Malcolm is back by the ■cean!
@Malcolm_Ocean

Ahh fuckit part of my @threadapalooza thread had a clear subtopic and wanted to be its own thread.

Here's the thread about "membranes" as a metaphor for groups of people.

> 15/ One metaphor I've heard people use for regulating group dynamics is of a cell membrane
>
> (what's my prompt again? "Spatial metaphors for human systems" ...idk what counts as spatial - everything's pretty spatial to me. I guess I'll avoid computer stuff tho\u2014doing great so far)
>
> — Malcolm is back by the \U0001f30ecean! (@Malcolm_Ocean) December 21, 2020

15a/ Membranes. Monists go on about how everything is one, which is true in a sense but also have you noticed that some things are inside and some things are outside? The role of skin, or the walls of a house, or a windshield on a car, is it keeps inside in & outside out.

15b/ Membranes can be applied to groups, and we can talk about a few different kinds of membranes that you might see around a particular group of people:
- closed membrane
- closed web
- semipermeable membrane
- open network

15c/ Closed Membrane: eg a company, family or country. Maybe a way to join it, but you need an active & explicit invitation by the members, whether that’s a job application or a marriage or an immigration process. Lots of intentional community houses are also like this.

15d/ Closed Web: consider a friend group. You don't exactly need an invitation from everyone in the group to join, but you do need to make friends with *someone* in the group. Polycules (except polyfidelity) work similarly, usually.

15e/ Semipermeable Membrane: ~anyone can join; there might be a requirement like buying membership, but you can just do it. Or going vegan. Or there might be a requirement of actually showing up, like Kevin Kelly's description of the Camp 4 scenius: https://t.co/2OzvIg58K4

Mountain climbers educated in the Alps discovered the vertical walls of granite in Yosemite in the 1930s and began to scale these monoliths. By 1941 climbers occupied a new permanent camp set up in the north side of Yosemite Valley, Camp 4. They would often camp there illegally for the entire summer. Most were climbing bums — young men with little money, lots of time, heedless of laws, and an overwhelming urge to climb in new ways. They hacked together amazingly innovative equipment, techniques, and ethics. Camp 4 became school, club, and summer home for many climbers, not a few who became well-known.



15f/ (note that semipermeable membranes do need to eject people sometimes, but only if the person's presence is actively disrupting the group, either asshole-style or by undermining the norms, eg by arguing using blatant logical fallacies at rationalist parties)

15g/ Open Network: doesn't have clear boundaries at all (not a membrane) and is more of a description of an emergent cluster in people-space. The region of twitter I hang out in is sometimes referred to as "strangely earnest twitter".

https://t.co/doandfMsJF

> beginning to feel that 'strangely earnest' Twitter is best Twitter
>
> — huan seoul oh (@HuanWin) July 24, 2019

15h/ How many ppl have heard of the phrase "strangely earnest twitter", or identify with being part of it?

It existed before it had that name.

It overlaps with many other seemingly-unrelated twitter networks.

Rather than joining such a group, you find yourself in it.

15i/ There are probably more types than this, but this is an initial typology that seems helpful for thinking about the nature of groups. All of these types are necessary, *and* you're gonna have a bad time if there isn't clarity about the nature of a particular group/membrane.

Click below to return to the original @threadapalooza chain:

https://t.co/z4FO4Nacxu

> 16/ ...six minutes left, what else is important?
>
> I better say something about hierarchy. Hierarchy, as the assymetric organization of things into different functional levels, is a vital part of this beautiful fractal universe.
>
> It can breed power abuses, but so can any context.
>
> — Malcolm is back by the \U0001f30ecean! (@Malcolm_Ocean) December 21, 2020