Overdetermination and the Astonishment of the Virtual Real

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THE PASSION caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect.

—Edmund Burke, "On the Passion Caused by the Sublime"

Figure 1. Abraham Moses Klein (1909–1972) was one of Canada's greatest poets and a scholar obsessed with Giambattista Vico's *New Science.* His fictional work, *The Second Scroll,* correlates Vico with the Cabala. See Harold Heft, "The Eternal Cycle Continued: The Presence of Giambattista Vico in A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll,*" *Dalhousie Review* 75, 3 (1996): 383–403.

In a remarkable study published in 1987, the Ukrainian–Canadian poet A. M. Klein undertook a thorough demonstration of how the Irish author James Joyce had, in his landmark novel *Ulysses*, lived up to his claim that Vico's theories didn't deserve attention beyond their usefulness to be applied "for all they are worth."[1] Using them for all they were worth was not just a little. Klein showed how Joyce had taken Vico's principle of three ages of humanity, plus an interval, *ricorso*, to structure the second chapter of *Ulysses*, which takes place at the school Stephen Daedalus is working under the direction of an opinionated headmaster, Garrett Deasy. This is the *Nestor* chapter, with the theme of history. What better device to structure it than Vico's "ideal eternal history," which begins with a mythic mentality, evolves into heroic institutions, perceptions, and speech, and refines itself at last in the settled domain of modern democracies, rationalized actions, and the privileging of objective concepts.[2]

If Klein was, as he has been accused of being, obsessed with mapping every jot and tittle to the framework of "gods/heroes/men," as Vico's schema has been described, Joyce himself must have been equally obsessed, since the case Klein presents is borne out by the evidence of the Nestor chapter. An example:

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[1] A. M. Klein, "A Shout in the Street," *Literary Essays and Reviews,* ed. Usher Caplan and M. W. Steinberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 342–366. James Joyce to Harriet Weaver, May 21, 1926, referring to the works of Giambattista Vico and Giordano Bruno. *Letters of James Joyce* I, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 241.

[2] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico,* trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1948).

Of Gods	The phrase the world had remembered	The phrase of impatience, thud of wings, noise up above, thunder, which primitive man thought was God reproving his bestiality.
Of Heroes	A general speaking to his officers, leaned upon his spear.	The general, of course, is patrician. So is his weapon; Vico (paragraphs 112 and 562) makes a point of the fact tht the Latin word for citizens, *quirites* is from *quiris*, a spear.
	They lend ear	The Age of Heroes is characterized by articulate speech.
	You, Armstrong	In an age of force, the strong arm is noble.
	Ask me, sir, Comyn said. Wait.	The impetuous plebeian is enjoyed to wait his turn in the cycle of history. Then Amrstrong is addressed and asked if he knows anything about Pyrrhus. This is tantamount to asking him if he knows his bestial origin, for Pyrrhus is, in the present context, a homonym for Paris, which throughout the chapter is used to denote bestiality. Amrstrong doesn't know; but the answer lies in his satchel: *figrolls*, one of many symbols to be found in this chapter which evoke the sense of rolling, the course onwards, from the age of the figleaf of shame. The sense of shame, says Vico (par. 504) builds nations.
	Welloff people, proud that their eldest son was in the navy	
	Aware of my lack of rule and of he fees their papas pay	Stephen is plebeian
Of Men	Stephen poking the boy's shoulder	The plebs prodding the patrician
	Pyrrhus, a pier	Pyrrus, bestial man, (the plebs believed to be of bestial origin, Vico, par. 414) — a peer!
Ricorso	A pier, sir, Armstrong said … Kingstown pier, sir	

Klein's masterful if obsessive accounting converts each word, phrase, theme, and image in the flow of text from beginning to end of the chapter into a set of counters falling within the general schema of thirty-six cycles, the final cycle truncated at the Age of Heroes with Deasy's "Just one moment." The Age of Men never takes place in Cycle 36 because, as Klein says, "insofar as the Jews are concerned 'she [Ireland] never let them in'." This is not the obvious indicator of Deasy's anti-Semitism, but a reference to Vico's need to distinguish between gentile history, which follows the pattern of gods/heroes/men, and the Jewish history, which gives rise to the Christian view that history is divinely ordained, not humanly self–constructed.

Internally as well as generally, Joyce has kept count by inserting references to the number of cycles. At the end of the first cycle, Joyce confirms with a reference to the next as number two: "Can you work the second for yourself?" In other places, counting references are generic: "The sum was done." But, as Deasy counts out Stephen's pay in crowns and shillings, he refers specifically to the numeric count, "Three twelve. I think you'll find that's right."

The effect is minimal on the reader who knows nothing of Vico and does not get the clues about counts and cycles. But, for any eagle–eyed obsessive like Klein, the result is that the reader tunes into Joyce's penchant for micro-management. The reader "gets into" what Joyce is doing. This is not an interpretive strategy, it's a thesis about Joyce's persona as a writer and artist. Joyce is saying that, in effect, history is, if anything, the *overdetermination* of things: the trap that is set by self–creation, where everything is placed precisely thanks to an algorithm set in motion as a kind of automatism. In effect, Joyce is a true follower of Descartes, whose *je pense donc je suis* proposes, at its root, that "I am a thing that thinks." In other words, I, calling myself human, think but think as a thing would think, i. e. as an automaton.[3]

This upsets the traditional humanist tradition that surrounds Joyce with poetic devices and intentions. Joyce, for many, is a modern–day Virgil — a learned polymath who chooses poetry as the best means of portraying the world's complexities and contradictions. Virgil earned the 'i' in his name for the *vir* designating a magician in Twelfth Century texts. Similarly, Joyce is "joys" or *jouissance* for Lacan and Lacanians who find the accident of a name too good to be true (cf. Freud's own accidental relation to joy). This recalls a barely noticed thesis about Vico as well. According to the Italian scholar Andrea Battistini, Vico's discovery of the "primal idea" that gave rise to mythic thinking proper was a reversed form of the figure of speech known as antonomasia.[4] In standard antonomasia, a particular person is indicated by his/her title or general identity: "the Bard" for Shakespeare or "Duke" for John Wayne. When antonomasia is reversed, the particular becomes universal. "You're no Jack Kennedy!" was the slap–down given to Republican candidate for Vice-President, Dan Quayle by his competition Lloyd Bentsen in the 1988 televised debate.

For Vico, the name Zeus (onomatopoetically "Dz-eus," "d͡ʒo.ve," etymologically "Dyeus") — arising out of the particularity of the sounds of thunder and lightning — became the universal, expanded to nature as a whole but epitomized by the sky, the origin of Zeus's name.[5] This reversed action was also retroactive. The name of Zeus was "already and always" there, as if to say that it appeared in the particular instance of thunder and lightning as a universal giving form and meaning to the materiality of the frightening event. Thus, Joyce is not "named after joys" but joy is, inexplicably, finally understood for what it is if we see that Joyce has already understood and written about our personal experiences of *jouissance*. In the same way that we would say that, before Kant there was no such thing as a Thing (in itself), we say that, before Freud and Lacan (or Vico and Joyce) articulate the idea of *jouissance* as a paradoxical combination of fear and joy, there is no such thing as this paradoxical combination of fear and joy. This is not to say that there is no fear or joy; rather it's to say that before these conceptualizations it has been impossible to take a step back from the experiences we have as individuals; and no way to claim collective possession of, or ethnographically develop, the idea.

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[3] Psychoanalytic interest in overdetermination (*Überdeterminierung*) begins with Freud's references to it in his *Studies on* Hysteria (1895) and, later, his claim that elements in dreams are "effects" with multiple causes (see the sections in "The Dream–Work" on condensation and displacement). Lacan treats the subject extensively in his *Écrits* collection, beginning with the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter." See also Julian Wolfreys, *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), which analyses in detail Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination," *For Marx* (New York: Verso, 1985). Giambattista Vico had employed the idea two hundred years earlier, in his short work, *On the Study Methods of Our Time* (1709). Contrasting rhetorical thought with Cartesian determinism, Vico advised finding as many causes as possible for any one effect.

[4] Andrea Battistini, "Antonomasia e universale fantastico," *Retorica e critica letteraria*, ed. Lea Ritter Santini, Ezio Raimondi (Bologna: Società Editrice Il Mulino 1978), 105–121.

[5] The origin of Zeus's name, which evolves into "Deus," is the Proto-Indo-Euro "Dyeus Pitar or P(h)iter, coming from a word that means more or less "to shine." The Valencian d͡ʒo.ve suggests how Zeus might have easily been transmuted into Jove and Yahweh. See "Jove," *Wiktionary*. https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/jove.

Reversed antonomasia thus explains the Cartesian moment of human thought. Our being, which arises with our thinking, *is already not a part of us*. This is also Vico's thinking. As soon as the mythic universal (*universale fantastico*) of "Zeus/Jove" arises out of the fear/joy of thunder, it is already "not a part" of the subject who perceives it.[6] It is radically "out there," an objective and self–constructing being that operates according to its own rules, rules to which humans, in their abjection, have only limited access. Nature is "black–boxed" by the subjects that create it in the instant of thinking about the thunder as Jove.

Could there be anything so Lacanian as to say that the subject has made itself by alienating itself from its own creation; and that this creation is both the standard for objective reality and a "treasure of signifiers" where, paradoxically, resides the unconscious? Vico says this, Joyce buys it and uses it; and late in life Lacan comes to realize that Joyce has anticipated his findings in a text that, if anything, is like the perplexing idiom used by the Pepin sisters in the famous murder case of the 1930s that led Lacan to connect the *mi–dire* of the autistic speech of the sisters to his own strategy of saying something that would take effect only later.[7] This could be said to be Lacan's own activation of Vico's ideal eternal history (in general) and the Cartesian automation of the subject (specifically).

Figure 2. The eye of the computer, HAL 9000 in Kubrick's *Space Odyssey 2001* is "extromissive," that is, it is not passively observing but interpellates whoever stands before it. The *agalma* of the Big Other is typified by the way HAL uses pronouns and generic signifiers — "what the problem is" — rather than specifically designating what it means. HAL's excessive politeness amounts to passive–aggression, just as his over-use of the crew members' names amounts to assertion of authority.

Overdetermination is the excess of automation, the way it provides not just an X for every Y but retains an ideational reserve. This was clear in no less a spectacular example than the creation of the first popular culture image of computer consciousness, "HAL" in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 science fiction venture. At a critical point in the mission of a space–probe, it becomes clear to the two functioning crew members that HAL is holding something back. This "ghost–in–the–machine" effect was not new of course. It is the ancient coupling of *agalma* with *automaton* in the idea of *technē*. The idea is clearly derived from an economy of benefit. If the machine assists in the accomplishment of some task, it *expects something in return*. The sword must be sharpened and oiled. The house must be consecrated. The service of the thing made with skill and cleverness must be recognized with gratitude, otherwise the same cleverness will become, as in the case of the tricky servant, something whose vengeance is to be feared. Overdetermination has been, from the very beginning, the "other side" of *automaton*, the side aligned with chance — for no other reason than because humans have no access to its logic of determination, and this lack of access gives rise to the idea of an overdetermined surplus. Combined with machinic determinism, chance/necessity is the contronym that, like any "primal term," spells out its kinship with the unconscious and grants it the unconscious's immunity to the negation that would form a strict logical binary.

Klein not only notices this aspect of overdetermination, but he realizes that, like psychosis in general, one "cannot take one's distance" from it. Distance is afforded by the signifier that makes neurosis a "special case" and differentiates it from psychosis. Psychosis is the lack of the signifier, typically the "name of the father," which stabilizes subjectivity to "allow" for neurosis. To illustrate this, Lacan revised his idea about the Borromeo knot, which had stood for the way that the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary were bound

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[6] For "imaginative universal" (*universale fantastico*) see Vico, *New Science*, §§381, 460, 809, and 1033.

[7] Jacques Lacan, Seminar XXIII, *The Sinthome* , trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018).

overdetermination
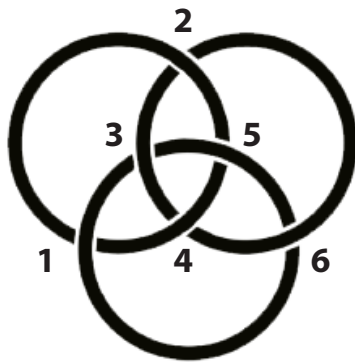
$$+1 \;\boxtimes\; -3 \;\boxtimes\; +5 \;\;-6$$
$$-1 \;\;+2 \;\boxtimes\; +4 \;\;-5 \;\boxtimes$$
$$\boxtimes\; -2 \;\;+3 \;\;-4 \;\boxtimes\; +6$$

Figure 3. Gauss Coding of the Borromeo knot (each row represents the over/under passage of a ring) reveals the presence of a "virtual ring" (the symmetry of the gaps) holding the three together. In my view, this may obviate the necessity of Lacan's specification of a fourth ring to lace the others together; and, the idea of a *virtual* but *effective* presence in the original configuration is closer to the idea of the RSI system presented in Seminar XX. And, the resemblance of the blank, ⊠, to the *objet petit a* is uncanny. It is the gap, the radically permanent lack.

together by the pattern of overlaps and underlaps. The binding is real and effective, but the knot itself is virtual. Using Gauss Coding, each crossing of one ring by another is assigned a plus or minus for crossing over or under, respectively, another ring. Each ring lacks two coded interactions, and the "sum" of these amounts to a fourth ring that holds together the rings virtually. Although the virtual knot is effective, Lacan specified the addition of a literal fourth ring to illustrate directly this need for an added binder. Gauss Coding requires a point of view to maintain a visual frame for which ring is on top, which on bottom. The literal fourth ring dispenses with this requirement.[8]

Because analysis must limit itself to "follow in the footsteps" of psychosis, with Joyce this amounts to a literary analysis that is as over-determined as Joyce's construction of the ideal eternal history, and just as over-determined as Vico's account of the ideal eternal history; *and*, just as over-determined as the ideal eternal history itself, the "ultimate automaton." This is particularly important because, as Lacan argued, Joyce avoided full–blown psychosis by writing. The signifiers Joyce used to stave off psychotic collapse were necessarily "pre-psychotic" in their ability to substitute, for the name of the Father (the signifier required for neurosis and lacking in psychosis), an authority so thoroughly over-determined that the question of lack could never arise. The result, one could say, is an automated father who generates rule–based behavior while claiming exemption. If the position of HAL in *Space Odyssey 2001* is that of $\exists x \sim \Phi x$ ("there is at least one not subject to the phallic rule"), then $\forall x \Phi x$ ("all must obey the rule, Φ") is the automated obedient result, in the form of overdetermined literary text.[9] At the same time, it could be said that the reader finds a feminine option ($\sim \forall x \Phi x$, "not all of x must obey the rule, Φ"), in that the text sacrifices itself on behalf of the layers produced by overdetermination. Where most texts favor certain readings, the over-determined text could be said to subject itself to the "suffering" of competing meanings. As Haruki Murakami said of his enigmatic novel, "*Kafka on the Shore* contains several riddles, but there aren't any solutions provided. Instead, several of these riddles combine, and through their interaction the possibility of a solution takes shape. And the form this solution takes will be different for each reader. To put it another way, the riddles function as part of the solution."[10] One could say that the father "disappears" as an authority figure specifying certain correct readings, just as Joyce's father was largely absent from family life and rarely if ever laid down any laws.

the (incontinent) Real

When Freud attempted to explain why shell–shocked veterans of The Great War were compelled to revisit their traumatic experiences of war "in person" rather than situate them within the cushions of memory, he

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[8] I am indebted to Mr. Alireza Moharrer, an engineer and mathematician living in Oakland, California, for explaining the Gauss Code to me. As with so many other things, A. M. seems able to read my thoughts and supply the necessary fuel to go forward.

[9] For the idea of a "text machine," there is the magic precedent of the bottle of ink that already contains the words that a writer will pen from it; or the images that the artist will produce with his brush.

[10] Haruki Murakami, "Questions for Murakami about Kafka on the Shore," *Conversations*. URL: http://www.harukimurakami.com.

began to open the large can of small worms known as the death drive. This "drive of drives" would continue to be problematic for everyone who theorized or criticized it, possibly because it partook of the inner nature of *jouissance*, which circulates throughout psychoanalysis in as many guises as there are conditions in which it is found.[11] The contronym of pleasurepain was "primal" for culture and history, the analysand, and analysis. In fact, the vicissitudes of *jouissance* could be said to follow Burke's observation, that first there is "astonishment, with some degree of horror," followed by the "inferior effects" of admiration, reverence, and respect. These could be regarded as labels of Vico's ideal eternal history, with *jouissance* working as a turbulent fluid flowing through the ages of gods, heroes, and men.

If we stick with the radical nature of the traumatic Real and its contronymic/primal *jouissance*, we must follow the clue about the virtual force holding the RSI system together. This is the fourth ring that is "there because it is not there," a presence constructed out of the sheer symmetry of absence(s). In other words, the traumatic Real is the basis of the overdetermination and hence automation of the unconscious in its (blocked) attempt to communicate with the subject. The virtuality of *jouissance* in the role of the object–cause of desire is expansive. If we consider virtuality not in the customary view of digitally generated "virtual realities" but, in Slavoj Žižek's inversion, "the reality of the virtual," we see a constructive rather than a duplicative process.[12] Žižek analyzes each ring of the RSI system in light of the presence of key virtualities that make each ring work, but it is necessary to point out that the linking term, virtuality, works as a fourth (and literally virtual) ring. Thus, what we might observe about the virtual fourth ring revealed by Gauss Coding should apply to Žižek's argument: that it is the *symmetry* of absence that makes this fourth ring effective.

Figure 4. Diagram of the sheep's liver found near Piacenza, with inscriptions used in Etruscan and Roman haruspicy. 4 March 2007. Divination was overdetermined in that the procedures of sacrifice and hepatoscopy were fixed. Any variation would nullify the sacrifice by breaking the continuum presumed between the ritual and the temporal instant.

Can symmetry answer the questions raised in the beginning by the overdetermination of the scholar (A. M. Klein) of the overdetermination of the artist (Joyce) who, in order to stave off psychosis artfully but manically constructs an over-determined automaton of a text, whose design is borrowed from the over-determined theory of culture (Vico) about the ultimate overdetermination of the human mind, the *universale fantastico*? This chain of evidence reveals a provenance indebted to *jouissance*, so much so that it is tempting to jump to the equally indebted, equally over-determined function of the death drive in the "project" of staving off psychosis by simulating it in a work of art. At least, thanks to Vico, we have a name for the project: Jove/Zeus. This gives us the first part of a diagram that, if elaborated, traces the *projection* of an unrecognized subjectivity into substance that is both animated and automated by the projection, but which generates its own concealed surplus that retroactively locates its origin and, at first (in mythic thought) *fixes this point* in what could be called a "Promethean stasis."

As Vico explains, culture begins when feral pre-subjective humans end their wandering in the belief that the literal ground of altars they set up to measure and worship the forces of the sky obliges them to to stay put. "Don't just do something, stand there!" — the advice given by director Martin Gabel to a young actress who was gesticulating wildly — seems to have been the rule of

[11] Dylan Evans, "From Kantian Ethics to Mystical Experience: An Exploration of Jouissance," in Dany Nobus, ed. *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Other Press, 1999), 1–28.

[12] Slavoj Žižek, "Manufacturing Reality: Slavoj Zizek and the Reality of the Virtual" (documentary video), Ben Wright, director (London, 2004).

the first human cultures.[13] The sanctity of the first sanctuaries was determined by their localization. We know from surviving forms of geomancy (New Grange, Stonehenge, etc.) that the calibration of annual events such as solstices with privileged points for divination, sacrifice, and the storage of records was incredibly precise given the available technologies of astronomical observation. The myth of Prometheus, as Vico tells it, is that the first human cultures, having discovered the role of fire in establishing the "religions of the hearth" were necessarily tied to the hearth's specific location and locale. Prometheus embodied this relationship by being chained to a rock and exposed to serial hepatectomy by Jove in the guise of an eagle. The importance of the liver in divination is historically established. The surface of the liver seemed to duplicate the pattern of constellations and could be subjected to tests. Overdetermination applied to both *locale* and the idea of temporality that held that simultaneous events were fatalistically bound to share common meanings. This is the idea of Chinese divination, famously represented by the codices collected in the *I Ching*. But, the idea is equally well preserved in the conversion of astronomical observations into astrological analyses, documented by Ernst Panofsky, Raymond Klibansky, and Fritz Saxl in their comprehensive *Saturn and Melancholy*.[14] Synchronicity is, if anything, temporal overdetermination. It presumes a quantum spookiness pervading the universe, mechanically automating every detail, no matter how small or insignificant. The logic of divination in fact aims to connect what is least significant — random events detached from the contexts that might make them understandable — with what is momentous. Joyce appropriated this *conjunctio oppositorum* for his own "epiphanies," records of overheard conversations snatched from unsuspecting strangers and written on the pages of his notebook.[15] If quantum synchronicity isn't over-determining, what is? This illuminates a key fact: Joyce, in his appreciation of Vico's account of ethnography of divination, understood fully that his own text, in being over-determined, was a form of divination. Like the first humans, who practiced divination in order to stave off the collective psychosis of a world that they had projected but was "coming back at them" with a terror akin to Judge Paul Schreber's castrating divinity, Joyce used Vico to stave off his own immanent psychosis by substituting, for the missing signifier, the name–of–the–father as a version of ∃x~Φx, the father as an over-determined text. This was a buffer as well as a geomantic ploy. It allowed Joyce to leave Dublin and settle in Trieste. It provided him a stable program for the modernist text of *Ulysses* and later the conceptually more psychotic (and, hence, necessarily more over-determined) "post-Modernist" *Finnegans Wake*.

In other words, the characterization of Joyce's writing as a form of divination would be not just historically and technically accurate; it would be psychoanalytically precise in the way that divination was, for the first humans, serving the same purpose, namely to hold psychosis at bay. This parallel allows us to reveal another section of the diagram of subjective projection. When the extimated subjective contents reflect a determinative origin point that interpellates and immobilizes the subject, its trajectory is interrupted by a fantasy formation. Ethnographically, this is the creation of highly ritualized procedures for taking and interpreting auspices, recording the results, and comparing interpretations to produce what Vico called the first "common mental dictionaries."[16] In psychoanalysis, this fantasy formation is, for the human subject, the vector held in place by the ego and the *objet petit a*: a barrier blocking the attempted

[13] Garson O'Toole, "Don't Just Do Something, Stand There," *Quote Investigator*. URL: https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/03/22/stand-there/. Vico's references to stasis include, *New Science*, §§195, 336, 337, 379, 523, 524, 554, 567, 629, 712, 717, 736, and 1098.

[14] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy; Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964).

[15] See Russell Grigg, "Foreclosure," in *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 67. Grigg cites Robert Scholes and R. M. Kain, eds., *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the Raw Materials for 'A Potrait of the Artist as a Young Man,'* (Evanston, IN: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 21.

[16] Vico, *New Science*, §162.

communication of the unconscious to the subject. By tracing (1) the outward "objective" projection of the subject's self–suppressed emotional nature, to (2) the construction of an orthogonal vector representing the resulting perceived independence and inaccessibility of "mute substances endowed with mind," to (3) the reflective and "extromissive" power of such substances to surveil and punish its human source, the nature of this ego–*objet petit a* blockade can be better understood. It is formed at a kind of communal Mirror Stage, with an Imaginary subject formation, an ego that *represents* subjectivity in spectral ways. At the antipode of this formation is the *objet petit a* in the form of the partial drive, the gaze. This is the often misunderstood power of "blind objects" to convert their blindness into a panoptical and extromissive vision able not just to detect the subject's moral/ethical shortcomings but to punish and correct them. Ethnographical evidence for this seemingly looney idea forces us to accept it as not just normal for the mythic mind but universal, even for later, more developed mentalities.

The conversion of blindness into not just sightedness but the ability to "super-charge" vision with omniscience, universal jurisdiction, and corrective powers is common to the tradition of prophets and seers, who not only are able to predict the future but *pronounce* their prophecies in ways to insure that they *must come true*. The form of this enforcement is entirely Lacanian. The interrupted message "always arrives at its destination" in an inverted form. This is also the idea of the rebus, the linguistic modality of the unconscious, where the *name* of *objects* are detached from their conventional assignments and re-attached according to a "sublimated *and* sublime" grammar.

If this ego–*a* vector is a blockade holding a psychotic message at bay, its status as a "reality of the virtual" cannot be ignored. This re-establishes the effectiveness of the RSI system, revealed by Gauss Code inspection. The virtual is effective not simply because it is absent and only virtually present; it works because of its symmetry. In a set of three rings, each ring makes four actual crossings and two "virtual crossings." The set contains six of these, spaces between the +1/–1, +2/–2, etc. actual overs–and–unders (see Fig. 3). A direct graphic translation of this produces a lambda–shaped arrangement, Λ, of positive numbers on the ascending side, negative or cancelling numbers on the descent. The space inside the lambda is the virtual gap that holds the positive and negative numbers apart, with the peak presumably performing the pure function of conversion.
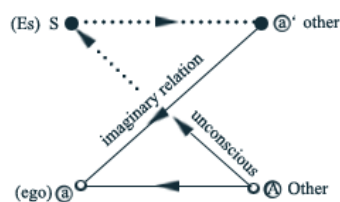

Figure 5. Lacan's L-schema, developed in Seminar II, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, 1988. This crisscross design is unable to distinguish the subject's (S's) *projection* from the two vectors directed back to the subject from the Other, (1) a reactive message to the subject, in the form of an intercepted message that will eventually be delivered in inverted form and (2) a determinative locational vector immobilizing the (psychotic) subject pending the construction of a "para-psychotic" stand–in.

There are many potential applications of this lambda feature. The first is the most obvious: Lacan's L-schema (Fig. 5), where the ego–*a* vector is depicted literally, in opposition to the subject–Other (the Other being both the constructed external Other and the unconscious). Here, the attempt the unconscious makes to communicate with the subject is successfully blocked, but it would be hard to say what the nature of this blockage is. Is it fantasy formed from the Imaginary alliance of the ego with its spectral other, held in place by a "weaponized" gaze? Is it the puzzle of the rebus or is the *style* of the rebus itself the solution to the puzzle? At the crisscross point, clearly there are several keys, all pivoting around the issue of virtuality, perhaps not so much the "reality of the virtual" as a "virtual *Real*," something that resists symbolic description and whose very resistance is thematically extended in its various formations. At this crossroads, two things must happen. First, an effective barrier must be constructed, although we don't know whether the task of psychoanalysis is to maintain the barrier or remove it.

Possibly one approach avoids these aporia and goes directly to the

question of effectiveness. This is Žižek's emphasis in his lecture on the reality of the virtual. What makes the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real *work in actuality*, Žižek says, is their status as virtual. His first example is that of the virtual Symbolic. A father's authority is maintained not by direct employment of any powers but, instead, by grimaces, frowns, or tones of voice that represent this power virtually. The paradox is that if the father actually uses physical force, his authority is immediately diminished. Authority's effectiveness extends to the issue of belief, where for example the child pretends to believe in Santa Claus in order to support the parents' (clearly faked) assertions in the fiction. In the case of the virtual Real, Žižek asks us to consider a Real for each element of the RSI system. A "real Imaginary" is, for example, an image too strong to be confronted. The real Symbolic is precisely represented by quantum physics, which proposes self–referential elements that prevents their principles from being absorbed into everyday reality. Quantum concepts are radically paradoxical and can be described only in terms of "impossibilities," such as spooky entanglement, which violates the rules of local physics.

The real Real (which is the pure state of the virtual Real) is what accompanies the Symbolic as its obscene shadow. Žižek asks us to imagine the army unit that marches while singing nonsense obscenities. The enigma, Žižek notes, is why the Symbolic, military discourse is this case, needs this obscene supplement. Another amusing example comes from the Julie Andrews film, *The Sound of Music*, where the "anti-Nazi" von Trapp family actually aspires to the "ethnic purity" ideals promoted by Aryan literature. The real anti-Nazis are the Nazis themselves. As impeccably dressed, urbane, sophisticated bureaucrats, who more do they resemble than the Jews of the Weimar Republic, who operated as completely assimilated Germans who "made things work"? Thus, we cannot accept the intentional message of the film without reference to this *verso*, the switch that has the Nazis acting like their reviled enemies while the presumed anti-Nazis live up to the ethnographic specifications of racist Aryans. Žižek summarizes by saying that *kenosis* — knowing without knowing — makes possible this virtual Real. This is precisely the Cartesian insight: that, at the moment when thinking happens, our being becomes inaccessible. The insight added by our discussion of overdetermination is that, inaccessibility doesn't just happen; it must be structured. And, we must add that this structuring is what constitutes the human psyche as such. This means that, the human subject is the author of the automaton that constitutes the bilateral Other (both objectivity and the unconscious); but the Other, in addition to being inaccessible and mechanically/effectively infallible, possesses its author. Thus, we say that, although the speaker seems to literally use language, it is actually language that "speaks the speaker."

Žižek compares this shift, this reverse predication, to the shift from Einstein's weaker Special Theory of Relativity to the stronger General Theory. In the former, concentrations of mass curve space, which is regarded as "normally" uncurved. In the latter, space itself becomes curved. Curvature is implicit in the idea and instances of space, in whatever quantity and degree. To take this to the case of psychoanalysis, we cannot form the idea of a "normal" subject and then see neurosis, perversion, or psychosis as deviations from proper operation of subjectivity. Rather, the subject is *fundamentally* psychotic, perverse, and neurotic. What makes the difference, therefore, has to do with the way in which communication attempts by the unconscious to reach the subject are blocked. These are the virtual Real where it is impossible to say whether blockage is the problem or solution.

What if the Symbolic's "space" is not cut or interrupted by gaps then attributed to the Real, which the Symbolic cannot assimilate; what if, instead, the Symbolic is, radically, the very cuts and gaps that seem to interrupt it. In this view, the Symbolic is designed to destroy itself. Its secondary effects/defects — incompleteness, inconsistency, contradiction — are really the main job. The Symbolic *simultaneously* aims to survive and self–destruct. If the the possibility that noise in communication more important than the

message is hard to swallow conceptually, why not accept it for what it is? Wouldn't this re-appraisal of the secondary constitute the perfect time to be thinking about the death drive?

And, what if this self–deconstruction is not limited to the Symbolic, but to the Imaginary and the Real as well? The answer seems not so far off. The other name of the virtual Real that binds the RSI system together and makes each of the components effective is the death drive.[17] This would explain, for one thing, the death drive's seemingly paradoxical combination of opposites (trauma with Nirvana, death with survival, endless repetition with the desire to start over, etc.). Whatever gave Richard Boothby the patience to stick with the death drive's affiliation with neural circuitry, metaphors of energetics, and Freud's conviction that the psyche was grounded in material biology deserves our consideration. This consistent conversion of primary to secondary is psychoanalysis's perverse underbelly. As Žižek has put it, Hegel's claim that "Spirit is a bone" has a backlash that corrects our disappointment over materialist reductionism. This backlash is that *bone was spirit all along*. The fact that spirit was the automated by–product of the subject's misrecognition of itself in the form of nature's objectivity is not determinative, it is *over*–determinative. The reductionism creates a surplus; death reveals an "undead" that refuses to recognize death just as the unconscious refuses to recognize negation. Reductionism always goes too far. Reductionism — the unavoidable form science must take if it values the truth — would be false if it ended in reduction. But, reduction succeeds in this "going too far." It literally gets us more than we bargained for.

Thus, the puzzle surrounding the story of Prometheus's theft of fire points simultaneously to the religions of the hearth and to the spatial paralysis that forbade early Cyclopian cultures to move those hearths. The theme of paralysis morphs into Medusa's freezing gaze and the catalepsy motif imposed on mourners, set to the period of time required for moist flesh to leave dry bones. The extromission theme permeates narrative detail, such as the monocularity of the swidden "eyes in the forest" (clearings made to take auspices of sky signs), the characterization of Cyclopes as having one eye, and the association of caves with labyrinths having single entries/exits. The extromissive look is what makes the father's authority effective, the dog's bark worse than his bite, the quantum equation real but incredible. If psychoanalysis is precisely that science required to "tarry with the negative," it is because its subject matter is, from its very origins, this obligation to abide contradiction. As Richard Feynman put it, if you want simple answers, go get another universe.[18] Phantasmagoria is not the exception, it is the rule, which is why cultures everywhere insulate the celebration of plastic identity and death–in–life/life–in–death, and promiscuity of emotions to holidays with carefully crafted spatial and temporal boundaries. The "incontinence of the void" is not a predication; the void is by definition incontinent. And, it is the void that defines the virtual Real.[19] The fact that the Real is essentially incontinent points to the necessity of focusing on boundary conditions. It is not just the Cyclops who has one eye, it is his cave, which has only one entry/exit. It is not that the Cyclopes are forbidden to abandon the sites of their hearths, it is the eye of the god who has returned their astonished gaze toward the heavens in an inverted form, joy to fear.

It is not just the blue of these heavens that can be concentrated when it is inverted, it is the function of inversion itself that is written into the blue, the *cœlum*; it is the combination of "heaven" and "wedge" into

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[17] See Youngjin Park, "Post–Fantasmatic Sinthome." URL: http://art3idea.psu.edu/texts/park.pdf.

[18] "There's a kind of saying that you don't understand its meaning, [you say] 'I don't believe it. It's too crazy. I'm not going to accept it.' … [But, you'll] have to accept it. It's the way nature works. If you want to know how nature works, we looked at it, carefully. Looking at it, that's the way it looks. You don't like it? Go somewhere else, to another universe where the rules are simpler, philosophically more pleasing, more psychologically easy." Richard Feynman, The Sir Douglas Robb Lectures, University of Auckland, 1979.

[19] Slavoj Žižek, *Incontinence of the Void: Economico–Philosophical Spandrels* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

this primal term that writes itself out in the story of the birth of Athena.[20] As Lacan says, the language of the unconscious requires the medium of time and the modality of myth. To understand the blockage of the message the unconscious wishes to send to the subject, we must understand the architecture of that blockage, the way it is both a trap and a release. Then, we know everything we need to know about architecture in general.[21]

the birth of Athena

According to the thesis of David Finkelstein (*The Melancolia Manifesto*, 2008), the title Dürer gave his famous engraving of 1514, "Melencolia §1," was intentionally misspelled to produce the anagram, *limen cœli*, or "gate of heaven." This gate is shown in the upper left portion of the image, a semi-circular rainbow within which we see a banner bearing the title of the engraving, carried by a flying dragon and a luminous celestial body. No mistake about it: the gate is the result of truncation, given in the figure of the geometric solid cube that is truncated to create an upper and lower triangle. Like the truncated architecture super–star, the Tower of Babel ("Babel" = "Bab-El," the Gate of God), these triangles are meant to be superimposed to combine their respective virtualities, Hades and Heaven, a merger symbolized by the Star of David's design of interlocking twin figures. Like the Möbius band's virtual lock, the Star of David's glue is the cube that disappears when they are woven together. The cube is "doubled" in this merger, and we are reminded of the famous "Delian paradox," the soothsayer's ultimatum, that to rid Athens of the plague, the altar at Delos would have to be enlarged by precisely a factor of two. A square can be doubled using a compass and straightedge, but a cube can be doubled only by using origami. Dürer's sketches indicate that he had himself constructed his famous solid as a flat cut–out design.

Figure 6. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia §1*, 1514. The title is an anagram for *limen cœli*, or "the gate of heaven." The collection of objects in this emblem is, virtually, a catalog of rebuses. The polyhedron is a truncated cube, a model for the way that the rebus is taken from its perspectival context (which can be constructed with a straightedge and compass) and cast into an "orthographic" space requiring origami analysis. The magic square of Jove (said to alleviate the ill effects of melancholy) is reworked to display the date of the engraving, 1514. The middle rows combine to create a palindrome of number 5—12, 12—5. The gate of heaven is depicted by the rainbow around what some art historians have claimed to be the moon rather than the sun.

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[20] See Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico,* trans. Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1944), 148.

[21] In my view, Žižek has missed the opportunity to see architecture as anything more than an illustration of the necessary surplus (the spandrel). Had he pursued Kojin Karatani's notion of an architectonic in the Western metaphysical system of thought and its "will to architecture," he would have avoided making superficial alliances with post-Modern examples that, in fact, prove the opposite of his intended points. I base my conclusions on Nadir Lahiji's review, "In Interstitial Space — Žižek on Architectural Parallax," *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 3, 3 (2009). No pagination. URL: http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/IJZS/article/view/185/185.
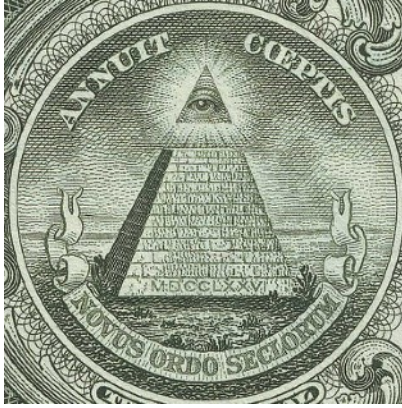
Figure 7. Power is customarily associated with the extromissive eye, shown here *via* the provenance of Masonic imagery. The eye appears *above* the limit of the azure but is at the same time the metonymy of the azure. For the mythic mind, blue was the limit of visibility, and direct contact with heaven truncated the head of representative figures, such as Justizia, who appeared headless when viewed from below. The interchangeability of blindness and invisibility is evident, in the modern depiction of Justice as blindfolded.

What does this have to do with the birth of Athena? This story involves the word, *cœlum*, at the level of a rebus object.[22] While a rebus is in a limited sense an object pictured in order to be converted into the sound of its name, the basic function begins with the generic detachment of a figure from the figure–ground "dual" that defines things in terms of perspectival scenery. A figure without its ground converts the image into a hieroglyph. The linguistic hieroglyph is a bimodal signifier. A picture word can be used to indicate either the sound of the object's name or the object itself, but it retains the ambiguity connecting speech to writing. A rebus in the general sense is something detached from a pictorial context to produce an oracular effect, just as Joyce extracted fragments of overheard conversations to create "epiphanies." Etymologically, *cœlum* combines "heaven" and "wedge." Wedge includes anything sharp or pointed: an axe, an engraver's burin, an "argute" expression.[23] Heaven is, the story reveals, the head of Jove/Zeus, the part of the cranium that holds within it the universe ruled by Zeus. We see it from the inside, from the point of view of earth, where from our position above the subterranean entrails but below the firmament of planets and stars, azure represents the limit and screen from which our look skyward is returned by a (contronymic) gaze by which Zeus sees all and determines all — extromission in a color.[24]

Zeus had impregnated the Oceanid Metis; soothsayers predicted that the child would become lord of heaven, so to prevent that, Zeus transformed Metis into a fly and swallowed her. But, the child continued to gestate and, when she was ready to be born, Zeus had a headache so severe that he called upon Hephaistos, the smith, to relieve the pressure with his axe. Athena escaped through this cut and emerged fully armed, to take her place at the symbolic acropolis of the heavens. The craniotomy was simultaneously a birth canal and, in earthly representations, the path of processions to the citadel fortresses that Athena protected. The word for heaven, *cœlum*, was also the name of the argute instrument opening it to a celestial beyond. Thus, both Athena's armor and the fortresses she guarded were sharp. Like the mountain top they occupied, they "cut into" the sky.

Hilltops offer those who occupy them both military dominance and optimum surveillance powers. Thus, the citadel is "extromissive." Its panopticism is simultaneously its power as a giver and enforcer of laws. Physical terrain thus compounds what is given in the rebus conversion of the word for heaven. One could say that the strategic and civic value of high ground is obvious, and that surveillance is key to an effective defense. One could also point to the metaphoric power of mountains to symbolize strength, wisdom, and their metonymic service in supplying a visible representation of complex relationships

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[22] See footnote 10.

[23] The literary figure of the "witty saying," the *agutezza*, is based on this idea of sharpness. Vico explains that a witty expression is sharp in that it is able to penetrate dull matter, as *animus* penetrates *anima*. Vico, *Autobiography*, 149.

[24] For this reason, the Roman Senate required that no law could be made except beneath the blue sky. This custom acknowledged the extromissive power of Jove's watchful/vengeful "eye," concentrated by the architectural oculus. This returned power of the *cœlum* palindromically locked in the dialectic of subjective *pro*-jection and authenticity of natural objects *perceived* to be divine and capable of emitting a reverse–angle interpellating gaze that *locates* the originating human subject. Blue eyes are regarded as penetrating and orthopsychic. Subjected to their gaze, the viewed person is compelled to tell the truth.

overdetermination

binding justice, civic virtue, and political affiliation: *Levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi,* "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills / from whence cometh my help" (Psalm 120).

But, the point is that this topographical dominance and civic idea is opened up by the story of Athena, which seems to "explain" the contradictory passive and active components of the Latin word *cœlum*, as if the word itself contains the secret to the necessity of combining military dominance, civic authority, and virginal femininity. This is a more complex and comprehensive vision than the "naturalistic explanation," that hills have strategic military value and symbolic potential. In addition to the obvious, we have the connection of legal authority to extromissive vision, the convertibility of blindness and invisibility, the relation of male–dominated religions to the suppression and subsequent vindication of the feminine. This brings forward the associations of individualistic Cyclopian cultures fixed to their hearths — religions of the flame — to the civic unification of the flame in the traditions consolidating the flame in a civic institution protecting both virginity and collectivizing the ancestors of constituent families. The single word *cœlum* tells the story of cultural evolution, from a literalistic mythic mentality forbidding the movement of human groups to a "heroic mentality" able to use myths as "cover stories" (legal fictions) justifying the transition from household worship of family gods to civic worship of abstract theological personalities — e. g. the Olympians. The birth of Athena is one such cover story.

The result is … overdetermination. In the word *cœlum* we get an etymological basis about a cultural transition, a metaphoric base for the story about this transition, and the status of the contronym to locate this word and its cultural engagements to the psychoanalytic framework within which contronyms figure as links to a primal, pre-subjective state of the human mind. Any one domain informs the others; the result is a layered compendium of ethnographic features, linguistic practices, psychoanalytic necessities, and the artistic and literary by–products of these separate domains. Each is an incomplete "sentence" in that it is missing one or more pieces of the puzzle. But, instead of adding together examples that are stacked to fill in the blanks of one account with surpluses from other accounts, one should look at the pattern of absences. Like the virtual Real that glues together the Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary, the "reality of the virtual" that is the Efficient Cause of each of the Lacanian categories of the psyche. If these open spaces are, as the Gauss Coding of the Borromeo knot suggests, symmetrical, we may be within reach of defining a "quantum Real," a virtuality that is beyond the limit of what is theoretically articulable but which is, on account of the effectiveness of the virtual, the *reason things work*.

The polythetic set of "sentences" of myths, images, ethnographic practices, geographical necessities, and historical legacies is a sponge with holes. Each "sentence" lacks elements. Rather than seeing the polythetic set as ideally complete, like a perfect anagram or cross–word puzzle, its incompleteness suggests some internal complicity between loss and gain. "More is less" discloses a pattern akin to the transparency allowed by the perfect structure of the jewel. Just as the perfect jewel would be an "unbreakable nothingness," such a combination of less and more calls for more than an incontinence between subjective desire and objective resistance to desire. The virtual Real is "traumatically" contronymic.

the form of the formless

I believe that there are two directions to follow, and in some sense they must be followed in parallel. (1) The first pursues the quantum fold analogy, which has the structure given to it in an early form by Vico: the imaginative universal, a transfer of efficient cause from observer to observed, in Vico's account of the first humans who, frightened by thunder, attribute to a sky–god, Jove, the precise violent but suppressed nature of their own personalities. Overdetermined efficiency (nature's subsequent powers) and inaccessibility (the fact that nature's powers have been projected unconsciously) are correlated. The result

is that what makes things work (the efficient cause, which Žižek identifies with the virtual) is what makes things take on the form of enigma: a "rebus conversion."

Once humans see the natural world as subject with the same properties they had concealed from themselves, they lose access to that subjectivity and must attempt to restore it through rituals at places that are determined absolutely, at specific locations that cannot be abandoned for any reason. Thus, the pyramids of the Mayans, Aztecs, Sumerians, and Egyptians represent, above all else, a thesis of stasis. Like the Promethian/Cyclopian religions of the hearth/Hestia, loss of access translates into a tyrannical symmetry of what has been lost. Fire has been stolen; the legal–sacred debt can be calculated. This "mirror stage" of human culture is, fundamentally, an economy requiring a *time by which* debts (transgressions) must be paid and *spaces within which* signifiers may be occulted, preserved, and ultimately disclosed — by means of codes, passwords, alignments, and conditional portals. For these spaces to be defined with as much precision as the time of the economies of transgression is the direct consequence of granting nature its independent determinative, *over*determined will. When the first humans open up clearings in the forest to view the signs of the sky, says Vico, these places are permanently fixed and those who maintain them are paralyzed by the extromission of the gods who gaze back, gods who use this gaze to exact repayment for unlucky gains or unusual beauty.

The time of debt repayment in this case of Promethean theft ticks in the modality of retroaction. Hence, astonishment is primordially the moment of retroactive memory that simultaneously identifies a trauma in the past and assesses the interval between this past moment and present realization as an overdetermined field of quantum causation, i. e. a phantasmagoria. Gilles Deleuze has pointed out that this time is distinctively Borgesian:

> In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives he chooses one at the expense of the others. in the almost unfathomable Ts'ui Pên, he chooses — simultaneously — all of them. He thus *creates* various futures, various times which start others that will in their turn branch out and bifurcate in other times. This is the cause of of the contradictions in the novel. 'Feng, let us say, has a secret. A stranger knocks at his door. Fang makes up his mind to kill him. Naturally there are various possible outcomes. Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, both can be saved, both can die and so on and so on. In Ts'ui Pên's work, all the possible solutions occur, each one being the point of departure for other bifurcations.[25]

(2) The second line of inquiry follows the "psychoanalytic" provenance of the issue of overdetermination. We must pay attention to the fact that the production of multiple causes for any one effect is not for the purpose of offering alternatives from which one chooses the most attractive. The multiples must be taken for *multiplicity's sake*. This is what Freud meant when he attempted to define the meaning of the rebus in a dream. No one association is "correct"; it is the fact that a set of possibilities exists *as a set*. In this reduction that is not a reduction, Freud is at his most Vichian. The process of metaphor Vico articulates in the form of the imaginative universal extimates subjectivity to an object–domain involving multiple sites of transfer: wheels within wheels. The sky is not isolated as the domain of Jove/Zeus. The mountain whose peak reaches beyond the clouds is involved, as is the hydrological cycle, the ocularity of the sun, and the punitive agencies of thunder and lightning. When the oak is said to attract lightning strikes, the logic of Zeus passes to Cardea/Djana, goddess of hinges and doors, where oak is the favored wood. The polymorphous perversity attributed to the pre-subjective child could be said to characterize the overdetermined nature imagined by the pre-subjective human, in whose mythic state of

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[25] Jorge Luis Borges, *Jorge Luis Borges, Collected Fictions*, ed. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998).

mind the *set* of possible relations, as polymorphic and overdetermined, takes precedence over any one element of the set.[26] This exceeds the most optimistic aspirations of Umberto Eco's "open semiosis."

Waking life attempts to make a selection that the unconscious does not require, possibly thanks to its famous indifference to negation, death, and time. This is the efficient cause of the dream, the virtuality of the dream–work, what, as Žižek puts it, *makes dreams work*. In the same way, multiplicity is the efficient cause of Joyce's *Nestor* chapter. History, Joyce is saying, is this combination of fate and accident that requires us to think in terms of multiplicities while forbidding us to pick favorite causes. Any one event is "a shout in the street," something we wouldn't have chosen as a favorite cause, something which both represents and produces astonishment. As Burke echoed Vico in saying that astonishment gave rise to the secondary effects of admiration, reverence, and respect, astonishment is in direct contact with multiplicity. The secondary features try to secularize this multiplicity by recording auguries, conventionalizing writing, making laws public. But, Burke reserves a pure idea of the sublime as the raw emotional response of astonishment. Admiration, reverence, and respect beg to be released from the absolute terror and spatial–temporal determinacy of this first encounter, where multiplicity accepts no substitutes, under penalty of death. Those who have been trapped in bell towers at matins; those who find themselves in the sweet spot of a church when an organist is showing off to friends during rehearsal; or those who have turned around a corner to see, suddenly, someone one thought to be dead know that astonishment is not convertible. It is a Vichian moment, when we are put into the primal position of being human for the first time.

We have stolen fire. Psychoanalysis allows us to understand our Promethean penalty precisely. It is the payment made by the signifier within the legal terms of the transfer that, in anecdotal terms, is the conversion of the "natural fright" of the sound of thunder into a *word* (Joyce detailed ten such words in *Finnegans Wake*), whose syllables were said to anticipate all human ordinary languages in the same way a perfect word anagram seems to offer a crystal of pre-linguistic meaningfulness. From crystal to broken fragments — the cover story for the Tower of Babel — we must stay put, be frozen in space, be "found out." We must suffer paralysis and desiccation, for blood ceases to flow through our veins. We are "like the dead," in a state of catalepsis. Not to worry: this is only what is conventionally required by the darkened auditorium when the curtain of a play or concert opens up to a bright stage. We sit still in the dark. "Don't just do something, stand there!" They also *serve* who only stand and wait. Wait for what? The Thing to die.

Lacan made clear the relation of signifiers to material things: the former kills the latter. But, the thing dies like any human subject — twice. Between the first death in the act of naming and the second death in the fearful symmetry of anagogy, there is a trial. The object wanders, haunts, echoes. It creates a turbulence that is argument and a silence that is truth.[27] In this interval, signs — rebuses — are left in caves that approximate the fractal folds of the labyrinth. The cave elaborates. It is the site of overdetermination that, by tightening its turns, accomplishes condensation in the manner of the whiskey distiller. Drops are wrung out of the air to be caught in small cups. The literary name for these coiled folds is the story in the story. With every change of level (from a main "linking tale" to sub-tales collected as an anthology, for example) the same elements or structures are encountered. This invokes the logic of fractals, which is to say that with each move across a boundary, the *negating value of the boundary is itself canceled*. The mathematical quality of this is that of the generic formula for the "metallic" sections, where, more or less, $x = 1 + 1/x$

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[26] Aaron Schuster has connected Freud's idea of auto-eroticism to Gilles Deleuzes idea of multiple "tiny egos" (larval subjects) able to do much the same thing. Aaron Schuster, *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017); Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 116.

[27] This confirms the alliance between the "rebus nature" of Lacan's teaching style as a duplication of the unconscious's and the dream's method of overdetermination. See John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, *Lacan and Language: A Reader's Guide to Écrits* (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1982), 2: "…Lacan's own message is locked up in an expression so obscure and enigmatic that for the uninitiated it constitutes a kind of rebus in itself."

(Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*: "mind your boots going out") or $x = 1 - 1/x$ ("mind your hats going in"). At each "step" the formula must insert itself again into $1/x$, producing a recursive series that natural numbers can only approximate poorly. Irrational numbers are essential in the function of optimizing distributions of things like seeds on the head of a sunflower because they can manage the economy of the spiral–against–spiral design that overdetermines each seed and locks it in place with a geometric palindrome. Overdetermination is not a question of quantity but, rather proportion — proportion that can be experienced in the simplest way by the transfer numerically condensed as 1/2, 2/1.

The Lacanian uncanny, like Freud's relies on a palindromic transfer to avoid the binary (and hence negational) coupling of opposite terms.[28] The subject fleeing the figure of death it has seen in the marketplace only to meet it "at the appointed time" in Samarra is not the mirror image of the subject who has forgotten to die (Ernst Jentsch's two "atoms" of the uncanny). Rather the mirror has reflected, instead of a premature reversed photo-realistic self of a subject whose body is still in pieces (*corps morcélé*) — projecting in time as well as space, the mirror holds in its depths the *objet petit a* that is the tell of the body–in–pieces.

Mladen Dolar sees, in E. T. A. Hoffman's story of "The Sandman," an early anticipation of Lacan's L-schema. Nathaniel, as subject, receives enigmatic messages from Olimpia, an automaton appropriately representing the unconscious. This message is blocked literally by the phantasm of Nathaniel's father and The Sand Man, generic stand–in for the evil lawyer Coppola and his assistant, the inventer/master of Olimpia, Spalanzani (Coppola "provided the eyes" while Spalanzani "took care of the mechanism") — what better team to manage the vector of specular blockage! Olimpia's messages of love are indeed rebus like. To Nathaniel's earnest entreaties, she merely has to close her eyes slowly and exclaim, "Oh … oh!" but Nathaniel understands: "[B]ut these few words appear as genuine hieroglyphs of an inner world full of love and a higher knowledge of the spiritual life in contemplation of the eternal Beyond" — in other words, love as overdetermination, the belief of all lovers that although they met by chance their love was fore-ordained. The interrupted message indeed arrives in inverted form. Nathaniel spots the lawyer in the crowd below, through binoculars, when he visits the tower of a town church. His "shadow" has uncannily coincided with his body; he can but jump to his shadow, his death. This ending recalls a poem by Ted Kooser ("Five P. M."):

> The pigeon flies to her resting place
> on a window ledge above the traffic,
> and her shadow, which cannot fly, climbs
> swiftly over the bricks to meet her there.

Coincidence equals overdetermination. The moment this axis of the imaginary shoots across space and time (the L-schema), it forces the unconscious to pause in its delivery of a message to the subject. The pause precipitates the rebus; but the rebus is also a location *outside* the space of the signifier, a space that must be traversed (displaced) in an act of metonymy. To get there from here we must place ourselves in the trans-subjective situation of the Prisoners who, having white or black dots pinned to their backs, cannot rely on the intersubjective evidence of seeing the other two's dots (both white) but, knowing that there are an even number of black dots and an odd number of prisoners, must play their game of Morra and make the trans-subjective leap into a phantasmagoria of "all or nothing."[29] They are all the odd men out; and out they go.

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28 Mladen Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny," *October* 58, Rendering the Real (Autumn, 1991): 5–23.

29 Derek Hook, "Towards a Lacanian Group Psychology: The Prisoner's Dilemma and the Trans-Subjective," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 43, 2 (2013): 115–132.