

# extimity and phantasmagoria: interpretation by the cut

[revised January 25, 2015]

*Thanks to the invitation from Prof. Marcia Feuerstein to speak to her seminar in the spring semester of 2019, I have taken the opportunity to bring together some loose ends of my research. I have recently been writing about the secondary (the artifact, the unintended consequence, the necessary supplement, the absent signifier, etc.) and space travel (Lacan's idea of extimity, or inside/out conversions). These projects fit within the general theoretical aim of the past five years: to introduce and clarify the role of the death drive in architecture. This has been a long-term interest, but because of the resistance to the death drive specifically and Freud in general in architecture theory, I've had to resort to radical measures. These include using the "death dream" theme in cinema and literature (the continued narration of someone who has died by the early moments of the work) and the varied form of recursion, self-reference, and the bi-modality of communications. To tie these varied themes and examples together, I resort to a method of graphic ancestry. Like the people who seek to know, by analysis of their genes, where they came from, I experiment with different kinds of graphs used to represent, among other things, the neuronal circuit, mathematical recursion, melancholy, mythical twinship, psychological desire, the drives (in particular the gaze), chiasmus, transfinite numbers, golden means, sexuation, and the RSI system of Lacan (Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real). The result has not been as confusing as it may sound to some. But, rather than present a thesis in an argument form, let me circulate a series of "notes" and then, at the presentation event, let the participants decide on the order of the discussion.<sup>1</sup>*



Giambattista Vico (1668–1744)

This is an experiment. Experiment is what distinguishes science from commentary, although commentary can become science if it knows how to use its rhetorical features. Even novels can become science. Certainly poems can, because their experiments take place at the level of the *letter*, of reading, where substitution and absence play key roles in bringing about *effects*. I only do one kind of experiment, called the "ersatz" experiment; it's drawn from the field of mathematics, where, in the face of a difficult problem, a conjecture is formed without any obvious ties to what is known about the problem. This is also called "a shot in the dark." The experiment's shot has an *effect* which makes no truth claims, but it does produce *data* about error, and this data is used in a succession of iterations that accumulate to make a resonant field of meanings. This field works to generate new ideas. The principle behind why it works is called "stochastic resonance," a term from neural network theory. These physicalistic terms and methods do not harm critical theory or

<sup>1</sup> Because my project over the years has been to join the (hitherto) unconnected work of Giambattista Vico to Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis, and because neither of these literatures has been understood to any significant degree by other architecture theorists, it seems unlikely that there will be any enthusiastic following-up by graduate students looking for dissertation topics or colleagues wishing to collaborate. But, because the WAAC faculty and students have always been involved with shared interests, and because we have a common heritage in our personal and academic relationship to Marco Frascari, Alexandria has been the best by far venue for discussing my work and linking it to others' interests. Elsewhere, the antipathy of architecture theory to psychoanalysis is exceeded only by its ignorance of any of its history or principles. Those who qualify as "close readers of Lacan" can be counted on the fingers of one hand, although there is a small group of knowledgeable scholars who can borrow here and there without making catastrophic errors. This is dedicated to them.

humanistic research. They connect at a methodological level, the point where every thinker must claim truthfulness and relevance.

When Francis Bacon (1562–1626) and, following his example, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), called their investigative projects “sciences” they weren’t kidding. They knew that human truth was not like the truth associated (later) with Positivism or Boolean truth tables. They knew it was reflexive, self-referential, and hence the Liar’s Paradox became the contextualizing challenge: how to make claims about making claims? The Cretan Liar is funny because he engages both of language’s levels of communication: (1) the level of representation, where we imagine that a “content” is moving from a speaker to an auditor; and (2) the level of the *act*, which includes the contexts of the speaker and auditor, the past and future of the



communication, and the cultural options available to all enunciations. The statement, “All Cretans are liars” seems to be a statement of fact until a Cretan says it, and then we realize we have *presupposed* that Cretans are not allowed to say such a statement, and that refusing to let someone say something violates the rule of communication, that the fact of content is a fact. Well, it’s not that simple. This has been realized for thousands of years by many top minds, and Plato and Parmenides might be said to have given us the playbook for how to proceed in this context of self-reference.

“Science,” in the context of self-reference means that we do not have the luxury of the fantasy that we can detach ourselves from our experiment. But, note carefully. Physicists are the very ones who have pointed out that this is a universal condition of all thought, not just humanistic thought. “Quantum” stands for the access denied by reference, the fact that we alter things by looking at them or just being interested in them. This is not the usual “inter-subjectivity” qualification — the relativist fantasy that there is no one truth, only different opinions.<sup>2</sup> Relativism is the stupid resistance to the idea of science, and just how stupid is revealed when the relativist reveals that they are not really interested in the issue; they simply want to register to get credit for attending (they do not stay past this point). The rest of us who are interested in subjectivity must simply say bye-bye to the relativist. They don’t want to be a part of thinking or the science that thinking (because of its obligation to pursue the truth) involves.

Science is not the same as philosophy, although the two inform each other. Philosophy breeds variety because it is (etymologically) a form of love. It aims to multiply ideas in the same way that lovers are sometimes said to wish for progeny, to continue their self-image through the generation of look-alikes. In *The Symposium*, Socrates articulates the exception, to suggest that philosophers seek another kind of immortality that doesn’t involve this; it is a “life-after-death” aspiration. This is the first articulation in Western thinking of the death drive’s main fantasy motif, the momentum of the soul past the moment of

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<sup>2</sup> Please, let’s not waste time on this. Relativism has been critiqued and shown to be false for over 2500 years, but because no one reads the critiques many continue to make the same mistakes in thinking. There is the quick rebuttal (that the relativist is contradicting him/herself by claiming that something is true); but the more interesting refutation involves looking into the relation of belief, impression, and subjectivity more deeply. If one does *not* do this spelunking, one is simply not engaging the issue of subjectivity, and simply standing at the border complaining about the cost of admission. Relativism is a fakery position but it does alert us to the issue of recursion and self-reference, which are always connected.

literal death — the interval “between the two deaths” that all cultures observe when someone has died (it calibrates the period of mourning to the imagined or real desiccation of the corpse). Socrates is a true philosopher because, unlike the Sophists, he rejected the idea of generation that was not death–drive related. In this subtle turn, he put philosophy into the position of being psychoanalysis: a science of subjectivity. Since then, Plato’s position has been resisted, falsified, and willfully misunderstood for primarily ideological reasons. The reason is clear; if the death–drive is acknowledged, Positivist assertions cannot be a part of science. Positivism and Relativism need each other, they are the perfect couple from Hell, two sides of the same coin that only pretends to be the value stamped on it.



Jacques Lacan (1901–1981)

But, like all ideologies, Positivism/Relativism seek power through words and continue to call the shots in many fields where terms such as science, creativity, imagination, knowledge, etc. are sanctified by giving them special captions that, if examined closely, turn out to be contradictory and tautological. Captioning itself is a form of the indexical (pointing out) strategy of distancing the knower from the known. The point does not fully specify what is being pointed out. It requires a rhetorical supplement, some implicit knowledge that the “pointee” must apply to understand the demonstration. This involves another Lacanian/Althusserian idea, that of interpellation. When we are required to say we know something that we do not properly know, this is ideology. We are put in the bad–faith (*mauvaise fois*) of forced collaboration with the speaker’s claim, that requires an assent on the part of auditors who can never know what the speaker requires them to know. This creates a void within subjects as individuals (for

whom the demand is to forget about knowing and just enjoy the situation) as well as subjectivity as a whole. Althusser’s example is still one of the best: the policeman blows her whistle and yells “Hey, you!” and each of the innocent passers-by who were not actually the object of this evocation thinks he/she did something wrong.

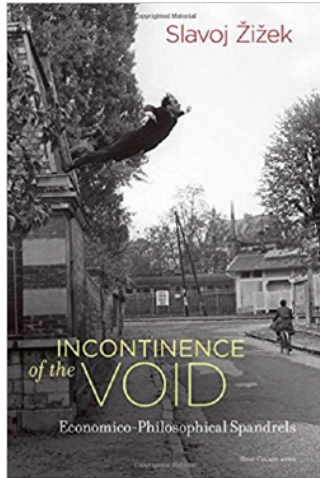
*two forms of interpretation: by punctuation or the cut*

Relativism has appropriated the powers of interpellation with its claim that knowledge is inaccessible, that science is impossible. How do they *know* this? We want to travel to the Land of the True but they say that they have been there and the hotels are crummy and the beaches are not that nice. Really? In place of this trip we get a Disneyland version, a (second-rate) humanism that uses what the psychoanalyst Dan Collins has called an “interpretation by punctuation.”<sup>3</sup> To make a long story short, this is interpretation that simply repackages “issues” or “problems” into new vocabularies and examples without looking at structure. Hence, it cannot explain anything because the problem has been transposed. When confronted with this, the second-rate humanist will object with a relativist excuse/alibi: there *is* no truth, cannot *be* any truth, so why are you bothering me with this demand? It’s important to note at this point that the title of scholar means that one is defined by one’s pursuit of truth, and to abrogate this is simply not to show up to work.

Dan Collins’ alternative is “interpretation by the cut.” To understand this, we are required to acknowledge a special kind of signifier. Lacanians will know about this immediately but others will have to be given extra time. There are some signifiers that are effective precisely because they are devoid of

<sup>3</sup> Dan Collins, “Stealing Money from Offices,” *Lacunæ* 16 (July 2018): 105–124.

meaning. Yet, their seeming defect allows them to structure and organize other signifiers. Typically, we say of such signifiers that they can't be defined. One example (from my field of geography, which I took up in between two romances with architecture) is that of the term "place." Attempts to define place fail because place is not a content or an idea; it is an empty relationship about which people say, "I can't say for sure, but I know what you mean." Place can thus combine ideas of place-*ment*, home, anxiety, wandering,



placelessness, etc. and sustain contradiction without running out of energy. The point is that by resisting determination, place is effective as a "master signifier." It carries with it a kind of "portable antagonism," without which it would lose its power as a signifier. It's meaningful by being meaningless.

Dan Collins advises us to do interpretation by the cut, not punctuation. Punctuation will always be like using a dictionary to define a word. We get substitutions, more words, that in turn raise new questions and which require further definition. We expand continually without the hope of reversing the centrifugal force of these additions; we can never come back to an *origin* that is the cause of the matter.<sup>4</sup>

The question of thought's origins is critical. It relates to how human thought is different from animal neural activity. Here, we must reverse the customary trope, that human thought is superior to animal thought. In an important sense it is inferior. It converts what animals synesthetically perceive as a sensory *field* to what could be called a "charged polarity perspectivalism." A viewer stands opposite a vanishing point and the dimension of depth (not an issue for animals who employ the idea of a field or net held together by smell, sound, light sensations other than retinal impressions, magnetic perception, wind, vibrations, and other "rhizomous" weak and vague

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<sup>4</sup> Note that bad dissertation proposals always begin with dictionary definitions; sometimes these are required by advisors. Nothing is gained by the dictionary definition except to expose the obvious instances of usage, but the real damage is the suppression of the *phenomenon* of tautology that is implicit to elaboration by definition and the equally toxic assumption that meaning is all of the *species et differens* type. Plato parodied this kind of meaning by casting his discussions in the form of dialogs between interlocutors who used *species et differens* as the principle of dividing up issues and ideas (the divided line is one such instance). The good dissertation can move beyond this bad beginning if (and possibly only if) it installs a tautology alarm system to avoid interpretation by punctuation. One such alarm, set in place as early as the 16c., is "Góngorism," a kind of elaboration that pushes the limits so obviously that it becomes a critique of elaboration. Góngorism uses aphorisms, digressions, arabesques, incongruities, asides, epithets, and other "interruptive" delay tactics to the point of becoming self-parody. At this point, a "phantasmagoria" is achieved in which the audience realizes the joke is not on them but with them. In condemning the elaboration project, they have nonetheless digested the particulars they need to make a correction. The elaboration project is an Accumulation Function that, by administering a proper anesthetic, has allowed the transfer of disconnects. The audience's receiving office has continued to accept unmarked packages. At some point, however, the hoard becomes a collection; an interior order is realized; the motive/cause emerges. This is in fact the strategy of Ionesco's funny play, *The Chairs* (1952), where nothing seems to be happening but chairs are continually brought in and placed on stage. Phantasmagoria is an effective goal of serious critical theory because it is the point of transfer (Lacan's *passee*) where truth emerges. Slavoj Žižek has addressed this in his book on exaptation (the example of the architectural spandrel): *Incontinence of the Void: Economico-Philosophical Spandrels* (MIT: 2017).

correlations).<sup>5</sup> The human perceiver loses these, and assigns the loss to the “sagittal” dimension (the line connecting the viewer to the viewed). This line will become the wire that vibrates to the slightest disturbance associated with depth and becomes an anxiety organ. It will transmit the energy of anxiety to the interior point where self-aggression of extended infancy (the condition of the double, the self that can act against the self) can be externalized (“extimated”) as aggression towards rivals, challengers, threats, dangers, novelties, and other unknowns. We know the volatility of these all too well with the political deployment of the collective national animus for the stranger, the immigrant, the ethnic Other, the Jew, the Muslim, the Black, the Asian — in short any minority that retroactively confirms judgmental authority on “the one who experiences anxiety,” giving this One the status of a primal signifier, a Master, or (in the case of Trumpism) the master *race*, presumed to be white, Christian, and continually threatened by *invasion*. (This trope comes with its own geography.)



Perspectivalism is a defective replacement for animal field-awareness, but this defect, this subtraction, is “corrected” by the prosthetics of language, custom, ideology, cultural institutions — in short the whole human project *as a supplement*. Because death is converted in human consciousness to a *boundary condition*, all of the supplements following the loss of field-awareness are conditioned by what Freud called (and Lacan clarified) as the “death-drive.” The boundary condition of “distantiation,” by means of the sagittal dimension of perspectivalism, is internalized.<sup>6</sup> It has the effect of what Collins calls the “master

signifier,” the original antagonism, split, or *cut*, that by virtue of being empty and meaningless has the power of organizing and empowering other signifiers.

How do we do “interpretation by the cut”? Collins uses a Lacanian theoretical framework that most non-Lacanian will find mysterious, to say the least. In psychoanalysis, the cut relates to trauma, which is normally held to be an actual event, an “overload,” a shock, thrill, or catastrophe. But, Freud documented how traumas are for the most part latent background features that charge normal everyday experience; only when we reach an impasse (which neurotic reach in different ways from psychotics) are we in the

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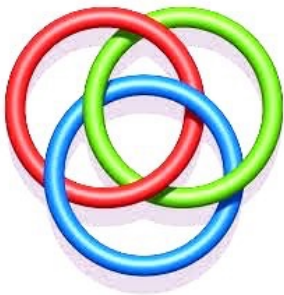
<sup>5</sup> I may seem to be hijacking a famous term from Deleuze and Guattari here, but in fact Deleuze and Guattari hijacked the term to imply a level of causality to replace that of the Freudian-Lacanian unconscious. Rhizomes belong to a consciousness that does not suffer from the *lack* that defines subjectivity, a lack that is the driving force behind the substitutions, misrecognitions, and demands made on the subject by the Symbolic (sum total of relationships mediated by language, customs, social relations, etc.) and given virtual stability through the Imaginary. The issue of the rhizome engages the central feature of psychoanalysis, the three “functionalities” of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real, which Jacques Lacan represented diagrammatically by the Borromean knot, the ultimate “recursive” figure.

<sup>6</sup> In other words, distance has to be *created*. It is not natural, at least not in the way humans structure it to be an anxiety vector. This vector, the sagittal, is key to the way anxiety connects an *internal* condition to an *external* (“objective”) perceived condition. For the sagittal, dominant directionality conceals within it a reverse directionality, even though the direction of perception seems to operate from object to subject and attention from subject to object (like radar). In either mode, the opposite directionality is also present, retroactively constructing virtual spaces and contents that become causal for the events of perception and attention.



position to realize that an event in the past had actually been traumatic.<sup>7</sup> It is accurate to say that trauma is the Real that we will discover only at a later time, at an event that will trigger, retroactively, the realization that the past event was traumatic. The fact is this: that trauma is “unbearable” only through this retroactive construction. Psychotics process this trauma differently from neurotics, but both fashion their compulsions around the double role played by enjoyment. On one hand we suffer when we relive trauma, on the other hand we gain satisfaction from returning to it. This combination of pain and pleasure is called *jouissance* — the French word for pleasure that is specifically sexual, which combines the accumulation of painful stimulæ to the point of pleasurable release, with the result that consciousness reports the pleasure as pain and the pain as pleasure.<sup>8</sup> Clinically, hysterics report pain although they are (unconsciously) experiencing pleasure, but the cut is not clear; in switching pain and pleasure they refer to the primary exchange of pleasure and pain in trauma. It is not fair to say that the famous hysterics of the late 19c. were only having fun, any more than it is correct to say that hypochondriacs are having us off.

### *the reality of the virtual*



Collins’ interpretation by the cut focuses on a Lacanian concept, the “master signifier.” This is, as we mentioned above, a signifier without meaning that makes possible meaning in other signifiers. How? This is the role of assumptions and presuppositions, which may or may not be true but which give rise to seemingly meaningful relationships. Often the master signifier is invisible, unnoticed, or unconscious. It meets the criteria of “the repressed.” The master signifier is a part of the virtuality of the Symbolic.<sup>9</sup> For example, those who are not vegetarians would nonetheless be disturbed if, every time they ate meat, they forced themselves to think about the animal they were eating — the animal’s life,

however miserable or happy, the events leading up to slaughter, the instruments of slaughter, the feelings of terror the animal must have experienced, the subsequent butchery, packaging, and distribution of the animals parts to indifferent humans who will eat it or throw it away without thinking of these things. We may additionally know that there are poisons added to food to improve their marketability, freshness, or the profit margin of those who produce it. We don’t want to think about any of this so we construct a “virtual reality” so that we can enjoy eating meat and other foods. Without this virtual, eating could not be possible, let alone enjoyable.<sup>10</sup>

In the same way there is a virtuality of subtraction in the Imaginary, there is a virtuality of the threat in the Symbolic, as in the frown of the father who disapproves of something we are doing. This frown is

<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud and Louise Adey Huish, *The “Wolfman” and Other Cases* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

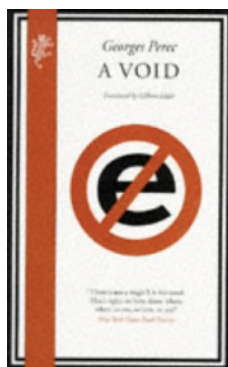
<sup>8</sup> The phenomenon of *jouissance* is closer to the vulgar expression, “to get off on.” It’s a form of pleasure that dissociates itself from its obvious cause-and-effect chains. The obsessive “gets off on” annoying certain people in certain ways, but the locus of this enjoyment may have nothing to do with the obsessive or his/her victims.

<sup>9</sup> This and subsequent “virtualities” are described by Slavoj Žižek in his podcast, “The Reality of the Virtual.” URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnTQhIRcrno>.

<sup>10</sup> The virtuality of subtraction’s Ur-example is, of course death. We suppress thoughts of what it is like to die, so in our confrontations of actual instances of death, we must subtract death to create a virtuality, which includes the idea of the momentum of life past the literal moment of death, an interval where the soul confronts its past in the form of judgments, trials, and, at the point of the second or symbolic death, punishment or reward. This is Lacan’s concept of “between the two deaths.”

actually the full measure of the father’s threat. If the father acts out the threat — if he actually hits us — his power is immediately deflated. He becomes a shameful parody of the parental tyrant; the threat is no longer a threat, it is simple sadism. This virtuality of belief that is more real than the thing believed is evident in the way we require our belief to be supported by the “virtuality” of the beliefs of others. Children believe in Santa Claus because they do not wish to embarrass their parents, who expect them to believe; but of course this embarrassment is constructed in a crisscross way; each party wishes to save the other from the embarrassing truth that Santa is a fictional construct (sorry Virginia!). Someone who takes their beliefs literally become monsters, “true believers,” who have become possessed (literally) by their beliefs to the extent that they are simply puppets (e. g. Trump’s belief that Obama was not born in the U. S.).

There are virtualities of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real — the elements of Lacan’s “RSI system” modeled by the Borromean knot. The structure of this knot is interesting, because it shows that we are not talking about the “virtuality *of*” these three categories of subjectivity, but that virtuality is the essence of what they are to begin with. This is clearest in the case of the “Real virtual,” where the structure of the knot is repeated internally. There is a Real–Imaginary, a Real–Symbolic, and a Real–Real. These show how virtuality is independent of scale. It can be found at any level, a metonymy of the whole within the part but also a *re–stating* of the condition of virtuality (“metalepsis”). In the Real–Symbolic we have the quantum condition, where quantum physicists openly recognize that their scientific objective is structurally and radically inaccessible to their experiments. Because the observer will always shape the nature and appearance and behavior of the observed, this mirror condition will construct barriers that are both subjective and objective, as if to say that truth *is precisely* this indeterminate construction. Quantum reality does not exist; there is only the quantum Real, and the psychoanalytical subject is what it is in the face of this Real as a psychotic potentiality from which there is only the retreat into the Symbolic of neurosis or the Imaginary of perversion. There is no consistent ontology, thus no way of representing quantum conditions. Spooky correspondence (the immediate effect governing the coordination of distant particles), presence–absence paradoxes (Schrodinger’s cat, who is dead only if we look to see if it is alive or not), and Gödelian limits (about whether well–formed sets contain themselves as members) transfer to the human realm in terms of the *virtualities* of subjectivity’s three aspects — virtualities that require that for something to be effective it must be absent.



Here, we need to take a breath and see a concrete example. Georges Perec vertiginous — this adjective will become clear later on — novel written entirely without the use of the letter ‘e’ (*La Disparition*, 1969). It is hard to think of many French words without the letter ‘e’ to begin with, but there are many who read the novel who actually did not notice that the letter ‘e’ was missing, despite the author’s clear parodies of famous poems and passages at the end of the book. Perhaps more amazing is that the English translation (by Gilbert Adair, *A Void*) also avoided (hah–hah) the letter ‘e’, but this involved prohibiting an entirely different set of words from the French list. Meaning of the novel flows primarily from sentence to sentence as the story of the hero, Anton Vowl, unfolds. But, there is a secondary meaning created by the way the text avoids having to use the letter ‘e’. This becomes comic when, instead of the usual colloquial expression, the author seemingly adopts a “poetic” usage. We may not immediately

recognize that this choice is forced by the rule, that the writer's typewriter lacks the letter 'e'. The practice is called the "lipogram," and it has been around for several millennia, at least.

*La Disparition* demonstrates how meaning is created out of absence; and how Symbolic meaning is, more generally, dependent on absencing or suppressing materials that would make conscious interaction unbearable and even impossible. Suppression (subtraction) — and its virtualities — are not simply options of communications, they are *requirements*. — And how are we to say what is the meaning that appears out of this nothingness? The meaning cannot be attributed to the objects of the story or the objectivity of the narrative; neither can it be said to be a subjective whim or motive of the author, although it is a part of his plan. What is the plan? The rule "don't use the letter 'e'" is arbitrary in the extreme. It is in fact a demonstration of how ersatz experiments are intrinsically allied with lipograms, with "leaving something out." The lipogram rule forces a choice of words that creates a turbulence in what is left (Harold Bloom's term: "clinamen").<sup>11</sup> Meaning swirls and twists around the voids of the lipograms.

### *ersatz to ansatz*

There is a radical opportunity here, an opportunity to be radical. This is a part of my "experiment," and a radical part of a radical way of experimenting. First, a word about scientific experiment. Mathematicians facing seemingly insolvable problems (the quantum problem would come to mind) have devised an acceptable alternative: the "ersatz" experiment, which makes no truth claims. It is simply a hypothesis that can be tested against an unknown reality (or, in the case of quantum impasse, a Real — something *structurally* resistant to investigation). The ersatz conjecture doesn't have to be good; in fact it has to take care that it is not too good, in case we would want to get attached to it and defend it as a serious theory. It may actually be truer than we had thought, but we don't want to be in the position of being promoters instead of skeptical theorists. Carl Popper's requirement that all scientific principles, to be scientific, be refutable, still holds, despite the fact that Popper was a wretched fellow, from all accounts. Rather, the point of the ersatz is to generate error. When tested, the reality/Real puts up a fight, shows resistance, returns indications of failure. This feedback is used constructively in the formation of a second ersatz, which is again subjected to testing, and again feedback returns with its collections of resistances, failures, and errors.

Something happens, however. In the collection of negative results, a pattern begins to emerge; a kind of *moiré* or field effect. In the resistance to provocation by the ersatz conjectures, reality/Real has had to reveal something of itself.<sup>12</sup> This is like the stress tests of banking structure: the random imposition of

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<sup>11</sup> Harold Bloom's early work about how poet's shake loose from masterful predecessors, *Anxiety of Influence* (1973) consolidated six highly useful critical terms that one should think of as a coherent system (although Bloom does not suggest this): clinamen (turbulence), tesseræ (doubling/suppressing-half), askesis (flight), demon (what it sounds like), kenosis ("knowing without knowing," which for Lacanians means the unconscious), and apophrades (the relation to a primal/primary form of wisdom, as in Vico's and Freud's interest in connecting to "primary words.")

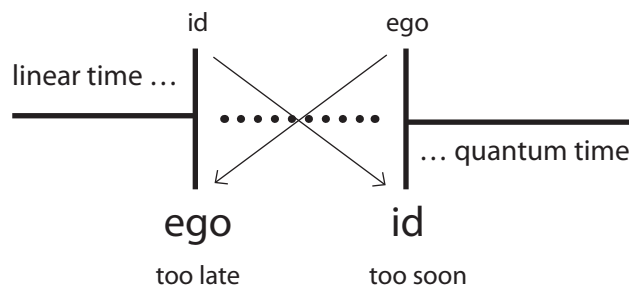
<sup>12</sup> It could be said that in using the ersatz conjecture to generate field effects is a return to a pre-perspectivalist mode of perceiving/conceiving. I would make a further suggestion, to see, in those phenomenologists who have been effective (Ernst Cassirer, Mikel Dufrenne, Maurice Merleau-Ponty) the tendency to construct "stochastic fields" where the facts of the case resonate rather than form linear signifying chains. Pseudo-phenomenologists such as Christain Norberg-Schulz and Juhani Pallasmaa, in contrast, construct the tightest and most linear chains, attempting at every turn to "put things in perspective." The tell-tale detail is that pseudo-phenomenology relies heavily on binary signifiers, such as the contrast between "body-derived" operations and mechanical techniques.



demands that are not predicted. The stress does not have to be rational; it is sufficient that stress is introduced that is not already accounted for. (The common economic practice of stress-testing is an everyday application of the ersatz conjecture idea.) In the same way that the stress test reveals *holes* in the bank's logical defenses, the lipogram creates voids around which language will flow to reveal its own inner structure. This is thought "purified" by pulling out the functional concerns for designation, denotation, implication, reference, and grammatical syntax. Once language no longer has the job of communicating something about something, it is left to communicating itself.

The ersatz procedure almost inevitably leads to an eventual positive result — the *Ansatz*, or lucky guess. Turning this result around, we find that Picasso's dictum of "I don't look, I find," makes more sense than structuring a search that automatically suppresses the very novelty that is sought. The *Ansatz* happens all the time, with coincidences, inadvertent discoveries, *déjà vu*, dreams, etc. The *Ansatz* is the moment in the present that retroactively structures the traumatic-Real that we didn't notice when it was happening, historically, in the past. That gives us a clue about the temporal structure of the *Ansatz*. I'm suggesting that scientific discovery might actually have the same form as the retroactive construction of psychoanalytical trauma. We can be specific at least about the moment of discovery. This is the future-anterior: the instance by the time of which something *will have happened*.

There are two important references. The first is Freud's famous statement about the three-layered self, the ego, id, and super-ego. As a neuter, the *id* is primary, heedless of the injunctions of the super-ego, the Master of culture and parental suppression. The Ego, "I," is a mediator who attempts to work out deals between the libidinous, anarchical *id* and the demanding super-ego (almost always in the form of projections, onto authority figures such as parents or political leaders). Freud famously said: *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*. "Where the *id* was, there the Ego shall be. The Ego arrives too late at the position that the *Id* was, but found itself to be too early. The interval between being too early and too late is a reversal of linear time. Imagining a kind of gap or gate, the *Id* is on the right, the Ego is on the left, paradoxically "before it," coming in too late to be effective. This creates a retroactive time reversal, just as in the case of the Wolf Man's realization that, because of a sexual impasse in the present, he actually had suffered a trauma (witnessing his parents in *coitus a tergo*) that he didn't take seriously at the time. The trauma, created retroactively, is Real only because of this *future* — or rather, *future anterior* — moment.



What appears to be a mix-up at the factory that extrudes time through a die to construct the fixed sequential order of past, present, and future, is the essence of the Symbolic. It is a causal chain, where an effect produced become the cause of the next effect, and that effect becomes a cause, so and so on.

Without this continuity, Kant argues in his brilliant exposition on the antinomies in *Critique of Pure Reason* (from which, by the way, the project of “critical theory” originated) that thought cannot anchor itself with any idea of how things happen. Yet, we can prove that this rule of succession can possibly have its exceptions. And, we can connect these exceptions with common, everyday experiences that are not simply outliers but formative kernels of subjectivity. In a sense, the Ego, Id, and Super-Ego are like the Borromeo rings of the RSI system: they hold together *because* they are not mechanically inter-linked. The system itself, where the “last ring” slips under the “first ring,” but each or any ring can be considered first or last. Just as the Möbius band’s twist cannot be located at any one point along the band, the condition is a “field effect.” It is like Einstein’s shift from the weak to strong version of Relativity, where he stopped thinking that space had a “normal” configuration that was deformed by the presence of massive objects to realizing that space’s curvature was “built in,” that curvature and space were synonymous (contronymic, or “orthonymic” — where the exchangeability of terms reveals something about the inner, or secondary, structure of the Real idea).

Quantum time effects are, as have been famously demonstrated recently, also evident in space, with the “spooky correspondence” of particles lying at great distances from each other. There is no time to transfer any signals to coordinate this synchrony. It happens instantaneously. At this point we have to admit that time and space are indistinguishable; that we are no longer allowed the Cartesian luxury of assigning time to the  $z$  to add to the  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  of spatial length, breadth, and depth. We must in fact allow  $z$  to “penetrate” the  $x$ - $y$ - $x$  system, to insert itself between the first two dimensions (which we can detect at the cellular level, on our retina or skin) and the final *constructed* depth dimension,  $z$ . Temporality involves muscles: contractions that focus our eyes and lenses, movement in space (virtual or actual), anticipation of dangers or objects of desires. We have a “body knowledge” of the sagittal dimension of the perspectival world. Because this knowledge is constructed differently in different cultures, the  $z$  of depth is also different. Our perspectivalism is culturally conditioned (this is well documented), so that the idea that a perspective drawing or camera photo are “realistic” is true only if we acknowledge that realistic is the Symbolic, not the Real.

Quantum matters should not be conceptualized as “out there,” a complicated matter of particle physics. Rather. Rather, quantum should be brought into the local, where custom has designated a “trouble-free zone” where, still,  $E=mc^2$  and Newton’s apples still fall straight down from the branch. Just as quantum demonstrates an immunity to scale, quantum theory — a kind of “orthopsychics” that seeks methods of correction limited to the native materials of thought — should not allow this precinct of delusional tranquility. If orthopsychic truth knows no scale, it should not abide the alibi of locality. This alibi has, for example, allowed phenomenology to use positivist concepts to critique Positivism, allowed architecture theory to claim one kind of theory (a “natural history”) for its materiality and another kind of theory (“humanism”) for its meaningfulness. Radically speaking, the meaning of architecture *is* a natural history, but the core of this “nature” is the cut, the radical antagonism between building and architecture that, from ancient beginnings, have depended on an organic *ratio*. When (as must have been the case) the first humans metaphorically conceived the cosmos as a comprehensive architecture, building was discontinuous, strategic, and purposefully ephemeral. It was wholly dedicated to ritual intervention, what in psychology is called “misplaced concrete reference” — the idea that an action properly framed and executed will have effects at different scales and distant locations. (This in itself is an example of quantum thinking!) As this mythical view is secularized, the ratio of relations of architecture and building reverses.

Building, metaphorically or actually, aims to provide continuities of shelter and protection. *Continenence* is both domesticated and weaponized. At the same time and by means of the same logic, architecture becomes discontinuous: constrained within a presentational/perspectival domain of appearances and, thus, fashioned in tune with esthetic principles.

The history of architecture is thus not of *one thing* that has continued more or less in a constant relationship to culture and individual experience from day one to the present, but of a *relationship* between two antagonistic demands, those of *temporal* continuity (periodically renewed ritual responses) and *spatial* continence (spatial permanence of defensive containment). A history of architecture by what Dan Collins has called a “method of punctuation” can only layer variations of a unified epistemology. This means that, despite the radical ontological differences in the architectural *object* from ancient times to present, or even in any given moment from what Ernst Cassirer called the “expressive function” to a “conceptual function,” uniformity is imposed discursively; the *object* is fixed by uniform ways of talking about the object.<sup>13</sup>

Replacing this interpretation by punctuation by an interpretation by the cut is localized in the function of teaching. Condensing the matter, there is no authoritarian relationship between the masterful teacher, what Lacan calls “the subject–supposed–to–know,” and the student–initiate. Rather, there is *only learning*; and learning proceeds in an “autoerotic” way, dialectically shifting between the modalities of teaching, self–teaching, learning, and un–learning. Like Penelope in *The Odyssey*, every construct in learning must be simultaneously de–constructed but (unlike Derrida’s methodology), every de–construction is a palindromic twin of the construction that must proceed in multiple modalities. Lacan himself taught in this way, in over twenty–five lectures spanning from the 1950s to the 1980s. No one who has read the texts of these lectures finds them immediately instructive or even intelligible. In fact, their unreadability has been the basis for Lacan’s poor reception, primarily in the U. S. and Canada, where ego–psychology and Positivism have combined to require all instructional texts to be clear, linear, and logical. Like Vico, Lacan used circular references, lacunæ, rhetorical turns, ekphrasis and other delays to produce a sustain what could be called “extended Góngorism,” the elaboration of elaborations to the point where the auditor/reader loses track of scale/level and point of view. Inside the labyrinth constructed by neutralizing the relation between the aim and goal, Lacan activates a certain kind of brain activity: a forward–leaning anticipation of meaning that employs the cut itself to structure its own future. This is the future anterior, the *moment by the time of which something will have been revealed*. The thinker becomes aware of a kind of destiny, and becomes mindful of this destiny with an attitude of prudence — Vico’s idea of providence.

A thinker held in place by providence is a thinker free in other regards to abandon any ideological forced choice — in effect, binary thinking. The binary domesticates the idea of the cut by producing two alternatives, one of which is to be aligned with “the right answer,” the other with corruption. Architecture theory is dominated by binary thinking to such a degree that all other options are neutralized in polemics extolling (mainly) “counter–Enlightenment procedures” that combine an enigmatic sensuality with a program of emancipation. The attractiveness of the costumes of this binary persuade many already put into positions of forced choices by university curricula that thinking should proceed “according to plan.” But, in fact, a phantasmagoria is the result. The circularity of binary thinking becomes evident in the way that preconditions and presuppositions are suppressed at the level of logical functions and revived and

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<sup>13</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Form*, 3 vols. (London: Yale University, 1973–1975).

applied at the level of censorship. Thinking is obliged to abandon certain practices and aspirations only to be faulted at a later stage for having overlooked these same practices and aspirations.

One option for any who would wish to survive the mandates of university discourse (which Lacan correctly specified as an uninterpretable command to simply enjoy suppression, held in place by an authority concealed behind a curtain) lies in the ability to treat *phantasmagoria itself* as an object of study. Such has been accomplished, cleverly, in Douglas Spencer's analysis of the past forty years of architecture theory; or in Carolina Dayer's interest in the polemics of the orgy. Berrin Terim has focused on Filarete's confounding treatise to expose its psychotic/hysteric core; while Jodi La Coe has studied the no-less-psychotic, Lazlo Maholy-Nage's compulsive involvements with the fourth dimension. My point is that, not only is the *phantasmagoria antidote* available, it is already being applied. My critique of these successes is, however, that they are partial. They do not address the necessity to carry the idea of phantasmagoria to its proper and scientific setting, i. e. psychoanalysis.

There are two ways of knowing when this is being done. First, there must be recognition of both of the two fundamental ideas grounding the Freudian-Lacanian field. The first is "extimity," the (dys-)function of the boundary condition that gives momentary solace based on containment, the separation of insides from outsides. Containment inevitably gives way to incontinence, but this is not just a matter for a call to the plumber or a commitment to the nursing home. Incontinence, as Žižek argues, informs us about its counterpart, the void. Every incontinence is an incontinence *of* the void in a way that requires inquiry into the void's origins and methods. Voids exist in nature but also in the Psyche, primordially, as the basis of thought. Vico's account of the primordial void around which humans first conceived the cosmos in terms of enigmatic directives of gods still stands as a primary text.

The other foundation stone of psychoanalysis is the death-drive, which is not an alternative or opposite to the pleasure principle but, rather, a built-in structure, something produced *at the same time* as desire. The composite nature of desire requires us to see the death-drive (the compulsion to "start over") as fundamental to language, thought, and (of course) architecture. The responses to the death-drive vary according to the requirements of neurosis on one hand or psychosis on the other. In psychosis, the subject rejects or has lost access to the "no" of the father. This no structures language and the options offered by the Symbolic, whose gaps, folds, and contradictions open up to a view of the Real, whose presence can be tolerated only with a cover of fantasy. The neurotic operates within these possibilities, but the psychotic must suffer the delay of unrealized trauma, which charges space and time with the turbulence of a time bomb set to go off when an unknown incident becomes a trigger. Time is then pulled inside-out, the present is "cursed" by the past in tortures that can be alleviated only by finding a path for trapped signifiers to escape.

For the neurotic, there is the only slightly less troubling "language of resistance," of denial, swerving, misrecognition, foreswearing, disclaimers, and renunciation that reconstitute the power of No through social presentations. The treatment here is "interminable," since to be cured of neurosis is to die, nothing less. Neurosis is what makes life livable, and, as Žižek puts it, we need a minimum of fantasy to make life bearable. Even if we could break through the cloud of delusions required to remain within the Symbolic's cultural, family, and personal networks, we would not like the results. The Real is permanently traumatic, and trauma is permanently unpleasant.

Perhaps only the pervert, who has fashioned a pleasure-house out of the Real's phantasmagoria, can enjoy the conditions imposed by the cut, and the pervert's "interpretation by the cut" results in the production of art: poetry, literature, theater, music, and architecture. Perhaps only the pervert can actualize the double structure of *jouissance* so that its pain and pleasure can be realized without blurring the distinctions. Certainly it is the pervert's duty and not just talent to package phantasmagoria (through some version of Góngorismo) so that it can be instructive as well as entertaining.



Thus, the test of whether or not the architectural theorist has carried forward the program of phantasmagoria into psychoanalysis is finalized by seeing if the same theorist can return in time to recreate some condition of phantasmagoria. It is not important for architectural theory to mind the rules of the clinic by accurately distinguishing between neurosis, psychosis, and perversion. Rather, it is essential that architectural theory (by the method of the cut) settle its affairs by drawing up a proper will, designating heirs and distributing surplus wealth. This is the collectivity of the theoretical enterprise: the necessity to think "as if in isolation" but act through a "dissensus" of collective and convivial shared duties. What duties? The duty to think, first of all; to disengage from binary ideology using consistently applied methods open to public inspection. Then, the obligation to write (or talk) in the creation of a public face, which is by necessity an *inter-face*. The god Janus faces out, but in fact the two faces have passed through and beyond each other. Between them is the overlap between opposite sides. The critic stops short of the overlap, to map contended territory. The Janusian condition of possession is the goal, but the *contest* over the contested territory is the aim. That territory is the non-zero, the gap, the space between parallel lines that will eventually disobey Euclid's sixth postulate and meet up, to literally *mind* the gap.

Don Kunze, Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, January 25, 2019