

Reversed Predication, A Review¹

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The expression “reversed predication” is not common. It is used in the field of symbolic logic to define complex conditions of negation.² There are two key places where reversed predication, *under a different, more general application*, plays a key role: (1) George Spencer-Brown’s non-numerical calculus (*Laws of Form*, 1969), as applied to the “sorites” of Lewis Carroll, and (2) Slavoj Žižek’s idea of Jacques Lacan’s “master signifier,” as a reversal of the roles of cause and effect. Eventually, the logics of these two applications blend. This short essay aims to show how that might happen.

The examples of Spencer-Brown and Žižek are interesting in that they “aim in opposite directions.” Žižek’s master signifier works from particular to universal. What at first seems to be an effect becomes a “demark” (the term comes from Deleuze) capable of organizing other signifiers. Its universality springs from its status as a particular that has, as it were, “universality inscribed at its very heart.” This universality springs out of a gap or void. In the subject, it is the Other, inscribed as a void in the process of “interpellation” (Althusser’s account of ideology). In the object, it is the uncanny element of alien resistance that fuels the ideas of the partial object, the Freudian Thing (*das Ding*), and the Real. Cases of double inscription (the uncanny’s two “Jentschian” states of death-in-life and life-in-death; the Lacanian *lamella*; extimacy; subjective objectivity and *vice versa*) derive from this condition. With Spencer-Brown, his one-symbol non-numerical calculus is about the bare-bones assumptions behind framing. When the calculus is done on a flat surface you get the “barbershop mirrors effect”; on a closed curved surface (i.e. the globe) you get double inscription. Note that both Žižek’s particular-to-universal account of the master signifier and Spencer-Brown’s universal-to-particular thesis about framing as topology focus on the middle or third condition *as it relates to anamorphosis*, stochastic resonance, and other “square-wave” vibrations that produce double conditions (the “uncanny” literary themes of travel in time, the story in the story, contamination of reality by the dream, or the double).

A memorable example of the uncanny Thing is the shark in Stephen Spielberg’s film, *Jaws*. The presence of the shark at a summer beach is not out of the ordinary, but the way it grips the imagination requires a system of signification that allows the shark to mean “nothing and everything.” As for a paradigm case of Spencer-Brown’s calculus, one could use Hans Holbein’s double portrait, *The Ambassadors*, with its anamorphic skull and mysteriously precise data (“April 11, 1533, 4 pm”) on the reverse.

Spencer-Brown uses a predicate form (“mark”) to arrange pairs into a predicator/predicated relationship, similar to the Aristotelian form of object and attribute. A fruit example: an orange may be said to “possess” certain traits: the color — orange names both the color and the fruit that is its source — roundness, texture, taste, smell, weight, etc. Because of its central role in organizing these traits into a distinctive unity, the orange as object holds a superior position in set-theoretic terms: orange > attributes. You can get a whiff of the problem with the case that “orange” names both the object and one of the attributes of the object.

A memorable example of how this contamination across the line separating predicators and predicates belongs to marketing. A short while ago, a new beer product was presented in test markets as a “dark light beer” and, alternatively, a “light dark beer.” Spencer-Brown would have notated this condition as D)L and L)D respectively. Predication made the difference; the D)L beer won by a sizeable margin. Predication, and its reversibility, is the stuff of corporate boardrooms and market surveys deciding on matters where lots of money

¹ This essay is a research paper for discussion. It is a part of a larger project, “Architecture for End Times: Handbook for a Personal Studio.” <http://art3idea.psu.edu/idiots>.

² Archie J. Bahm, “Does Seven-Fold Predication Equal Four-Cornered Negation Reversed?” *Philosophy East and West* 7, 3/4 (October, 1957–January, 1958): 127-130. A more comprehensive account of this term in the context of generativist linguistics, see Marcel den Dikken, *Relators and Linkers: The Syntax of Predication, Predicate Inversion, and Copulas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006). This work is contextualized by Alain Rouveret in his review of den Dikken’s book in *Language* 85, 3 (September 2009): 706–710. This study is remote from these impressive works, apologies to all linguists who may take offense. The term “reversed predication” will be limited to conditions of obversion, extimacy, and enthymeme involving recursion. Spencer Brown’s notation system takes the idea of predication into a non-Boolean calculus: George Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form* (New York: Julian Press, 1972).

is at stake. That is because it is a human mental mechanism that, to put it directly, lies beneath and supports all others.

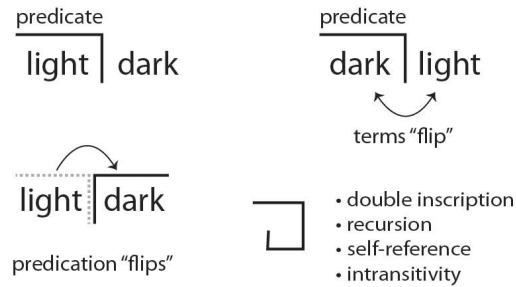


Figure 1. The non-numeric calculus of George Spencer-Brown is particularly useful in describing conditions of “intransitivity,” where predication may be the key to discovering, as in the case of marketing beer as “light dark beer” or “dark light beer,” a seemingly gratuitous shift in the point of view. Diagram by author.

It would seem to be rare for anyone but an artist to suggest a reversal of the standard hierarchical arrangement, where things have colors and shapes but not the other way around. Consider, however, the situation of perception, where in fact the predicates of sense experience are retroactively reversed in the inference of the “common cause” of *sensus communis*. A close look at the process by which the subject guesses “in reverse” the presence of, not just a buzz but a fly, or not just a disjointed bundle of color, shape, etc. but a common objective cause behind them, has skipped over the logic of reversed predication — a logic that might have from the start provided theory a consistent platform, from Plato to Lacan.³

Reversed Antonomasia

In an essay little read outside of academic circles in Italy, Andrea Battistini described Vico’s important discovery of the nature of the first human thought as “reversed antonomasia.”⁴ Both terms are significant, since in the idea of predication (attribution) it is the reversal that is important. Antonomasia is a rhetorical figure of naming: “Joseph Steel” (Stalin) condenses the idea that Stalin was “tough as steel” and calls him Steel/Stalin outright. As a form of metonymy, this kind of naming brings to the particular person a universal set of operative affordances. With a name like “steel,” there’s no telling what a Stalin might do. This is an example of how the structure of metonymy “resonates in the distance,” so to speak, while metaphor fills a screen, in this case, the *persona* of the re-named individual.⁵

In reversed antonomasia, the screen that will be but is not yet the container of metaphor creates, in “retroaction,” metonymy, which in turn “retroactively” elevates the metaphor to what could be called a hieroglyphic status. What happens in particular is immediately a universal. In their 1988 debate, Vice-presidential candidate Lloyd Bentsen shot back “You’re no Jack Kennedy!” to the false claimant, Dan Quayle, and immediately the logic — first the (metaphorically) filled screen, then the creation of a metonymy resonating in the distance, and the sudden tear through the screen — was understood. John Kennedy as a name had been canonized to work as reversed antonomasia, a process whereby the particular Kennedy became the

³ It is important to note how reversibility figures in terminology employed to study phenomena where themes of boundary, presence, and visibility/invisibility intermix. One important case is the idea of the “flesh of the world,” employed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his later years. See Lawrence Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 2008), 124, 137–142. “[W]hen Merleau-Ponty talks about a ‘distance’ that is consonant with proximity, he is referring to *écart* and the proximity that folds around it is reversibility. Further, when he refers to the flesh as ‘paradox’ he is gesturing toward the weird intertwining (reversibility) of things that are different but not opposite” (139).

⁴ Battistini, Andrea, “Antonomasia e universale fantastico,” in L.R. Santini, E. Raimondi (eds.), *Retorica e critica letteraria* (Bologna: Società Editrice il Mulino, 1978). Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas G. Bergin and Max H. Fisch (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1944).

⁵ The key role played by the contrasting functions of metaphor and metonymy are pointed out by Ed Pluth in *Signifiers and Acts: Freedom in Lacan’s Theory of the Subject* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2007). The antonomasia magic of naming has roots in ethnology, in genealogy practices that use names to preserve characters, qualities, or literal spirits of the dead. The comparatively finite set of names correspond to qualities filled, variously, by successive generations.

universalized Kennedy, metonymy and metaphor at the same time, i.e. an example of Vico's imaginative universal (*universale fantastico*).⁶

This modern appreciation of the hagiography process does not diminish its function for mythic thought. In the not-yet-human minds of the not-yet-human beings, particulars were present in abundance, in 1:1 correspondences that we should credit as rich, effective, and survival-oriented. How could thought — equating thought with the existence of independent universals able to escape their particularistic predications — emerge? Vico's answer, recognized and employed two hundred years later by James Joyce, was "thunder," i.e. a moment of fear so pure and prolonged that it fused with its antipode, anxiety, forming an alloy of simultaneous distance and collapse of distance. "Jove" (Yahweh is the Judeo-Christian equivalent) is the composite being that is neither completely universal nor particular. Ernst Cassirer pointed out how this universality was not simply a primitive stab at thinking but the formation of a primary, durable basis for all forms of thought to come:

For the representation of a god comprises two different spiritual elements and dissolves them into each other. It grasps the god in his wholly immediate living presence, for representation is not intended to be taken as a mere copy; rather, it is the god himself who is embodied and active in it. On the other hand, this momentary action does not exhaust the whole of his being. The representation, as presence, is at the same time actualization: what stands before us as here and now, what is given as this particular and determinate thing, announces itself also as the emanation and manifestation of a power which is not wholly exhausted in any such particularity. Through the concrete uniqueness of the image we now perceive this total power. Though it may hide itself in a thousand forms, it remains its identical self in them all: it possesses a fixed nature and essence which in all these forms is captured mediately — that is, "represented" in them.⁷

This account of the first form of human universality clearly describes a situation that could be characterized as "reversed predication," yet the topology of this process, by which the causality binding universals and particulars seems to change polarity in the process of naming, engages the theme of distance implicit in metaphor and metonymy. We would not be off base to remember Lacan's observation about human remains: what distinguishes rotting bones from the natural materials that cover it is *the fact that they are named*. In this insight, Lacan connects directly to Vico's identification of burial as the central, key human ritual, and burial's secret relationship to marriage as a corollary.⁸ Antonomasia should not be considered as a particular variation on the naming theme, but a part of its essence. And, a critical part of this essence is its reversibility.⁹

Contemporary thought should be embarrassed that this idea was widely recognized in antiquity but scarcely understandable today.¹⁰ Apart from the few "difficult thinkers" whose original ideas are still

⁶ The best in-depth treatment of Vico's imaginative universal remains, 25 years after its publication, Donald Phillip Verene's *Vico's Science of Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1981).

⁷ Ernst Cassirer, *The Phenomenology of Knowledge, Philosophy of Symbolic Form 3*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 108–109.

⁸ The correlation of death, brides, and journeys to the underworld has been under-investigated. However, without this correlation, artworks such as Euripides' *Alcestis* or the myth of Orpheus would be unintelligible. Some have understood: consider the example of Alfred Hitchcock's film *Vertigo*, where an actress is hired to construct evidence that will be useful in covering up the murder of the woman she impersonates.

⁹ Cassirer's own style of writing is saturated with the logic of reversed predication. Cassirer's adopted Kant's style of presentation in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, antinomies section. Each of two situations, which seem to exhaust all possibilities, is reviewed but found wanting. A third option is found in something that both precedes and results from the opposition. The third option, which is "about" reversed predication, turns out to be a case of reversed predication itself! Cassirer has always been regarded as a "conservative" neo-Kantian whose considerable depth and breadth of learning allowed him to appreciate the aim of Aby Warberg, to create a synthetic view of culture, science, and mathematics. Cassirer's clear recognition of reversed predication was never recognized, although his attempts to discover a "middle position" between the standard views of universality and particularity were characteristic.

¹⁰ It would be hard to miss the point of the meaning of Dante's employment of Virgil as a guide on his tour of Hades. The point was to say that ancient literature is, in essence, a key that unlocks the affordances of such cosmological tours, where travel is equated with knowledge. See Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1990), 17–19.

misconstrued, there is nothing like the evidence of widespread mastery of the technique in ancient times by, for example, poets and their audiences. The Homeric story of the Cyclops, for example, employs the “my name is nobody” trick in ways that are clearly linked to the architectural predicament of shelter-turned-prison, reflected in the customs of hospitality-turned-hostility (reversible traits implicit in the word *hostes* itself). “Nobody” as a pronoun could, to the poor Cyclops, be literally acceptable as a name like any other; the one-eyed giant’s naiveté can be forgiven, since the Cyclopes were famous for their literal acceptance of religion. The “single eye” referred not to anatomical anomaly but rather the single forest clearings that were the place-reference for worship of single tribes that regarded the authority of their religion in absolute, un-sharable terms. Sound familiar?

The key to this episode in *The Odyssey* is that Odysseus understands reversed predication and the Cyclops doesn’t: it’s no more complicated than that. In one “position,” predication is the trap of the Cyclops’ cave: one way in, one way out: transitive space that we could represent as successive enclosure ... ((((•)))). By discovering the reverse position, Odysseus escapes. Just as common in antiquity were practices that could be called “chiastic,” \wedge , in that they used mirror constructs to bend linear constructs (narratives, journeys, lines of sight and logic, etc.) so that a space could be created in between — a kind of “anamorphic middle” that allowed two things to be seen at the same time, a conceptual binocularity that yielded a conceptual third-dimensional depth. This artificial dimension was *literally* a line of travel that threaded through artworks because it provided free passage to the imagination of all those who grasped its “stochastic” functionality. Think of the images, popular in the 1990s, of patterns that, when stared at, created the illusion of depth out of minor variations in the spacing of fractal designs. Once the eyes gave over the work of vision to the brain, the dimension of depth appeared without further effort. This “conceptual third dimension” had achieved notoriety under the false flag of “the fourth dimension” in turn-of-the-century spiritualism. It is possible that everything said for the wrong reasons about the fourth dimension turn out to be true about the *conceptual* dimension, the anamorphic middle, created in between contrasting halves differentiated by the process of predication. If there is any point in talking about a “fourth dimension,” it is as a “conceptual fourth dimension,” to allow space itself an escape route and hiding place (*poché*).¹¹

How far does this optical analogy go? Do the two slightly different views of the left and right eye produce a depth sensation that is in any way a prologue to a depth *con*-ception created by any other kind of slightly differentiated sets? That is, what is the basis for claiming that the “anamorphic middle” between two coded entities constitutes a depth or dimension of any kind — particularly when the entities are, most commonly, narrative sequences? The pursuit of this line of inquiry depends on the correct decoding of a number of ciphers used by some key projects. My own codes are constructed with an eye to syncretic cohesion. I want a consistent critical vocabulary, where special terms, when necessary, provide some minimal resonance for the new reader to grasp. My terms are not taken raw from the sources where they, under different names, were developed and perfected. In some cases there is some minimal correspondence between the original and the new adaptation: “stereognosis,” “anamorphosis,” and “chiasmus” have occupied critical vocabularies for at least part of the 20th century, with counterparts attesting to their considerable antiquity. The six terms employed by Harold Bloom to describe poetic anxiety are ancient Greek terms that, when brought into modern critical thinking, turn out to have retained their original voltage. With some allowance for the paradigm shifts that normally obscure anything from the past, they can all be brought into focus — askesis, tesseræ, dæmon, kenosis, clinamen, apophrades — although doing so requires a synthesis that goes beyond Bloom’s original project.¹²

¹¹ See Donald Kunze, “*Poché*,” *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture*, ed. D. Friedman and N. Lahiji (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997). Like the spiritualists’ fourth dimension this conceptual (so-called because of its relation to sexual reproduction) dimension requires correct positioning, as in the precise point of view required by anamorphic images, resonant conditions in cathedrals, and imaginary travelers in such fantasies of the fourth dimension as René Daumal’s *Mount Analogue (Le mont analogue)* (Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 2004). Conception, gestation, and birth are the main chapters in this conceptual escape, and the forty weeks of pregnancy correlate to the period designated for time spent in wildernesses, the underworld, and other spaces of isolation. The word “quarantine” establishes the relation of forty to the boundary, and *vice versa*.

¹² This essay presumes familiar with the project generalizing Harold Bloom’s system of six “revisionary ratios,” developed in *Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). The system forms a central part of the project, “Architecture for End Times: the Personal Studio.” See <http://art3idea.psu.edu/idiots/system>. No one has before this grouped Bloom’s six terms into three pairs, arranged so that two overlapping triangles create a fuzzy margin separating askesis and dæmon. The

The Triangulation Test

“Reversed predication” hides within each of Bloom’s terms, just as it constructs the dynamics of the system Bloom did not himself recognize. How do we know? There is a test involving the triangulation of three effects: motility, scale, and identity. Each of these works by means of a “problematic” that provides a key dynamic. For travel, the problematic is a breakdown in motility, an obstacle to completing the journey—as-errand. This breakdown turns the errand into “travel performance,” in reality and popular culture as well as high literature. Scale breakdown is whatever interrupts the built-in hierarchy that orders objects and events using a “container-contained” rule of succession, where each element is “contained” by a “larger” succeeding event: x) ...)...)...)...). The result is often portrayed as *déjà vu* or *travel* through time, but it is basically fractal structure that makes the part equivalent to the whole. The third dysfunction is identity. This includes the theme of doubles (Plautus’s *Amphitryon* is the paradigm) but extends to any case of rivalry or misidentification.¹³ On account of this last element, the entire range of subjective “thrownness” comes forward thanks to Lacan’s idea of the barred subject after the mirror stage “triangulation” of the subject through the Imaginary (the reflection) and the Symbolic (the mediating system of social relationships).

How do dysfunctions of motility, scale, and identity function as a means of triangulating, and thereby “testing,” Bloom’s six terms? The test could be stated: (1) All three will be found within each term; and (2) the system as a whole can be described in terms of this triangulation. By this “test,” the logical conundrum of reversed predication, converted into a performative mandate (the young poet *must* involve these six “actions” in order to create poetry that is not demonized by its precursors), can be generalized to a much broader range of spatial and temporal conditions.

Motility: travel, the landscape, access, boundary crossings and conditions;

Scale: temporality, extimity (Lacan), paradoxical connections in time and space;

Identity: relating the Real of the above to the constructions of fantasy.

The complete test would amount to a book’s worth of analysis. The example of askesis gives a taste of how this test might proceed. Askesis is a retreat ... but from what? In historical examples of literal retreat, such as the monasteries of the late Middle Ages, we find walled communities whose motility dysfunction is evident in the creation of a restricted territory functioning as a microcosm (scale dysfunction). The issue of identity is key, as those in the religious community abandon their former social roles and adopt new religious identities. Within the monastery, motility, scale, and identity function as supportive functions, each reflecting the work of the other two. In relation to the system, askesis is at first a motility dysfunction, a retreat ... retreat from *what?* Of course, a retreat from the dæmonic aspect of evil, against which geographic and architectural defenses might be effective. Triangulating this retreat, the other four terms fall into place as two triangulating aspects of the monastery. On one hand, scale is evident in the model of successive temporality that comes with the Lucretian term, *clinamen*. The *clinamen* is a swerve in an otherwise even flow of “atoms” through a void that is the temporal plenum. The swerve correlates to the monastery as a “site of exception,” and the Bloomian term “*tesseræ*” establishes this interruption of the scale hierarchy will be the basis of a coded reunion within the site. *Tesseræ* were tokens, usually made of clay, broken at the time of parting and symbolically reunited at reunion. The accident of the break — its precise shape — constituted a test of identity, since only two fragments from the same original whole would fit together again.

The theme of halves carries over to the other two elements, *kenosis* and *apophrades* (return of the dead). Again we have the theme of a reunion, a “knowledge of halves,” and *kenosis* as a kind of mystery knowledge based on fragments suggesting wholes. Just as *clinamen* suggests a moving geography and *tesseræ* suggest an identity test working within that geography, *kenosis* and *apophrades* intensify the theme of identity that works on a temporal basis. “*Apophrades*” referred historically to the days set aside for the trials of homicides in ancient Athens, drawn from the idea that the dead periodically return to their original living abodes, as in the celebration of All Souls’ Day. Time and space work as ground and figure in the case of *clinamen* (time’s even

advantage of this is to reveal the fractal of 3’s within the logic of each term, a resonance that converts the static definitions of the terms into a performative and resonant study method.

¹³ It is necessary to mention the extensive work of René Girard on this theme. See *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1978), but one of many works by this author on the subject of doubles, rivalry, and subjective misidentification.

flow of atoms as the ground for the site of exception); such sites require a secret password, embodied by the *tesseræ*.

The balance of space and time also rule "identity pair," kenosis and apophrades. Kenosis's knowledge by halves involves an "emptying out" in order to be receptive to God's will; and the apophrades is a return both to a spatial location and an event specifically restricted by the structure of the calendar. The Lucretian model exemplifies this in miniature, by being a spatialization of temporality and *vice versa*. While time is portrayed as a movement through a spatial void, space itself is seen as dynamic. Ascetic retreats such as monasteries are seen as swerves in time-space, and so the life inside the monastery as a site of exception is governed by a special form of time defined by the religious calendar and division of the hours of the day. Because the history of the customs of monasteries arises from an independent ecclesiastical-theological basis, the "test" of triangulation (motility, scale, and identity dysfunctions) can be accepted as somewhat objective. Its function within Bloom's six terms, both as a whole system, inside terms taken as three sets of pairs, and each term taken individually, realizes the fractal exceptionalism that binds the set. Comparison with Lacan's own system of three domains of subjectivity (Imaginary, Subjective, Real) and his own characterization of the fractal quality of these elements (using the Möbius band example and comparing the three to the rings of the Borromeo knot) can be made easily. Subjectivity is about lost identity within the Symbolic, the uncanny role of the double (scale dysfunction) in the Imaginary's mirror themes, and the spatial and temporal dimensionalizing of the Real (whose location is ever indeterminate) within themes of motility. Fractal logic makes it possible to find the same configuration of motility, scale, and identity within each single element; so no one diagram can translate the system. Rather it is the *test* of triangulation that sets up the logic of the anamorphic middle, the dimension of depth that allows a *passage* of conceptualization comparable to the visual construction of depth through parallax view.

The resonance — indeed, the perfect correlation — between systems concocted independently for entirely idiosyncratic reasons (Poe's, Bloom's, Lacan's, etc.) is enough to justify a matrix-approach to the personalized study that uses the conceptual passage idea to "see within" phenomena. At this level, the empirical existence of the terms of triangulation do not require more than the justification that they are adequate to the conditions they aspire to describe and explain. They need to be no more than conventions. However, when the same terms and distinctions seem to have been "already-always" represented independently by the systems and phenomena under review — where, as it often seems, the idea of anamorphic passage and the triangular terms that test the methods used to achieve it are simultaneously *informed* and *elaborated objectively* — then more than convention is at work. The theme of anamorphic passage and the unique form of universality that results from the reversal of predication is, like Vico's "imaginative universal," something that not only "works in history" but is essential to any idea of cultural formation, at whatever scale, in whatever time or place.

A Critical Case: Ekphrasis

This poetic device would not seem to be a likely proving ground for the general significance of reversed predication. The pause of a poem or story to allow an "object to speak" is, if anything, a quaint, even "ante-quainted," way of working in a bit of exposition at the expense of the conceit that if inanimate objects could talk, what would they tell us about what they have seen! Ekphrasis was in ancient times any occasion where an inanimate object could be called to testify from its "impossible" point of view. The overlap with *prosopopeia*, the animation of inanimate objects (the mirror that tells what it saw, etc.) in later history disappeared, and ekphrasis concentrated on converting the contents of one media into another media, a narration for example of the "stories" told by paintings, as in the case of Homer's famous description of the shield of Achilles or Virgil's account of the shield of Aeneas or the doors to the entrance of the underworld at Cumæ. Ekphrasis was extolled by Horace's dictum, *ut picture poiesis*, which because of the ambiguity inherent in inflected languages can mean either that paintings should tell stories or stories should paint pictures. In any case, the point is that there is meaning in looking but only a kind of "half-meaning" that leaves room for speculation.

The point of considering ekphrasis is to see if anything new can be discovered through the idea of reversed predication. If Quintillian was right to claim that ekphrasis could "bring down the gods from heaven, evoke the dead, and give voices to cities and states," then this power surely requires some investigation.¹⁴ The power of the voice is not to be trivialized into a Disney idea of talking cats. Rather, what is suggested here is the kind of "acousmatic" voice described by Mladen Dolar in his book, *A Voice and Nothing More*.¹⁵ When the

¹⁴ Quintillian, *Institutes of Oratory* 9, chapter 2.

¹⁵ Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

dead speak the subject is prophecy or omen, not idle chatter. The language itself is not the usual stuff of phonemes but, rather, the kind of reading that occurs between the lines — emotive, exceptional, hypertextual (Michael Riffaterre's term).

In the ancient examples, there is more than a switching between the gears of image and narrative. What stories gain when they find their place on the shield or some other spatial field is a spatial order that was not, in the original temporal sequence, immediately evident. The spirals, tiles, adjacencies, etc. evident at a glance in the visualization of the story takes them out of their linearity and shows how the spatial design might "have been their all the time," operating as a fate curving what appeared to be a straight-line logic of action and reaction into a curve, spiral, or other spatial figure. When the image is re-narrated in ekphrasis, the narrator may be reliable or unreliable. Like Aeneas before the gates of Cumæ, they may miss the point of the spatial order. In Aeneas's case, the priestess of the temple drags him away before he can finish — the figure of aposiopesis. Is this theme of half-speech related to ekphrasis? The remainder of Aeneas's reading is "completed" by his journey to the underworld, which is itself formed by a logic of halves.¹⁶

Finding spatial form in poetry or other narrative has been extensively employed in literature. It is not limited to modernist fiction, as Joseph Frank seems to suggest in his studies of Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* or James Joyce's *Ulysses*, but a practice that, as the antiquity of ekphrasis suggests, nearly universal. Italo Calvino's experiments with spatial form in *Invisible Cities* (whose anthology form is a spatial arch constructed out of corbelling successive thematic stories) and *Castle of Crossed Destinies* (where guests unable to speak tell their stories by laying out Tarot cards).

The extensive evidence of image-word collusion makes it somewhat baffling to understand the real motives behind W. J. T. Mitchell's overtly positivistic treatment of ekphrasis in his book, *Picture Theory* (1994). Treating the exchange between images and words as a "problem" that ekphrasis "attempts to resolve," he of course runs into the classical barriers to *ut pictura poiesis* cited by the formalist critic Lessing (*Laocöon*, 1766), who advised against intermarriage between the media. Thus, ekphrasis would naturally be forced into negative moments — hope, fear, indifference — where the "impossibility of translation" would frustrate any attempt at turning pictures into poems and *vice versa*. Armed with an enlightenment version of semiotics, Mitchell finds no essential difference between texts and images.

The moral here is that, from the *semantic* point of view, from the standpoint of referring, expressing intentions and producing effects in a viewer/listener, there is no essential difference between texts and images and thus no gap between the media to be overcome by any special ekphrastic strategies.¹⁷

McLuhan's "medium is the message" slogan has, he argues, been misunderstood. Language is the medium of the image, and the caption is able to translate what we see, easily done — with a bit of semiotics, that is. As with other Positivistic conversions of human life into nothing more than a series of problem-solving tasks; the ancients, who saw in the *essential difference* between temporalized words and spatialized images a gap into which legions of artistic experiments might drive through to invade broad landscapes of meaning, were simply wrong. There is, Mitchell claims, no gap, no essential difference. Just as Herbert Simon was famous for claiming, in the early days of computer development, that language translation was "just around the corner" (a period that was lengthened on a regular schedule, to be "within a few years" and finally "just a few decades away"), Mitchell sees no problem and cites the case of the sign language of the deaf, forgetting that the deaf hold on dearly to ASL because *it keeps others out!*

All the gate-keeping, door-locking, boundary complicating, and military-like defending that predominate the ancient examples have not gotten through to Mitchell, who might wonder why the Argives didn't just knock on the doors of Troy and ask for an appointment. For example, Aeneas's attempt to recover the meaning of the

¹⁶ W. F. Jackson-Knight, in his extensive study of this scene from the Aeneid, connects the tradition of underworld visit in classical literature to mythologies of far-away Malekula, where a goddess-demon would show the soul of the newly deceased a map that was the puzzle it had to navigate before finding a final rest. Before the ghost could take it all in, the goddess-demon erased *exactly half* of the image, forcing the ghost to make an effort to recall the plan as he/she might have experienced it in life. *Cumæan Gates: A Reference of the Sixth Aeneid to the Initiation Pattern* (Oxford, B. Blackwell, 1936).

¹⁷ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 160. The chapter, "Ekphrasis and the Other" is available on-line at <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/shelley/medusa/mitchell.html>.

images Dædalus had placed on the doors to the underworld at Cumæ were not simply a puzzle whose deciphering was unfortunately interrupted by the priestess. Their *spatial arrangement* had already encoded a literary “sequence,” but the sequence itself — which culminated in Dædalus’s escape from the wrath of Minos — problematic before its translation into images. In other words, the gap in the “media” as Mitchell puts it, is not just the difference between the delivery mechanisms and perceptual reception of images and words, it relates *to the gap itself, which is a constitutive and key element of the “essence” of the story-as-image!* To say there is no gap, in order to demonstrate that “Language can stand in for depiction and depiction can stand in for language because communicative, expressive acts, narration, argument, description, exposition and other so-called ‘speech acts’ are not medium-specific” is, on the one hand, correct in its utopian aspiration for a meaning that lies “beyond” the limitations of media; but, on the other hand, it misses the point of what this “beyond” actually means, or how it might be reached.¹⁸



Figure 2. Aeneas at the gates of Cumæ, entrance to the underworld, *Aeneid*, Book VI.

In other words, Mitchell would simply not understand why the deaf like ASL, why Aeneas is dragged away from his admiration of the Cumæan gates, or why James Joyce would bother to set *Ulysses* in Dublin rather than Peoria. Here’s how (and why) reversed predication can correct this famous critic’s blind spot by seeing, in the gap that he denies, the point of *ut picture poiesis*. If “resistance” functions in any way in art, poetry, film, or politics, it is, in Mitchell’s book, an annoying temporary obstacle. Clearly, he is driving the bulldozer between categories that intends to smooth the ground for future generations of ideologues.

How smooth is this ground to be? We should return to the naïve characterization of enlightenment representationalism — the continuum between the viewer and the viewed, marked off at intervals by frames that turn it into a conceptual staircase. Each step is not insurmountable; it slows down progress that might go uninterrupted if the connection had been a ramp. But, it provides the philosopher-critic with opportunities to comment. With one foot on the step below and one on the step above, the pause allows philosophy to reassert its control over the situation. Is there not, however, a “dark at the top of the stairs”? Doesn’t the philosopher

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

neglect mentioning the space of enunciating that must be kept separate from the space of enunciation? This space has been charted by Slavoj Žižek in his critique of Descartes' "I think therefore I am." This is possibly the shortest complete argument in the history of philosophy. In order for Descartes to describe the space of "I am," he must be allowed the independent space of "I think." The two spaces, completely independent of each other, are based on the difference between enunciating and enunciation, something difficult to notice in English but easy to spot in French, where *énoncé* (the enunciated) points directly at the line that must be drawn between the content and the act of expression. As in the case of the shout of "Fire!" in a crowded room, no one waits to hear the full argument before rushing out to avoid tragic death. The bomb is a *hypothetical object*, whose effect is "bombastic" *precisely because it is absent*. The absence of the object that causes the effect of enunciation is the key point. We must not underestimate the issue of absence.

This matter — which Lacanians would situate within the volume on the paradoxes of the Symbolic — affects the *ut pictura poiesis* issue directly. For Mitchell, there is only one theoretical space connecting images and words. Experientially it is a ramp, but critical theory can turn it into a staircase to allow opportunities for commentary. For example, Mitchell stops before a Malevich painting at the Museum of Modern Art. The painting is "Red Square and Black Square" (1915), subtitled "Painterly Realism of a Boy with a Knapsack — Color Masses in the Fourth Dimension."

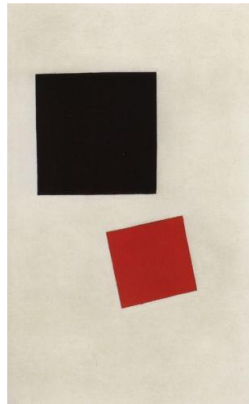


Figure 3. Kasimir Malevich, *Painterly Realism: A Boy with a Knapsack — Color Masses in the Fourth Dimension* (1915), oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art.

Mitchell leaves out "a" in "a boy" and again in "a Knapsack." He has his son with him, whose age he tells us is thirteen at the time, who serves him in the text as the naïve foil against which the wise father will guide discourse toward its proper end. The son, like other knuckleheads who visit art museums in order to dispel any lingering belief that artists may have done something important, fails to find any meaning in the painting. The knowing father corrects him, going so far as to animate the squares as personalities with dramatic relationships ("I felt gratified that he shared my sense that the 'hero' of this painting, the protagonist of its one-sentence narrative, is the tilted red square"). The son's skepticism is the stage for the father's brilliance, a stage in front of a grateful and forgiving audience willing to applaud Mitchell's self-attenuated arguments (after all, he's only trying to make his son move to the second base of art theory). Mitchell goes so far as to compare the squares to father and son, never taking seriously Malevich's advice about the fourth dimension or looking at the painting's field, a vertically oriented rectangle that silently maps the range of geometrical opportunities.

The opposition is given its lines to read in Mitchell's script. They are the *refuseniks* who disallow *ut pictura poiesis* as a transparency, a smooth ramp between representation and represented. In their possible critique of the museum as an ideological frame factory, they are only being impolite guests who wish to attend the wine-and-cheese reception without making a tax-deductible contribution. It is easy to see through Mitchell's stance, first in terms of Malevich's painting; second in terms of the "ramp critique." We will take up the ramp first, since it goes directly back to the two main sources that fuel discussion of reversed predication, Slavoj Žižek's idea of master signification and George Spencer-Brown's non-numerical calculus-topography.

The Ramp

To speak of the continuity of a representational "space" linking represented and representation presumes a stability in Western thought that never existed. If any one monument can locate and summarize the divisions of this space, it is Kant's antinomy, which is quotable:

Thesis: The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space.

Anti-thesis: The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space.

There is more to this first antinomy, but it is enough to point out that issue of time is bundled in with the problem of space. In the famous debate between Newton and Leibniz about whether or not the universe was finite or infinite, i.e. whether or not an actual margin of space exists, the resolution is Borgesian.¹⁹ Pascal's metaphor of God as an infinite sphere whose circumference is nowhere and center everywhere allows for finitude without a boundary line. The curvature allowing this to happen would have been lost on Cartesian conceptions of straight spatial dimensions; only with Einstein do we have an adequate mathematical adaptation of Riemannian spaces able to incorporate curvature from the start — i.e. not as an exception as in the case of Einstein's first Relativity Theory, but as the grounding principle, reflected in the modifications that produced the stronger, more comprehensive second Relativity Theory.

Whether space is "Borgesian" (i.e. "poetic-theological") or Einsteinian (i.e. "mathematical") is not important. Both angles tend to meet up at various key sites: the photons of quantum mechanics; the infra-thin of Duchamp; the apocalyptic anamorphosis of Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, Dante's idea of the role of the number nine as a (feminine) middle ground between heaven and earth in his *Vita Nova*.²⁰ This Borgesian-Einsteinian space differs from the Mitchell ramp/stair by incorporating the "gap" directly into the space between representation and represented. This gap in fact prevents us from settling the affairs between representation and represented in terms of any "overcoming of a temporary paradox" or "captioning" or "helping the naïve son or other knucklehead get past his/her rejection of abstract art by discovering a story of heroic father-and-son back-packers off on a black/red adventure. Rather than a ramp to which steps may be added for the convenience of pausing to insert explanatory materials, the space of representation/represented is, radically, a space of double predication.

Kant's contribution to double predication was the antinomy form, the combination of opposite arguments to show that whatever serves consciousness as a *medium* cannot be described as either "container" or "contained." It oscillates between the two functions, but this motion has only two "positions," i.e. container or contained. The oscillation is not a wave-form curve smoothly shimmying between high points and low points but a square wave that alternates "instantaneously" between the two values. There is no middle ground.

In rhetoric, there is a form of syllogism that is "all about" subtracting the middle ground. The enthymeme is the "rhetorical syllogism" that defines how speakers relate to audiences. It is instructive. The speaker says something and the audience is moved, but how? The thesis that the audience is directly persuaded by the speaker's brilliance and logic does not work. There are immediate "artifacts" that get in the way of this smooth mental kinesis. A major artifact is the audience's trust or mistrust of the speaker. Without trust, the most tightly constructed logical argument cannot convince. The audience's suspicion is that the speaker regards them as fools and has cleverly concealed some key evidence. The suspicion need not be substantiated; it is effective and fatal, for even the most rational, honest, and brilliant of speeches. A modicum of unproved doubt can unsettle the clearest, expertly argued case. This is why, for example, modern art conceived as "argument" cannot hold up to the objections of knuckleheads. They simply do not trust it. They are not obliged to ground their mistrust.

¹⁹ Jorge Luis Borges, "The Fearful Sphere of Pascal," *Labyrinths, Selected Stories and Other Writings* (New York, 1964), 189–192. See also Callahan, J. J., "The Curvature of Space in a Finite Universe," *Scientific American* 235, 2 (August 1976): 90–100.

²⁰ For an interesting synthesis, see Edward Tufte, *All Possible Photons: The Conceptual and Cognitive Art of Feynman Diagrams*, exhibition catalog (New York: ET Modern, 2012). I am grateful to Curt Dilger for pointing out Edward Tufte's work. Apostates should take seriously the notes to the translation in Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nova*, trans. Andrew Frisardi (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2012). See the on-line review from *The New Republic*: Helen Vendler, "Dante's *Vita Nova*," accessed November 19, 2012. <http://www.tnr.com/article/books-and-arts/magazine/108154/the-road-paradise#>

The enthymeme takes the classic form of the syllogism best known to students in introductory courses: Socrates is a man, all men are mortal, therefore Socrates is mortal ($A > B, B > C, \therefore A > C$). This is a kind of transitive scalar order. If "Man" lies at the "particular" end of a line, then "Mortal" lies at the universal predication other end. Socrates, being located on the line by the evidence that he is, in particular, a man, must be predicated by the mortality that affects all other men on the line.

In the enthymeme, the "predicated" stands for the idea; the material and immediate presence of the speaker is the "predicator" — act and agent, so to speak. But, the factor of trust is key. It is, by analogy, the "middle term." The speaker cannot prove anything without trust, and trust is not simply trust in the speaker but trust that can be attached to the predicated, the "truth" of that which is being said. The truth/trust element cannot be addressed directly. By the rule that makes all Cretans fools (or not), it must be a "silent" (implied or presumed) element. The speaker cannot say "Trust me!" because any scoundrel could and would say the same thing. The Cretan of paradox fame knows enough to make a joke out of the situation of silence. By incurring self-abuse and including himself in a group of liars, calling into eternal question whether or not he really knows what he is doing, the Cretan shows how the silent middle of the enthymeme may be silent in a number of musical keys and time signatures.

The transitive line connecting particular and universal is, in the enthymeme, interrupted with something that curves it. The reciprocity represented as a smooth ramp between two opposite positions, which we might represent as two parallel arrows moving in opposite directions — a kind of Newtonian economy of action and reaction — reveals a tilt. The parallel lines will "intersect" in a silent distance. This intersection is a "recursion," a violation of the spatial-temporal rule of continuity: the outside turns up not just inside, but in a *central position* that plays a causal, original role.

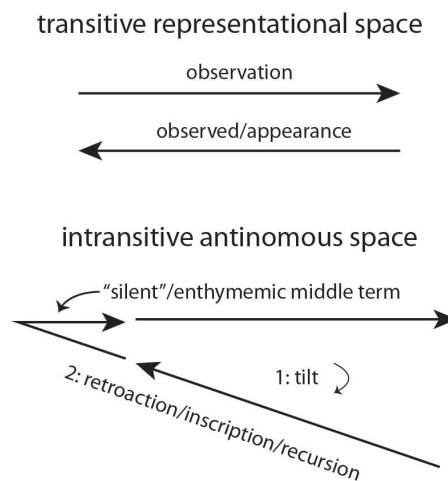


Figure 4. The "antagonistic" (i.e. truly "heroic" space, not the dramatic caricature Mitchell anthropomorphically imposed) is the structure of enthymemic, intransitive space that is, like Einstein's Second Theory predicts, radically curved. In effect, the curvature is "built in to" space/time itself, and this function creates "retroactive" scale dysfunctions that allow for the "philosophical" time-travel of retroactive realities as well as the popular culture time travel in fantastically unrealistic machinery. With perception put in terms of a "push" of observation-desire, matched by a "see what you want to see" of appearance, the role of the viewer in constructing the viewed becomes visible, as the enthymemic element, only when the viewer "comes true according to his/her desire." Diagram by author.

The enthymeme is not just about the oral rhetoric of the public speaker. It is about, among many other things, the *impasse* intentionally developed by Malevich's black and red squares. The middle is not intended to be used as a translator's highway connecting image to caption. Rather, it is the "remainder," the gap, that connects directly to the viewer, abolishing the distance between the viewer and the viewed. This is not a collapse in the sense of neo-Platonic mystical union. It is a retroactive understanding of the frame function, which allows the viewer to realize that the place before the painting now occupied by the alienated observer was once necessarily occupied by the painter in the act of production. This is the occasion of *apophrades*, the return of the dead *to the place of former habitation*, a serious event that, as all cultures seem to have

understood, is about eating and whispered speech.²¹

In Lacan-speak, the dead have an important semantic status, based on the fact that they “do not know they are dead.” This ignorance matches up to the unconscious’s inability to distinguish between dead and alive beings, hence dreams often involve the deceased. One could say that this is the unconscious’s central “accomplishment,” its blindness to death as an event. Rather, we should say that the unconscious fails to take death seriously; the biological terminus of life has no effect on the Symbolic; the deceased must die “properly,” i.e. in Symbolic terms, and ethnographical studies of the interval Lacan designated as “between the two deaths” are in agreement that “going out” (finding Symbolic rest) is a mirror image of the “going in” of life, construed as a multi-fold pathway. The classic image of between-the-two-deaths is in fact the Thesean labyrinth, a combination of three three-part “fractals” of an ABA design: AABA, BABA, AABA. The fractal is the clue that the labyrinth and its theme of nines is the same as Dante’s *Vita Nova* as a middle, and evidence that this middle also has “acousmatic” qualities related to the enthymeme and its functional deployment of the “silent middle term.”

If Spencer-Brown’s account of predication works from universal spaces to particular contents and Žižek’s master signifier works from particulars that acquire predicating powers, these approaches, too, have their own kind of middle ground in the number nine. This is not intended to be numerological mumbo jumbo but rather a thesis about scale dysfunction that is, at the same time, translated to motility dysfunction and identity dysfunction. In other words, the point of collating examples from mortuary belief, Medieval poetry, topology, and rhetoric is to compound the interest of the issue of reversed predication. Bloom’s assertion that his six terms account for the construction of “original poetry” out of the ashes of tradition is thus not so outlandish, if by the “triangulation test” we find in those six three relations of three’s that work “enthymemically” to find, in the deicide poet, the “already-always” presence of the younger! The dramatic occasion of “synchronous anachronism” — modeled as a flip, twist, or turn in our diagram — is acousmatically “silent” (as *per* the requirements for being an enthymemic middle term) and optically “invisible” (hence, the tendency to connect anachronism with a spatial “fourth dimension” of paranormal escape and haunting).

Double Inscription

In Spencer-Brown terminology, reversed predication allows a topological reversal of space divided to create a unified predicating agent and its cluster of predicates. The object “contains” or “owns” these, and as we construct this ownership arrangement, we think of the essence of the object to be concealed within a central interior space. In Enlightenment terms, we see only the outside, the superficial appearances that predicate the subject of the perceptual scene. We attempt to “penetrate” this veil, to pull it aside. We search for new layers of predication that get us closer to the real basis for the unity of the parts. We have, in this one-way process, however, forgotten the space we needed to construct in order to begin this interrogation, the space that Velázquez so deftly undermines with his triple triples, the “enthymemic” silent “middle” of the work of art.

If *Las Meninas* is anything, it is uncanny. It creates a “homey-looking” space but then undermines its stability. The carefully constructed perspective becomes less of a framework for reality and more of a web of the Real. It is possible that Velázquez in fact employed this metaphor: the painting above the mirror is of Arachne, the maiden who aroused the jealousy of Athena with her expert weaving and was, out of vengeance, transformed into a spider. Ovid, as always, provides some insight into the *metonymical* secrets behind the *metaphorical* transformations that were the theme of his *Metamorphoses*. As always, there is an irony. What the transgressor has done *before* becomes a part of the fate she will endure “in eternity.” The element

²¹ It is worth noting that it is precisely this issue taken up by the thematics of what has been called a “meta-painting,” Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (Figure 5). With the still-controversial use of mirrors and, possibly, optical devices, Velázquez used a mirror at the back of a room, the obverse side of a canvas, the natural irony of self-portraiture, and the accidents of duplicate names to “triangulate” the otherwise normal space of a room in the Alcazar Palace. The king and queen seen in the mirror appear as they might standing directly in front of the mirror, but the optics require some other source. This turns out to be the contents of the canvas on which Velázquez is shown working as he gazes at his models. There are three necessary occupants of the space in front of the canvas: the present-day viewer, the king and queen, and Velázquez himself. The king and queen would seem to break the rule of three’s, but the Infanta Margarita is, visually as well as genealogically, the apex of the “royal triad.” The painter’s triad is completed by the *apostador* shown at the rear of the scene. This royal “keeper of keys” was also named Diego Velázquez, a funny situation not lost on the painter, who used two dwarfs and a dog to mark, in the critical right-hand corner, a triad of “royal folly.” Like children, royal fools and pets were kept to ward off the evil eye, by institutionalizing the factor of dependency/defect.

concealed *inside* becomes the external/eternal container. Translating into the terms of the painting, the lines and vanishing points used to give the scene its look of natural perspective are the same medium that now *over-determine* the meanings that ricochet among the subject-images, the acts of looking, and the themes of representation.

Las Meninas is uncanny, but it also tells us a lot about the *Unheimlich* in general. If the diagram of the flip and V-shaped re-inscription provide a Žižekian account of how the particulars of a narrative sequence get “universalized,” the flip from container to contained that clearly marks *Las Meninas* in the matter of who stands where doing what is a paradigm for how the universal flip gets “particularized.” Double inscription is the process by which two opposed entities — for example, the two primary examples of life and death — are topologically related as container and contained. The metaphor of death containing life is the principal model used from the point of view of the life-span. Birth “comes out of death” and death returns the living subject to his/her “original state” of inanimate matter. The contrasting metaphor of life containing death is the spatial paradigm of the tomb, the cemetery, the isolated precincts of sibyls and shamans — zones into which one ventures at one’s risk, where passwords, tokens (*tesseræ*), and other devices indicate the idea of exception and liminal passage.

So, if both death and life can as easily be seen as container or contained, can we not go directly to the logic that allows these “reversed predication strategies”? In fact, this was the basis of Ernst Jentsch’s account of the uncanny, as the contrasting conditions of “life inscribed by death” and “death inscribed by life.”²² Freud, in his classic short study of the uncanny, took his start from Jentsch’s basic insight, developing out of it the themes of optics and identity — as if to say that Jentsch provides us an account of *scale dysfunction* while Freud covers the matters of *motility dysfunction* (using optics as a means of constructing “action at a distance”) and *identity dysfunction* in the theme of reflections, doubles, twins, etc. The uncanny, like Bloom’s six-term account of poetry, requires a triangulation test — to reveal its pattern of nines. “Pattern of nines” is not numerical mysticism but rather the criteria of internal resonance. Desire is integrated into the system, at every level. Thus “scale” becomes “dysfunctional” because no matter what scale the dynamics reappears. “Motility” embraces not just literal movement but the potential movement of travel, flight, concealment, lines of sight, etc. implied in spatial dimensionality. In effect, there are no “neutral” spatial dimensions, as seemingly implied by the Cartesian *x*, *y*, and *z* used to reduce space to content. There are only and always conditions and reasons for moving, returning, avoiding, etc. Motility dysfunction has to do with the gap in the circle of desire that creates, in spatial terms, conditions representing this gap in material circumstances. Within these, it is frequently the mirror function that leads to the identity dysfunction — primarily the “misidentification” that is the basis of the subject’s location within the network of Symbolic relationships.

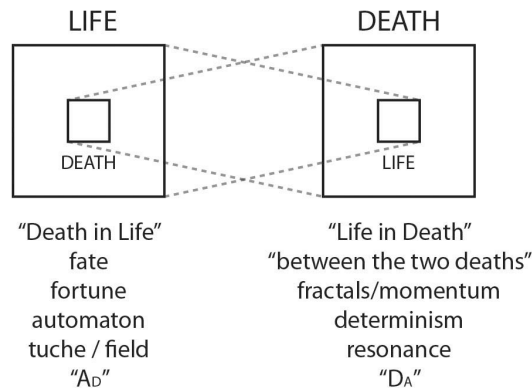


Figure 5. Through “double inscription,” life and death, the ultimate absolute demarcation, cross-contaminate each other to produce the hybrid forms well-known as fate and the interval “between the two deaths.”

With the basic diagram of double inscription (above), it would be possible to write many accounts of the uncanny involving material dysfunctions of motility, scale, and identity. All three modes point to a single logic of boundary intransitivity. One appears to have crossed a definite boundary but, instead of the transition between two states, a third is reached, which constitutes a kind of trap or liminal space. Referring to Figure 4, the “flip”

²² Jentsch, Ernst, “Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen,” *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 8, 22 (August 26, 1906): 195–198 and 8, 23 (September 1, 1906): 203–205. Freud’s study was first published in *Imago*, Bd. V., 1919; reprinted in *Sammlung*, Fünfte Folge.

of retroaction opens up a revisionary reading of the original “transitive” line. Where Euclidean space seemed to dominate, now a Riemannian contamination seems to be the case. Every “if-then” has become a “either-or.” The link between Spencer-Brown’s topological account of retroaction and Žižek’s master signifier seems close at hand. The “particular-turned-universal” of the enthymeme has come back to haunt particularity, and we know the specific name of this haunting: metonymy! We also know that the principles of haunting are a resonance-at-a-distance that influences consciousness through stochastic patterns that amplify the weak signals that first appeared to be noise but now appear to be passwords!²³ This new territory is rich with fictional material. Not only can the main themes of the fantastic (travel through time, the double, story in the story, and contamination of reality by the dream) be given concrete methodologies for their scale, motility, and identity dysfunctions, but these popular culture materials can replenish their stores continually from the inner logic of the Lacanian-Freudian drives, whose dissonance of symbolic demand (goal) and concealed desire (aim) curve every straight intentional arrow into a curved flight returning to an origin facing its original position, an internal “misidentification.” The partial objects (breast, feces, phallus, and gaze) have their logics anchored in the primary death drive.



Figure 6. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656). Oil on canvas (125.2 in. x 108.7 in), Museo del Prado, Madrid. The painter stands before a canvas he is presently working on; the models seem likely to be standing in the place of the present-day viewer, but the question remains: wasn't Velázquez also standing here as well? The main figure, the Infanta Margherita, is shown with attendants, and two older courtiers are shown behind. Two dwarfs and dog stand in for the royal custom of employing dwarfs as “natural fools” to ward off the evil eye; as William Empson has noted, dogs, children, and fools are in the class of those who require and deserve our help and forgiveness. The mirror at the back shows the figures in the doorway indirectly; the optics of reflections requires that they are the subject of the canvas turned away from us. A calculation of angles shows that this is exactly what the mirror must reflect. The gentleman in the act of leaving the room *via* the rear doorway was the royal keeper of keys (“apostentador”), two of whose names were Diego Velázquez.

²³ There is another kind of triangulation at work that combines Žižek’s particular-to-universal “master signifier” and Spencer-Brown’s universal-to-particular topological paradigm to emphasize their common element and its utilities: namely, the gap. This is, so to speak, the in-between of metaphor and metonymy, what Mladen Dolar has aptly isolated as the “non-phonemic” component of language. See Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006). The “acousmatic” function of the password shows how this “speech inside speech” works as motility dysfunction — i.e. a means of passage through/into an “impossible-Real dimensionality.” This middle ground opens up the territory connecting Giambattista Vico to James Joyce, *via* the theme of the thunder and the deployment of secret codes (“sigla”) in *Finnegans Wake*. McHugh, Roland, *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976).

This web of interactive relations is evident if one takes this diagram of double inscription, Figure 5, back to the example of *Las Meninas*. The simple opposed parallel vectors of looking and the "resistance" of the image to visual penetration (perception theory without Lacan, so to speak) is the "transitive" condition. Add the idea of the (Lacanian) gaze and the role of double inscription becomes obvious. The "triangulation" of the parallel vectors through a linking element of retroaction is present both in our diagram, Figure 4, and Figure 6, *Las Meninas's* triangulation of spaces activated by the mirror and its "scale dysfunctional" image of the king and queen. The motility function is broken. The equal and opposite vectors of looking and resistance are made "dysfunctional" by the "delay" imposed by the obverted canvas. The issue of identity (the "misrecognition" of the couple in the mirror as the couple to whom the Infanta and other figures in the painting are shown in the act of looking at; coupled with the three identities who fill this space in front of the canvas) completes the trio of interpolation functions.

What is doubly inscribed? What makes this painting so "uncanny"? We can see clearly from the Jenstchian model that the mirror literally takes on the role of one inscribed element. We see, however, that the door, with its temporary occupant, one foot on the next stair, on the way out. The vanishing point is indicated by this figure's right hand. The optical horizon of the painting crosses it and the heads of the figures in the mirror. We see the two spaces, representation and the represented, superimposed.

This more complex superimposition of doubly inscribed zones shows a folding of the space of looking (in front of the canvas) on to and within the space of representation, creating a "moiré" or "resonance" that vibrates between the two frames, recto and verso. This demonstrates two things. First, Velázquez shows that it is possible to show the two antipodes of double inscription at the same time; but, more important, it demonstrates that double inscription is, in fact, the key to the painting and an indication that Velázquez as an artist and thinker in the seventeenth century was aware of the potentialities of the uncanny within an optically constructed complex. This painting, more than most other kinds of evidence, puts on display a "tradition" of reversed predication that stretches back to (at least) Homer's poetics.

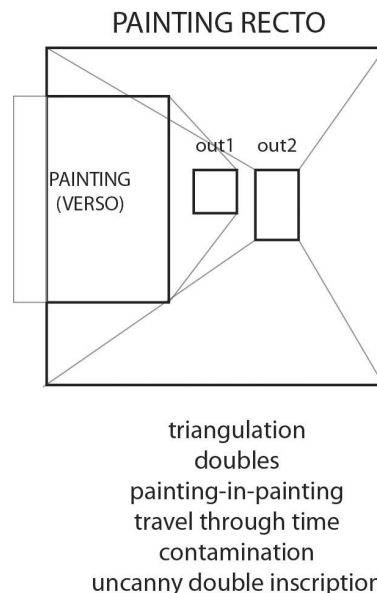


Figure 7. The superposition (*moiré*) of the Jentschian categories of the uncanny. Velázquez essentially folds the space in front of the canvas into the space of representation, with the consequences of creating pockets (*poché*) that create dysfunctions of scale, identity, and (considering the flight of the eye as travel) motility.

Las Meninas's folded space of double inscription shows how the retroactive \Leftrightarrow vectors convert transitive demand into intransitive desire, i.e. desire with a gap that becomes a portal to a conceptual depth within the work of art. This is significant because it links to works in other media where the visual/optical less of a literal element and more a matter of echoes in the text that "calibrate" a fold around a central pivot, as in the case of

the cheque handed to Dupin in "The Purloined Letter."²⁴ This fulcrum allows the beginning, "It was an odd evening" to collate with Poe's quote relating to the banquet of Atreus and Thyestes, twins whose rivalry concluded in a cannibal feast. If "self-consuming boundaries" ever needed a more grisly metaphor, this could not be a more appropriate reference! *Las Meninas* raises the hope that the "fourth dimension" as a conceptual portal is — and has been — a reality for poetry and the arts since its origins ... that in fact the idea of the work of art as a structured entry and exit involves a real, experiential movement akin to the DA of the soul after the moment of the first, literal death. This is not a plea for a "spiritualist" interpretation of art. Rather, it is a question of how art employs virtual space and time. This point requires a short digression.

Detached Virtuality

In architectural and art terms, "virtual space" and "virtual time" refer to perception based on inference rather than direct evidence. A room may be made to feel larger thanks to its proportions, colors, or detailing. Relations of events stretch time to make them seem to go slower or faster, etc. Perceived space-time as opposed to "real" space-time has led to a more general application: the construction of virtual spaces thanks to digital technology. We call virtual spaces those that are constructed with computational algorithms so that objects may be inspected from moving viewpoints; so that properties can be adjusted through a click of the mouse; and so that imaginary conditions can be simulated with great detail and animated in time. This kind of virtuality, and the original virtuality that gave rise to it, is based on the idea of contiguity: spaces and times as collections of pieces held together by Euclidean or other rules of order; one space *leads* to the next; one time is *succeeded* by another. Virtuality is *about* this continuity and the technology that makes it possible

This is not, however, the only form of virtuality.²⁵ The virtuality of "attached" spaces and times was preceded in history and in the imagination by an entirely different kind of virtuality — the virtuality of the detached. The simplest example is that of the shadow, which has since ancient times demonstrated an ability to detach itself from its "owner." Things done to a shadow (stabbing, capturing, cursing, etc.) have been regarded as having equal effect on the real subject. Escaped shadows have demonstrated an independence that puts them on par with the dreaming subject or the soul of the deceased. In other words, a phenomenon, an "effect" that is tied to its "cause," is given some selective freedom, an ability to become a "cause in its own right."

The freedom of the libertine shadow is also evident in the lore of the mirror image. Where the rules of optics require mirrors to reflect images in standard ways, violations of those rules have been around ever since the invention of mirrors, and the possibility of violations surrounded the early use of mirrors with dread and superstition. Reflections "should obey" the rules of optics. When they do not, there is a sense of uncanny evil.



Figure 8. René Magritte, *Not to Be Reproduced* (1937). Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. It is significant to note the book Magritte has placed on the shelf at the bottom of the mirror. It is Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, a book structured by a bi-partite chiasmus similar to the one Poe employed in "The Purloined Letter."

²⁴ Richard Kopley, "Formal Considerations of the Dupin Mysteries," *Edgar Allan Poe and the Dupin Mysteries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 7–26.

²⁵ Remarkably, Elizabeth A. Grosz's seemingly comprehensive book about the philosophy of virtuality in architecture treats *only* the condition of contiguous virtuality as exemplified by digital simulation. While she acknowledges the antiquity of virtuality, she sees only the cases of imagined, whole spaces. *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001). The lore of detached virtuality is the stuff of ethnography, folklore, and mythology, where detachment is the rule, not the exception.

The virtuality of detachment, where reflections and shadows take up an independent life, has two forms or modalities. In the moment of detachment, where as in the Magritte painting the reflection refuses to obey the laws of optics, the dependent image or shadow abandons its "owner," but there is still a causal link. The shadow, on its own, may encounter adversities that will impact the now-isolated subject. Similarly, as popularized by the Disneyfication of Grimms' *Kinder-und-Hausmärchen* (Berlin 1857), tale number 53 ("Snow White"), the mirror image can become assertively contrarian. Just as the Magritte mirror image "refuses" to face its cause, the detached virtual image rebels and becomes cause, not effect. What happens optically is elaborated into other media and the triangulation test applies. The shadow and mirror *travel (dysfunctionally)* away from their immediate causal source. The scale relationships of cause and effect reverse. And, finally, the identity that was normally preserved by seeing one's shadow or reflection is negated.

It would be interesting to consider how this "magic virtuality" plays into the famous mirror stage of Jacques Lacan's young child, for whom the mirror reflects a previously unknown entity, the specular self, initiating a period of development of the child's ego within networks of symbolic relationships. This is a form of detached virtuality we may all claim to have experienced as the foundations of the formation of our egos. We may later normalize our mirror image, but in this first encounter the mirror image's "stranger" provides the *mis-identification* that is the key to subjectivity. We never "see ourselves" again, but we assimilate the view of the Other through the mirror's service as an index. We "check the mirror" to see if our hair is combed, if our clothes look right, if we have aged or gotten sunburned. The mirror "interpellates" us in the sense that it maintains the power of the Other as authoritative. With subjectivity relocated to this external regulator, we make an "intimate externality," a process Lacan dubbed "the extimate" (*extimité*).

Like reversed predication, detached virtuality is remains unknown and misunderstood because its effects have been domesticated thanks to the mandates of the Symbolic (the networks of our social relations based on language). The dream, clearly one type of imaginary space, is hardly ever considered virtual because of the re-dedication of virtuality to digital representation. Similarly, representations in art show spaces that are in every sense virtual, but again the term is not employed. Mental conceptions of places were once the focus of planning and geography studies of "subjective perception." "Mental maps" represented how people adjusted objective environmental features to their unique personal interactions and values. But, again, such maps have not been counted among the evidence of virtuality.

It remains to the phenomenon of detached virtuality to reassert the virtuality that is key to the ability of the imagination to project, remember, and invent spaces and times with or without any objective basis. The construction of spaces and times through "non-visual" means of literature, music accentuates the point that it is *contiguity* in virtuality that is a fragile construct, ever subject to dissolving into the mist. Narrative spaces in dreams and fiction are fragmentary, discontinuous. Sequences are easily jostled out of order. Rarely are events completed or spaces completely known. The commonplace failure of contiguity is like a failure to reach completion; something is always left over. The virtuality of detachment, in contrast, brings this incompleteness into the middle of experience. Where we expect cause and effect to hold a mirror reflection to the subject standing before it, breaking the rule creates a fantastic condition. *What should have remained attached has become detached*. Where the nocturnal dream returns to become the reality the next day, fantasy simply has shifted its direction. *What should have remained detached* has invaded the safety of the everyday.

The contiguous virtuality of digital/video simulations follow in the tradition of "naturalistic" paintings and photographs. Representations on the screen, canvas, or paper play the role of a scene viewed through the window of the picture plane, the conceit developed by Alberti. The frame "clips off" a view from a virtual world that extends beyond this particular instance of framing. Through the frame we enter into a consistency of representational space and time; there are no reversals of causality or breaks in the neutral containers of space and time. With the advent of Cubism, Surrealism, Constructivism, Abstract Expressionism, etc. it was the break that was brought to the center of the scene. The frame itself appeared in multiple guises, as made evident in Marcel Duchamp's famous *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912), where the "production technique" of sequential visualization was itself materialized by the succession of positions of the moving figure. The incorporation of framing devices into the pictorial content of the representation showed that detached virtuality was, in effect, a comment on the process itself. If something could be attached in the imaginary contiguity represented realistically, the *rule itself could be broken*; what could be attached could just as easily be detached. The "fragility" of attachment was exposed when the frame and other components of the *act* of representation were put on display, hauled in as it were from the periphery to the center.

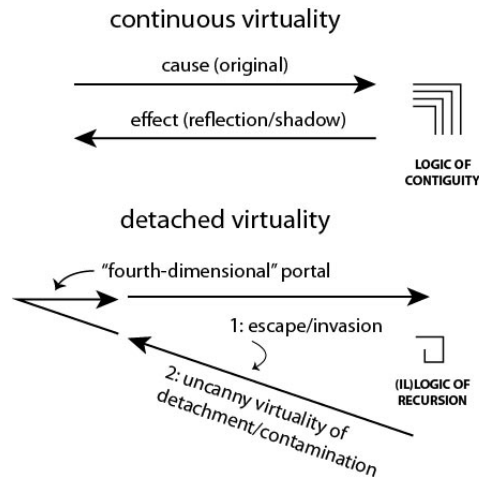


Figure 9. Continuous virtuality's logic of continuity effects a transitive set of parallel, opposed vectors that chart a "cause and effect" relationship of sensing and the sensed. When, however, the rule is exposed as a variable rather than a constant, the limits of the system so to speak are brought into the center of things, as a rule violated to create a route available for either escape (e.g. the mirror image that refused to obey the laws of optics) or invasion (the contamination of reality by the dream).

How does detached virtuality come to instantiate the essence of reversed predication? To answer this question we have to consider the role, in the "flip" of predication from cause-to-effect to effect-to-cause. In this we see Žižek's idea of the "master signifier," the particular that has been elevated from the role of one particular among many (think of the shark in Stephen Spielberg's film, *Jaws*) to a signifier that is able to order all other signifiers.²⁶ But, it is possible to also see the universalist logic behind this reversal, as developed by George Spencer-Brown in his non-numerical calculus of forms?

Spencer-Brown demonstrated the power of his calculus over Boolean logic by taking up the examples made famous by Lewis Carroll, his "sorites," or lists of nonsensical attributions about a finite set of objects or people and their attributes.²⁷

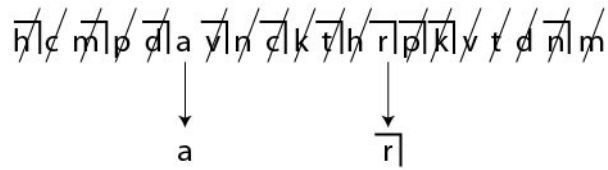
1. The only animals in this house (h) are cats (c);
2. Every animal is suitable for a pet (p), that love to gaze at the moon (m);
3. When I detest a animal (d), I avoid it (a);
4. No animals are carnivorous (a), unless they prowl at night (n);
5. No cat (c) fails to kill mice (k);
6. No animals ever take to me (t), except what are in this house (h);
7. Kangaroos (r) are not suitable for pets ($\sim p$);
8. None but carnivore (v) kill mice (k);
9. I detest (d) animals that do not take to me ($\sim t$);
10. Animals, that prowl at night (n), always love to gaze at the moon (m).

Spencer-Brown translates each quality and its object into a letter. For example, 'h' designates "house, in this" and 'c' stands for "cat."

²⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 26–27.

²⁷ George Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), 123–124.

process of "cancellation" of terms distributed in other predications



$\overline{r|}a$ — "all kangaroos (r) are avoided by me (a)"

Figure 10. Sorites is a logical paradox that asks how the designation of a group may persist, even when the group is reduced to a minimum. For example, is a pile of sand, when reduced to one grain, still a "pile"? At what point did it cease to be a pile? The reduction in this case is a cancellation carried out on paired terms. Wherever one element, 'a' for example, appears as *both* a predicate and a predicat-*ing* term, the two "cancel out." Through a quick operation, Spencer-Brown demonstrates how Lewis Carroll's puzzle can be accurately reduced to the two terms that remain unpredicated and unpredicating, relatively. The 'r', kangaroos, are 'a', "avoided by me." The *particular* is reached through the universal-as-collective, disaggregated through the sequence of predications. The answer is discovered "automatically," without any consideration of content, only the "even-odd" aspect of predication.

Lewis Carroll listed a series of predicates that, in their jumble of animals, animal habits, hatreds and loves for this and that animal that does or does not gaze at the moon, we seem to be in a Pirandello play. Yet, hidden within this pile, this sorites, is a pattern. Each term but two has a match. If predicated, the twin will be predicat-*ing*. If predicating, then the twin will be predicated. The noise created is a kind of white noise, from the *delay*, the separation, of predicated and predicator. Not until the process of cancellation does it become apparent that the pairs have existed as such, or that their twinship will amount to silence. Nor until the cancellation of pairs is complete do the "orphan" predicated and predicating elements step forward to join each other, like the masked king and queen at a fancy dress ball. Their marriage was concealed up to the last minute.

This would be a silly operation were it not for the fact that we have, in this adaptation of Spencer-Brown's Laws of Form to Lewis Carroll's sorites puzzle, the keys to the relationships linking predication, virtuality, the "who am I?" aspect of the enthymeme (and hence the key to the "silent middle term" that constitutes the essence of the master signifier). The uncanny's cross-inscription, which affords us an entirely different view of how boundaries are created through distinction of opposed qualities, furthermore explains the role of the (vertical) screen that cuts a section through the normally "parallel" lines of action and reaction, motion and resistance, gaze and counter-gaze — hence, the importance of those surfaces that work as section-screens: mirrors, windows, picture planes — even the flat ground upon which shadows are cast ... and sometimes measured, stored, and re-used.²⁸

There is, however, in this example, a stripped-down paradigm of predication that has the potential to demonstrate, if not explain, the inner workings of thought in its relationships to (dis-)placement and the ability of the signifier to escape the conventional ordering of the signifying chain (i.e. "signalizing"). This harvest of insight requires a fresh example.

²⁸ The reference is to the account in Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* of the practice of measuring the shadows of unsuspecting victims of foundation rites. A person's shadow would be measured surreptitiously using string; the string would be sold to be used in the magic ritual required to protect a building from spiritual harm; as the building was completed the original "owner" of the shadow would sicken and die. This practice was apparently still in evidence into the late 19c. in eastern Europe. "Not long ago there were still shadow-traders whose business it was to provide architects with the shadows necessary for securing their walls. In these cases the measure of the shadow is looked on as equivalent to the shadow itself, and to bury it is to bury the life or soul of the man, who, deprived of it, must die." *The Golden Bough* (1922 abridged edition), epub, accessed November 24, 2012. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3623>.

Pale Fire

Vladimir Nabokov's novel about novels (i.e. "self-predicating from the start") begins with a poem, written by one of the characters who, in the digetic time-line, is dead at the start of the story. The poet is neighbor and friend to a visiting faculty member teaching in the Slavic Languages Department, Kinbote, a partial anagram of "bodkin," a slender needle or stiletto, and a "king bot," "maggot of extinct fly that once bred in mammoths and is thought to have hastened their phylogenetic end." (The term is defined in the index of the novel itself.)²⁹ Nabokov's expertise with insects made this an instructive use. Kinbote plays the role of the fly who lays its eggs in the newly deceased animal. The fly is so expert in sniffing out death that the presence of the larvæ, and their developmental stage, are used to determine the precise time of death in forensic investigations of corpses found out of doors.

Such is Kinbote's role when his neighbor, John Shade, pays a visit to celebrate the completion of his biographical poem. Shade is shot by an intruder; Kinbote realizes the significance of the timing and steals the poem's manuscript. The remainder of the novel is about Kinbote's reading and annotation of the poem to demonstrate that the ostensibly biographical poem about Shade is really about Kinbote, the exiled king of Zembla, disguised as an itinerate academic visiting U.S. colleges. The annotations, ridiculous at first, begin to take hold of the reader. The wildly delusional connections start to make sense on their own, and in the end the reader is balanced within a "master signifier" that is based on the reversed predication pivoting between a "standard" reading — following the thesis that Kinbote is simply crazy — and the "Zemblan" reading, which for all its fantastic allusions seems to be able to include more of reality than had Shade's biographical poem. Josh Kaplan notes a key etymology: "the name Zembla is a corruption not of the Russian *zemlya*, but of Semblerland, a land of reflections, of 'resemblers'." Considering that the sorites of Lewis Carroll is an accurate algorithm reducing "a land of reflections" to its pure logical form, Zembla reminds us that the sorites is a "field of affordances," a landscape across which a traveler may wander in order to sort, from the countless predications he/she encounters, the two elements, predicated and predicating, that constitute the hidden key. That landscape, and its pole star, owe their being to the calculus of predication.

I was the shadow of the waxwing slain
By the false azure of the window pane ...

We are hearing the words of a dead bird. Birds don't talk, they sing, so we are *ipso facto* enjoying a *song* being sung from "beyond the grave." Of songs and birds, the Russians have a saying, "Without songs there are no birds," a reminder that reversed predication can often be the basis of folk wisdom. The bird has broken its neck against the glass of a window that has provided a false virtual image of a blue sky. The transitive cause-and-effect of flight, wings pushing down and air pushing up, is interrupted, permanently. Slain and pain go with stain — the "smudge of ashen fluff" Nabokov cites in the next line — and pain, which must have been the cost of the bird's own reversal of predication, as it hit the window constituting a vertical "section" cutting across the flight. The bird that traversed the blue in its flight is now "traversed" (killed) by that blue, which was virtual in the formula of predication:

²⁹ To understand the navigational significance of key terms, see Josh Kaplan, "A Delineation of Botkin's Role in Pale Fire, & His Fate Beyond," accessed November 22, 2012. <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/kaplan1.htm>.

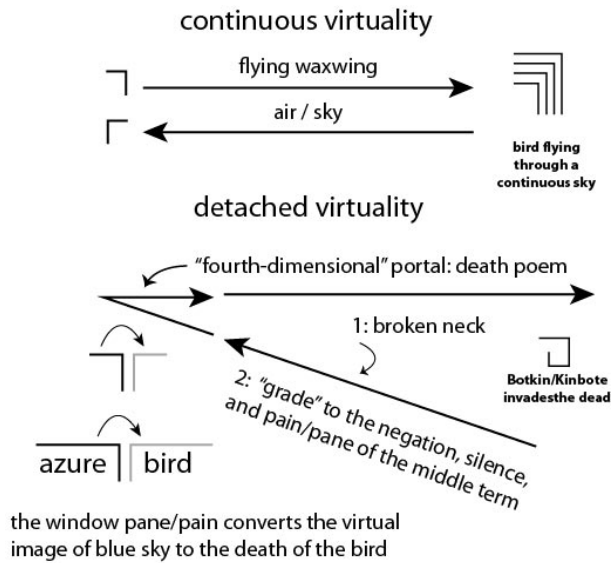


Figure 11. The poem-inside-the-novel begins with a reversed predication. The virtual image of the reflected sky is exchanged for the shadow (death) of the bird. Yet, as shadow, the bird continues to sing "from beyond the grave," an example of Bloom's *apophrades*, the return of the dead to the *place* of reversed predication, to predication *as a place*. The momentum of the shadow past the moment of death qualifies the poem as a death narrative, set within the space Lacan designated as "between the two deaths," the first literal death and a final *symbolic* death. We will now come to understand how this final symbolic death corresponds to the reunion of terms in Spencer-Brown's sorites — terms that, unlike the conventional predications of symbolic systems, "resonate" in a metonymic (as opposed to a metaphoric) way, not to "signal" but, rather, to *signalize*. Hence, the final predication is a reunion of parts thanks to a cipher that not only splits materials into two parts but is itself a split.

The following can only be imperfectly said: Philosophers of culture and psychoanalysts agree that fear and anxiety are the two critical aspects of human origins, one based on the presence — the *here* — of the feared, the other the *there*, its absence. Lacanians emphasize that the two aspects of subsequent human subjectivity are an alienation experienced *here*, in the midst of the Symbolic, the subject's debt to the Other for self-definition; and separation, that defines the Imaginary as a journey of the soul after its separation from the body. In language and thought in general, the principal division of metaphor is created by the over-presence of meaning filling an imaginary perceptual field — metaphor proper — and the effect of meaning that acts "at a distance" — again, a contrast of *here* and *there*. In each of these fundamental domains of human subjectivity — origins, existence, and imagination — there is the matter of presence or absence, a here and there.

The "spatial" sciences — art, architecture, geography, landscape study, etc. — have a special stake in subjectivity as well as a special obligation to contribute something insightful to the undeniable dominance of their medium to the central matters of subjectivity. The fine print of this obligation returns to the matter of presence and absence: (1) to clarify the role the spatial dynamics of fear/anxiety that structure the *places* of human origins; (2) to set up diagrammatic templates by which fantasies about alienation and separation are *topologically* structured in relation to the Real; and (3) to assimilate and explicate the role of metaphor and metonymy in the structure of temporalized places as the sites of subjectivity, both sites that domesticate the Real within the symbolic networks of "reality" and the "sites of exception" that address the Real directly.

Pale Fire does not flinch in its obligation to these three theaters of subjectivity. In fact, it deploys motility, scale, and identity in a 1:1 concerto of techniques fit to each challenge, of origins, of fantasy, and of poetic imagination. The question of identity begins the novel with its monumentally idiotic misrecognition. Kinbote takes Shade's poem to be about him; at the same time the reader is alert to the fact that Kinbote's own identity is in crises, within the delusion that he is the exiled king of Zembla. The dysfunctional escape from New Wye, which is at the same time an escape from the *heimlich* cosiness of the poem as Shade's autobiography, is a "mind on the run" from itself and, indeed, any stable explanation of what is happening in the novel.

But, finally, it is scale that breaks down entirely. The consecutive order of moments that maintain time's orderly successions and the analogous Cartesian coordinates of horizontal movement across the landscape give way to the immediacy of unpredictable contaminations of here by there. Kinbote's abduction of the poem begins when a gunman appears out of the blue and shoots Shade. The story of Zembla appears out of the blue of Kinbote's heated imagination. The assassin Gradus appears out of the blue to "finish the job." But, most convincingly and immediately for the reader, the idea that Zembla somehow exists — and the impossible atlas and encyclopedia supporting this idea — appears out of the blue of reading. This "blue" is the azure promise of the reflection in the window, the lure that broke the waxwing's neck and yet could not prevent the song from continuing within its own impossible space "between the two deaths." The blue was not just there in the usual sense of calculated projection of lines of sight and superposition of reflection over reality. It was a there that appeared suddenly in the midst of the here, a there that immediately permeated here with its magic spell.

Jacques Lacan summarized the issue of here's contamination by there in his economical neologism, *extimité* ("extimacy"). Whether extimacy exports subjectivity to the most objective form of being, the Thing; or whether the Big Other's enigmatic desire is imported into the hollow center of every subject, as Louis Althusser argued in the case of ideology; the point is clear for all those engaged in the spatial fields of architecture, geography, landscape studies, and visual arts criticism: Whether imported or exported, extimacy is the business of "detached" virtuality. Extimacy is the unified field upon which the dysfunctions of motility, scale, and identity play out the dramas of the here and there, the uncanny enthymemic creation of universality out of materiality and the obverse construction of materiality out of the universal language of predication. What in extimacy is double inscription (Jentsch's categories of the uncanny as fate, death-inside-life (AD) and the survival of the soul, life-inside-death, DA) is at the same time the optical dynamics of here and there in detached virtuality. To ignore detached virtuality in the face of this *grosso concerto* of these interconnected interests would be profoundly idiotic.

Does reverse predication hold out the promise of synthesis? Spencer-Brown failed to develop his calculus beyond its formal rules and accomplishments. However, a large number of physicists and mathematicians, the former working primarily with String Theory, the latter with number theory and recursion, have taken Spencer-Brown's calculus into new territory. The chief figure in mathematics has been Louis Kauffman, who has demonstrated how imaginary numbers emerge from simple boundary relations.³⁰ Kauffman's interest in the self-entering form might qualify him as a literary critic, since the detached virtuality of shadows, reflections, shades, souls, and the like might find counterparts in the recombinant numeric residuals that give rise to such figures as the Golden Section. Mathematical remainders evident in numbers such as 1.1111, 3.3333, and 6.6666 were recognized in antiquity and again during the Renaissance as the magic of musical ratios were allowed into philosophical discussion. Where etymology was also included, the service of special numbers was evident. The nine in Dante's *Vita Nova* has its echo in Vico's *Scienza Nuova*. Either or both could be regarded as a life or science of the new, the *hapax*, requiring a full understanding of the number 9's "autonomy" and "self-sufficiency" or, more directly, "a science of the nine."

In the language of predication, we might return to the theme of reversible possession and the thin gap separating the possessor from the possessed. In Dante's *Comedia Divina*, the poet, like the waxwing, reaches a threshold beyond which travel comes at the cost of death. The pane cuts a section across the path, and we are at a crossroads defined since antiquity by god of the crossroads, Hermes, \times , *alias* Janus (Djanus), consort of Diana (Djana), goddess of the hunt and the moon. This "planet" ruled the tides and gestation, the forty-week interval between conception and birth, a journey of the soul from Elysium through the imagined spheres of planetary influences, beginning with Saturn and melancholy. Dante's melancholy was the dark wood, the *selva oscura*. In the woods of the landscape as well as the words of language, the only voice that penetrates is the song of the bird, translated in poetic conceits to the lines of the poet or shaman, verses or curses. The root $\sqrt{\text{VEL}}$ — will, choose, wild, twine, wonder, wind, turn, etc. — traces a path through Indo-Germanic words that link wishing to winding, charming, and poetizing. By Dante's time, casting a spell was an ancient art, impossible to ignore in the creation of "secular" poetry. The poetic journey begins with the melancholic section, the destruction of the illusory virtuality of everyday life and the acceptance of the virtuality of the detached, the *katabasis*, ($\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\beta\alpha\iota\nu\omega$), the interval "between the two deaths." Naturally, the number of quarantine, 40, plays a role in linking this space to all others designated to insure a *cordon sanitaire*.

What we have in Dante's journey is a case of cosmically reversed predication and double inscription.

³⁰ Louis Kauffman, "Laws of Form—An Exploration in Mathematics and Foundations," Rough Draft, accessed June 17, 2012, <http://homepages.math.uic.edu/~kauffman/Laws.pdf>.

Through the reckonings of symbolic death, DA, we see how life's sins, AD, where D stands for the "thousand deaths" of moral transgressions, have converted to punishments. Dante piles up scene after scene. One predicating element is separated from its predicated twin. Finally, when the process of predication is completed by the spiral trail, the final predicate, Satan, is reached. Satan himself is a predicate, a reversed predicate. Predictably, we're at the point of the ninth circle where space inverts itself, from a hole perceived not by sight but sound, eroded by a rivulet (*un ruscelletto*), a "hidden road" that gains the poet and his guide access to the morning stars.

It is a maudlin truism to say that when you die "you can't take it with you." From having possessions to being possessed — weighed, judged, sentenced or rewarded — the enigma of dying is the remote inevitability that seeds itself inside every moment of experience, so says Heidegger about the essence of *Dasein*. So, Heidegger, too, must confess to being a *magi* of the Freudian death drive. As with all drives, the death drive creates its own "partial object." This is the seeming goal against which every aim must fail. Our aim is true, it seems to place the bead directly on the goal, but the course the arrow or bullet or pilgrim takes curves around to its origin, where it confronts itself in the same way Magritte's poor young man is refused by his own reflection. Aim and goal constitute an automaton, a "perpetual motion machine" able to convert all lines into such gapped circles. Here is where the partial object is found: the breast, feces, the phallus, the gaze. Each partial object cannot sit still within the space that is adequate for ordinary objects. It has a surplus, which is also a shortage, a lack, the lack associated with desire. Once bounded, once limited, the object of desire creates (self-perpetuating) *desire itself*. We cannot get enough of it because we are allotted only a portion. Yet, "Coke is it!" and we set our aims on the ineffable remainder. That gap is the pivot point of reversed predication. It is the point at which we cease to desire something and that something begins to desire us.

Lucretian Flow Model and the "Horizontal Atlas"

In the fanciful novel, *Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing* (1952), René Daumal describes the quest undertaken by intrepid hyperspace explorers intent on finding the "paradams," magic gemstones found only on a mountain of a Pacific island concealed within the fourth dimension.

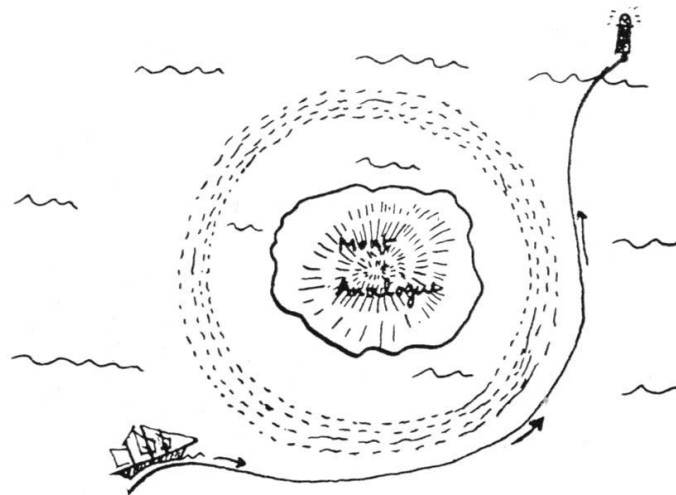


Figure 12. The curvature of hyperspace. From René Daumal (1908-1944), *Mount Analogue: an Authentic Narrative* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1968). The Lucretian traveller experiences a straight-line efficient flow, and if a ship able to enter the space of *Mount Analogue* could be observed from the Lucretian position, that ship would appear to be moving in a curved route.

A ship sailing across the Pacific in a straight line actually takes a course curving around Mt. Analogue. In other words, the normal conception is reversed. To sail straight is to know how to enter into the fourth dimension of this charmed island. But, relative to ordinary Cartesian/Euclidean space, the journey into the fourth dimension appears to be curved, or, more accurately, "volute" (from the Indo-Germanic root, \sqrt{WEL}). This navigational reversal is best seen through the logic of Lucretius's idea that all of solid reality is in fact moving through space, in parallel, with all parts moving at equal speed. Just as cars on a crowded multi-lane

highway appear to each other to be motionless, no one notices this high-speed chase unless one element speeds forward or falls behind. The path of the hyperspace ship in Daumal's story would appear to be curving into the invisible island. The island itself would be a "site of exception," a "space-inside-space" whose invisibility is linked to the project of knowledge and special pass-codes required to jump inside it.³¹

In fact, Daumal specifies that only explorers who have passed certain moral purity tests are able to mine the paradams. The elaborate protocols of getting to the island and on to the mountain make it clear that the space is, like Dante's inferno, a conditional space requiring special visa permits, especially if one wishes to return alive. Daumal's fantasy seems less idiotic if we consider how other "sites of exception" work. In the conventional mapping of terrain, facts are determined in relation to a zenithal point of view. The mathematics that regulates the movement and periodicity of this point of view determines the projection-style of the maps singly and as a collection. Because maps are views from a hypothetical "above," the successive points of view (POVs) required for an atlas are multiple, while the "vanishing point" (VP), to borrow a term from perspective drawing, is always the same: the center of the earth. This rule is flexed when the frame is adjusted to allow for a more convenient use of the maps as a set. For example, a Mercator projection traces lines from the center to a cylinder, thus exaggerating greatly territory near to the poles. Projection to cones rather than cylinders lessens this effect, and cutting away the surface into sections before doing the projection is even more accurate.

Consider what might happen, however, if the both the zenith (∂) and the nadir, the earth center (α), could change, not just the zenith. A space would "open up" in the midst of the "vertically mappable" terrain that would have to be mapped "horizontally." *This is precisely the situation of Daumal's "analogy as mountain."* The movement of the center, α , has created a *poché* within ordinary space so that the ordinary space appears to be "rectilinear" but in fact is radically curved. The "site of exception" lies within the *poché*, accessible only through procedures and geometries that, from the point of view of ordinary space, are themselves "curved": twists, winds, spirals — i.e. the "recursive" paths that characterize ritual spaces, entries to the underworld, curses and blessings, enfiladed entries of Neolithic fortresses, labyrinths, etc. When the literal geometric element is missing, the theme of testing, proving, provoking, etc. is not. The sites of exception both exist and don't exist, which is to say that they are the essence of reversed predication. And, because thought is fundamentally the act of predication, the existence of a "pure reversal condition" of predication amounts to an unconscious, extimated into the circumstances of the material world, an "intimate externality." This is what the sorites parodies: the concealment and subsequent revelation, through a process of negation (the cancelled pairs, creating a chiasmic pattern), of a resistant surviving remainder, a final predication, two terms that meet at a gap.

³¹ The Lucretian model is not so outlandish as it first sounds. Inhabitants of planet earth in fact believe their space to be stable, but in fact it is in constant rotation as well as orbit. For this reason, the Coriolis effect, which is normative (straight) with respect to the more general gravitational framework, appears to be a force curving otherwise straight flows into spirals.

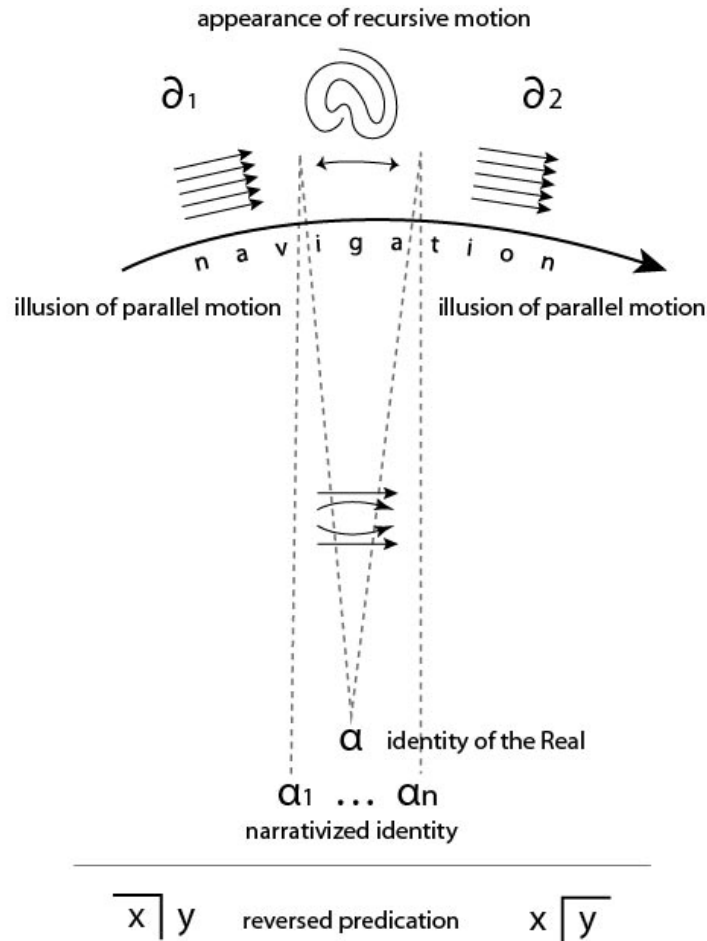


Figure 13. With $\partial_1 \dots \partial_n$, "vertical" travel enjoys the illusion of traveling in a straight line. In this context, sites of exception are invisible, entry based on "recursive" motions such as spiraling, meandering, circling, etc. The Real center of navigation, α , can be expanded to $\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n$ to provide the required 1:1 ration of ∂ and α *within* the site of exception. This is both a statement of reversed predication and the *gap* between predication's internally opposed polarities.

It is time to revisit the image of Aeneas before the gates of hell at Cumae (Fig. 2). Is it not now easy to recognize how the "wings" of reversed predication function as gates to the prohibition/privation space of the underworld, whose password is the number 9? Book 6 in *The Aeneid*, known for its theme of "funeral games," divides the epic poem in two equal parts. The doors that initiate Aeneas's descent divide the story of Dædalus and Icarus into left and right parts as well. Here is Virgil's ekphrasis describing the sculpted "story doors."

[... and now behold,]

And enter now, the temple roof'd with gold.
 When Daedalus, to fly the Cretan shore,
 His heavy limbs on jointed pinions bore,
 (The first who sail'd in air,) 't is sung by Fame,
 To the Cumaean coast at length he came,
 And here alighting, built this costly frame.
 Inscrib'd to Phoebus, here he hung on high
 The steerage of his wings, that cut the sky:
 Then o'er the lofty gate his art emboss'd
 Androgeos' death, and off'rings to his ghost;
 Sev'n youths from Athens yearly sent, to meet
 The fate appointed by revengeful Crete.
 And next to those the dreadful urn was plac'd,
 In which the destin'd names by lots were cast:
 The mournful parents stand around in tears,
 And rising Crete against their shore appears.
 There too, in living sculpture, might be seen
 The mad affection of the Cretan queen;
 Then how she cheats her bellowing lover's eye;
 The rushing leap, the doubtful progeny,
 The lower part a beast, a man above,
 The monument of their polluted love.
 Not far from thence he grav'd the wondrous maze,
 A thousand doors, a thousand winding ways:
 Here dwells the monster, hid from human view,
 Not to be found, but by the faithful clew;
 Till the kind artist, mov'd with pious grief,
 Lent to the loving maid this last relief,
 And all those erring paths describ'd so well
 That Theseus conquer'd and the monster fell.
 Here hapless Icarus had found his part,
 Had not the father's grief restrain'd his art.
 He twice assay'd to cast his son in gold;
Twice from his hands he dropp'd the forming mold.

... iam subeunt Truiulae lucos atque aurea tecta.
 Daedalus, ut fama est, fugiens Minoia regna
 praepetibus pennis ausus se credere caelo
 insuetum per iter gelidas enavit ad Arctos,
 Chalcidicaque leuis tandem super astitit arce.
 Redditus his primum terris tibi, Phoebe, sacrauit
 remigium alarum posuitque immania templa.
 In foribus letum Androgeo; tum pendere poenas
 Cecropidae iussi (miserum!) septena quotannis
 corpora natorum; stat ductis sortibus urna.
 contra elata mari respondet Cnosia tellus:
 hic crudelis amor tauri suppostaque furto
 Pasiphaë mixtumque genus prolesque biformis
 Minotaurus inest, Veneris monimenta nefandae,
 hic labor ille domus et inextricabilis error;
 magnum reginae sed enim miseratus amorem
 Daedalus ipse dolos tecti ambagesque resoluit,
 caeca regens filo uestigia. tu quoque magnam
 partem opere in tanto, sineret dolor, Icare, haberes.
 bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,
 bis patriae cecidere manus.

The Dryden translation takes many liberties but is poetically true to the original, within bounds. *Hic labor ille domus*, that famous house, refers to the Labyrinth. *Caeca regens filo vestigia* refers to the thread, Dryden's "faithful clew," by which Ariadne insured Theseus's escape. The first picture shows the death of Androgeos, the second the tribute of seven youths in payment; an urn is used to draw the names of those sent to Minos. *Contra ... respondet*: the scene shifts to Crete and the story is taken up on the opposite door. The Labyrinth is shown in the fourth picture.³²

It would not be fanciful to compare these lines with the opening lines of Nabokov's poem-within-the-novel in *Pale Fire*. The only commonalities are the structural features. There are two skies and two doors. There is a line between the viewer and the path before him that constitutes a liminal passage. Only heroes may pass and survive. The waxwing does not survive but the reader takes up the POV of this "smudge of ashen fluff" and hangs furniture above the snow, just as Kinbote will hang the furniture of the dead Shade's poem above the snows of Zembla. Travel along this dimension is explicitly judgmental/critical. Kinbote's project is a critical one; Aeneas is on a questing mission to find out the truths of the future Rome from his dead father. In both cases, the voice of the song is about the *apophrades*, the return of the dead, from a there to a here. The ekphrasis makes "there" "here." It is possible to go further with the fractal structure of the labyrinth, which is a triplet of triplets: A (aba); B (aba); A (aba). The nine and the new combine in the theme of the new city, Rome, out of the old invention of Dædalus.

³² W. Fitzgerald, "Aeneas, Daedalus, and the Labyrinth," in Phillip Hardie, ed., *Virgil: Critical Assessments of Classical Authors* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 207–220. Note that Dryden, like many others confuses the *meander* of the labyrinth for a maze, with "a thousand doors." The true labyrinth has only one passage. The danger is to pause and forget which direction one has been going, i.e. to lose track of the *odd and even* number of stops.

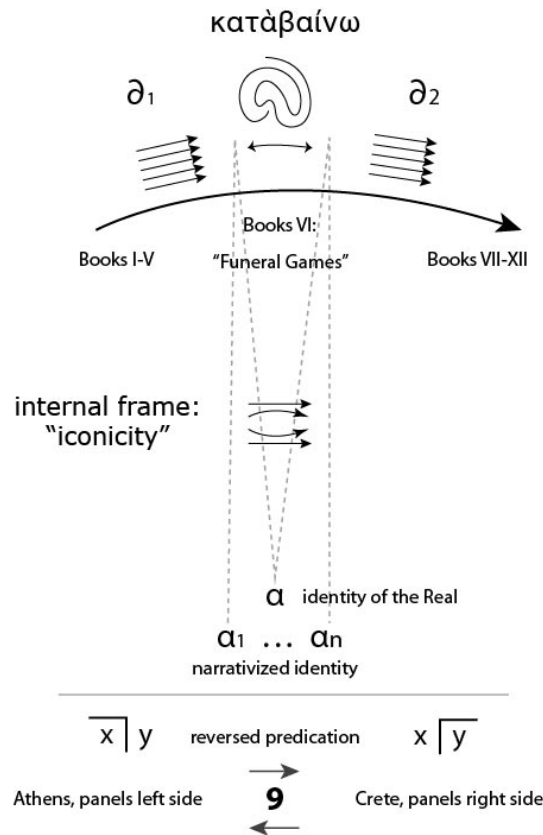


Figure 14. *The Aeneid* makes good use of the expanded identity of the nadir, the underworld “dimensionalized” through the 3x3 schema of the labyrinth and the portal that Daedalus contrived to provide a “preview of coming attractions. The alpha and omega thematic of Troy and Rome is played out in the stereognosis (*kenosis*, knowledge by halves) of the gates, left side for Athens, right for Crete.

A New Theory of the “Opening”

The example of *The Aeneid*’s Book 6, the “funeral games,” shows how the concept of the opening relates to the standard tropes of travel, spatial concealment, and entry into prohibited spaces. A site — in this case the caves of the oracle at Cumæ — is designated as “exceptional,” a place where the normal expectations of spatial structure and movement (the parallel arrows in the diagram above) are suspended. In place of the “shortest distance rule” of connecting two points, what looks from the outside to be a spiraling or rotating movement is substituted, combined with conditions imposed on the traveler. The site of exception becomes a spiritual filter. Only the chosen, or those with “pure” intentions, are allowed to enter. The test is administered usually in the form of a riddle, and the riddle form itself relates to the appearance of the line of entry.

What Mitchell denied in his “smoothing” of the space between images and texts, was a continuation of the causal chain uninterrupted by the kind of curved exception offered in Book 6. Mitchell did nothing less than deny the existence of a traditional and ancient method of opening up a work, typically through ekphrasis, in such a way that the normal “sagittal” relation of the viewer to the viewed, put into the narrative of travel, could be radicalized. An anamorphosis between the “optical” sagittal and the “liminal” sagittal opens up the site of exception to an exchange of signifiers that, like the sorites, is self-negating, self-cancelling. The line of travel that appears to be spiral/recursive from the outside is, from the insider’s perspective — i.e. from the POV of the performative — the straight line. This justifies the connection of the “ortho” (Gr. *orthos*), “straight,” to apply to both the most direct path and, at the same time, a “right” angle. The orthogonal angle in mathematical graphs indicates independence. A vector may vary while another remains constant. A visitor to a “site of exception” may spend what seems like a long time in Hades while, from the perspective of the ordinary outside world, no time has expired. This is the “time of the dream,” and also the “space of the dream,” which exists as a pocket (*poché*) within space, without “taking up space” in the Cartesian sense.

With predication, negation, and spiritual filtering combined into a spatial-temporal landscape feature, it would be difficult not to look at examples, such as Cumæ, where this conceit has served the ends of poetry. The ritual of the “rites of passage,” practiced by nearly every culture, might be considered the master trope; with the many examples of descent themes, the so-called *katabasis*, forming in its wake. Dante’s *Inferno* should figure as the most prominent formalization, a guide to the proliferation of more secular examples (*Tom Sawyer’s* rescue of Becky from the cave hiding place of a murderer, “Injun Joe,” who is, in the tradition of the Minotaur, a “half breed”). The device of liminal passage makes way for the development of characters, scenes, and events, whose particularity postpones their correlation in the process of “delayed predication” (cancellation). The predication left standing at the end of the symmetrical alignment of these delayed details is, paradigmatically, a marriage — usually a combination of the spiritual marriage of “impossible opposites” with the literal marriage of a hero and heroine.

Mitchell’s “ramp” would deny this kind of opening, this anamorphic sagittal by which travel achieves the status of gnosis. What are the consequences of this denial or, rather, what are the payoffs for refusing Mitchell’s analysis? The critical resources available that directly contradict Mitchell agree in one point about the formation of universals. First, the Cartesian account is defective. Universals cannot be formed out of the collection of properties occurring in experience/perception, bundled into increasingly larger sets until a single identity is achieved. The dichotomous division of a general term, such as “dog,” into the types of dogs from the largest groups down to the specific case, e.g. the terrier named Fritz who lived in Saskatchewan, will not work because there are many conflicting ways of encountering and experiencing the species. The paradox is exemplified by Michel Foucault’s well-known citation of the Borgesian “Chinese encyclopedia,” *The Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*,³³ which divides animals into

1. those that belong to the Emperor,
2. embalmed ones,
3. those that are trained,
4. suckling pigs,
5. mermaids,
6. fabulous ones,
7. stray dogs,
8. those included in the present classification,
9. those that tremble as if they were mad,
10. innumerable ones,
11. those drawn with a very fine camelhair brush,
12. others,
13. those that have just broken a flower vase,
14. those that from a long way off look like flies.

It seems that, with each new category, the rules have been changed. This is one strategy for delaying predication, so to speak. The list in fact resembles Lewis Carroll’s description of animals. The delay is a breakdown in the “chain of cause and effect,” as Lacan would put it. Signifiers are defined in terms of other signifiers, for and to which they have meaning, creating a closed, curved system. The Augustinian concept of knowledge begins with the instructive indication, of elders to the child, of things and their names. What is left out in this empiricist view is that the universal — the meaning that is ultimately intended — must *already be present at the moment of instruction*. Because the child is in the dark about this, the universal is present as in the form of the enigmatic demands of the elder. Enigma is not dispelled with growing acquaintance with the world and its names. It persists in the form of a gap, through and by which desire is carried along through the system in terms of the surpluses and lacks inevitably present with signification (the Lacanian Symbolic, “reality”). The adult learns to cover up this gap through fantasies, most of which are collective, learned through media of ideological instruction (journalism, fiction, film, jokes, television, etc.).

The gap’s ontology has to do with the triple negation of the forced choice, which I have discussed in detail elsewhere.³⁴ The three kinds of Hegelian negation Žižek cites as critical to the forced choice, denial

³³ Jorge Luis Borges, Jorge Luis, “John Wilkins’ Analytical Language,” in Eliot Weinberger, trans., *Selected Nonfictions*, (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 231. The essay was originally published as “El idioma analítico de John Wilkins” (in Castilian), *La Nación*, Argentina, February 8 1942, and republished in *Otras inquisiciones*.

³⁴ Donald Kunze, “The Slow-Fast Architecture of Love in the Ruins,” in *Architecture Post Mortem: The Diastolic Architecture of Decline, Dystopia, and Death*, ed. David Bertolini, Simone Brott, and Donald Kunze

(*Verneinung*), renunciation (*Verleugnung*), and foreclosure (*Verwerfung*) are nothing less than full annotations of the labyrinth's triple turns. When the subject attempts to escape, as does Theseus from the Labyrinth, the flight is from an Enchanter, a personification (= reversed predication, reversed antonomasia) of the double predicate. "Falling in love with love" or being "possessed by love" constitute the element of fate without which love's exercise of free choice, affordance, and opportunity make no sense. The opening, the escape, the anamorphic sagittal is, from inside the labyrinth a straight line but from the outside appears in the form of a twisted conundrum. It is the stake that Odysseus plunges into the eye of the Cyclops (denial of sight), the neutralization of the Cyclops' call for help by Odysseus's giving him the name of Nobody (renunciation: "Nobody has blinded me!), and the "orthogonal" escape made by hanging beneath the rams let out of the cave to pasture (foreclosure). 3x3x3 and you're out!

Ariadne's silver thread, the clue that links her incarnation as Minos's daughter to the Great Goddess whose mother, Pasiphaë, was the moon, the planet with three phases, 3x3x3 days, and three "moods" personified by the Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and . Ariadne, Ἀριάδνη, "utterly pure," ruled over the period of purification, the 40 days/nights of the quarantine, the 40 weeks (= nine months) of pregnancy, the 40 associated historically with the *katabasis*, as in the case of Jesus's time in the wilderness. The silver thread was a mnemonic device, not for threading through multiple-choice passageways but to distinguish between the loose end of travel and the fixed end of entry, to which travel must return. Compare the labyrinth's turns to the "tropes" of poetic narrative, in its "flight" from the demonic enchantment of predication, the ever-present element of ventriloquism that Bloom's young poet must escape. Remember, too, that predication as enchantment is the factor by which love predicates the lover. There is no clearer indication of this condition, or its consequences, than Apuleius's late Roman novel, *The Transformations of Lucius, or, the Golden Ass*, with its story-in-the-story of Cupid and Psyche. Psyche's problem — one could not find a more Lacanian way of putting it — is that she is "in love with love itself." Her husband, *Eros*, is invisible until she violates the prohibition that she should never gaze upon him. Venus prescribes her punishment in terms that involve sorting and spinning. Dante rightly identifies the reasoning behind Psyche's final trial, to retrieve a draft of water from the River Cocytus. It is in the ninth ring of Hell, a frozen lake more than a river. It is the place where traitors are punished: those who sought to harm their friends and, thus, a legal form of the phenomenon of extimacy and reversed predication: the traitor is always an insider who betrays. This third trial is solved with the help of an eagle (Jove) who weaves an aerial path avoiding the three-forked tongues of the guard-dragons.

Psyche's triple accomplishments were met with a coda requiring her to visit Hades and return alive, to fetch "beauty itself" from Persephone to repair Venus's good looks, faded from attending to her son, wounded by Psyche spilling hot lamp oil to see "love itself" — the story is full of reversed predication! It is in Hades, the ultimate site of exception, that the case for the role of obversion/extimacy must be made definitively. The "proof" I offer to conclude this study of predication is a short-cut that aims to tie together the examples of Nabokov's waxwing, Aeneas's gates of hell, Dumas's Mount Analogue, and even Velázquez's *Las Meninas* with the uncanny of detached virtuality and the opening/escape it makes as an analogue-dimension threading through the tripled triple meander of concealed virtuality/*poché*.

Dreams of Flying: the Screen, Flesh of the World, and the "Kino Eye"

There is a vision, touch, when a certain visible, a certain tangible, turns back upon the whole of the visible, the whole of the tangible, of which it is a part, or when suddenly it finds itself *surrounded* by them, or when between it and them, and through their commerce, is formed a Visibility, a Tangible in itself ... It is this Visibility, this generality of the Sensible in itself ... that we have previously called flesh. [Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 139.]

With the advances in downsizing camera mechanisms and improving the technology of booms, tracks, and zoom techniques, the lens of the cinema camera was able to simulate the sensation of the floating/flying dream

(Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate Press, 2013). Essentially, this is the escape of ideology's negational lock, its "enigma," to the self-realization of the "psychoanalytical subject." Mladen Dolar has described this escape as based on "love," in itself a form of ideology, where the subject must come to terms with his/her own role in the construction of fantasy in relation to desire. Love is the primary example of reversed predication. As Dolar puts it, there is no way to speak about love without involving an implicit role of free choice, yet lovers find that they are compelled by a "distant force" (think of metonymy in this regard) that automates and fatalizes the process of falling in love. Dolar, Mladen, "Beyond Interpellation," *Qui Parle* 6, 2 (Spring/Summer 1993): 75–96. Love is essentially subjective possession that is obverted into "being possessed." The lover is one who is by love possessed. The hallmark example of this process is provided by Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), specifically *attent* ("waiting"), 37–40.

with ease. Is this not evidence that the camera has found a “short circuit” to the brain’s realization of a dream state, and that the cinema’s famous relation to the dream is not simply an analogy but a “neural” reality? Some of this has to be true in a trivial sense; but is there a critical advantage to beginning with this condition of obversion?

The first step to take is to return to the original point made by Freud. According to Ludwig Strümpell, cited by Freud in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, floating and flying dreams arise from the sleeper’s awareness of the lungs’ regular inhaling and exhaling.³⁵ The body’s containment of air in equilibrium is “extimated” to the condition of the weightless body in air, experienced as normal. The floating/flying dream is clearly extimate: the subject dreams of looking back at itself from a distance. This is the non-Cartesian type of virtuality, the detachment of “interior” consciousness as a staging of external conditions of opportunity. The “norm” of contiguous virtuality is emphasized by flying: mastery of the full set of Cartesian dimensions “without prejudice”: i.e. gravity, the vertical, is mastered through extimacy. This neutralization of dimensional difference is also evidence in the anachronism of dreams. The dream cannot distinguish between living and dead, past and future. Short events can be slowed down to the point of extreme slow motion. Event sequences appear in random order.

On this last point, we are aware of three important forms of anachronism that relate directly to the extimacy of floating dreams. In these forms, the idea of an “architecture of velocity,” a fast and slow architecture, becomes useful. In the Lucretian model we developed to understand the site of exception, velocity is relative. Through the coordination of buildings, sites, activities, expectations, and functionalities — summed up by the Vitruvian term of *utilitas* — buildings maintain “solidarity” with their multiple symbolic networks (*firmitas*). When something slips out of synch, either by obsolescence, where a building seems to fall behind the demands made of it, or by a premature “fast-forwarding” of a building to its final state of ashes and dust through fire, warfare, floods, etc., we become aware of the Lucretian dynamic. Otherwise it is transparent.

Besides obsolescence and sudden destruction — both conditions of ruin — architecture has two other states of anachronism where, thanks to the construction of sites of exception, architecture may temporarily enter into a purely performative state that is the obverse of ruin but often with many essential elements of destruction-and-rebirth. The first is the hypothetical scene of the origins of humanity: clearings in the forest where “oral poetry, dance, costumes, and masks powered events These [clearings] did not provide shelter or other ‘practical’ functionalities; rather, they facilitated the universal human practices of marriage and burial — to intervene strategically within the extensive Real of a perceived cosmic architecture.”³⁶ The performative aspect of these sites of exception has been established by ethnography. We have not only the extensive analysis of “liminal spaces” of ritual from Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. Robert Ferris Thompson, an art historian of the Yoruba of Nigeria, has demonstrated that African masks are not intelligible outside the system of movements of the dances in which they served as visual framing devices.³⁷ The idea of “atoms” of performative “moments” (= positions, turns, tropes, scenarios) circulating within this “spherical” clearing—including the major aula or eye framing the sky—maintains the functionality of frames even though the locations of frames continually move, along with the imagined point-of-view of the audience, independent of any participant’s literal location. Lucretius’s “even flow of atoms” is here maintained by strictly enforced frames of spectatorship and theatrical performance.

The second and more contemporary case of the architectural site of exception is the scene of “festival architecture,” the temporary conversion of civic and other spaces to mark celebrations, typically of “gaps” in the solar year such as the solstice and new year. Such events continue to be characterized as times of return, specifically the return of the dead to their original abodes (*apophrades*), in the form of (acousmatic) voices to be recollected or even, as in the case of the Mexican “day of the dead,” as pure appetites, requiring the preparation of the deceased’s favorite foods. It is clear from these two cases, where architecture seems to flirt with ruin — by simulating or actually carrying out destruction as spectacle (we are reminded of Bernard Tschumi’s remark about fireworks being “the perfect architecture”), that detached virtuality is the key. Something akin to “spirit” departs and returns. Like Psyche in *The Golden Ass*, this departure and return is always in relation to a *dæmon* — epitomized by eros, “love itself” — who sometimes offers shelter in the

³⁵ Ludwig Strümpell, *Die Natur und Entstehung der Traüme* (Leipzig, 1877). Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³⁶ Kunze, “Slow-Fast Architecture,” 1.

³⁷ Robert Ferris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African & African-American Art & Philosophy* (New York, 1984).

underworld or compels an escape (*askesis*), requiring a passage through the nine-ringed depths of Hades.

In these two intentionally constructed sites of exception, Merleau-Ponty's remarks about the visible and invisible take on a certain charmed destiny: "There is a vision, touch, when a certain visible, a certain tangible, turns back upon the whole of the visible, the whole of the tangible, of which it is a part, or when suddenly it finds itself *surrounded* by them, or when between it and them, and through their commerce, is formed a Visibility, a Tangible in itself." The phenomenologist might as well have been speaking about Psyche's trials, Aeneas's visit to his dead father, or Odysseus's test of Cyclopien hospitality. The *flesh of the world* has a narrative legacy that shows how the reversed predication of qualities — visibility *itself*, invisibility *itself*, tangibility *itself* — re-animates the principle of reversed antinomia that vivifies the universal within the idea of flesh — which we must now consider in two different algebras: that of Lacan's idea of the "lamella"; and that of the cinematic screen. The lamella — the layer of skin that cannot be considered either living or dead, but which is the boundary between subjectivity as internal and objectivity as external, becomes portable (independently predicating) under conditions of extimacy: the realization of "partial objects" that are "subjectively objective" — the "intimacy of the external" that is the hallmark of sites of exception. The obverse of the uncanny partial object is the subject's "interior condition" of a radical internal Other, an inscription of a voice, a commanding force, alien and enigmatic, at the very center of subjective being. In these crisscross conditions, objective subjectivity and subjective objectivity, the lamella becomes the portable extimating organ. It can be found outside of its usual location as the skin of the subject. Like the "undead" state of zombies, it has a durable, indestructible quality.

This creepy undead organ shows us the dark side of extimacy. On the bright side is the popular culture function of the screen, where we may find another case of the "flesh of the world." The emblem of the screen is the cinema screen, which functions in a limited optical way as a window on to the simulated virtuality of film space. We see the illusion of a world animated by the ϕ function of sequenced still images. Because the images are static, the ϕ , dynamic, "belongs to us." It is created "in our heads." There is no evidence in the external world of motion, apart from the mechanical movement of still frames. The sequence gives rise to our perception of continuous movement, action, drama, and the settings in which these make symbolic sense. We construct the virtual space within the illusion of the film to be continuous according to the code that allows drop cuts, flashbacks, and a-temporal tricks. None of these seem to render any permanent damage to the continuity of the virtual of filmic illusion. Only when an actor looks directly at the camera, as Paola, the young girl the restaurant at Fregene, does at the last shot in *La Dolce Vita*, do we have a collapse of this illusion.³⁸ The rule is so absolute that when it is broken intentionally, the audience constructs a "camera within a camera" to protect itself, to see that the film is a parody of a documentary, which demands facing the camera directly. Otherwise, violations have the effect of the "stage whisper" that allows the actor to stand outside of the spatio-temporality of the fiction to set the audience straight on some matter. The audience's unflinching ability to judge to which of these types of the "don't look at the camera rule" is happening demonstrates the function of the thickness of the "flesh" of the screen-as-lamella.

It is clear that Maurice Merleau-Ponty was getting at just this idea of *poché* and poiesis in his notion of the "flesh of the world." This flesh, thin and thick at the same time, prevents us from fully separating body and mind, body and world, or any of the usual dichotomies by which the Cartesian world-view begins its analysis of presumed stability. Rather, the flesh of the world involves the "double inscription" of inside and outside as well as the "reversed predication" that precedes the social conventions that settle the issue for the sake of symbolization and communications. The body cannot describe the "world outside" objectively without concealing the fact that it has constructed another space from which this description can take place. Lacan calls this the contrast between the "space of enunciating" and the "space of the enunciation." Although the Cartesian account sounds straight-forward, it has concealed its use of this "backstage." The question must be: from what place is it possible to say "I think, therefore I am"? There must be two spaces, and human being's "place" is a composite that always involves these two spaces.

The meaning of the triangulation test of motility, scale, and identity dysfunction can now be played out. From the point of view of the *utilitas* of parallel synchronicity of architecture in its ideological normal state, the

³⁸ Paola waves to Marcello but he doesn't recognize her, even though at the restaurant he had noticed her innocent beauty and asked to look at her in profile. At the beach, the party goes watch fishermen haul in a giant sting-ray whose eyes stare blindly at the sky. "He keeps wanting to look," Marcello comments, correctly identifying the monster in this scene, like a good Lacanian, as "that *which, by looking, has forgotten how to die.*" Paola waves but is unrecognized, i.e. invisible. This is the gap that opens up the irony of the sweet life.

site of exception is noticed first because of a breakdown in the chain of causality — also a signifying chain — that gives rise to the symptom-as-cause, what Lacan called the *sinthome*. The *sinthome* causes a new structure, which becomes a site, an opening, famous for its manifestation as an opening to Hades (“the invisible,” literally), where there is truth to be learned (*kenosis*). This is a site where “vertical” authority has been disrupted. The nadir whose parallel adjustment to the zenith guaranteed “transitive” relations within a Cartesian domain has been collapsed through a process akin to the negation-reduction of the sorites predications. What seemed to be contingent (the series of predications) finally discloses the symmetry it concealed, but the unveiling occurred under the “darkness shining through the light” (Blake) of the negative. Its invisibility had been based on delay rather than presence (metaphor). Reduction happened only through the presence of a “stochastic resonance” of meaning effects operating from afar (metonymy).

Extimacy is the pure case of scale dysfunction, but the diluted effects of double inscription, as in the polar cases of the uncanny (death-in-life and life-in-death) are found in abundance. The commonest form, love, is in fact the secret of subjectivity’s escape from ideality through love, although it must endure love’s polar opposition and double inscription of free choice and fate.

Identity brings the remainder, the final predication that *is* the gap or passage, into focus as a anamorphic alternative to the Cartesian sagittal relation between the audience and the work of art. Or, as in the case of Vico’s *New Science* (a.k.a. the science of nine), the reader and the text, in the analogy Vico makes explicitly with the image and the text.

Vico: the Dipintura



Figure 15. *Dipintura*, *The New Science* of Giambattista Vico. Vico says that he inserted this engraving at the last minute due to the unexpected surplus of blank pages after he had been persuaded to withdraw correspondence relating to his dispute with Carlo Lodoli, the Venetian architect–friar who had offered to publish the 1744 edition of *The New Science*. Vico called the *dipintura* a microcosm of his science and described its contents and their relations to the science in a short introduction.

It was necessary to cut short the description of the third leg of the triangular test, identity, to go straight to the case of Giambattista Vico's extraordinary employment of ekphrasis. Like Virgil, Vico placed the reader at the gates of an experience that was prefigured in an image placed at the gates. This experience, was akin to a meander (of text), a sequence of signifiers. At the starting point of such a journey, both Vico and Virgil took the opportunity include in the image a direct reference to the journey itself, as a labyrinth. Virgil referenced the story of the Minotaur and Theseus; Vico builds a case for an "ideal eternal history," three universal stages through which all cultures pass in their development from mythic mentalities to modern secular thought and institutions.

Ekphrasis, in Mitchell's terms, is able to demonstrate continuity between image and text. Horace's theme of *ut pictura poesis* is applied without reservation. Vico seems to be confirming this thesis. The text describing the image explains elements in the image and their place in his theory of universal culture — each element except for one, the helmet of Hermes shown prominently at the lower left of the *dipintura*. Hermes was a god of many abilities. First, thanks to tricks he taught the infant Herakles, he was the god of thievery (Herakles stole cattle while still in his crib). More famously, he was god of trade, reflected in the words relating to his name: market, mercantile, etc. But perhaps most significantly, he was the god of romantic love, a pre-Olympian Eros, connecting romantic traditions to the more archaic idea that love was something stolen. As Eros/dæmon, the textual invisibility of the helmet plays a central role in Vico's ekphrasis. It is the "gap" that allows Vico to define a functionality at the center of the *New Science* that transfers the work, *as an event*, to the reader. In a striking passage (§345) Vico explains that the reader must narrate the *New Science* for himself, experiencing as a result a "divine pleasure" in his "mortal body." This predication has been overlooked by all scholars who have attended to the *New Science* in otherwise rigorous detail. The predication is intrinsically reversed and intrinsically related to the reversed predication that *is* the *New Science*.

The function of ekphrasis for both Vico and Virgil is delay. This delay, caused by an enigmatic image, disrupts the normal "even flow of atoms" that is the causal chain in the form of signifying chains that constitute our normative networks of symbolic relations. What disrupts this causal chain itself becomes a cause: "He who loves is by love possessed." Žižek's example of the Lacanian master signifier as an inversion of cause and effect — turning the effect into a cause — is this process of reversed predication. Delay is key: it is a temporal phenomenon that has a spatial result. The image is itself a clearing, analogous to the clearings in the primeval forests that Vico sites as the first places of civilized human life. Within these clearings, architecture was purely performative. With minimalistic material building elements, architecture was constructed with the ϕ -dynamics of ritual, song, costume, and choreographed performance. The ϕ itself draws a picture of its own logical structure. It is a radical division of space and time that can occur at any and all scales, a division between the spectacle and the spectator. At the same time this division is invested with the difference between life and death itself — the spectator must receive the active spirit of the performance. This contrast of active and passive roles is the basis of what Vico elsewhere describes in terms of *animus*, the "sharp wedge" of witty thought (*agutezza*) that is able to penetrate maternal matter, *anima*. The Stoic theory of the animus went further, to relate how the double meaning of *cælum* — both "heaven" and "wedge" — signified the role of thunder in the perception of the sky as the skin of a god (Zeus, in his various incarnations in all religions). The "flesh of the world" is experientially this first screen/skin/face, disrupting the not-yet-conscious "even flow of atoms" with the creation of a reversely predicated Cause, what Lacan would call a *sinthome*.

Sinthomes are the basis of all drives. They afford some possible relation to the partial objects that represent those drives: the breast, fæces, the phallus, the gaze, the (acousmatic) voice. These repositories of the childlike but primordially evil id (think of Eros, always shown as an adolescent, combined with Harpo, the silent member of the Marx Brothers trio) are the *dæmon* that always provokes our flight response. We cannot bear the over-proximity of *dæmon*; the domain of this god is a domain of collapsed dimensionality. Fences fall down, walls tumble. Tunnels are dug into the bank vaults. Black holes suck up constellations. Delay is not simply a temporal spacing from this force, it is a spatial clearing — a site of exception. The zenith and nadir that, in succession, held *firmitas* and *utilitas* in parallel coordination are disrupted by the *clinamen* that collapses the functionality of the anchor, the α . Two reciprocal actions take place: with the contraction and concentration of the demonic α , the "condensation of the god" as it were, a space is cleared away. A swidden opening is burned in the forest; a place for rituals and divinatory measurements. These "eyes" in the forest (*luci*) are counterparts to the divine eye, the disruptive eye whose acousmatic word in the thunder is the enigmatic basis for the sciences of augury. (James Joyce famously played out this idea in *Finnegans Wake*.) Delay that is also space postpones predication, allowing signifiers to evolve secular speech out of sacred speech; but from this point on the relations to the *dæmon* will be negative: first, in the forced choices of ideology; second, in the double inscription of love as the unconscious's last defense against discovery. "He who

loves is by love possessed" is the puzzle that must be solved by Ariadne's silver thread, the moon mnemonic that seems useless if the way in and the way out are the same (transitive space). The recursiveness of the mnemonic is that it structures itself. As Vico put it, memory and imagination are the same thing (§§211, 699, 819). This echoes Plato's theory of knowledge as memory (*anamnesis*, ἀνάμνησις) and raises the issue of "the new" aspect of the nine: the *hapax* meaning that "comes out of nowhere." This would seem to be unpredicated meaning but in fact it is *self-predicating meaning*, the kind of "master signification" Žižek described that comes out of fantasy. "Traversing the fantasy," identifying one's role in constructing escapes/avoidances from/of the Real, is the goal of psychoanalysis. The subject's last defense is to fall in love with the analyst (Dolar), i.e. to establish a new ideology (double inscription of love as both accident and fate) for the old one (castration by the networks of symbolic relationships, beginning with the Mirror Stage). Ekphrasis and *askesis* (retreat) are combined in Vico's and Virgil's primary identification with *dæmon* as the key to the meaning of their works. The relationship is complex, because both spatial and temporal collapse and construction — a poetic-philosophical emulation of *Festarchitektur* — combine themes of construction and destruction. The danger of anarchy is madness, as Vico himself comments in his *Autobiography*, where he uses the old trope *aut deus aut dæmon* — "I don't know whether I was becoming a god or a demon." To flee from the enchanter requires a clearing, a place of sanctuary, a monastery. The *New Science* is precisely that, and even scholars without interests in Bloom's critical system or the idea of the site of exception have compared the text to a labyrinth.³⁹

In this independent confirmation of the principle of *askesis* as the construction for thought that *thinks the thinker*, the rule of nines come into direct play. As a self-sufficient number, a number that "constructs itself" so to speak, there is both the idea of completeness as well as a gap. A pie divided into thirds has three slices valued at .3333.... Add them up to get the full pie and you have not quite a '1': .9999.... In the decimal system, 9 is the "just before" that presages the "just after." In Lacanian terms this is precisely the grammatical function of the future anterior, the time of prophecy. Lacan and Vico merge in the idea that imagination (of the future) and memory (of the past) are one and the same.

It is possible at this point to string together our memory places as promised. By turning the graph in Figure 4 (the structure of the enthymeme) 90° we immediately see its relation to the construction of the "vertical atlas" through the projection of nadir to zenith (VP to POV, or α to θ). In this Lucretian space, construction is synchronized to utility, buildings accommodate functions, the *tuchē* of affordance is idealized within a field of adjacencies. This field is disrupted once the materiality of the screen is encountered directly. The waxwing flies into the glass-plate window that reflected a sky *in front of flight* rather than *behind flight*. This obversion may have literally caused the death of the waxing, but thanks to the momentum of desire, flight continues through the good offices of detached virtuality — Lacan's interval "between the two deaths." The enthymeme teaches us a few things about this continuation. First, it is silent or, rather, it *silences* the phonemic, conventional functions of the signifier. It disrupts the causal chain. It produces a *sinthome*. For the enthymeme, the *sinthome* is the gap of exchange that allows the speaker and his/her audience to join across a bridge of a reverse predication, a master signifier, a truth which neither can speak directly. Second, its reversal of effect and cause shift to the materiality of the signifier, an artifact that was hitherto simply a conventionally acceptable vehicle of meaning, just as the idea of "tree" is expressed in various languages — *Baum, arbre, albero* etc. — or within any one language synonyms specify different intended uses (lumber, wood, timber, etc.).

The collation of examples (antonomasia, reversed predication, Harold Bloom's revisionary ratios, *Pale Fire*, enthymeme, sorites, site of exception, ekphrasis, *Las Meninas*, *Mount Analogue*, the Cumæan Gates, Vico's *dipintura*, etc.) demonstrates, through diagrams that establish the *interchangeability of parts* that allows one example to merge with others, the durability of the idea behind reversed predication that allows it many incarnations, thanks to the universality of the screen, the "flesh of the world," that relate predication to desire, fantasy, and the (non-)structure of the Real. There is no idea here, only a network of potentialities, future predications, all reversible.

³⁹ Margherita Frankel, "The 'Dipintura' and the Structure of Vico's *New Science* as a Mirror of the World," in *Vico: Past and Present*, Giorgio Tagliacozzo, ed. (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), 43–51.

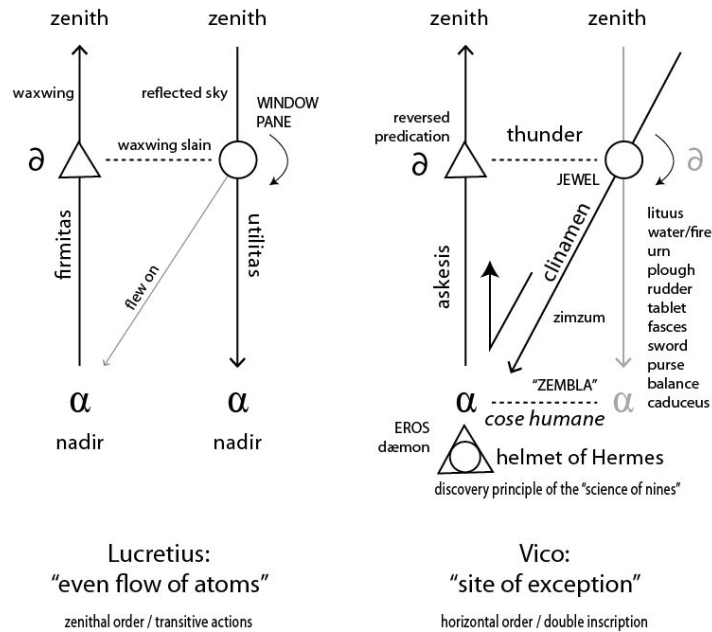


Figure 16. In the Lucretian "even flow of atoms" (cf. "Eve and Adams," Joyce's pun) the separation of vectors defined by independent zenith and nadir points allows the synchronization of *firmitas* (construction) and *utilitas* (use, convention, adjacency, affordance — i.e. *tuchē*). Interruption of this flow (*clinamen*) is a poetic commonplace, figuring prominently in *Pale Fire's* autobiographical poem. The tragic flight of the waxwing is a misdirection. What was after (memory) is placed before (imagination). The future anterior is materialized in the window-pane, a thin-thick screen equivalent to Merleau-Ponty's "flesh of the world," a fulcrum of extimity. The collapse of $\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n$ to a "demonic" unity does not collapse its functions. Hermes remains a god of considerable complexity. As a precursor of Eros, he is the principle of reversed predication, the ruler over theft (the theme of *Pale Fire*). Vico's *dipintura* is instructive. The enigmatic instructions of the thunder are converted into the goods of human culture (altar, hearth, plow, etc.) through the science of divination, where the observations of signs of the sky (birds, planets, weather) become the secularized basis of the modern sciences. Zembra is Semblerland, a land of reflections, of 'resemblers'. There is more to say ...