



The Space between the Legs

reversed predication, chirality, and the thesis of the two Dianas

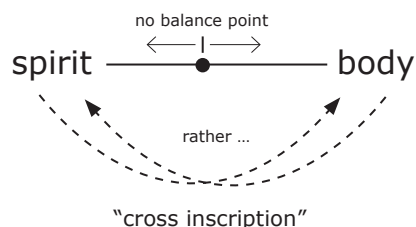
Clearly, we are in the restricted topical range of "that about which we must take care of speaking," in other words add restrictive phrases, prepositions, and many complex parts of speech to avoid the liability of any strong statement of conviction. The space between the legs confirms the "deniability" factor in humans' representation of their own body's space. It is there and not there at the same time. It must, since Adam and Eve, be covered in public, at the risk of legal consequences. Freud's rule about hysteria, that erogenous zones may be located anywhere on the body, mean that the space between the legs can be moved around to different positions, as in the case of the breast, whose exposure can still create a scandal as in the case of Janet Jackson's famous Super Bowl XXXVIII "costume malfunction." The fundamentalist position is that exposure to this space or its proxy causes damage for which there can be claimed legal compensation. Seeing and believing finally meet up in law court.

This is a space inside a space, but a space that does not rest hierarchically, nested, as a content packaged inside a container that is larger. When exposed, a true moment of Lacanian "extimacy," an inside-out effect, takes place. Safe distances are no longer safe. Detachment becomes

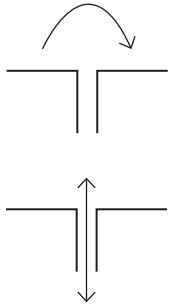
impossible. Scandal ensues. The phallus especially has an immediacy that the Greek dramatists captured with strap-on prosthetics, always good for a laugh. Erection identifies the wearer's loss of reason and allegiance to capricious Eros, always up to no good and no friend of the Law. You might as well say, "here comes trouble."

Because the space between the legs violates the laws of spatial continuity and proves, even to those who resist, that Freud was right about the potentiality of erogenous re-location, it is a good time to review the case of the soul and the body. This is the story of opposites placed on a scale, which one could amusingly label "spiritual" and "material." But, the seriousness of this presumptuous model is evident in that whole philosophical systems have been built upon it, and language testifies to the self-evidence of contrasts. On one side we have denial of pleasure by covering up a space, on the other, the drive to consummation of pleasure by uncovering it. On one side we have abstraction and a physics of air, fire, and clouds. On the other the rocks and cans that get kicked to demonstrate reality's persistence and durability.

This model, however, is famous for its breakdowns. On either end, the pure case is always showing off its fractures, rips, frays, and tears. Finding a middle ground is, likewise, fraught with contradictions. Just as those who seek a rational balance-point between the selfish interests of the subject and the concerns of the collective are driven to ridicule either side. Northrop Frye called this the battle between freedom and concern. *Brave New World*, was Frye's manifesto of dialectical materialists (or concerned others) critical of spiritualistic freedoms; *1984*, was the nightmare of freedom's takeover by a technology and ideology of concern. In Slavoj Žižek's parallel account of westerners who, while embracing capitalism, hint that a little communal sensibility idealized by the originators of communism wouldn't be amiss, the point is that there is no middle ground — that from the beginning, each "paradigm case" holding up its respective end of the line of opposition has, at its radical interior, a blank, a void.¹ This void would be embarrassing enough, but in fact it is the void constructed by the radical Other. It is the libertine/apostate's yearning for family obligations; it is the speculative wildness of the youth over-interpolated by the religion of the elders, as recognized by the Amish in their tradition of *Rumspringa*, a period allowed for deviancy and even delinquency, intended to "flush out the spiritual system" to allow for adulthood acceptance of religious and adult obligations.



¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Demanding the Impossible* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013). Northrop Frye, *The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971).



The cross-inscription of something by its opposite tells a different story than the barbell whose opposed weights fight for a balance point. For one thing, it shows that the yearning for a balance is, at best, a "bad faith gesture." It is the cynical private acceptance of conditions that one secretly intends to make the best of, while complaining publically about the need for some other way of life. For another and more interesting thing, it reveals a kind of structure that is best described as a "reversed predication." While each position, say communism and western capitalism, claimed to have succeeded where the other had failed, the space between the two positions establishes that the only resolution of these claims is *negation as such* — a "gap" that cannot be filled or even described adequately. Yet, the gap plays a curious role in the relation of the public face to the private accommodations. It is the very element that constructs itself from within each opposed position, as a place from which the dialectical twin may appear.

The Hegelian parable of Lordship and Bondage illustrates this logic perfectly. The master cannot be a proper master because other masters oppose him directly; the result would be a battle to the death with only one master left standing and badly damaged. The master needs the servant to provide the recognition he seeks; the recognition of the servant is not authentic, still it must do. The servant experiences the only freedom in this lock of ironic self-cancellation. The servant, while subject to the master's rule, is an automaton able to realize fully the irony without being "personally involved" in its making. The servant needs only to make a show of respecting the master; it's part of the job. It is the master, not the automaton servant, who really has no choice in the matter. The master's proclamation of mastery, calling for respect, is undermined by the void of the servant's position in maintaining the legitimacy of this call. The servant's void, an "inside frame" from which the servant sees the whole situation from an interior position, is the freedom *from* interpolation by the system of mastery. The gap exists in both of the predicating pairs, master and servant; but in the servant the gap retains the value of a freedom — albeit a freedom of the "forced choice" ("Freedom's just another word for 'nothing left to lose'" sang Janis Joplin). Still.



The word "gap" gives you a fair idea of where I'm going with this. If reversed predication can be symbolized thus: $X > Y \rightarrow X < Y$; and the reversal could be symbolized thus: $> \downarrow <$; then the gap of the dialectic exists in the same space as that which is carried around by all of us between the predications we take as steps, alternating between left and right. In a remarkable recognition of the value of this space, I cite the well-known statue of John the Baptist by Rodin, where the artist shows the saint pointing in two directions while taking a step, which we may notate as $> \downarrow <$ and $> \uparrow <$, or $> \uparrow \downarrow <$. "Baptism" is a theme to which we may return later in relation to the prohibition of viewing $> \downarrow <$, while maintaining the privation of viewing/knowing $> \uparrow <$.

A portable space of reversed predication sounds even more

controversial than academic conversation about the phallus or pudenda. The notation however has afforded us a convenient bridge. It is both a surplus (which is prohibited) and a lack (a privation), something you don't have or you may have to give away; thus the gap gives us the opportunity to discuss the relationship between privation and prohibition, which is a thoroughly architectural matter. In the case of securing the structural and spiritual *firmitas* of new buildings, it was customary to make a sacrifice. The type of victim could vary but symbolically the being who was killed was a woman, specifically a virginal maiden. Death of a maiden would permit the victim to become the bride of spirits who might otherwise wish to reclaim the void made by the new building, to suck it up again into dark earth. (I am drawing not just from Stephen King novels but, generally and broadly, from ethnographic studies collected around the turn of the century and published in Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and adding observations of Fustel de Coulanges in his book, *The Ancient City*).

To continue a conversation on the matter of building security with my friend and colleague Claudio Sgarbi, I want to advance the thesis that the foundation rituals required for this security are a matter of "chirality," abstractly represented by reversed predication but more poetically experienced in customs where handedness is involved in material expressions.² I hope to show that eventually we are on the same path to the discovery of an important truth about this space between the legs. In an earlier essay in the journal, *Via*, I showcased evidence from Frazer about shadows.³ Documenting fairly recent cases from Eastern Europe, Frazer recounted the story of the "shadow salesman," a vendor serving building contractors by offering them lengths of string made by measuring the shadows of people unaware. Prices varied, with those of virginal or semi-virginal women being the highest. Able to avoid the scandal of a real human sacrifice, the builder was able to bury the string in the corner of the foundation wall. The anonymous victim would at some point sicken and die, with the now-added benefit of becoming the spiritual protector of the building, bride of the Lares and Penates (*manes*). The matter of whether the theft of the shadow actually caused death was certainly nothing that could be proved in a court of law. The "modern mentality" would be satisfied that the building would be secured according to the old customs, nonetheless, just in case luck still had any force in the matter.⁴

The string solution reveals several important dimensions of human sacrifice. First, it shows that the modern mentality *views with shame* the practices demanded by the culture by its original view of the world. Shame preserves the function of prohibition that, attaching to a variety of conditions and objects, is at the base an inference of the presence of an Other behind appearances;

² Chirality, the symmetry of handedness, ($\chi\epsilon\rho$ = hand) is a term borrowed from chemistry, where it refers to molecules that are non-superimposable mirror images of each other. I have expanded the term to include symmetries within "reversed predication," where reversals, such as the use of effect for cause, heighten the role of twinship, unnoticed in the conventional relationship.

³ Donald Kunze, "Skiagraphy and the *Ipsum* of Architecture," *Architecture and Shadow, Via XI* (1990): 62-75.

⁴ The modern position, where the possibility of magic causation is dismissed but, "just in case" certain hangovers from magic practices are retained is summed up by the saying, "Don't be superstitions, it brings bad luck." The low cost of knocking on wood or adding "God forbid" to a statement acts as an insurance akin to the death-bed conversion of the profligate who uses Pascal's argument about the existence of God, i.e. that if God doesn't exist then the conversion didn't do any harm, but if he does then the just-in-time measure avoided eternal damnation.

an Other who, in a space that *cannot be seen*, operates as a check, or agent of revenge. This is what Vico (*The New Science*, 1744) realized about the thunder; that it forced the human perception of a space *behind* the sky, a point from which a voice was projected, a voice that did not give the full complement of signifier and signified but only the signifier, the material component of the voice distilled beyond a phonemic level into an "acousmatic" essence. A word that "meant something without meaning anything."⁵

Shame is connected with the invisible void of the building, the corner where special tokens are buried even today. Privation of space by material invisibility would seem to be a simple accident of physics. You can't see inside or behind things that are opaque. To believe otherwise requires a fantastical-magical suspension of disbelief. But, the relation between privation and prohibition can be "reverse engineered." What is impossible to experience becomes what *shouldn't be experienced*; and what involves the "shouldn't," the prohibition, in reversed predication suggests a privation, a physical limitation. It should not be necessary to prove this point, since it is a commonplace of popular expression. When mountain-climbers explain their desire to endure great hardship, they use the self-evidence of "because it's there" to justify converting the mountain's physical resistance to being climbed into something that *ought to be done*, to convert that privation into an imagined prohibition to be challenged. Without the conversion of privation into prohibition, there would be no narratives of discovery, scientific advancement, or personal achievement.

At the same time, the modern mentality employs the logic of Rodin's St. John in connecting what is kept out of sight by custom, $\gt\downarrow<$, with the highest spiritual order, $\gt\uparrow<$. We return to the reason why the building is protected by the virgin. The issue is that of the sanctity of marriage. The sacrificed woman is wedded to the spirits who would otherwise claim the building as an extension of the grave. The evidence of this marriage is a flame, originally maintained as the hearth-flame of the domestic kitchen. In many ancient cultures, the cult of the hearth is the center of the household religion, the worship of ancestral spirits originally buried in or near the house. As this necromancy was domesticated, the *manes* or dead spirits became the *Lares* and *Penates* of general household "spirits of place." Richard Onians locates the *manes* in the psyche, the breath-soul that specifically bore the "genius" of the family from generation to generation. Onians further argues that the meaning of the herm, the prismatic statues used as apotropaes to protect thresholds and boundaries, which were

⁵ It is important to see that the voice of the thunder was permanently untranslatable. It's "phonemic" quality as a series of syllabic sounds could not later be converted into symbols for any conventional thing but remained "original," as James Joyce intuited when he incorporated four versions of the word of thunder in his novel, *Finnegans Wake*. This has a direct impact on the issue of the voice's location. Enunciated from a position *behind* the sky, the thunder is always a radical case of ventriloquism. The material sky is animated without its consent, so to speak. Like the medium at a *séance*, the material transmitter gives over all will and personality to be "taken over" by the distant source. The medium is thus temporarily or sometimes permanently dead in order to be re-animated externally. All such cases of acousmatic ventriloquism involve this interaction of an *animus*, an active but remote and invisible point of origin, and an *anima*, a visible/present material medium. Vico described this through the idea of *ingenium*, which he described as a sharp wedge whose origins were *caelum*, which in Latin meant both "heaven" and "wedge." Ethnographic customs bear out this relationship where, for example, the blue sky is required for making oaths. Even the Olympian gods were required to swear the truth in a specifically reverse-predication way, i.e. by straddling the River Styx or Okeanos.

simplified as representations showing only a head and a phallus, represented the psyche, which also connected the head and the phallus and was supported by the configuration of domestic spaces, family tombs, and agricultural fields.⁶

In effect, the herm operated as an exteriorization of the “space between the legs” but at the same time pointed, like John the Baptist, to the æther of blue sky that was the basis of true swearing, the *animus* that was at the same time the psyche of the family gods. The chthonic basis of sky-spirits is also explained by the saint’s double indication. Vico connects two things in his account of the origins of human culture and human mentality. (1) The thunder operates acousmatically to create spaces behind a material *anima*, spaces that were not realized as “private” but, once the thunder made this possible, privation converted to prohibition. (2) The consecrations of marriage and burial were the immediate result of this formation of prohibition space. The logic of this is contained in Vico’s idea of the “imaginative universal,” the human mentality’s first version of the concept. I would suggest seeing this original idea in terms of Lacan’s *matheme* of discourse. Paul Verhaeghe has a very nice introduction to this. Like all other communications theories, Lacan begins with a communicating Agent who addresses an Other. And, like all other communications theories, this address is supported materially, in a zone of Production. But, the accession of the necessarily material medium opens the way to ambiguity and noise. The intended “message” may not be interpreted correctly because the Other receives it in a form whose *anima* can only indirectly support the *animus* of intended meaning. This is where Lacan reveals a genius on par with Vico’s. In his *matheme* he realizes a circularity, by which the “noise” of production’s materiality has the capacity to reveal the Truth of the Agent, who has, in choosing a material medium to address the Other, has necessarily included alien elements that cannot be subsumed by intention. Their “accidental” adjacency to intention reveals both the circumstances of this original choice but also the necessary exclusion of some elements — a portal to an “unconscious” that before this choice had not existed.

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| 1—AGENT | 2—OTHER |
| 4/-1—TRUTH | 3—PRODUCTION |

Truth can be regarded like the last ring of the famous Borromeo “knot” that Lacan used to describe the relationship of the three domains of subjectivity, the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. It is both “above and below” the Agent, both a “before” and “after.” This is the space, of course, that is also the “space between the legs.”

⁶ Onians effectively refutes all of the causal and idiotic interpretations of herms as “fertility symbols,” pointing out that herms did not need to symbolize anything; they functioned to frighten away and avert the gaze of strangers. Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate: New Interpretations of Greek, Roman and Kindred Evidence Also of Some Basic Jewish and Christian Beliefs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

By speaking about the space between the legs rather than what occupies this space, penis, vagina, anus, or combinations of organs that produce transvestitism, we move from a “base materialism” of sexuation to a “boundary account” that Lacan also favored. We should review that here, before moving to other components of Vico’s theory of human origins. Lacan’s theory of sexuation is based on the “phallic law.” This is a rule about substitution. Effectively, it commands anyone who wishes to enter into a part of the “network of symbolic relationships” to submit to misrecognition. They will be named for someone; they will be seen by others as having this or that personality; they will “dress the part,” i.e. look as others expect them to look as long as they value their membership. An example is the king whose power is based on his crown and scepter; losing either calls into question his authority and even identity. The child’s nursery tale of the “Emperor’s New Clothes” shows the reverse point of the modern moral interpretation — i.e. that the king really is nothing more than his regalia, without which he is and should be the subject of public ridicule. The modern interpretation, which seeks to find “the real king” behind the robes, misses the point. The real king is, really, his position within the Symbolic. The modern mentality forgets what a king is and attributes more of a “racist” idea than was ever present when kings were in power.⁷

In Lacan’s terms, the difference between “those who choose to call themselves men” and “those who choose to call themselves women” — by no means determined by biology! — is one of rule and exception. All those who choose to call themselves men are entirely subject to the phallic law (the submission to the Symbolic), whereas all those who choose to call themselves women are only partly subject to this law. And — this is a key point — whereas men are entirely subject to the law, there is always an exception, an actual or fictional man who is outside the system. For women, there are no exceptions; while not-all (*pas tout*) of the woman is subject to the phallic law, the castration of Symbolic, there is no woman who is not *pas tout*.

In spatial terms, this is like saying that men must go inside a space and stay there; that there is someone outside guarding the door. Women, in contrast, may slip in and out. It is never certain whether they are in and out. They embody an ambiguity that cannot be subsumed by any “rule of in or out.” It is clear why Lacan was at first the darling of feminists but later vilified by feminists who preferred the phallic law and wanted nothing to do with *pas tout*.⁸ Lacan’s theory of the woman, or “~~woman~~,” as many Lacanians write it, speaks directly to the question of why the woman was required as the sacrifice to secure the *firmitas* of buildings. As not-all, the woman must be *prohibited* from other relations through her marriage to the “flame” of the psyche/*manes*. This prohibition is required to counter the woman’s natural ability to invade and escape, to be inside while being outside and *vice versa*. This, I believe, is the revelation of the wall with the protruding breasts.

⁷ See Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁸ The astute reader will realize that the *pas tout* resists ideology. Since it has no inside-outside principle to accept interpellation as effectively as “men,” who are “all in” because they are able to contain an internal void of the Other, a point from which authority regulates by its absence, its status as an “inside frame.” Ideology constructs opposition to the phallic law, but opposition cannot be translated in the language and logic of the *pas tout*.



The breast is able to “escape” the *poché* of the wall it protects by being buried because it is “not-all” subject to the prohibitions established through the rituals of sacrifice [image is thanks to Claudio Sgarbi]. It nourishes the public space that is now secularized, *pro fanum*. This is the value of the woman as victim for the building trade. She is a surplus keyed to the “prohibition aspect” of the privation–prohibition function. We should take heed not to attempt modern moralizing interpretations of signs, such as the breast protruding from the stone wall, as saying anything about the “role of the woman,” the

“relationships between men an women,” the “oppression of the wife within phallogentric culture.” Neither should we, as has Vernant and others, attempt to conceptualize the key mythic components of the sexuation of space — really, sexuation *as* space — Hestia and Hermes, as “concepts” of inside and outside, abstracted and anachronistically imputed to the mythic mentality. We should restrain our aggressive abstractions upon the advice of Vico and Lacan, who set aside conceptual and evidentiary space for the unconscious as such. In effect, once the unconscious emerges as a consequence of human awareness of the Symbolic, the moment of thunder, so to speak, it never develops past this point even though the conscious mind evolves into a “heroic mentality” and then a “conceptual mentality” (using Vico’s idea of the three stages). The unconscious continues to communicate its desires via myths, set in a mythic logic. Freud recognized this in his gradual understanding of the drives, based on family relationships. With Lacan’s addition of the gaze and the (acousmatic) voice to Freud’s list of three (oral, anal, phallic) came the addition of more evidence of how the unconscious continues to function as a mythic being, despite its “Other” position in the communications model.

Imagine a telephone conversation between people located not just in different places but in different times. Although the channel of communications allows them instantaneous transmission of signals, the role of production is radically altered. Coming out of the ancient past into the modern present calls for elaborate modifications of what Gérard Genette calls the “paratext” — the materials that frame the diegetic narrative. Just as critical reviews, catalogs, and interviews with the author extend the function of the title page and book jacket, the dream and symptom (Lacan: “sinthome”) serve as the paratexts of the unconscious. Because we can understand them — or rather *misunderstand* them — they are myths in the sense of fictional stories, parables, riddles, etc. But, because their Agency is in the unconscious, the Truth arrives in the form of an *original paradox* that was, *at the time of formation*, already formed within the negative.

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| 1—“MYTH” | 2—MODERN SUBJECT |
| 4/-1—TRUTH (“ANALYSIS”) | 3—DREAM, FANTASY, SINTHOME |

In the 4/-1 position, myth is in the position of having to "swear the truth." Looking at what classical Greek myths have to say on the subject, the verdict is decisive. The obligation of the gods swearing an oath was to straddle the waters of the Styx or Okeanos, both streams separating two territories of opposite ontological status: life and death, the world and not-world. In the world of symbolic logic, $\sim\sim P$, "not not-P," is equal to P. In the modified world of "intuitionist logic," the constructivist position, that $\sim\sim P = P$ is modified to read $\sim\sim P \approx P$.⁹ It would possibly be better to say, that it is both equal and not equal to P, or to use Lacan's sign of the *pointon*, \diamond , which can also be written $\langle \rangle$, in sympathy with the "Möbius band" effect of Truth being simultaneously the last and the first element of the communications process.

We are ready to return to the mysterious space between the legs, $\langle \dots \rangle$, also written $\langle | \rangle$, where up, down, or both up or down can be indicated, the space inside space. In the art of the pick-pocket, the victim ("mark") must be coerced without him/her knowing it. The mark will assist in the pick-pocket process. The story is akin to the myth of Endymion, whom Diana (in the form of Semele, the moon) put under a spell so that she could kiss him while he was asleep. This is one way of saying that Psyche visits Eros in Hades, "the invisible." In other words, the herm (Psyche + Eros) becomes invisible. The pick-pocket is the master of the art of "body loading," a process of constructing invisible space where objects will be deposited and later removed, just as a capacitor stores electrical charges for later employment. Norman O. Brown has shown that the different traditions surrounding Hermes — psychopomp, thief, seducer, messenger, commercial regulator, etc. — are not accidentally accreted as Hermes stories are passed around from culture to culture but, rather, *functionally inter-related components* within the same "system." The erotic aspect of $\langle | \rangle$ is the same as the space constructed by the pick-pocket; both follow a logic of Hermes, or Psyche+Eros. Both involve a "not-all" logic, a \diamond or $\langle \rangle$ (both greater than and less than) relationship.¹⁰

What is the Truth of the situation? This is the not-all of the gods, the Truth of myth, the Truth of the literary form of the unconscious. This is the truth we dare not misrecognize by forcing an "ideological reading" to pad our arguments about the repression of women. Sgarbi has exposed an important aspect of the myth of immuration. It is not a wall that gives milk; rather, it is a wall that paralyzes with the gaze of a Medusa.¹¹ The solution is found by combining the "body-loading" idea of the pick-pocket/Hermes with the other myth of Diana, the story of Diana and Actæon. Vico says that there are "two Diana's," the Diana of Endymion and the Diana of Actæon. The Diana of Endymion is converted into customs protecting the purity of marriage. In essence, the wife can experience any

⁹ Lacan rejected the constructivist logical principle of $\sim\sim P = P$ (a double negation resulting in the reaffirmation of the positive. For a consideration of the consequences of Lacan's "intuitionist" logic, see Russell Grigg, "Lacan and Badiou: Logic of the Pas-tout," *Filozofski vestnik* 27, 2 (2005): 53-65.

¹⁰ Norman O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief; The Evolution of a Myth*. [Madison]: University of Wisconsin Press, 1947.

¹¹ Sgarbi, it is true, sets up categories that begin to get in the way of a resolution. By saying that the builder is involved with hubris invites a allegorical or moral reading that is not the required anagogical reading of the Dantesque *quadrigia*. Rather, the builder is being pious, especially with respect to the sanctity of the "sacred marriage" that sets aside specific "sites of exception" that cannot be approached without making the necessary spiritual preparations.

amount and degree of sex and remain pure. This idea was retained in the traditions of the Virgin Mary, who was a virgin despite her pregnancy and the birth of Jesus. The Diana of Actæon protects the sacred precinct of the springs around which human communities first established themselves. Strangers were not allowed to enter these “site of exception” without proper gestures, speeches, interrogations, and trials. The story of Actæon can be read in two ways. The common reading is that the hunter Actæon stumbled across Diana bathing in a spring, attended by nymphs. In punishment for stealing a glimpse of the naked goddess, Diana splashed Actæon with water that transformed him into a stag. His dogs took immediate notice and chased him down. The uncommon reading is to see this as an initiation myth and to regard Actæon’s transformation, into a totem animal, as the desired consequence of sacred baptism. The dogs represent the step-wise procedure of mortification, a component of all “rites of passage.” Ovid indicates that he knows what is going on and gives detailed accounts of all of Actæon’s dogs, which he also counts to the number 33, a “number of completion” associated with journeys to the underworld. Three is itself a number of completion, eleven is a number capable of both reduction and infinite expansion without modification. Actæon’s horns thus specify a ritual mask affording him passage directly into the spirit of the deer, the representative of the forest, as indicated by the metonymy of branching horns.

Is this the famed “gate of horn,” by which true dreams pass? Vergil does not give many hints on the matter even though he produces the paradox whereby his hero Æneas passes through the “false gate” of ivory after his *katabasis* in Book 6.¹² The question of Truth brings us back to the Lacanian *matheme* of discourse and the over-under connection of Truth to the Agent. What is between Actæon’s legs? In addition to the usual anatomical *equipage* is there not also a stream, a boundary that has only one side and one edge — for is not this the meaning of the Styx and Okeanos, the “not-all” boundary? It is easy to see how this not-all boundary gives rise to the phallus idea as well as the *pas tout* of feminine sexuation, and to the “intuitionist” logic of $\sim\sim P \neq P$.

Vico places the idea of Diana in his computer file directory at the level of a “root folder.” No Vichians have officially recognized this! Diana for Vico has two aspects, an Actæon aspect and an Endymion aspect.

§528 From this source imagination conceived the third major deity, Diana, representing the first human need which made itself felt among the giants when they had settled on definite lands and united in marriage with particular women. The theological poets have described the history of these things in two fables of Diana. The first, signifying the modesty of marriage, tells of Diana silently lying with the sleeping Endymion under the darkness of night; so that Diana is chaste with that chastity referred to in a law

¹² This reading is supported by Leonard Barkan, “Diana and Actæon: The Myth as Synthesis,” *English Literary Renaissance* 10, 3 (1980): 317–359. Actæon falls into the category of those who have seen something they shouldn’t: Cadmus, Tiresius, Narcissus, etc. See also G. R. Levy, *The Gate of Horn* (London: Faber, 1948) for background on the use of horns on graves, crowns, and as gates to heaven/underworld. See also Apuleius, *The Transformations of Lucius, Otherwise Known As, the Golden Ass*, trans. Robert Graves (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1951). For background on the liminal space of ritual initiation, see Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) and Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977).

proposed by Cicero, *Deos caste adeunto*, that one should go to the sacrifice only after making the sacred ablutions. The other tells us of the fearful religion of the water-springs, to which was attached the perpetual epithet of sacred. It is the tale of Actaeon, who, seeing Diana naked (the living spring) and being sprinkled with water by the goddess (to signify that the goddess cast over him the great awe of her divinity), was changed into a stag (the most timid of animals) and torn to pieces by his dogs (the remorse of his own conscience for the violation of religion). Hence *lymphati* (properly, sprinkled with *lymphe* or pure water) must have been originally a term applied to the Actaeons who had been maddened by superstitious terror. This poetic history was preserved by the Latins in their word *latices* (evidently from *latendo*), to which is always added the epithet part, and which means the water gushing from a spring. The *latices* of the Latins must have been identical with the Greek nymphs, handmaidens of Diana, for *nymphai* in Greek meant the same as *lymphae* [in Latin], The nymphs were so named at a time when all things were apprehended as animate and for the most part human substances, as we have set forth above in the Poetic Metaphysics. [*The New Science*, 1744]

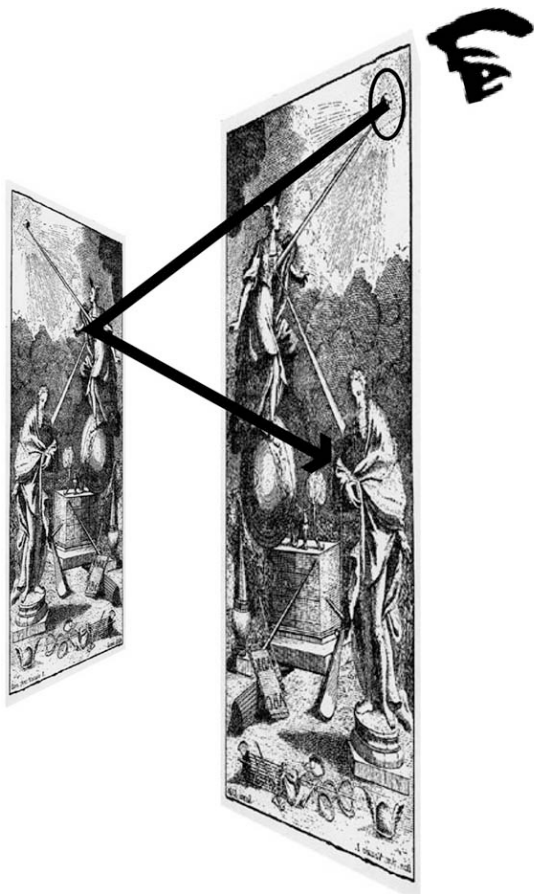
Vico's word *latices* is more likely *laticis*, any kind of water, but his idea is to connect it with *latere*, to lie hidden, a variation of which he uses in the motto of the "impresa" image that adorns the title page (*Ignota latebat*, "she lay hidden"). Who lay hidden? *Metafisica*, who lies at the corner-stone to protect *The New Science*. Literally, her helmet, the helmet of Hermes, is in the other image placed at the front, in the "paratext," of Vico's major thesis about humanity and the imagination.



In his reading, Donald Verene [*New Vico Studies* 5 (1987): 77–98] believes that this image on the title page is a "before" picture of *The New Science* and that the *dipintura*, the frontispiece, is the "after." He also holds that *Metafisica* is looking at herself in the mirror, "self-absorbed," but for this to be the case it would be impossible for the viewer of the *impresa* to see the surface of the mirror, as is clearly the case. As with the mirror at the rear of Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, a plan view analysis is required to clear up the disputes. *Metafisica*'s face is farthest from the picture plane, then comes the mirror, then the triangle/square (*squadro*). The angles show that *Metafisica* is telling us how to look at the *dipintura*, so in a special sense, Verene is correct. This is a "before" as if to say ... "follow my example in order to see the *res humanæ* of the *dipintura*."

This is probably Diana-Endymion, the mythic unconscious of *The New Science*, who sees by means of a mirror, through a “rectifying triangle” (really a builder’s square, a *squadro*) into the other image, the *dipintura*, where the reader must put his eye in place of the divine oculus that gazes down on the first human site of exception, a swidden clearing in the primeval forest. There the reader must see the image in a mirror because of his/her position as the divine eye. Reflected below, off of a jewel on Metafisica’s breast, is the human scene: an altar bearing the implements of marriage and burial, a plow, a rudder, the alphabet, etc. Homer receives the light reflected off Metafisica’s jewel first, but he is blind. He is unconscious of the source but willing to endure the mortification (= temporality of narrative) that will give form to this gaze and voice. We remember that others who “saw Medusa” (the coupling of snakes) were blinded and/or paralyzed, “turned to stone” as is this statue of Homer. Tiresius’s blindness afforded him the gift of prophecy (Vico says the first mentality was based on the art of divination). Asklepius, who recovers blood from the body of the Medusa slain by Persius by use of a mirror, finds that blood from the left side of her body is a potent poison; that from the right can

restore the dead to life. This “stereognosis” — knowledge by left and right — is key to the mirror logic and use of reversed predication of Vico and others who have stumbled across the two Dianas.¹³



In my somewhat adventurous but plausible idea of a “Vico box,” the viewer looks through a hole drilled through a board, on the other side of which is pasted a reversed image of the *dipintura*, the official frontispiece of *The New Science*. Opposite this hole is a mirror that reflects this image and corrects its orientation. The viewer sees his/her own eye as a divine oculus — the position of the reader is not concealed but rather “misrecognized” as the divine creative force of Zeus or (if the Inquisition is reading) God. This reading is supported by the angled beam shown in the *dipintura*, where the ray from the eye is reflected off of a jewel. This reveals that Metafisica is herself the mirror, that she plays a role akin to the reflecting moon, Diana. Dona Metafisica = Diana = Psyche + Eros = Herm.

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¹³ I would include, in this illustrious list, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare, whose mastery of reversed predication and metalepsis is so advanced that they clearly must have given these issues serious thought. Among the modern masters, Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* reads like a handbook of moon-lore, centering on the “inspired misreading” of a poem by the thief Kinbote (a botkin is a fly whose larvæ live within victims, consuming their flesh while alive).

In ancient law-courts, the etymology of testimony was demonstrated directly. Witnesses were called to swear upon a newly sacrificed pair of ram's testicles, presumably to heighten the visual immediacy of body loading for forensic purposes. Diana's "Actæon rule" is that one may not enter into the site of exception without spiritual cleansing. An oath must be sworn. Diana's "Endymeon rule" is that the unconscious cannot lie. Its dreams are "true dreams," but they come in inverted form. Dreams of flying suspended by air are stimulated by the air of the lungs suspended in the body. The Truth of dreams is a "last thing" that was really the "first thing," the thing omitted (private) by the unconscious in the process of conscious formation, the thing then prohibited, as a space-within-a-space, a space of the not-all.