

comment j'ai écrit...

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Boundary language may appear to be, primarily, a technique, and a reductionistic one at that, for dealing with spatial and temporal complexity. The several stages of its evolution attest to some trial and error: the initial triad of motility, scale, and identity 'dysfunctions', the stage of identification with anamorphosis as a 'crossing', the emphasis on the Möbius-style topologies of self-reference, such as suture, the assimilation of Lacanian elements to fill in the blanks (especially around the object-cause of desire), and most recently the accommodation of the boundary language diagram to Lacan's famous L-scheme. The method is hardly such, in the sense that a 'neutral tool' is set up for wide application to materials that it immediately renders understandable. If anything, boundary language complicates the issue, introduces its own gratuitous perplexities, takes familiar situations and renders them unintelligible. This 'apologia' attempts to lay out the method behind the evolution of the boundary language approach, not in hopes that the method can be forgiven for its many faults, but that the real basis of study be laid bare: the sheer belatedness of this approach, which in the face of authorities infinitely more able to conquer its territories, offer templates against which boundary language will always be found in some rag-tag condition, wanting, inaccurate, even misleading. The apology is not offered in hopes of clemency, but as an invitation to see how an inverted method may in fact be an essential approach able to keep open the essential gaps required of truly live theory.



The Egyptians (even when they were shamelessly plagiarized) regarded Hermes-Thoth as a multi-purpose god, dealing with boundaries, the dead, commerce, seduction, and writing.



Wild = 'willed' = savage = selva (forest). Go figure it out. The tradition of the wild man relates to sacrifice, the holidays celebrating 'inverted rule' (fool kings), and a variety of reversed sequences that determine the interval of what Lacan called 'the interior 8'.

1. the basic method

The founding method behind boundary language is one of idiocy. In the phenomenon of 'idiotic symmetry', two equally idiotic positions nonetheless support each other through a tautological, self-sustaining logic that provides both context and justification. An example is the famous statement by Groucho in the film *Horse Feathers*: 'My client may look like an idiot and talk like an idiot, but don't be deceived — he *is* an idiot!' The use of truth in the role of the false sign designed to deceive is nothing new. The same logic lies behind the ancient practice of 'silent trade', where two parties whose paths cross but never meet are able to sustain a trade relationship as long as each conceives that the other is the god Hermes. Even if both parties maintain this fiction cynically ('I know very well that it's not Hermes, just a guy like myself, but nonetheless ...'), the structure works. Idiotic symmetry is a structure rather than a proposition, and it can be used by anyone, even sophisticated intellectuals, to make progress in areas dealing with such unsymbolizable commodities as desire, partial objects, anxiety, and the like.

2. interpellation

Boundary language draws much from Vico and Lacan, sources that it fuses through a kind of mind meld operation. However, boundary language method inverts the usual relationship between primary and secondary source. It takes seriously the hysterical position expressed by the statement, 'What does Lacan/Vico want (of me)?' Conceding that no true Vichian or Lacanian boundary language can exist, since by its very existence it would have already/always falsified the originals in some critical ways, boundary language uses its position as a hysterical subject, a subject personified by woman ('Woman does not exist' —Lacan), a subject already divided in its commitments. One vector of this commitment is to the symbolic order, where pleasure is reported as pain (of failure), but also where the 'masculine' Other is shown to be crucially lacking a middle, a court, its 'secret garden'. The masculine Other is pantomimed by the father who refuses to die, and is in the Stephen Kingian position of 'between the two deaths'. The father is not, actually, Vico or Lacan, but a stand-in who maintains the hysterical discourse simply by being symbolically demanding (i.e. finding boundary language consistently unable to 'symbolize' any ideological stable situation). The subject's other commitment is to the wild: specifically, the wild (*sauvage* = 'of the forest (*selva*)') as the point of view, a point that Dante did not miss. Between the two deaths is an interval, a series — something that must be dealt with in its pure seriality, such as a temporal sequence, a narrative (another point Dante did not miss). This is perhaps why the discourse of the hysteric is fundamentally about propaganda and ideology, and why boundary language is advanced as a 'cure' to the ideology underlying investigative practices.

3. interpolation

The interval between the two deaths is the basis for the back-and-forth dialectic that relies on the model of chiasmus: flip-flop, hip-hop, hoity-toity, brick-a-brack. This structure 'violates' the orderly sequence in order to revisit the past 'from behind', i.e. from a dimension of production that was 'behind' some event or action in the role of artifact rather than contextual predecessor. Interpolation is also the moiré condition of anamorphosis that refuses to allow 'optical' stability in a given situation: whatever keeps things open, unresolved, which is to say 'fool play' in all its historical manifestations. The role of chiasmus (mirror structure) has been only rarely introduced in scholarly literature to the degree of its historic ambitiousness. Chiasmus is not simply a narrative trick but a basis of temporality (venatic, forensic, and festal time combined, as well as the more Deleuzean-Bergsonian trick played with *durée*, which boundary language treats through the figure of the anacoluthon) as well as spatiality (in the identification of the famous 'fourth' dimension as constitutive of depth as a variable dependent on event, memory, culture, and the other tutors of the muscular.

introduction: how I wrote ...



Vico's unusual book, *The New Science* (*Nueva Scienza*, 1744), described history as a cosmic jewel, diffracting light from a 'blind-sighted' god whose reflected glory is ironically re-interpreted through the anxiety of literature and the arts to provide a basis for human institutions such as marriage, burial, agriculture, government, commerce, and ... well ... science.

PRINCIPI
 DI
SCIENZA NUOVA
 DI
GIAMBATTISTA VICO
 D'INTORNO ALLA COMUNE NATURA
 DELLE NAZIONI
 IN QUESTA TERZA IMPRESSIONE
 Dal medesimo Autore in un gran numero di luoghi
 Corretta, Schiarita, e notabilmente Accrefciuta.
TOMO I.



IN NAPOLI MDCCXLIV.
 NELLA STAMPERIA MUZIANA
 A spese di Gaetano, e Stefano Elia.
 CON LICENZA DE' SUPERIORI.

The secrets of Vico's theories seem to lie in the images 'inadvertently' supplied with the final edition of *The New Science*. Themes of reflections, jewels, interior frames, Justizia (with winged temples) doubling as Metafisica — these undoubtedly Rosicrucian icons suggest an occult side to Vico that official scholarship has never acknowledged. Unlike Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*, the 'Vico Code' leads somewhere besides a sentimental truism. It's a map of the fold by which the human world bifurcates itself in fractal, Möbius form.

4. the idea of study method

Vico's emphasis on 'study methods' (*On the Study Method of Our Time*, 1709) Vico develops an alternative to Enlightenment thinking. He proposes a philosophical recovery of the *ars topica*, an 'art of topics' (metaphors), what he calls the 'art of finding the middle term'. The middle term is the common element of the syllogism of rhetoric, the enthymeme. It is an idea turned in two directions at once: toward the particular, the evidential, enigmatic fragments of the everyday; and toward the universal, which is not the logical universal, the universal of set theory, but the 'scholarly universal' that is the counterpart of what in mythic thought was the imaginative universal (*universale fantastico*). It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that this was not a 'New Age' identification of modern thought with ancient thought. Rather, it is the horrifying collapse of distance and dimensionality that comes with the appreciation of cultural seriality.

In another short work, (*On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians, Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language*, 1710) Vico discovers meanings concealed 'unconsciously' in the words and phrases used by the ancients. In this technique, Vico is strikingly Rousselian and a precursor to Roussel's *Locus Solus* (1914). In terms such as *verum-factum* (true-made), *mens* (mind), and *sensus* (senses), Vico found a narrative that 'will have been played out' (employing the idea embodied in the future-anterior tense) through historical, cultural development. Here we find the material basis of Vico's study method, his *ars topica*. In a most striking way, Vico exemplifies an interpolative/interpellative strategy built into his idea of the *verum/factum*.

Locus Solus as well as Vico's study method involve the strategy of the 'draw and turn'. This is pictured most easily as the 'knight's move' in chess, a hop and a side-step. Travel experience provides the explanation: one makes plans to visit a certain spot but, upon arriving, finds that the principal attraction is closed for repair. Wandering around with nothing better to do, one then experiences something entirely unexpected which proves to be of incalculably greater value than the original intended goal. The knight's move can be translated into design terms by considering how to construct a 'draw' (an initial attraction or goal) that will effectively lead the design towards what will ultimately prove a failure. This false goal must be well placed, so that the event of failure will quickly lead to a compounded discovery whose way had been prepared by the previous fictional constructions. 'Fictim design' is a set of techniques for diversifying the construction of a false goal and the successful turn. Compounding refers to the quick collation of insights and discoveries. The designers must be ready to convert the products of compounding quickly into built results, each detail of which must be able to offer forensic testimony about the entire process of discovery, development, failure, and recovery.

Analepsis ('recovery', 'restoration') cannot endure reflection or experiment and must at least seem to happen quickly and naturally. This last phase resembles a symposium (dinner), in particular Plato's *Symposium*, where Socrates' startling insights come at a time when most of the revelers have fallen asleep.