

Things Good to Know

There are things, and groups of things, that are essential for critical thinking. This is true in the sense both that knowing them allows the knower the freedom to move from one system to another, using the appropriate systems to address specific historical subjects; and in the sense that *not knowing* them leaves open a serious gap in scholarship and thinking that is corrected only by restoring the missing components or their equivalents. Naturally, anyone's list of essentials is missing some components itself, so if you find other things to add you will only improve the list and add to your abilities.

This list owes to an eccentric background, so the specific resource may not be important *per se* but the general function it plays is, so even if the specific resource is omitted, some substitute should be found. How you identify this function and find a substitute is your own "style" of thinking and writing.

Speaking of writing, it is important to develop a general discipline that keeps you writing regularly, continually. Whatever your trick, you must have a way to write about something that you cannot at the moment develop fully but "save for later." You must have a way to incorporate your various modes of thinking, such as graphics or even doodling. You must have specific projects — such as writing a paper to present at a conference or submit to a journal — as well as general ones that go on for years. Whatever your strategy, it must allow you to create something completely each day. The brevity of this goal (one page of text, for example) should allow you to go full circle and include some bibliographic work, some drawing or diagramming, and some speculation to push the project further. At the end of the day, you will "have your page" and have accomplished things at several levels.

My groups of things good to know includes films, Lacan, Vico, theories of discourse and causality, some philosophy ideas, and concepts pulled from many sources. I use examples from architecture and history to give these groups a work out, to test their effectiveness and tweak my understanding of them. The examples should show where one has made an error, or improperly characterized a system. The idea is to make mistakes that lead to insights. If errors are not encountered, you are making no progress. The idea of writing and research is based on self-discovery through confrontation with the limits of mastery. You must take mistakes. Now to the lists:

I. Lacan

- a. Theory of extimity
- b. The four types of discourse
 - i. master-servant
 - ii. hysteric
 - iii. university
 - iv. analysis
- c. More uncanny: partial objects and "between the two deaths"
- d. Oppositions: aim/goal, desire/demand, enunciating act and enoncé (literal content)
- e. Metonymy and metaphor, Lacan style
- f. Fantasy formation
- g. What are: the imaginary, the symbolic, the Real (and their interrelation)
- h. The mirror stage and its significance
- i. Schreber's "square" of paranoia
- j. transitivity/intransitivity
- k. Future anterior (cf. chiasmus)
- l. *Mi-dire* (half speech)
- m. Möbius-band ideas (cf. extimity)

II. Vico

- a. General thesis about the three stages of history and the *ricorso*
- b. The role of the graphic elements in the *New Science*
- c. "Verum ipsum factum"
- d. The imaginative universal
- e. Vico's idea of Homer
- f. The Table of Cebes, as an idea and background story

- g. Vico's extimacy, writer to reader
- h. Vico's idea of a common mental dictionary

III. The Uncanny

- a. Jentsch
- b. Freud; "The Sandman"; optics (anamorphosis) and identity (doubles)
- c. Lacan (*extimité*)
- d. Activating the connections using Jentsch's "epitome conditions" (fate and momentum after death)

IV. Ancient History (mostly from Fustel de Coulanges, supplemented by Robert Graves)

- a. Myths about twins
- b. Foundation rituals
- c. Magic to protect buildings and cities
- d. Marriage and burial
- e. Boundaries
- f. Diana and Actæon
- g. Cyclops episode
- h. Folklore about foundation rites and building
- i. Temple of Solomon

V. Memory systems

- a. Ramón Llull
- b. Giulio Camillo
- c. Italo Calvino: the tiled array
- d. Kaballa and the divided soul

VI. Films

- a. Essential films: *Vertigo*, *Rear Window*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Wizard of Oz*, *The Truman Show*, *Citizen Kane*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Veronika Voss*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *Dead of Night*, *Playtime*, *High and Low*, *City Lights*
- b. Important films: *Red*, *Double Life of Véronique*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Rebecca*, *Notorious*, *Dial 'M' for Murder*, *Young and Innocent*, *The 39 Steps*, *Blue Velvet*
- c. Helpful films: *Blind Chance*, *Mon Oncle*, *Psycho*, *Brazil*, *Dr. Strangelove*

VII. Paintings

- a. Velázquez's *Las Meninas*
- b. Antonello da Messina's *St. Jerome in His Study*
- c. Picasso's *Desmoiselles d'Avignon*
- d. Holbein's *Ambassadors*

VIII. Biblical

- a. Eden as an extimate space
- b. Tower of Babel
- c. Genesis vs. Sumerian creation myth
- d. Borgesian and Žižekian arguments about Christ

IX. Causality

- a. Aristotle's main four
- b. *Tuchē*
- c. Automaton
- d. Arrangements of the system

X. Systems from the Past

- a. Vitruvius
- b. Aphasia: contiguity and semblance disorders
- c. Metatheories
 - i. Organicism (comedy)
 - ii. Mechanism (tragedy)
 - iii. Irony (satire)
 - iv. Formism (romance)
- d. Humors and their systems, with esp. attention to Melancholy

XI. Cassirer, Kant, Hegel, etc.

- a. The case of the sublime (Kant's *Critique of Judgment*)
- b. Hegel's master-servant argument
- c. Hegel and skulls (Golgotha)
- d. Double negation

XII. Frame/Screen analysis ideas

- a. Encadrement, four forms
- b. Virtuality, four forms
 - i. contiguous
 - ii. attached
 - iii. detached
 - iv. anomalous
- c. R1, R2 (external Real, internal Real)
- d. Idiomatic symmetry
- e. Iconostasis/chiasmus
- f. Inside frame
- g. Prohibition society / enjoyment society
- h. Ø phenomenon
- i. Interpellation and interpolation
- j. Strategies of continuation and completion
- k. prohibition/privation exchange
- l. Knight's move; frozen time, frozen space
- m. "Epitome conditions"
- n. Anamorphosis, expanded
 - i. acousmatics
 - ii. POV and vanishing point issues
 - iii. stochastic resonance
- o. "The fourth wall"

XIII. Miscellaneous

- a. Roussel and the *procédé*
- b. Edgar Allan Poe's method of composition
- c. Chiasmus, plot points, dysfunctions (motility, scale, identity)
 - i. analepsis
 - ii. metalepsis
 - iii. anacoluthon
 - iv. aposiopoesis
- d. George Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Form*, sorites (Lewis Carroll)
- e. Issues concerning recursion, self-reference, Gödelian theory
- f. Alan Turing and the "curtain" of the Turing Test
- g. James Joyce: *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*
- h. Travel categories (Henry Johnstone)
- i. Travel epitomes
 - i. Bruce Chatwin
 - ii. W.F. Sebald
- j. Magic: contagious and sympathetic
- k. Stereognosis and propriocept
- l. The "Pym"
- m. The performative as a basis for architecture etc.

XIV. Projects, sources, and other groupings

- a. Boundary Language project
- b. Art3, Architecture Seminar, summer workshops, IDP workshops
- c. *Atlas of the Obverse*
- d. Books, articles, lectures (see CV)