



Stendhal Syndrome, sudden faintness or even collapse in the presence of great beauty, usually of a work of art, architecture, or landscape, or was named after Marie-Henri Beyle (1783–1842), better known by his pen name, Stendhal (*Wikipedia*).

## Forty Reasons Lacanians (or Anyone) Should Take the Stendhal Syndrome Seriously

**INVITATION:** You are invited an informal zoom discussion Sunday, August 15, 2021, 1 pm Eastern US time (6 pm Ireland, Scotland, UK; 7 pm central European time) to explore different aspects of the Syndrome that many have never heard of before but whose relation to beauty, ecstasy, the nervous system, and the spatial-temporal status of the psychoanalytical subject demands a special kind of theoretical attention.

This zoom session is the first of a possible series of three, in the style developed by iPSA (Institute for Psychoanalytic Studies in Architecture) to challenge the usual academic conference design of boring PowerPoint presentations crammed into sessions precluding any possibility of intellectual conversation.

The “reverse zoom” (MOOZ, or schMOOZ) design begins with chitchat that randomizes any received idea to produce “free radicals.” Although presentations and papers are invited, they are posted on-line for participants to view before the live session. If all goes well, a second session features more formal presentations and invited critics. A third session seeks to structure the

topic to make possible more directed, experimental inquiries. Two zoom symposia have already taken place, the first directed by John Hendrix on the Psychoanalytical Imagination in Architecture, the second on Lacan’s idea of the Alethosphere, led by Andrew Payne. These two events generated nearly thirty on-line texts/presentations that may be further formalized in the group’s journal, *Psyche Extended*, or book proposals.

### Why Stendhal?



Freud displayed this replica of the Vatican’s *bas relief* of Gradiva, the Aglaurid whose peculiar delicate step was said to calm earthquakes, or induce vertigo.

This invitation assumes that, even if one has heard of the Stendhal Syndrome or even experienced it directly, one does not know what to say about it theoretically — even less, what to say about its relation to architecture and/or psychoanalysis. This invitation intends to put a foot in the doors of the unwilling. Even if you can’t attend the August 15 or subsequent sessions, the aim is to get you thinking about this phenomenon in a different light.

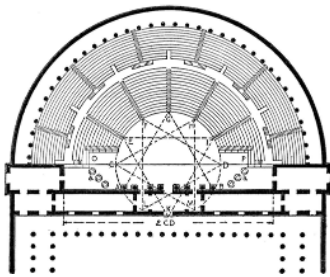
If you survive this (*over-*)elaborate prospectus, you may be fired up sufficiently to return fire.

It is all too easy to limit this visceral response to great beauty to a sub-category of reception theory. This would be a mistake. The first thing to note is that the Stendhal compels us to build a spatial model with three elements — (1) the “workspace” of the work of art, (2) the space of reception, and (3) a mediating buffer. This buffer, like the frame of a painting, tells us that its contents are intended to be enjoyed as an entertaining fiction even though the representation may claim to “accurately portray reality.” In cinema, the buffer is elaborated into the “fourth wall,” an opening made in the set to accommodate cameras, lights, wires, directors, etc. that later is the hole in space through which viewers sitting in darkened auditoriums enjoy a view into private lives. While the spectator is immobilized (like the dreamer paralyzed in sleep), this cooked reality moves in front of fixed eyes, reversing the

usual figure-ground relationship. What the perceiving subject normally conceives as “outdoors,” surveilled by a consciousness housed, metaphorically, within a mobile observation deck is flipped. The world spins around a fixed tower, which has become an axis.

Stendhal himself never fainted before a particular work of art, as so many have before Michaelangelo’s *David* or Botticelli’s *La Primavera*. Rather, he experienced vertigo in a church, the Basilica of Santa Croce:

I was in a sort of ecstasy, from the idea of being in Florence, close to the great men whose tombs I had seen. Absorbed in the contemplation of sublime beauty ... I reached the point where one encounters celestial sensations ... Everything spoke so vividly to my soul. Ah, if I could only forget. I had palpitations of the heart, what in Berlin they call “nerves.” Life was drained from me. I walked with the fear of falling. [Wikipedia]



The feeling that “the earth moves under my feet” covers a multitude of situations where there is a sudden reversal of the figure-ground relationship. Normally, the observing figure moves across a stable ground, but when this is reversed, as it frequently is in art, the figure is immobilized and the “ground” — a screen, a dream, a painting — animates the imagined reality as a moving spectacle. The buffer separating/protecting the art viewer while he/she is paralyzed seems to provide a tranquilizing sedative to dampen the alarm this figure-ground reversal would normally cause, but once this buffer gives way, once the spectacle becomes phantasmagoria, the sudden loss of imagined ground produces, at the very least, a sense of vertigo.

What normally protects us from these sensual extremes seems also to lose the ability to maintain binary opposition. Medusa is either beautiful or horrific, depending on the source. Psyche is beloved by Eros but despised by her sisters. This interest in antinomies seems to play into the idea that the dream insulates sleep by converting external stimuli into dream components, which Freud mentions in *Delusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen’s Gradiva*. For the figure-ground reversal of the dream, the buffer between waking and sleeping must be an inverter device. The rule seems to be that “once the container is inverted, all else may invert.” Thus, the Stendhal symptom of vertigo best resembles a spiral.

Or does it? Lacan favors his followers with near-lethal doses of projective geometry, 2-d surfaces that twist and reconnect to mimic the psyche’s own predilection for self-encounter and mirror inversion. How does the fourth wall buffer figure in?

In the classic theater design, stage and auditorium are divided so that we are led to imagine the fourth wall existing at the proscenium. As theater depended



increasingly on stage illusion, theaters elongated. But, originally, ancient theaters were dancing ground whose circular choral dances were met on all sides by a concentric space for viewers. First the circle gave way to a privileged stage area, then, in the Vitruvian Roman design, stage and auditorium each took half of a circle. The evolution of stage illusion elongated this to an idealized “cone of vision.” By the late Renaissance, the metaphor of the window for the picture plane allowed art historians to think of representation as a transfer of outside to inside, fit into perspectival regulating lines.



René Magritte toyed so often with the metaphor of the window for the picture plane that we have incorporated his metaphysics at the level of the anecdote, ignoring their status as insult — where, as Lacan pointed out, metaphor is at its purest: the dog goes meow-meow, the cat goes bow-wow.

Could this halving of performance space, then its elongation, be a way of re-engineering the fourth wall to better protect the spectator? This suggests that cyclicity as such was a pharmakon with as many dangers as benefits. In the form of a frame, proscenium arch, or a museum's velvet rope, the "monster" of beauty (or horror) could be contained and less likely to escape its fictive confines to overwhelm the unsuspecting viewer. Should we not look at the "space of representation" as a trap? In parodies of escapes from the fictive cage (cf. Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* or Pere Borrell del Caso, *Escapando de la crítica* (*Escaping Criticism*), 1874, the idea of the trap actually intensifies the danger or promise of what we believe to be trapped. This is the "wrapped gift" phenomenon, where the contents are never as good after opening as before, where ribbons and wraps intensified the idea of what was concealed inside.

## The Uncanny

The condensation effect of the frame or wrap brings us to what could be considered architecture's anchor point in the center of Freudian psychoanalysis. In his treatment of the uncanny, Freud etymologically demonstrates the (word) uncanny's own uncanniness. Home, Heim, begins with the idea of protective enclosure but ends by allowing the escape of "that which ought not to have been revealed." Heim is thus, palindromically or contronymically, unheimlich. What architects take to be the solid ground of the shelter function (utilitas for some) encounters the theme of the void, not as a hollow (the space mistakingly labeled "the void" in Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin) but as something self-similar and incontinent — the Lacanian Real.

Confusion over architecture's sheltering/enclosing function and the central significance of the void is brought into focus by ancient houses' relation to the hearth, ruled by Hestia and her assistants, the wife and daughters of the

household (Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*). At the "cyclopean" stage of dispersed family worship, each hearth condensed the manes of the family's dead into the flame, to which the women were wed. To defect from this relationship risked spiritual disaster, so a betrothed daughter had to feign resistance; marriage was disguised as abduction. This practice is actually preserved today in the custom of carrying the (passive) bride over the threshold of the husband's house.<sup>1</sup>

Further, practices of shielding the household hearth from the view of strangers still exists in parts of the world today. Although as the manes could surveil and control the family from the hearth-point's void, these funerary spirits were regarded as an audience that could be fooled. The bond of marriage to the flame, contracted at the hearth, required innocence and purity. These qualities were transferred to the College of Vestals when Rome centralized the rule of separate clans into its early kingships and, later, republic. Lacan notes a parallel practice surrounding the traditions of divination, where Prometheus's liver is regularly harvested by the eagle of Jove. Prometheus is bound to the rock, in parallel to Hestia's priestesses' obligation to the family hearth. Lacan suggests an etymological proof to connect to the innocence required by divination ceremony, as well as to its repetition and rigid procedures.

The buffer between the artwork and spectator becomes, more generally, that separating art and life and, even more radically, that evidentiary and contingent span connecting the living with the dead. In the case of divination, the dead



"(s)Pan," the first Greek god to die, was also a keeper of the secret code of the cosmic connection between heaven and earth, a.k.a. life and death, hence his acquired mortality (along with the sexuality tied to mortality).

<sup>1</sup> The tradition of passivity comes from this ancient ruse, but it is continued by the general theme of the hero who willingly faces danger without defense: the disguise of the royal master as a stranger, the performance of "labors," the acceptance of doomed dares. See Erwin Cook, "Active' and 'Passive' Heroics in the 'Odyssey,'" *The Classical World* 93, 2, Homer (November–December, 1999): 149–167.



Piranesi's fantasy of an infinite prison refers to external space only once, in Plate IX, the oculus and door. But, even here, the ghostly scaffolding (or rafters?) suggests that even the sky is an extension of the prison's logical infinity, that one escapes only to be trapped at a "higher level." In fractal terms, recursion introduces the idea of the Lacanian "unary trait," the 1 that, no matter how many times it repeats itself, remains a 1. The bi-nomial  $x=1+1/x$  is the algebraic version of the projective surface, thanks to its self-intersection and non-orientation (around the value of the golden number,  $\phi$ ).

communicate to the living through "merioic" cryptography of signs correlated by detailed record-keeping with procedures and outcomes. What Lacan called (correctly) bi-univocal concordance, is not so much a 1:1 indexicality as the truth arising from the "return of the Real," a case of the Real's inherent incontinence. Because the Stendhal Syndrome's feature performance is, actually, a case of incontinence, we should take the example of Prometheus (cf. Hestia) very seriously! Replacing the idea of mediation (spanning between opposites) with a "merioic" (= concordant, part by part) span bridging the void separating opposites, is a metaphoric operation. It is non-indexical, in the sense of the correlation of two variables. Rather, it is a way of establishing conjunction that is good at any scale, and resistant to exceptions. This is the logic of the "polythetic set," as opposed to the monothetic or linear set. In the normal or monothetic set, exceptions "count against" the strength of a conjunction. In the polythetic set, variation and error are allowed. Exception "proves the rule," in that the reasons for the exception are anticipated by the polythetic principle, which not only takes into account the lack as a component of the function of the set but uses lack (cf. E. A. Poe's "The Purloined Letter") to complete its correspondence.

Another way of thinking of merioic concordance is to understand the logic of coincidence. In the linear temporal model, every choice constitutes a selection that cancels other options. We could use the synchronic order of the signifying chain to show how the selection of one signifier eclipses other options and gains its meaning thanks to the difference of this choice from others. Diachronic flow is thus an "up hill" layering of meaning on meaning, choice on choice, and the pile of discarded signifiers creates a rubble that acts as a ground against the *figure* of consecutively piled-on meanings. Polythesis uses the negative of this branching procedure, reducing multiple possibilities to a single "instance" that travels *down* the

brachia of choice, as if this reverse angle converted chance to necessity.

Remember that this tedious-to-some lecture on polythetic sets and merioic concordance is the logical basis of divination, the requirement that the sacrifice of divination be "renewably" pure, and that, in incidences of the Stendhal Syndrome, a Real has escaped its conventional restraints, immobilizing or even killing the formerly protected spectator. Remember, too, that reversal is both a geometric property of the fourth wall and a means of "building up a charge" just as the plates of an electrical condenser work like Freud's dream condensation of opposite qualities into a single feature. The functions of opposition and intensification/purification result within "condensation," and that the logic of condensation that allows affects to be separated from one idea and re-attached to another (displacement) is both merioic and polythetic.

The Stendhal Syndrome points to the importance and evolving deployment of the fourth wall buffer between artwork and spectator, a utility we are able to spot in mythic practices (divination, marriage, ancestor-worship at the hearth, etc.). We have already encountered a wealth of materials stretching far beyond the limited confines of museums and tourist look-outs (cf. the collapsed Japanese tourist at the opening of *The Great Beauty*). If we need any proof that a "mythic mind set" can survive into modern times with real "voodoo" effectiveness, it is the Stendhal Syndrome. It is no accident that the gaze of the hearth-gods imposes the same risks on its attendants as





Second later, this appreciative tourist at the Janiculum Fountain above Rome will collapse thanks to a Stendhal-induced myocardial infarct. Possibly due to a combination of the landscape view, the restricted cone of vision imposed by the telephoto lens, and the ambrosial sound of the choir of the Temple Church singing John Tavener's "The Lamb," a "Stendhalian Perfect Storm" threw a tsunami over the photographer.

the work of art on its spectators. It is no accident that, with or without believing in the "myth" of the Stendhal Syndrome, its victims suffer nonetheless. The Stendhal is a premier example of the relation of the Unconscious to Effectiveness, and the consequent definition of a "virtuality of effectiveness" in the idea of a (thickened) fourth wall allowing spectators to benefit from a figure-ground reversal without harm ... until of course something goes wrong. Until the Real escapes its the cage, tradition and necessity construct 2d projective surfaces that self-intersect but are non-orienting, like the *Carceri* of Piranesi.

## Provenance of the Stendhal/Fourth-Wall Effect

The physiology of the Stendhal Syndrome rules out the idea of historicity. Although the objects that trigger the varieties of syncope (fainting, weakness, vertigo, even death) are very likely to be highly conditioned by culture and, thus, fashion, the symptom itself stems from a survival response to immanent fear. With an attack immanent, victims of many species either to "play dead" to possibly deter their prey from devouring them or, to avoid the worst of a painful experience, retreat into loss of consciousness. The nervous mechanism in this case of defensive unconsciousness is **the vagus nerve**, "the main component of the parasympathetic nervous system, which oversees a vast array of crucial bodily functions, including control of mood, immune response, digestion, and heart rate .... The stimulation of vagal afferent fibers in the gut influences monoaminergic brain systems in the brain stem that play crucial roles in major psychiatric conditions."<sup>2</sup>

If Lacan is correct in emphasizing the detachment of affect (whose chief representative is anxiety) from an idea at the moment of suppression, then the "free-floating" affect may be said to *localize* within the tight geometries of art reception and analogous instances of "appreciation." When Odysseus instructed his crew to lash him to the ship's mast so that he could appreciate the terrifyingly beautiful songs of the Sirens at the Straights of Messina, we might say that even Homer was conscious of the Stendhal's ability to kill under the influence of surpassing beauty or horror. Although Stendhal named it, the effect was ancient. The question that rushes forward at this moment is that of: "Who else knew?" In other words, is their evidence that others — *artists* in particular — were conscious of the Stendhal Syndrome as an "architecture of the fourth-wall" and left behind indications that they knew how to use it?

**Antonello da Messina's St. Jerome.** Many examples of art establish the idea of the work of art as a portal or threshold, but Antonello's portrait of the Saint famous for translating the Vulgate Bible is over the top in relation to the utility of the fourth wall. Art historian **Penny Howell Jolly** has described the fourth wall of this painting as a prime example of the *oculos Dei*, the open face of space by which God is able to see his creations in progress. This theological fourth wall is conditional *and* transcendent. The objects placed on the sill of the frame-inside-the-

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<sup>2</sup> Sigrid Breit, Aleksandra Kupferberg, Gerhard Rogler, and Gregor Hasler, "Vagus Nerve as Modulator of the Brain-Gut Axis in Psychiatric and Inflammatory Disorders," *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 9, article 44 (March 2018); doi 10.3389/fpsy.2018.00044.

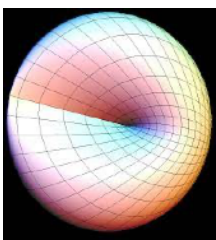


frame tell a story that relates to all fourth walls. Jerome was a champion not only of Mary's virginity at the instance of Christ's birth but of her perpetual virginity. She was, like Prometheus, "continuously renewed" as a sacrifice. This of course had to do with the re-location of her womb to the ear, where conception took place as a transaction of signifiers. Mary is shown reading in almost all paintings of the Annunciation. In terms of Jerome's translation of the many constituent texts of the Christian Bible, the challenge was to avoid the customary binary challenge, of having the text "make sense" at the expense of accuracy or stick to literal substitutions. "Too beautiful to be true" is the usual criticism of a translation that has inserted its own idea of coherence, sacrificing original texts' peculiar difficulties. Antonello's insight is that Jerome, like Mary, has experienced reading as an impregnation rather than a challenge destined to fall short of the indexical 1:1 aim of perfect translation. Antonello signals this by placing a partridge (L. *Perdix*) on the sill in the rebus-display of the golden bowl (= Mary's purity) and peacock (= splendor of heaven).

There may be a topological relation of the continent bowl with the explosion of colors of the peacock's glorious tail feathers. The key is the partridge's reputation in Medieval bestiaries, of being able to be impregnated by the wind, the *afflatus* that, in the divine version of God's word, impregnates Jerome in a highly sexualized communications model, something that Lacan would of course endorse.

Antonello gives us a theological semiology of the fourth wall, but more important, his visual thesis proves that, in 1474, *this kind of thinking was going on*. This sophisticated idea of how the fourth wall operates towers over contemporary conceptions, although Giorgio Agamben's account of the "apparatus" (*dispositif*) that is the scientific counterpart of the fourth wall tellingly returns us to theology. If we hold to Antonello's high 16c. standard of critical thinking, we return to Lacan's challenge: to consider how human subjectivity as a whole pivots around the *singular and pivotal function of extimacy*. Jacques-Alain Miller has made this claim on behalf of Lacan, but any reader of Lacan who takes his commitment to projective geometry and knot theory seriously must come to this same conclusion. Lacan's subject is "topological" and "projective." The Stendhal Syndrome reveals, further, that topological projectivity swirls around a theological transference, one manner of which can be secularized, but with no loss of intensity or effectiveness, in experiences of beauty.

## Architecture's Gain



The Stendhal Syndrome is the physiological component of the fourth wall, which is simultaneously an illicit portal "through space itself" and a condensation of the problem of all openings in walls where security issues involve both practical and theological anxieties. In Jacques Tati's architectural *tour de force*, *Playtime* (1967), the doorman at a new night club is not deterred by a guest smashing the glass entry door. He continues to hold the brass doorknob in his hand, ceremoniously moving it to open the way to guests who do not notice the glass is missing. This sums up our relations to conditional entry. We require a correct protocol no matter how minimal our material support. Like Prometheus, we hold fast to our position and renew our welcome at every instance. We are virginal in our relation to the perpetual novelty of the transaction between what we *believe to be* an inside and outside but, from the theoretical perspective, can be seen as a dupe.

The ant traveling on the surface of a cross-cap does not notice when it crawls from the “interior” to the “exterior” that it has crossed the seam that, pinching the sphere, has abolished inside and outside. The ant’s path traces an “interior-8” figure but knows nothing of it. This is the ant’s version of Freud’s great insight, *Psyche ist ausgedehnt; weiss nichts davon*. “Psyche is extended; knows nothing of it.” Theory is detached from experience, *topology is that detachment*. Theory is not “immersed in the Lifeworld,” as phenomenologists typically advocate, but possessed of — and by — the “fourth dimension” that allows it to realize the topology that creates, in the fourth wall, a transaction that, at the same time, is the liminal “rites of passage” of ethnography. In these grounded versions of the fourth wall, death is always at hand. Initiates suffer death and be rebirth. The evidence of cultural practices confirms what Lacan says topologically about the fourth wall. The opening that is not an opening, the cut that appears for theory but is invisible to the Flatlanders of the Lifeworld, return us to the issue of the Stendhal Syndrome and its functional involvement with anxiety, the King of Affects, the “free radical” whose lost link with the Real re-aligns it with all traveling heroes, all displaced persons, all motherless children — in other words, all those who take up the mantle of passivity as a defense against terror, over-presence, and the return of the Real.

In other words, architecture theory cannot afford to fail to theorize the Stendhal Syndrome. It cannot avoid Lacan’s insistence on the topology of the fourth wall. It must reject the domestication of the fourth wall as an effect of the “lifeworld” and insist on the radical nature of the cut and allow it to be simultaneously a matter of body, mind, and soul. This mandate of the Stendhal Syndrome calls for nothing less than a complete revision of architecture theory, a reconstruction, this time on Lacanian foundations, which include the idea of the unconscious from the start. Is this not too much to ask? Consider how a strict mandate of internal reformation might have the opposite effect of universalizing architecture theory as an *ars topica*, central to other projects in the human sciences. To this end, I offer this “short” — or at least “not too long” — list of forty new *topoi* by which the Stendhal Syndrome proposes the possibility of a critical conclusiveness that is simultaneously empirical and theoretical, simultaneously physiological and psychoanalytical. Forty is a fortuitous number, required for all transactions, buffers, acts of penitence, and quarantines. A period of forty days, months, or even years is effective in cases of rites of passage (in this case, theory’s passage from anecdotes to protocols). It will soon have been forty years since Lacan’s death (September 9, 1981), when, in true *après coup* fashion theory must consider its temporal status as a “future perfect” moment and retroactively stage an encounter with the trauma of Real, allowing the letter to reach its destination.

## The Double: A Personal Coda

In conversation about this very zoom session, I reviewed a paper by Clint Burnham, “**Hegel without Lacan: on Todd McGowan’s *Emancipation after Hegel***,” which reviews Todd McGowan’s book on Hegel, *Emancipation after Hegel: Achieving a Contradictory Revolution*.<sup>3</sup> The idea of with/without is key to Clint’s opening gambit: the idea that two authors have a fatalistic relationship (my term) after we consider them together (*avec*) and then separately (*sans*). I myself had been practicing this methodology with Lacan and Giambattista Vico, the 18c. Neapolitan philosopher of culture, author of *The New Science*. With virtually no Lacanians interested or even slightly familiar with Vico, and no greater number of Vichians interested in Lacan, I condemned myself to a theoretical desert island. Burnham, however, gives me hope. The connection between *any* two thinkers, I contend, is a latent, metaphoric condition. The historical encounter, taking the first author as he appears on time’s line and then the second, as a possible “follower” does not work. The count, as Lacan advises, begins *only* with the encounter of the second. The thinker first in experience is not the logical first. The claim of a relationship involves an *après coup* reference to the first, as theoretically prior, even when the second (historical) author is the occasion for our comparison to begin with.

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<sup>3</sup> Clint Burnham, “Hegel without Lacan: on Todd McGowan’s *Emancipation after Hegel*,” *Continental Thought and Theory: A Journal of Intellectual Freedom* 2, 4 (no date given): 108–138.

I will exempt Clint from any responsibilities in my development of this idea. He has provided the inspiration, I thank him and will continue to compare the coincidences between his provocative essay and my own (mis-)application. Lacan certainly knew who Vico was. His detailed expertise on James Joyce's work provided many opportunities to consider that the Irish novelist had "applied" Vico's theory in virtually every line of his *Finnegans Wake*. There are 61 references to Giambattista Vico listed by Pep-Web (Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing), but Vico appears nowhere in any title, and the most Vico-inspired of the list does not mention Lacan but, as if to rub salt in this wound, Carl Jung. It would not be an exaggeration to say that a Venn Diagram of the Vico/Lacan overlap would barely show proximity, let alone an overlap.

Against all odds, I would assert that any imaginative reading of Vico must accept as given that Vico had been reading Lacan. This is a bit in the same comic vein as Oscar Levant's quip, that he "knew Doris Day before she was a virgin." Every fiction however depends on an impossible-Real grain of Truth. Vico's truth was his pre-Lacan idea of metaphor, where the 18c. thinker makes a distinction between Adamic speech, a 1:1 coincidence of name with the reality of a thing (Lacan's bi-univocal concordance) and human language, which develops through the invention of a Symbolic Other. These are capitalized in light of Vico's story of the first such metaphor, the idea of Jove as thunder, which Joyce developed through his examples of four linguistic claps of thunder, said to contain all of the possible phonemes of human languages, a kind of primal phonemic grocery store.

Of course the first true humans, Vico contends, "know nothing of what they have made." The world appears to them to be objective, exacting, and excruciatingly complex. To master it, they deploy the institution of divination, whose literality first requires a "Promethean" rule, that the exact circumstances of sacrifice and interpretation be duplicated. Like Prometheus, the victim is chained to a rock (topographically fixed, in correlation to the stars that were often the source of divination's *data*). Also, like Prometheus, the victim must be "the same victim" although empirically a new individual; and this "new" includes the idea that the victim is pure, to guarantee the authenticity of the interpretation and, hence, the authority of the law that proceeds, in all Cyclopean cultures, from ritual sacrifice.

Interestingly, Lacan cites Prometheus's purity but does not explore the ethological details that would explain how the first religions were formed around family hearths, then extended (according to Vico) to clans and then groups of "clients" seeking protection of the "primal father." Homer, by the time Greek culture evolves past its own Cyclopean beginnings, knows enough to parody this necessary stage of human literalism in Odysseus's famous encounter with a Cyclops, where the hearth fire is credited for Cyclopean blindness in a gruesome way. Heroic culture, Vico notes, is able to gain a "theoretical perspective" on literalism of myth. Odysseus is an adept liar, and his logic deploys the Cretan's famous duplicity at every turn, opposing Speaking and Being.

It would be hard to say how Vico knew these things without having first read Lacan; without first seeing Lacan's formula for metaphor,  $S/S'_1 \cdot S'_2/x \rightarrow S(1/s)$ . Vico seems to have stolen this schema's resemblance to the Möbius band twist ( $S'_2/S'_1$ ) whose "experiential" twist occurs after the logic, which is temporally prior. In other words, both Lacan and Vico, like Oscar Levant, "knew Doris Day before she was a virgin"! AND — *this is not at all hard to argue* — both stand along in their rejection of the possibility of literal meaning.

Why is this significant? Literal meaning does not see any dynamic relationship between Speaking and Being. Whether or not they align with Descartes' *Je pense, donc je suis*, they endorse its premise, that the human subject's being arises from its relation to thought's symbolic substance. Lacan specifically plays a zero-sum game with Descartes. Speaking grows *at the expense of* Being, which means that the 1:1 of bi-univocal concordance, Adamic speech, is more like  $x=1-y$ : the greater the value of 'y' (Speech), the lesser the value of x (Being). Lacan goes further by citing the unary trait's foundational trait, self-inscription, by which 1 is always "one 1," modeled as the Golden ratio,



$$x = 1 + x \qquad x = 1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{\dots}}}}$$

While this produces the irrational number  $\phi$  for affine geometry (the Golden Rectangle), it is the basis for ideal packing in growth algorithms, as evident in sunflower seeds and cruciform vegetables.

Yes, architects have noticed this, but they have been attracted to the projective potential of the Golden and other metallic ratios, as Lacan noted, seeing how the Vitruvian Man in his various guises has lived up to the flat space rule. Only Vico and Lacan have understood how the unary trait revises Descartes' *je pense* into "I am the being who thinks 'I think therefore I am,'" an expression with considerably more comic potential, in that the Vichian/Lacanian subject, as metaphorical, relates directly to the condition of the dupe.

None of this is noted in ANY of architecture theory's interest in metaphor. For Alberto Pérez-Gómez, for example, "attunement" means moving beyond mechanism to a recovery of metaphoric potential, but, by "metaphor," he draws exclusively from Paul Ricoeur's magisterial work, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language* (1978). Ricoeur cites all of the relevant theories and theorists of metaphor, *sans* two: Vico and Lacan. The reason is clear. Vico and Lacan produced the *only two* ideas of metaphor that were not contrasted with literal meaning as a "norm," presumed to be logically prior. Despite the evidence that not only was mythic thought historically prior, *even for the mythic-minded humans*, retroaction — the before-and-after paradox of encountering first what was logically second — was the logical prior structure of metaphoric thinking. Ricoeur missed this, just as he missed almost everything he witnessed of Lacan's lecturing and writing. But, architecture draws almost exclusively from this poisoned well.

Are there any benefits from asking readers to put their chips on these two adjacent numbers of the linguistic roulette table? I have found one, thanks to Clint Burnham's timely insistence on a with/without hermeneutic, an interpretive necessity to consider the influence, however improbable, of two thinkers, forcing the issue of whether or not there was any actually "historical" influence (hermeneutics in the standard opposition to anachronistic relations). Lacan's and Vico's theory of metaphor is evident on structural grounds, but the argument is too complicated to make here. Rather, we look to ethnography and popular culture and the curious evolution of beliefs and practices around the idea of the "volatile double" — the twin-ship of the single individual as well as the impossible binding relation between two unrelated individuals. The latter lies behind Lacan's discovery of the uncanny bind between the Master and his rivals in the "prime discursive form" of the Master. One is tempted to say that Lacan could have benefited from reading René Girard on this subject. The former relates to the logic of the name, whereby the subject enters into the Symbolic networks of culture, society, and family *via* the assignment of the *name of someone else*. Implicitly, this Other is a double who is either literally dead or logically incommensurable, a principle illustrated by many "primal" cultures, where twins are dreaded or celebrated. The sacrificial victim is always a case of a magic that follows the rule of "reversed antonomasia," where by virtue of being named, a person *becomes* the enigmatic entity contained by the name and subject to being *called* by that name for an unspecified duty.

Andrea Battistini is the only scholar to note that Vico's metaphor idea is drawn from the idea of reversed antonomasia, but this Bolognese scholar might have easily agreed to the comparison to Lacan's own version of antonomasia in the idea of a *nom-du-père* that is simultaneously a *non-du-père*, an interdiction, the essence of which is Symbolic castration,  $-\emptyset$ .

The name of the father is, of course, the father's hegemonic name, the paternal signifier, but it is also the power of the father to give a name that is simultaneously a fatalistic bond, a command that is both impossible and Real, a relation to a Kā, or spirit-double, a *psyche*. A living person bound to a dead one, however domesticated (naming someone after a dead sibling, uncle, or other ancestor) is a version of the Castor/Pollux story, where twin brothers are guaranteed perpetual if alternating eternal life *if and only if* they take turns in Hades. The key to this story — and the clue that returns us to the Stendhal Syndrome, is the buffer that separates the twins but simultaneously binds them in a *temporal repetition*, where one could say to be the alternating sacrifice for the other.

Lest any reader consign this point to obscure philology, let me point to the power of “dying for one's brother” as the essence of combat PTSD, where victims say they feel that they should have died in place of their confrere, *and act as if they were dead*. The buffer, and its relation to syncope, profound lethargy, and depression, is not something we can afford to ignore. In short, the Stendhal's relation to Lacan and Vico's *après coup* theories of metaphor, and their



The German town of Stendal

mutual relation to each other in a “with/without” dynamics, links the philosopher, the psychoanalyst, and the author of *Le Rouge et le Noir* into a cute triangle. Even the fact that “Stendhal” is a *nom-de-plume* taken by Marie-Henri Beyle is significant. It is Stendal, the German town in Saxony-Anhalt, some 2.5 hours drive west of Berlin. Apart from being the birthplace of Johan Joachim Winkelmann, the famous archeologist and art-historian, I cannot offer an explanation, apart from Beyle's desire to escape “Marie-Henri,” his Doppelgänger.

The Jesuit scholar W. Meissner has written persuasively about the effect of being named after a dead sibling on no less a figure than Vincent van Gogh, who could be said to have experienced an ongoing PTST of Stendhal Syndrome every day of his life. Was his psychosis and voluntary (?) paralysis before the canvas vibrating like a Lacanian

*lamella* related to the fact that he believed himself to be pulled into the death of this other Vincent? This and other cases of the name as a Kā could be explored and related to the buffer between twins that, when breached, produces syncope.

## Forty *Topoi* Relating Architecture and Psychoanalysis to the Stendhal Syndrome as a Fourth Wall

Although this list pretends to be a list to end all lists, it is incomplete, personal, and (therefore) idiosyncratic. It suggests, rather than a complete inventory, a *portable connectivity* that can be carried to architectural and art-critical conditions to reframe the usual theoretical approach that, thus far, has been dominated by Positivistic and (pseudo-) Phenomenological theory's failure to account for the (neurotic) subject structured by the unconscious or the psychotic subject's loss of access to the paternal signifier. The promise of the Stendhal Syndrome is that, as a strategy for condensing the functions of the fourth wall, it forces theory to correct itself along the lines of the topological subject and, thereby, the Lacanian subject. In this correction, there is architecture, present at every step and in every condition. Architecture, rather than a marginal consideration for psychoanalysis, finds itself in the center of things.

There could be two different versions of this quarantine list, one based on the theme of anamorphosis, which the Slovenian critical theorist Mladen Dolar has argued lies beneath each and every element of Lacan's psychoanalytical theory. Anamorphosis begins officially with the murals on the walls of the Minims Convent in Paris in the 17c.; but Lacan asks the key question in Seminar VII on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*: just what was anamorphosis *before this point*? There is something *logically prior* to this historically first appearance. Just so, projective geometry, discovered by Pappus of Alexandria in 300 a.d., was *logically prior* to Euclidean affine geometry, which preceded it historically. This "*après coup*" aspect of logical priority is central to psychoanalysis. The "unary trait" is a first that is discovered only after some second element comes to light. It is my contention that the logically prior antecedent of anamorphosis is nothing less than the uncanny of mythical thinking, with its metaphoric basis.

In his exhaustive study of metaphor, Paul Ricoeur would seem to cover every aspect and element of metaphor, but in fact he inexplicably makes *no mention whatsoever* of the two theorists of metaphor who contributed the most original theses: Jacques Lacan and Giambattista Vico. This latter figure, an 18c. philosopher of culture writing in the Naples of the Spanish Inquisition, created not only a "pre-Lacanian" account of the "psychoanalytical metaphor" but, in the process, engaged a fourth-wall methodology. This is my argument for considering Vico to be the logically prior to Lacan, who is discovered, historically, first and is the proper introduction to Vico. In addition to re-theorizing Lacan in terms of anamorphosis, it is necessary to include Vico's ethnographical-poetic arguments about the sudden appearance of human mentality structured by metaphor.

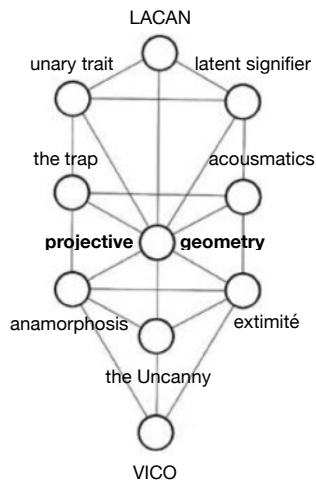
Another global claim about Lacan is made by Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan's nephew and intellectual executor, who advocated the view that *extimité* (extimacy, the topological erasure of difference between inside and outside) could apply to any and every aspect of Lacanian theoretics. This is a mandate. Psychoanalysis, to be psychoanalysis, must never fail to take into consideration projective geometry. Up until now, this project has been a matter of explaining the topology of figures such as the torus, Möbius band, cross-cap, etc. and the knot-theoretics of the Borromeo knot. Yet, none of this current work says anything about Pappus, the discoverer of projective geometry's logical priority to Euclidean geometry.

Neither does contemporary Lacanian literature have anything to say about Pappus's other major contribution. This is not just an omission, it borders on scandalous neglect. Pappus of Alexandria was even more famous in his day for his review of theories of analysis, from Aristotle on. His assessment was strikingly Hegelian.<sup>4</sup> He characterized analysis as a downward motion and synthesis was, as expected, upward. But, in his assessment, synthesis followed precisely the fractures and missteps of analysis in its upward ascent. In effect each was a complementary negative of the other, anticipating Lacan's title for Seminar XVII, *L'inverse de psychoanalyse, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. Although Freud drew the term analysis from the physical sciences, mainly chemistry, his project to provide a scientific basis for psychology, the essay of 1895, made clear that he saw analysis as a "way of doing business." It was simultaneously analysis and synthesis, just as the neural system alternated between the disturbances of stimulation and the pleasures of dispersing or transferring stimulation. It was as if the nervous system itself had enthusiastically embraced Pappus's principle of a "Hegelian" synthesis, palindromic to the decomposition of analysis. It would not be preposterous to claim that the "analysis" of psychoanalysis comes, albeit indirectly and unconsciously, from Pappus.

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<sup>4</sup> Jaakko Hintikka and Unto Remes, *The Method of Analysis: Its Geometrical Origin and Its General Significance*, Vol. 75, Synthese Library, Monographs on Epistemology, Logic, Methodology, Philosophy of Science, Sociology of Science and of Knowledge, and on the Mathematical Methods of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Robert S. Cohen, Donald Davidson, Jaakko Hintikka, Gabriël Nuchelmans, and Wesley C. Salmon, eds., also Vol. 25, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, ed. by Robert S. Cohen and Marx W. Wartofsky (Dordrecht-Holland and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1974).

If we combine the very Lacanian notion of acousmatics with these suggestions, to revise Lacanian theoretics in terms of (1) extimacy and (2) anamorphosis, we must include (3) projective geometry's 2d surfaces "of no escape" and, thereby, redefine psychoanalysis as (4) a study of traps: traps that the victim does not see but the analyst recognizes by listening to (5) the "acousmatics" of the Analysand's blahblahblah. Here we have to recognize, however, a sixth central theme: metaphor. Here, we must restore both Vico and Lacan, first separately then together, as sole defenders of the principle of the (6) latent signifier, both latent in relation to the operations of the unconscious and latent in the use of a "second virtuality of effectiveness" to cancel and preserve the (7) unary trait, the final element of my new Sephiroth of (architectural) psychoanalysis.



It is not necessary to grasp this entire candelabra of new lights to begin talking about the Stendhal Syndrome. At any level, the Stendhal comes with an exit visa to exotic lands of any provenance, any thinker's peculiarities. The point of Sunday's zoom seminar is to initiate the discussion that guarantees a productive cacophony and energy renewal. This list of forty *topoi* leaves out important terms that are woven into the others: the polythetic set, theories of coincidence, the phantasmagoria, the special category of astonishment, contronymics (of "primal terms"), employment of the lipogram, the sexuation of surprise (and *vice versa*), love as falling short, the discourses as a weather system, cryptonomies, ciphers and rebuses, the Delphic Altar Problem, the trans-subjectivity of the Three Prisoners, Piaget's Conjecture (how children learn more than they are taught), language's dual modalities (*énoncé*, or

content; *énonciation*, or act), and many more. Any list is selective, but there is a latent symmetry that holds terms into solar orbits. Even independent systems such as Harold Bloom's six-sided crystal (*kenosis/apophrades*, *clinamen/tesseract*, *askesis/demon*) approximates my own Sephiroth with uncanny accuracy.

## ONE OF SEVERAL QUARANTINES

1. Evolution: the fainting response and the vagus nerve.
2. The fourth wall in art, cinema, and architecture.
3. Theology of the *oculos dei* in painting and literature (Borges' "The Aleph").
4. Towers and their powers of hegemony.
5. Foucault's Panopticon, corrected by Joan Copjec, as a matter of continence/incontinence.
6. The Tower of Babel and the issue of linguistic bi-univocal concordance (indexicality/meroids).
7. The birth of Athena and the evolution of the "theological citadel."
8. Lacan's definition of architecture as a "surface of pain" in the story of Apollo and Daphne.
9. Fear of premature burial and the emergence of horror fiction.
10. Issues of concealment: "The Purloined Letter" effect and topology of effectiveness.
11. Projectivity of the fourth wall: cross-caps, Möbius bands, and interior 8s in relation to the "torus of desire."
12. The contronymics of the uncanny in architectural versions of heaven and hell.
13. Portals, thresholds, and rites of passage in the transactional architecture of ritual.
14. Cyclopean spaces in hearth-based cultures.



15. The theme of the passive hero who willingly undertakes tasks destined to fail.
16. The mathematicians' strategy of last resort: the ersatz conjecture.
17. The death dream in literature, film, and folklore.
18. Utility of the unreliable narrator device in fiction (the inside frame).
19. The psychoanalytical analysand as an unreliable narrator and the role of the inside frame in Analysis.
20. Lacan's "alethosphere" as "fake truth"; feigning, imposture, and charade.
21. The structure of the con, the scam, the grift: the "thaumatropic" middle role creating an internal fourth wall.
22. "Idempotency" of the buffer function of the fourth wall.
23. Figure-ground reversal preceding REM paralysis in sleep.
24. Induced paralysis/syncope in the "default creation" of fourth walls; definition of "strong meroics."
25. Lacan: there is no such thing as literal meaning (therefore, language always constructs a fourth wall).
26. A "second virtuality" (of effectiveness) in the function of metaphor (language's "fourth wall").
27. Pappus of Alexandria: the original theorems as foundational to the "virtuality of effectiveness."
28. Pappus again: defining "analysis" that becomes psycho-*analysis* (synthesis/analysis as a fourth wall relation).
29. The structure of the joke and the relation of laughter to the Stendhal Syndrome.
30. Comedy's fourth wall: the inside frame of irony.
31. Anagnorisis as interpretive ecstasy, preceded by the offset symmetries of Purgatory; "meroitic relations."
32. The unary trait in Lacan's *Seminar XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*: the oneness of 1.
33. Palindrome stability in the creation of idempotent buffers in dreaming, fiction, and architectural rims.
34. The King of Affect: anxiety's wandering capabilities, relation to the passive hero motif.
35. Lacan's L-schema in light of Steven King's uncovering motif: return of the Real and Stendhalian analysis.
36. What is the fourth wall of the Analytic session? How blahblahblah becomes a matter for the vagus nerve.
37. The non-projective virtuality of effectiveness as logically prior to the Euclidean virtuality of ideology.
38. The Replicants' Complaint: how to *be* without *speaking*.
39. Time after time: the logical priority that comes second in cases of anamorphosis and topology.
40. Syncope, sleep paralysis, figure-ground reversal, etc. in relation to fantasy construction of the double, travel through time, contamination of reality by fiction or dream, and the story in the story.

Forty, the number of the buffer, is not an end in itself but the beginning of something else.