# Once upon a Space

## Love and Fright in the Times of Covid

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Figure 1. Saul Steinberg, Untitled, 1948. Ink on paper, 14 ¼ x 11 ¼ in. Saul Steinberg Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Drawing reveals the self–reference implicit in boundaries. We cannot define boundaries because, in effect, we *are* boundaries.

*Vorkurs* has a traditional interest in what makes boundaries important: the complexity that prevents them from being just lines delimiting things, people, spaces, or times.[1] Boundedness is intrinsic to experience, if only in the form of frames and distinctions. But, we have no way to define this involvement objectively. We have no privileged position outside a "bounded world" where our observations might enjoy operating without boundaries. This situation of having to use what we would wish to describe creates a *mise en abîme*, a hole in logic that is like the hole in space, the abysmal, the vortex (Fig. 1). It is only on the lips or fringes of such voids that we can say anything at all about boundaries, but anything we say must take into account the fact that we are on a lip or fringe of a Nothing that is impossible to represent. Allow me to put this in the form of a slogan:

"The void is what makes reality unreal but also what puts architecture on the side of the Real."

To explain this, I have to suggest that what we call "reality" is really not all there is. Reality requires us to believe in it. It needs our continual affirmation. In contrast, the Real, the status of the void, couldn't care less. If we say that reality "exists," we would then have to say that the Real, in contrast, "ex-sists." The Real stands *outside* of any claim we might make about it; it doesn't need our support or positive attitude. It would be more accurate to say that "reality," in

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[1] Since the 1990s I have studied boundaries as intimately related to language, more in their resistance to being described and their origins at the "moment" that humans become subjects through the ability to speak (a moment that survives its historical initiative and continues through all successive stages of development). See http://www.boundarylanguage.com or http://art3idea.psu.edu. The boundary cannot be simplified as a simple spatial or temporal division. Like the Jordan Curve in mathematics, what seems at first to be simple resists definition. See "The Jordan Curve Theorem," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan_curve_theorem.

the way we use the term, is patched together with fantasy, but because this word has such a low reputation among those who depend on the ideological value of their particular version of reality, we have to  skip this for now.[2]

Thus, things get complicated with theories about voids and their escutcheons. When trying to talk about holes in reality, we must compare the visual holes where we allow imaginary crossovers (screens, television, paintings, photographs) to the holes we construct explicitly to maintain a "continence function," keeping what we want to define our space on this side of the void and what we don't want on the void's far (other? in–?) side. While it is easy enough to critically define the former, the latter resist our descriptions. The Slovenian philosopher–psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek has demonstrated the comedy of the situation of relating to the continence or incontinence of the void.[3] This is how the three main divisions of Late Western thought can be summarized by the toilet bowl designs of France, Germany, and England.

In France, Continental Philosophy is embodied in the way that the products of the acts of elimination are dispatched, thanks to placing the drain at the far back of the bowl, to a predestined void as efficiently as possible. This, in essence, is the intention of Descartes' claim that to think is all there is to be said about being — that, if you have any doubts that you exist, your very doubts will prove to you that there's nothing to worry about.

In Germany, home to Kantian–Hegelian Critical Philosophy, things are not so simple. The bowl is shaped with the hole near the front, or fitted with a platform, compelling the recent user to inspect the results "thoughtfully" in light of alternative futures, that they might be useful for the garden or a warning of digestive problems. In German philosophy and literature, there is a tradition of "tarrying with the negative." Kant had already perfected this kind of pleasurepain in his methodical examination of thought's innermost perplexities, the "antinomies" of space, time, and thinking that keep things–in–themselves in thought's freezer compartment.

The third main school of Late Western philosophy, British Empiricism, is associated with the bowl design most in the US and Canada "enjoy." Modesty oversees our talk about the "soup" created, which is antipodal to any that we would want to put on a dinner table. The line drawn between the two, in fact, is the paradigm that must be addressed in order to make a correction to (1) our normal view of what a boundary is, (2) what the space that is affected by boundaries

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[2] In terms of psychoanalysis's schema of three domains, the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real, "reality" is a frame of reference that can vary highly from subject to subject, but its value is that it can be described, both verbally (Lacan's "Symbolic") and pictorially (Lacan's "Imaginary"). What "lies beyond reality" is a Real that is both resistant to description and traumatic. But, it is not a substrate of the non–human, not an objective Nature. It is a product of subjectivity's investments in language. Thus, there is no hierarchy beginning with an objective substrate ending with idiosyncratic–subjective experiences. There is no objective "norm" that can be used to gauge and relate various subjective versions of it.

[3] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 1997, 4–5.

is, and (3) how that space is also a time but not a simple point moving from past to future. In short, the soup line is what is drawn between (domestic) reality and the (uncanny) Real. From the perspective of Critical Philosophy (my scholarly headquarters), the soup line is always a problem, if only because architecture educators tend to turn the Continental and Critical bowls into the English one, and so for them the line connecting reality to the Real can turn into a circle (the metaphor of "circling the bowl"), just as the soup is stirred with every change of scene. This is my spin on the *mise–en–abîme* of boundaries.

*Covid-19 and the Uncanny*

A "moment" is simultaneously a time metaphorized as a place and a movement in certain direction. In the case of the pandemic, the time becomes an "everywhere" and any simple movement is discovered to be both a forwards and backwards. The political "moment" of Covid is the uncanny of Covid. We are led to expect things that are not going to be supplied. Masks. Tests. Contact tracing. PPE. Vaccines by election day. Whereas (1) what has been promised will never come about, (2) what has been predicted will *always* come about. Promises and predictions come out of two disconnected worlds, politics and science. Anyone agreeing with the pessimism of the historians Tacitus, Vico, and Spengler, will be inoculated against the eternal optimism of the Empiricist position. The brain is "wired" to be optimistic rather than pessimistic, probably for the same reason that babies are supernaturally adorable. Without these automatisms, the human race would not survive beyond two generations. Nonetheless, the utopian lens in architecture theory tends to force philosophical conversations in the direction of a Happy Meals outcome, where "if only" some "x" (usually related to "embodiment") can be realized, things will be OK. There will be racial and economic justice, political equality, job satisfaction, the restoration of craft and thoughtfulness. This optimism extends to, or derives from, architecture's belief in the infinity that Euclid provided, namely one with a problem attached (the Fifth Postulate). Despite evidence of our eyes (we really do see two lines converge on a point located at the horizon), Euclid insisted that this was an illusion. Don't worry about the infinity that appears in front of your eyes! The world is insured against such bad effects of the uncanny by Euclid's axioms and postulates. If infinity should demonically punches holes in this continuous virtual fabric, refer to the "sanity clause" that requires us to depend on perspective to maintain Reason.[4]

The uncanny, Freud advised, is *perdurable*. It is not just *associated* with "the human," as a kind of dysfunction, it more arguably *is* the human, something that belongs to the animal who has learned how to speak and, consequently, how to dissimulate. There is no utopia, as the word Utopia, combining *eu-*, "good," and *οὐ-*, "no," warns us. Binary oppositions (man/

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[4] Marx Brothers, *A Night at the Opera*, 1935. The thorny issue is: Euclid and Empiricism require the use of "a right mind" to define "a right mind." That's why there "ain't no Sanity Clause," whatever Virginia may be comforted to believe.

woman, war/peace, inside/outside, etc.) will not dissolve if we just "solve the problem of their division." The binary was not constructed just to be overcome in a "nowhere." Nonetheless, optimistic theory continues to spin the uncanny as an amusing side–effect of rational thinking. Is it really possible to so easily disregard the evidence of so much of human history before the French Revolution?

Parallel lines meet in perceptual experience, so what is that to Euclid? Just as there was something before the French Revolution, was there something "before" Euclid? Certainly, there was something *logically* prior to Euclid. This was/is projective geometry, a subject virtually undiscussed in architecture theory, except in the negative.[5] Shouldn't our question be, what was going on in *history* before Euclid came along to embody the Greek fear of infinity? Did this prior logic have a *historical* name? Considering the role of the void and the line connecting infinitely distant antipodal points, fore and aft on a horizon "lying at infinity," the answer must be: "What came before Euclid was, historically, the uncanny." If Euclid addressed the fear of infinity, this fear was structured historically and ethnographically by the uncanny. Projective geometry is the name for what brings that infinity within theoretical reach. Its logical priority corresponds to the historical priority of the uncanny. The uncanny and projective geometry can and should be co-explanatory. How parallel lines not only meet but create a space that is only virtually present and immaterial but *effective* — a space whose "ex-sistence" has pop–cultural and ethnographical forms — should be the next question in any architecture theorist's mind.

This secondary virtuality of effectiveness doesn't need support. Popular culture has essentially done all the necessary work to show us how it works. The uncanny pans the full range of human thought and cultural formations. All we need to explore it are methods that do not obscure or misrepresent the key operations. What are these? The first is fictionality itself.

Where art, folklore, and architecture provide examples that lack any motive other than to please and entertain, naïveté is itself a kind of authenticity. With no motive other than to entertain an audience, we can apply this ratio: the greater the fiction, the greater the truth.[6] "Once upon a time" means that there wasn't any such time in reality. But, our "reality" is itself a construct. It comes in multiples, many of them in fact, and things that "exist" within them exist

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[5] The flagship of architecture's distaste for projective geometry in favor of Euclidean geometry was a Ph.D. written at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1983, which blamed Girard Desargues for starting the Industrial Revolution. Desargues and Blaise Pascal revived the theorems discovered by Pappus of Alexandria in 300 a.d. and showed that projective geometry was logically prior to Euclid. At the time, their work was reviled and misunderstood, but in 19c. projectivity was widely expanded by Gauss, Plucker, Riemann, and others. By, the 1900s it was again forgotten or demeaned as being "non-Euclidean," as if to say that regular coffee is "non-decaf." But, projective geometry was essential to both Quantum Physics or Relativity Theory, so one could say that it survived only by being transmuted.

[6] See Michael Rifaterre, *Fictional Truth*, 1990.

because of congruencies that supports the constructs. But, the "once" of "once upon a time" involves a singularity that ex-sists in a zone that cannot be fit into these realities. This is a Real, something necessary despite its resistance to being represented. Fiction as such is better equipped to stage the Real than is non-fiction, which must avoid incongruencies.

Euclid gives us the shape of reality by accounting for three spatial dimensions in the face of perception's uneasy relations with depth; but what is the shape of the Real? Could we not say that, just as the 2-d surface is geometrically "prior" to 3-d space, what "lies" on the surface is hidden, both from the Euclidean eye as well as the "solid truths" enlisted to support the coherence of realities? What lies hidden from reality in our everyday commitments to it could well be what *geometrically* lies hidden to Euclid. The surface that flatly refuses to join the contrivance of Euclid's three dimensions will be as singular as the once–upon–a–time, the flagship of fiction. It will fold itself, origami–like, around the phantasmagorias and traumas that Euclid would wish to smooth over with fantasy constructs. It will be unable to look at what Euclid specifies as entirely visible. It will stop at the door (apotrope) that Euclid defines as nothing more than a line dividing two spaces.

Why? Because it's already inside. We all know about the Edgar Allan Poe story, "The Masque of the Red Death." This is the logic of pandemics in a nutshell. Poe, by drawing on the traditional tropes of the uncanny, is able to know something in 1842 that we, in 2020, have yet to recognize: *contagious diseases work like projective geometry.* They allow the construction of a boundary with the reasonable assumption that distance can be replaced by thick insulation.[7] This becomes the rule of social distance: "Stay six feet apart." Face masks provide protection in the form extra layers that compress distance, and now we realize just how much distance and insulation are a function of anxiety, $F(A) = I \bullet D$. The scatological–minded reader will already have guessed the connection to the Three Toilets Theorem. French and German designs are the two components of CDC recommendations: (1) The French idea of quick dispatch is the vaccine. (2) The German preference for close examination is testing and case–tracing. But, predictably, (3) the English design is what happens in universities, the new centers of viral outbreak. Students will wear masks on campus but enjoy Boccaccian delights in the officially banned Elsewhere: parties, bedrooms, and, where civil law is lax, bars, fraternities, and clubs.

As always, the English toilet bowl design imperils health because the line between antipodal soups, the culinary and the scatological, is bound, at some point, to collapse. This is the principle put forward by Slavoj Žižek in his book whose title explains my point: *Incontinence of*

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[7] Geography's theoretical basis is historically based on this assumption, perfected by the "gravity model," by which liability is distributed as a function of the square of distance.

*the Void* (2017).[8] Poe's partying nobles, who try the Boccaccio solution, not only have their defenses *breached* by what they fear, they have produced an *architecture* that incorporates what is feared as the very basis of their plans for insularity. The students now creating the most dangerous resurgence of Covid-19 play the Boccaccio card, not because they are in some sophisticated literary–mathematical mentality, willing to obey the rules of projective geometry in restoring the real projective plane, but because they are enjoying the phantasmagoria of the "soup that must not be named," that is, the idealization of the conditions of contamination — namely, the carnival.[9]

Carnivals plant the outside on the inside (Lacan invented the word *extimité* to cover this, we have no better term[10]) *precisely* with the intention to contaminate and be contaminated, so there is more than a little justification for recognizing off–campus revels in relation to the Death Drive. This was Freud's broadly misunderstood alliance between extinction and Nirvana, about which many thoughtful scholars have struggled.[11] But, really, isn't it as simple as the carnival, especially the Medieval versions where revelers were required to don head–to–toe dominos?

It is said, and I believe it, that the point of late–winter masked tumbles was to refresh the gene pool of the nobility with anonymous sex afforded by total disguise. Misrecognition is the key to the carnival and its mania for costumes (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 1965). The "equality" of the carnival is really a recognition of the *zoē* of the human body, in distinction to the *bios* of social convention.[12] As bodies we are equal. Even sexual difference can be equalized, since in the pure form of carnival every physical attribute is neutralized "for the duration." Thus, carnival as "time outside of time" is the correlate of the isolation of the party castle in Poe's "Masque." It's "space inside/outside space." It's space *as* inside/outside. Now, we have a virtuality that begs us, please, to regard projective geometry in relation to the question of contagion.

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[8] For a more mathematical reasoning on why incontinence should be considered alongside the issue of parallel lines, begin with David Hilbert and Stefan Cohn-Vossen, *Geometry and the Imagination* (1952). For an accessible introduction to the subject and history of projective geometry, see Norman Wildberger, "Projective Geometry," *History of Geometry*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYK0GBQVngs.

[9] Carnival logic, it must be said, lies behind the resistance to restrictions of public gatherings and social distancing. The resistance to wearing protective masks is more complicated, since festival groups already use costume, standard gestures, and other specialized forms of interaction that constitute a "masque." We return, theoretically, to Erving Goffman's continually refreshing work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1958), where preparing one's appearance to others is the first duty of the day.

[10] See Jacques-Alain Miller, "Extimity," *The Symptom, Lacan Dot Com* 9 (Fall 2008); https://www.lacan.com/symptom/extimity.html.

[11] The struggle is most beautifully organized and distilled by Richard Boothby, *Death and Desire : Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud* (2015).

[12] For background on the *zoē*/*bios* distinction, see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995).

Figure 2. René Magritte, "Not to Be Reproduced" (1937), Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam. The painting, commissioned by the poet Edward James is considered a portrait of James although James's face is not depicted (Wikipedia).

It would be unrealistic and even perhaps unfair to expect readers to bone up on the mathematics behind the topologies of the Möbius band, Borromeo knot, Klein bottle, cross–cap, etc. Luckily, the popular culture of the uncanny offers many useful work–arounds. We can readily understand the need to reduce *bios* to *zoē* in the carnival. We can also grasp how party time is both inside and outside time itself, and how this temporal *extimité* is simultaneously a spatial *extimité* — meaning that, *voilà*, Poe has his plot idea for "The Masque of the Red Death."[13] More in keeping with the high tone of our reduction of philosophy to toilet design, we have a new formula, namely "masque" (the necessity of lying, hence fictionality); "red" (the color associated with erectile tissue tumescent with blood); and "death," or (thanks to Dr. Freud) the conjunction of extreme pleasure and death.

There are two terms that will help mathematically challenged persons, such as myself, grasp what it means to say that extimity has to do with projective geometry and the "soup line problem." These are (1) non-orientation and (2) self–intersection. An example: The Möbius band twists "before" it joins, meaning that we imagine it to be an ordinary strip of paper starting out in 3–space. Twisting does two things that Euclid can't conceptualize. It creates one surface "from" two (assuming the before/after structure of the "strip–before–twisting"). And, if an arrow is drawn to distinguish the top edge from the bottom and moved along this surface, it will arrive back on "the other side" (which does not, actually, exist as an other side) upside down. Actually, since there is Really only one edge, this arrow is *always* intersecting itself in a non-orienting manner. (Note that the Möbius band is a citizen of projective space's Real but not Euclidean space's "reality").

Self–intersection can be depicted visually, if one is familiar with René Magritte's painting of a young man standing in front of a mirror that is showing his back rather than the front that Euclidean space's rules of reflection would require (Fig. 2). The sill beneath the mirror in this painting is, not coincidentally, marked by the French edition of Poe's only novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, of Nantucket* (Baudelaire's translation, *Aventures D'Arthur Gordon* Pym, 1858). Magritte is not just anticipating the celebration of the centenary if this work, he is referring to the novel's chiastic construction, a butterfly design that pivots around the

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[13] The Ur-example of temporal extimity is the Roman Saturnalia, and the first biographer of this festivity, Macrobius, has provided what is possibly a template for projective geometry's extension into the traditions of the uncanny. The Loeb edition translated by Robert Caster (2011) is adequate and available on–line through many university libraries. See, especially, Macrobius's account of extromission, the anti–Euclidean theory of vision.

*Once upon a Time*                                                                                                          7

shipwreck caused by a *whirlpool*. From vortex to fore–text or pretext, the critical missing bit of information here is how the mirror gets away with it.

The mirror, any mirror, could be said to be like a computer. Part of its memory works quickly but only when the computer is switched on. The other is "latent" — it just *lies there* even when the computer is shut off. Allow me to say that the quick memory belongs to Euclid, but that every culture at some point in its history has imagined that mirrors have latent memory; that they can somehow remember and deliver back what they have "seen." Yes, yes, mirrors don't have eyes, but this technical truth doesn't explain why, in some cultures, mirrors are draped when there is a death in the house, why children become different kinds of human beings once they recognize themselves in the mirror, or why we continually use mirrors to see "if we look all right" and, if necessary, adjust the way we look *to others*. We believe that mirrors have eyes but we keep this information to ourselves, collectively, in beliefs that regard mirrors as somewhat uncanny.

The mirror in Magritte's painting has had the man in front of it *pressed into its depth*, into its long–term memory, so to speak. *If* we may speak of mirrors having eyes, then the mirror has looked back at the young man and allowed him to "step inside," but he must do so in the same position, just as the arrow drawn on the Möbius band must continue to point in the same direction. Let's say, now, that the earth is round. The mirror man, to get back to his place in front of the mirror, must make a 360° trip to complete this task. He gets back to the point in front of the mirror to see, not the short–term memory of Euclidean mirroring but the kind of memory that will work when the mirror has no one looking at it. We have no direct evidence that mirrors do anything when we're not there to look into them, but Berkeley once advised us that "God would take over" when we were not around, looking at things to guarantee their existence, to "think about them" so that they could "be" (cf. the French toilet idea in an English application).

We take things to be true *if and only if* they pretend to be lying to us. This extends to the homonymic cousin of lying, the latency that is also truth because whatever we find lying on the ground is taken to be a trace or track, something left behind unintentionally and, therefore, without any intention to deceive. We know cases of trails designed to mislead, but even in this case the idea of the truth of latency is the efficient cause of the trick, which won't work unless we are prone to be fooled on this account. In fact, the trickiest tricks in the book involve planting clues made to look like clues but leading in the opposite direction (self–intersection with non-orientation).

How would we get ourselves pressed into the long–term memory of a mirror? We would have to do something that "in our eyes" is horrific. In the 1945 British thriller, *Dead of Night*, a socialite gifts her fiancé with a Chippendale mirror she found in an antiques store. What she didn't know at the time was that the mirror was owned formerly by a wealthy landowner who crippled in a riding accident. Confined to his bedroom, his randy wife seeks satisfaction

elsewhere (breaking the quarantine) and comes back contaminated with the love of another. The husband strangles her in front of the mirror, no mask, no social distancing. This horrific Real is more than the mirror can take. It has to shut down (what we all do in the face of the *un-face-able*), and to do this it shoves the image of the murder into long–term memory, the *latent* depths beyond the quick–turnaround Euclidean space it normally returns to anyone who asks. This latent content is a burden from the mirror's point of view. When the *fiancé* becomes a husband, he is in "the same position" in his bedroom as the original owner was in the 19c., the "Magritte position." The result follows the rules of projective geometry. It is non-orientable (the love of the husband is converted into jealous hatred) and self–intersecting (the new husband is put in "the same position" as the old one, the background behind the figure is reversed, old for new).

Fiction never lies. We have a story readily captioned as "a ghost story" and as such discountable. But, as "fallen" away from truth–abiding discourse, it's on the floor to be picked up as an honest trace, a line leading, if not to "truths," to a "truth of truth."

A final story. Apollo, an excellent archer, finds himself in the position to make some fun out of Eros's lack of skills in this sport. Love, he says, never strikes the right people, and when it occasionally scores a hit, it's in the wrong place. Eros, vengeful if anything, decides to get back at Apollo and so crafts two arrows (some say one arrow with two points). One inflames Apollo with love for the river–nymph Daphne. Daphne has the opposite response: revulsion for Apollo. This is the logic of the chase, deified in mythology with protective optical gear (Diana and Actæon). Apollo pursues, Daphne flees. At some point Daphne realizes she is on a 2d manifold, a "real projective plane." There is no boundary to her universe, yet it is finite. Like Magritte's well–dressed young man, trauma commands her full inventory (360º) of a space that is really cut in two by a mirror (180º), so that when she has finished the inventory she is just back where she started (self–intersection) but at the end not the beginning except "back" (non-oriented).

The math of the situation has the traumatic Real of her inventory, her "full measure of escaping," convert into latency. She takes a stand by adopting the form of the plant best known

for taking a stand: the tree. Her trunk is going nowhere, thanks to this demonic desire–machine.[14]

Going nowhere, which the mirror instantiates and the tree–girl solemnizes, has a name: idempotency. This is the magnetic force that keeps the Haunted Mirror husband standing fascinated before the "wrong bedroom" in the antique spectrum. It's what terminates Apollo's chase scene. It is the *potentiality* (power to remain) *idem* (the same). In computer circles, an idempotent algorithm is employed to fend off "denial of service" attacks, where a server is flooded by multiple requests with the aim of shutting it down. A good algorithm will recognize the cusp of the attack and construct, on the fly, a "reverse–angle" defense that palindromically mirrors the incoming requests, giving a – for every +, an origami fold of left over right, odd over even.

Idempotency has an even more important job, that of keeping the dreamer insulated from external disturbances. In order to dream, it is a fact that the dreamer must be paralyzed. To do this, any "denial of service"attacks to wake the dreamer must be met, palindromically, by an origami defense that incorporates the cusp of a stimulus into the dream, converting it into phantasmagoria. The key is Euclid. In the dream, the dreamer imagines him/herself to be a figure on a Euclidean ground, free to explore the explorable. In physical sleep, however, the "figure" must be anesthetized and frozen — cataleptic. To dream, the brain must supply a field that moves *across* the dreamer who still imagines him/herself to be moving. Sleep's figure–ground reversal of Euclid's waking reality is "taken inside of itself," in the idempotency defense. This is nothing less than the creation of a *circuit* in the style of Magritte's mirror. Rather than "not to be reproduced," this circuit is designed to run forever, to keep the dreamer dreaming by making "the same place" both same and different (non-orienting and self–intersecting). This accomplishment, done by every human being who sleeps every night, is

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[14] There is reason to consider Eros as the "model" *dæmon*, related to the idea of perpetual motion. This is the self–sustaining circuit, that has just as much pleasure as pain, stimulus as expenditure of stimulus. To be a circuit (circle) in projective geometry, stimulus and expenditure must be co-generative. Love *necessitates* hate, as the Apollo–Daphne story shows. In vector terms, Eros's arrow flies in two directions at the same time, to antipodal targets. But, the antipodes are actually *the same point*. Projective space is an origami construct. It folds over on itself, left to right and thus life to death, pain to pleasure, feminine to masculine, love to strife. Origami is the stuff of myth, which by virtue of its radical uncanniness, its un-truthfulness, its once–upon–a–time singularity is the "truth of truth" (Vico's *verum ipsum factum*). In distinction to hermeneutical–architectural readings of Vico's dictum, Vico's intended meaning is the secret of *latent* metaphor, what he called the "imaginative universal," which is to say, once we are able to decline telling the truth, we gain access to the truth of truth, although this involves the interposition of a tricky mirror, called subjectivity. See Giambattista Vico, *Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, 1710. Vichian interpretation refutes, and is opposite to, hermeneutical interpretation; and Vico is in no way, as has been claimed, a "phenomenologist." See Donald Kunze, *Thought and Place: The Architecture of Eternal Places in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987). Revised text at http://art3idea.psu.edu/locus/thoughtplace.pdf.

nothing less than the effectiveness of projective geometry — as the uncanny of the phantasmagoria — at the point where *zoē* intersects *bios*.

*The Party*

Architecture theory of the last twenty years has all but barred projective geometry (admitted only as the diminutive version, "non-Euclidean") and psychoanalysis, where non-orientation and self–intersection constitute the theoretical, the "basis phenomenon" as Cassirer has called it in his church.[15] Anthony Vidler's otherwise exhaustive study of the architectural uncanny made no mention of the uncanny's debt to the archaic latency themes of myth or the psychoanalytical latency of the unconscious as such. Architecture's silence on the matter of geometrical latency goes past the accidents of scholarship preoccupied with other matters. It's almost true that the blank spots (where projectivity should have been recognized) gives a perfect map of where latency actually exists, a left–hand for the right–hand correction. Vico once said that you could measure accurately the greatness of a poet by counting the steps down to the prison cell where the Inquisition had decided to place him. This is notable not just for being possibly the first claim to be able to quantify poetic quality but an equally striking case of idempotency. After all, what are prisons for?

Topology is clear: on a 2d surface one cannot say, in strictly bounding a "continent" space, which is inside and outside, which is the prisoner and which the warden. If we are on such a space — *and I hope to leave no doubt on the matter, that the pandemic makes it clear that we are indeed on/in such a space* — then quantity and quality are no longer the way the humanities "respect" the quantifying domain of science and *vice versa*. This should be taken as I intend it: a rebuke of those who would pull neuroscience out of a hat to interpret or explain architectural phenomena. In the first place, I would prefer to hear about neuroscience from the horse's mouth. In the second place, the brain's circuitry and the mind's *circles* are one and the same: idempotency devices. It is clear that humans have understood this from the beginning of history, when cyclopean cultures forbade any abandonment of a once-established hearth, for fear that the *manes* communicating through the flame of that hearth would curse (course, turn, throw into a vortex) them forever, with Daphne–like precision of cutting 360° into an idempotent 180° trip around the "world" (a word which means, after all, "making round").

If the reader thinks maybe I am being a bit harsh here, remember that reality doesn't get much realer than a pandemic, and the "Boccaccio Option" of ruling out incontinence by having a party at home has the opposite effect. In some cases (Middle Ages carnivals for enriching the gene–pool), contamination is a good thing. Today, the *jouissance* of the party returns to the

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15 Admirable exceptions exist: the work of Tim Martin, Lorens Holm, Francesco Proto, and John Hendrix for example made early cases for the necessity of incorporating the psychoanalytical subject (a.k.a. the Freudian–Lacanian field) as primary in architecture theory. I will skip proving a bibliography in light of Google's utilities.

Lacanian *dual*, pleasure and pain combined, without the benefit of a golden mean. This is to say, expansion is both finite (the pandemic will eventually end) and unbounded (every attempt to contain it will fail). In these dark days, I no longer believe that "we can learn from our situation." There is only the compulsion to repeat, in utter lack of originality, the same mistakes, as if the mistakes themselves confirmed some inner reality and value. I don't know what "church" you belong to, so I offer my word only as someone who advocates that we all need, as B. Dylan put it, "to serve somebody." I suggest that, among other good books, the books of Vico, Kant, Hegel, Cassirer, Freud, and Lacan be reconsidered. So far, in Architecture World, is there any evidence that this might happen? The mind is wired to be optimistic but let's curb our enthusiasm. *Real*-istically, trauma is the essence of human subjectivity. But, in this simple truth we have the best clues possible about how the Real is a virtuality that can be latent, and stored — not by human recollection, which is frail at best and disingenuous at worst — within *things* that, like the "innocent" mirror, cannot bear to look at what we do. Just like Agent Fox Mulder (*The X-Files*) put it, "The truth is Out There."

Isn't this the dream of British Empiricism, whose toilet design begs us, against our delicacy, to look at that which we do not wish to look, knowing in advance what we will see? Do we not have, in *every rule of civic design*, establishing a margin has to do with establishing a *cordon sanitaire* protecting a "clean interior" from a soiled wilderness, where from the woods periodically should emerge a "man of the woods" who is, for a week at least, treated like a king and then beheaded? Is this not enough evidence to rethink architecture's relation to contamination, continence, and the traditions of liminality?[16]

In Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film, *The Shining*, a budding psychotic, a writer (aren't they all?) seeks asylum in an off–season resort. His hope is that continence will insulate him from interruptions of his creativity. If it is true that every sense organ involves some form of erectile tissue or function, then the writer's ears are turned bright red thanks to the whispers carried through the hallways, invitations to the party that will eventually encase him in the photograph shown at the end of the film, where we can speculate ("  ") that the other guests at this 1920s banquet have also been writers looking for a quiet place to work, and that, in their 1920s embodiments, they were destined to haunt the hotel in its off–season in the same way that Magritte's well–dressed gentleman. Were "their ears burning" at the time?

The writer's son turns out to have psychic talents. As the family is given an orientation tour by the hotel's concierge, who is also a psychic, the concierge "turns" to the boy to ask if he would like some ice cream. The concierge turns 90º (an "orthologic" move) but the effective angle is a Janusian 180º. The mirror's 180º cut of 360º–space, implying that ordinary 360º is really a 720º combination of Euclidean virtuality and projective virtuality. The god Janus figures

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[16] See Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology*, 1952.

in the equations of *The Shining* in the same way Janus guarded the thresholds of ancient households and burial grounds. Janus is "kept out" but is simultaneously "already there." The boundary intends to mark off a continent interior from an extended exterior "ground," to distinguish it as a "figure," a "form," but the action itself cross–interpellates inside and outside, protected and unprotected. The boy's ice cream will become the "I scream" of the joke–gone–wrong. We are reminded that all horror stories have the literary structure of comedy. They expel ghosts. They trump the *senex*. They decapitate the Wild Man.

Ghosts whisper because their "basis phenomenon" is air.[17] Ectoplasm is about as far as they can solidify, but thanks to this plasticity, ghosts are able to remember everything. That's why they haunt — to *remind* us of something we have forgotten. They fill the negative space, the voids, the vortices, the grounds behind our figures, with shapes whose profiles recommend the existence of straight lines calculated in another virtuality, but with an exactitude that exceeds all "earthly" (= Euclidean) requirements. These lines do not require a compass, and we need a straightedge only in relation to the idea that origami $(1{\rightarrow}0)$ involves a crease. Pappus of Alexandria showed that pairs of points (ABC/A'B'C') *anywhere* along two lines set at any position in relation to each other, specify a determinate line where the palindromic lines connecting the pairs (AB'/ BA'; AC'/CA'; BC'/CB') are co-linear. This, claims the mathematician–historian Norman Wildberger, would be the best password for gaining access to alien parts of the universe. It would be a principle known by "any intelligence of merit," a good way to separate thinkers from those who just "have thoughts." On this account, there is not much thinking going on in architecture, where even in Schneider's impressive dissertation, neither the name nor the theorem of Pappus appears once. Yet, this theorem was the basis of Girard Desargues' revolutionary invention of stereotomy and perspective drawing with a vanishing point that could be constructed on the drawing board. It was the basis of Pascal's brilliant inventions and the foundation of a century–full of geometric ideas that became the basis for both Relativity and Quantum Physics.

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[17] I borrow the phrase "basis phenomenon" from Ernst Cassirer's unfinished fourth volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. by Donald Verene and John Michael Krois in 1996. Cassirer adopted Goethe's Maxims 391–93 about the "being of life" in terms of a dynamic monad. My paraphrase of Goethe in terms of projective geometry would be: "We have an innate desire to nurture the form of our being without having intellectual access to it. This form (the projective–Real) immerses itself into (Euclidean) reality with the realization that it has no internal limits although it is finite. Its shroud of mystery can be penetrated only by a method of the *Ansatz*, the lucky guess; the aim of method is to preserve the role of mystery. Theory will always be an 'unreliable narrator' behind whom we may guess the profiles of the Real. The basis of this Real lies both in its durable status as mystery as well as its curvature, its existence as a 'surface of pain,' where the very desire to escape generates the impossibility of escape. This means that we must accept incompehensibility (the necessity of its virtuality) and try to understand it in its own terms, as it appears in experience (ethnography of the uncanny)."

Is projectivity arcane and obscure? I would argue that it is essential to the understanding of the human subject *especially in relation to architecture.* Now, in "our times of Covid," we have all the more reason to consider issues of the boundary in terms of incontinence, extimity, non–orientation, and self–intersection. Effectively reviled by the architecture scholastic establishment, I predict that Lacan and Freud (whom Lacan aimed to "rehabilitate") will be exiled *ad infinitum.* Those who dissent from this ban must band together, while maintaining social distancing and wearing masks. This won't be a problem, since for those who understand architecture through psychoanalysis, *all* distance is social, and the human subject is nothing if not masked to begin with.