



Can Architecture Be Psychoanalyzed?

This question is a radical one. Ultimately it is how an object might be considered as a subject, not just a component of subjectivity. This cannot be done as a characterization (“Architecture is ‘like’ a subject”) or a caricature, as in Edward Sorel’s cover for the January 31, 2000, edition of The New Yorker, above. In the same way that a mirror image may be said to reflect or a photograph to capture the qualities or even some essence of the subject, architecture is in such continual interplay with human subjects that characterizations or caricatures are unnecessary. When they call out this interplay, such instances are funny because they bring what is barely submerged suddenly to the surface, where appearance provokes astonishment, insight, or laughter. This review thus avoids the obvious “no” answer based on the subject–object binary that would have, as in Sorel’s cartoon, buildings literally visiting the psychoanalytic clinic. Instead, the question is revised to ask what roles architecture plays in the numerous reversals by which the psychoanalytical subject “passes on” components of subjectivity to non-subjects. In architecture in particular, such transfers amount to the coronation of architecture as not just a subject, but a psychoanalytic subject.

In Filarete’s architectural treatise, written in 1464, the author playfully/seriously asserts that the building is the child of the architect mother and client father. This parentage gives us the minimal justification we need to think that architecture, like any other subject, can be psychoanalyzed. Further in the treatise Filarete provides an illustration of Adam in the first few moments after being cast out of heaven, holding his hands to his head, both a gesture of distress and a means of shielding himself from the rain that is falling. This combination of shelter and complaint seals the deal, so to speak. Architecture in the terrestrial “wasteland” will never be what it was in heaven; it will always lack something. Its occupants will complain, the clients who paid for it will complain to the architect, the architect will complain ... to *whom?* The

architect's complaint is the final complaint in the series that, like the third ring of the Borromeo knot, sitting "on top of" the other two, will have to tuck neatly beneath the first, for the architect was the one who, as Adam, fused shelter with complaining. And, because there was no one else to complain to (Eve had already begun to tire of Adam's kvetching), presumably was left with the Ultimate Long Shot, the complaint to God, who had just punished Adam doubly: first by casting him and his mate into the domain of trouble and strife, where psychoanalysis would have to evolve from shamanistic, ritualized complaining through brutal sacrifices, to the elaborations of Comedy and Tragedy, and so on and so on until the complaining could be confined within the analytical session.

Adam's complaint had two parts. The first was geographical. In contrast to Heaven's perfect symmetries, where there was no danger of being lost because everywhere was "here," earth was an ubiquity of lost-ness. Even the here-and-now engaged the anxiety-ridden coupling with Elsewhere, thanks to a mentality that was always wanting to look around corners and under stones. This "geographical" complaint was coupled with an architectural one that was more specific. In contrast to the Very Nice House, a pure architecture that did not have to concede anything to the troublesome matter of shelter, all terrestrial architecture would be geared to complaining: first as the motive for building in the first place, to keep out the rain, the cold, the heat, the scorpions, snakes, and wolves, the thieves, the unwanted guests. But, once shelter attempted to insulate its occupants, troubles began. The roof leaked, the tiles cracked, the very means of keeping things out would be prisons for keeping things in.

Given this two-fold case against God's expulsion of Adam, the case blurred the boundaries of the container and the not-so-successfully-contained that the complainer and the complained-about merged. If Adam's kin were not happy in their new homes, neither were the houses happy with never getting occupants who understood them. This was obvious in the way occupant abuse was ritualized and domesticated to the point of being a habit of ruin. The architecture of heaven had "got things right," from the very beginning (if time can be said to be a dimension of Paradise). This was evident in the way the locality was indistinguishable from the totality. The part didn't just "stand for" the whole, as in the metaphor known as synecdoche, it was always the controlling center of things. There were no edges, margins, alleyways, crevices for things to fall into or hide. There was no possibility of concealment, if only because nothing could ever be lost. Pascal, the boy-genius who among other things extended Desargues theorem to include conic sections and thus brought the infinity of the vanishing point into the interior of representation, put it succinctly. God — or Heaven, given the identity between domain and master — was a sphere whose center was everywhere and circumference nowhere.

Pascal in fact knew how to draw this sphere. You take Pappus's theorem, two lines (A and B) with matching points placed here and there, and connect them with a straight-edge so that points follow this pattern: A1, B2; B1, A2. These mirror couples would intersect at points that were always co-linear. Desargues extended this theorem to include projective planes as well as projective lines, and Pascal had the good sense to extend the lines to circles and parabolas and the planes to spheres. In a sense, when Pascal said that God had the architecture of an infinite sphere with center everywhere and circumference nowhere, he knew what he was talking about. Earthly reality had to use a straight-edge to find this lost projective world, in Heaven it was a given; it was architecture.

On Earth, *pro*-jection meant that one had to calculate. The infinite sphere could be specified mathematically and determined graphically, but it would have the reputation of being not quite believable.

Adam became the “boy who cried wolf” in two senses. First, there was *no one to complain to*, in a rather literal sense. Not only had God created the problem, so to speak; he was distinctly unsympathetic. This antagonism produced the Pentateuch’s litany of back-and-forth snipping over prohibiting this or punishing that. The structure of complaint at this level could be said to have a further relation to mathematics: it was presented in the form of Base 10. The last commandment, like the complaint of the architect, must, like the number 10, “fold under” the number 1, to establish the new register of teens. At this primitive origin, we see the straight-edge in the more cosmic form of folding — origami!

The second sense of Adam’s complaining was its relation to the truth. Adam would always tell the truth but what he said would come out as a lie: the curse of Cassandra. In general terms, this is not about Adam, but about truth itself, which (thanks to language, or “the Symbolic” in general) co-embeds truth and falsehood within every necessity to speak, the necessity to have a speaker and a spoken-to, and the consequent invention of two registers in addition to the first of speaking: one register of motive (on the speaker’s side) and another register of doubt (on the listener’s). This is evident in the post-Adamic character, the Cretan Liar, who claims that “All Cretans are liars.” What happens here is that language itself reveals its Janusian inner nature. There is the enunciation *act* and the putative *content*. There is no way to condense these, but you can’t have one without the other. All speakers are in this sense Cretans who must lie to tell the truth, only to have that truth resorbed into lying. Speaking is folding, along a straight crease in the plane of representation.

Adam, if anything, marks the entry of the human into the world of paradox, and a subsequent identification of human essence with that paradox. This is not all bad, however. The origami fold is one solution to the multiplicity issue. Think of the number series. Without the idea of the base, we would have to count by inventing new symbols for each new number: 123456789abcd@#%^^& ... Infinity could not be specified because there would be no way of symbolizing it as the “nowhere and everywhere” of the number system. The 10-base allows numbers to fold onto themselves, and thus for the fold itself to be taken into account. Thus, the number system reveals its own internal *overdetermination*, its patterns, its primes that resist the pattern, its rhythms and reconciliations. If there is 1, there is 11, 111, 1111, 11111. There is 1, 11, 121, and then 1331 and 14641; palindromes hinting at the deeper fact that any positive whole number is the sum of three palindromes, and that palindrome point-pairs construct projective lines. If there is 6 there is $1 + 2 + 3$ and $1 \times 2 \times 3$. There are the two lines of Pappus and a third line, *implicit in the palindromic connection of points*. From the projective line equating point and line comes the projective plane and then the projective sphere, the place of Architecture One, where point and line are the same, where here and there are the same, where everywhere and nowhere are the same.

The prohibition of having no other God before God raises a question for monotheists. Just where did these other gods come from? We thought, hey! there’s this One God and now that God is worried about competition. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that the last commandment, as the number 10, tucks under this first 1. This commandment is about Lack: “Thou shalt not covet.” This partly explains commandment number two: don’t make idols of “false gods”; that is, don’t fantasize about this multiplicity of gods as being desirable to the point that (the Second Commandment) you materialize your desire. Theologically speaking, the form-making related to the second architecture (on earth) will forbid representation of the desire that makes us go from here to there to get something. The truth will continue to relate to the first architecture of everywhere and nowhere, accessible only by geometry. Where

architecture of the secondary wishes to embody desire as a here-to-there idea, it will fail; worse, it will *sin*. Where it constructs the here-and-there in some form of equity, it will avoid creating an idol and, instead, gain something like access, at least to the idea of Architecture One, the architecture that doesn't need to shelter, the architecture without a roof or walls.

So now we have a new protocol for complaining about architecture. We descendants of Adam, the first complainer, can either call the electrician or roof guy or we can use a straight-edge to find the line or the plane (or the sphere if we have a good imagination) that is the “one thing that, by not changing, allows all else to change.” In mathematics, this is the *eigen*, which can take the form of a vector, a plane, or a point. In whatever form, *eigen* is a root, a determinative; and we might imagine that the Roman agrimensors carefully placing their gnomons to establish the center of a city or military camp were planning to establish a set of eigenvectors that would fold the meridians of indeterminate space into a quantum that could be localized. The new center would be nowhere and everywhere. Negation would open the lines of communication to engage a dialog between heaven and earth, to put it in New Age terms. The prohibition to have “no other” and just this one point would justify the privations to follow: the exclusion of elements by roofs and walls, the exclusion of enemies and animals by fortified enclosures, the exclusion of bad luck by the rituals that would be an extension of the charms needed to sustain the roofs, walls, streets, and gates.

Most important, however, would be the ability to use this new line of communication, this *eigenvector* made by equating negation and prohibition, as a hot-line to the Complaints Department. We see this clearly in the history of architecture, actual and fabular (story-based). The curious case of the Tower of Babel takes us directly back to the fold in communicative space. We can actually see it. It's the point where, near the top of the unfinished or God-demolished tower, we see space itself fold. The fold is a curious origami construct where the temple, unachieved in the Jewish version but depicted in Pagan literature, is folded over the labyrinth shape below. Note that the labyrinth is not a maze but a meander. It is a spiral, which means that its curve is a function of what are called the metallic numbers: number series produced by *folding in* the results of an equation written at one state into a new equation at a subsequent stage. The *eigenvalue* is sometimes portrayed as a literal number, but we note that the metallic numbers are the kind that go on forever and ever. They are “irrational,” and some are more irrational than others, in that some metallic numbers reach a point where the number is so good an approximation of the ratio that going any further is not worth the trouble.

If the fold means anything, it means that the difference between heaven and earth occurs along a straight-edge, which folds the confusing and un-orientable space of human existence with a perfect order we identify with the temple. Because the word temple comes from the root meaning “to divide,” we have another connection to folding, as if the temple on one side of the folded space was about the folding process itself, a pure case of self-reference. Then, we are brought back to the metallic numbers that, by referring to themselves, create the self-extending and self-dividing forms of the Golden Rectangle and the spirals that were presumably used as the template for the lower part of the Tower of Babel. Babel's other cultural versions emphasized not a confusion of language (this was based on a pun with the Hebrew word for babble) but rather the recovery of a perfect speech — the speech used by Adam in Paradise, a speech that did not alienate speaking from being but in fact used speech to call things into being simply by naming them. If the theory that “architecture speaks” (*architecture parlant*) has any basis, its case depends

on this difference. When architecture “spoke” in Paradise, it spoke without representation. It *was* what it spoke, and speaking was its means of constructing its material presence. Architecture One, so to speak (hah hah), was an architecture of words or, more specifically, *names*. The relations of its parts and wholes was grammatical, although Architecture One’s speech, like Adam’s, would not separate nouns and verbs, things and acts. There would be no Cretan Liar in heaven: “plain speaking.” On earth plain speaking can be found only in the mouths of fools, lovers, and poets, who cannot tell literal truths any more than the rest of us but get around this by saying things that are *astonishing*. In astonishment, act and content collapse, and we recover the *Ursprach* as a crystal moment, time that moves but, at the same time, stands still. Astonishment is the discovery, after the crisis of meaning that time forces (the separation of the end of the sentence from the beginning), we discover the meaning that we knew was there “all the time.”

Possibly it’s in the failure to say what we mean, which results in saying more than we intended as our slips of the tongue and blunders betray to others the thoughts that even we didn’t know about, that is the key to how the Second Architecture somehow retains a memory of the First. This, more than any other thing, is justification for saying that psychoanalysis should be called in. Architecture Two must be put on the couch to let Architecture One escape its lips. In its errors, omissions, excesses, and failures (the place of the fold in the space of the Tower of Babel), Architecture Two’s analysis would note each instance, the “instance of the letter” as Lacan would call it. Instance is also *insistence*, a connection more easily available in French than English. The letter is the literal, the material support that language gives to the speech act, which is glossed over thanks to the conventions that immediately convert letters to words, words to expressions, expressions to anticipated moves in the volley of everyday blah blah blah. The literal, the letter, returns our attention to the way materiality insists on re-asserting itself. In analysis, this is clearer when the letter is the wrong one; when the tongue slips or blurts, failing to return a shot in the volley with the interlocutor.

Let’s not get hung up on what the letter means. Actually, the point is that it doesn’t mean anything. That’s how it works. It is there, a brick in the wall of language, doing its job and only grudgingly giving itself over to an ornamental or expressive function. Think of *Hamlet*, when King Claudius can’t for the life of him keep straight which is Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The Queen, Gertrude, wishes to correct her husband’s mistake, so after he mislabels them she walks around the back of the two guests and, as she puts her hands on the shoulders of Guildenstern, says “Rosencrantz and *gentle* Guildenstern.” Just reading the script without imagining this motion and gesture makes the Queen sound a bit dotty, as if she’s in the first stages of dementia. But, seeing how the gesture works as a *letter*, coupled with the word “gentle” turns the error into a small comic scene. Who *can* distinguish them, anyway! Their impossible names, similar ages and appearances, and the sudden appearance of so many of Hamlet’s college friends at court at the same time, packing in around the dinner table ... it’s too much for any host to bear. We all know this frustration, and our failure at such moments in keeping up the appearances required by the laws of hospitality. Also, we admire the Queen’s tact, in not calling out her forgetful husband or embarrassing the guests, who may realize what she has done and chuckle quietly.

The letter is like a pile of signifiers that are re-used. Twenty-six in the English alphabet. We call a letter written from one person to another a letter in the sense that, before it’s opened and read, it’s “just letters.” We know the ability of these “just letters” to function as an unopened gift; its value is virtual until the moment when its meaning is submitted to the interpretation machine. The letter in Poe’s short story, “The

Purloined Letter,” is all about being unread, and the virtuality of not knowing something. In the story this virtuality is structured by the handwriting on the address, which is all anyone reads. The addressee and the addresser are immediately known, hence the scandal that drives the Minister to steal it and the Queen to attempt recovery. This is not the virtuality that would be required to read the letter itself; they way the words are filled out by the imagination to *mean something*. This is the virtuality that embodies the essence of the letter as “meaning in reserve,” where concealment plays the central role. *Who* is concealing *what* from *whom* defines what is being stolen. Surely not the literal message, but the secondary virtuality’s full range of potentialities. This is why the letter can’t be hidden in the normal way — inside a table leg, behind a mirror, under the floorboard. It must be hidden in a place that qualifies as “last”: the last place anyone would ever look, because no one looks for what is in plain sight. This actualizes Picasso’s claim, that “he never looked, he found.” This short-circuit cuts to the essence of the letter both as a piece of the alphabet and a folded paper message. Both are what they are thanks to a second kind of virtuality that works behind the scenes of the first. We see the scene painted inside a frame, the colors are very nice, but it’s secondary virtuality that tells us what the painter didn’t choose to paint, how he allowed the rectangular frame to emphasize and structure objects on the inside that knew nothing about being painted, and how space had to be stretched or squeezed to make things combine into a painterly “scene.”

Painters have long mocked the pretended acquiescence of the secondary virtuality to the first, and their mockery has made them famous. The painter Parrhasius, in his contest with the virtuoso of primary virtuality, Zeuxis, painted a curtain that fooled the judges into thinking it was the real thing. Zeuxis’s clever *trompe-l’œil* of a bowl of fruit had fooled a bird to fly into the wall and break its neck, but Parrhasius had done the same thing, metaphorically, to the human birds who, thinking the curtain to be an accessory apparatus, what Bachelard would call a *dispositif*, of the contest, broke their own necks in effect when they demanded that Parrhasius not waste their time and pull it back to reveal his entry. This is a famous marker in the history of painting. The idea of secondary virtuality is revealed so clearly that there can be no doubt that it was already floating around in the air as early as 400 b.c.e.

Other paintings calling secondary virtuality in to testify to the uncanny cracks in primary virtuality are equally famous. I name only my favorites: Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (check out the separate vanishing points that make this painting an example of projective not Cartesian geometry); Holbein’s double portrait, *The Ambassadors*, with its anamorphic blur that turns out to be a skull forcing us to *turn the painting around to reveal the over-determined date written on the back*; and Picasso’s monumental visual contronym, where the real projective plane is brought forward into 3-space to create a non-orientable match of front to back, audience brown to infinity blue. Note that all of these paintings require us to *turn them over* to solve their puzzles. They are self-intersecting, just like the Möbius band, the Klein bottle, the cross-cap — all of the “non-orientable” single-side surfaces that intersect each other to produce an internal infinity.

The amazing thing is that, while Desargues repackaging of Pappus’s theorem into projective geometry in 1648 was quickly eclipsed by the more popular and more easy-to-figure-out descriptive geometry of René Descartes, his contemporary. The crowd went with what they could understand. Just before the full eclipse, the boy genius Blaise Pascal was able to carry Desargues theorem to the case of conics and show that six arbitrary points on a circle defined a line “between” them. (Because all lines on a real projective plane converge, not just non-parallel ones, the idea of between and beyond overlap.) Pascal’s circle or eclipse followed the same protocol as Pappus’s and Desargues’ point-pairs. Two “sides” were identified (A,

B) with three points on each side. Each pairing was a palindrome: A1 to B2, crossed by B1 to A2; A2 to B3, crossed by B2 to A3; and A3 to B1, crossed by A1 to B3. This protocol is rarely mentioned in geometry textbooks, but it is essential to show how there is, from the beginning, a kind of origami fold in the space of the real projective plane. When projective lines are extended to conics, spheres in the projective plane are, technically, folded onto themselves, a fold that we can see in 3-space as a self-intersection, as when the Möbius band twists to rejoin itself to eliminate one edge and one surface. Pascal succeeded in carrying over the non-numerical topological antics of origami to numbers. In his famous numerical triangle,

Pascal's idea of projective geometry was magnificent but he died young (age 39). He was the first teenager to make a major discovery in mathematics. It is hard to imagine what he might have done to top his identification of projective geometry to God as an infinite sphere, something that only Borges realized was not just a metaphor but a serious geometric conjecture. Either because of its difficulty or the domination of Descartes, projective geometry sadly fell into disuse. However, Desargues' theorems were rediscovered in the 19c., where they underwent a popular revival. Geometers realized that projective geometry was the basis of *all* geometries, that descriptive, affine, and Cartesian geometries were only subsets. With projective geometry, a true non-Euclidian topology developed the idea of *n*-dimensional space. Some have claimed that this was the end of "embodied imagination" whose best pictures were made by descriptive geometry, but I would claim that the reverse is true.

Once dimensions themselves were realized to be something *constructed*, it was possible to see how cultures used dimensions to create *spaces* and not just objects in spaces. The cultural imagination did not try to fit itself into the standard x, y, and z and add time as an afterthought; rather, it used dimensions to structure its anxieties, its desires, its flights into the unknown. What ethnographers had long noted about other cultures' lack of respect for the right angle was now clear. European visuality simply did not see what the cultures it invaded and colonized saw; it thought it was conquering one thing, the conquered made a different account of their gains and losses. These differences were nowhere as clear as the case of Europe *versus* Africa, which is possibly why Picasso used African mask imagery to pull off his *tour de force*, *Les Femmes d'Alger*. Think of it as a Klein bottle or Möbius band, where space must be folded and where we look into the fold itself, indicated by the symmetrical seemingly reclining women and the emblematic figure of Melancholia. Dürer had shown just the same folded space in his emblem of "Melencolia I," purposefully misspelling the title to connect melancholy's ancient tradition to a host of numerical anecdotes, culminating in the anagram, *limen caeli*, the "gate of heaven." *Caelum* of course is a contronym, as Vico had noted, telling the story of the birth of Athena by being both the carapace of blue (Zeus's skull) and the sharp ax splitting that skull, showing that a contronym is, like the Klein bottle or Möbius strip, also "non-orientable" and "self-intersecting."

In other words, Picasso, no less than Parrhasius, Velázquez, and Holbein, was completely aware of the fact that painting that aspires to be "meta-painting" takes place within the secondary virtuality of the real projective plane, which when immersed into 3-space, creates folds and self-intersections. All of them are "gates to heaven." We might involve sexy names such as origami or even quantum (for secondary virtuality) in contrast to primary virtuality's "local effects." All involve self-intersection, identities at the extremes of the plane, and . All are inscribed within the secondary virtuality of projective but twisted and folded when immersed in descriptive geometry. What makes these paintings uncanny is the fact that the uncanny itself is structured within secondary virtuality; these paintings are the *letters* that are delivered

and left out on tables to be stolen, purloined, and discovered by craft. What makes the uncanny subject to appropriation is what makes it a letter, in relation to the unconscious. In these terms, architecture may not be “speaking” (*architecture parlant*) so much as it is writing letter and leaving them out to be taken, hidden, and discovered — in an act of astonishment that radiates out from a single center to a multi-dimensional sphere where, as Pascal would put it, the center is everywhere and circumference nowhere.

The argument has been made that non-orientable surfaces and the projective geometries and topologies involved, where lines are equivalent to points and any single point is simultaneously a pair of antipodes, are far from the “intuitive materiality” of Euclidean geometry.¹ This is true if we accept that the (Euclidian) picture of reality that requires the removal of the viewer from the viewed and the fiction of the vanishing point successfully represents our sensual engagement with a world that, on its own, does not easily sort out signifiers and signifieds, forms from the formless, or space’s continually elastic subjectivities. Euclidean geometry achieves stability, true, but this comes at a cost, and that cost is precisely the component of space that qualifies it as “lived space.”

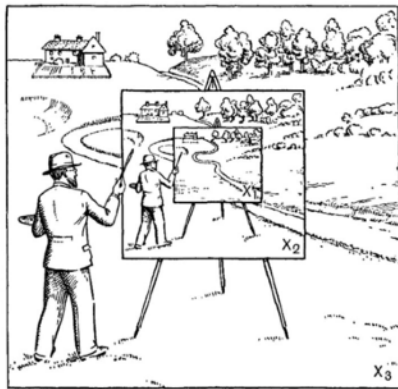


Figure 1. A painter wishing to correct the “problem” of leaving himself out of the picture he had attempted to make of “all of reality” immediately encounters the issue of the bad infinity. Source: John W. Dunne, *A Serial Universe*.

One proof of this is illustrated by fact that the most obvious consequence of representing the “world out there” in pictorial terms forces the exclusion or suppression of the artist’s role, something we accept easily thanks to the convention of the window as an analogy for the representational surface through which rays of light can pass and be registered as points on a plane. This fiction allows us to accept a picture as “realistic” even though the picture plane has, in every case, “glued” the representer’s space to the represented space but then magically disappeared. Because this is a cultural convention rather than a physical or perceptual law, we can expect other cultures to take a different view of things. But, in our own culture, we can at least laugh at our own attempt to conceal our convention in order to accept the fiction. Thus, John Dunne’s illustration (Fig. 1) of the painter who tries in vain to include himself in his “picture of everything” suffers defeat at the hands of the bad infinity where he must produce a succession of attempts, each creating a new construction space that must be included in yet another version.

The joke frequently trumps conventional practices, bringing to light what had been suppressed by common agreement. Slavoj Žižek tells a short joke about the waiter who, when he asks the guest who has just arrived “How are you today,” gets a full medical report and update of personal complaints when of course the correct response is “fine, thank you.” The response is funny because the *literal* has been treated as the conventional, when the literal’s function is to work silently and invisibly to keep “reality” from being contaminated with what Jacques Lacan would call the Real. Dunne’s artist is funny because he thinks the Real, which resists representation, can be included simply by staging a more inclusive account of painting

¹ Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 135, 137.

the scene. The letter of the representation is the non-appearance of the painter in the painting, with the common agreement of everyone who shares the cultural convention of pictorial representation.

You can't fight a joke. "Getting it" confirms culture's shared complicities by allowing some of them to be exposed from time to time. Where convention fails to support our experiences, we run directly into the uncanny, where the ideal of "embodied imagination" cannot cover what actually happens to us. Hikers lost in a forest frequently walk in circles and come back to the places they had actually left hours ago. Their actual path is a circle, but their experience of it was a straight line, so their arrival back at their point of origin creates both astonishment and dismay. Their error cannot be dismissed as something that didn't happen to them; it was what motivated them to keep walking, without being aware of their circular return. It does no good to simply correct the mistake, to explain away the "ghost" as if delusions or misconceptions, once corrected, would reveal full subjectivity. Just the opposite. Subjectivity is constructed by multiple fantasy constructs, not the least of which is pictorial space with its Euclidean constructs. But, just because these constructs effectively set the (traumatic) Real at a distance — that is their function — we do not have to accept them as being successful or unsuccessful, desirable or undesirable. They are simply doing their job, providing buffers that insulate us from the inconsistencies and contradictions that are the essence of the Real. Where the insulation wears thin, the first reaction is to laugh about it; the second (if we have the presence of mind to do anything about it) is to see the philosophical challenge involved. At such a point we can either re-create the situation in more explicit terms (Picasso, Holbein, Velázquez, Parrhasius) or seek to find a *determination system* lying behind the impasse. The names for these systems have been famous: Freud's *unconscious*, Einstein's *relativity*, Marx's *Capital*. All have this common feature: they seem to be working for themselves. Their relation to those who either seem to possess them (the unconscious), live inside them (the warped space of the universe), or use them without thinking (*Capital*) is one of complete and most often cruel indifference, as if the "we" that we construct as our subjective selves are simply hosts to an uncaring visitor who "uses our facilities" without asking permission.

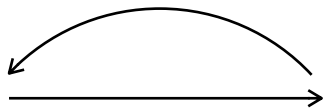


Figure 2. The retroactive movement of *Nachträglichkeit* structures time through a palindrome that "locks in" the trauma by according it a position in the past that cannot be re-oriented.

The visitor lives in another part of our subjective "house," which we had thought to be ours but find that it is the visitor who really owns it. This is what makes the theme of the haunted house so powerful. It reflects and elaborates this theme of independence. The classic instance is retold by Edith Wharton. An American couple suddenly come into money and decide to move to the south of England. They find a primitive Tudor house, intentionally shunning the idea of modern comforts. Hoping that it is also haunted, they discover that the ghost has the annoying technique of making itself known only through retroaction. You don't know that you've seen it until well after the "event," at a later moment when something triggers the realization that you "must have seen" a ghost.²

This ghost is of course nothing less than the *Nachträglichkeit* or *après-coup* of Freud's theory of compulsion, which he expanded to extend far beyond the victims of trauma, such as the Wolf Man, whose troubling symptoms sprang from an event he could not remember. If Freud (for the individual), Marx (for the collective), and Einstein (for the physical universe) can be said to correct the

² Edith Wharton, *The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 63: "...when one *did* see a ghost at Lyng, one did not know it.... 'Not till long afterward'"

biographies of *homo psychoanalyticus*, *homo economicus*, and the *homo materialis* all using the same idea: an automaton working independently, silently, and on its own behalf. In architecture, this automaton function appears in the case of the haunted house, a well-known theme in folklore of all cultures, which would seem to be considerably less complex to analyze. The materials are a combination of fictional elaborations of semi-empirical experiences. To avoid the question of whether or not ghosts are real (in the same tone that one questions Santa Claus), we have the phenomenological standard response: if someone has regarded something as authentic, then that *regard* is what is at issue. What formed it? What gave it, for them, the stamp of authenticity? What set in into the grammar of lived experience? That is, when it comes to talking about effectiveness, we must temporarily legitimate the use of a bogus or ersatz feature — “the ghost.” The ghost exists in the same way Schrödinger’s cat is alive until you look at it. The ersatz conjecture requires simply that one doesn’t look, and that looking would “kill the cat”: negate the inquiry and invalidate its results. The ghost is allowed to “float through” the *question* of the haunted house just as it floats through the houses themselves.

Here’s where the procedural suspension of reason (the evidence organized around the slogan, “ghosts exist”³) must require us not to over-write the answer on to the question. Wharton is clever in thinking that ghosts are allowed to exist in the interval of retroactive time, where the universal human relation to trauma imposes a structure (the palindrome) to “lock in” an event that may have never happened, but now has the force of a catastrophic experience *thanks to* the structure that locks it in. “Ghosting” is now a question not of whether ghosts “actually” exist, or whether they are just a theme in stories of a certain genre; but rather of how a structure can manifest its contents purely out of its topological form. The space between the conventional straight line of time and the curved arrow retroactively recalling an earlier forgotten/overlooked moment creates a space analogous to the projective plane. The straight edge of the half-losange appears to be Euclidian, the other “instructive,” a vector annotating the straight line. Compare this to the Möbius band’s appearance of a normal strip of paper, with two sides and two edges, proven to have lost one side and one edge by an implicit *instruction* to draw a continuous line across the surface. Mimesis (looking like something) and indication (the power of that something to convey a message or instruction) are combined. Just so, the two kinds of gestures, the imitation and the point, also give evidence of the existence of a real projective plane where this contrast is not recognized but allowed to exist by folding and twisting. We don’t notice the folds or twists until this plane is immersed into three dimensions, where self-intersection seems to create problems, where the house becomes haunted.

What of Pappus and the determination of his hexagon’s sides by points on an infinite horizon? What of Desargues’ regulating “eigen-vectors”? What of the real projective plane’s peculiar creation of “spherical” re-definition of points as rays with antipodes? The “ghosts” created by projective geometry/topology *effectively* haunt spatial experience, but they are not just imaginary constructs about which we are invited to believe or disbelieve. Their effectiveness has nothing to do with the existence or non-existence of the line lying at infinity where parallel lines converge. These are graphic features conventionally established to provide geometers and topologists access to these “effectiveness mechanisms,” which protect their anonymity with the simple principle, that you *cannot know what you have made*, since making (something that *works*) must be done “retroactively,” that until you see that it works, you don’t know what you have

³ When there are two or more terms in a proposition that are circular or tautological, the proposition may appear to be legitimate but in effect it is a forced choice.

actually achieved. This principle comes from the 18c. Neapolitan philosopher of culture, Giambattista Vico, but it seems to be the opposite of the standard interpretation of his slogan, *verum ipsum factum*.⁴ Gadamer and others have taken this to mean that, just as God has a perfect knowledge of His creation, humans (by an argument of ratio) can know only that which they have themselves made. This interpretation assumes that knowing and making have an unproblematic continuity. God makes the world; he “understands” it. But, this seems to be, theologically, presumptuous. Throughout the Old Testament, we have ample evidence that God is uncertain about what he has made. God, for example, is willing to bet on Job’s loyalty, even after he piles torture after torture upon him, but he still waits to see what happens. Going to the heart of the matter, the Ten Commandments presume a gap between prohibition and privation: saying that you *shouldn’t* do something is not the same as saying that it is impossible, which would be the case had God made a world completely known to him, a world that would not tolerate unholy violations (sins) contrary to His nature.

Indeterminacy makes creation, human or divine, into a conjecture about what might happen. The truth of what is made is evident only after the act of making, when the nature of the *factum’s* effectiveness becomes fully apparent. The logic of making is that of *Nachträglichkeit*. You know what you’ve made only after you’ve made it, when you can realize the whole context of making. This knowing of course is far from complete. You have created an “unconscious” in the process of consciously trying to create some useful thing. This unconscious is not accessible, but it does communicate something of itself through the (ironic) evidence, that what you thought you were making was not the full story. In effect, you, the maker, were like the painter in John Dunne’s series of failed attempts to encapsulate reality within a frame. You made both the contents inside the frame but also used them to define the nature of what was outside the frame: your intentionalities, your abilities, your failures, your incapacities as well as your talents. This composite truth comes about retroactively; the *verum* is indeed the *factum*, but only in the palindromic return to the moment of the split of consciousness from the unconsciousness required to make something *effective*. In its effectiveness, the true is the made; but we know this only in relation to the unconscious of the thing (Thing) that has been made.

In one phase of continental architecture history and theory, the expression *architecture parlant* was used to summarize the way in which buildings used language. Not only could they “send messages” to both the public as well as specific inhabitants or viewers; they were capable of nuanced expressions of feeling, ideological mandates, and eternal truths. Like the units of language, buildings could be said to have a grammar and syntax, not just in the “orders” established by stylistic convention but in the dynamic interchange between material form and human use, the “solid and void” relations, so to speak. *Architecture parlant* was not just a characterization of what things, despite their thing-ness, might say *if* they were regarded as subjects; it was an extension of the way architecture was used, since ancient times, to say

⁴ Vico’s dictum comes not from his major work, *The New Science*, but rather from an earlier short work, known as the *De Antiquissima*, investigating the curious coupling of Latin words, such as *verum* and *factum*. Vico’s ploy for every example is the same. Although early language practices equated words that a later mentality would separate, there was no “magical” insight of ancients but rather an inability to distinguish that could be seen as a “cononymic” exchange, a “negation of negation” such as Freud described in his essay on the “Antithetical Meanings of Primal Words.” The idea that the ancients were *unconscious* of the difference between certain ideas can be turned around to the idea that the unconscious is itself the *site* of antinomies. Derivatives of *factum* carry positive and negative senses, as in the suspicion generated by the word “fabrication,” i. e. a falsehood. “To forge,” a related verb, can imply both a positive result of a skilled smithy or the negative results of a fake work of art.

things not just to other subjects but generically, in the way that a poem or novel is written to establish an order that exists above and beyond being read.

If the idea of expressiveness can absorb the role of authorship so that the object can itself automate the process, then it can be said that the object itself has an intentionality and voice, in the same way that objects can be said to resist our intentional use of them. When objects “go along with” our desires or become (literally) objects of our desire, they are subsumed as instrumental causes. Their materiality is required by desire for desire to be effective. But, what if effectiveness is not just a matter of the well-designed hammer hitting the unsuspecting nail? What if effectiveness is shown to be something that takes place off-stage, so to speak?

Just such a thesis has been put forward in a convincing manner by Slavoj Žižek, who argued in a podcast posted in 2003 that, for each of the three psychoanalytic “domains” established by Lacan as the topology of the psyche — the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary (the “RSI system”) — there was a “reality of the virtual.” In contrast to “virtual reality,” which Žižek characterized as a boring matter of extending “the real world’s” pictorial, perspectival qualities to computer-graphic simulations, the reality of the virtual was established, for each domain, by invisible means. In the case of the Imaginary, Žižek cited the example of how, when we interact with other people, we suppress the components of their subjectivity that would disrupt our practical/ethical interaction with them. Elsewhere, Žižek gives the example of the restaurant patron who, in response to the waiter’s polite opening, “How are you today?” gives a full medical report and financial summary, along with a detailed lament summarizing his woes and tribulations. The patron has rejected the convention by which the polite question is intended to initiate a formal process of ordering food at a restaurant. He has mistakenly included the virtuality that attaches itself to every subject: details such as getting bathed and dressed, having sex, and so on that are essential and causative but which, if left unsuppressed, would make normal human relations impossible.

This “secondary virtuality” exists in all three modes of the Lacanian RSI system. As such, it constitutes a “shadow domain” where the rules that construct “pictures of reality” are suspended — or rather where the backstage of pictorial reality offers the space and time of *production*, a place for efficient cause *to happen*. Secondary virtuality is like the soul of the subjective body, without whose invisibility, inaccessibility, and indefinability the visible and perceiving body could not be said to have intentions, thoughts, or possess and express meanings. Our contention shall be that architectural objects, no less than human subjects, not only possess secondary virtuality but are the model of the relations between “pictorial” virtuality and this secondary virtuality. There is no need to give the architectural object a face, appendages, and other components of human form. Such caricature overstates the obvious truth, namely that “architecture,” in the abstract sense of a structure of relations as well as the literal form of physical buildings, interiors, and landscapes, is a vector and medium of human subjectivity to the extent that, apart from the human subjects who design, occupy, own, borrow, or simply perceive it, an analyzable subject.

The clearest evidence for this claim of subjectivity and, hence, analyzability, lies in architecture’s relation to the RSI system by means of the four forms of Lacanian discourse: the master’s discourse, the hysteric’s, the university, and analysis itself.

[TO BE DEVELOPED...DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUR DISCOURSES AS A COMBINATION OF TWO SETS OF FOUR ENTITIES — S1, S2, *a*, \$; AND THE “POSITIONS” OF AGENT, OTHER, PRODUCTION, AND TRUTH...]

Architecture's relation to power establishes it most clearly in the discourse of the Master, whose subordination to the signifier compels a fight to the death, while enjoyment is displaced to the domain of his/her servants. The University is already a set of buildings and designed open spaces, so the relation to University discourse begins as that of container to contained. While the Hysteric forces its own literalism on to the complaining human subject in relation to the Master or master signifier, buildings themselves are at their most psychoanalytical when they seem to resist or ignore our demands that they serve us. When, as in Jamison's critique of the Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, a building seems "hell-bent" on confusing, frustrating, or otherwise abusing its would-be human users, it develops a personality that is not just intensely subjective but specifically hysteric. Architecture could be said to form its subjectivity around this hysteric indifference or active opposition to human desire. In hysteria, we see a secondary virtuality of intention, emotion, and even an ethical or demonic sensibility.

At this point, architecture can be psychoanalyzed simply on the basis of its active participation in the psychoanalytic *categories* of discourse. Even though only human subjects will show up, on time or not, to their appointments with literal psychoanalysts, buildings will to such a great extent appropriate, formalize, and refine the *resistances* that make analysts have to work long and hard to achieve the goal of analysis, that we might take the same step taken by mathematicians in redefining the "=" sign. Instead of indicating pure identity, $x=y$ can be read more productively as "is indistinguishable from" or "can be confused for." Lacan's discussion of identity in Seminar IX, for example, relinquishes the strict hold of idempotency. When A "departs from itself" in the function of self-equality in the expression $A=A$, the move from the first position to the left of the "=" to the position on the right does not guarantee a return to the original left side. Like the character in Thomas Wolfe's novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, the failure of idempotency is embedded in the idea of home in the same way Freud found that the uncanny was already/always present in the idea of the homey. Etymology lets slip the secret that, at this level of epistemology and even ontology, the contronym is the rule not the exception. It is more evident that $A=\sim A$ — that negation is the core component and efficient cause of A's very existence; that anything that *is*, exists precisely because it is self-negating; because it converts into its opposite in a Hegelian annihilation, thanks to the debt paid by existence to pure distinction.



Figure 1. Freud's collection of antique figurines constitute a much-discussed supplement to his theories of the psychoanalytic subject. Just as the figurines were used to assist the dead in their transition from life to the afterworld, they seemed to assist Freud in his transition from the "primary virtuality" of the clinic to the "secondary virtuality" of Analysis.

What of architecture's subjective, and hence psychoanalytic, status beyond the systems of discourse that establish that, as *architecture parlant*, it has something to say? The first clue comes from its resistance to human, subjective desire. As Lacan emphasized in his L-schema, the Imaginary in Analysis throws up a barrier to the Symbolic exchange between the Unconscious and the analyst's acoustic reception of the analysand's symptomatic discourse. This Imaginary can be thought of as the analyst and analysand's "ego presence" in the physical examination room, with its furniture; its walls, ceiling,

and. floor; its windows and doors; its accessories (such as the antique figurines that jostled for space on Freud's desk). We might say that a curious parallel between the ego-space Imaginary and the Unconscious space of Symbolic transaction is embodied by the architectural interior and its accouterments. Just as Freud's *ushabtis* assisted Freud in his transition from the pictorial virtuality of the Imaginary to the secondary uncanny virtuality of the Symbolic Unconscious, we could say that the architectural collective of interior space and its objects were both pictorial and non-pictorial: not simply objects set in perspective relationships with each other but *transitional* objects, set between objective death and subjective life in the same way that the *ushabti* could be said to aid the deceased from the primary virtuality of life to the extended eternal virtuality of the Afterworld.

In the L-schema, the barrier functions much like a literal border between two countries, with its military guards and inspectors looking for smuggled contraband. Again, a Žižek joke comes to mind. A factory worker (the story usually takes place in Soviet USSR) is suspected of smuggling goods for resale on the black market. Each day, his wheelbarrow is poked and prodded; and at one point it is completely disassembled for micro-examination; but nothing is ever found. After the worker retires, he meets up with a guard, also retired, at a local pub. The guard cajoles him into admitting that he was a smuggler, which the worker now readily admits. "But, what were you smuggling?" the guard asks. We never could find anything in that wheelbarrow of yours!" The worker slyly replies, "I was smuggling wheelbarrows."

The joke follows the principle Lacan examined in his essay on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter." In French, *purloin* has the sense of "running alongside," a parallel motion that, because one object moves from place to place, another object can be left in plain sight without being "found out." Here we have a model for literal space-time's primary virtuality's ability to conceal a second virtuality within it or, rather, alongside it. Parallelism is, we would claim, essential to understanding the relationship of primary to secondary virtuality that is at the heart of architecture's status as a psychoanalytic *subject* — where *subsection* is, literally, a placing *beneath* at the same time something moves *along with* a salient element.

In Euclid's famous fourth postulate or axiom, two parallel lines will never converge, no matter how far they are extended. This postulate has been thought of as both obvious but questionable, since it begs the question of space's extension and extensibility. It is possible to define space in non-Euclidean ways that do not support this axiom. For example, in what is called the "real projective plane," the observer and observed are co-equal and identical. In what is called a near projective plane, "any two distinct lines intersect in at most two points and any two distinct points are both incident with at most two lines.... Thus, in a near projective plane, if the number of lines intersecting a given line in two points is λ , then the number of lines not intersecting the given line is also λ . A line with $\lambda = 0$ is called a pure line. If all lines are pure, then we have a projective plane."⁵ Euclid's fourth axiom fails in the projective plane, and the ability of primary virtuality to continue concealing a secondary virtuality gives way. This is analogous to the way in which the purloined letter, in Poe's story, is found; and analogous as well to the way that the signifiers occluded within the analysand's unconscious are released in a moment of astonishment at the conclusion of Analysis.

⁵ Alan R. Prince, "A Near Projective Plane of Order 6," *Mathematical Sciences Publishing*. URL: <https://msp.org/iig/2013/13-1/iig-v13-n1-p05-s.pdf>. Although the projective plane is central to the topographical surfaces that interest Lacan from early days in his career, there are few if any Lacanian commentators who take up the subject. Will Greenshields, "Relationality, Materiality and the Real in Lacan's Borromean Knot," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* (2016): 156–181.

Architecture might make use of the real projective plane in the way that orthography is privileged, first as a style of drawing where scaled measures can be taken from any part of the drawing that touches the picture plane, and in the axonometric drawing, where instead of perspectival privileging of near and far there is an equalization based on 30°/60° or 45°/45° intersections. Orthography, a kind of graphic truth, relates curiously to “orthopsychics,” a term developed by Gaston Bachelard to describe the way a speculative scientist approaches the invisible unknown, not with the usual sense of inadequacy and doubt but with a pleasure in a certain spooky correspondence between would-be knower and known — a pleasure that anticipates Lacan’s own topological Energizer Bunny, *jouissance*. By involving a portable Mirror Stage function throughout the psyche’s developmental history, orthopsychics establishes an alternative model of truth within an Imaginary domain. Instead of the perspectival image relationships that pertain to all mirror reflections, there is an orthographic “correction” in the recognition that arises from the failure to fully identify with the reflected “me” in the mirror. On one hand, it is a “me,” but only *a* me, just one of a set of multiples. The possibility of multiplication arises at the “pure case” of duplication. Just so, the real projective plane introduces a truth of loss that undermines the mirror’s perspectival case for correspondence. Just as subjectivity arises out of the *failure* of the mirror image (the poor human subject is degraded into a *corps morcélé* while his/her image enjoys social success) at the hands of perspectival virtuality, another virtuality — associated with orthographics and orthopsychics — “corrects” the pictorial set-up by showing how the split between actual and Imaginary, the mirror-line, is the Real of the psyche.

How might architecture take advantage of this Real of the split, a Real that divides virtuality into two parts, a pictorial function and a truth-advancing function? In psychoanalysis, truth is advanced primarily through the project of analysis, whose discourse aims to prepare and provoke the analysand into allowing signifiers to make a prison break. In the moment of release, the analysand experiences a pleasure exclusive to the analytical process: a form of *jouissance* that comes with astonishment that the truth was “known all the time” but not just known but active in structuring the analysand’s thoughts and actions. This astonishment is not unique to psychoanalysis. It belongs to the traditions of *kenosis*, the basis of meditative-spiritual traditions since ancient times. But, psychoanalysis properly secularizes *kenosis* to make it available to the broad range of neurotics who suffer from their symptoms and simply seek relief without ecclesiastical obligations. Because the ancient practices of *kenosis* contribute historically to the development of psychoanalysis, architecture can claim to have made use of psychoanalysis before its invention. But, also, those of us who ask if architecture can be psychoanalyzed have an experimental model. If a building can be led to the psychoanalyst’s couch, its confessions, its “blah blah blah” as Lacan characterized the neurotic’s complaints to his psycho-confessor, must take the same *form* as those of the human analysand. If the *form* of configuring the blah blah blah to set up a moment of astonishment is the same for architecture as it is for the human analysand, then we have a QED for our inquiry. Architecture *can be* psychoanalyzed.

The key lies in showing how the primary virtuality of the examining room gives way to a secondary virtuality in which the analyst and analysand discover that they are in a real projective plane relationship, where one is able to take the place of the other in an “orthographic/orthopsychic” transaction.

Lacan makes the point that in the “space” of Symbolic transaction, the analyst in the role of the dummy in the game of bridge takes up the job of the analysand; provoking without disclosing the clues

that will be necessary for the analysand to make his/her own move of release. As in the projective plane's erasure of the distinction between observer and observed, the Symbolic vector of the L-schema unifies analyst and analysand in a curious virtuality of ventriloquism, where the dummy is simultaneously a bridge-player and a wooden puppet. The difference between the ventriloquist's stage performance and the condition exploited by films such as Ealing Studio's thriller *Dead of Night* (1945), where the ventriloquist's mind is wholly captured by the automaton-dummy is precisely that of analytic transference, where the unconscious-as-automaton makes itself present in psychotic coup. In other words, the L-schema is a model for the way architecture, as "inanimate" and dummy-like, plays the key role in psychoanalysis's staging of a take-over of the ego-subject.

Look, It's Simple

Many who came to be early enthusiastic readers of Slavoj Žižek did so through his demonstration of the differences separating the three main streams of European philosophy.⁶ German conservatism, French revolutionary radicalism and English liberalism could be "explained" by referring to the toilet designs of their respective countries. The German toilet, known for its insistence on inspection before dismissal, the French toilet, whose hole at the back of the bowl insures a speedy exit, and the English attempt at mediation between the two positions with an ambiguous soup. Possibly there is more to reflective thoroughness (German idealism), revolutionary hastiness (French rationalism), and utilitarian pragmatism (British empiricism) than porcelain products, but the key point was that "evidence of the obvious" — the *real* and *effective* structure of philosophical traditions — was available to all in non-compromising material signifiers.

In a later documentary film, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, Žižek cited the 1988 film, John Carpenter's *They Live*, where a drifter discovers a box of magic glasses that, when worn, show the invisible messages written on buildings, signs, objects, streets, and people. The messages state overtly what is subliminally contained to bend public opinion and control behavior. The glasses Žižek allows us to wear while looking down at toilet bowls is equally direct. It is a "Look and see!" methodology. The evidence does not require scholastic mediation; it is rhetorical, evident, and clear. It is a matter of simply saying what you see.

Of course, the problem is that it seems that no one before Žižek had been so clever as to see the "obvious" differences between the toilet designs that gave away the secret structure of European thought. This made Žižek even more attractive, in that the appeal of the "getting-it" component of learning (akin to the way one either "gets" or "doesn't get" a joke) was that, although there were no guarantees, it could be transmitted quickly and completely. If it worked, it worked well.

Could we make the same comparison to anamorphosis? In the well-known example of anamorphic painting Lacan employs in Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, a diagonal blur that seems to stain the otherwise perfect double portrait, Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533) turns out to be a skull when viewed from the right position (Fig. 2). This sweet spot negates the perspective of the main image but it takes no time to establish its successor. The skull is the *memento mori* counterweight that tradition requires to counter the effects of the evil eye in the face of any display of wealth or status. In fact, as John North has discovered, this particular *memento mori* was considerably more ambitious. The geometry of the diagonal, involving angles structured by the number 9, was echoed on the reverse of the

⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *A Plague of Fantasies* ...

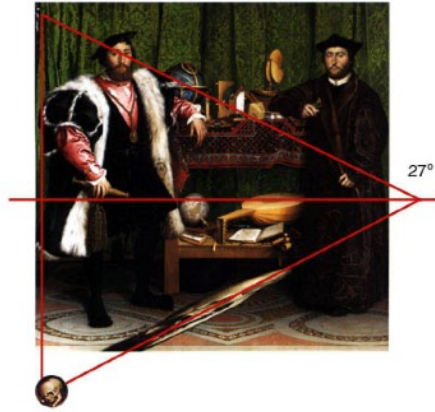


Figure 2. Hans Holbein, the Younger. *The Ambassadors* (1533). The Trustees of the National Gallery, London.

“everything.” From the instruments, devices, and books displayed between the two subjects to the network of lines implicating the crucifixion and Golgotha (“the place of the skull”), Holbein was showing how the



Figure 3. Giorgione, *La Tempesta* (1506–1508). Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.

instant suggested by the immediate image of a painting could, although it took a considerable number of sittings to create, could, in the days before photography, relate the instantaneous presentation to the eye to a single moment, an apocalyptic moment, a moment where everything would be *answered and resolved*. Žižek’s revolutionary move was to transport critical thinking to the “get-it” mode, to an *anamorphic* relationship to the truth, which is nothing less than the reduction (consummation?) of content to The Act.⁸

The idea has been around for quite a while. Digging just a little deeper than Holbein’s *Ambassadors* we find a less profound but more definitive declaration of the conceptual act, Giorgione’s *La Tempesta* (Fig. 3). The contents of the painting are a puzzle to art historians who fail to understand the identity of the figures and objects shown in the foreground (the background has been thought to resemble Padua, but nothing has ever been documented. No

⁷ John North, *The Ambassadors’ Secret ...*

⁸ I must take issue with Mladen Dolar’s otherwise brilliant essay, “Anamorphosis,” *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 8 (2015): 125–140. Dolar compares the “frontal” view of the two ambassadors and the anamorphic view of the skull: “There is a choice, a shift in view that constitutes the tension in the image and the oscillation of the gaze. Hence there is already a minimal trap of desire in this oscillation, a pulsation of desire that comes from being caught between two viewpoints, from being literally displaced in relation to what is presented up front” (126). The two options are far from equal. Thanks to the flatness of the salient image, its perspectival coherence stays intact even when the viewer takes an extreme oblique position. But, to see the skull correctly, the viewer has to find a narrow cone of vision, either from the lower left of the canvas or upper right; either way, the main image is at that point nearly impossible to see. The success of the skull necessitates the obliteration of the main image’s extensive frontal domain. This forces the recognition of the set of lines that lie on or parallel to the surface of the painting, where the number 9 rules the day to implicate the project in the fulfillment of the prophecy that April 11, 1533, would be the end of the world.

commentators have ever cited the visual effect of the bold of lightning that streaks across the sky. If this is a nighttime scene, as it seems, then the image “takes place” as a flash preceded and followed by total darkness. The viewer takes in the scene by surprise and does not have time to order expectations with evidence to “decide” what he/she sees. Instead, the viewer’s mind has filled in the blanks and met the evidence lying on one side of the picture plane with his/her own unconscious contents. This meeting of the viewer with the viewed constitutes a continuous *one-sided* “surface” of perception known as the real projective plane. Whereas a Möbius band can be closed into a projective plane by (as is well known to children of all ages) twisting its ends and gluing them together, the Klein bottle goes one step further by closing the Möbius band into a cylinder. The real projective plane is a compact non-orientable two-dimensional manifold. The important issue is that, in a topological manifold, the space near each point resembles Euclidean space. When the real projective plane, a two-dimensional manifold, is “immersed” into Euclidean space — the immersion could be equated with the flash of lightning — the result is self-intersection: the meeting *of* the self *with* the self.

The one-dimensional surface is non-orientable. This is to say that there is no way to establish a stable “inside” and “outside” as there would be in drawing a circle, or (in the case of painting), creating a picture plane definitively dividing the viewer from the viewed. Non-orientability connects (sutures) the space of viewing with the space of the viewed. The observer looks at objects in the representational field and find mirrors shattered and dispersed into perfect crystal mirrors, each with its own visual-conceptual trap to provide the illusion of otherness that delays discovery of the self that generated and placed it into the objective field, “just so,” where placement takes on the cosmic task of constructing a reticular indictment of the structure of the picture plane’s illusion. Self-to-self; non-orientability; self-intersection (meeting one’s self face to face); all this explains the relation of the Platonic Cave to the Socratic slogan “know thyself” (γνώθι σεαυτόν), the *prima principia* of the form of knowledge known as *kenosis*, a way of “knowing without knowing.”

The temporality of *kenosis* is critical. As Holbein and Giorgione go to such lengths to show, we find *kenosis* without looking for it, before we anticipate the problem of looking within any historic-cultural *epistemē* that makes it one of the missing pieces in a jig-saw puzzle that has already been printed and cut. Looking for the right shape to put it in the right location takes time. *Kenosis* takes time but in a sense that literalizes the idea of “take.” It takes time in the sense of appropriating the time line and converting its linear sequencing (taking time in the usual sense) into a winding-up that is understood only in the moment of unwinding. In a sense, the winding does not exist before it is unwound; the *kenotic* “idea” does not exist before its own destruction, which happens in a flash.

What’s left? In the destructive moment where lightning suddenly illuminates objects cloaked a second ago in total darkness is a *con*-struction guided by the moment itself. This “pure temporality” is spatialize by the same logic that folds the real projective plane into the “immersed form” of the Möbius band, the cross-cap, and the Klein bottle. In the neighborhood of each point we feel at home in what seems to be an Euclidian relationship. We can draw our names on the Möbius strip and continue writing until the last mark meets the first mark, which it must overwrite as “the next.” The nursing woman in *La Tempesta* is at home in her immediate space, but this zone gives way to the general phantasmagoria in which stand a man with a staff and a broken column. The painting’s visual field has been reconfigured as a rebus, a sentence with an alien meaning due to the fact that the picture plane’s two surfaces have, in a flash, become a real

projective plane with only one surface, and the viewer and the viewed have met each other in the instant of suture.



Figure 4. Giotto, Angel of the Apocalypse in charge of archives. Arena Chapel, Padua, Italy.

In the temporality of the anamorphic (I prefer this adjective form to the usual “anamorphic” to emphasize the coincidence with “psychotic”) we either “get it” or we don’t. The readers of Žižek who look at toilet seats and don’t think of Continental Philosophy must certainly outnumber those who do, but the point is that those who “now see” that complex systems of thought are so co-extensive with everyday life that they *compel* those who design and acquire porcelain fixtures to “follow the rules” and side with the reflective thoughtfulness of German idealism, the revolutionary haste of French rationalism, or the utilitarian pragmatism of British empiricism also see that the Big Things in Life are co-equal, or co-extensive, with the Small Things. It is as Vico said, the astute ignoramus will see the trees but not the forest; the learned man destitute of prudence will try to deduce the trees from the forest idea. Only the sage will see the Big Ideas embedded at the level of the most trivial, the most insignificant details.⁹

Vico’s fourth category of thinker, the Fool, is not to be demeaned. He/she simply uses the toilet and flushes it, without a thought to consider the genesis and self-differentiation of European intellectual history. Indeed, most of the time sages simply need to excuse themselves and find this smallest room in the house rather than enjoy the ecstasy of kenosis. Sages do not get up in the morning and go into work, taking a commuter train or fighting snarls on the M1, I-95, or the A10. Sages have no retirement plan, no health care benefits. They have, instead, *moments*; moments where they “get it.” Moments of kenosis where the wind-up spring of temporal sequences come unwound and reveal their structure, which is that of the real projective plane, where the viewer/viewed and knower/known distinctions are annihilated in a flash. Sages do not apply for this job, the job recruits them and the job interview goes something like this: “What do you currently do for a living?” “Nothing.” “You’re hired!” The Nothing of course has the positive value of being a negation that operates on itself without happening twice. Unlike the circle’s attempt to represent the kenotic moment of self-encounter by a gap/void that it must then attempt to *fill*, the real projective plane has its “Euclidean moments” only when self-intersection requires a locality, a neighborhood, to provide toilets where there were none a moment before. Or, to give an anamorphic crease to fold up the surface we had moments before confused with a pane of glass, following the example of the angel Giotto painted on the back wall of the Arena Chapel in Padua to settle the matter of reality for once and for all. The closure of the real projective plane self-intersects without creating this crisis, but the *effects of crisis* can be transcribed into Euclidian space nonetheless, as *La Tempesta*, the anamorph(otic) skull of *The Ambassadors*, or Giotto’s angle show. We have sufficient evidence to conclude that any and all instances of such transcriptions are

⁹ Giambattista Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, trans. Elio Gianturco (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1990), 35.

not just uncanny, they are prototypes of and specifications for the essential structure of the uncanny *as such*.

What is this structure? In Freud's perceptive study, he features the pithy formula put forward by Ernst Jentsch, in his two-part study published in 1906.¹⁰ Jentsch's "principle of the uncanny" bases itself on the preponderance of tale types: (1) the living person who, thinking he/she is fleeing from death, actually constructs the most efficient approach *to* death; and (2) the dead person who has "forgotten how to die" and goes through what Lacan called the "interval between the two deaths," a literal death followed by a symbolic death. This suggests a way to correct the diagram of the gapped circle.¹¹ By placing two circles side by side, possibly as a butterfly edition of a *recto* and *verso*, death is the determinative kernel of the life circle and life the resistant dot/stain at the radical interior of death. In fact, the two circles are not two circles. Not only is there no *recto* and *verso*; there are no interiors or exteriors, only a bipolar exchange between life and death that makes life and death into the "Euclidian localities" surrounding points on the real projective plane. It is more accurate if we move the two circles so that the circumference of each passes through the center of the other: the *vesica piscis*. Note that this is not a classic *coincidentia oppositorum*. The cross-inscription is more of a twinship requiring two-ness in spite of the evidence of one-ness.

Doesn't this diagrammatic relationship reveal the connection of the uncanny to architecture? Like the uncanny, architecture has two "primitives," the labyrinth and the temple. And, like the uncanny, the labyrinth and temple are co-determinative yet chiralistic. The topological mapping of points of the one cannot be reduced to the mapping of points on the other. The relation is not that of one form to another, but rather of a *loss* and a *motility* in relation to that loss. What is lost is the historical basis of the labyrinth's historical employment as a place of confusion, where orientation is so confounded by the labyrinth's twists and folds (here we have the "origami" theme!) that King Minos used it as a prison despite the fact that portal had no lock. The theme of non-orientability alerts us to the presence of the real projective plane. The point that is the Euclidean locality of the labyrinth is the temple, whose etymological theme of splitting provides another clue. The folded quantum features of the labyrinth are simply the other side of the projective plane's coin. The temple's famous — imperious we should say — relation to orientation can be misinterpreted. It is not that the temple is carefully sited with respect to cosmic qualities of the horizon and local landforms, as Vincent Scully so carefully documented in his famous book, *The Earth, the Temple*,

¹⁰ "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen" was published in the *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 8.22 (25 Aug. 1906): 195-98 and 8.23 (1 Sept. 1906): 203-05. Translator of the English version, Roy Sellars, notes: "the bibliographical references in the Freud editions do not make it clear that Jentsch's essay is spread over two separate issues of the weekly." Published in *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*, ed. Jo Collins and John Jervis (New York and Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 216–228.

¹¹ The gapped circle appears often in Lacan's writings and secondary scholarship. As a repetitive return to an empty place of origins, it recalls the theme of *Nachträglichkeit*, the retroactive realization of a trauma that, as it originally happened in the past, went virtually unnoticed. Because of the gap, the gapped circle restates the situation of the void without adding more than the idea of compulsive, repetitive, and self-defeating action. Cross-inscription suggests the co-presence of two "circuits," one of which operates as an effective but invisible virtuality within what is salient, pictorial, and perspectival. When the servant attempts to run away from death in the story "Appointment in Samara," the fact that she actually runs into Death's arms, thanks to her own fright, demonstrates how this virtuality is the source of effectiveness and correction. When the "dead person who has forgotten to die" wanders in the interval between literal and Symbolic death, the effective dimension is the fractal pattern latent within the origami folds of the deceased's meander. In this way, we might say that the *objet petit a* that designates the gap of the gapped circle is the contronymic operator that is both inside and outside the circle and, as such, the agency that shows how this circle lies within the real projective plane — a topology rather than a flat geometry. This suggests, alluringly, that the *objet petit a* is essentially the sign of extimity, an inside-out operator indicating the surplus or lack that connects "local" Euclidean pictorial conditions with the topologies of the real projective plane.ana

and the Gods. This careful placement indeed did happen. But, what does it indicate? I agree with Scully on the point that a temple's position and orientation proceeded from a kind of geomantic research of local conditions, so as to accentuate and take advantage of "natural forces" already present in the landscape. Where I disagree with is on what happened next. This is proven by the fact that the temple was an architectural extension of the alter, and the alter was the surface of sacrifice, where an interior (of the victim) was flattened to reveal a surface. Deformations or marks on the surface constituted divinatory signs that were the basis of the first writing, since records of ritual sacrifice results were graphically recorded and compiled. Before these signs were secularized into writing that could be used for other purposes, they had the status of a rebus: halfway between sound and image. Where to place the halfway mark was the carefully guarded secret of priests. Before phonetic assignments, texts wrote across the material they analyzed. The *templum* distinction was, precisely, a *failure of the indicative* function of writing to point to conventionalized secular sounds/meanings; and without this failure there would be no function of the priests' sacred designation. The failure in a sense maintained the power potential of the cut. The indicative function's shortfall — its inability to efficiently pass from code to message — meant that the full surface of the labyrinth (which is an architecture that can be said to be both "all surface" and "all void") was accessible to this cut, this sacred *dis-orientation*. Between the uncanny's life-within-death and death-within-life there was a point of contact, a portal opened up by the divinatory sacrifice and reading.

Adjusting Scully's thesis of "sensitive placement" of temples in the landscape, one could say that the temple, once placed, opened up a void that, exploited by means of rebus-determinations filling in the void with another, a *signifying* void, defined by the sign's failure to fully indicate a meaning, became an exporter (of orientation) rather than an architectural consumer of the values of place. The temple was a new *locale*, a new energy source. Like other Euclidian "neighborhoods" surrounding points on the real projective plane, it's orthogonal *cardus* and *decumanus* directions, along with its corrected verticalities, referred to the logic of superimposing the temple onto the labyrinth, finalizing the labyrinth's singsong meanders while providing the terminus of the interval between the antipodal deaths, literal and symbolic.

Summarizing, the architectural twins, the temple and the labyrinth, correspond to the uncanny's cross-inscribed conditions of death-inside-life and life-inside-death, respectively. The "business" of the temple is to exploit the interval between the death of the sacrificial victim and the determination of secular implications in the form of prophecies and judgments. This is the interval where, because the signifier *fails* to indicate what is meant, mantic forces prevail. This is the power of the void to radiate an orthopsychism, as evidenced the role played by religions in the early formulations of public law. Today, the failure of indication is carried over into the symbolism of the goddess of Justice, whose eyes are blindfolded. The popular interpretation that holds this to signify impartiality masks the transference of blindness for invisibility. Originally, the goddess's head was invisible because of its direct contact with the *æther* above the visible realm. The head serves as *cælum*, an ancient contronym meaning both heaven and wedge. The temple is the head of architecture, and when it surmounts some labyrinthine form (the Tower of Babel, a ziggurat, a *mons delectus*) it is either ruined (Babel), invisible (Parnassus/ziggurat), or perched above a defensive layer of clouds (*mons delectus*). The temple is the first locality; the first orthographic and orthopsychic domain, where order and laws emanated from altars of sacrifice and where human writing evolved from the failure of rebus-like records to fully specify the contents of the oracle. The temple is thus the *break* in the Symbolic as such, and as a break the temple is Real in Lacanian terms, a manifestation of

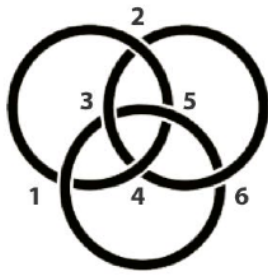
the secondary virtuality of effectiveness whose structural symmetries emphasize circularity and whose precise proportions embody ratios that were first defined musically.

Locality as Such

The bigger question is this: What if *all* of our everyday experiences occur inside “Euclidian localities” immediately surrounding points on the real projective plane, a surface of pulsating flipflop conversions? What if within these localities orientation must always “begin again from zero,” given that nothing on the projective plane is orientable? What if, finally, does the virtuality used to picture this locality not actually “hold back,” or conceal, a second, *topological* Real? In relation to the local virtuality that divides the viewer and the viewed, the knower and the known, this topological Real appears as a “secondary virtuality” on account of its uncanniness. Could we not then call this “secondary virtuality” an *unconscious* in relation to the first? Is it not fundamentally a Real that pulls back the curtain on those veils of objectivity that subjectivity, in believing in the reality of its perspectival separation from “the world out there,” had constructed out of sheer binary opposition?

This is not the time to proclaim a Q. E. D. by revisiting the past examples of (anamorphic) misadventure to “explain” the meaning of the blurred skull image or the enigma of figures in the benighted landscape, suddenly brought to the eye in a flash of lightning. Rather, we should provide a kind of evidential doubling: conditions where this same question has been asked in the past, and where the impasse that seems to divide the primary virtuality from a secondary ghost, covered by a sheet with only one side — i. e. a ghost that is *ourselves*. Finding instances where the same question has been asked is not a search for some case where the question seems to have been answered. Such a find would be a “false positive.” The nature of the secondary virtuality’s relation to the first is not that of the seemingly uncanny event that is explained as a trick to drive others mad, as in the 1944 film *Gaslight*. There is no normalization that can “domesticate” the effects of the real projective plane because one of its most uncanny effects *is already* its presence inside local Euclidean “neighborhoods” surrounding its points. The real is Real in Lacan’s terms: unymbolizable.

An example from the past that demonstrates this resistance to an explanatory Q. E. D. is the story — also retold by Lacan in Seminar XI — of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, two painters in ancient Greece who agreed to enter into a competition to determine which was the best artist. Working on two sections of a wall, the painters devised two radically different kinds of entries. Zeuxis, master of the *trompe l’œil*, painted a bowl of fruit set inside a faux window. As the judges stood before this masterpiece, the story goes that a bird was enticed by the realistic fruit and flew into the wall, breaking its neck. With the idea that it was one thing to fool a human eye, quite another to fool an expert animal, the judges all but awarded Zeuxis the prize on the spot. Grudgingly moving down to Parrhasius’s portion of the wall, the judges stood waiting for the artist to pull back the curtain covering the painting. In his calculated moment of triumph, Parrhasius revealed that the the curtain in fact *was* his painting; that the judges were as ready to admit the reality of what they expected as the bird was. They, following the bird’s example, had “broke their necks” on their own expectation of seeing a curtain concealing a painting. This is possibly the first famous case of a painting that demonstrated clearly the possibility of representing the real projective plane in local Euclidean terms, so accurately that the Real of the plane’s self–intersection was condensed into the *moment* of recognition.



+1 ☒ -3 ☒ +5 -6
 -1 +2 ☒ +4 -5 ☒
 ☒ -2 +3 -4 ☒ +6

Figure 5. The secondary virtuality of the Borromean knot is revealed by the “gaps” in the Gauss Code notation of its over-and-under crosses (which presume an observer’s point of view). The missing crosses for each ring combine to specify a forth “ghost ring” that is the glue for the other three. To the forced-choice option of “over or under,” the ghost ring seems to provide a non-Euclidean way out.

We do not have to lay out Lacan’s early interest in the real projective plane to make this point. However, it is curious that while commentators have delved deeply into Lacan’s interests in the Möbius band, cross-cap, and Klein bottle — topologies that predate Lacan’s later interest in the case of the Borromean knot — they do not mention the real projective plane nor do they connect the issue of non-orientability. We might pause at this moment to connect the early topology interest to the later knot-theory interest. The connection has also eluded Lacan scholars. The Borromean knot is a “stack” of rings that folds into itself. While each ring is evidently lying on top of a “previous” ring, each ring is similarly “tucked” beneath the next ring. The uncanny at the heart of this $A>B>C> \dots$ A situation is that, in the face of a clear appearance of a stack and a below/above sequence, there is actually none! Like the Möbius band’s twist, something that *must happen* cannot be found to happen in any particular place. The non-orientability of the Borromean knot connects it to the non-orientability of the topologies of the real projective plane. Location, location, location! While local Euclidian effects can be found around any point on the real projective plane, there are no locales that can provide orientation. Up/down, inside/outside, here/there, etc. are all destabilized within the secondary virtuality of the real projective plane. Imagine cutting a long horizontal strip from a Mercator map, where every vertical line is north-south and every horizontal line east-west, and twisting the ends. Not only are the cardinal directions unplugged from their usual cosmic references, the map and map user continually change places.

Just as the Möbius band and other topologies of the projective plane have the observer meet him/herself at a point — and *moment* — of astonishment, the Borromean knot makes what seems to be most evident — the sequential stacking of three rings that seems to go on forever and ever — vanish as soon as we realize that each ring must “tucks under” the next. Here, we are all judges standing before Parrhasius’s painted curtain. We are “seeing ourselves seeing ourselves” in the discovery that we are most prone to take as reality that which is the *barrier*, the sign to turn back. We “get it” when we identify with our own construction of this barrier, when we no longer prefer the alibi that someone else has made it. This, for once and for all, reveals the dynamic link between psychoanalysis and the *ob-jects* that seem to be thrown in our path as we rush forward, with our perceptual apparatuses and their enhancements, to penetrate their mysteries. We have questions; they have curtains.

The Analytic Jailbreak

The idea that a barrier suddenly is overcome with the discovery of its true authorship describes, accurately and succinctly, the goal of the analytical session. The analyst and analysand confront each other as two egos in the perspectival space of the examining room. As Lacan detailed in his L-schema, for analysis to succeed, both analyst and analysand need to transform themselves, from their “stage identities” as egos defined within the networks of cultural, social, and professional Symbolic relations, into spectral operators in a smuggling operation to liberate signifiers repressed by the unconscious. Bruce Fink has focused on the analyst’s two principal options, either to follow the analysand’s slip of the tongue or bungled account with a

subtle cough or murmur; or to herd the analysand into territory where ego defenses are weak, which the analyst has scouted out previously.

The structure of the L-schema is grounded in the use of signifiers, but there is no reason not to extend this use to the kinds of space and time they require. This allies the “blah blah blah” of ego-discourse with the scenic virtuality that is sustained by the Symbolic’s own figure-ground strategies. These assign value, identify objects and regions of anxiety, and associate depth with the “fight or flight” algorithm. The Symbolic is, as it were, so invested in the vectorial space-time of desire and fear that it is almost impossible to say which is more causal. When Symbolic structures are weakened or obscured, space-time supports remain to enforce autonomous, self-maintaining force-fields that achieve the same results. It’s as if a city under the threat of a volcano eruption (that never takes place) is evacuated and for some reasons the residents don’t return. A band of wandering gypsies happens innocently to find the empty town and begin to enjoy the oversized pleasures of civil life, but the buildings, plazas, and streets quickly change them. They raid the stores and dress up; they organize banquets to fill the waiting halls; they see tools of trades and undertake them, as if they were trained for the work since childhood.

It is the city, not its residents, who have concealed then offered up this new virtuality, this new “gypsy interpretation” of what the city means. Formerly, ego-citizens met each other in the streets and offices and homes and conducted the business of the Symbolic. Now, “under new management,” the same force-field has revealed a second power, a power to “communicate with itself” thanks to unsuspecting agencies who are transformed from wayward wanderers into civic persons. It is a visitation of the smile to the Cheshire Cat, the portable, detached signifier taking over possession of the being that had previously displayed it as one-among-many attributes. This flipflop is certainly a quantum folding of a situation by folding the medium in which the situation “unfolds.”

The Gypsy takeover resembles nothing more than the four-ness of Freud’s theory of love, the necessary involvement of spectral lovers to assure that both parties will honor the term of their literal contract, to love and be loved. The others ... who are they? In the L-schema, they are the analyst and analysand, but in what way? The two still sit as egos in the same room, still regard each other within the perspectival domain of furniture, plants, artwork, carpets. But, there are two more. Two Invisibles who are engaged in a game, but playing by two sets of rules. The one listens and, if lucky, becomes the possessor of (key to) the unconscious of the other, the “Other of the other” to erect a Lacanian scandal but only for this special case. As in the game of bridge, the one who listens has the cards the other needs but cannot tell him so, or give away which cards exactly. She (the analyst) must cough or give an “ahem!” at the right moment, following the analysand’s slip or miss amidst the blah blah blah of indifferent patter. Or, she might interject some surprising expression or idea to push the blah blah blah into a new direction. The limitation to these “you’re getting warmer/colder” hints to the blindfolded analysand is a study in self-control. Should the analyst blurt out her discovery the jig is up. Or, should the analysand be allowed to attempt his own thesis about the blah blah blah’s hidden message, it’s time to go home. Only when the signifiers themselves, waiting silently for just the right moment, make a break for it, run past the larynx, tongue, and teeth of the astonished prone gabber, is the project a success.

Lacan offers, separately, a puzzle that is the obvious model for this jailbreak. In fact, the story is set in a jail. Lacan heard the story at a dinner party and became fascinated with it.¹² A prison warden decides to give three of his favorite prisoners a chance to get early release. He proposes a challenge. He will pin one of five “dots” on the back of each. Three of the five are white, two are black. Each prisoner can see the dots on the two others’ backs, but not their own. The prisoner who guesses the color of the dot on his own back will be allowed to walk freely out of the cell and on to a free life. Those who are listening to this are also told: the warden pins three white dots on the three prisoners.

The solution takes some time to think through, but it is readily available to all. Each puzzler thinks about what the prisoners see. Because there are three dots, all prisoners see two white dots on the backs of their mates. But, of course, the point is that they *do not see* the dot on their own back, so they must take into account what their mates see and judge it by how they respond. The first response is nothing. No one makes a move. What could be the reason for this? If there were two black dots pinned, one prisoner would see them and immediately reason that since there were only two black dots in the “supply,” they have been used up and therefore he has it. Knowing the color of the dot, and knowing that the others have not seen what he has seen, he confidently claims the prize of freedom. However, since no one does this, we move to the next option: that there may be one black dot.

If there is a black dot on one prisoner’s back, then that prisoner sees two white dots, while his two mates see a combination of black and white. The prisoner who sees two white dots reasons thus: “I may have a white or a black dot, but my mates are not moving. If they are seeing a black dot on my back, then they must be also seeing one of the two white dots that I see. They are thinking, ‘I may have the other black dot! I don’t know!’ but they are not moving and will continue to stay still. *BUT*, if they see that I have a white dot it will take them only a second to realize that we all have white dots, and it will be a matter of who makes it to the door first!” All prisoners make this deduction at the same time. All of them make a rush for the door.

As Derek Hook has reviewed this puzzle, there are two distinct temporalities at work, and the two overlap. The first temporality is the one of immediate realization generated by the fact that no one sees two black dots. No one actually sees *any* but the point is that the one who saw two would *immediately* know the solution. This immediacy evaporates quickly: zip, zop. The onus passes to each individual *as* individual. If there’s one black dot (the possibility of two being ruled out zipzop) there is now another temporality, one that passes out of the hands of each prisoner and into the collective of the group. This temporality must base itself on an inverse of the first condition. There is no one who sees two black dots, so the next consideration must be, “is there anyone who sees *one*?” The one who saw a black one and white one would still have to wait to see what the others would do. If there is only one black dot I must have it, and the other two *both* see a black/white combination. But, *they are also thinking the same thing*. They would both immediately see that, if they had the *other* black dot, the prisoner with the white dot would run for the door, but this does not happen.

This second stage of reasoning has a second form of delay. It is based on the structural condition by which two prisoners are “held in place” by a third. It is simply too tempting at this point not to suggest a similarity to the Borromean knot, where two rings are held together by a third which, if removed, would

¹² Hook, Derek (2013) “Towards a Lacanian Group Psychology: The Prisoner’s Dilemma and the Trans-Subjective,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 43 (2): 115–132. ISSN 0021- 8308 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12005>.

allow the other two to fall apart. As with the Borromeo knot, is there a “Gauss encoding” that specifies a “ghost ring” invisible to the other three that can account for these two temporalities that by folding the second over the first, yields the solution? A simple transform shows how this is done. By encoding the rings’ pattern of overs and unders (Fig. 5), the program of “sliding tucks” is revealed numerically. There are two crosses missing for each ring. The missing intersections of course constitute a complete set. All six intersections are, at one point, missing for a ring, and they are missing in pairs: 2/4, 3/6, 1/5. These are the “blank spots” that are like the backs of each prisoner: the unknown that each fills with the question, “Do I have a black or white dot?” For *each* prisoner, this is a virtuality that is felt immediately and individually. But, just as the knot of three rings becomes a knot of four rings, the three prisoners realize the solution as soon as they “graphically” extend their individual condition to the group and “visualize” a fourth ring surrounding them, a “black ring” that is “there because it is *not there*.” Like the Borromeo knot, the prisoners have had to convert the condition of each 1:2 relationship to a 3:4 relationship — the relation of *each* to a fourth *inclusive* condition.

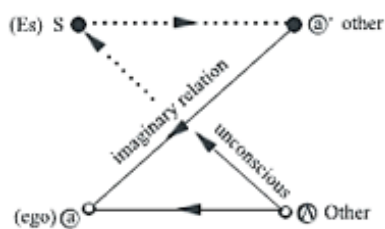


Figure 6. In Lacan’s L-schema, each “player” faces two others, an ego-other and the spectral Other playing the game of before and after (the analyst’s two options of provoking the analysand to move toward a release of trapped signifiers. The issue of the Three Prisoners becomes that of “which role am I playing in the eyes of the others?” Or, “who (which one) am I, and *who* (which one) is asking this question?” Release comes with the acknowledgment that this question is co-symmetrical. The Dummy and the Ventriloquist are “floating functions.”

There is nothing incomplete or wrong with Hook’s analysis. He shows the necessity of considering the Prisoners’ dilemma as a case of *trans*—rather than *inter*—subjectivity. This characterization is in keeping with my view that the intersubjective condition is analogous to the primary virtuality of the analyst and analysand who, as egos, sit in a “primary virtuality,” the analyst’s examining room, where each contemplates the other as an equivalent human being, “another mind,” a subject like any other and certainly like themselves. Just as the analytical session requires a second virtuality where the doubles of the ego-versions of the analyst and analysand play a game of “before” and “after” (the analysand’s insertion of ambiguous gestures/sounds), there is a Gauss code consideration. What is missing for one (the analysand’s lack of access to his unconscious, his “back” in prisoner terms) is missing for the game as a whole (the presence of a circumferential enclosure, a black ring that is effective because it is *not there* — the unconscious as *sharable, collective*, something that is possessed as much by the analyst as by the analysand.

What of the fact that the L-schema situation is about doubling and the Prisoners’ Dilemma is about three judges in relation to a fourth condition? Does the same claim about the operation of a second virtuality within or after a first apply? The answer is supplied by the L-schema itself. Each “player” must deal with the existence of two others: an ego other sitting in a “pictorial” space, a Euclidean “neighborhood” set up around a point on a projective plane; and the spectral other who operates within the projective plane according to the rules of quantum transformation. There is, as in the quantum space of physics, the reality of “spooky correspondence.” The analysand is the navigator of the the analysand’s unconscious. She knows where the road is leading but cannot steer the car. The designated driver, the analysand, can turn the wheel and operate the brakes but is blindfolded. The analyst is gagged, in a limited way: prohibited from saying directly where to go but able to give muted signs about when to turn left or right.

Because the analyst and analysand each see two others, the configuration works the same as in the Prisoners' Dilemma. Recognition must move from a first state (cf. the prisoners' concentration of doubt about their own backs) to a second state (cf. the prisoners' realization of a "secondary structure" common to the group — Hook's *trans*-subjective moment). This is like a circumferential binding ring, effective because it is not literally present but only a virtuality. This is the effectiveness of the real projective plane, the surface of transaction in the literal sense of converting one thing into its mirror opposite, making Lacan's claim about the repressed's return *in inverted form*. This is what happens in analysis. The repressed contents of the unconscious are inverted because *they are returned*. This is to say that the agency of the Other operates, functionally, to *re-lect* contents and thereby reveal their *binding* — one could say, even, *lawful* — nature.

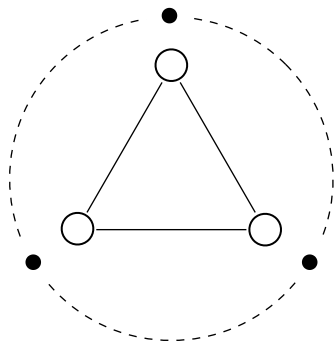


Figure 7. Like the Borromean knot, the L-schema generates its own circumferential and binding entity, a virtual presence that effects the transition from an intersubjective virtuality matching up to the pictorial presence of analyst and analysand in a room to a trans-subjective *co-presence* of ventriloquist and dummy engaged in a game of before and after, where the analyst sees but cannot steer and the analysand can steer but is blind.

I have not made any attempt to reveal a "hidden geometry" correlating the diagram of the Prisoners' Dilemma to the pseudo-Rosicrucian figure of the divine eye, a triangle inscribed within a circle. But, perhaps, there is a coincidental relationship between this historical image and the idea of providence as related to the realization of "prophecy" in its Lacanian form of *Nachträglichkeit*, a retroactive realization of the traumatic Real in an obsessional revisit to the "empty locale," the void that now has a voice of authority. The double meaning of the eye is "durably double," in that "eye" means both a void and the optical organ, but (1) the optical organ is again doubled, as both intromissive and extromissive; and (2) the void is also doubled, as a kind of black hole that draws in surrounding space and, at the same time, a point radiating an uncanny power — a power that must architecturally be attenuated by a series of concentric enclosures. Optical doubling is evident in the way that looking and gazing are treated as energies directed from the eye outward to passive objects, that are not changed by being seen; and, at the same time, the physics of light from the object to the retina is accepted as the causal path of vision. Because looking and gazing are directed intentionally and therefore subjectively, the direction is from subject to object; but, because what is seen travels from the object to the subject with a force recognized since ancient times as impacting emotions directly and immediately, visual lines are always vectorial doubles, traveling alongside ("purloined" originally has this meaning), one concealed within the other. Confusion over the direction of the (Lacanian) gaze, most famously evident in Foucault and Lacan, grows not from a confusion over this "contronymic" quality but from a refusal to admit the contronymic quality of visibility.

The Lacanian gaze is not simply the gaze of the object to the subject who, in constructing the objectivity of the object, has endowed it with perceptual mastery; it affirms a contractual relationship between subject and object that admit to an anamorphic, silent support. For the subject-object pair, there is a *subject-in-object* and *object-in-subject* pair. The S_0 converts to O_S and *vice versa* because the contract is fundamentally a cross-inscription. The gaze is uncanny because the gaze embodies the structure of the uncanny. The gaze requires an anamorphic (or "anamorphic," to rhyme with "psychotic") supplement, just as the neurotic unconscious (only neurotics *have* an unconscious, according to Lacan) requires its own

terminus, a self-destructive breakdown that “returns” the mind’s apocalyptic last act to its autoerotic pre-subjective state, where there is only the binding structure of the quantum, projective topology, where self / Other distinctions cannot be stabilized and where the subject metastasizes into a multiplicity of “larval subjects,” as Deleuze would call them.¹³

This doubling of optics into the look and the gaze, and the doubling of the gaze again (reflecting the double inscription of the uncanny) forces us to take seriously Freud’s remark about needing two *kinds* of unconscious to account for the psyche of the neurotic subject:

The remains of the day are not unconscious in the same way (as the unconscious desire). Desire belongs to another kind of the unconscious ... Already when we posit one unconscious we are reproached that this is fantastic; what will they say if we admit that we need two kinds of unconscious?¹⁴

Freud softened this conjecture by distinguishing unconscious materials, saying that there were those readily accessible to consciousness and therefore “preconscious,” leaving materials that took considerable labor to extract.¹⁵ Mladen Dolar’s essay on Anamorphosis suggests a different kind of division, one that has the promise of restoring the interest Freud had in his 1895 essay, “Project for a Scientific Psychology.” The puzzle of Freud’s earlier attempt to resolve the nature of stimulus in relation to a return to pacificity (which is the “pleasurable” part?) could be understood in terms of an anamorphic division between what is received as an interruption — an anamorphic “blur” on the pictorial “surface” of consciousness — and the discovery of the content of the blur. This, Dolar argues, is not the end of the story. The full implication of this doubling of the pictorial “surface” lies in the *procedure* required to access the precise point of view required by the anamorphic image. In the case of the Holbein portrait of *The Ambassadors*, this alignment plays the key role, according to the analysis done by John North, revealing Holbein’s elaborate geometrical schema involving the number 9 and the belief that April 11, 1533 (the date given by Holbein for the completion of the *double* portrait) was to be the end of the world.

What would be the most ambitious, the most radical form of the question of how anamorphosis figures into the “psychoanalytic subject”? I use this phrase to allow the question to range across the broadest possible terrain of subjectivity, including *pre*-subjective autoeroticism (the possibility of “larval subjects” working within an anarchical topsy-turvy world) and *post*-subjective, *post*-neurotic psychosis, meaning the part of Lacan’s Graph of Desire where there is no unconscious and the mind comes to “the end of its rope.” Aaron Schuster’s suggestion that this Deleuzian Apocalypse is foreshadowed by the psyche’s attempts at self-sabotage (another name for which might well be the death drive), raises this

¹³ See Aaron Schuster, “Is Life a Disease?” in *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2018), 30–37.

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, page? From Lecture XXXI, “The Anatomy of the Mental Personality,” *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1932): “The consideration of these dynamic relations puts us in a position to distinguish two kinds of unconscious: one which is transformed into conscious material easily and under conditions which frequently arise, and another in the case of which frequently arise, and another in the case of which such a transformation is difficult, can only come about with a considerable expenditure of energy, or may never occur at all. In order to avoid any ambiguity as to whether we are referring to the one or the other unconscious, whether we are using the word in the descriptive or dynamic sense, we make use of a legitimate and simple expedient. We call the unconscious which is only latent, and so can easily become ‘conscious,’ the ‘pre-conscious,’ and keep the name ‘unconscious’ for the other.”

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, “The Anatomy of the Mental Personality,” Lecture 31 (1932), *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933).

interesting possibility: What if the earliest, autoerotic stage of self-destruction is related to the last? What if the two are antipodes within the topology of the real projective plane, where “messages” on one side of a sphere are transported with a flip and a twist to the other side, an origami palindrome?

There would be an enormous payoff, if “payoff” is the right word for the disaster that might occur should Lacan’s earlier “non-orientable” topologies connected to his late interest in knots, the Borromeo knot in particular. The disaster would be not a collapse of Lacan’s theory of the subject but, rather, a kind of phantasmagoria where theory would define itself as a trip down the tunnel connecting the two antipodes, *through* the middle of the real projective plane. The trip would be marked by a struggle to maintain a neurotic grasp of reality in the face of psychotic “presentations.” The theorist would confront the apocalyptic potential of the mind with the risk that theory itself would be drawn in. As Albert Camus wrote in *The Plague*, the physician studying the evidence of the advancing disease beneath his microscope would be well aware that he himself would *already be infected*, that his insight and understanding would be reconditioned by the onset of symptoms. But, to take Schuster’s conjecture seriously, wouldn’t the necessary step be *into* the rather Nietzschean possibility that the “neurotic” theoretical idea was providentially fated to meet its “psychotic” double in a moment of truth coupled with destruction? Before this moment, about which nothing would be possible to say (and, thus, theory would end in an act of semi-suicide), the truly radical thought would be that foreshadowing of this *terminus ad quem* has been atomized; that theory itself has used the death drive as an aerosol to “juice up” its otherwise dry narratives?

I would offer one compelling argument for the truth of this outlandish suggestion. What if the death drive did not exist for the human (neurotic) subject, the subject with an unconscious? Subtract the death drive and you have a subject without symptoms, a Symbolic without any gaps, an Imaginary where the mirror reflects left and right sides in their correct position. You would not have alienation or separation. In other words, you would not have a psychoanalytical condition. No neurosis, no subject, no unconscious. The raw conclusion would be that, without the death drive, the human would be, without an unconscious, radically psychotic. This non-subjective human would not have a theory about anything. There would be no paternal signifier to stabilize theory’s infinite chain of conjectures, no discourse separating signifying chains from master signifiers or *jouissance*. The death drive is essential to the neurotic subject and her unconscious. Now, what about the *two* unconsciousnesses? If, as Dolar argues, anamorphosis compels us to go beyond the simple “aha!” of recognizing the identity of the blurred image and step beyond the curtain that the image has constructed, we will see ourselves retreating back behind *another curtain* at the back of the room, our spectral, palindromic self that goes as we come and comes as we go, a demonic double form at the antipode of the real projective plane that is the topological space behind this curtain.

We will have entered into the same space that, as John North has carefully documented, Holbein himself anticipated as apocalyptic (self-destructive), overdetermined, and revelational. Without any knowledge of North’s disclosures of the 9-ish triangles, Golgotha, and sidereal data informing the painting’s “secret message,” Dolar has already prepared the Lacanian documents for the marriage of these two ideas. Not only does the unconscious stand for an “anamorphic” presence in consciousness, divided into a pre-conscious desire to know the contents of the blurred image and an equally strong desire to step behind the curtain itself (in an act of self-destruction), but this second desire is anamorphic in relation to the first. Anamorphosis is “anamorphic” in its inner self-division that couples knowledge and destruction as a necessary sequence. In the moment that the unconscious is “known,” it destroys itself and

the knower. The unconscious is the black hole of the subject, the psychotic kernel at the heart of the subject's neurotic struggle for survival. But, in this kernel, there is another kernel, another black hole anamorph(otically) blurred in relation to the common view (the erroneous idea that the unconscious is "there to be seen as a picture"). This is the point where anamorphosis becomes anamorphotics, where the unconscious plays the part of consciousness *in its anxiety* over a stain, a blur. Consciousness identifies with this anxiety, sympathizes with it, and enters *into* the unconscious's "way of thinking."

This would be a fantastical, shaky construct were it not for the way in which we find, in art, exact simulacra. In Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*, there are two female figures, supposed to be reclining and tentatively identified as prostitutes, a seated allegorical figure in the classical posture of Melancholy, and two figures in the process of opening or holding back curtains. The front curtain is akin to the device used by painters as an authorial stand-in. The painter "reveals" the painted world in a gesture of pulling back a curtain; and so we have literal figures, sometimes as self-portraits of the painter him/herself, shown in the work doing just that. The figure in the back seems to be doing the same thing, but from a reverse position. the "painter" is cosmic; the curtain he/she pulls back is the sky, in the same manner of Giotto's angel, rolling up the "canvas" of material creation. Thus, we know that this curtain, like Parrhasius's, is both an image and a rebus perched midway in its transfer from a natural object in the pictorial field and an anamorphic/-photic *memento mori*, with the invitation to enter into that midway, the brothel chamber.

The device of the "curtain in front" paired with a "curtain in back" corresponds to Dolar's doubling of anamorphosis into phases of discovery and self-implication. In the first, a truth is discovered to be a construction, and the construction a truth; in the second, the author of the construction turns out to be none other than the viewer who seeks out the narrow visual tunnel of orthographic viewing and then encounters an ortho-*psychic* situation. This is Giambattista Vico's famous theorem, *verum ipsum factum*, "the truth is itself the making." Playing on ancient literature's word equivalences, Vico articulated the secondary virtuality he had used to discover his "imaginative universal," the conceptual structure of mythic thinking. This, too, was based on an anecdote about anamorphosis: the first human pre-subjects encountered their blur in the form of a flash of lightning, followed by a deafening clap of thunder. The former connected earth to heaven with a violent sear, the second seemed to annotate this sear with an unintelligible but "orthopsychic" speech. This first instance of an acousmatic voice was unintelligible, foreign. Vico posited that, if the code preceded the message, the results would be *trans*-subjective. The pre-subjects would transfer their own nature to the objective world and, in effect, subjectify it before they would subjectify themselves. The authority presumed to be concealed behind the enigmatic speech of things would be the agency of subjectification. The first moment of anamorphosis, the sudden perception of an "orthographic" agency of disruption of pictorial tranquility — a dramatic orthographic tunneling through space — would be followed by the enigma of a double, where the living subject would be haunted by dead nature in the form of a cross-inscription of death within life and life within death.

Vico's anamorphosis repeats the situation of the Prisoners' Dilemma, but it additionally shows how the Dilemma is related to the real projective plane. When each prisoner sees two white dots on the backs of his mates, thinking divides itself into two. First is the "instantaneous" realization that there is no one who will see two black dots, and therefore no one who will run out of the door immediately. This is the "blur" of the perspectival scene, but the blur is present behind the backs of each prisoner, an *absence* brought forward by the *presence* of two white dots. What is made *visible* is the *nothing* of the black dot that might still be on

the back of all prisoners, but only the prisoners as viewers, not as viewed. The emblem of the situation is a trefoil, whose pattern of over-and-unders produces a Gauss code of 010/101. The viewer's position is represented by 010 ("I see two white dots but my dot may be black") while the viewed condition is 101:

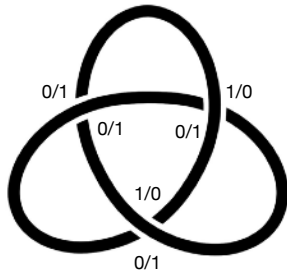


Figure 8. The trefoil knot is a continuous string that intersects itself, producing a symmetrical set of Gauss codings: 010/101. The trefoil anticipates the Borromeo knot's pattern of "empty crossings," linking that knot's use of self-intersection to the topology of non-orientation.

"The only positive situation would be two black dots, seen by the one with a white dot, who immediately rushes out." In Vico's two-part scenario, the 010 divides the viewer from the viewed with the equation of opposites, the heaven-and-earth connection made by the lightning. The second phase is the Prisoners' transsubjective realization, that not only is the word of the thunder misunderstood, it is *not understandable*. The enigma is durable; translations will be temporary, contingent, forever incomplete. The reason for this radical unintelligibility is of course the fact that the pre-subject has made the word himself, but that this making has been repressed at the deepest level of the psyche.

Vico's Gauss code, its pattern of "over-and-under foldings," follows the trefoil's origami tumble of 010 on top of 101. The lightning logic of anamorphosis would be *ortho-graphic* — something breaking through the 1:1 perspective protocol of looking and seeing — while the acousmatic logic of "lost meaning" would be *ortho-psychic* — an anti-perspective protocol of looking and *seeing-without-seeing*. Just as the Prisoners realize that the solution has been constituted by their own (in-)actions, the black dot has existed as a virtuality behind the backs of all three, linked in the same inscrutable way as the rings of the Borromeo knot. Three agents have been held in place, *paralyzed*, by the presence of a virtual fourth.¹⁶ The situation is that of a *daemon* of imprisonment and the possibility of escape, *askesis*. Both are themes in the primary formulæ of the uncanny, which (according to Jentsch) involve (1) a flight from evil that structures, ironically, a direct encounter with that same evil and (2) a momentum extending motion beyond the point where it has been canceled. The commonality of annealing motion and stillness is precisely the rule that results in the Prisoners' Dilemma, the Borromeo knot, and the trefoil's eternal round-about. The uncanny's "moving but going nowhere" and "achieving absolute freedom of motion through stillness" are two sides of the same coin.

¹⁶ The theme of paralysis is prominent in Vico's first societies. Emulating the action of the lightning, altars are set up in burned-out clearings (swiddens), where ritual sacrifice authenticates the interpretation of oracles. The specific location of the altars are invariable, however, because the *specific* soil must connect with the heavens' *specific* configuration of signs. Vico says that this relationship is contained in the myth of Prometheus, chained to the rock while an eagle plucks out his liver. The first societies are "cyclopean": each family's religion is tied to the household hearth; each "law" is given through the "voice of the flame" from the ancestral dead (*manes*) to the women serving as priestesses of Hestia. The marriage of a daughter necessitated a defection from this role that required a ruse to avoid breaking the covenant with the *manes*. Like the prisoners of the Prisoners' Dilemma, a "black ring" would have to be broken, an *orthopsychic* break would have to be made within the *orthographically* determined 1:1 held in place by the auspices of the hearth. The escape of a daughter in marriage was made possible by the ruse of rape, vindicating the daughter of any complicity. The "black ring" binding cyclopean groups was held in place by the two-fold structure of anamorphosis. Its virtuality could be penetrated by an anamorphic blur, followed by a re-sanctification modeled after the theme of doubles (marriage).