What Is a Masterpiece?

Looking at a film, reading a novel, or studying a poem in a "classroom situation" is almost never without the anxiety of not knowing "what to look for." Courses have their own goals and rules; works of art are fit into their program of study. Yet, true works of art involve a meaningfulness that goes beyond course requirements, or any requirements. They form a community with other works of genius that span centuries, cultures, and individual temperaments. While no two works are alike, not even works by the same creator, there is a tone or atmosphere of the masterpiece that goes beyond the immediate contexts of its production and reception. This is the way that style ceases to belong to the artist or artwork and achieves an independent status.

Figure 1. Andy Warhol and Alfred Hitchcock, interview, 1974. Andy Warhol:" Since you know all these cases, did you ever figure out why people really murder? It's always bothered me. Why."
Alfred Hitchcock: "Well I'll tell you. Years ago, it was economic, really. Especially in England. First of all, divorce was very hard to get, and it cost a lot of money."

For those who can remember their first sip of really good wine, or nibble of a cheese more than cheddar, the paradox is that the first of almost anything with any degree of complexity creates displeasure or confusion at the first interaction. Some sipper-nibblers never recover and go on with life wondering what all the fuss was about. Others persist, put up with the difficulties of imposed unpleasantness (the bitterness of beer, the cacophony of a Beethoven string quartet, the brutality of a Soutine painting) and even become connoisseurs of the negative. This could be put down to the general psychology of deferred reward, the view that nothing good comes without effort and even pain in the beginning; and that simple pleasures are just that.

Anna Lembke, M.D., in *Dopamine Nation*, presented an entirely physical account of our complicated relationship to pleasure, which can easily be applied to our experience with works of genius.[1] In terms of neurochemicals (principally dopamine, as you might have guessed), it repeats what Sigmund Freud was trying to get at in his 1895 essay, "Project for a Scientific Psychology," that the physiology of pleasure and pain is no simple matter. Both Lembke and Freud emphasize that the neural circuit aims for homeostasis. Each stimulus, pleasant or unpleasant, excites the nervous system, which strives to return it to a near–zero energy level. To do this, Lembke elaborates the role of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that, along with others, does away with the distinction between pleasure and pain to deal with, simply, disturbance. Pleasure disturbs, so does pain; dopamine considers them equal threats to balance. In the process of correcting the circuit, the possibility of addiction looms strong. We can just as easily be locked into negative as well as positive adjustments.

I can't present a full picture of Freud's and Lembke's arguments here, but I can generalize their conclusions in relation to our problem of how to relate to works of genius. Basically, the neural project's

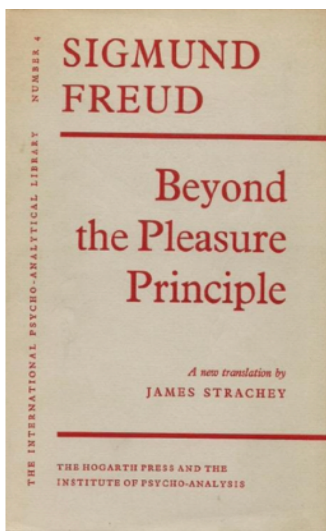
---

[1] Anna Lembke, *Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence* (New York: Dutton, 2021). Sigmund Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology (1950 [1895])," trans. James Strachey, 1954 In *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis*, edited as above, **347-445** (London: Imago Publishing Co.; New York: Basic Books).

aim of homeostasis and neutralization of the difference between pleasure and pain means that we enjoy two things when we process stimulus. We enjoy the "original" stimulus and we enjoy the process of returning the system to zero. Freud noticed this first with hysterics, who report that they are experiencing pain but are actually feeling pleasure; then, with sex, which involves an increasing intensity of displeasure before the pleasure of release at climax. The main take-away for Freud was that our "reports" of enjoyment or dis-enjoyment are not to be trusted. We say things are wonderful when they're not, and we frequently seek out things that are, if you look closely at them, displeasurable. In the case of risk sports this is evident, where the adrenaline rush more than justifies the fear of skiing, bungee jumping, or all-terrain bike riding. Those who run or swim regularly benefit from the endorphin high that comes with training the system to "put up with it." The chemical exchanges involved with adjusting the neural system to stress themselves produce a "house wine" that is addictive.

Freud had the difficult task of finding a way to say that we seek displeasure to the point of having a "death drive." Complexly, we associate the point of a final rest with Nirvana and mentally elaborate this as a way for our neural systems and our cultures as well to "start over." Children playing frequently employ a smash-everything element that they stage and execute with glee. Only with more socialization do we learn to regard the death drive as controversial and say that we "choose life over death." As survivalist and global catastrophe films demonstrate, we still prefer the idea of a universal re-set button.

Our internal chemical addiction can be seen in the case of compulsive gamblers. Paradoxically, they experience more pleasure when they lose than when they win. The sociological explanation is that their anxieties over their role as a supporter of their families is re-established more when they have lost their kids' college tuition savings or the deed to the family home than if they inadvertently win money that constitutes a guilty personal enjoyment. The tragedy of the Titanic is more glorious than one passenger falling overboard, and glamor goes with the chemical process of equalization. We are addicted to pain because pain more quickly and successfully returns our neural systems to a low-energy state.



What happens for all people in the same way but to different degrees must clearly have historical and cultural implications, which motivated Freud to write *Civilization and Its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, 1930). Without the death drive, culture is not possible. We love to hate, love to suffer, and the lengths we go to to "domesticate" the unpleasant side-effects so that we can continue to hate and suffer by using these negatives to create social and political bonds is extraordinary. Sacrifice and denial become the key to social and cultural solidarity. We cannot simplistically say that we do things according to the "pleasure principle" of seeking delight and avoiding unpleasantness. It makes more sense to say the reverse, which is what Freud did in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 1920).

This is a sketchy introduction to a complicated matter demanding our most careful intellectual effort. It goes against our temptations to say that architecture, along with other art experiences as well as food, drink, diversions, and other pleasure-seeking activities, seeks delight. The "house beautiful" expectation is that architecture provides not only shelter but comfort, enjoyment, and even pleasure. It is so obvious that we *seek* comfort, enjoyment, and pleasure that we find it necessary to state these as architecture's *duty to*

provide these things, as Sam Ridgeway did in his book on Marco Frascari: "Marco Frascari believed that architects should design thoughtful buildings capable of inspiring their inhabitants to have pleasurable and happy lives."[2] Frascari himself claimed that "The main role of the art of constructing architectural and urban spaces is to make our life congenial and satisfying or, in other words, to create numinous places for the enjoyment of a *vita beata*."[3] Why not? Frascari himself said as much. And, other authors have chimed in.[4] My response is like that made by Mahatma Gandhi when he was asked what he thought about Western Civilization: "It would be nice." To pose happiness as a goal for architecture runs into the same problems as posing happiness as a goal for human subjects. It ignores the nature of humans to *say* and *think* they are seeking pleasure and The Good while — as their actions and methods make clear — their true goals are far more complicated. We have undeniable experiences of pleasure, contentment, even bliss; but these meaningful experiences do not banish for once and for all our shadows, our secret conspiracies with displeasure, even pain and disaster. The simplistic model of the subject as a pleasure seeker and pain avoider overlooks not just the "inner" facts of the need for homeostasis, involving a neutralization of the differences separating pain and pleasure, but the more obvious cases where we dedicate ourselves to objects, persons, experiences, and processes that are undeniably painful.

Figure 2. Gian Carlo Bernini, The Ecstasy of Santa Teresa of Avila, Cornaro Chapel, Rome, 1647–1652.

An emblematic case is that of the Homeric traveler Odysseus. In Book 12, the hero has his crew plug their ears with wax, but strap him to the mast of the ship, unplugged, so that he can hear the reputedly beautiful — but unbearable — song of the Sirens. The combination of pain and pleasure is a mark of great art, where we move from mere amusement to a feeling that we are being transformed, almost "against our will," hence Odysseus's need to be strapped to the mast. We could compare Bernini's sculpture of "The Ecstasy of Santa Teresa" (Fig. 2), where the role of pain in pleasure is the key to this experience of extimity. We could say of this "potentiality of the margin" that it is available to all "normal neurotics" who spend most of their days denying the importance of such potentiality in order to reserve, for the actual experience itself, the possibility of happening. It is as if, as neurotics, we not only can appreciate a state that is technically psychotic but set it as our ultimate goal. This is not the psychosis of breakdown, the loss of our neurotic sense of place and identity, but an intensification that pushes these senses to the point where they give way to something Real that has been present, "virtually" we might say," all along. Thus, in cases like Santa Teresa's, we say that a state is realized

---

[2] Sam Ridgeway, *Architectural Projects of Marco Frascari: The Pleasure of a Demonstration* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017).

[3] Marco Frascari, "The Present Architecture Smells Bad," in Federica Goffi, ed., *Marco Frascari's Dream House: An Architecture of the Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 84.

[4] Henri LeFebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Grant Hildebrand, *Origins of Architectural Pleasure* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1999); and of course the popular Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (London : Penguin Books, 2014).

where the "mortal" (= neurotic) persona has turned itself inside-out in order to find out "who it truly is," and that this moment of inside-outness is rehearsed, in art, music, literature, and love, so that when it overwhelms us, we can "know what's happening." Or, at least we may be allowed to say that we know.

Thus, we see immediately that the problem with Sam Ridgeway, or Alain de Botton, or even Marco Frascari's "happy architecture" is that it has no way of handling the "psychotic" presence that, within everyday subjectivity, refuses to be domesticated and, at least at first, seems opposed to the projects of comfort, delight, and enjoyment. The subject of ecstasy renounces "the happy life" in exchange for the Real of "psychotic" reversal, where the subject is stripped of identity and satisfaction to face something greater.[5] Architecture criticism for the most part remains at the level of the pleasure principle, pre-1925, stuck in the Roaring Twenties of the imagination, unaware that pleasure's dark side is far more ruthless and effectively destructive than outright danger. The first and most obvious objection to Happy Architecture is the theoretical position supported by the evidence that human subjects typically, universally, seek one thing while they say they are seeking another. We must frame ourselves as rational beings who avoid unpleasure and seek reliable satisfactions, so our social communications are obliged to affirm our allegiance to whatever is generally perceived to be good. This commitment even reaches to the depths of consciousness; we cannot admit to ourselves that what we enjoy about enjoyment is that a lot of it is quite unpleasant. This is particularly obvious with hysterics, who report pleasure as pain and pain as pleasure. But, it is generally true for all of us. We study and submit to disciplined assimilation of sometimes unintelligible materials to "get an education." We practice music, dance, or some graphic art to get recognition from others. We run every day to stay fit.

Our relation to achievement is quite complicated, and we tend to identify with the socially-perceived/endorsed outcome rather than the actual pain or pleasure of the processes involved. Yet, we do this because, at the level of experience, we endure contradictions and put up with pain on behalf of the *symbolic* rewards of recognition. In this transfer from actual experience to a collective affirmation, we see almost immediately how low art is different from high art. In low art ("having fun") we can experience the artwork in terms of relationships, impressions, and intellectual benefits ("I learned a lot about myself from this film/novel"). With high art, in contrast, meanings are displaced and dismantled by the greater experience of meaning-*ful-ness*. We find it impossible to say what we have learned from great works of art, works we say are "works of genius," because there is no way to disaggregate meaningfulness into separate meanings that we can explain to others. It is typical of our most profound encounters with art that we say, in response to someone who asks about it, that "you had to be there." There is, for those who see the connection between Santa Teresa and their own ecstasies, no way to say what has happened; no way to describe, let alone rationalize, the totalizing effects.

---

[5] Three books stand out as particularly helpful in understanding the complications of pleasure/displeasure. First is Richard Boothby's comprehensive study of Freud's "energetics" theory of the death drive, *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991); Todd McGowan's *Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis* (Lincoln NB and London: University of Nebraska, 1991); and Aaron Schuster's *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT, 2016). Although understanding the death drive's significance for architecture is not easy, it is not impossible. At least, architecture critical theorists should resist the pleasure principle on the grounds that it is actually a positivist simplification of Skinnerian psychology, which even Skinner himself amended as unacceptably naïve. Unfortunately, this is the common error made by the "happy houses" school of thought in architecture theory.

In a curious physiological counterpart to this "psychotic" aspect of art, the Stendhal Syndrome sometimes causes the spectator of art, music, or even architecture or landscape to physically collapse. In the example used at the opening of Paolo Sorrentino's 2013 film, *The Great Beauty*, a Japanese tourist visiting the Piazza on the Janiculum overlooking Rome during a performance of David Lang's composition, "I Lie," by the Torino Vocalensemble, is so overwhelmed by the concentric forces of beauty closing in on him that he dies of a heart attack. This is a medically rare response, but it exaggerates features of the art experience that are present potentially. We imagine a presentational space where our position as a spectator is insulated from extreme but open to the challenge of destruction. We are "ready to die," so to speak. Our sympathetic nervous system, our "fight or flight" sense, prepares us to live or die as we lower our guard and give into the power of the work of art. The vagus nerve, which among other things makes us faint in the presence of fright or shock, communicates what we see and hear directly to our entire nervous system, bypassing the normal processing features of intellection and detached evaluation. It is the "exposed nerve" we willingly place at the margin between our protected space of spectating and the "stage" where art is happening. If we do not take it out of its safely insulated space, if it is too close to us; we say that "we couldn't get into" the work. If we take the riskier option of putting this uninsulated nerve within close reach of the work, however, we are in danger of being overtaken. Like the Stendhal Syndrome victim, we can come close to collapse or even death; or, like Santa Teresa, we can die of the ecstasy that seems to be a direct encounter.

It is good to have some experience with Stendhal–like situations. Ethnographically speaking, we could say that cultures are structured by key events, such as initiation experiences, where extremity is the rule. The anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner (van Gennep's follower) documented cases of "rites of passage" — basically initiation rituals — where the transition of the adolescent to adulthood or the couple to marriage or the dead into the deceased was observed as a liminal passage through an extreme space and time. The model of this, from antiquity, was well known as the *katabasis* (descent into Hades) and famously formalized by the annual celebrations at Eleusis, a short distance from Athens, where for over five hundred years pilgrims submitted themselves to the terrifying drama of the death and resurrection of Persephone/Kore. On the procession to the ritual site, pilgrims dressed in their finery submitted knowingly to insults and threats hurled up to them as they passed over a bridge; this humiliation prepared them for the sober experience to come. All had to be "equalized," all had to feel a part of the collective audience, for the dramatic Stendhal shock to be effective. Like other kinds of shock treatment, the effect was simultaneously physiological and psychological. Everyone, following their experience of this famous show, reported that they no longer feared death. Everyone. Another impressive fact about Eleusis is that, of the hundreds of thousands if not millions of those who went through the ritual cleansing on the condition that they would not reveal any of its details, *none broke this oath*. When the playright Aeschylus made oblique references to the rituals in his plays, he was taken to court and charged with a capital offense (he was subsequently acquitted).[6]

[6] Simon Critchly, "Athens in Pieces: What Really Happened at Eleusis?" *The New York Times* (March 13, 2019). URL https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/13/opinion/ancient-greece-ritual-mystery-eleusis.html

Eleusis is perhaps the most famous case, just as the Stendhal Syndrome is the most extreme outcome. But, both *exemplars* say this about the work of genius as an extreme or psychotic condition made for "ordinary" (meaning "neurotic") mortals: you couldn't say it was pleasure-seeking *nor* could you say that it aimed at producing happiness. History, biology, and the nature of the human subject refute the thesis of "architecture (or any other art) of happiness." The important point is that while Eleusis and the Stendhal include happiness as "one moment in the cycle of the human experience" their aim is more complex. Their simulation of death is critical; their totality replaces the more localized project to secure pleasure and avoid pain.

How to Regard *Rear Window*

In this context, we look at the films of Hitchcock a Hitchcock himself did: on two levels. At the first level is the question of survival. A film does not exist because it is a work of art but because it persuades people to pay money for the privilege of watching it. In securing this economic foundation, Hitchcock was a master. He knew that people prefer to be discomforted far more than they enjoy being pleased. He consciously cultivated a reputation for being the master of suspense, where the audience was "held on pins and needles." The stage tricks of this art have been perfected since ancient times. Imagine playing on the piano a scale of eight tones — an octave. C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. Boring. An artist plays the scale this way: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, … … … C. The listener, arriving at B expects C but C does not come. Has the pianist forgotten about it? Has the "promise" of the first seven notes been broken? Suspense is, in the most compact formula, *suspension*, the withholding of a reward, the desire for which has been artificially induced. We know in advance that Comedy ends with a happy reunion, but the union must be a *re-* event, following the sad separation of those who "belong together." What about Tragedy? This is the death drive in its pure artistic state. The hero has accomplished an unexpected and perhaps undeserved rise, a ↑, and we feel that there is another shoe waiting to drop, a ↓, which is supplied by Fate, following the universal principal that balance must be restored no matter what, that "what goes up must come down." Our happiness in this case comes from seeing that, no matter how rich or famous the hero is, and thus different from us, that *all* must abide within this order. Our individual death is somehow made bearable by knowing that it is an end that must be suffered by everyone.

Both Comedy and Tragedy involve displeasure. Comedy ends with the sense of pleasure only by terminating temporality artificially. We do not follow the happily re-united couple back to their small apartment, or suffer their loss of sleep when they tend their screaming infants, or share their disappointments when the older adolescents go astray. It's better not to know these things. Tragedy gives us an end (death) which actually ends. We leave a Tragedy the same way we leave a funeral. We would say that if we left happy we would "not be getting the point."

With a Hitchcock film there are two distinctive kind of resolution. The first is that of justice calibrated to the union of a couple. In *North by Northwest*, Roger O. Thornhill and Eve Kendall hop into a Pullman bed as the train zooms through a tunnel (a bit literal). *Rear Window*'s argumentative Jeff and Lisa finally

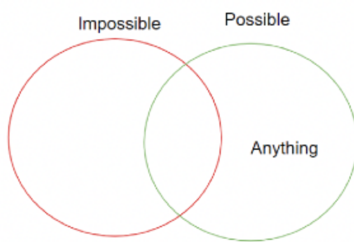


Figure 3. Euler circles (rather than Venn diagrams) can deal with the impossible "as impossible." In this case the void where the two circles seem to intersect (they do not in Euler terms), there is nonetheless a union that is the "everything" that follows from the Latin saying, *ex falso, sequitur quodlibit*, "from the false/fiction, both the true and the false can follow."

find peace as Jeff naps and Lisa turns to the latest edition of *Bazaar*, a fashion magazine (once Jeff fell asleep she could safely ditch *Beyond the High Himalayas*). *Vertigo*'s couple, Scottie and Judy, are not so fortunate. When Scottie realizes he's been duped by Judy and her former lover Elster, he takes her back to the scene of the crime (faked suicide of the "real Madeleine" that Judy and played as an actress to fool Scottie), and summarizes her crime. She is reptant and it is not too late for Scottie to forgive her, but a nun shows up unexpectedly to see who's in the tower at this time of night and frightens poor Judy to jump.

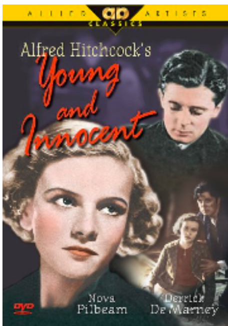
Whether the resolution is "happy" or tragic, we take pleasure in seeing its logical necessity, not as an "If A then B" kind of determinism but as the intricate meshing of gear-parts we had only barely noticed when they were presented. This is the principle of the "fair-play doctrine" of mystery stories — that the audience should be given everything it needs to solve the puzzle, even though they will almost always be surprised by the ending. Hitchcock gives us all we need, often by showing who did what, removing the "whodunit" question from the start. Rather, we focus on other things: how the wrongly accused person escapes and is vindicated (*The 39 Steps*, *The Wrong Man*, *North by Northwest*), how two people were really the same person (*Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *Stage Fright*), or how what our point-of-view character *feels to be true* can survive skeptical examination (*Rear Window*). Directly or indirectly, Hitchcock takes up the problem of the witness to a crime who is disbelieved. As with *The Lady Vanishes*, the evidence of the senses of the person we sympathize with is not at first socially acceptable. The drama involves convincing others that a crime has been committed and must be dealt with.

Because the process of recognition and vindication meets with all kind of obstacles and dangers, the audience can be held in suspense. Siding with the hero, we resent any delay. Seeing the hero put him/herself into danger to defend the truth (*Young and Innocent* is particularly good on this point) asks for our extra investment of sympathy. When we see *how* Hitchcock manages, within this highly variable formulas for cinematic enjoyment, to construct SUSPENSE and SUSPENSION, we move into another kind of pleasure, the pleasure that is, distinctly, *critical*. We see that Hitchcock is an artist, in the same way we might appreciate the skills of a surgeon if we are conscious during the operation. In other words, we benefit from the skills when we "enjoy" the film along with the rest of the audience. But, we have a distinctively different kind of enjoyment when we see and appreciate how the film has insured this first kind of pleasure.

How do we learn what we need to know to move from being the enjoying consumer targeted by Hitchcock's design, the design that gets us to pay for the privilege of sitting in a darkened auditorium and having the bejesus scared out of us? Two distinctively different skills are required. First, we have to know something about the work of art (as experience) generally and film in particular. We would need to know about how plot points, which suddenly shift the audience's perception of what's happening, must happen at specific points and times. We have to know how the beginning of the film is partly misrepresented when it is first presented, but sufficiently memorable so that, at the end, the audience is able to return to it

retroactively to attach the end to the beginning to make a perfect circle.[7] These two principle define, in turn, two kinds of criticism. The "criticism by the cut" looks at how transitions, division, contrasts, and inconsistencies work in the film story. "Criticism by punctuation," in contrast, examines how the film remains *one* film, and how elements repeated within the film constitute returns, repeats, and *identities*. Analysis may seem at first to destroy the project of enjoyment, but it opens to view the mechanical literacy and poetic skill of the artist who has structured these breaks and healed their wounds. His/her techniques are on par with that of the famed magician–physician Asclepius. The elixir of Asclepius, it should be noted, was a *pharmakon*, a substance with the power to heal or kill, meaning indirectly that healing is equivalent to killing and *vice versa* — as we say after a hilarious joke, "you're killing me!"

Whether we're cutting or re-assembling as critics, our enjoyment moves to the level of appreciating how something has been put together. How do we know a work of genius is a work of genius? In general it is due to the way that what we find at the critical level is completely invisible at the level of general enjoyment. It works because it works invisibly, silently. This is what the Slovenian philosopher-critic-Lacanian Slavoj Žižek has called the "virtuality of effectiveness."[8] It is the "how" of the work of art, specifically focused on art as the *experience of reception* of the artwork by the audience. In this transactional mode, "how" is about, mechanically, a stimulus and a response. It is like the magician's carefully planned trick — putting the rabbit in the hat beforehand so that it can be pulled out of the hat to the audience's surprise, shock, and amusement. Note that magic works only for those who don't believe in it, so this "stimulus" includes that knowledge and develops it intentionally. The artist prefers to deal with "people who don't believe in art" (the others are sentimental delusionals). Hitchcock gets people into their seats who are expecting to be entertained and makes them uncomfortable. This is a part of his effectiveness, a kind of "base line assumption."



We call a director an *auteur* when the series of his/her accomplishments carries forward techniques, ideas, story-lines, and character types. There is also a "look and feel" of an *auteur*'s works that allows you to see something old in anything new. *Frenzy*, a late film (1972), is just as much a Hitchcock film as *Young and Innocent* (1937) or even *The Lodger* (1927). While it is clear that Hitchcock was learning as he developed, the essential idea of suspense was there from the start, and only found new settings and situations. It is the classic "Ship of Theseus" paradox — the Athenians, wanting to preserve this historic vessel, carefully replaced parts as they rotted, to the point that at the end every part had been replaced; the question is, at what point (if ever) did the ship of Theseus cease to be the ship of Theseus? We see Hitchcock replacing old parts with new ones, but in the end we are convinced that we still see "a Hitchcock film."

---

[7] The perfect circle is not the simple whole it looks to be in Euclidean geometry. Rather, it is an Euler circle, which is able to draw a void, whereas a Euclidean circle cannot (it only divides off a sub-space that is still a space). Euler circles cannot describe anything that does not exist in ordinary experience. Thus, when it comes across something uncanny or impossible, it must declare this impossibility as a forced detour. The rim of the void can be defined but not the "interior" (the void has none).

[8] Slavoj Žižek, "Reality of the Virtual," Ben Wright (dir.), 2004. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnTQhIRcrno I recommend anyone interested in the effectiveness component of genius to watch this video several times at least, to be convinced that "how things work" (Vico's *factum*) is the "truth of fiction" (Vico's *verum*), following from the dictum that Lacan passes on to us in Seminar XIV (*Fantasy*): "ex falso sequitur quodlibet," or, "from fiction there is an explosion of both true and false."

By the time we gain some useful level of critical mastery with Hitchcock films, we will have traversed some difficult terrain that I cannot more correctly name than "psychoanalytical." This is to say that we will have had to come to terms with the neurotic subject who carries about in a kind of "anamorphic sense," an element of psychosis, that is connected with the traumatic Real of life. We will have answered, at least to our own satisfaction, why and now there is a death drive, and how this has structured our networks of symbolic relationships: with lovers and spouses, friends, families, communities, groups, and nations. We will have learned to reject simplistic accounts of the subject as mainly pleasure-seeking, pain-avoiding. We will have understood the complex structure of ecstasy and necessary relation of this experience to death. In short, just to arrive at the place where we are able to appreciate Hitchcock's mastery, we ourselves will have become masters in our own right, triumphant (each in our own way) over several types of stupid mistakes. We will have preferred the Stilton and even Limburger cheese to Cheddar, even the most aged. We will go for the bitter tastes, the sour or smelly fruits, the impossible crossword puzzles. We will, in short, realize the value of suffering. Doing this, we will be not just happier, but joyous.