

# Call and Response: CS & DK

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Figure 1. The Assyrian king, shown with a small bucket but also sometimes with a trowel, was primordially a brick-layer who literally constructed ziggurats as links of the ground, earth, with heaven, the source of water. Mixture of ground and water to create *mortar*, whose links to death are etymological and ethnological. The king achieved immortality not by claiming life eternal but by assimilating a “death in life” condition.

**CS:** Let’s go back for a moment to our example: the brick builder or the designer of brick buildings who is stuck/mentally impaired/doubtful/caught by painful dilemmas.....and cannot place a brick on top of another or cannot design the placing of one brick on top of another. It is a very interesting case of acting impairment or a problematic relationship between potency and impotency (any sexual allusion is very welcome).

**DK:** I think it’s very interesting to use the brick builder (Fig. 1<sup>1</sup>), since this is repetition at its finest! Repetition centers us in the Lacanian field, since it is what distinguishes the speaking animal from the non-speaking animal (returning to a place/situation and NOT finding satisfaction). However, does potency/impotency add a new angle? Eventually, I would say it’s key, since in the case of phallic demand (the response to the perceived desire of the Other), it’s critical that failure, the  $-\emptyset$ , is the defining factor. The poor organ that men celebrate as the essence of their sexuality is not dependable, subject to criticism, and anxiety-prone. It is, for the Turks at least, so central that in the case of  $-\emptyset$  dysfunction, life is not worth living. It “sticks out” and is thus vulnerable to sacrifice. Even when castration is Symbolic (almost always), the effect is the same, and it shows how the  $-\emptyset$  is a creature of the Symbolic, a side-effect that becomes a central controlling feature that makes us liable for the Symbolic’s technical defects and communicative failures. A slip of the tongue or bungled explanation subjects us to this all-important biological catastrophe!

So! Potency/impotency is on the table when we are discussing repetition. A drive is the compulsion to repeat, but anxiety is that the repetition will not be effective or satisfying! Potency is itself a fantasy, as is evident from popular culture. What is masked is the humiliation of impotency, and its relation to “pride,” as the Symbolic basis for the subject and its important /, as \$. *Pride* is both social and perceptual, which tempts me to make a bold move. In the stereogram, the form that emerges from the background thanks to the overlap of the *repeated* pattern “stands proud.” This is a carpenter’s term for any edge or object that protrudes. A molding is made to stand proud to create an artistic profile, for example. But, there is a significant relation between this physical effect and the motive behind the Master’s claim, to the other masters, the prideful boast of superiority which implies that the other masters must be *suppressed* with the self-defeating effect that there will be no one left to provide the objective, respect, the basis of the master’s sought-for pride.

<sup>1</sup> See Jorgen Laessoe, “People Of Ancient Assyria,” trans. F. S. Leigh-Browne (Assyrian International News Agency, Books Online, [www.aina.org](http://www.aina.org)), <http://www.aina.org/books/poaa/poaa.htm>

In effect, the Master's claim is a case of a repetition that is logically linked to suppression — i. e. it is *toroid*. Now we have a definitive relation of the sexual impasse to discourse theory! I think we should think about this for a bit. First, what we would today call gendering (Lacan never used this term) is based on the contradiction of two contradictories! First, both “those who would call themselves” men or women are each defined by contradictory conditions. I don't want to repeat them here, but it's basically that, for men, a universal condition is based on an exception; and for women an exception is grounded on a universal. The idea of getting men and women together is equally problematic. There can be no sexual relationship because, in the same way that animals can obtain satisfaction in repetition because they are creatures of instinct and humans cannot because they are creatures of the drive. We are “creatures of the drive” because we are born prematurely. Unlike other animals who are “ready to go” shortly after birth, our development requires the Symbolic, which we don't even enter into until the Mirror Stage, where we get our first dose of Symbolic inconsistency. *Should we not take the “cut” of the mirror as a stereogram, or stereo-ungrammatical creation of an anamorphic condition that will forever haunt us by converting any repetition into a bi-directional, extimate, impasse?*

Let's go back to the brick-layer, whose anxiety accumulates with every new attempt to fashion a wall from the pile of bricks on the pallet. Impotency is indeed the fear, that the project will not be completed. Let's call this the Babel Insecurity and say that it is the basis for human conception of time. By *not* ever being guaranteed satisfaction in repetition, the brick-mason fears that his pride — the ability to complete the wall/tower/dome — will be destroyed. His boast is the Symbolic claim of mastery. His pride is both the social return on accomplishment *and* the physical erection of form.

This has a stereogram aspect. The brick literally comes from the ground, as clay and as something lying on the ground on a pallet. There is the story of Tim Finnegan, which we could add later, especially with the joke about how Tim was killed while erecting a steeple! “Something emerges from a ground” is the form aspect and material aspect of all building. It is fundamental, *foundational*. Pride and the threat of Symbolic castration,  $-\emptyset$ , and actual collapse (castration = the destruction of the Tower of Babel), take us to the issue of the discourse of the Master, who is by definition and ethnography a Master Builder. The Master Builder stands proud (most of them are kings) but this pride is stereo-grammatical. It is permeated with anxiety that comes from the *objet petit a* — *the inability to complete a cycle without having a small remainder.*<sup>2</sup>

**Conclusion: The brick is indeed a material “unit” both in the sense of the unary trait and a marker of repeated behavior that, by the anxiety it introduces to the act of repetition, brings us to the critical point of the meaning of the phallus as the failure of a “project of pride” — the**

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<sup>2</sup> I won't repeat the detailed argument about how Lacan's slide-rule analogy demonstrates how a series of intervals cut into the '1' set as the value of the Big Other, A, follow a Fibonacci pattern, where the values of the Fibonacci series, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, etc. as versions of 1 (1/1, 1/2, 2/3 ...) can, by “sliding across each other,” provide successively better estimates of  $\emptyset$ , the Fibonacci ratio. This is the very model of the CUT that first appears as the Mirror of the Mirror Stage, showing that the Mirror Stage is an *ACT*, where the cut creates a  $-\emptyset$  of dissatisfaction. One appears whole but it is one's *spectral self* that is made “prideful,” *stealing pride* from the original pre-subject who, now, is a *corps morcélé*, a “body in pieces.” The Germans say *zugrunde gehen*, or “to fall to pieces,” to return to one's ground — ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Life, for the human subject, is thus a case of death-in-life, the uncanny condition that Heidegger cited as the foundational condition of Being, always a Being-*for* or towards Death. The denial of this by many architectural phenomenologists has made them radically resistant to Lacanian theory, for the meaning of the Mirror Stage will remain forever an embarrassment impossible to interpret correctly, thanks to their perennial insistence on a “life value” implicit in the idea of humanity, as resistant to anything mechanical or repetitive. This is evident in Bergson's theory of comedy (as springing universally from mechanism) but also in the rage against instrumental cause.

**belief in the aim of completion, in the face of knowledge of incompleteness. This returns us to the sexuation formulae that, being double negations, create a criss-cross condition that is essentially a stereogram — i. e. that which, out of a PARALYZED focus, allows the overlap of a patterned ground that allows the emergence of a “figure that is not a figure,” a  $\emptyset$  that is  $-\emptyset$  as soon as it has accomplished a “presentation” into the 3-space that we know for certain is only a 2-space.**

**CS:** From within the “university discourse” of the school of architecture this is a pathology, an ailment that demands cure. It has to be healed. Why is thy doing this? Let’s have thy laying on a sofa and begin the analysis. Thy confesses to be able to design such a building but thy then sees it falling apart ... (now I would like to tell the story of Master Builder Manole but I spare you from this boredom).... It’s interesting to notice that what was a figure/ground relationship (the brick building / the building site) now is a figure with a ground within itself. **[DK: in effect, a stereogram!]** What do I mean? I mean that the problem is not between the brick building and its site but the brick-building process in itself. The designer is caught by painful dilemmas in establishing the sequence of piling bricks one on top of another. So the figure contains the ground that is created by the sequence of piling bricks one on top of another. Here we see the regressive (or infinitely progressive) nature of the figure/ground that is so well expressed by all the possible *mathemes* of the golden ratio or by other visual experiments like the stereogram or the anamorphosis.

**DK:** You have already arrived at the conclusion I was looking for. I would only caution that it is possible to be both too conservative and at the same time too reckless if we do not “return to the text” of Lacan. By this I acknowledge that any return is also a repetition that seeks what it has already-always lost and thus is an example of the dissatisfaction of the reader and experience of Symbolic castration, a loss of pride. But, here, Lacan has a unique cure for our “incurable” disease: the *mi-dire* style of writing, his *lexis* (in contrast to content, or *poros*). Could it be that the reader’s relation to the writer is ALSO a stereogram situation? Do we not see “one word after another” in relation to our dissatisfaction with  $S(A)$ , as signifying a *lack* in the Big Other? Is this not also the lack that we see when the  $A$  is submitted to division by the small  $a$ , which in its progression of  $a^2, a^3, a^4 \dots a^n$ , leads us to the *pure cut* of Fibonacci? Isn’t reading Lacan a journey to the pure cut, to the *pure suppression* that Freud experienced as *parapraxis*, when he, unlike the native speakers of Italian, saw “signor” (and, hence, *Herr*) as the anamorph inside Signorelli?

This both proves and demonstrates Lacan’s idea of metaphor (not just the replacement of one signifier by another but the *suppression* of a signifier that produces a metonymical chain). Simultaneously, it proves that Lacan’s theory of metaphor duplicates precisely Vico’s original formulation in his *universale fantastico*, vindicating Vico’s original idea that metaphor equals suppression and necessitates the “unsatisfactory repetition” that was the basis of the first Cyclopean societies: the *paralysis* of divination procedures (Prometheus) that constructed a *ground* (neutralization/vivisection of the victim) out of which were read the divine signs to serve as basis for the Law (prohibition =  $-\emptyset$ ).

The Vico-Lacan connection is critical, in that both metaphor theories have been denied and suppressed by phenomenologists who, like Paul Ricœur, have opted for models based on analogy (Perelman’s theory) rather than those based on Freudian suppression (*parapraxis*). This connection has never been explored. It is free to us. It is our originality, grounded in the (largely ignored) evidence of

Seminar XIV and our extension into the analogy of the stereogram. The example of the foundational repetitions of the builder Manole are highly relevant! He is a “naïve informant” in the sense that he repeats something (compulsively) that produces the same relations to the *objet petit a* (the protruding breast) indicating a lack in the Other,  $S(\bar{A})$ . We have Lacan without asking, and with the bonus that we have connected psychoanalysis to ethnography and established foundational ritual as universal, i. e. not just an artifact of first cultures or “mythological thinking.”

**CS:** The problem remains: does the “stuck brick building designer” have to be healed? Does thy have to join the flock of all the other brick building designers who are piling bricks one on top of another and have already created a city of walls and towers? Thy sees the immanent (latent) failing of a babel tower even in the equilibrium of one single brick on top of another single brick!  $1+1$  is not so straightforward because thy sees  $1+(1 +/- a)$ . A very complicated formula that has a lot to do with the hubris of the golden mean. Does thy have to be healed? As a Freudian/Lacanian I would say: let’s look deep into this “disease”! Maybe I have something to learn. To learn from the impairment of the other???? How do I look into it? Is the sofa/ laying-designer/ backing analyst/ dim light room.....the right setting for finding it out? Suddenly we find ourselves in a topological situation! Our own space (whatever this means) is folding and stretching upon us. Shall we consider ALL this or prescribe some pills instead?

**DK:** This problem is solved by the Freudian subject’s destiny: there is no “cure” in the sense that we can avoid neurosis or psychosis (or perversion). We can however find relief from our symptoms/sinthomes through Analysis. What is Analysis? Analysis brings repetition to a level where it does not produce dissatisfaction as anomaly but, rather, as “domesticated.” The uncanniness of the symptom is resolved once the Analysand connects with the Unconscious to discover, as Freud discovered with his realization of his “Signorelli Parapraxis,” the structure behind his suppression. This did not relieve him of the imposed failure of forgetting, thanks to the Master Signifier (Herr) and its imposition of a bond between sex and death. It did, however, remove the terror. The Real is the trauma of an ACT, and this trauma is the basis of our appreciation of all Acts, in that the Act is different from the behavior.

The Real requires a return, it demands a repetition. We cannot remember (= suppress) the trauma because it lies outside the Symbolic. This is the lesson of psychoanalysis. We suffer from traumas that are an “outside the Symbolic” but are required to act-out (literally ACT-out, from within the Symbolic) and thus we localize psychosis by reducing our language to inverse barking: “the dog goes meow and the cat goes bow-wow” as children delight in saying. The Rat man calls his *father*, the Other who has a lack, signifiers that complement his father’s barred condition: “a towel, a plate, a lamp.” This chain of metonymies is held together by ... what? The bricks of the wall are held together by ... what? By some gravity that simultaneously is an anti-gravity, the same floating coherence that held together Freud’s parapraxis: Bosnia and *Herr-zegovena*, *Bo-ticelli* and *Bo-ltraffio*, *Traf-ei* ....

Metonymy is a two-part invention. It is able to follow a signifier at one level while obliging a future signifier to link up at another level. This is the logic of the chain, that it holds on to a past while implicating an undetermined future: the essence of divination logic. What is a chain? It is both the coherence of the metonymic cloud and the bonds that paralyze the Prometheus of Cyclopean augury protocols, which we know to have been absolutely proscribed. The sacrificial victim could not be blemished; the secret

incantations had to be pronounced perfectly. Paralysis in turn is the paralysis of the focus required to allow the background of the stereogram to slide across itself so that small differences ( $\partial$ ) create an anamorphic  $\emptyset$ , a form that *stands out* but is simultaneously from the ground, like the mud brick. Standing proud, a builder's terms, could be taken as a monogram for architecture in general. Pride takes from the ground something that must, in cosmic economy, be returned. It is a theft and therefore a crime, a transgression. Guilt is fundamentally traumatic, and we return to it compulsively without having the Symbolic means of soothing ourselves. We must *suffer each and every time, with every return*. THIS IS THE MEANING OF THE UNARY TRAIT, which Lacan locates as the slide-rule "ground" ( $1 + a + a^2 \dots$ ) equal to  $1/1-a$ , the figure that emerges that is co-ordinated with the vanishing point,  $\emptyset$ , the Fibonacci ratio, which is *nothing but the pure cut*, the unary trait that we recover whenever we take "two steps back" through the metonymical chain. First step removes the bad taste of form-ation, the Euclidean solid that phenomenologists making the same mistake as Claude Bragdon by taking space as a "given." Kant has dispelled this with his antinomies and Kojin Karatani with his parallax contentions.

However we have an advantage over Kant and Karatani. We do not go directly, as Žižek has done, from parallax to the criss-crossed obligations of ontology to epistemology and *vice versa*. We understand that our knowledge directly conditions the object, reversing the empiricist's claim. However, Žižek has not "tarried with the negative" sufficiently, as Hegel has advised, and thus he has failed to appreciate negation as it has *paralyzed* focus on the ground allowing the *anamorphic* slide, the  $\partial$ , that has created a form-ation out of the almost-uniform ground, the Tower of Babel that we can witness in front of our eyes if we are sufficiently paralyzed.

The stereogram analogy has never been made in relation to Lacan's slide-rule analogy, if only because Seminar XIV has rarely been read or studied. Even the summary given in [nosubject.com](http://nosubject.com) is incorrect! It makes no mention whatsoever of Lacan's slide-rule analogy or reference to the Fibonacci  $\emptyset$ . It cites as central a reference to Shakespeare that appears only in the final short paragraph of the seminar. Is it possible that, in all of Lacanian commentary, this seminar has been overlooked? Thus, the stereogram analogy has been foreclosed for mainstream scholarship, and it is virgin territory. If it is also the key to psychoanalysis's relation to architecture, we might make the additional claim, that Seminar XIV is critical, thanks to its *stereo-grammatical* reasoning.

We, too, must take care to make "two steps back." We must remove the formation taken as a given and deconstruct it, using repetition (the brick analogy) and paralysis as guides. Paralysis was, in Cyclopean society/mentality, a "cure" for the radical effects of displacement that were produced by metonymic chaining of signifiers, thanks to the suppression of the Master Signifier, A, at the moment of metaphoric consciousness's emergence at the (traumatic) instance of thunder. Thunder as a paradigm for trauma is why Vico is needed as a supplement to Lacan, and also as the key to how to relate architecture to psychoanalysis. It is the idea of repetition as refusing satisfaction, the moment of the creation of the *objet petit a* that makes speaking humans different from instinctual animals. The *a* produced is, as Lacan specifies, a *series*:  $1 + a + a^2 \dots$ . The series is *unary* — it reconstructs a "one as one," but always with a remainder, *a*, a *dis-satisfaction* that is an "eternal return" in ethnological terms. Our second step back is the critical one, since paralysis is also the essence of the stereogram's relation to projective geometry and this in turn is the relation to the ACT that is the basis of art and art's essential anamorphosis.

We cannot have an Act without reference to the inside-outside, or “contenance v. incontinence” issue. Antigone’s brother Polynices has been disallowed burial, just as the victims of the roof-collapse at Simonides’ famous banquet oration were crushed to the point of anonymity. They would not be admitted to Death without the Symbolic, the “Name of the Father.” This unary Master Signifier would allow the families to continue without being haunted. His exclusion is an incontinence, a denial of continence. At the same time, Antigone has submitted to a death-within-life condition, one of the two ways of experiencing the interval “between the two deaths,” another ethnological instance of continence/incontinence and its relation to paralysis.

I have not mentioned conatus or cathetus in this long exposition. But, they are critical terms in that they connect long traditions of philosophy of intentionality (freedom v. fate, chance v. necessity, free will v. determinism) with theories of optics and perception. These terms indicate “work yet to be done,” in that *only* Vico and Lacan give us the means of resolving the philosophical–philological impasses that must be removed before we can adequately understand human subjectivity. Vico is clear on the idea of conatus; Lacan never mentions it as such. But, Lacan does provide Vico with the necessary distinction whereby the Unconscious suppression of signifiers creates “fatalistic” conditions that seem to form impulsive behaviors, where Acts are embedded within behaviors, which can be uncovered thanks to their *repetitions*. Lacan also provides the means (projective geometry) of fathoming the true role of cathetus and basis for stereogram analogies. This allows us to conceptualize Vico’s phenomenological account of mythic, heroic, and modern perception and, without creating a rigid historicism as Pérez-Gómez has done, use Joan Copjec as an anti-Foucauldian guide to recover a structural basis for Lacan’s “toroidal” desire/demand.

These sources (Lacan, Copjec, Vico) are virtually strangers to architectural theory. Each attempt to introduce them has led to rejection or distortion, even when authors have chosen to give comprehensive accounts of subjects such as perspective, cultural perception, and geometry. One could read dozens of architectural writers on the subject of geometry and never run across the name of Pappus of Alexandria, who discovered projective geometry in 300 a.d.; or any correct references to the nearly hundred years of mathematics history that developed this subject following Desargues and Pascal’s work in the 16c. In short, these fields of abundant wealth are open for exploration.

If there are means, we must also find the extremes, which means deploying Lacan and Vico’s anti-analogy theory of metaphor, relating to the rules of continence/incontinence. Metaphor is not “analogy with one term missing,” but rather the suppression of a signifier thanks to an anamorphic reading that leads to cloud-coherent metonymic chains. The torus model is our guide, since it involves continence/incontinence by relating neurosis to psychosis, in relation to the Act, that is the basis of all religion and art. Stereogramatically, a thin space is created, within which the vanishing point is localized and cathetus re-sets the viewer’s relation to the viewed. The figure emerges rather than projects. This is the process of accumulation known as sorites, the “one grain more, one hair less” that demonstrates retroactive presence of the exception in the form-ation of the whole. Again, sorites is a term completely misunderstood both in architectural and Lacanian scholarship. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

Just as the torus guides us through the labyrinth of connections in our own version of the *katabasis* of failed returns and lost satisfactions, we must attend to the ethnological remains of literature and popular culture where, for example, we learn that the hero’s passivity (paralysis) is the critical key to why the hero

and travel are synonymous. Scholarship, too, can be “naïve” by leaving out Vico and Lacan but coming to the same conclusions. The supplement lies in restoring subjectivity itself to these “subjective” creations, which is the meaning of Lacan’s citation of the saying, *ex falso quodlibet sequitur*, “from fiction we can recover any and every truth.”

As with all of my contentious commentaries, I have given \$1000 in change to your overpayment of \$10. I do not mean to flood the fields as much as to insist that, in “sticking to the text” we find the freedom to think, or rather thinking’s highest freedom, speculation that takes risks, heroic risks, to disdain instruction but, instead, take seriously the *teachings* that are guides rather than ideologies. Lacan and Vico gave us teachings, and we move from being pupils to being students, thanks to their *mi-dire* way of writing. What we see on the page is a *tessera*, and we must construct its mirror-piece so that the broken edge (our errors) can serve to authenticate our thinking as an Act rather than a behavior. Just as Joyce’s epiphanies were Acts created out of the overheard bungled conversations of others, we can take heart in knowing that our errors are Eros and even the arrows that, like the one double-headed arrow Eros made to inflame Apollo and suppress Daphne, require us to involve projective geometry. The Tower of Babel and Thesean Labyrinth are the architectural incentives to do this, since without projective geometry these structures are unintelligible. They involve the void, the Act, and the suppression of the Symbolic, i. e. metaphor. We do not have to “justify” talking about psychoanalysis in psychoanalytic ways. But, equally profitable is your example of the brick wall, and the connection to the king as the “humiliated” brick-layer in Assyrian tradition. The humble hero, the paralyzed hero (hero originally meant just “any dead person”), takes us back to the theology of the chthonic origin, the creation of human form out of mud: “*Hans Adam wer ein Erdenkloss*,” wrote Goethe. We do not need an excuse for making these connections. Those who have not made them are remiss.