

# Letter from DK to CS, BT, and JL

August 9, 2021

Hi All,

I think the stereogram analogy might be more important than I had thought. I got hold of **Zizek's essay on parallax**, which I will attach (you can find others at <https://www.lacan.com/zizparallax.htm>), but I marked up my copy so you could see what I'm aiming at.

The bottom line is that Zizek gets his stuff about the *objet petit a* from Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, which focuses mainly on the gaze aspect. This is where the subject's gaze is already inscribed into the object, and where epistemological ideas about the object seem to be spookily coordinated with ontological differences in the object itself.

Then Zizek takes the idea of parallax back to Kojin Karatani's book, *Transcritique*, where it is connected to Kant's *Critique of Reason* (mainly). Everyone interested in perspective seems to follow this standardized trail back to Karatani, and that's fine, but Seminar XIV, as we all know, has a special analogy (the slide rule) that deals with the relations of *a* and *A* operating *in a 2-d plane*. Sliding back and forth across each other, Lacan demonstrates two things: (1) the idea of a *patterned ground*, where a pattern slides across itself to produce a virtual space, idealized by the model of the Fibonacci number series that, by sliding across itself, creates ever "deeper"/more correct estimates of the true ratio as a "vanishing point"; and (2) the role of the '1' in this sliding process, revealing the relation of the UNARY TRAIT to the *objet petit a*.

Zizek misses all this, as do most others who use him as a travel guide. Thus, the potential relationship of psychoanalysis to questions about perspectival space experience, parallax, and the "problems" of Euclidean space v. projective 2d space topologies is foreclosed. We will never make any progress using Seminar XI as a starting point.

Seminar XIV, however, with its slide-rule analogy creates a situation that we can only call "stereogrammatical." There are two really interesting aspects of this analogy, and the first one is analogy itself. Lacan's use of the "mean and extreme" points to his argument about Perelman's mistake in regarding metaphor as an "analogy with only three terms." Perelman's view is the same as Paul Ricœur's, which may be why Ricœur left Lacan (and Vico) out of his otherwise exhaustive book on metaphor.

The mean and extreme are the A/B:C/D model, with A and D as the extreme terms, B and C as the mean terms. Lacan uses the form  $A/B \bullet C/D$  in his own model of metaphor, but it's also similar to his *mathemes* for discourse: Agent/True  $\rightarrow$  Other/Production. All forms of discourse are derived from arranging the master signifier, Other, *a*, and barred subject \$ across this "ground."

Here's where the figure-ground analogy comes in. With the stereogram, we have a special case of perspectival perception. We PARALYZE our focus muscles so that they stare out into infinity. But, the thing we are looking at is close, a PATTERNED GROUND. Our two eyes see two separate parts of this ground. There has been a small variation, call it  $\partial$ , introduced to shift the ground slightly, so that one eye sees something slightly different from the other. This  $\partial$  produces a FIGURE, and we can say *literally* that the figure EMERGES from the ground. It is literally covered with the ground pattern. ALL we see is the SHAPE.



In this experimental condition we can see the relation of paralysis to Figure-Ground and projective geometry. We can also see the relation to Lacan's idea of using the slide-rule, which is also — literally — the sliding of a pattern across itself, which models the Fibonacci number as a slide of  $1/1, 1/2, 2/3, 3/5, 5/8 \dots$  to produce its own vanishing point,  $\emptyset$ .

The  $\emptyset$  of Fibonacci is not unrelated to the  $-\emptyset$  of suppression in the reference polygon of the torus, about which Lacan says (p. 155 ff) is about suppression. In about five pages of XIV, we get an account of parallax, the sexual relation, the couple as a unary trait, stuff about the work of art, and the role of repetition ... a much much richer account than Seminar XI and even Karatani.

The advantage of the stereogram over Zizek's approach is that "we can do this at home." We can do a personal experience that converts the intellectual argument into a physical experience brought about

by the paralysis of our parallax focus that directly engages the infinity of projective topology, that uses the  $a$  as a series,  $1 + a^0 + a^1 + a^2 \dots$  to reach the vanishing point of

$$a = \frac{1}{1 - a}$$

In Seminar XVII Lacan presents this as the model for the unary trait. Because we have to plug in the value of  $a$  into the formula over and over again, we get the same progression as the Fibonacci number series, which has the logic of the Borromean knot:



This is the topology of the stereogram, and also the general model for Lacan's system of the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary. In other words, we get a lot out of the stereogram experiment.

Reading Seminar XIV thus puts us on an "inside track" that others have missed. Every seems to follow Zizek>Lacan>Karatani>Kant. Our pathway would be Lacan>stereogram>emergence>torus>repetition>suppression>Lacan. Our model is both toroid and Borromean! Zizek's continues to spiral outward to other positions and countless examples, but it never returns to the Lacanian ideas of topology. He has little to say about the unary trait, but this is the *key to the impossibility of the sexual relationship!*

The advantage of our alternative is simple: You can do it at home. The stereogram gives you all of the "parts" to describe the role of *anamorphosis* in psychoanalysis by simplifying an experiment and using one's own bodily engagement as the proof. This connects to Vico's own reference to a "proof of the body" in *The New Science*, §345, where he says that, to understand the new science you read it metonymically, with as many causes as possible for any one effect (Freud does the same in his study of his parapraxis, forgetting the name of Signorelli). Note that Ricoeur also leaves out Vico's theory of metaphor in his book on metaphor!

Another long email, eh? Sorry for this but I think reading Seminar XIV has been tough enough for us, we need some really big PAYOFFS, and this is one. Simply by experimenting with the stereogram, we can demonstrate the emergence of a Figure from a Ground, that is *pure emergence* (the figure is patterned), which gives us the model of the infinitely small distance/difference,  $\partial$ , that we also find in other mainstream examples of anamorphosis. In Holbein's *Ambassadors*, for example, we have the  $\partial$  as the small angle off the canvas the viewer of the skull has to be in order to see the blur as the *memento mori*. This angle imposes a PARALYSIS on the anamorphic viewer that we find elsewhere.

The  $\partial$ , the thin layer that pops up in the stereogram, also appears as the curtain in the Parrhasius example (correcting the "bad readings" of this story in Seminar XI) and the Simonides story it's the thin metonymic layer that Simonides "reads" after the ceiling has collapsed. I'm very excited to compare this layer where metonymy connects the mashed (blurred) corpses of the guests to the Names of the Father, so they can be properly buried. The  $\partial$  of the stereogram is the same as the  $\partial$  of the ruin!

I hate to say it but we have been in the city that will be the start of the civil war between Trump fanatics and the rest of us. In a little over a week, four Muslim men have been shot in Albuquerque, which means that there is an organized campagne. No telling where things might go from here. Targeting Muslims and Blacks and even people who eat "impossible meat" at Cracker Barrel, the far right has gone off the rails, but now that they sense they are losing elections things will get worse.

I hope we might be able to meet Thursday? I think we are at a tipping point and I'd like to hear what you all would like to do with the stereogram analogy, now that Claudio is able to see them, too. I will get some magic dirt at Chimayo and rub it on a few printed-out pages of the Seminar to see if I can get it to thicken into a stereogram. By the way, you can get a stereogram to form out of ANY pattern if you get the right scale. [Ben Nicholson's argument](#) about the tile patterns at the Laurentian Library now makes sense, since Michaelangelo put in *intentional errors* — little  $\partial$ 's — into the design to help the scholars think!

The two radical claims about Lacanian psychoanalysis are Mladen Dolar's (that everything is a case of anamorphosis) and Jacques-Alain Miller's (that everything is a case of extimity). BOTH of these can be modeled using the stereogram, but NEITHER Miller nor Dolar have extended their ideas of anamorphosis/extimity to include it. This is all new territory.

## Footnote

We need to remember that the difference between the speaking animal and the non-speaking animal has to do with SATISFACTION and REPETITION. The non-speaking animal returns to a site of satisfaction and is able to repeat the satisfaction. The speaking animal returns to the site and is UNABLE to repeat the satisfaction. *The remainder between the INCIDENCES of repeated visits is the object-cause of desire.* The COST of being a speaking being (i. e. being a part of the Symbolic) is that this gap, the little  $a$ , must be covered/crossed by FANTASY. Lacan gives us the Logic of Phantasy in Seminar XIV. This is the logic of  $a = 1/(1-a)$ , which almost can be literally read out loud as ... "The value of  $a$  is that which prevents the '1' of 1, i. e. the unary trait: 1/1. There is something missing, and it is  $a$ , and this missing/lost thing is what keeps desire going, what makes it perpetual (i. e. toroid).

The human speaking animal is born prematurely, which means that the neural networks and their coordination of physical abilities must develop through socialization, i. e. the Symbolic. Without the paternal signifier, the psychotic must manage by imitation. The neurotic will do just fine, but there will be "acting-out" in relation to the idea of Mastery, the Paternal Signifier.

Animals repeat things and we call them INSTINCTS. Humans, thanks to the Symbolic, repeat things (unsatisfactorily) and we call these repetitions DRIVES. To confuse these two terms, as some translators have, is truly unforgivable. Animals have instincts; humans have drives. Animals have no issues with satisfaction as it relates to places that can be revisited. Humans cannot find what they are looking for ... this is *the definition of being human!*

*Remember ...* Lacan is the only thinker who puts things in this way, and he revises Freud so that he is able to clarify this difference, the difference of the little *a*.

Architecture, which is about making places where people come (back) to find satisfaction seems to know nothing about the little *a* or its status as a cause of desire. When architecture theorists talk about desire, they are really talking about fantasy as if it were something the subject could know without irony. This is ridiculous.