

binary signifiers, occultation, and the issue of ingenuity

From the review, *Two Kinds of Negation / Two Kinds of Space-Time*:

Human mental and cultural life began, Ernst Cassirer writes in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Form*, with the temporal and spatial binary of light and dark. As day and night, this binary gives the “natural event” of diurnal change a “spiritual” basis, so that existence becomes an “emergence” from the darkness of night; and night, equated with death, is conflated with a broad range of actions and conditions that, through hiding, concealment, absence, failure, etc. becomes the hallmark of negation itself. The positive and the negative become the left and right of the human body, a “chirality” that is extended to objects in the world, who by virtue of this handedness are attributed a face and back.

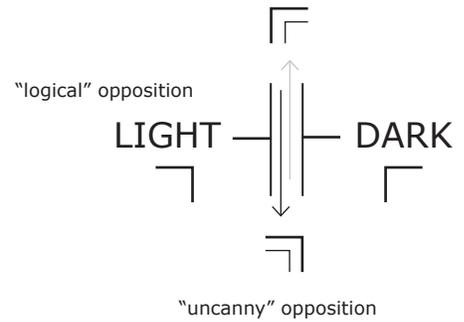
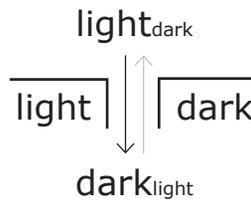
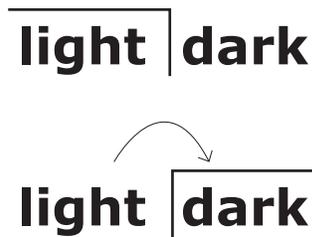
In the question of origins, we always face the same problem: what was there before there was something? Clearly the proto-humans had systems of communication — all animals have some form of this, and some systems are also superior to “human language” in many ways. But, communication is not language. The symbolic chains of language are radically flawed. Other kinds of systems may have gaps, but only in the human system, “language,” do the gaps take on central importance. In conversations, for example, three kinds of silence are critical: the silence that the listener must have in order to hear the other; the silence between parts of the message; and the silence that concludes. The literal gaps of silences are not all. There are logical gaps: inconsistencies, surpluses, lacks. Everyone complains that they are never able to fully say what they mean to say. At the same time, everyone says more than they intend. Tone of voice and other acoustic clues “give away” unconscious messages within the main message.

In art, silences can take many forms. There is the silence implied in standing in front of a painting, for example, and the silence implied by the painting “just after,” when there is no one standing in front of it. In the paintings of Edward Hopper, for example, figures gaze outside their own windows to scenes we cannot see. Then there are the barely noticed details that play only minor roles of filling space; or the spaces implied just beyond the edge of the frame or behind the surfaces that block our view. In architecture, silence takes up the whole matter of the spaces that can never be taken in all at once, as well as the spaces that must exist but cannot be visited — the voids of materials, the ground of the building, the “impossible views” that can’t be attained.

Does silence have a structure? Yes, of course. There is always a “master signifier” that takes over where our sense end, which tells us what is beyond the corner or hidden in the closet, what we might see from the roof or just beyond the edge of the frame. The master signifier glues pieces of the signifying chain together that would ordinarily fragment or send the wrong message on account of the gaps that proliferate. The master signifier itself is enigmatic in that it specifies what could happen without saying exactly how it should happen. When “night” is posited as unknown in comparison to the clarity of day, the unknown is filled in with the master signifier of Night, as a materialization of what began as a privation, a void. Within the master signifier, the negated “content” of night is preserved, although wrapped as it were in enigma. The binary, day/night, is thus not symmetrical. One term is “sublated” (Hegel) in relation to the other. Hegel’s precise German word is important. *Aufheben* means both to negate and to keep/preserve — an odd combination indeed but one that shows how, in order to create something out of the “nothing” made by binary opposition, the “silence” takes on an active role. As “occultation” (the best name for this process), the sublated term becomes “demonic.” It is seen to have magic powers; it resides in wit, in tricky inventions; it has a life of its own just as Night is considered to be a domain.

Here, the issue of the frame, the silences that begin and end the signifying chain, mixes with the silences that reside inside the frame. “Silence” becomes one thing, with the ability to act demonically as a single intention and force, outside our conscious reach, beyond the limit of our senses. The sublated term becomes a rival: Night against Day. In Mozart’s opera, *The Magic Flute*, the Queen of the Night is at war with her husband, Sorastro, a magus and head of a council of wise men. Art’s alignments can be read simplistically (night = evil irrationality, day = benevolent rationality), but artists typically complicate the “ideological simplicity” of the binary reading. Rivalry is also love, such as the love of the twins Castor and Pollux, destined to rotate between life and death in order that Pollux, the mortal twin, might escape eternal death. The case of Romulus and Remus is more complicated, but both sets of twins found cities, and stories of the founding of ancient cities typically begin with stories about twins.

Do we count the frame or don’t we? Do we allow the frame to negate, or do we implicate it in the “curvature” that makes, within the silences created by art, a space for the twins to re-unite; for splits to reconcile; for gaps to reveal themselves?



I / Binaries are considered to be “reciprocal,” that is, predications that reverse. Day rules and sublates night, but then night rules and sublates day. This is not a symmetrical situation, however. One term dominates while the other “takes the hit” of *Aufhebung*. It is occulted. To compensate, it acquires demonic powers, and the ability to move around through space and time in impossible ways. This movement takes place in the space between the two main positions of predication, the “right” of dominance and the “left” of sublation. The gap in between can be seen in two ways. It can be the incompleteness/failure of the (positive) chains of signifiers in symbolic systems, or it can be the “enigma” of the master signifier created in order to “cover” the gaps in these chains. As incompleteness/failure, we have fragments, broken parts, breakdowns themselves; partings, silences, misunderstandings. But, within these there is the promise that comes from such fragmentation: the detail that reveals the builder’s secret, the edge of the tessellated shard that may be used as a code to find the missing piece, the resonance of the noise in the background when the signal is too faint to hear.

As enigma, the positive side of silence reveals itself. At first, the gaps (“silences”) in symbolic chains (“messages”) are covered by fantasies. What we cannot know, we invent. Where the senses end, imagination must create a possible, credible structure. The supersensible must have some meaning, and fantasy is the name we give to the overall project of supplying meaning where there is none, only negation and fragmentation, surplus and lack. Fantasy is the stuff of ideology. Insurance policies are sold on the fears about the future. Stock markets go up or down based on the precarious balance between such fears and greed. Other “elsewheres” also generate fantasies: the past is only slightly less temporally mysterious than the future; other cultures and other places are filled out with anticipations based on fear and mistrust. Locally, the “interior unknowns” of other people are given pop-psychological forms, as in the Disney film, *Inside Out*.

Silences’ timing and/or duration are means of “signalizing.” The most famous popular culture instance of this is the slight delay in the actor Bela Lugosi’s delivery of lines as the character Dracula: “I do not drink . . . wine.” Here, the pause between “drink” and “wine” are filled in by the audience as the intended but occulted meaning, that Dracula drinks blood, and that he has paused to think about this difference from convention in order to reveal something about himself through a negative, a gap.

In the same way, Giambattista Vico’s major work, *The New Science*, begins with a frontispiece (the “dipintura”) showing distinct objects as icons of the origins of human culture. Vico claims to give an account of each, but he *does not give an account* for the helmet of Hermes, prominently shown at the bottom left of the engraving. Many experts who have analyzed this image have failed to note Vico’s “oversight,” but the clear conclusion is that Vico intended to create a lipogram serving multiple semantic functions within the writing and reading of the text. Vico himself conceived of his new science as having a left reading and a right reading, with a lipogram in between.

Chirality. How, out of the “left/right” of light/dark — the way that other properties such as good and evil (“sinister”) get attached to terms that grow out of opposition to each other — do the left and the right come to matter? Why? How does the chirality, which is a property of our not-quite-symmetrical bodies and thus a projected nature of the world we *face* (stereognosis), insert itself into the project of knowledge from sense expe-



rience to the highest forms of awareness. “Kenosis” and “anagnorisis” are terms given to that state of mind where knowledge goes beyond content of any kind. Kenosis must be practiced by cultivating the negatives: meditation, emptiness, the void, inversion. It is as if evolution has played a trick on humans by giving them super-powers available only by renouncing the usual power-over-nature that thought is presumed to pursue. We know that Christ practiced kenosis during his time with the Essenes, that John the Baptist was his Master of instruction. Kenosis is also the basis of the Lurianic methodology that arose in the 11c., Muslim, Christian, and Jewish mystics working together to pry out the secrets of the Kabbalah. (Later, Giulio Camillo would try to reassemble the diagrammatic potential of these secrets in his Theater of Memory.) Anagnorisis, the last of four “steps” of interpretation in the system known as the Quadrigia, was a rhetorical style, not a meditative practice, but the idea was to put speech into service of this Nothing, to stand before others and speak with a voice not one’s own. Hence, Lacan’s idea, that there is a minimal element of ventriloquism in every instance of speech is not just true, it is the basis of anagnorisis distilling this minimal element to the point where it saturates speech and includes silence as its most strategic and devastating element.

Try this. Take a long strip of paper and twist and join its ends so that it makes a Möbius band. Cut the band along its length without detaching the ends. The trick is well-known: you get two linked bands. Take a new strip and twist it twice, perform the same operation. The two rings fall apart. If you have an experimental nature, twist a third band three times (it will have to be long to accommodate a longitudinal cut) to confirm: the odd number is key. It retains its oddness, and even in cases where the number 2 dominates as a theme, it is when two-ness reveals a paradoxical oneness that the oddness returns to the bi-fold as well.

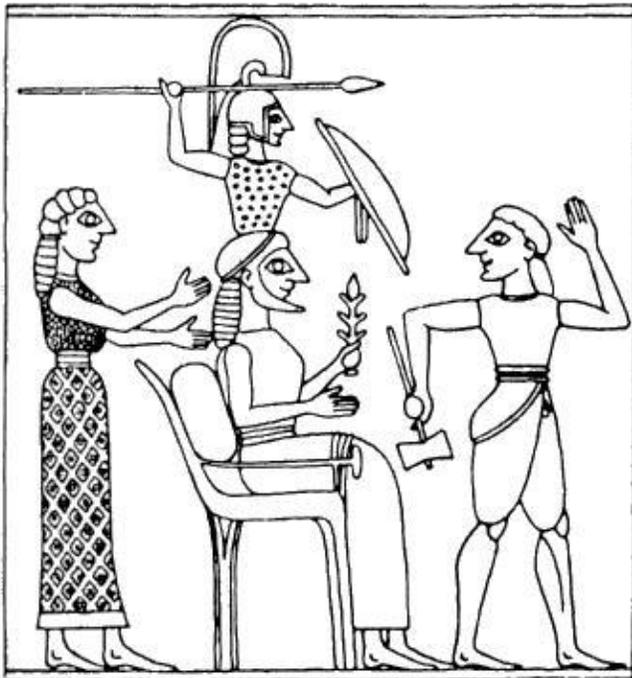
Nobody is the “odd man out,” the missing man in *The Timaeus*, corresponding to the space in between the two predications, in that a nobody can be a nobody — i.e. not “nothing,” but a someone who is able to take on the personification of being ... er, uh ... nothing. This is the trick Odysseus plays on the Cyclops to escape the giant’s cave-prison. Knowing the Cyclopes to be literal-minded, Odysseus, when he blinds the Cyclops, taunts him by telling him not to forget that Nohbdy is the one who has blinded him. Odysseus is being prudent, and not just provocative. He knows that even if he and his crew get out of the cave, the wounded Cyclops will call for help, and the other giants may come to his aid. But, when the Cyclops does this, he screams, “Nohbdy has blinded me!” and the other Cyclops return to their caves, annoyed by the false alarm. This clever use of nobody as a name (cf. the Sergio Leone movie, *My Name is Nobody*, 1973) signals the mentality of the trickster, who works the conventional symbolic chain to his advantage, from “outside” — i.e. dæmonically. The Cyclops episode in *The Odyssey* fills in the remaining gaps of the lambda diagram, Λ , the left arm narrating entrapment, the right narrating escape following the blinding of the Cyclops’ single eye. The Cyclops’ eye was in reality the hearth-place of family worship in the “cyclopien period,” the sacred household link to the *manes*, the ancestral dead, tended by Hestia (Ἑστία). Odysseus wishes to test the hospitality of the Cyclopes, meaning that the Olympian Greeks wish to see if the hearth is still off limits to strangers. Odysseus is indeed a stranger, a “nobody,” but his test runs up against the old religion, based on individual auspices produced by household hearths, managed by the female

members of the household, “priestesses of Hestia.”

Odysseus blinds the Cyclops = destroys the religion of the family hearths, so that the Cyclops’ “children” (here, represented as a herd of sheep) may be used to smuggle out the Greek crew who cling to their undersides. The law of the hearth was absolute, hence the Cyclops’ literal-mindedness. This literality was the chain that bound Prometheus to the stone as the eagle perpetually devoured his liver (the traditional organ used for divination): ancient societies were, in their literal and absolute regard for the auspices of the hearth, unable to move from the “eyes” they had opened up in the forests. With household flames serving as the source of family-based rule, no political consolidation or trade could take place; the Olympian system replaced this by consolidating the flame with a civic institution — the Prytaneion of the Greeks, the College of Vestals for the Romans. The Λ then became the ambiguous continuation of Olympian cultures’ reliance on the older hearth-based practices. Oracles at Delphi and Dodona, for example, continued to serve the modernized political systems by offering advice on key matters. Oracle precincts represented a collective hearth for a dispersed and multi-national clientele. The two religious systems, the “chthonic” or mystery religions and the official calendar-regulating Olympian religions, functioned side-by-side, hence the story that Metis continued to give Zeus advice after he had “swallowed” her.

2 / The Metis/Sollertia Controversy. Officially, there is no controversy. The Latin word used by Vitruvius to indicate “ingenuity,” *sollertia*, is a translation of the Greek word, *metis* (μητις). Those who have extolled *sollertia* to distinguish the architect as a kind of shaman, a “master builder as Magus,” carry over the Greek idea of ingenuity to the Latin term. The frequency of Vitruvius’s uses of this term is cited as a kind of gauge, but actually the Latin text has only 27 instances of *sollertia*, not as high a number as “repeated many times” would indicate (*Built Upon Love*, 16) — 2.7 instances average for each of the ten books. Also, the uses seem to be conventional. *Sollertius* indicates that something has been done well and quickly, not through magic agency or esoteric wisdom.

It is important to see how the word for ingenuity relates to *metis*. The Oceanid Metis, first official wife of Zeus/Jove, was recognized to be witty by a variety of narrators, of which Hesiod was only one. Telling a story about the faculty of ingenuity itself — putting a difficult-to-explain term into a narrative context — is different from claiming that the idea of ingenuity originated from the contingent circumstance of the mythic personality, Metis. The logic here is retroactive. An abstract quality cannot be articulated by the mythic mentality; instead, a myth “thinks through” the quality in material terms of events, personification, narrative structure, and natural



substances. Andrea Battistini accurately described this mentality as one of “reversed antonomasia,” the transfer of power through a name that has the power to occupy different actual people. In regular antonomasia, a person with a proper name is given a nickname (“Antonomasia e universale fantastico,” *Retorica e critica letteraria*, 105–121). Napoleon is called “the little general,” and that becomes permanently fused to Napoleon’s identity. In reversed antonomasia, the proper name is already and always a definite and particular quality that can be transferred to others who, in a kind of metempsychosis, reincarnate that enigmatic quality, embodying it as an occulted power that speaks and acts through a kind of ventriloquism. Someone can be “a Stalin,” for example (in the same way that Stalin himself was a reversed antonomasia of “steel”). Battistini’s primary example, Jove, was thus not simply the qualities of the sky (thunder, lightning, the firmament, etc.) given a name and a

human form, but the reverse; the named form of the external natural counterpart of human fear, epitomized by thunder. Once Jove became a “body with a face” (the sky) thanks to fear of the thunder, anxiety could be mediated by a religion based on reading celestial signs. Jove’s imagined actions and qualities were thus made portable, able to interact with other divinities and mortals. Reversed antonomasia is the principle of this portability.

The opposite view is that stories of mythical events and figures approximate a pure, if inaccessible, source of the meaning of the embodied quality — that, in this example, Metis’s “true story” is hidden by practices, texts, and traditions that contaminate each other, that “authentic” ingenuity began to deteriorate as soon as humans developed more sophisticated ways of thinking. This would mean that post-mythic ingenuity is doomed to be imperfect unless some few gain back its esoteric secrets. This has been the position of many who regard myth as a *prisca theologia* (truth given in an original form by God to primitive peoples), a view Vico fought to dispel with his version of reversed antonomasia. Vico argued that the first humans unconsciously projected their own natures on to external phenomena, making the world appear as a self-image with their own authorship occulted, behind appearances, as a dæmonic origin. In Vico’s terms, the story of Metis reveals a cultural transition embodied as Zeus’s anxiety. The Olympian religion of human personification replaced direct worship of natural substances (streams, lakes, mountains, forests, the sky, etc.) metonymized as personalities. The saying, that Zeus “swallowed” the Titans meant that the religion of the Twelve Olympians replaced this worship of natural elements.

Specifically, Metis, Zeus’s consort, an Oceanid, daughter of Okeanos and Tethys, embodied an abstract quality (cunning) in the same way that Tuchē (Τύχη) embodied luck. In an age where the representation of abstract qualities was not yet possible, the reality of cunning/wit had to be enacted materially. The idea of *metis* had no other possible form outside of its narrative basis in Metis’s story, but once known through story, *metis*, as trickery, could penetrate other stories, other actions, and even the time of the storytellers. This was a form of “knowing without knowing”; that is, the narrators, unable to conceptualize, could nonetheless “operationalize” ingenuity effectively and transmit its essential properties to all able to understand the story as such. My analysis focuses on the elements of the Metis narrative that make the goddess Μητις *metis*. In other words, the elements that, lacking recourse to abstraction, fall back on the effectiveness of embodiment through narrative relations.

Splitting. Metis was prophesied to give birth to a daughter who would rival Zeus. The god of thunder swallowed the pregnant Metis fearing this specifically, but Metis nonetheless carried Athena to full term and even clad her with armor after her internal first birth. The second birth was accomplished by the ax that split open Zeus’s head. Athena sprang forth fully grown and fully armed. Metis is associated with splitting on a number of counts: (1) in terms of the secret gestation of a rival and successor to Zeus’s wisdom, and (2) in her continuing craft inside Zeus (it was said that she continued to give Zeus advice), and finally (3) in the literal splitting of Zeus’s head. On every level, Metis is related to the idea of doing something that has been forbidden, something that must be concealed — such is the essence of “trickster gods” in every culture. The folkloric motif of the trickster is universal and recognized for its *occultation of the means of production*. A trickster produces results as if by magic, although its methods, when revealed, show an ingenious non-standard use of logic and everyday physics. The effect is the key. Trickery is always greater than the sum of its efficient causes and technical operations. It dazzles and inspires. The trickster rocks!

Sollertia tells another story. Its etymological meaning is “the fabrication of a whole,” the word being a compound of *sollus* — “unbroken,” “whole” — and *ars* (“art” or “skill”). There is no ambiguity here, no connection to a narrative, no etymological relation to a narrative tradition or non-conventional role. It is a compound word, “making whole,” that acquires meanings in predications with other expressions. A mason makes a whole wall out of separate stones, an architect makes a whole building out of materials; in other words, nothing particularly mysterious, just getting the job done. But, the idea of making *whole* has, through Vitruvius, come to mean

a kind of “third thing” able to overcome binaries of all kinds. In some extensions of *sollertia*, there is a constant aim to establish a unity over a duplicity, the highest form of this being sexual/romantic union.

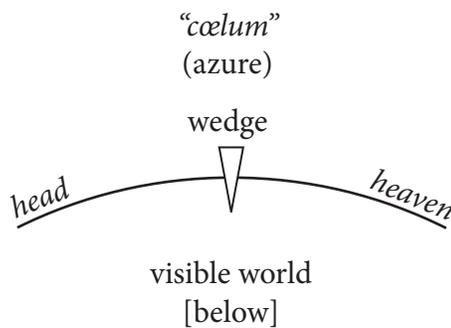
Such ambition to reify the third is particularly striking in the case of *harmoniē* (ἁρμονία, “harmony”), where the word associated with musical harmony is taken back to its original meaning, as an architectural detail, a joining of separate parts. Although a carpenter is a “joiner” who makes wholes out of separate parts, the emphasis in Greek has to do with the idea that the joined materials remained in a critical sense different and were held together by a double art: *one part practical, one part ritual*. *Harmoniē* in its architectural sense and later philosophical sense is radically binary, demonstrated by the overwhelming evidence of building and city foundation rituals, where the full three-dimensional stability and safety of any city or structure must be (1) grounded at its *point of origin* through foundation rituals, and (2) *renewed on a regular basis* to insure continued durability and security. The “third” in other words is not a utopian place, state, or person; it is an empty receptacle, a condition of pure reception or readiness that must be answered by ritual foundation and renewal.

We can find no culture’s or period of history’s traditions of building where the components of foundation and renewal are not present! There is no evidence that a utopian “third thing” overcomes the need for foundation and renewal, as *sollertia* is made to signify. What is technically constructed must be maintained by the regular acknowledgement of the role of fate, luck, grace, or other “supernatural” entity, even when those who make such acknowledgements have no belief in the efficacy of such agencies. The idea of the whole in antiquity is never that of a permanently completed, finished, “third thing” arising out of a joining of different or even opposed parts. It is not the “overcoming of a binary antagonism” that has resolved the matter in a personality, object, or state of affairs that has the antagonism serve as a “before” and the resolution as “after.” Rather, it is the case that the whole must be cleansed and *renewed regularly* by rituals, at first religious but later secularized as narrative: stories, myths, fables, folkloric superstitions, even popular culture practices. Before leaving one’s house, many cultures advise residents to kiss the four walls, a symbolic gesture of circumambulating, the “running widershins” of witchcraft, to encircle the house to protect it in the residents’ absence. Of course no one consciously intends to renew any authentic Greek *harmoniē*, but rather to avoid bad luck with a harmless gesture, a kind of “knock on wood” to serve, just in case something bad is waiting to happen.

The idea of *sollertia*, however, has been given a permanent thirdness despite Plato’s idea of thirdness (χώρα, *khôra*) in *The Timaeus* as “pure kind” — empty receptivity. The drive to reify the third kind overwhelms such cautions, as when Pérez-Gómez compares *harmoniē* to the medical treatment of joints as a “union of two bones” (*Built Upon Love*, 35). The source, Galen, is of course very late, but surely this idea repairing a joint by fusing the bones is neither good medical practice nor an analogy for *harmoniē*’s palintonic tension. It would seem to be essential to go back at least to the pre-Socratic point when the carpenter’s *harmoniē* became the philosopher’s *harmoniē*. In Heraclitus’s fragments, we find the distinction between two forms of time, a *palintropos* describing alternation between opposed states, and a *palintonos* describing a constant tension, holding together opposites. This is the form of temporality that corresponds to *harmoniē*, and we should not confuse this temporality with an a-temporal stasis, i.e. a permanent state of fusion. After all, Heraclitus is remembered for his metaphor of the river, into which one cannot step twice. Yet, his association with pure flux makes the point that any river you *could* step into twice wouldn’t really be the stable geographical concept we have of a river! Palintonos and palintropos “have made a deal,” and that deal is the reality of the nature of time as an embodiment of *two distinctively opposed ideas* about experience and *two ways of affirming truth*.

Yet, the drive to see the implicit value of *metis* as union is unstoppable. This is not out of some respect for *sollertia*’s evident meaning as “making whole,” because the term is used throughout by Vitruvius in a conventional rather than an esoteric way. It is simply the best Latin translation of *metis* for such conventional uses, where *metis* is taken to indicate ingenuity as a characteristic, without any etymological reference to *metis*’s relation to division and reception.

We also read in *Built Upon Love* that “Metis [is] the mother of Dædalus,” but the Oceanid Metis is long gone by the time Dædalus starts working for King Minos. Dædalus belongs to the Olympian stage of Greek religion, not the more primitive nature-worship stage. The later religion has converted the older one into genealogies of its own origins — a retroactive memory. One account uses *metis* in the conventional sense, to characterize Dædalus’s parents as both “crafty” and “cunning,” hence able to genetically pass on these traits to their son. In the sense that all artists possess craft and cunning, all are sons and daughters of Metis, but this is an expression of relation rather than an actual mythic narrative.



Tracing Dædalus’s genealogy back to Metis is not completely unproductive, however, if we pay attention to an overlooked detail. Athena is born whole from Zeus’s head. What does this image say? To imagine Zeus’s head as a human head would be to over-literalize the mythic conception of Zeus. As the sky god, Zeus’s head means the sky as a top/head of the cosmos. In particular, it is the pure azure above the cloudy atmosphere, the bright clear sky beneath which the Romans required to validate their oaths (hence, the atrium in the Roman Senate House). Vico provides the key with his etymology of azure — *cælum* — as meaning both “heaven” and “wedge” (*Autobiography*, 148–149). Vico holds that this is a productive, not a con-

tingent binary. Vico’s book on Latin etymology, *The Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, 1711–1712, makes the distinction between words that evolve separate meanings for unrelated reasons and those whose separate meanings conceal a hidden relationship, such as the convertibility of *verum* and *factum* (the true and the made), each of which contain elements of the other.

The geometry of heaven and wedge can be diagrammed as a plenum penetrated with a sharp angle whose vertex lies just above the limit of visibility. This is the blue associated with the authority of Jove, the reason why blue sky is required for the making of oaths. Heaven, the “head of Jove,” is split by this authority, out of which comes Athena, wisdom. Athena is the “daughter” of Metis in the same sense that the Olympians descended from the worship of nature in the Titans, Oceanids, Cyclopes, etc. Remember that Hesiod is but one source of mythic traditions, and a particularly “sanitized” source at that. Swallowing and giving birth by splitting have poetic meaning uncovered only by paying attention to the resonances created. *Cælum* is one such resonance, which tells us that the plenum of the sky is simultaneously a point, a zenith, that authenticates the “eyes” cleared in the forests below, giving them powers of augury and divination. Thus, when Odysseus pays a visit to the Cyclopes to see if they will bestow on the visiting Greeks the customary gifts required of hosts, we have a complex juxtaposition of one form of religion, the Cyclopan — where each clan is ruled by the auspices taken at their own family “eye” (hence, the attribution “one-eyed”) and the Olympian consolidation and repackaging of the nature-gods into secularized human-like personalities.

The religious movement from object orientation (natural substances and features) to subject orientation (the Olympian gods) was not accomplished without certain “topological” adjustments to accommodate the mythic logic of the former within the “heroic” logic (using human agency/feelings) of the latter. The idea of ingenuity was preserved in the literalization of splitting Zeus’s head to give birth to Athena, and the etymology of *cælum* preserved the diagrammatic-topological truth behind this literal image. Metis is figuratively the “mother of Dædalus” to the extent that *ingenium* — which simultaneously relates not just to individual creativity but to a reverence for the advice/voice of the ancestors (*gens*) — is an extended surface penetrated by a sharp wedge: i.e. the function of *animus* in relation to *anima*, a sexuation of the action of reversed predication. This explains how the asexual generation of nature worship was taken up into the Olympian personalities. While this transition streamlined the economy of the gods, it paid a price, using an installment plan, where sexuation itself would be exempted from strict logical compliance with the principle of either/or (the excluded middle). The Olympians

would be charged with the payment of tributes “monetizing” their sexual adventures, and the account of this payback is given in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, where for example nymphs escape Jove’s (Zeus’s) lustful advances by changing form.

The relation of the *gens* to genius is one consistently confused in the prevailing literature. The *gens* is not the *djinn*, the sprite sub-genus of the trickster species. Rather, according to W. B. Onians, it is the collective aspect of the *manes*, the familial *lares* and *penates*, who present themselves at the hearth under the direction of the household women, who are in this regard priestesses of Hestia, Ἑστία. The *gens* is the spirit transmitted by the breath, so that at the death-bed the male heir is required to perform the kiss of death, transmitting the *gens* from the dying generation to the living. This is also the basis for the use of herms, prism-like vertical statuary markers with only head and erect phallus depicted, as property markers and protectors of burial sites. The evolution of the herm from a point of silent trade to a family symbol (because of the *gens* relation to both genius and sexual generation) is documented by Norman O. Brown in his study, *Hermes the Thief* (1948), an invaluable resource generally ignored by architecture theorists and historians.

The non-Boolean status of sexuation, exemption from “either/or logic,” is carried over to the status of women, specifically as “priestesses of Hestia,” in Greek households. There is a “not-all” relationship to the *manes*, ancestral spirits descending on the male side of the family. A daughter could defect from this otherwise lifetime obligation as long as the *manes* could be deceived into thinking that the daughter, who was really becoming a wife in another household, had died rather than defected. The not-all principle reflects the relation to the trickiness of Metis, the woman’s ability to do, literally, an “inside job,” just as Metis had continued to offer Zeus/Jove advice after being swallowed. Note: this can be translated as meaning that, after the conversion of religion from nature worship to the formalized Olympian personalities, the alters and sacrifices of the “old religions” were continually maintained. Oracles — most of them run by women — continued to be consulted. The official state religion was Olympian, supplemented by ongoing “chthonic” cults and “Orphic” practices, whose cosmographies and myths were at variance with such “official views” as Hesiod’s *Theogony*, a streamlined consolidation of traditions aimed to stabilize official state practices. The non-all status of women was officially elided through customs, such as carrying the bride over the threshold as if she were dead or at least unwilling to take part in her new husband’s rival ancestral worship, but in certain strategic instances, it was the subject of high comedy, as in Euripides play *Alcestis*, a farce that continues to be misinterpreted as a tragedy by classicists unaware of its relation to the not-all of religious evolution.

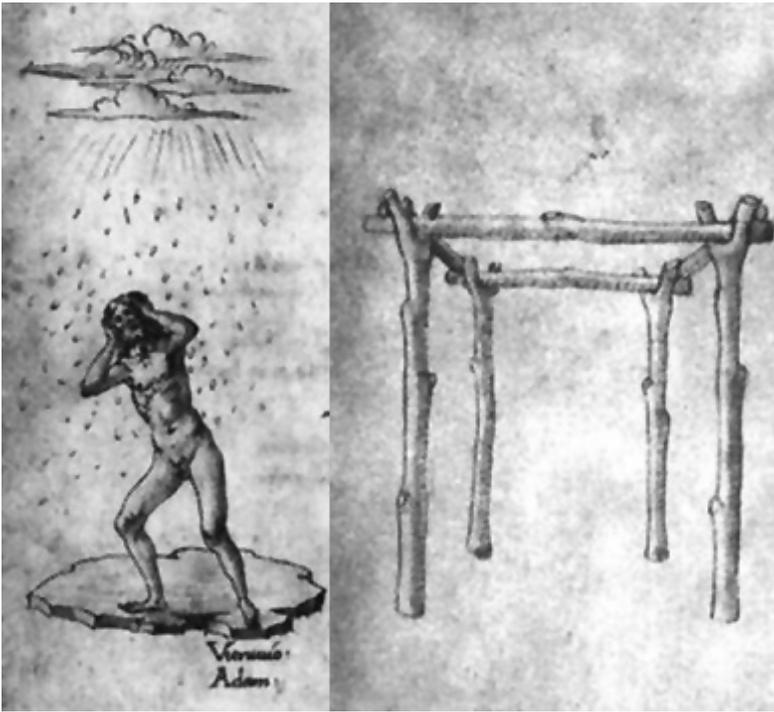
Vico’s *cælum* as heaven-plus-wedge belonged to the Orphic/chthonic brand of religious thought, and explained Metis’s genius as a splitting rather than a “making whole.” Thus it was possible that the logic of *ingenium* could be continued through religious practices rather than official beliefs documented in written accounts such as Hesiod’s. Those limiting themselves to text sources would frequently miss the point of certain practices that “signalized” their meanings in terms of rituals, esoteric lore, and initiatory learning (kenosis). Just such a case is the uncritical acceptance of Vitruvius’s use of *sollertia* to translate *metis*. It is one thing to suffer the fact that *metis* failed to influence *sollertia*, another entirely to allow *sollertia*’s emphasis on unity to influence *metis*. The drive to a “unification theory” position also has led to what could be called a resolutely anti-Hegelian position against other articulations of *metis*, such as Plato’s concept of the “third kind” lying beyond the first kind of Being and the second kind of Becoming. The third kind is more about receptivity — and hence the kind of “readiness” that is emphasized in all initiatory religions — than a utopian option escaping palintropic oppositions of war/peace, life/death, inner/outer, etc. Admission to this “third kind” of mentality was indeed the aim of initiatory cults, but no political or economic status differentiated initiates; rather, they carried their wisdom secretly, just as the guilds in the Middle Ages kept their professional secrets from the common view.

The drive to consolidate *metis*, through *sollertia*, into the image of an “ideal architect” — witty, imaginative, ethically pure, etc. — may be a true depiction of Vitruvius’s patronizing text written for the ultimate patron,

the Emperor Augustus; but it cannot be considered as more than a self-aggrandizing fancy to attract architects into comparing themselves with shamans. The link between the architect's wittiness and shamanism has been realized in modern times, by architects who have been witty enough to re-create the practices on their own, out of their own direct involvement with the challenges of building design. But, this link is not "theoretical" nor is it a basis of theoretical understanding. Wit can be enacted but its understanding is a matter for a "science" that can appreciate the not-all status of *metis* and the true trickiness of Metis's progeny. Such a science is a true science, comparable but superior to other modern sciences, in the sense that Vico's "new science" was intended to be a true science, not just a science "in name only." Science is not what you know (*sapientia*) but what you do ("act"). In other words, you must learn to trick (acumen — *agutezza*). NIHIL SAPIENTIAE ODIOSIUS ACUMINE NIMIO (epithet for Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter"). The hatred of trickery by ideology (knowledge fashioned into social program, S_2/S_1 in Lacan's terms) is the marginalization of technē as "mere technique," portraying the act as automatic, machinic, thoughtless. The act takes thought into the body where the whole muscular and nervous system comprises a supersymmetrical mentality that, by interacting directly with sensations, objects, weights and other forces, and movement (i.e. dance is the intensive formal structure of this), gesture becomes not just expression but a form of "knowing without knowing": acumen without determinative intentionality, i.e. without closing off the outcome. Open: action as receptacle (*khôra*).

3 / The Lambda conversion. The Λ model of reversed predication aligns the three "kinds" that Plato cites in *The Timaeus*, becoming, being, and receptivity. Being and becoming are reversed predicates in the classic sense of opposed terms, each of which sublates the other if it is chosen to dominate. The space in the middle is a diagrammatic space, not a material/literal space. Plato characterizes as receptivity to show how material and psychic "remainders" fall into it without being lost. Pure receptivity relates to the "pure remainder" that is "radically lost" in the construction of semantic chains (i.e. language, social relations, political systems, normative thought, etc.). From our own Λ model, we predict that this space of reception is cross-inscribed. Four terms formalize this cross-inscription, drawn from Harold Bloom's set of six "anxiety" terms: clinamen, tesseræ, apophrades, kenosis. Together, they serve as a repository for what Plato described as anamnesis — the form knowledge takes when memory is used in the dynamic form of imagination. Vico: memory not as it recalls things but memory as it is used to imagine new things — memory as an *act*.

By ascribing to Plato's *khôra* a topography of four terms and a dynamic of cross-inscription — the logic of the uncanny and detached virtuality — brings a new methodology to use of this term in architecture theory. Previously, phenomenologists had been included to view places as essences to be opened with poetic insight, a variation on the theme of religious naturalism. The spirit of place was indeed a *dæmon*, but not a Socratic one. The natural conditions of a place are understood as being based on features in the topographical landscape, "including a cosmological and temporal perspective that includes continual changes of light and vegetation in the annual cycle. These characteristic rhythmic fluctuations contrast with the stability of physical form. This is the genius loci as a place in nature that we have to interpret when we are changing our built environment" (Gunilla Jivé and Peter J. Larkham, Sense of Place, "Authenticity and Character: A Commentary," *Journal of Urban Design*, 8, 1: 67–81 [2003] citing Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 1980, 25–32). Treating the *dæmon* as an essence to be retrieved by a "sensitive poetic" quest for authenticity misses the point of *khôra*, that it is not a concealed essence but rather an *active receptivity, itself devoid of any particular qualities*. Ironically, substituting *dæmon* for the empty "third type" of Plato's *Timaeus* eclipses any possibility of exploring this receptivity vis à vis clinamen, tesseræ, apophrades, or kenosis; or through the many examples of detached virtuality available in popular culture, literature, the arts, painting, film, and even architecture! The proclamation of a return to a materialism of "natural substances" bracketed off from any instrumental uses or scientific viewpoints is in fact an anti-materialism forcing the *dæmon* of place to be like any other concept, except that it is held in reserve for those who claim to have poetic sensibilities — claims that are unable to prove because the essence that is their proof is bracketed within specific contingent "poetic sources" that cannot be corroborated.



I am claiming that the “active receptivity” of *khôra* actually becomes active *through* the four functionalities of clinamen, tesseræ, apophrades, and kenosis. Why? Because the symmetry of these terms — a symmetry that is realized in the “cross-in-scription” of the uncanny’s two main conditions, life-in-death and death-in-life, is self-constructing and self-correcting. This means that each of the four terms anticipates and necessitates the other three; and that this self-sustaining dynamic foursome, in turn, anticipate and necessitate the fundamental oppositional dynamic between dæmon and askesis. Because dæmon/askesis are fundamental to architecture — architecture as fundamentally an “anxiety response” to environmental threats or dangers, real or perceived — architecture’s fundamental relationship to *khôra* is at stake: a means of seeing the

Platonic “third kind” as not an object or container of objects but, rather as an active receptivity, an openness, a *process of reception*.

To understand the (super)symmetry locking together these four+two key terms, the process of dæmon/askesis must be viewed in light of the more fundamental subjective relationship between “cathexis” (ongoing valuation of the contents of each moment of experience — retained at the level of the unconscious but alternately transformed (fantasized) or suppressed by consciousness — and anxiety. Lacan does not subscribe to the usual comparative arrangement of anxiety (*Angst*) in relation to fright (*Schreck*) and fear (*Furcht*) that places fright closest to the subject, fear at a greater distance, and anxiety at an indefinitely remote distance. Instead, Lacan emphasizes that anxiety has the power to suddenly rush forward toward the subject, creating an unbearable over-proximity that is mediated through the geometry of the Stage. The first and most famous version of this too-close Stage is of course Lacan’s own “Mirror Stage,” the time in a young child’s life when she retroactively realizes that his/her spectral double, more poised and masterful than she, has already—always been usurping her identity. (“She” and “her” here are used in recognition of the Psyche’s fundamentally feminine status.) The remainder of this distressing realization constructs the feminine not-all, the resistance to the interpellation of subjectivity by the Symbolic mode, i.e. resistance to the ideology of language, social relations, and other “networks of symbolic relationships.”

Angst’s fast-forward rush of the subject into a future modality is grammatically set within the “future anterior,” a point “by the time of which,” the subject will already be subject to an enigmatic demand. “*Wo es war, soll es werden*” (Where ‘it’ was, there shall I be). This moment of the past rushing forward across the future violates the clean division between viewer and viewed that consciousness constructs to sustain its picture-view of the world. Although the stage provides minimum insulation, points on the theatrical stage and positions within the auditorium provide places of resonance where what would otherwise be heard as noise becomes a voice, an “acousmatic” voice coming from offstage. This is a conflict of temporality. The “first thing” of anxiety becomes the “last thing” in a series arranged by cathexis, realized through a narrative reconstruction. First and last complete a Möbius-band like twist by which *khôra* achieves its fundamentally formless form: a space of

pure tension and receptivity (palintonos): the sea-shell that converts any random ambient noises into a recollection of the ocean.

What maintains this tension? Certainly, not the idea of three as the “third form” resolving the antagonism of the first two forms (the standard phenomenological conversion of *khôra* into a *coincidentia oppositorum*), but the third as representing the role and form of counting itself — oddness as such. In his book, *Chorology* (1999), John Sallis notes that Plato’s introduction of *The Timaeus* begins with the words, “One, two three.” One “does not count” because for the Greeks one is not a number, the first number that can designate a “number of things” is the number two. But, the number that moves beyond counting *things* to the conception of counting generally is the number three. This is not a third thing, in the sense that numbers count things, but a number that is “counting in itself.” Socrates notes that “there should be four” — that there is someone missing. This is an important clue, in that it specifies someone who is unnamed throughout the dialog. Absence and the idea of counting “in and of itself” are linked. In *khôra*, the third kind (γένος) not a third *thing*, goes to its aspect as a verb rather than a noun: “giving birth.” Thus, *khôra* and *gens* share a common link to the idea of gestation and birth, key elements in the story of *ingenium/metis* as the swallowing of Μῆτις and subsequent birth of Athena from the split head (*cœlum*) of Zeus.

The third is, in relation to the first two kinds, the result of a giving–birth, not a natural birth to be sure, but a parthenogenetic birth, a splitting intrinsic to the meaning of Zeus’s skull as “heaven.” *Cœlum*, heaven-wedge, the idea of ingenious action as opposed to static wisdom, the trick as against the ideologically maintained treasury of the Symbolic, kenosis as resonance (clinamen), voice (apophrades) and *mi-dire*, or half-speech (tesera), fills up by emptying out the Platonic *khôra* with a dynamic stage set that, unable to complete three things without the missing fourth (its self-contemplation of its own order, as order): easy enough to guess, because Socrates has already told us — someone unnamed who is missing, i.e. a “nobody.”



Detective Neal Domgaard (*Mullholland Drive*, 2001):
“No. Could be that someone’s missing.”