

critical language — what are some of its critical sources?

Architecture theory takes place in thought that is made present through language, so it must contend with language's nature and limitations. Principal among the paradoxes of language are the paired conditions of a "too much" and "too little." Although everyone says they cannot quite say all that they mean, our speech always says more. There is a surplus and a lack that always overshoot and undershoot language's aim of communicating. In the same way, theory's adopted terms and methods will always overshoot and undershoot key questions of meaning, necessitating a back and forth effort that presumes the existence (or non-existence — both apply) of a golden mean between the two; or (another version of this back and forth) a guiding force that "damps" the back-and-forth so that it seems to circle around or settle on a key position of stability.

Substitutes for this stability, however, turn out to be unsatisfying. Instead of damping the wild back-and-forth, they clamp it down. It is impossible to reach a state that can be called "a theory" that is frozen. Such a theory becomes dogma; propaganda. There can be systems for thinking, terminologies that emphasize certain ideas and approaches, diagrams, images, preferred examples — but there are no permanent structures that fix, within theory, a single method of analysis. This shortcoming teaches us that theory is not a system of rules but rather an activity, and that its essence is "the act," considered as an atom — a *moving* atom — of thought. Architecture theory falls within a particular set of overlapping traditions growing out of mostly Western philosophical history, with significant intersections with the Orient and Islamic worlds. Roughly, we can trace a path based on concern for paradox, in contrast with attempts to eliminate paradox. (This addresses language's surplus/lack condition directly and maintains theory as theory; whereas eliminating paradox corrupts theory into non-theory — dogma, pragmatics, ideology, etc.)

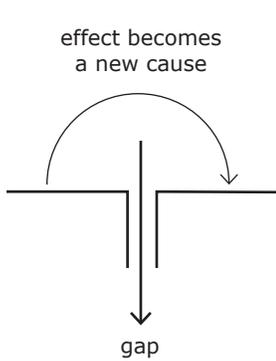
Rather than name the thinkers who are key points along this path, we focus instead on situations, avoiding the emphasis on personalities as such. The first situation, for example, begins with the pre-Socratic interest in time. On one side we might place Heraclitus, who emphasized flow and process; on the other side, Parmenides and Zeno, who seem to have wanted to disprove temporal flow in favor of Being. The idea of "Heraclitus versus Parmenides" is a *Cliff Notes* conception that completely overlooks what is happening at this critical site. What is important is the symmetry linking/contrasting these positions and how the symmetry affords us a means of preserving both "Being" and "becoming" as theoretical components.

The critical pathway continues with the same principle: to preserve and examine contention rather than try to dispell it, trivialize it, or take sides. Theory is, in this sense, always opposed to polemics, because at the heart of such debates is the function of the binary signifier, the creation of ideas in opposed pairs, of which "conditions" the other. Polemics uses binary signifiers to argue that one "theory" is better than another, but of course such a move must actively suppress the way its champion is conditioned by the champion's antagonist. It is this process of opposition that is interesting and key to theory, so in refusing to take sides theory is not advocating any kind of relativism, it is looking at the polemical strategy of binary opposition — e.g. defining a garden as an "absence of weeds" — that must create two levels of operation in order to function but which must suppress and deny one level in order to have an "official public position." Theory rarely has opportunities to wave flags or cheer. It is "critical" in the way that *kritikos* (κριτικός), "able to judge," is different from particular results of judgment. It's a readiness that faces to the future, not a list of past achievements.

Having said this, there are certain procedures and vocabularies that are better than others in keeping the options open. "Critical theory" must have free access to those traditions, not just from philosophy but from art, literature, ethnology, etc. where writers have had similar need to see process rather than product. This seminar offers some options that have proven to be workable. The key sources comes from points in history that always appear to be "early modern" in relation to periods around them. Sigmund Freud's "discovery" of the nature of the unconscious (as based on the complex of forces around the death drive) instituted the modern idea of the subject, and so was "early" to the "modernity" it made possible. Lacan's restoration of Freud's key ideas anticipated Structuralism and today's versions of critical theory. James Joyce discovered a way of writing modern fiction that was ahead of its time. But, in all of these examples — and in every other case that might be added to these selections — the point of "early modern" is that the innovator is always misunderstood and even repudiated by those who follow. Innovators make possible theoretical advances that "turn against them," and so theory must always wade into polemical rejections of such founding figures and restore ideas that have been overlooked, distorted, or misunderstood. Theory is, in addition to being a kind of readiness, an act of renovating delapidated buildings.

Any vocabulary must have some minimal stability to allow meanings the freedom to circulate, develop turbulence, create new formations and new questions. Words must be able to fly around "in commotion." The vocabulary of this theory seminar comes in sets. The main core of these sets come from: (1) the pre-Socratics, (2) Plato, (3) Vico, (4) Hegel, (5) Freud, and (6) Lacan. To find some glue able to hold this collection of scraps together, some smaller sets are used: (1) Harold Bloom's six terms describing the relation of the young poet to the masterful predecessor; and (2) Henry Johnstone's "categories of travel," devised to consider movement as a form of thought. These major and minor sets are not to be consumed as philosophical positions; they are words that afford discussion. There are other sources — the uncanny, Kant's antinomies, the art of memory (Simonides and Camillo), the calculus of George Spencer-Brown, the corrective classical scholarship of Norman O. Brown. But, let the sources be structured by the situations.

1 / Word Communities: General Background. Every new project generates the need for terms and ideas that fit its aims and methods. For critical theory, the words used reflect the critical pathways used to construct ideas. Definitions cannot be found in a dictionary — such generalized summations make no sense in the context of new projects needing to connect to precedents. A group of terms is not definitive or definable, even for the original groups that assembled them. If we could return to the “primal scene” of theory formation, we would find discourse proceeding in the same tentative and imperfect way we experience ourselves. There was no time when terms were precise; meanings were always dependent on dialectic exchange. Thus, any good glossary refers to use rather than semantic reference.



Meanings are designed to be unstable. One word is defined by another, which in turn is defined by another, etc. etc. We could write this up as a series of cause-and-effect instances, with each effect being converted into a new cause and extending the meaning of one word out to others in a “ripple effect.” In this sense the whole Symbolic (language and other sign systems, plus our participation in symbolic networks) is a causal chain, and we can use “signifying chain” and “causal chain” interchangeably. Both are kinds of *sorites structures*, where predications are reversed to create others. The important characteristic of this chain is that it is never complete: it always creates a remainder, an unsatisfied demand for supplement.

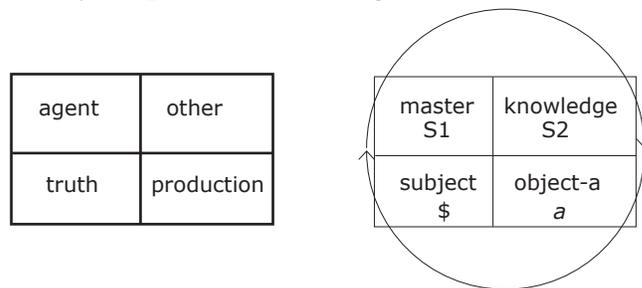
At the same time, the chain says more than its literal contents. Between each state of predication, where an effect becomes a new cause, the gap between the two “positions,” which is like the hinge of a gate. It allows movement but it itself does not move, or rather we could say that it moves in an entirely different way. Its verticality affords the gate’s horizontal open and closed positions. The system Kant developed in his famous three critiques (pure reason, practical reason, judgment) reflect respectively the role of the cause of thought (the perceptual encounter with the world), the effect, turned into a cause in itself (ethical judgment, knowledge of the self and other people), and the hinge: judgment as the element linking the perceptual with self knowledge. This “gap” was, for Kant, bipolar. It was about beauty if the mind was able to accommodate perceptual experiences and see a harmony. If the senses were overwhelmed, the result was “the sublime,” something that stripped the system by being greater than its inputs were allowed. Both beauty and the sublime were “disinterested,” i.e. unrelated to any use or practicality — not good for anything, but pleasing or astounding or horrifying “on their own.” This disinterest could in turn reveal a mysterious hidden teleology — a sense that there was some other purpose embedded, something beyond human interests, or something that wished to communicate with human interests. Thus, Kant grounded religion in the sublime, and found the reason why Judaism and Islam expressly forbade representation of natural forms. These would have amounted to idolatry, since the world in its sublime aspect was a communication of a God who exceeded our capacity to perceive.

Kant’s three critiques fueled the neo-Kantians, who in turn contributed to Phenomenology and Critical Theory. In the mix were Spinoza and Vico, both of whom considered the world of humans apart from the influence of a “designer God,” but Spinoza eclipsed Vico after two world wars led philosophy to ask how such horrors were possible. Spinoza held out for the idea of conscious morality, while Vico held that an unconscious was involved. Thus, when the influence of the Frankfurt School, which had tried to focus on moral questions after World War II, began to weaken, the Spinozan influence also waned slightly, allowing for Vico and other theories of the unconscious — Freud and Lacan in particular — to complement but then also correct the Frankfurt School and Phenomenology, whose “outliers” (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Cassirer) had already anticipated some need for such corrections.

2 / Word Communities: our Special Systems. Jacques Lacan, Harold Bloom, and Henry Johnstone provide the main word communities that contribute to the formation of our specifically composed language of critical terms; and, the history of their formation is important. Harold Bloom’s *Anxiety of Influence* is an example of how word groups, formed out of projects with a definite goal, reveal a relationship that goes far beyond that project. Bloom borrows six key terms from other sources to describe the mentality of the young poet who strives to escape suffocation from the master poets of the past. His terms (*askesis, demon, clinamen, tesserae, apophrades, kenosis*) come with various kinds of baggage — folklore and myth, Lucretius’s *De Rerum Naturæ*, the *Zohar*, early Christianity, etc. But, because Bloom connects these terms to a unified idea, we can consider them as a system. As it turns out, Bloom never tried this out; the terms are introduced sequentially, without much reference to each other. Our move in this case is to construct the “word community” that might have existed if Bloom had taken the terms back to any of his primary sources to see if the others could be found there as well. This turns out to be not as hard as it first appears. The ascetic tradition of monastic isolation is replete with references to demons, the “acousmatic” phenomenon of apophrades, and the aspiration to a higher form of knowledge in kenosis. We can interpolate using model of the monastery to see how the six terms work together.

The most formidable challenge for our new critical theory is undoubtedly Lacanian psychoanalysis, with its frequent references to Freudian terminology. Lacan undertook to restore Freud’s true legacy because Freud’s followers had for the most part distorted his findings and re-defined his terms. The popular conception of Freud’s theories bears little resemblance to the real Freud, but Lacan seems to add his own complicated terminology to the project of clarification. We approach this problem by looking at the way Lacan saw discourse as a system. From here we can branch out to other key terms and formulas (“mathemes”) to build up confidence gradually in using key specialized terms and ideas.

Central to Lacan’s thinking was the concept of three interlinking systems of subjectivity: the Imaginary (perceptual constructs), the Symbolic (language, mostly, but also networks of symbolic relationships such as families, schools, clubs), and the Real (the traumas that resist symbolization). Lacan described the relation of these as Borromeo knot — three rings, each lying on top of the previous ring, with the third ring “tucked under” the first. The knot is maintained by the pattern. If one ring is cut the whole knot falls apart.



The other central organizing device for Lacan was the idea of four principal discourses (Master, University, Hysteric, Analysis). Each discourse was defined by a template where four standard elements (S1, the Master Signifier, S2, Knowledge, *a*, *jouissance* — actually, an indefinable “object-cause of desire,” and the “barred” Subject, \$) rotate across a quadrated field. The four discourses work like generic contextual situations where forces of Agency, the Other, Production, and Truth play dynamic roles.

The fourth main term set comes from Henry Johnstone’s “categories of travel,” the philosopher’s consideration of travel as a means of embodying critical subjective situations. Using the idea that authentic travel is different from running an errand or nomadism, that the traveler ideally uses travel to learn and be self-transformed, Johnstone studied Homer’s *Odyssey* to craft nine key terms (Accumulation, Control, Saturation, Suffering, Curiosity, Reflection, Solitude, Naïveté, and the Personal) with dynamic interactions.

3 / Hegel. Every beginning philosophy student knows at least this one “fact” about Hegel, that dialectic consists of a thesis, followed by an antithesis, followed by a synthesis. In fact, this triad does not belong to Hegel but was added by a later commentator who, clearly, did not understand that the dialectic does not contain any form of “synthesis,” if by synthesis we mean a merger or resolution — these are completely foreign to Hegel! Yet, it’s the commentator that everyone remembers, not Hegel. OK, life is not fair. Hegel’s brilliant invention can be best summarized in the “Parable of the Master and the Servant,” from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). The Russian scholar ___ visited Paris in the 1950s and lectured to famous intellectuals in the city — Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Jean-Paul Sartre, etc. so that this parable got imprinted at an important time and became an important “root level” influence. Simplifying, the Master seeks recognition from other masters, but since they all want the same thing, they face possible death in armed conflict. They are willing to die for their honor, but to achieve some minimal stability, the Master falls back on a second solution, the respect of the Servant who, in renouncing all claim to honor, becomes a master in his/her own right — learning skills in order to provide the Master with what he needs and desires. The Master thus gives up the need to know anything — knowledge becomes the province of the Servant. The Master also imagines that the Servant, who does not have to maintain any reputation or preserve personal honor, is free to enjoy more than the Master. The Servant’s mastery is tied up with knowledge, while the Master’s mastery is based on the perception of others.

Hegel’s other important contribution to our word groups is the way in which binary signifiers work. Hegel saw how ideas are conditioned by their opposites, which they claim to oppose or negate. He documented this process carefully, giving its parts and stages names that are critically useful. The first is *Gegenstoss*, the instant rebound, a negative response, to something on a visceral level that gives rise to the “necessary alternative” that must exist to counter the undesirable content. The horror of the vast wilderness gave the first European visitors to the Americas the idea of the need for a new civilization. Their “rebound” required this recoil from the negative and allowed the positive idea to live despite its vagueness and inconsistencies. Žižek refers to *absoluter Gegenstoss* to emphasize that it is the negative, not the positive, that has the real energy for thought. The negated element continues to “haunt the signifying chain” from a distance, using the logic of metonymy; while the positive content prefers to form itself around metaphors. The relation of these rhetorical figures can be played out using the ideas of metalepsis and its complement, catalepsis (a figure Claudio Sgarbi has invented to invigorate the grammatical analysis).

Absoluter Gegenstoss is the “recoil” made to the negative that forces subjectivity to fall back to its ground (*zugrunde gehen*). This is where we encounter the Hegelian reversal of particulars and universals. The material detail, the remainder, the trivial or discarded or abject fragment becomes key. When Hegel ridiculed phrenology, it was not that he wanted to make fun of the popular pseudo-science of his day, he wanted to show how the ridiculous and clearly fallacious idea that “spirit is a bone” actually could be true. He used phrenology to connect to the essential role played by the skull in Golgotha, the site of Christ’s crucifixion, at the point where Absolute Reason is achieved. Note that the Absolute is not the achievement of any final moment, where the collection of knowledge is perfected through the addition of a missing piece, but instead the realization of the mind as a perfect storm of self-negation.

To “go to one’s ground” has the idea of falling on the spot, going to what is without meaning or support except for the minimalist idea of place itself. It is like saying that, “I may be killed, but at least I can claim that this spot is mine; it’s all I have left.” The relation of a particular location, a spot, to this minimum is key, not just to architecture but to the entire phenomenology of place. Here, the atom, the final particle, becomes the essence, the universal. This conversion of the small to the infinitely large, all-encompassing True is the basis for relating any and all philosophical traditions to the practical and material procedures of architecture. Building and death,

as the foundation rites of every culture tells is in no uncertain terms, are correlated and mutually informing. This makes Sgarbi's category of catalepsis central; and it explains why metalepsis — the positive account of recoil — are critical to architecture's critical theory.

4 / The World of Predication and Reversed Predication. Using the angle sign, our visual critical system uses simple diagrams to illustrate the difference between the Aristotelian logic of All and Some and the (Lacanian) logic of Whole and Part — or rather the not-whole and the “partial object.” Predication comes from linguistics. It's the idea of the subject and predicate, the noun part and the verb part. In logic, it's the idea that something is “predicated” in the sense of defined, limited, or connected. We use some of these meanings, but for the most part predication is about the way all of something can be “contained” by something that has other relationships elsewhere, but how this containment is far from binding. Predication is like a promise or oath, made with a “tricky clause” that enables the oath-maker to slip out of the deal later on. This tricky clause points to the role of exception in the issue of Truth. Aristotelian truth is undermined by the least element of contradiction or exception. Lacanian truth is, so to speak, “proven” or consummated by the exception. It is the negational element that shows how truths are located within the larger structure of Truth in General, the relation of the speaking/knowing subject in a Symbolic world where the Symbolic itself is inconsistent, incomplete, and radically self-contradictory.

The fundamental symbol of predication is the angle bracket, $\langle \rangle$, borrowed from George Spencer-Brown's non-numerical calculus. It resembles a frame, with viewers or the artist standing outside. Complications of this kind of set-theory indicator pertain also to the complications of the frames we use for pictures, and the analogical use of framing we use to talk about ideas, situations, power relations, possession, events, and subjectivities. None of these escapes the fundamental problem that dogs Aristotelian thinking, which tries to “clean up its act” through elaborate laws of identity, opposition, and contradiction. What this “clean thinking” wants us to do is impossible to do and, at the same time, maintain our humanity, our subjectivity. Lacan saw how Freud had discovered how our inconsistencies are, fundamentally, our human nature; and in his restoration of Freud's actual views (they had been distorted by Freud's so-called followers), Lacan, too, relied on visual graphics and “mathemes” that attempted to summarize spatial and temporal conditions.

Our predications reverse. In a stupid example, a beer producer wanted to know whether to market a new product as a “dark light beer” or a “light dark beer.” They discovered that people had remarkable different feelings about the two options. In other words, Aristotle was no good here. Lacan was required. Reversed predication is about what Lacan called “extimacy” (*extimité*), the inscription of something external into an interior location inside the subject, where it operates as an “inside frame.” This in fact is a picture of what happens in “interpellation,” the way ideology gets installed into subjects as if it were something inside them, a “voice of conscience,” a personal guide rather than an external rule. Mladen Dolar makes the point that this inscription is never 100%. There is always a small remainder, and that remainder is the subject of psychoanalysis. It is the “symptom” produced by the subject trying to live entirely within the Symbolic, S2, the network of relationships whose inconsistent rules nonetheless require the subject to be consistent. We portray this <100% condition by showing that, between the two positions of predication, the right and left, there is a small gap. This gap is filled by a vector that is perpendicular to the “horizontal” process of predication, the left-to-right series that we represent through the sorites.

Chirality is a term used to talk about this left-to-right process (causal chains, signifying chains, etc.). Chirality comes from chemistry, where it refers to the curious properties of symmetrical molecules. We use it to introduce the idea of “supersymmetry,” the reverse predications plus their gap.

5 / Secondary Systems. While Lacan, Bloom, Joyce, and Johnstone provide the main word communities that contribute to the formation of a language of critical terms, there are other key terms from other topic groups. To connect two terms, a third term may serve a bridge function, but, at any point, a linking term can become the center of a new, independent idea or project.

The Quadrigia. Medieval rhetoricians used a four-part system to describe levels of understanding. Essays, treatises, sermons, and other argumentations presumed that the audience would itself be divided into four groups, the first capable of understanding only the literal words, the second able to see moral-ethical issues involved, a third able to construct and construe analogies. The fourth level contained the most ambitious aims of the presentation: an “anagogical” state where meanings became open-ended and the relationship of the speaker/writer to the text came into question. At this level, the idea of communication as a flow from a speaker/author to a passive audience gave way to a more active construct. The four parts of the quadrigia can be used to see levels of meaning or semantic contexts akin to Lacan’s four discourses.

The categories of “Metatheories.” In the 1960s, systems proliferated that aimed to show that, beneath literature, myth, the sciences, history, etc. lay four principle genres or categories, sequentially arranged to construct a perfect circle. The main terms were Organicism, Formism, Contextualism, and Mechanism. Northrop Frye followed by relating these terms to the four states of drama: Comedy, Romance, Tragedy, and Irony. Hayden White found that historians fell into four identical groups. Ralph Manheim devised a similar system for political science. The four-fold systems can be read in two ways. As a quadrated circle, the systems deteriorate as a collection of four categories, each with problematic definitions and relations to the other three categories. As a cyclical system, the circle smooths over the gaps and reverses that characterize the real annual cycle — the holidays and fasts that qualify circular time as something more complicated than a single complete curve.

Metatheories were affected by the famous binary set in place by Roman Jakobson, the semiotician who drew from data of brain-damaged soldiers in World War I. The two kinds of aphasia identified by the neurologists Gelb and Goldstein became, for Jakobson, two principle mental “strategies”: metaphor (the ability to use semblance); and metonymy (the ability to construct logical relations). This division got simplified as a difference between science and poetry, but for the metatheories it was a division between the upper “romantic” part of the categorical-seasonal cycle — from spring to winter so to speak — and the lower satirical/ironical half, where actions were dominated by mechanical relationships.

Heraclitus’s two forms of time. From this famous pre-Socratic Greek philosopher we have the famous popular example of time as process — a flow that, like a river, cannot be stepped into twice. We are tempted to think that Heraclitus may have been an advocate of absolute flux, lacking any stability, but the philosopher developed two notions of time that provides an interesting way of framing the Being *versus* Becoming argument. These were: (1) *palintropos*, the idea of tension that takes place as an alternation between two opposed states, such as a battle where one side, then the other, is winning; and (2) *palintonos*, tension that is sustained in time, which is a state of opposition that can be “moved along” the temporal line, a kind of permanent “now” that carries with it its own past and future. Reversed predication is clearly an example of a palintrope, a conversion from one state to its polar opposite, while the hinge function seems to be akin to *palintonos*, something that facilitates change but does not itself change.

The uncanny (*Unheimlich*) — Sigmund Freud and Ernst Jentsch. The uncanny is not just a category of marginal exceptions to the normal in perception and life. It is central to the phenomena of ordinary perception and thought. In his witty introduction to the subject, Freud showed how, in the very etymology of the word *Unheimlich*, the negational opposite is contained in the positive formation of home. Home secures what needs to be

concealed, but his concealment becomes “that which ought to remain concealed.” But, of course, what ought to be concealed gets out, and haunts us. Within the secure home is an element of this obscene hiddenness, preventing the category of home and dwelling from being one of perfect rest and security. But, this logic has its positive side, and there is no place however foreign that we are not able to, in some small but meaningful way, able to create a bit of home. The crisscross logic of the uncanny was first spotted by Ernst Jentsch, who argued that the uncanny’s two atoms were mirror images of each other: the life haunted by the spectre of doom, a fatal attraction to an unknown moment in the future where one encounters death, who “has been waiting all along”; and the momentum that carries the dead person past the moment of literal death. Unaware of having died, the deceased continues to experience a suspended form of living. Wandering as if in a dream, he/she experiences a radical defamiliaration. The world is the same but different. Things don’t quite resemble themselves. They are semblances that fall short of identity.

All cultures address these two conditions, forming around them rituals, traditions, folk stories, and practices. The period of mourning, for example, is set precisely to cover the period between the literal death and the imagined Symbolic death, when the soul finally achieves rest and no longer wanders or dreams. The opposite condition is famously played out as Fate, which is built into reality unconsciously. The story of Œdipus, who by simply responding to situations fulfills the prophecy of Tiresius (that he would kill his father and marry his mother) could be regarded as the paradigm exemplar. The irony is that Œdipus experiences the freedom to act, but the more that this freedom is free, the more it establishes the tyrannical absolute cruel prophecy. Fate requires chance to reach its cruel (or sometimes happy) conclusions.

Anthony Vidler has written about the uncanny’s relation to architecture, but he forgot all about Jentsch’s two important conditions, or the significance of the “cross-inscription” of life and death that makes every instance of the uncanny a form of chiasmus. For Vidler, the uncanny is simply a feeling, a characterization. For us, it’s a structural condition that allows us to connect to a vast ethnographical treasure of practices and materialities. Please do not bother to read Vidler unless you need an example of how a writer can continue to miss the point. (As the saying goes, “The half-life of missing the point is forever.”)

Diegesis/Mimesis. In the study of metalepsis/catalepsis it is important to distinguish between the framing actions of diegesis (the framing act) and what goes on in the interior of the frame (mimesis, “imitation”). Sources, even sophisticated ones, are continually getting these terms switched. Film critics use “diegetic” to refer to mimetic accounts, nothing can change them. Big errors like this occur frequently in academia; they show how quickly word use is fixed by the communities it binds together. Make the switch mentally and don’t expect the groups to change their practices.

Whole and Part. In Aristotle’s logic, groups of things are considered from the point of view of All and Some. Conditions are described as contradictory or contrary, and these relations give rise to standard, or “Boolean” logic and set theory. Lacan’s system is based on the idea that a whole is always slightly incomplete, and that the part sometimes takes on property of the whole. His non-Boolean logic is one of fuzzy overlaps, but it comes closer than standard logic in describing our drives, inconsistencies, and repetitions. The graphic system we’ve developed, which also draws from George Spencer-Brown’s non-Boolean “calculus of forms,” attempts to describe Lacan’s whole-and-part thinking in terms of gapped circles, Möbius strips, vectors, and other devices. The point is to provide a basis for collating examples from different sources, not to consolidate or conclude.

Consolation Terms. Chirality, supersymmetry, reverse predication, and our other word group terms give rise to the effort to consolidate these traditions within new terms that serve to collect, conserve, and console. “Body loading” is what pickpockets do to numb the space around their “marks,” and it helps us understand how

cataleptis (numbing in general) works in other situations. Chiasmus is the structural design used to effect “magical coincidence” that is key to kenosis, the form of knowing that, like Hegel’s dialectic, negational and Absolute rather than accumulative and associative. When artists use chiasmus in literature, architecture, the visual arts, or drama, they often use a “lambda design,” shaped like the Greek letter Λ . The legs of the lambda are formed by two sides (*tesseræ* — “Bloom terms”) while the interior flow is altered by *clinamen* (another Bloom term) to produce a “stochastic resonance” that we experience most commonly in the form of the “acousmatic voice.” The space created between the bend is filled with reverse predications that are summarized in an “anamorphic” or “palindromic” way, as in Edgar Allan Poe’s use of a “cardrack” (a phonetic palindrome, “kcardrac”) to hide the purloined letter.

While there are many terms and term sets in theory, the need to consolidate (also collect, conserve, and console) forces us not just to elaborate and multiply our terms but to use some terms to describe conditions where things begin to come together, and where the key to understanding them requires us to use terms in a specific and precise way. Lacking the support of dictionaries whose meanings are divorced from their user communities, we use the terms to define new communities of users, new traditions of use and thinking based on this use.

Information Theory. In the 1960s, academia was buzzing about the mathematical model of communications devised by the engineers Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver. The point was to be able to measure information using a binary 1/0 system to determine the limits of copper wire transmission. The unintended by-product was a reduction of discourse to a linear flow that usually, in most popular versions, left out the key element, context. If the alternating state of communication is taken into account (really, a matter of reversed predication), then the restoration of context as a treasury of signifiers becomes key, and the model comes close to resembling Lacan’s mathemes of the four discourses, where four fixed-sequence elements (master signifier, knowledge, the object-cause of desire, and the barred subject) rotate across a quadrated field of Agent, Other, Production, and Truth.

Jorge Luis Borges’ Four Types of “Detached Virtuality.” The Argentine master of the “uncanny” short-story once hinted that there were no more than four fundamental themes of the fantastic. Each is an example of “detached virtuality” — the construction of imaginary times and spaces requiring reversals and corruptions of the time-space continuum. These are: (1) the double theme, (2) travel through time, (3) the dream within the dream or story within the story, and (4) contamination of reality by the dream or fiction. Unlike attached virtuality (digitally produced computer spaces, video games, etc.), these four themes require breaks or twists of the Möbius band kind — ones that challenge the very idea that time and space could be continuous in the first place.

Foundation Rituals. A group of traditions based around the foundation of cities, laying of corner stones, exorcizing evil spirits from houses, etc. reveals a strikingly logic involving doubles, sacrifice, secret burial, and periodic reconsecration. Fustel de Coulanges’ landmark book, *The Ancient City*, pulls together many of these practices and beliefs. Norman O. Brown’s study of *Hermes, the Thief*, and Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* fill out a complex picture. Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* gives the why’s and wherefor’s.

Ocultation, Exaptation, the “Treasury of Signifiers,” Aphanisis, Artifact. Some terms pop up in a variety of contexts, always filling a key need. “Treasury of signifiers” refers to the means by which occulted signification can store up reserves of significations and relationships that, when contexts change, are ready for re-deployment. Aphanisis, a subject’s feeling/fear of disappearance, is related. Under the tyranny of ideology, the subject is necessarily misrecognized, and the basis of new identity is controlled by the Other, at the subject’s peril. This storage function is not unique to fiction and art. In the scientific phenomenon of “artifact” — unintended

and/or unanticipated elements that become causal influences in experiments — effects ruled out or unrealized can reveal the unconscious’s influence on “discursive structures.” The famous study of workers in the Hawthorne Works, a General Electric Plant outside Chicago, sought to discover how colors influenced productivity. With every new painting, efficiency increased, workers seemed happier. But, there seemed to be no regularity, no pattern to suggest which color worked best. Finally, researchers realized that workers were responding to the fact that, in repainting the factory, management was indicating that it cared about their conditions. The fact of being studied became the principal influence. What was “occulted” (workers’ attitudes towards the study) was actually the most obvious and effective message: “management cares.”

Examples from Classical Scholarship: Diana/Actæon, Hermes/Hestia etc. Mythology and folklore provide ethnographical evidence of how architecture works at a fundamental level to create structures and stories that contain hidden messages about the structure of space and time. Vico provides the rationale for looking at ethnological materials and the binary signifier provides the means of “analysis.” What we find is that the story directly names the parts of the binary signification process, with particular emphasis on the materialization of the element of occultation (aphanisis, phallic signifier, the double frame, etc.). Because mythic and folk practices were “purely naïve,” so to speak, they constitute treasuries of signifiers because, in the first place, the narratives they contained exapted imaginative conditions where Truth could appear with a capital letter ‘T’. However, it’s necessary to apply the quadrigia to myths, folktales, and folk practices in the sense that exaptation preserves its True at the level of anagogy.

Raymond Roussel was a forerunner of Surrealism whose conscious invention and employment of the *procédé*, a means of breaking down scale relationships using palindromic and chiasmic techniques, deserves to be celebrated if, for no other reason, his technique so clearly and consciously reveals the engagement of sorites in a broader range of artworks where its role is unconscious and unclear. The *procédé*’s visual aspect was the penetration of impossibly small or distant spaces: the gradual zoom into, for example, the label on a bottle of Vichy water showing a ship at sea, to the point where the beard of the captain of that ship is examined in detail. This telescoping shows how scale continuum, a kind of signifying chain, is filled with gaps and breaks that, when ignored, create an uncanny effect.

Numerology. Mathematics, geometry, and even the scientific conjectures of quantum physics have much to offer in the sense that such “non-art” sources often seem to be up to the same kinds of things as art, particularly at the level of structure. Just as Lewis Carroll’s symbolic logic and George Spencer-Brown’s calculus of form are strictly “rational” projects, the properties of numbers and geometric figures have always intersected the arts. We do not have to “make a case” for looking at, for example, the significance of the number 9 in *Dante’s Vita Nova*, where not only did Dante use 9 symbolically but structurally. (The word “nova” is both “new” and “nine” in Latin.) There is a case to be made that Vico’s *New Science* can also be seen as a “science of nines.” Vedic math practices from India and contributions of Arabic philosophers allowed a certain lore to develop around 9’s ability to enter and exit numeric calculations without affecting sums and dividends. 11 is another number deserving attention, as the paintings of Jasper Johns make clear.





Tower scene from Hitchcock's *Vertigo*

6 / Source Sets. In addition to words groups created by communities formed out of discourse, there are examples that have served as anchors of critical speculation. I limit my list to (1) films, mainly by Hitchcock and Lynch, (2) novels and short fictions, mainly by Poe, Chesterton, Joyce, Murdoch, Nabokov, and Sebald, (3) “metapaintings,” such as Picasso’s *Des-moiselles d’Avignon* and Velázquez’s *Las Meninas*, (4) poems, samples from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Robin Becker, Stanley Kunitz, T. S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens, and of course (5) key buildings and landscapes, both real and fictional.

These sources, created originally to serve or entertain or, at least, uninterested in teaching or instructing their audiences, often contribute new terms to the study of the uncanny, detached virtuality, metalepsis/catalepsis, etc. Authors/artists who pay particular attention to structure, as does David Lynch, or the effect of sustained suspense, as does Alfred Hitchcock, have much to teach. They are not simply examples of various ideas of critical theory. They show how criti-

cal theory can develop around the practices of making art more effectively and efficiently than in abstract. The “discourse” of such growth is the work of art itself, and for the most part critical theory is non-verbal, unarticulated. When it is put into words, care must be taken to observe the intended “audience relations” built into every work of art. In effect, critical theory here becomes reception theory — how the audience becomes the “site” of the world of art.

7 / Lipogram and Cosmogram. When Georges Perec wrote *A Void*, a novel originally in French that did not use the letter ‘e’, the circumlocutions to make non-‘e’-word choices seem natural creates an uncanny sense in which the reader becomes aware that Perec has an “invisible dysfunction.” Perec, one of the OULIPO group of writers, constructed experiments that, like this one, transferred the processes of surprise to the reader. The Cosmogram, like the Lipogram, is about transfer; but these were invisible diagrams constructed in architectural spaces by Yoruba-origin slaves during the American Colonial period. Voudoun practitioners, knowing the location of the invisible diagram, used it as a force field to focus curses and blessings designed to reach subjects unaware of its presence.

8 / Acousmatic and Stochastic. Mladen Dolar has explored (*A Voice and Nothing More*, 2006) the position of the voice for psychoanalysis as well as for ethnography and everyday encounters. Emphasizing the non-phonemic qualities of the human voice, he demonstrates that the exchanges of desire as well as the interpellations of ideology work over a special “channel” of communications that is barely distinguishable from noise. Scientists have also seen in noise strange capabilities, in particular the ability of white noise to amplify weak signals through the “randomized” (stochastic) structure of its waves. The “acousmatic voice” was described by Michel Chion as the voice detached from diegetic action in film, and the connection of acousmatics to film has made study of stochastic resonance particularly useful in that medium. But, because the psychoanalytic subject is defined funda-

mentally as a voice in relation to a stochastically-tuned ear, this voice must be understood as the underpinning of all four types of Lacanian discourse (Master, University, Hysteric, Analysis).

9 / Sexuation. Lacan's mathemes for sexuation are deadly, in the sense that he relies on logical notation to distinguish between a "male" and "female" condition. They appear to be polar but are not. Men are "anyone who wishes to call himself a man" (opening up this category, freeing it from gender), who obey the phallic rule (to allow themselves to be mis-identified in terms of their Symbolic relations) as long as there is one exception, the Big Other. Woman (anyone who wishes to call themselves woman) in contrast are not-all subject to this phallic law, so they are never fully interpellated by ideology or social re-assignments of identity. The kicker is that there are no exceptions to this not-all feature. Instead of Aristotle's One-and-Some language, Lacan's system features Whole and Part, but the whole is never fully whole (there is always a remainder or a lack), and the part is empowered to play the role of a whole, even after it is separated. Bruce Fink (*Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*) has argued that sexuation is about the two incompatible perspectives on the circulation and location of *jouissance* (roughly "sexual enjoyment" and its analogies). This is why Lacan is quoted as saying that "There is no such thing as sexual relationship."



Abrecht Dürer, *Melancholia I* (1514)

medicine is really about a binary capability of one substance able to combine healing with death-dealing powers — the curse-blessing aspect of all shamanistic practices.

10 / Melancholy. Thanks the monumental scholarship of a trio of historians working out of the Warburg Institute just before World War II, the lore of melancholy has been shown to be a "metaconcept" operating for over two thousand years. Although it may be more ancient that the theory of humors usually attributed to be its source, melancholy is traditionally considered in the context of the four key substances (air, earth, fire, and water). As the black bile aligned with earth (cold/dry), melancholy was linked to the personality of artists and poets; hence it is a key to the mentality that gives rise to art's self-reflective, and hence recursive, nature. Aristotle wrote a famous treatise on it; Dürer devised an even more famous emblem. The key is to see melancholy both as a symptom of the "artistic personality" and as a structural condition of art taken at its highest, "anagogic," condition.

11 / Pharmakeius. The legendary first Greek physician, Asklepius, was said to have drawn blood from Medusa after her death. The blood from the left side of her body was a deadly poison, but that drawn from the right could raise the dead. This chiralistic view of

12 / Defective or Unreliable Narrator. In literary and film criticism, the unreliable narrator is a common device, the point of view character who is providing a skewed, misleading, or incomplete account of things although he/she is serving as the audience's principal representative. The audience must "see around" such narrators, and of course this seeing-around is the trick of this device. But, in some sense, *all narrators* are defective; all audiences must use their awareness of contents lying beyond the intended diegetic frame. This creates, for every single frame associated with the always-defective narrator, another frame constructed by the audience.

13 / Hopscotch. In 11c. Catalonia, Ramón Llull underwent a conversion experience that made him turn from a profligate youth into a renowned mystic. The most significant part of this religious transformation, however, was the divine revelation that memory was the key to spiritual transformation. Llull devised a system based on the ancient methods of memory places, but stripped it bare to form a pure geometry of interlocking wheels and triangles rotating inside each other. His theory was taught at the University of Paris for over 500 years before the Jesuits realized its magical powers and banned it, but artists took up the essence of its ideas. Giulio Camillo constructed a "Theater of the World" in 1544, based in part on Llull's ideas, connecting the Kabbala and other mystic traditions into the auditorium seats of a 7x7 array (the mnemonist stood on a small stage). Matteo Ricci taught the method to the Chinese in the Sixteenth Century, and much later the Argentine novelist Julio Cortázar developed his own memory theater (*Rayuela*) in the form of a novel whose chapters could be read in a number of optional orders. The hopscotch idea goes to the essence of the idea of artificial memory, that is a relationship between life and death, understood through the invisible diagrams made by the mnemonist relating place to idea.

13 / Power Words and Power Sets. Some terms are central to clusters that connect with a diverse collection of other clusters — logic, ethnography, mythology, architectural details. They can be used to create "switchovers" where one cluster can be compared 1:1 with others. These words are (1) *exaptation*, the unconscious "storage" of relationships that can be "called up" in the event contexts change; (2) *occultation*, the process in binary signification where one term is eclipsed at the beginning and forced to "resonate" at a distance, metonymically, until a point where it is associated with a return; (3) *binary*, the initial condition of polar opposition; (4) *negation*, the Freudian/Hegelian process by which contents of the unconscious first reach consciousness, or (Hegel) the dynamic by which the concept is transformed; (5) *recoil*, the initial moment of dialectic, the point at which contents are sublated/occulted and the subject "retreats"; (6) *double frame (parallax)*, the structural feature of occultation

by which apparent framed contents are, in fact, trapped between two frames, each of which creates a slightly different point of view location.

Power can be structured by "power sets," groups of terms as well as single words. These are linked terms that set up symmetries or strategic groupings, often with obvious blank spots to fill in that can be the focus of experiment. The relation of the power set to sorites is direct and rather obvious. Term sets imply that there is a binding force hidden within a series, that some element or idea constitutes a kind of "other universe" that is, paradoxically, inside rather than outside, but it still works like an exterior. The sorites logic, and its relation to the two forms of time, palintropos and palintonos, guides us through such series to the discovery and articulation of this other universe.



Giovanni di Paolo: *The Creation of the World and the Expulsion from Paradise* (1445). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art