The Idea of a Reading

The Bloom system of six critical terms or ratios is appropriated by the idea of the architecture studio. The aim in general is to create a condition of optimized "stochastic resonance." This is the technical term describing, in engineering terms, the meaning condition peculiar to kenosis.

Stochastic resonance is, in short, the amplification of a weak signal by noise. In a closed signal system, such as a pond (this was the original experimental setting for defining stochastic resonance), some species have developed perceptual systems for detecting the weak signals given off by predators moving toward them. In the salamander, short hairs on the reptile's back are able to receive and process such signals, but in experimental isolation these hairs failed to alert the salamander of the approach of its main threat, the snapping turtle. Researches at last discovered that the experiment had removed all background noise from the point. When they added this "white noise" back, the salamander was able to detect the faint signal of an approaching turtle and escape. The noise had amplified the previously undetectable signal.

This idea may relate directly to the neurological condition known as "neural networks," which process signals generally and across a field, not in hierarchical pathways. This is the basis for the brain's ability to relocate functions lost in brain damage, an ability that has only in the past ten years been documented and used in therapy. Given a collection of ideas, images, and trivial details, there seems to be no order until the mass of material has been reduced to a condition of optimized randomness. As white noise, the collection takes on the role of an echo chamber, making any one idea or experience not only detectable but broadly significant.

The Irish author James Joyce employed such a method, as must have countless other authors, artists, composers, and philosophers. By keeping copious detailed notes, Joyce constructed a polyphony of "voices" that, not understandable when isolated, became audible when reduced to the same level of "stochastic readiness." This was Joyce's *study method* — his "writing technique." He was able to operate this automaton at the level of plot and character development in *Ulysses*, but in *Finnegans Wake* he was able to convert any language string into a "polyphonic" construct, a true example of Bloom's *apophrades*, combining the method of *askesis* (economy, by which details are collected "at the same level) with the form of "knowledge by halves" of *kenosis*. *Tessera* (the signal side of meaning) was optimally broken (i.e. made artificially inaudible) in order that, when combined with the noise of the system (*clinamen*), a "password" would be constructed opening up the system "acousmatically" to the persistent reader.

Joyce was not alone in his understanding of this system of stochastic resonance, although the terms would have been entirely unfamiliar to him. We can find the same procedure across a broad range of writers, artists, architects, composers, and other creative people who are excused from constructing linear methodologies, which are promoted by professions where "methodology" is misconstrued as a deductive rather than an abductive procedure.

Stochastic resonance is a physical fact of signal systems; it is only beginning to be understood as the basis for neural systems; but, it has been long employed by artists of all kinds, suggesting that its methodological procedures are known under a variety of names and titles. The idea of a "reading" is the application of stochastic resonance, which should be clear by now is both active and passive: a means of both constructing and construing, teaching and learning, etc. etc. The fact of stochastic resonance directly refutes and nullifies systems of "progressive discovery," i.e. positivist schemas that create an artificial blank, a *tabula rasa*, as the initial stage of investigation and build up systems of "unmasking" (Peter Sloterdij, *The Critique of Cynical Reason*) as artificial knowledge structures. The Cartesian method, appropriate by positivism, converts the hypothetical to the ideological by dividing, at a functional level, the mandates of enunciating as a rhetorical act, and the de-constructed contents of enunciation, didactic information. To use an analogy from cinema, the "diagetic reality" of this positivist system continually suppresses its ideological components for use in manipulating constructs of the knower and the authoritarian resources that constellate the knower within an inaccessible system. Lacan has identified this as "university discourse," governed by "master signifiers" that remain behind the scenes while the learners are presented with impossible-enigmatic mandates to "simply enjoy" what they are doing. The

idea of reading confronts this discourse directly and structurally, backing up its resistance with the traditions drawn from the arts, where stochastic resonance is the dominant practice, not the exception.

A reading is, fundamentally, a conversion of the artifacts of a work of art, experience, book, etc. to the level of a "homogeneous performative." This is the understanding of the experience in terms of resonance, echo, and polysemy (multiple potential meanings, but also multiple potential *failures* of meaning). The concept of mastery does not belong to a reading, except as one of the desires/aims involved in conventional mandates to learn something from a given source, in a way that is culturally defined.

In the Bloom system, six terms serve as a checklist to insure, at least in a rudimentary way, that a reading is sufficiently distributed within a recursive set of traditions and cultural practices. Each term has an abstract meaning that can only be approximated in any instance of training, and a tradition of past employments that can be described through examples. The particularities of the Bloom system can be ignored and some others found, but the general symmetry, which forces the system into a self-referential topology of recursion, will necessarily be the rule employed by any alternative. This rule is what links the three systems (Bloom, Lucretius, Johnstone) in this particular adaptation, but it would apply to others used throughout history as well, for the simple reason that such recursion is required by stochastic resonance to be effective.

Guidelines. For a reading to be effective, the choice of the first term must involve a certain persistence and construction of distance identified with askesis. It will be assumed that the goal of the process involves kenosis, whose structural peculiarity as a "knowledge by half" is actualized in methods that use halves, doubles, reflections, etc. in some active way. The interpretation of clinamen as a swerve within the Lucretian flow-model is open to variations. Swerves can result as clearings, journeys, monasteries, pilgrimages, fortresses, tea-houses, gardens … the list is quite long. In every case, however, the discipline of reading requires imposing the separate stages by which the eclipse of influence is presumed and treated as dæmon, where separation involves the construction of specific dimensionalities, and where discovery, kenosis, involves some kind of "resonant" acousmatics, relating specifically to an origin.