THE SYSTEM

Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* uses six terms to explore and explain how the young poet is able to transcend the stasis of the "overpowering influence" of tradition, personified by an older poet or poem used as a predecessor and model. The young poet is humiliated by the constant contamination of what he/she feels to be original words, which turn out to be little more than the result of the older poet's ventriloquism.

The poet overcomes anxiety with a fiction about time. Rather than accepting the linear model of influence, whereby the early work *always* is in a causal/superior relation to the later, the young poet imagines that the older poet has somehow been "influenced" by the younger — a logically impossible situation but one that is explained by finding, in the older poet or poem, something that *had been hidden* and was not discovered until the younger poet found it.

This discovery allows the older poet to be "reborn" through the younger poet's work. Since the older poet was not directly aware of this "influence," this hidden meaning, the credit goes to the younger poet for bringing it to light — without the consent or knowledge of the older poet, yet with the support that the hidden element served as the kernel of all the older poems' meanings.

The six terms Bloom uses come from "outside" of this problem of influence; that is to say, they have a history independent though related to the concerns of literary criticism. Yet, the histories of the six *separate* terms suggests that there was some kind of *system* underlying their overlaps in meanings and related cultural employments.

Using this list of terms to define a "private use" of the studio method of discovery involves a bit of what could be called "out-Blooming Bloom." Just as the young poet finds, in the older poet, something unconscious and unrecognized; this architecture employment finds, in Bloom's terms, both a system (previously undiscovered) and a prior existence to Bloom's particular choices. Out of all the ideas Bloom might have selected, these terms seem both ideal and complete. Their overlaps suggest unity; their distinctive meanings reach toward independent issues and realms of operation. Going both inside and outside itself has a certain harmonic rule. In Bloom, we discover "more in Bloom than he himself," and are justified in using Bloom this way by Bloom's own theory — i.e. if Bloom is correct, then we can "do to him what he is suggesting has been done by others."

The System for Architecture Studio

Here's the raw list:

- Askesis (as-KEE-sis)
- Clinamen (KLI-na-men)
- Kenosis (ke-NO-sis)
- Apophrades (a-PO-fra-dees)
- Tessera (TES-ser-a)
- Dæmon (DEE-mon)

Translation makes the list easier, but only as a list …

- Detachment and discipline
- Deviation/error
- Revelation, learning
- Voices from the past (literally "of the dead")
- Fragments used to encode and identify
- Inside-out relationships

The list has been tweaked to make the connections to architecture studio possible to see, even at this early point, but they are still true to the original Greek meanings. Some terms relate clearly to the process of doing things in studio: the need for detachment and discipline and learning as revelation are the most obvious cases. Others relate to specifically spatial, architectural situations, such as inside-out relationship. Tessera is a bit more cryptic; it deals with how architecture uses fragments (details) and fragmentation (incompletion). Apophrades is downright strange. How could "voices from the past" be a part of the studio education

system? If you knew that already there would be no reason for the workshop. Once you learn a bit about the history and previous applications of this term, you will wonder why you didn't know about apophrades all along.

A system is a system. From the outside, you can't always see how some parts work, or even why they're there. Only when you have to build a gadget from scratch do you realize the interrelationships. Leave one part out and the thing doesn't work.

There are other ways to cut up the "pie" of studio, no Greek terms required. This is like a section taken through a building. The other "cuts" miss key components. This one not only gets them all; it shows how they are related.

Each of the elements on this list is a "workshop goal." It could be used as the main theme of the course. This is because each term could be the basis for explaining all the others. This is a relationship describable by another Greek term, synechdoche, the part that exemplifies the whole. Every system and even every organic body uses synechdoche, or it dies. Think of a check list with items that you accomplish in order. When you're finished your job, the task is accomplished, over, done with. This is a check list with items not in a line, one after the other, but more like fish in an aquarium. They move around in relation to each other, yet, we don't want to leave out any fish. We need to see each item in its potentially central, synecdochic role, as well as in its linear sequence. Doing two things at once is the essence of studio. When we say "accomplishment" in studio language, we always mean *two things*. One thing we do to be seen and have value for some kind of public — the general public, our clients, the inhabitants of our buildings. The other thing we do is make progress as thinking architects. We make progress by connecting to the past but moving toward a different future, yet one that has been implicit and contained already in the past. This seminar is about how to make the first kind of accomplishment better by concentrating on the second, the personal. What can the studio do for you personally, without considerations of becoming a professional architect, getting a job, making a living, etc. Without the first, you will not have the resilience to handle the strife of the second, nor will you learn anything really important no matter how much work you do.

The First Structure

If this list describes the studio system of education, and if understanding the list can make us more successful in studio, then we have to begin with the problem of how and why it's not a linear list but more like fish in an aquarium.

Despite the fact of synecdoche — that there is no "first on the list" item — there is one that is more familiar to us, more practical; something we can act on immediately: *askesis*. This is both the dimension of method (discipline, self-direction, effective scheduling of work time, etc.) and a spatial-temporal dimension of separation. You *go* to studio. You stay apart from other things and keep other things from interfering with work. Architecture is, after all, an art of creating space that is separated from other spaces, so there's something basic about understanding the dimension of separation and isolation that informs us about the *spaces we design* as well as the *methods we use to design*. Askesis points in two directions.

What comes next? In the fishbowl analogy, anything might come next, but following our method of placing the most familiar terms at the top of the list, we might substitute the next most comprehensible terms. *Kenosis* is the openness to inspiration without which there would be no point in being an architect, landscape architect, or artist in the first place. Engineers would be fine, and probably much more cost-efficient. The art part of architecture and landscape architecture is all about this openness. Works of art open up new ways of seeing things that were not visible except in a latent form before a project was built. This kind of newness is not just novelty, not just something different. It becomes a *new center of reference* for other works to use, to build on, to extend some original understanding. This is how art history works for artists. A new age is required to understand the previous ones. This is art's reason for being; don't try to argue it away — it's our bread and butter!

Kenosis as openness can go from little insights to extended visions. When we think of the great modernist architects, such as Wright or Corbusier or Aalto or Gaudi, we know that their vision connected even very small things, such as what the clients wore, the furniture they sat

in, or even the silverware on the table, to the most extensive visions of how the universe fit together. These were no small thinkers! We don't have to be thinking on this scale personally to appreciate how these are the "terms of the game" we play. Kenosis is there, whether we use it or not.

The term that is on par with kenosis is *clinamen*, swerve, difference. Clinamen could be minimalized as something simple, but putting it on the same level as kenosis makes a point. Just as Lucretius used his model of solid reality flowing along evenly along a void, this upside-down view is about what we do *mentally* to construct analogies that open us up to insights. No revelation can come without our mental preparation, and the idea of clinamen is one example of how we must invert "ordinary" situations to see them more productively. We must test propositions, but in an artistic way, through analogy and allegory. Our dimension of separation/isolation (askesis) requires us to not only be different but think differently. Kenosis is the reward for clinamen.

Basically, clinamen is error-based learning. The old saying, that "you learn from your mistakes," is too often trivialized. That is, it's taken out of the *quadrivum* (astronomy, geometry, music, arithmetic) and put into the group of the *trivia* (rhetoric, grammar, logic). Mistakes should be corrected, but there should always be *two things that happen*. Namely, as well as the improvement that comes with correction, we should personally improve. The suffering of making errors is a part of the *dimension* that separates us in studio (askesis).

How does being wrong become productive? In engineering school, the wrong solutions are discarded. In architecture, landscape architecture, and art school, the wrong solutions are saved, recycled, re-constituted. They are "right" in that they were a part of the path from not-knowing to knowing. The path is more important than the destination, particularly in terms of what we take away personally from the studio system of education. The principal of the firm we work in may not be paying us for this, but we are of no value to him or her unless we have it. The successes belong to our employers and clients, our failures — far more valuable in the long run — belong to us. This ownership is the core of the idea of discipline, askesis, and the passport to kenosis, revelation.

We will look at several different types of error and our responses to error in the studio. The "critique" is the classic assessment device that distinguishes studio education. Unlike tests and essays, the critique is highly social, highly unpredictable. The critique can fail if it is used only to confirm the illusion of mastery. Mastery is its own reward, and needs no external confirmation. The critique, when it's working well, harvests the results of kenosis, thanks to the clinamen created by the project. Now, you have the system in a nutshell. Dæmon, apophrades, and tesserae are the nuts and bolts of the project and its presentation. The critique is the event where these are assessed in terms of askesis, kenosis, and clinamen. The critique is the pivot point, where whatever is going to hit the fan hits the fan. This is why we will look at the critique as a comprehensive spatial and temporal event.

The other kinds of error can be packaged together with the usual wrapping: "process." This all-too-general term is about failure, the limits of mastery. It is about facing mastery not as the sought-for goal but as a potential killer of creative process. Mastery masks problems; it creates confidence that will overlook the essentials. Because mastery is ego-based, and because relationships between students and teachers is less troublesome when the pleasure of confirmation is emphasized, studio can fail when the productivity of error and the unproductivity of mastery is not recognized and, to some extent, formalized within the day-to-day routine of the studio.

Students coming into studio programs have generally become used to the confirmation model. They begin life as super-intelligent infants whose parents promote throughout childhood by defending against any contrary evidence, such as teachers who do not appreciate their child's inherent talent. Schools become places to confirm what the students already know, to offer networking opportunities, to become career counselors. The shock of the studio is that it is opposite to this system of confirmation. It is as if, having been told fruit is good for you, you run into a doctor who tells you it is poison. You blame the messenger, and think that the message can't be right because everyone in your past has supported just the opposite.

The monastics who left their secular lives to enter into convents and monasteries did … what? They sold off their worldly goods, said goodbye to friends and relatives, forsake the sensual enjoyments of ordinary life. They became poor, subjected their bodies to discomforts, and put themselves under the rule of maniacs who did not praise them. The studio is much like a monastery, but before putting on the sack-cloth of suffering, consider that mastery, not suffering, is the enemy. Mastery provides convenient, comfortable illusions. These prevent real discoveries (kenosis) by shutting down the practiced openness required — an openness that depends on error (clinamen).

So, now, do you see the triangular, reliable relationships between askesis, kenosis, and clinamen? Any one could be used to start a discussion of how the other two are equally key to the studio experience.

The Rest of the List

The critique, the event of judgment, is the pivot where the efforts of the project meet with the un-rehearsed responses of a "disinterested" group of critics. What has gone before (askesis, kenosis, clinamen) must be present in some form at this event, but how?

We need to understand the component parts of the actual *work* of the project. Here we encounter another triad: *dæmon* (inside-out relationships, and some other interesting stuff), *tessera* (the use of detail, fragmentation, and the method of "knowing things by halves"), and the strangest of all the terms on the list, *apophrades*, literally the "voice of the dead." Almost everyone has consulted a Oija Board at some time in life. The idea of consulting an oracle, visiting Hades, or praying to ancestors is perhaps the most ancient of ideas in human culture. The power of this kind of consultation comes not so much in the answers we get — which are almost always ambiguous — but in the state of mind we must place ourselves in for the process to make sense. We don't just ask stupid questions of the dead or of dieties. We have to get our acts together, think about it beforehand. The oracle will give stupid answers to stupid questions, great answers to great questions.

Divination is the exposure of process and thought to chance. There are two components to this, each involving another Greek idea, twinned ideas actually: automaton and *tuchē.* Simply, these are related to "natural accident" (automaton) and "human opportunity." In the first case, it could be that a rock falls onto your head. We can't get mad at the rock; it just happened. In the second kind of case, our ingenuity is involved directly. We go out to do something but whatever we wanted to do — a closed museum or rained-out game — is not available. Looking around, we discover something else that we wouldn't have seen unless we had *failed to do what we wanted to do first*. If this second, accidental thing turns out to be even more satisfying than the first thing we were consciously after, then we are in the position to realize how error (clinamen) has led to revelation (kenosis) but only after we formed a plan (askesis).

We are close to defining a "core methodology" that works for all kinds of projects, all kinds of studio people. Because the harvest of studio work lies not in settling on a solution that gives out a sense of mastery by masking error, the reverse condition has its own method. To make fragments of failure valuable and not just the stuff to fill trash cans, they have to be employed as *tesserae* — the visible/material halves of something "spiritual," the sum of this spiritual component is in fact the basis of kenosis, revelation.

We need to understand the "language of halves" embodied by the tessera. Tesserae were, in Mediterranean cultures, tokens made out of pottery, broken when friends or associates parted. They symbolized the promise to get back together again, to make the token whole. The subtlety of the tesserae involved the broken edge. It was a unique key. You could give your broken half to someone else, a complete stranger, who could then meet your departed friend and prove that he/she had been sent by you. Only your half would fit the other half. This guarantee of authenticity was a "negative" one. It depended on absence, both the real absence of friends and the symbolic absence of one half of the token from the other. But, the tessera made the absence *material*. It made the *event/occasion* of reunion into a starkly material test of authenticity.

In the case of the pottery token, the two halves were made of the same material. They were like a code or cipher when one letter of the alphabet is used in place of another. If you have the code-book you can read the ciphered message. In the case of error in studio, the material error considered as "half" is not matched up to another error directly; it connects to something that *will never be literally, directly present*. The fragment will be permanent, but this will only increase its effectiveness and power.

We have many examples of this use of tessera. The theater is a space of halves, a stage half and an auditorium half. Neither half exists by itself; each presumes the presence, though not always in the standard configuration, of the other. The relation is direct. When one space is "on" (active), the other must be "off" (silent). You can't have a performance when the audience is socializing, milling around, etc. They must be "playing dead," fixed in their seats. We can watch a play by looking at the faces of the audience; when they are laughing, we can't see the joke directly but we can imagine that there must be something they see that's funny. Turned in the other direction, we can watch the performance and hear laughter or applause, but we add these "mentally" with every perception of the scene *as a performance*. The audience is invisibly, silently present. We "know" one half through the other half. This is kenosis, at least one example of it. The physical situation of tessera, the division by halves, has brought it about.

What about apophrades? What about dæmon? When errors pile up around us, we either throw them into the dumper or treat them as evidence. As evidence, they are so many tesserae, waiting to be connected to some "voice" from elsewhere, some invisible idea. We *can't state the idea ourselves, directly*. Like the example from the theater, the actors don't do the laughing or applauding or crying. That's the audience's job. The audience supplies the apophrades. In fact, they have been "playing dead" in a rather literal way. Their response is very nearly an exact version of apophrades. This audience relationship turns whatever we use it for into a *performance*, into "the performative." All work has this component, especially in the art/architecture/landscape world where every work is for some kind of use and appreciation. To inhabit a building and find it useful, to live in a place, visit a park, etc. is to *perform* its utility, substance, and beauty. Without our (audience) component, there is no reason to have art or call anything art. The triad is almost complete. Apophrades and tessera are joined.

Dæmon is a strange element, the strangest in an already-strange list. One of the most famous *dæmones* in ancient Greece was Eros, love. It could strike at any time. It was regarded as a thief. Seduction was the taking of something through the art of enchantment. The seducer does not seduce the beloved by "convincing him/her that it's a good idea to be seduced." The seducer gets the beloved to *come up with this him/herself*! The seducer, the ideal dæmon, "plants the external idea into an internal location," where it has the greatest force and effectiveness. Now, this is real theft! I get you to *want to give me all your money!* And, even if you discover my trick, you still willingly go along with it; you might even put more into the deal.

Dæmon is about inside-out relationship and transactions. The business of architecture, after all, is the making of interior spaces, and even landscape architecture is about creating, within the generic openness of space, parts that have their own sustainable "interiority." There is a big history to dæmon, as you might imagine. Cosmically, it's the relationship between the smallest, most interior parts of the universe, and the largest, most distant. It's a direct short-circuit connecting intimacy with what is most remote and exterior, hence the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan coined the term "extimacy" — found in "subjectivized objects" and "objectivized subjects." You might easily understand that the category of things called "uncanny" almost always involves extimacy, the physics of the dæmon. Put this with the origin of the German word for uncanny, *unheimlich* — "un-homely" — and you have good reason for considering why architecture should be interested in this. A home that is somewhat unaccommodating and spooky, or even haunted is a paradigm case of the *Unheimlich*. The opposite case, feeling oneself to be at home in a foreign land, is also uncanny, but in a positive way.

Fortunately for us, given our restricted workshop time together, the extimacy of dæmon can be modeled easily. We can show how this small-to-large, inside-to-out works, even though it

is always irrational and non-linear. We can show how cases of extimacy have created famous cultural artifacts and conditions (think of Janus in Roman religion and architecture, for example), so if the idea doesn't make sense, one of the examples probably will.

Dæmon completes the second triad of the critical system of sixes. It is the geometric aspect of the relationship with apophrades and tessera that defines the other two and takes the triad to the critical meeting-place with the first triad, askesis, kenosis, and clinamen. Armed with these two triads and their interface, the critique, we can see (1) that the whole system is a kind of tessera, (2) that one triad is present, as an uncanny kernel, working silently within the other half — dæmon!; (3) that the "voice" of the dead comes out in the language of the critique; (4) that the system itself is the means of distinguishing and setting apart art, architecture, and landscape architecture from everything else, akesis; (5) how it occurs outside of functionality and temporality of the ordinary, clinamen; and (6) why it is a kind of education based not on information but revelation — kenosis. In other words, the system is the system of itself — a case of extimacy to the Nth degree!

The issue, however, is not *knowing* this but *doing* this. The radical claim of the workshop is not that there are not other ways of construing the studio, but that there are no *better* ways. In terms of ideas, there are many ideas, many contents, some good some bad some awful. This is not an argument about the inherent superiority of this set of terms in describing the studio as a pedagogical system. It is about the voluntary transfer process, which is what the participant makes of it. A much worse system could have the same or even superior results in the hands of an adventurous, imaginative, and persistent participant.

However, the terms chosen for this particular exposition have depth. Askesis has a rich history, as does kenosis, clinamen, dæmon, etc. The point is to show how these terms can potentially open up new perspectives through their individual, independent historical personalities. No one to this point has claimed that Bloom's collection is in fact a unified system. Why has no one up to this point thought of applying them, as a system, to studio education? The answer may lie in the improbability of this second, provocative action. The literary culture surrounding these terms and, in particular, Bloom's collecting of them into a bouquet of critical essays about poets and their relations to their precursors, is not a part of studio education, except through personal accident. The study of classical religion, philology, literature, and so on takes place, typically, in classrooms, lecture halls, and libraries. The studio, in contrast, is an "un-literary" place where visual ideas are given equal or better weight over abstract philosophical or critical-theory examples. Even when these latter influences are allowed, they typically burden projects with boring, ill-understood, misapplications. In general it is a good idea to "keep theory out of the studio" and allow projects to "speak for themselves," in a language of materials and processes. Let the critics bring in the ideas at the end, and "tell the artists" what their work implies!

This workshop is not opposed to this view. In fact, it is against importing abstractions into a scene that should be dominated by accident, experiment, and randomized luck. Too much information can strangle a project, give it too much to do, too much (and too alien) stuff to think about. If architecture, art, and landscape architecture are truly performative at their heart, then the *flow* of performance of the product must be matched by a flow in the process that creates this product.

The solution is not a "proceed with caution" warning, to use the six-fold system only as a study aide, watching out for over-use of its ideas. Rather, the advice is to keep the system separate from studio, despite the obvious utility of any and all of its components in thinking about architectural, art, and landscape conditions. The workshop is like a "spiritual exercise" of the kind designed by Ignatius Loyola, the famous founder of the Jesuits, whose model of discipline was anti-religious in many ways. Loyola took the saying of Pascal seriously: that conversion depended not on the assimilation of ideas but of just "going through the motions," the materiality of kneeling, making the sign of the cross, etc. — i.e. the most banal, empty gestures would lead to the most desirable spiritual goals. Like the mechanical prayer wheels of the Tibetan Buddhists, the point is to dissociate will and desire from the process so completely that "automaton" takes over to produce *tuchē* (opportunity) in a way that automaton's natural source and accident will guarantee the objectivity and authenticity of the "finds" made by art.

The workshop should prepare its participants to give way to automaton, to empty their minds of the ideas of askesis, kenosis, clinamen, tessera, apophrades, and dæmon — since these elements are already and always at work, with or without our conscious recognition. The preparation for this ready state makes the workshop itself a form of askesis. Its isolation and difference should work. The other five will follow. They themselves "are themselves": their structure resists and survives the variety of guises in which they appear, and they teach us how to resist, and how to use resilience as a means of discovery and understanding.