Circular diagrams address, naturally, isss of repetition, mirroring, pairing, and recursion; but they also are key in describing the “gap” that characterizes conditions of self-reference and desire. The circle is created by intransitivity, particularly in conditions where there is objectification of something that cannot be assimilated by the network of symbolic realtionships.

1. closed v. open circuit

One series of diagrams uses the analogy of the electric circuit, a circular flow of electrons, fitted with an ‘inverter switch’. The switch must have two parts to function: one part converts the current from positive to negative, the other from negative to positive. The switch divides the circuit into positive and negative ‘halves’, each of which has an unambiguous charge.

When one component of the inverter switch is removed, a condition is created where the circuit can no longer be identified as positive or negative. This condition is caused by a ‘short-circuit’ condition (recursion), where the result of a process is fed back into the analysis component. This is the case with the equation for Ø, the value for the ratio of the ‘Golden Rectangle’.

Mathematically, the intransitive circuit expresses the condition of imaginary numbers (i) and, by extension, the imagination itself. It is analogous to Coleridge’s famous description of the precondition of fiction: the willing suspension of disbelief — a double negative that does not ‘switch back’ to a fully positive state.

In the Castor/Pollux variation, one twin is mortal, the immortal. The mortal twin is killed, but the immortal brother argues for a reprieve, and the dead twin is allowed to return to the living on a regular basis as long as the immortal twin spends the same period of time in Hades. The two twins can thus not appear together; but, taken as a whole, they ‘rule’ the complete realm of living and dead and thus express the ‘both-and’ quality of the intransitive.

2. the gapped circle of desire

The gapped circle is equivalent to the short-circuit circle, but it emphasizes the Lacanian theme of the ‘return of the Real’, and the repetitive behavior that accompanies the creation of an uncloseable gap, an ‘aporia’ (= ‘without a bridge’). The gap cannot be bridged symbolically; rather it is the fail-point of the system of symbolic communications and the network of symbolic relationships. It can be characterized by the ‘object-cause of desire’ (petit objet ‘a’), which is by definition unassimilatable to the network of symbolic relations. The return to this object is locational and temporal. It is the ‘place of the crime’ to which the murderer is compelled to return; it is also the time of ‘primal origins’, in the sense of a traumatic cause.

3. twinned stars

Two elements which function as one, such as two actors playing a single character or one actor playing two characters, can be used to actualize the condition of the inverter switch. In the myth of the twins Castor and Pollux (Dioscuri), the mortal twin is killed and the immortal twin bargains for his immortality by promising to spend time in Hades while the mortal brother returns to the living on earth. This fore-figures the practice of rotation kingship where a sacrificed king rules Hades while a living king presides over the tangible realm. Mythic heroes were almost always originally twins, and the twin logic figures in to foundation rites (the Dioscuri were the protective gods of Rome).

4. the interior eight

Lacan considered that a cut of the cross-cap or Möbius band would create a condition where inside and outside could no longer be determined. This is fundamentally the condition of the uncanny, the ‘collapse of distance’ which brings into immediacy ‘that which had long been thought to be dead and forgotten’. See Ellie Ragland and Dragan Milovanovic, eds. Lacan: Topologically Speaking (New York: Other Press, 2004). There are interesting historical anticipations of this cut which refer to the ‘recession’ of planets which appears to occur if earth is used as a fixed reference point.