

theory, stereognosis, and proprioception

The positivist outlook of the 20th and early 21st century suppresses the role of theory by converting theoretical options into ideologies. Where science is pressed into the mold of empiricism, criticism is re-cast as a sentimental New Age version of Phenomenology; both create 'forced choices' that, analogous to the famous Fox News ploy, create invisible mandates (Lacan: master signifiers) that organize materials and voices. Science is 'really about' horror, in the same way that airline seat safety card instructions repackage death and dismemberment as 'having a protocol'. Architecture requires theory because of demand's excess beyond need and this excess's attachment to the traumas of the psyche, converted into 'anamorphic' issues of identity that are mirrored in the topology of houses, cities, and landscapes. Stereognosis (de-centering of the world based on minimal difference) and propriocept (the organ as a 'partial object' relating imperfectly to nature). Restoration of theory involves an *ars topica*, 'art of topics', an understanding of the relation of voice (the essence of the uncanny) to the use and conception of boundaries and bounded spaces.



Gerrit van Honthorst's 1623 painting of 'The Denial of St. Peter' triangulates Peter's fulfillment of Jesus's prediction, that he would deny him three times before the dawn of the day after his crucifixion. The contradiction between Peter's affirmation and denial is distributed in the temporality of the narrative of prophecy and fulfillment.

1. reversed antinomasia

Antinomasia is the use of a general term as a name (e.g. Joseph *Stalin*, 'steel'). When the process is reversed, the proper name becomes 'its own universal'. As was once said of Vice President Dan Quail, 'You're no Bobby Kennedy!' The move from Bobby Kennedy being Bobby Kennedy the name to 'Bobby Kennedy' the congeries of qualities organized into a constellation moves from the contingencies of experience to the status of the universal without mediation. The two forms of identity can coexist, as when a pattern is imputed to someone's behavior: 'That's what you always say!' One's empirical self is, uncannily, undermined by one's 'universal', which is based on the desire of the Other, not the design of the subject affected. The subtle de-centering of the subject arises out of the two aspects of the 'call' — the particular call (*bios*: the use of the name as a place-holder within various networks of symbolic relationships) and the universal call (*zoe*: the 'voice' that plays the role of the 'call', as in the voice of conscience or the call of destiny).

Because the subject is always radically undermined by the two natures of the name/call (reflecting the subject's conflicting allegiances to *bios* and *zoe*), the point of view correlative to frames of reference that include visual representations, buildings, landscapes, narratives, etc. are split at the root. They are the basis for a minimal difference that has myriad manifestations: the subject's inability to consolidate knowledge of his/her own body (propriocept) and relation to the world (stereognosis). At the level of the body, the 'organ' is the blurring between inside and outside, self and world; an attempt to maintain a difference that always fails, which always pretends that its stopgap is working, whose repair efforts always result in a small, irreducible surplus. At this level, failure or lack is attributed to an impossible forced choice imposed by the Other, who refuses admission to some network of symbolic relations. The 'privation' of some limit of knowledge or action is converted into a 'prohibition' issued by the Other, a consequence of 'symbolic castration' (castration BY symbols, not a symbolization of physical castration).

From the mirror stage onward, the subject's unity depends on a 'triangulation' of functions that compensates for the troublesome failure of an organ, such as a hand or eye, to completely separate the perceived from the perceiver. Where direct feedback results in the 'nonsense' of self-reference, triangulation (chiasmus, anacoluthon) allows for a temporal/narrative staging that postpones these effects and incorporates the unsymbolizable surplus (Lacan's *objet petit a*) as a material object, place, or action.

2. interpolation

Interpellation is the uncanny 'call' whereby the subject imagines that the Other is summoning him/her. This exterior voice goes to the heart of one's missing identity, a central hollow core, producing the uncanny effect that Lacan called 'the extimate'. The call requires embodiment which the subject can manage only by interpolating a unity, a presence, a placement. The subject in fact must attempt to 'occupy the place of representation' (hence, the 'theatrical stage' aspect of the mirror stage). [more later ...]

3. the partial object: the subject/subjective in the world

The commonest example of the subject in the world is the hero who travels. The encounters formalized in this drama are the interpolations of the subject-turned-inside-out, attempting identity through placement in the interval 'between the two deaths'. The whole trip might be considered as an 'encounter with the Real' (*tuché*), where the paradigmatic confrontation is that of the hero with a monster whose challenge, like that *Ædipus's* chimæra, condenses the issue of self-reference into a boundary condition — literally! [more later ...]



The wax anatomical models in La Specula museum in Florence, Italy, demonstrate that science's other side is horror, with particular focus on the female body. Not only is the woman what Lacan called 'the not-all', impossible to capture all at once; the woman's body became, in the attempt to erase the uncanny, the model of the 'partial object', the threatening borderline between the visible and invisible, knowable and unknowable.

Annette Burfoot, 'Surprising origins', in *Kinoeye: New Perspectives on European Film*, www.kinoeye.org/02/09/burfoot09.php.