

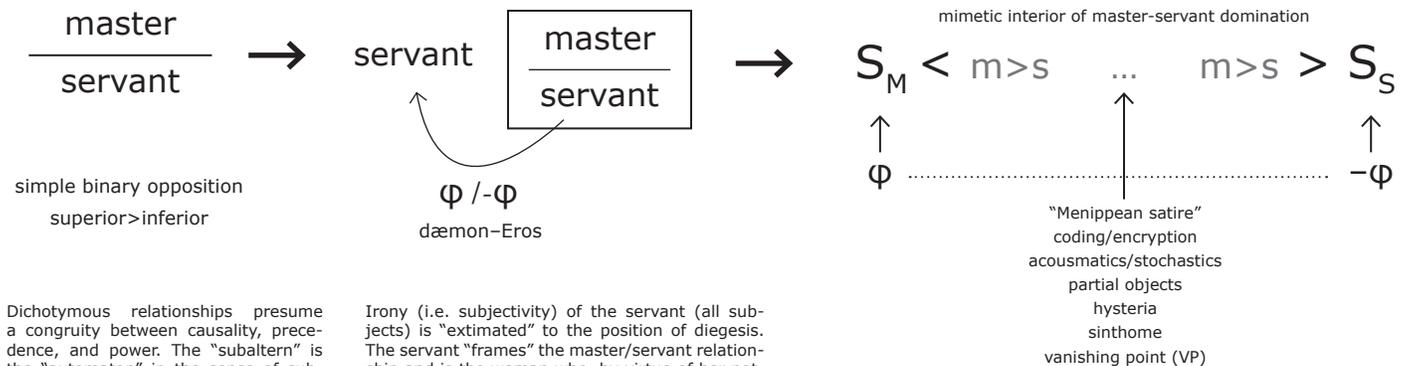
the calculus of predication: a secret axiom

The so-called "calculus of predication" was created as an askesis, a voluntary contraction of a critical project (metalepsis) to "as few terms as possible" in the face of the "demonic demands" of interpretation requiring reductive monothesis. If anything, the calculus aspires to hold discourse open long enough to develop "polythesis," or what could be called (following Bakhtin's description of Dostoevsky's writing style) "polyphony" — multiple voices, each with not just a point of view but a whole world, co-existing ("dissensus") without the need for a forced resolution. This aim so clearly coincided with the aspirations of the ancient "zairja," an actual device, possibly the first real computer and certainly the first "thinking machine," which aimed not to determine single causes for multiple effects but the reverse: to find, for any one effect as "many causes as possible," anticipating the Rabelaisian joke, "You brag about being the father of many sons? Well, I tell you I am the son of many fathers!"

The comedic element of polythesis is no accident. One clear source of the calculus as a picture of metalepsis (the recursion/contamination of the framed by the frame) is Menippean satire, a style of joking that activates the space between the audience and the artwork the effective zone, the place where things get done, poetically. Dostoevsky was a clear subscriber to this kind of "emergence theory of art," but we can also see in Poe, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Plato, and many others a commitment as well as deep acquaintance with these linkages.

Therefore a "secret axiom" added to the original six (see below for the list) is a big deal. In short, it addresses the problem of the binary. Two terms are held to be co-defining, such as the "garden" and the "weed." One idea conditions the other. The rule (which sounds arbitrary in its bare form) states simply that the negative term is metaleptically the framing term; that it conditions both itself and the contrasting "good" term and regulates the relationship of opposition as well. Hegel's parable of Lordship and Bondage is the first philosophically definitive account of this axiom, and applying the calculus to it provides the first and possibly clearest account (also see below).

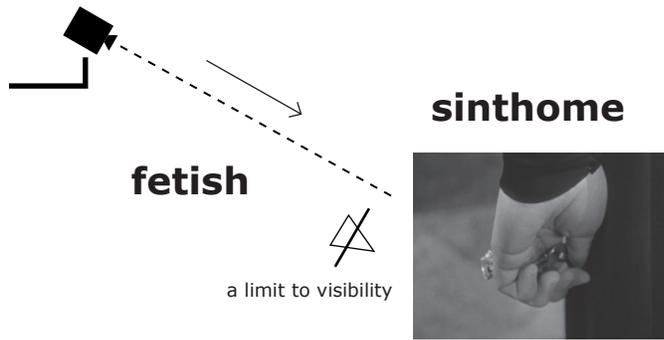
Why this seventh and secret axiom? One defense is that it "saves time" by showing how negation is "there from the start," that what may seem to be experientially the first element of a "situation" is actually preceded by a retroactively present negation. But, this attempt to state the axiom truly and briefly is not helpful as an explanation. Rather, it is necessary to review the axioms as a system, regard metalepsis in its variations and themes, and consider separate issues, such as discourse theory, the Freudian drives, Lacanian *extimité*, etc. as separate and equally important cases.



Dichotomous relationships presume a congruity between causality, precedence, and power. The "subaltern" is the "automaton" in the sense of subjectivity, "serving at the pleasure of the master." The "master comes first" in a temporality that transfers cause to precedent: "without the master the servant/servitude would not exist." Although this is an inherently vertical relationship, it is played out through a series of predicative exchanges, where orders are given and followed. The servant converts the raw materials of nature into things useful for the master, and in this process knowledge as a "how-to" is created and present as a reserve, a pool of tricks of the trade. The servant's inferiority is qualified by the element of fate related to this pool; the servant has superiority over the master, who is in this construct a total idiot. The servant "could teach the master a thing or two." Also, the master has had to resort to the servant system as a substitute for the impossibility of finding recognition from other masters (Hegel). The servant's superiority comes out of inferiority (reverse predication), and the gap between the two states is identical to the *poché* space the servant traditionally inhabits.

Irony (i.e. subjectivity) of the servant (all subjects) is "extimated" to the position of diegesis. The servant "frames" the master/servant relationship and is the woman who, by virtue of her not-all status, cannot be contained by any dichotomy. The not-all must be read, in diegetic or mimetic terms, as a phallic function. The servant is capable of appearing or disappearing in a "demonic" way (without apparent cause). The cannibal on the periphery of the known *œcumene* of the 18c. was credited with the ability to appear and disappear magically. This boundary condition also mandated that the aborigines of peripheral territories were subject to enslavement "by virtue of their position at the periphery" coupled with their ability to vanish and re-appear. In Greek history, the transition between interminable civil wars and democracy based on male appropriation of the functions of the hearth (cf. the *prytaneion*, where the civic flame was displayed to distinguished visitors) the suppression of the customary role of mothers and daughters as the priestesses of Hestia converted the $\Phi/-\Phi$ function to the ambiguity displayed with full Menippean hilarity in the plays of Euripides, notably in *Alcestis*, where the $\Phi/-\Phi$ was structured in the form of Orpheus's rescue of Eurydice. Orpheus failed but Herakles succeeded in the rescue, with the irony of $\Phi/-\Phi$ converted to the final joke of presenting Admetus a "bride" that was actually "his bride." The hero is thus the medium who brings about the Menippean conclusion, the triumph of the servant/woman.

The "secret" aspect of this seventh axiom is based on its status as a "silent language" within the system, expressed as a cipher, a stochastic white-noise reinforcement of a weak signal, the encoding of predication by the hysteric (saturation of knowledge by desire/pleasure-pain) — and this a basis for "cross-programming" of spaces and times. A template is, as it were, superimposed on an empirical field to operate as a "fate" of determinative magic, re-engineering cause-and-effect predications without any apparent external influence. Agency is internalized, which is the same as saying it is denied exteriority and extrinsicality. The foreign is "within the system," as in the case of the demonization of the Jews by German Fascism. Thus, "final solutions" take the form of the "dirty fantasies" (Žižek) that always accompany positive, utopian fantasies. Thus, the Jew is both impotent and super-potent, impoverished and wealthy, inept and masterful. The Deleuzian "demark" also occupies this range, as a natural sign converted to virulent omen and Nemesis (cf. Spielberg's *Jaws*). Silence (privation) is converted into secrecy (prohibition) on the basis of the natural hysteria of the seventh axiom. $\$/a \rightarrow S_1/S_2$, where $\$/$ is "impossible" as a result of the privation of the master or master signifier (i.e. the paternal super-ego), and where a and S_2 are the subordinate knowledge system, saturated with pleasure, of the servant subject. This is both why *Alcestis* was written and enjoyed by the audience as a farce (whose understanding of the situation was truly hysterical) and why modern classical scholars mistakenly counted it as a tragedy. The "masters" of the university as well as of society in general cannot hear or understand the silent speech of the subaltern, whose commerce with Hades and freedom to come and go from the realm of the dead is both *phallic* (Eros-derived) and *asketic* (a social bond based on secrecy). The "interval between the two deaths" is the twinship rule: subjectivity is divided between its obligations to the Symbolic and its commitment to the death drive: Cupid and Psyche.



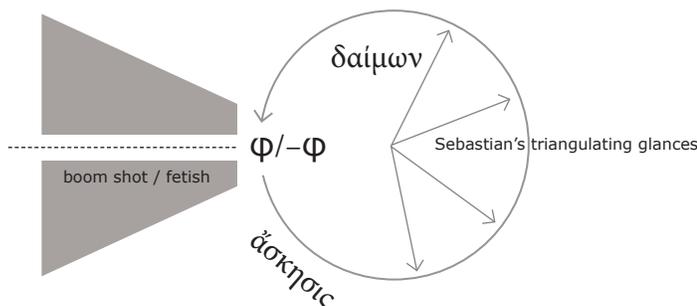
Žižek's links the "fetish" with a distant view structured by perspective — in effect a panorama of the Symbolic's networks from an high vantage point. In this scenic mode, cathexis arranges objects/subjects within a space time invested with the interests of the Symbolic, concealed as "mimetic content." The closer the POV approaches to its object, however, the fetish encounters a barrier, an absolute limit, where it gives way to the sinthome, which re-organizes spaces, times, and the objects and subjects in them, charging the view with a "hysterical" mandate, a counterpart to the "Ché vuoi?" of the Other. This comparison of the linked but opposite provisional spaces of fetish and sinthome match perfectly to the scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *Notorious* (1945), where the camera, placed on a balcony overlooking the entry hall at the Nazi spy Sebastian's villa during a party. As the camera descends, it tightens its focus on Alicia's hand, clenched around the key to the wine cellar. She has slipped this off Sebastian's key ring so that she and her lover Devlin can discover what's being concealed in the wine bottles set aside for shipment out of the country.

Within the fetish zone, distance and perspective allowed subjectivity a "proper distance" to insulate it from the Real, which occupies the position of the gaze, the partial object that is "impossible" to see. At close range however, this "privation" converts to "prohibition," and prohibition charges the action and cathexis of objects based on the new economy where the program of desire is superimposed onto the program of invading and escaping the cellar. Prohibition is the theme of impotence (symbolic castration) that limits spatial exploration. Masculinity requires keys and permissions, femininity's "not-all" allows free passage. Alicia and Devlin "resolve" this in a "kiss that is not a kiss but is a kiss" to give Sebastian the impression they had met in the cellar for a romantic tryst. Sebastian is not fooled however. His series of glances clues in the audience to what exactly he is thinking about.



Sebastian's musing glances triangulate the "logical space" of the wine cellar door, the key, and the "situation" that has come about as a result of the "event" (cf. LeFebvre), two temporal structures that correspond to the fetish and sinthome of the preceding scenes. Just as the sinthome penetrated the position of the gaze, which was for the fetish a resistant vanishing point, Sebastian now plays out the structure of that small spatial remainder through his series of "acute angles" penetrating the impossible space. He is the Bloomian "demon" paired with Alicia/Devlin's askesis. As the perfect Hitchcockian Oedipal couple, their descent into the wine cellar confirms the erotic nature of the space that opens up after fetish has gone through its reductionistic tubular journey. The general sequence has been: situation > event > (new) situation; fetish > sinthome > revision/resignation. The $\phi/-\phi$ forms of Alicia and Devlin combine materially in the "kiss that is not a kiss (i.e. given as a false sign of their assignation) but really a kiss (they realize they love each other)." This moment is akin to the ending of the Menippean masterpiece, *Alcestis*, or its 18c. version, *Le Nozze di Figaro*. The husband falls in love with the wife, who was for an interval not a wife but simply a woman willing to be seduced. The "idiotic symmetry" of the point where fetish gives way to sinthome colors the circularity, the "out and back" aspect of the sinthomatic space-time.

Like the master who has discovered the superior position of the servant, it now becomes mandatory for Sebastian to eliminate Alicia. This sequence of Sebastian's facial expressions, "objectivity of the subject," follows the "subjectivity of the object," the transformation of wine-glasses into ticks of sinister timer set to trigger Sebastian's awareness of the missing key. In objectivity of the subject we are aware of "situation," which is a cathexis of objects within a shared Symbolic field. In the subjectivity of the object we see these same cathected objects appropriated by the sinthome, whose relation to the unconscious requires (such a cliché!) a key.



the "Masonic eye-pyramid"

The initiatory, "secret society" deployments of the fetish-to-sinthome (or situation-event-situation) structure use the same imagery and geometry, but the controversial nature can be overlooked if Sebastian's gaze is not recognized as the gaze of a *blind man*, specifically a case of hysterical blindness which, in the new situation, cannot alter the fate of event. Devlin will rescue Alicia, betraying Sebastian to his Nazi colleagues. The panoptical gaze of the Masonic eye is clinically blind. God is the cosmic hysteric who is blind *because* he sees, i.e. the obverse of Tiresius, who "sees *because* he does not see." Tiresius does not see sinthomes as "blind spots." God sees only the blind spots.