

Metalepsis Seminar • Virtual Session 8

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CATHEXIS (INVESTMENT) AND PULSION — ARE THEY TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

METALEPSIS SEMINARIANS, 9-ERS, AND AUXILIARY MEMBERS



jazz singer Billie Holiday, 1915–1959

* push pull

What is it about Lacan? Wasn't Freud's bad experience with his followers clear enough? You use a simple term, describe it in a straightforward way, and as soon as you look around it has been exchanged with an impenetrable technical term that no one will understand. Possibly *mi-dire*, Lacan's habit of saying (less than) half that was required — "required to do *what?*" we can hear Lacan saying — was an indication that some terms, and the ideas behind them, were best left unfinished. In the standard logic of definition, there is a big difference between the *genus et differentia* style, you have a thing that belongs to a class but distinguishes itself in a certain way. In dialectical definition, you have something that is changed in the process of trying to pin it down. Like [Schroedinger's poor little cat](#), the "either/or" condition makes a difference only when one actually looks to see. We are in the position of Scotty in the second half of *Vertigo*. It's Judy or Madeleine *only* because of his attempt to make an inventory.

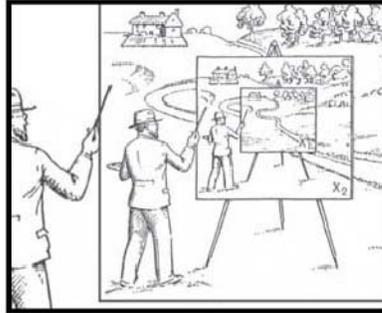
So it is with **cathexis** ("investment"), the energy behind the inventory and its field, and pulsion, *the drive*, specifically the "death drive" as the physics of all the drives. Using our earlier assessment of the oral, anal, and phallic drives as deriving their relation to the Symbolic *via* the slight delays and polarities of demands and supplies (a way in which this simple back and forth process creates *emergent significance*), it was easier to see that the death drive's compulsion to return to the void of origins was an engineering issue. One takes aim at a goal, but the two things are different. The aim must have the goal to continually deflect itself, so to speak, into a curved path that thinks its straight but really returns to zero. This is the deflection common to discourse, where TRUTH appears in the first position and also the last, as a kind of "gotcha" moment that reveals the role of chirality in the left and right of enunciation.

The rude and premature conversion of cathexis as a kind of supply-side push into space-time invites a simplistic "equal and opposite" reaction of *pulsion* out of Newton's playbook. The difference is that this response has a built-in time element, a delay (or advance — the polarity of "who started this argument" comes into play) that, like [Billie Holiday's](#) advance or delayed delivery of lyrics to a tune, opened up a whole new dimensionality of the song. Clearly, push-pull was in Sartre's mind when he wrote the famous passage in *Nausée* about the chestnut tree, or in the minds of the Jewish mystic authors of the *Zohar* when they

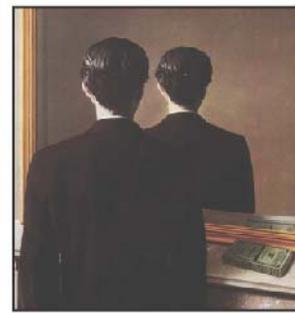
wrote about *zimzum*. In our more ambitious project of describing chirality in relation to a penetration of perceptual space-time "in front of" the subject (in effect arguing that subjectivity basically has a "space-time in front of it") the dimensionality that is opened up follows the plan described by Vico as a relation of *animus to anima* — not the crude gendering of space where inside is feminine and outside is masculine but the relation of head-psyche to phallic-psyche modeled by the ordinary HERM, a.k.a. Janusian boundary marker that establishes Diana/Djana as what Vico said she was, the first external human brain, able to "think while subjectivity sleeps" (Endymion) as well as transform mentality through mis-recognition (Actæon). Just try to explain shamanism without either of these two concepts and you will see that Vico is not just a footnote in the history of philosophy.



violation



extension



flip: $\phi/-\phi$

The frame conditions of the (1) nose, (2) *abîme* and (3) "sartire" are illustrated by *Notorious*, a painter doing a self-portrait, and Magritte's naughty mirror.

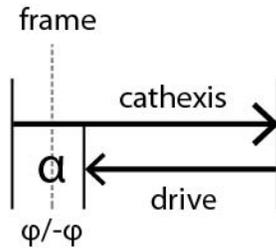
* frame arguments

If cathexis is a kind of push and the drive is a kind of push back, with a built-in time delay and/or reversal, why not look at the frame as a push-investment and the fill as a push back, beginning with the violation of a "nose" (above, left — the scene from *Notorious* where Cary Grant appears as an uninvited guest at Alicia's party), where a bit of the audience is appropriated by the mimesis of the frame interior? In for a penny, in for a pound: if this kind of push-back can take place, the obvious next thing that could happen would be an attempt to account for that push-back with a *mise en abîme* situation (above, center). The principle of this bad infinity is that at some point the left and right versions of reality are going to confront each other, just as Sosia is going to meet up with Hermes disguised as Sosia in Plautus's *Amphytrion*. Or, Romulus is going to be taunted by Remus, leading to the foundational sacrifice required to secure the spiritual security of Rome. You see where this is going. Every frame embeds a small seed of subversion that starts with a nose and ends with a ghost/host/Geist, the "stone guest" who protects the living banquet (the key to Camillo's theater of memory, by the way).

The point of a calculus is reduction to the "bones" of the situation, same point as the interval known as "between the two deaths," which we can now recognize as the essential negative tendency of theory — it's shamanistic reduction using a canonical number of "dogs" to get the flesh of contingency off the bones of truth, which was first, then last, then "first" again in the form of principle. *Verum ipsum factum* said Dr. Vico, and in this he was possibly thinking of Actæon's truth, his $\emptyset/-\emptyset$ of reverse predication into a stag. Usually translated as "the made is convertible with the true," the fact is that in the making the truth is killed, and this sacrifice creates an absence that will guarantee the security through metonymy's "resonance-at-a-distance." Truth will be the "darkness shining through the light," in the form of the chirality of the space opened up (*ingenium*) by the cathexis of the frame, whose investment pushes into space to be met with a slightly out of synch and sometimes flipped pushback, just like the oral, anal, and phallic drives.

When Lacan added the gaze and the voice (*voix acousmatique*) to Freud's list of three drives, the fix was in. The "death drive" — pleasure derived from the **obstacles** to the pleasure-seeking tendencies of demand — food, hygiene, sex — mean that each cathexis builds into the field, just as it is making a map of desire, a demonic push-back, a truth, some hidden treasure. "Every map is a treasure map" (slogan for the students of metalepsis). Gaze and voice, whose directions are *en face* to the subject who asks "Ché vuoi?", are going to be the sticking points for those who get Lacan and the Freudian drives backwards. They, like Foucault and Derrida, simply miss the directionality issue that pairs the outward gesture of the frame/cathexis with the push-back direction of the drive.

Below: The frame pushes cathexis out to the right (into an objective field of "affordance"), then the drive pushes back, but with a gap ('aleph') that constructs a 90° vector force to animate the field with a "chiral" demon that works like an automaton (i.e. it is the voice of the unconscious).



This sums up the above sequence of (1) nose, (2) *abîme*, and (3) "sartire" by showing how chirality ($\emptyset/-\emptyset$) becomes demonic within the space that is neither officially inside or outside the frame, but also both. This is the point at which the field of predications <...> is invaded, haunted, or sunk (if it is a boat). **it is truth in the first and last positions.**

Now, go back and think through the four discourses.