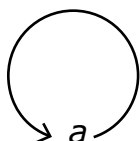


Session 3: The Name

The phenomenon of the proper name sounds silly when isolated from its considerable history. In the story of Odysseus, we get a dose of complexity when, trapped inside the Cyclops' cave and having blinded the Cyclops, he must still devise a way to escape. The key is to give his name as "Nobody." This buys him time on the escape route back to the ship, when the wounded Cyclops is calling for help by saying "Nobody has blinded me!" The proper name is meant but the pronoun is understood by his Cyclops neighbors. Vico employed a similar logic by using reversed antinomasia in his concept of the logical kernel of myth, the "imaginative universal." The thunder gave the proper name of Jove. It wasn't like Jove, it was Jove; it called the god forth directly. Lacan realized that the name appears as a negative inserted into the set of signifiers as a "hapax" (first-time, unique) event. Comparing it to i , or $\sqrt{-1}$, it is not symbolizable (except as a paradox) and "unthinkable," i.e. the Real. Its resistance to symbolization and imagination is played out in the three-part Borromeo knot, where each "ring" of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real is held together by the third.

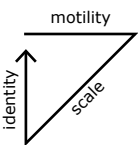
Interpretation through Diagrams



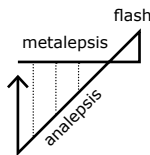
The gapped circle identifies the non-place location of the partial object. It is the "same" but equally nowhere.



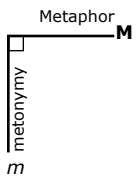
The Möbius band exemplifies the ubiquity of the passage at which the partial object reveals the "defect" of R2.



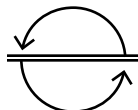
Passage and identity are coupled in the $\langle \rangle$ role of the $\sqrt{-1}$ in functions of scale, extimacy, and non-place location issues.



The anacoluthon suspends the metonymy initially so that metalepsis ultimately is a "metonymy of a metonymy," as in the case of the Nobody as name.



The acousmatic voice is "all metonymy" in that it lies outside of the system of phonemic signifiers, and couples this outside with a literal place outside the system of places: i.e. a wilderness.



Foundation rituals are fundamentally naming ceremonies, where the secrets of spiritual protection are kept through sacrifice.

The Unthinkable. The Real is that which resists symbolization, which is not to say that it doesn't try to have its time on stage, as a part of the visible, auditory, tangible, olfactory, or tasteable world. We can in fact mark this presence as two specific locations: an R1 location, what we normally take to be a reality that surrounds our world of limited experiences and perceptions, a kind of "wake up" boundary; and an R2 location, which is inside at some point of breakdown or contradiction. Partial objects inhabit both locations. Explorers from Herodotus' time onward pushed at the boundary of the known world to find monsters, cannibals, composite beings, etc. whose form itself constituted a kind of puzzle about religion and nature. Dealing with the military threats of these encountered beings led to conclusions about their function as emissaries of death. When the explorers were invited to dinner as guests rather than menu items, the questions turned to explaining strange customs. The body of the savage was often taken to be the metonymical key to this anomaly of nature and turned into a puzzle about the ultimate truths of creation. Internal monsters became a focus of popular curiosity as travellers reported finding shark's teeth on mountain tops, strange animals and animal bones, and other curios they began to collect and display in curiosity cabinets and rooms: *Wunderkabinette*, or *Wunderkammer*.

In the process of classification and naming of natural objects, such as Linneaus's strictly hierarchical system of domains, phyla, species, etc., differed from traditional ethnological systems where the function of the name retained the magic of the $\sqrt{-1}$ Lacan cites for the proper name. In magic practices, the name reveals a secret, and the secret involves power or control over the named object. In Romany (Gypsy) culture, a person's real name is known by only a few close family members. Nicknames are employed for extended family use, for clan use, for use by non-Romany friends, and ultimately "harmless" names given to strangers. To discover a name closer to the Real name is to gain power, and this use of the voice has to be examined in light of another function, the "acousmatic."

The *voix acousmatique* is the term given by Michel Chion to the offstage voice. Because it cannot be located, it is a voice determined by location, but specifically a *lack* of location. Thus, the acousmatic voice has a function like the name, a status as $\sqrt{-1}$, or $-i$: a partial object or Real. It is important to look at the full list of things that Lacan included in his list of "part" or "partial" objects. The first were related to the stages of the primary drives of infant development: the breast (oral), shit (anal), the gaze (phallic). The voice was added, and by this, as Mladen Dolar has pointed out in his book, *A Voice and Nothing More*, is the non-phonemic part of language that is like the silence that separates words rather than the sounds that directly signify. Think of the story of Narcissus and Echo, for example. We have a primary example of the doubles theme of the uncanny and an ancient anticipation of Lacan's account of the "mirror stage." Coupled to this — we should note that it's no accident — is Echo's love of Narcissus and her punishment, to only repeat what has been already said. This is a type of *voix acousmatique* that Poe employed in the "empty signifier" of the Raven, as a demonstration of the value of $\sqrt{-1}$ in poetry. The also ancient story of Pyramus and Thisbe, where two lovers living in adjacent houses communicate through a small crack in their common party wall, demonstrates a logical consistency surrounding the whisper as acousmatic. In some eastern languages there is a special "whisper dialect" used in relation to romantic conversation and seduction. In the west, we have the tradition of Hermes, the god of seduction, trade, and messaging as well as the conductor of the souls of the dead to Hades (a true mascot for boundary language!). Hermes is portrayed holding a 7-candle candelabra (standing for the planets, the spheres through which souls travel when they are born, and his finger to his lips, partly to signify that the lore surrounding this travel is esoteric, but also to point to the acousmatic relation between whispering and the "music of the spheres," i.e. the mathematical relationships that connect music to building.

Privation to Prohibition. It is a rule of thumb to note that whatever humans cannot think, they come to regard as intentionally withheld from them. The "privation" of the senses includes and conflates everything beyond the horizon of the visible/sensible, from the shadows cast by our own point of view to the other side of the moon, to death itself. At this horizon we place guards stationed to "keep us out," as if it were at all possible that we could trespass in the first place. The conversion of privation into prohibition means that $\sqrt{-1}$ as a sign of the Real is something we could know but are forbidden to know, and this addition of an element of intentionality makes it possible to convert the partial objects, the guardians of the domain kept from us by (natural) privation, into beings whose very material nature, whose bodies, are signs of prohibition. We can test this hypothesis by looking at situations where the function of prohibition has been required (property boundaries, apotropaic signs warning visitors to turn back, protections against spiritual as well as physical contamination, rituals to protect cities and buildings during "foundation rites"). Much of this has been done for us



The *dipintura*, or frontispiece in the 1744 edition of Vico's *New Science*. A ray from the eye of the sky-god Jove reflects off a jewel worn by "Metaphysics," shown on top of a globe of the celestial (visible) universe. The first poet, Homer, is shown as a statue, frozen as if by the gaze of Medusa, pointing at the helmet of Hermes, the only object Vico does not describe in the text following the image.

JOHNSTONE'S CATEGORIES OF TRAVEL:

- Control:** "We see that travel proper is impossible when the moving person exercises either too much control or too little over his movement."
- Suffering:** "Suffering is necessary because absolute control would transform a travel into an errand."
- Curiosity:** "The curiosity of the traveler opens him to the possibilities of an alien culture."
- Accumulation:** "Travel must be funded with memories of travel. Your trip must have a certain duration, a duration encompassed by memory."
- Home:** "The traveler must be at home in his travels; and one is at home only where a memorial deposit has accumulated."
- Saturation:** "Saturation can arise from a catastrophe so violent that it rips away the traveler's sense of being at home in his travels. Saturation ... arises from the exceeding of a certain maximum duration."
- Reflection:** "Reflection is a generic term of the account one must be able to give of one's trip if it is to count as travel."
- Home** is constituted of memories that accumulate. But we can be at home in these memories without knowing that we have a home."
- Solitude:** "Solitude is what distinguishes travel from migration. ... each must make the trip for himself, reflecting on it in his own way, acting on the basis of his own curiosity, subject to his own physiology of saturation."
- Personal:** "A traveler needs a guide. If he finds himself in truly strange circumstances, he will not even be able to grasp how strange they are if he is limited to his own interpretive resources. He needs to have ... things explained to him."
- Naïveté:** "The fact that curiosity can be suffocated by facts points to the need for a categorical term to designate unsuffocated curiosity."

by the French classicist, Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, whose book, *The Ancient City*, available on-line, documents the connections between the hearth, the underworld, cities, houses, tombs, travel, and many other urban practices. It was not for nothing that, in the days of ancient Greece, schoolboys were required to remember thousands of names of ancestors in order to preserve their well-being in the Afterworld. Naming and Hades (literally, "the invisible") both relate to the R1 aspect of the real, with the requirement that localities (hearths, altars, corners, property lines, tombs, etc.) take on the duties of the R2, the "acousmatic voice" embodied in ritual verbal formulæ, oaths, prayers, songs, and chants.

Vico and the Acousmatic Voice. James Joyce knew a good thing when he read one, and his reading of Vico's major work, *The New Science*, led him to put emphasis on the thunder as the word that initiated human thought and culture. In his book, *Finnegans Wake*, even the written text takes on an acousmatic quality. Puns, neologisms, anagrams, composite words, and rebuses erode the normative meanings to a fundamental, primitive aural quality. Words have "hieroglyphic" meanings, but the book must ultimately be read out loud to be understood. Vico gave an account of the first pre-human feral beings wandering the forests who, frightened severely by a particularly loud clap of thunder, conceived (for the first time) that the thunder was a word, and that the word was also the name of the god, "Jove" (note the similarity to Yahweh, the Hebrew equivalent). This was a metonymic transfer, from the human capacity for vocalizing to an unlocatable voice beyond the surface of the sky, then to be conflated with an unlocatable gaze (the phallic partial object) and related to the drive/demand of Jove, the basis of the first rituals and auguries aiming to interpret this demand. The first humans understood that Jove meant to tell them something (prohibition) but they required a system of signs to interpret that demand. Eventually these attempted interpretations, or auguries/divinations, became the substance of laws.

Did Vico know what he was talking about? That is, was this something more than a variation of ethnological theorizing? There are clues pointing to Vico's anticipation of a "Lacanian" perspective, well over 200 years before Lacan. The first is the text of *The New Science* itself, which creates a spiral of repetitive sayings and arguments, a kind of verbal labyrinth. In this text, Vico advises the reader that s/he will be the true writer of the "new science" that combines *scienza* with *coscienza*, knowledge with consciousness — implying an alliance between science and a science of, correspondingly, the unconscious (what is missing in Descartes' "I think therefore I am"). Vico's labyrinth constitutes a text that Vico writes in true analytical traditions: from the position of a "dummy" or *le mort* (dead man). In his *Autobiography*, Vico tells the story of how he fell from a ladder while working in his father's bookstore. The attending physician foretold that the boy would either die or grow up to be an idiot. In either case, *The New Science* is identified as a *mi-dire* kind of text: a prophetic masterpiece of divination, one that implies a moment in the future, "by the time of which" all that has said will have come true, Lacan's "future anterior" of subjectivity. Vico's entire work could be considered, therefore, a "death narrative," an acousmatic voice coming from what Lacan called the stage "between the two deaths" — a symbolic death and a Real death.

Vico even incorporates a near literal version of the Mirror Stage. In the 1744 edition of *The New Science*, he reports that an argument with the architectural theorist Carlo Lodoli (Venice) led to the retraction of a number of pages that had to be filled, and that he decided to insert a freshly designed frontispiece, known as the *dipintura*, to explain the whole of the work. A verbal commentary explained the significance of all of the elements of the *dipintura* except one: the helmet of Hermes, shown at the bottom left corner. This reference to whispering and the *-i* value (it is both "present" and "absent") makes it a partial object. Vico's status as an anti-Cartesian suggest, too, that his theory is really about the subjective unconscious, the *scienza* that is counterpart to the *coscienza*, or "consciousness" by which cultures develop their networks of symbolic relationships. That Vico uses an image, and a mirror image at that (see the reflected ray of Jove, angled off the jewel on the breast of *Metafisica* standing atop the celestial globe), shows that he, like Lacan, employs three domains — the imaginary, the symbolic, the Real — the connections between any two of which depend on a third. Enough for the uninitiated!

Voice, Name, Passage. It is impossible to consider the voice, as inherently acousmatic and therefore suspending the issue of location; the name and its "hapax" relationship to prior experience; and the connections linking partial objects to outer boundaries and internal gaps; without concluding that there is a strong relationship to travel. This is a matter not just of motion undertaken as a consequence of needing to get resources, avoid danger, wander about, etc., but travel in relation to knowledge: "authentic travel" such as that undertaken by Odysseus in Homer's second great poem. Henry Johnstone has deduced some ten categories that distinguish gnostic, "authentic" travel from other kinds of human movement. Mainly, the possibility of failure has to be ever-present. There has to be a risk. The key linking Johnstonian travel with the partial object lore of Lacan is the voice employed as a password. Here, a random word or phrase is chosen from the series of ordinary signifiers ($S_2: S_1 \dots S_n$). The causal directionality of the password is opposite that of the name. Instead of *entering* the series of signifiers, the password *is removed*. A password might be used by accident, so context is key to establishing the conditions for this removal. The $\sqrt{-1}$, the payment for name, is refunded with the password. The amount is the same, credit or debit.