

Metonymy and the Modern (notes)

Modernism in thought and art begins with recognition of metonymy, the “figure of speech” based on the power of the part to speak about the whole. Metonymy was of course recognized grammatically and poetically since ancient times, but until the late 19c. no one had related so precisely or imaginatively two forces within metonymy that had enormous potential when combined: placement and accident. Possibly, placement was not understandable in relation to accident without the evolution of the late industrial city and the wasted landscapes of frontier settlement and colonization; and, one could argue that, on the side of the aleatory, until Poincaré, Riemann, and others had sufficiently articulated randomness with respect to the scientific accounts of the world, the connection of accident to placement would not have made sense.

The “perfect storm” of conditions that brought accident and placement into perfect alignment in the late 19c. began with overt visual potentiality could be credited to the use of collage. In particular, we think of the collages of Max Ernst in relation to his participation in Dada, specifically Tristan Tzara’s idea of metonymical collage in poetry, where words reduced to rhythmic sounds nonetheless retained their capacity to communicate through pure song. Ernst’s collages used fragments that retained some measure of their original content meaning, so that juxtaposition occurred at the level of primary identification. A woman and a fish could meet, so to speak, as a woman and a fish rather than as arrangements of color tones and shapes. Placement led the accident of juxtaposition into a landscape of signs that one could call “forensic.” Their distribution spoke directly about the process of their “abandonment” to the viewer, as if the artist was someone who had to pack quickly and leave town, leaving behind a field of debris, rather than someone who, as a careful craftsman, had carefully placed objects on a stage to be viewed by an audience seated in a dark auditorium.

Where meaning had been “pumped forward” to the screen-apparatus (stage, canvas, page, etc.) in pre-modern literature — i.e. carefully arranged to produce an intended effect — the modern method of *abandonment* “pulled backward” to create a meaning vacuum from this “debris field” with its forensic clues about the artist’s reason for leaving.¹ As with any crime scene, forensic evidence may be a mixture of purely unintended accidents (bloodstains, smashed furniture, shell casings) as well as those things intentionally left behind as false clues to mislead those who would wish to solve the mystery. Metonymy is the logic of the remainder that has been “occulted” both intentionally and unintentionally. Metonymy is an intentional strategy of art; but, unintentionally, it is a mechanism of the unconscious. This is why “placement” involves a field that is simultaneously a conscious logical account (trajectories, angles, distances, proximities, etc.) and an “echo chart” of stochastic effects that resonate without creating a signal of their own. This doubled force-field could be said to be a case where white noise, meaning nothing in itself, is capable of amplifying weak signals within and around it, signals that had not been noticed before but, with the presence of white noise, create pure tones.

In art as well as psychoanalysis, the myth of Narcissus and Echo is given a new meaning. Narcissus sees a face he takes to be a god, beautiful and divine *because* he misrecognizes his role in the construction of this simple reflection. When he becomes aware of this role, it is not simply a "correction of an error" but the creation of a new consciousness that includes the *process of error*. This embeds a "negative" echo within each positive "signal," an echo that can be stored, transferred, reconfigured, transformed, and re-charged independent of the concrete modalities that contain and convey it. These "independent management procedures" so to speak give metonymy a portability that metaphor, simply a transfer of meaning from one material domain to another, lacks. Where metaphor calls on and requires the consent and intellectual investment of a "viewer" to appreciate the clever act of transfer, metonymy operates as a consciousness within the work of art, with or without the viewer's awareness or consent. This is the basis of modernism's attitude towards the audience: no longer a consumer whose approval is sought, but a vector across a field of meaning that does not require the simultaneous presence of all elements in play.

Metonymy's portability was the feature that afforded modernism an unprecedented unity across a broad typology of media, techniques, artists' personalities, cultural backdrops, and historical conditions. One could say that metonymy, by refusing to speak directly, became a *lingua franca* once placement and accident were brought into an ideal relationship.² To understand the historical significance of this portability, we have to look into the interior of its mechanism; and this interior is nothing less than the *gap*, a kind of "negative universal," that on the level of politics and history creates the obsessional drives of Capitalism and, on the level of the individual, constitutes the (psychoanalytic) drive. Because the gap is not explicable without reference to metonymy, we can consider the gap and metonymy to be "simultaneous" if not co-referential or even identical. The gap implies metonymy's procedure of occultation; metonymy, by being meaningful only through absence and negation, implies the gap as both *location* and *impasse*, an *aporia* where the symbolic chain breaks down but at the same time opens up to alternatives (*detournements*) that, without themselves becoming positive substitutes, constitute radically self-negating sites of resistance and exception. Metonymy could be said to be the gap's rhetorical "front office," a means of domesticating the Real of the gap without compromising this negative quality. As metonymy, the gap can be experienced in art and literature through devices of virtuality that "detach" themselves from the continuities of space and time, as is the case with the fantastic's four famous virtualities, travel through time, the story in the story, the contamination of reality by the dream, and the double. The fairy tale of fantastic fiction requires our voluntary suspension of disbelief and allows us to return to a "reality" where identity is protected by symbolic difference and space-time is reinforced through geometric analogies. But, because the Symbolic itself is self-referential and based on overlapping chains of signifiers requiring metaphoric glue to hold together, breakdowns and discontinuities are "built in" although they are made to appear as exceptions. The Real of the gap is implicit in the formation of signifying chains. The cause-and-effect predications of our networks of symbolic relationships, epitomized by language, carry a radical defect within them from the very beginning, like a gene set to trigger a disease at some indeterminate time of life. This "fate of the Symbolic" constitutes a permanent *uncanny*, resistant to

attempts to domesticate its effects. Attempts to domesticate the Real within insulated circumstances (museums, art schools, student demonstrations, etc.), leaves a remainder that is retroactively volatile.

It would be useful to compare the political–historical “constitutive conditions” of metonymy to the psychoanalytic phenomena of the gap. One interesting result of such a comparison would be to consider how otherwise coincidental advances in seemingly unrelated fields (physics, psychoanalysis, economics, politics, poetry, etc.) are in fact independent manifestations of one and the same process, how each is a “treatment” of the problem of the metonymical gap. To do this we have to describe in detail, and in abstract terms, just what the gap and metonymy are, how they relate structurally, and how their common mechanisms created historical overlaps among a great variety of fields. The barrier to doing this, however, arises when the gap is treated as a symptom wherever it arises. This is typical of analyses that see the gap as the problematic middle ground between two alternative positions or entities. The gap then stands as nothing more than an impasse that can be overcome through an optimistic program of “moving beyond” the original opposition by (1) portraying the conflict as a matter of communicative/semantic breakdowns (the nominalist solution) or (2) relying on the discovery of a new, more effective means of mediating the conflict with the discovery of some superior form of analysis and problem-solving (the realist solution).

It is clear that neither nominalism nor realism can resolve the “gap as problem” view, because neither sees the gap as more than a symptom of conflict or conceptual-intellectual failure. Nominalism will tend to suggest an ideological solution at the level of theory, while realism requires a different “reading” of the history of contingent conditions that gave rise to conflict and is thus ideological at the level of politics itself. Is there another, “non-symptomatic” reading of the gap? There are two, which become evident as we take a look at three primary thematics of the gap, one grounded in nominalism, a second grounded in realism, and a third that arises from the idea of scientific revolution, a blend of nominalism and realism.

Failures arising in the chains of signifiers

Because the Symbolic in Lacan’s terms is a self-referential closed system where meaning arises internally, breakdowns in the chain can be regarded as “simply” failures of communication. There is more to it however, if one abandons the idea that communication is a “solution” to a “problem.” The contradiction of this view is evident when one considers that there can be no prior superior relationship between signifiers and signifieds. Indeed, there is, in the closed system of signifiers, no relationship whatsoever to any independent “objective” signified. Rather, the Real of the signified lies elsewhere. Any “objective” condition is already conditioned by signifiers, already contaminated by the “problem” it hopes to dispel. This does not commit Lacan or any other position critical of nominalism to a hopeless relativism. Rather, it shows how the search for a Real within material or other circumstances “outside the signifying chain” is a foreclosure of its own project.

The alternative is to see that the signifying chain itself embodies a radical gap, and how this gap is moreover key to the “proper” functioning of any system within the Symbolic. This was Hegel’s

achievement in understanding that, beneath Kant's demonstration of the antinomies of reason, where two opposed viewpoints can be shown to be equally true and equally compelling, lies a fundamental antagonism preventing positive resolutions. Hegel's answer was comprehensive and complex, but we may take the idea of dialectic, and in particular the notion of *Aufheben* ("overcoming through a negation which preserves the original antagonism"), as a means of critiquing the nominalist position. This involves more than the typical Philosophy 101 mantra of thesis/antithesis/synthesis — an account that J. N. Findlay has shown to be profoundly misleading if not outright false. Rather, Hegel's dialectic goes to the radical irrationality of what symbolic logic takes to be its foundation stone, $A=A$. A thing cannot be a predicate of itself, Hegel argues, but in showing this he reveals that the failure of $A=A$ involves a central, key negation. The self is not a positive affirmation of identity but, rather, the demonstration (in advance) of the failure of any attempt to establish a positive subjectivity that does not involve this negational feature.

Failures arising in "contingent reality"

It seems obvious that one should turn to history to find out how the impulse to modernism grew out of political, social, or religious conflict; or how environmental conditions and the competition for limited resources could have led to irresolvable conflicts. This "realist" approach grounds its arguments in the "indisputable facts" of historical events and, because gaps really do arise out of conflicts between cultures in their attempt to dominate the planet earth, there seems to be little doubt that nominalism must give way to realism — i.e. that our problems are not simply "failures to communicate." This approach, however, fails in the same way that nominalism fails. It prematurely assigns value to the Real by finding, in its accounts of a "reliably real reality" only temporary conflicts between points of view that are more or less accurate and insightful. Critiques of this position have followed the general pattern of finding, within any attempt at realism, the presence of a "metaphoric presupposition" that shapes the larger structures determining the smaller-scale contingent features. In the field of science, Stephen Pepper identified four principal positions that, when linked, constituted a kind of "ring of interpretive positions." Not surprisingly, Karl Manheim discovered a similar quartet behind political thinking, and Hayden White, in his *Metahistories*, derived an identical symmetry. Northrop Frye, the Canadian literary critic, surmised that all "metatheories" relied on a mythic underlayment of comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony, set in motion by nothing less than the organic cycle of life, death, and rebirth adopted from nature through humans' long experience of nature first hand. But, even Frye's account yielded to quaternary re-interpretation, and the cycle of four "realisms" could be as easily credited to mechanism, formism, and _____. When Lacan claimed that "there can be no metalanguage" it was precisely because any metalanguage requires another metalanguage, creating an infinite regress. Paradoxically, the project of grounding the phenomenon of the gap in a realism leads to a nominalistic impasse.

The crisis of science

If the gap(s) giving rise to modernism are to be situated within historical conditions, it would seem that the easiest approach would follow in the footsteps of Edmund Husserl's critique of science, a

critique that famously gave rise to modern Phenomenology, thanks to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's detailed extension of the idea of crisis to the sciences of physiology and psychology.

[account of Husserl's *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Modern Science*]

[account of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*]

Apart from the critiques that led to the modern philosophical position of Phenomenology, however, there remains the issue of the stark abstractions of physics and mathematics. What do they contribute to this "ontology of the gap"? We might begin with the controversial theorems of Poincaré, the revisionary geometries of Lobachevsky and Riemann, or the anticipatory Relativity theory of Eddington. Interestingly, all of these "objective" revolutions were correlated to popular culture interest in spiritualism, primarily through the device of the "fourth dimension" along which time and space could escape their Cartesian constraints. In particular, the British mystic John Donne, a friend and collaborator of Eddington, produced popular accounts of how the extra-dimensionality of the Real allowed for such paranormal phenomena as time-travel and precognitive dreams. The age of scientific deduction, personified by Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, was also the age of an "impossible-Real" of life beyond death. T. S. Eliot's reference to Madam Blavatsky, the famous medium of the late 1880s, and ____'s fantastic theory of cataclysmic worlds seemed to be cut from the same cloth. In this context, Einstein's first General Theory of Relativity may have seemed mild stuff, with its assertion of light's ability to bend in the presence of strong gravitational fields. This version of Relativity could be compared to the "realist" position in need of a theoretical correction, a more adequate version of reality. The second and stronger version, in contrast, was an attack both on the realist and the nominalist positions. Einstein posited that the bending of light was not a "defect" found within the ordinarily even field of spatial forces, but that *space-time itself was bent*. In this radical shift, we see a model for moving beyond the nominalist and realist "solutions" to the gap: i.e. we see the need to identify the gap, as did Hegel, as central to the Real, as the negative essence of the Real.

Is science really the model for humanist reflection on the nature of subjectivity? Does this not repeat the fallacies introduced by the Positivism of turn-of-the-century Vienna, which portrayed human motive as force-vectors played out on a billiard table? Here we have to recognize a distinction between experimental science, where, according to the standard "scientific method," a hypothesis is formed as a *null case*, data is gathered and analyzed, and the null is either rejected in favor of a positive finding or accepted as a proof of no relation. Here, as in Thomas Kuhn's account, metaphor operates as a guiding system of generic causality, changed only when evidence mounts that forces the revolutionary adaptation of a new model. This is "science one step at a time" as opposed to the world-shattering visionary science of an Einstein or Poincaré. At the visionary end of the spectrum, the negative gap is not dispelled with the realization of a revolutionary new view; the gap is the means to its own "rediscovery" within an entirely new context. What we had failed to realize properly, in the old theory, was our failure to realize properly. The new view is not a positive realization but, rather, a re-contextualization of failure as such.

The gap is not a symptom

The key lesson learned through these three encounters with the thematization of the gap as a symptom is, simply, that the gap is not a symptom. While we can imagine gaps of all kinds as products of conflicts, failures, breakdowns, etc., these remain at the level of superficiality until we reconceptualize the gap in a "Hegelian way." This involves a "positive assessment of the negative" that does not gloss over the permanent and radical nature of the negative. The gap is durable, resistant to symbolization, and radically central. It cannot be the hypothetically curable mid-ground of any conflict portrayed as a "binary signifier," where some median compromise is sought. The result of this approach is simply to duplicate the old problem at a new scale, with a new vocabulary, concealing the fundamental lack that made the old problem more than a "misunderstanding" (nominalism) or "faulty view of reality" (realism).

The solution to this war between nominalism and realism lies in a return to the essence of the breakdown in the signifying chain, a breakdown that is not a "problem" to be eliminated through the determination of some "solution," but a problem that is at the same time a solution — i.e. a key to the fundamental nature of the signifying chain itself. This amounts to saying that the gap is not a defect of subjectivity, but that the gap is in a sense the *essence and basis* of subjectivity. How is this assertion possible? What does it mean? The key lies in understanding how the signifying chain is fundamentally metaphoric in that it depends on "lateral" transfers of meaning from one domain or medium to another; and that this metaphoric transfer is "afforded" by suppressing the role of one signifier so that, in a negative way, it supplies the metaphoric transfer with its "rule as exception." Metonymy is a kind of metaphor, typically described as "part for whole." Thus, we have forty head of cattle rather than forty cows because the cows are counted by their heads protruding from the mass of the herd. A ship is a sail because the sail is the first part of the ship seen on the horizon. A sword is a point because it is the most sharply perceived part of the weapon (no pun intended). This anecdotal rhetoric obscures the important function of metonymy, which is to say that metonymy is a *remnant* of a process that is isolated, temporally or spatially, from other parts or from the cause. An erotic encounter can be metaphorically represented by shifting from the bedroom scene to a sunset, to mating birds, to waterfalls, etc., where passion is given an alternative form. The same encounter is represented metonymically by showing clothes lying on the floor, or two empty wine glasses. We see "evidence" that can be associated forensically with that which it represents. Its meaning "radiates at a distance," in a negative modality.

The most evident case of metonymy is the Panopticon, the ideal prison designed by Jeremy Bentham, whose principle was based on the concealed position of the guard house at the center of a ring of cells. Because prisoners could not tell whether or not guards were watching at any given instant, they were forced to behave "as if" the guards were present at all times. The broad treatment of Panopticism given by Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish* did not in fact go far enough. With the omnipresence of surveillance cameras, non-prisoners may experience the Panopticon's prisoners' dilemma. In parking lots, on city streets, in airports, hospitals, and buildings both public and private, the innocence of physical presence is given a sinister twist by cameras which may or may not be operating, may or may not be collecting evidence of a "potential crime." Surveillance cameras

are capable of replacing Louis Althusser's famous example of the "interpellation" of ideology, the shout of the policeman which makes nearby innocent pedestrians wonder if they have not in fact committed some crime. The *voluntary assumption* of unknown/unknowable guilt is what gives ideology its force. It is carried to the center of the subject, where it is maintained *as a negative void*. Because this void cannot be filled with any positive content, it persists, undiminished, as the effective agency of the Big Other of power, at the level of the family, the state, or religion.

Panopticism bests Althusser's example on two counts. First, it demonstrates the persistent and radical negativity of ideology with the "blind eye" of a camera that may in fact not be working. This camera is sometimes visible, but aggressive programs of surveillance have convinced many people that they are being surveilled at all times and in all places, however difficult this is to imagine. Second, the persistent void at the center of the surveilled subject cannot be dispelled by asking the policemen politely what he meant. There is no "original intention" to be clarified. The system is completely automated so that both the surveilled and the surveillers are "victims" of a common logic of interpellation. Surveillance converts any object, any act, into a potential metonymy of an unnamed, undiscovered crime. The private-public binary signifier of ideology is "locked in" not by some middle position balancing the desires of ideology with the passive acceptance of the subject. It is maintained by the *absence* of the process of power, which can be then viewed from two alternative positions. From the point of view of ideology (the "public" end of the binary signifier), negation produces alienation. Subjects within the system must experience a radical discomfort, an unease. From the point of view of the individual subject, negation is experience in the form of *separation*, an exteriorization of what is radically internal, i.e. the subject's own kernel of identity. Separation exemplifies Althusser's geometry of interpellation: what is most external becomes the most intimate (Lacan: extimity). Alienation, in complement, exemplifies what we might call the *agon* of ideology — the involvement of all parties in a death-grip of inevitability, a common Fate. While the former is an outside turned inside (or *vice versa*), the latter is an inside turned even more inside — an *intrinsic condition* that, however one attempts to correct or escape it, binds even more tightly.

The surveillance camera is only the beginning. An even more telling proof of the compelling nature of interpellation is the use of cell-phone cameras to make and distribute "selfies" that, sent to friends everywhere, say "Here I am! Now you know all about me — where I am, what I'm doing, whom I'm with." Not just your friends, however. The internet knows and distributes such information so that marketing services and government information services can fill their appetites for aggregate information that can quickly converted to individual data with pin-point accuracy. When ads appear on the margin of a g-mail window, there is the implicit "gotcha" moment. Everyone knows what we are saying, where we are, to whom we are speaking, and how this interaction can be exploited. That it happens with our knowledge makes us complicit in this act of full confession, so there can be no outrage at the Panoptical presupposition.

At the theoretical level it is possible to give more informative names to the "private" and "public" poles of the binary signifier. For the private, we can expand the idea of the gap into that of

the psychoanalytic drive. For the public, we can take the most public basis of relationships, the Symbolic, and focus on defects and breakdowns in the chains of signifiers. The case of ideological interpellation demonstrates the relationship. The policeman's whistle or the blank eye of the surveillance camera creates a negative position, a failure to communicate rather than a direct exercise of authority. This failure is simultaneous with the "private" aspect, the "extimate" creation of an internal negative frame in a central position within the subject (and subjectivity generally) from which the power of a "Big Other" operates with negative impunity.

Think of the powerless Wizard in *The Wizard of Oz*, the "man from Kansas" who himself is trapped within this logic of negative power. As long as the curtain concealing his frantic operation of levers and dials is closed, the phantasmic apparatus of power (the fierce visage appearing in a green cloud, the booming voice, etc.) terrorizes all who seek favor from the Wizard, who is said to be on the side of good against evil. This is the confrontation of the occulted signifier in person! The Wizard is actually the "man from Kansas" hidden behind a curtain. It is thus the curtain that has a magical power of creating terror of the Big Other from the frail elderly gentleman who cringes at the very thought of criticism. This is the same curtain, we should note, that gave Parhassius's painting power over the "fierce" judges who demanded that he reveal his entry in the contest with the *trompe-l'œil* painter Zeuxis; even more so it is the curtain behind which the philosopher Pythagoras sat while his students were being interviewed. The curtain confers *acousmatic status* to the voice, and here we have a linguistic model of the metonymic role of truth within speech, articulated in detail by Mladen Dolar in his book *A Voice and Nothing More*. Once we are within the Symbolic, once we accept it as the only viable alternative to the "autism" of the pure act at the Mirror Stage, we are eclipsed by symbols (this is the meaning of "symbolic castration"). We are not subjects imprisoned by a universal mandate, the standard interpretation of the Symbolic as "belonging to a club." Rather we carry the exception to the universal mandate of the Other — the function of the Other as a lawless super-ego — inside us, at a position from which it operates as an "inside frame." We are alienated by this acousmatic presence in relation to the Other as an ideal; but simultaneously we undergo separation in relation to the original metonymy (this is played out in the fantasy of *The Wizard of Oz* as a trip through a cyclone to an imaginary land of munchkins and evil-beneficent witches). Thus, there is both a "one-world" aspect, a monad from which we cannot escape (we must internalize the exception of obscene power); and a "two worlds" aspect, where fantasy buffers the notion of the obscene Real, allowing us to tolerate its negativity through another negative, e.g. a curtain concealing the Other.

Because alienation and separation operate metonymically, from positions outside the chains of signifiers, there can be no resolution of polar opposites within the Symbolic that confirm their binary opposition. Any attempt, as the example of Zeuxis-Parhassius shows, results in an *anamorphic condition* — the co-presence of two conflicting realities, each of which seems grounded in the other without providing a means of resolution. Here we have a "non-symptomatic condition of the gap," where there can be no alternative to the recognition of the (vertical) metonymic space that is both within and without the laminated metaphors of the (horizontal) chains of signifiers. The anamorph,

internal to the laminar signifiers, requires and presupposes a point of view positioned outside the laminar.

How do we represent this condition? The anamorph suggests a diagram that is equivalent to an experiment. Because the lines and angles of the diagram require a *surface* akin to a screen *upon which are projected relationships* from an imaginary space of authenticity lying behind the surface, the experiment fails to free itself from the very conditions it hopes to judge objectively. But, it is precisely this failure that aims to establish conditions for philosophizing. The “search for truth” of philosophy cannot be a comparison of various positions achieved by those who have searched for the truth. It must instead be an account of whatever has led to multiplicity and difference, whatever has created dissent and conflict. This is where philosophy becomes, essentially, Hegelian — a “negative of a negative” that does not return us to a positive position but, rather, an obligation to “tarry with the negative.”

I would try to make my “diagram experiment” into a demonstration of the “logic of the metonym.” The anticipated failure of the diagram will occur when the viewer realizes a contradictory “Hegelian” moment, where the “I” that is the content of the diagram is also the “I” that is drawing the diagram. I would like to connect this failure to a parallel or correlative failure drawn from Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*: “The pure present is an ungraspable advance of the past devouring the future. In truth, all sensation is already memory.” The quote marks indicate not Bergson’s exact words but a paraphrase that appears in Haruko Murakami’s novel *Kafka on the Shore*. The circumstances of these two statements is an example of what the two statements are intended to suggest, made in the hopes that the “moment of realization” will turn the realization over to the reader in a moment of epiphany.

The diagram experiment

Alienation and separation constitute two “orthogonal” vectors in relation to the “horizontal” laminar planes where signifying chains slide past each other, quilted to achieve momentary stability by metaphor, which “carries across” meaning from one layer to another.

[experiment/diagram here]

¹ Abandonment had many names, but one of the most recognizable would be the *détournement* of Guy Debord and the Situationists. The “detour” was both a delay and a turn, with the implicit sense of abandonment of a previously chosen route. Abandonment has the advantage of including the remainders of the forsaken route without any positive assertion of a substitution. Where *détournement* could and was articulated through metaphor, allowing the old meaning to be “translated forward” into a new form, abandonment suggests foreclosure, loss, and remainder — the kind of depletion of (metaphoric) meaning that leaves metonymy as the only alternative. One need only to consider Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* as a manifesto against metaphoric translation that “holds out for” a meaningful alternative. Similarly, it would be wrong to regard Picasso and Braque’s Cubistic paintings of cityscapes as “stylized” renditions of normative scenes.

² One could make an “anthropological argument” that placement and accident are not simply a modern phenomenon but the basis of shamanistic and other “occult” phenomena, such as silent trade, where precise economic transactions take place without trading partners ever meeting. The ultimate case of this “anthropological argument” is Giambattista Vico’s discovery of the (metonymical) “imaginative universal” whereby the first humans, playing the role of Narcissus, constructs nature as demonic through the transfer of their own natures into natural substances (the sky, earth, plants, animals, etc.).