

The Natural Attitude versus The Uncanny

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Spaces of Concealment

More recently, the 'natural attitude' has been linked to the contrast of *zoē*, 'raw life' as the animalistic dimension of human being, to *bios*, the socializable aspect of life.² In its former incarnation, it was used to indicate a component of positivistic thinking that saw space as a continuum of dimensions, measurable and easily appropriated for the serious uses of power, instrumentality, and illusion. The two seemingly unrelated interpretations may be keys to each other, but, in situations where any premature characterization is likely to do damage, it's best to begin with a joke. The joke concerns a meeting between three philosophers (the good guys, of course) and three (evil, positivistic) computer scientists. They are all going to respective professional conferences by train, and the philosophers buy only one ticket. Curious, the computer scientists ask the philosophers how they will get by with only one ticket. Inside the train, the philosophers pile into the washroom before the conductor comes. When he knocks on the lavatory door, one hand shoves the ticket out the door, which the conductor cancels. The computer scientists decide to try the same trick on the way back, usurping the philosophers. They get their ticket but notice that the philosophers have bought nothing. Once in the train, they crowd into the washroom to re-enact the trick. While they wait inside, a philosopher gets up from his seat, walks to the washroom and knocks on the door: 'Conductor!'

This bad joke shows a difference between two conceptions of space and time. The positivistic computer scientists see how the blind of the washroom door works. They are, after all, masters of codes and ciphers. What they lack, however, is an appreciation for the philosophers' trickier anacoluthic logic. This is the logic of the set-up, the con game, where some early circumstances are constructed in order to reach a pre-designed end. While both the computer scientists and the philosophers exploit the functionality of 'spaces of concealment', the philosophers incorporate the computer scientists' naïveté as a part of their *phronesis*, their summary knowledge of human nature. They trap the scientists knowing that greedy reductionists see the world as bound by rules but hold themselves exempt, 'outside the plot'. The scientists do not take into account their occupancy of the 'space of the audience', a space of concealment that can be brought back into play when the joke takes its most unexpected turn.³

The employment of the rhetorical figure of the anacoluthon is a fine point, and it reminds us that rhetoric trumps positivism any day. It is a trick of inversion that uses the end of a series to alter the meaning or relation of the beginning of the series. In the context of the joke, it is a cheap trick, but in the context of human thought and culture it is a masterpiece. First of all, it initiates a chiasmic logic by dividing things into a visible, 'representational' component and a silent structure that is connected with the artifact, the structure that is discounted as 'merely' a means to an end. Artifact is, at the last moment, converted into the 'real representation' by 'collapsing' its invisible status, bringing it into the level of representation.

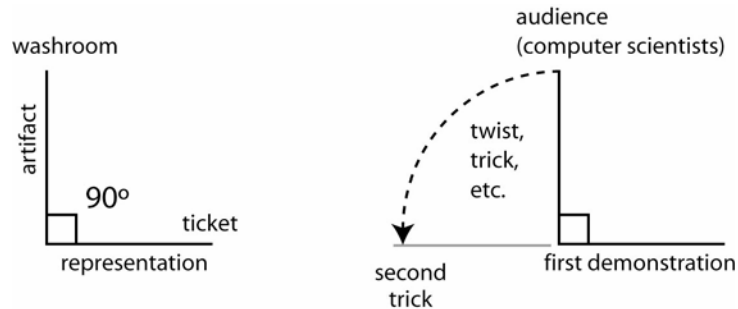


Figure 1. The 'matheme' considered as a relation between representation and artifact. Diagrams (*passim*) by author.

interesting. Comparing to modern language, the analogy has to do with the voice in relation to phonemic speech. Phonemic speech can be described completely; every syllable relates to a variation in meaning; it is entirely 'semantic'. The residual, as Mladen Dolar has pointed out, is a 'non-meaningful component', a residual that is nonetheless the human component, the personalizing and authenticating factor.⁵ In Eden, the voice fits in the margin just past the line which is God's prohibition against eating the fruit (Figure 3). Once in that zone, Adam and Eve speak with a pure voice. This is the conversation of the serpent, who represents both the tree that is central to the garden and the boundary around the garden. His is a 'reverse word' to the plentiful adequacy of God's commands. The matheme is the relationship between the voice and the rest of language; between unobjectifiable desire and the demands objectified and fulfilled by the garden. The matheme is the animal (*zoē*) at the center of the cultural being, the serpent at the center of the holy space.



Figure 3. Adamic speech and the emergence of voice with the desire as excess/surplus.

The role of the voice gives some insight into the principle structure of the matheme, \diamond . Language demands a strictly independent relationship between the representation and artifact vectors. (This is the naïve component of the train joke.) Once this is constructed, the artifact can be redefined to incorporate examples of the knower into the known, the audience into the work of art. This can be brought about through various means, but the most vivid are optic: the mirror, the shadow, the gaze, the counter-gaze, the surveilled surveillance. Counterparts in acoustic form are the stage whisper, the Socratic inner *dæmon* or 'voice of conscience', the un-locatable voice (christened the 'acousmatic voice' by Michel Chion⁶), the echo, or acousmatic effects produced in music and nature. The ancient tale recorded by Ovid of *Narcissus and Echo* provide examples of both, which is what makes this story so contemporary. The growth of love through separation of a wall that restricts romantic conversation to a whisper in the story of *Pyramus and Thisbe* brings architecture into the puzzle.

What stands out in all these examples is the element of self-reference where something very familiar (indeed! — the self itself!) is concealed and makes an 'uncanny' reappearance at some crucial moment. Is this just a characterization of the effect or our response to it? Or, does the uncanny itself have something to say? The question pivots around the issue of space. In the 'natural attitude', concealment is a matter of manipulating the cone of vision or, collectively, visibility in general. Metaphorically, the natural attitude regards surface as a mask, and penetration beyond the mask sets up the contrast between truth and appearance that ultimately demotes perceptual experience to secondary data. Where the Middle Ages consigned the space beyond appearance to God, the natural attitude of modern times cedes it to science, to specialists, to theory. Yet, the experience of the arts, architecture, poetry, and literature tell a different story. They activate the realm of appearance to give direct access to its truths; they connect antipodal extremes; they find the self in the heart of the Other, and *vice versa*.

The uncanny, which is precisely about the relation between inside and outside, addresses this situation directly. Before the modern era, the uncanny was a component of the spaces of ritual, pilgrimage, religion, and civic experience. Ringed by tradition, the uncanny was a poetic practice whose audiences knew well its functionality and effects. With the Enlightenment, such spaces could not be assimilated within the continuums of perceptual experience. The uncanny was 'set loose', so to speak, and 'recaptured' by the arts, popular culture, and politics. As has been often pointed out, the gothic novel appears precisely at the time of the French Revolution.

Not only is the case of the uncanny (*Unheimlich*) at the very basis of the line dividing between pre-modern and modern; the uncanny offers a crucial clue to the development of theories of the mind. Mladen Dolar has stated: 'The dimension of the uncanny ... is located at the very core of psychoanalysis. It is the dimension where all the concepts of psychoanalysis come together, where its diverse lines of argument form a knot. The uncanny provides a clue to the basic project of psychoanalysis.'⁷ But, as Dolar continues, there is a problem. Freud himself did not know what to

make of this clue. To a great extent, it remained to Jacques Lacan to build up a case for the uncanny, for which he coined the new term, the 'extimate' (French lacks a counterpart to the uncanny or the German *Unheimlich*). But, Lacan builds a case for the extimate through different and often contrasting projects. One carried the flag of the 'small object of desire', the embodiment of the subject's inability to articulate desire within any network of symbolic relationships. Another involved the closely related issue of the Real, within the Lacanian triad of 'symbolic', 'imaginary', and 'real'. The extimate found its way into various other topics: anamorphosis, the voice, the interval 'between the two deaths', etc. So, even with Lacan's 'rehabilitation' of Freud, we get a complex and often confusing picture.

The Uncanny as Basis for a New *Ars Topica*

Even though the case for the uncanny is incomplete and unwieldy, there are important reasons to use it to critique 'the natural attitude'.⁸ First, the uncanny is a 'root idea' that grounds subsequent discourse in architecture, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and other subjects. Second, the uncanny's 'topological' qualities work as a corrective to 'projective' and instrumental approaches that escape their critical frameworks to operate within academia as ideology.

The uncanny follows the logic of the matheme in relating the representation and the artifact.

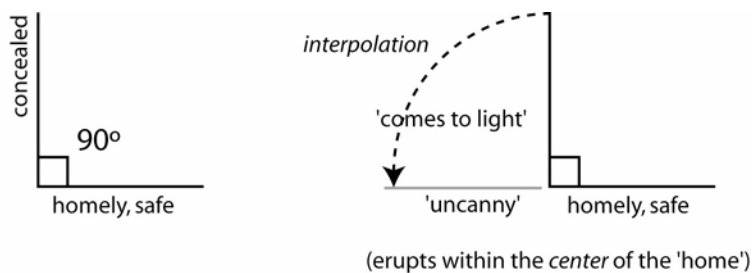


Figure 4. The uncanny — both as a word and a function — use the logic of the matheme by zig-zagging (interpolating) between polar opposites.

Freud begins his study of the uncanny with an etymological investigation. The word itself is curious, one might say 'uncanny'. The definition begins with what is familiar, comforting, intimate; then it moves to the theme of protection and concealment from the eyes of strangers; finally concealment becomes the hidden, occult, and fearful. As Dolar points out, this glide from comfort to fear is the key to the uncanny's spatial structure. It is both the kernel of the familiar world and the virulent contaminant, a radical Other. As such, it blurs the division between inside and outside (Figure 4). More accurately, it 'cancels and preserves' the function of the boundary in a move that links the radically remote with the radically interior. This is not an isolated phenomenon, but one common to any dichotomous condition in the human sphere. For example, the case of the voice, the element of speech that lies outside the phonemic production of meaning, is precisely the phenomenon that makes speech personal, authentic, and human. The voice becomes uncanny when it becomes an agent blurring the inside-outside boundaries, as when a machine voice seems to acquire human qualities, when voice loses its spatial location (acousmatics), or when an interior voice prevents some unwise action (the 'voice of reason'; Socrates' *dæmon*).

So it is with other phenomena that relate the subject to the world: the gaze, touch, travel, etc. Slavoj Žižek's notion of 'organs without a body' also correlate to Lacan's 'between the two deaths' (the natural death of the body and symbolic settling of the soul, comparable to the *katabasis*, or journey of the hero to Hades). This is the body 'in the world' in the sense that Merleau-Ponty endorsed in his *Visible and Invisible*, and the transposed imagination of the viewer of art described by Mikel Dufrenne.⁹

The centrality of inside-outside issues in the idea of the uncanny requires architecture theorists to make a thorough canvass of the term. In part, this involves re-inserting Freud and Lacan's ideas of intransitive space and time into architecture theory from the point of view of the uncanny, where issues such as topology, the voice, and the literary territory of 'the fantastic' claim prominence. This re-arrangement of an *ars topica* revolving around the uncanny is made even more interesting by a feature of the uncanny that amounts to a 'compound interest' feature. As mentioned above, the word

Unheimlich is itself *Unheimlich*! Within the original term, *Heimlich* — at its very heart — is inscribed its opposite, *Unheimlich*. The move from homely to protected to concealed to occult to frightful is an interpellation between two poles which reside within a single topology.

But, the uncanny does the same thing in history! Before the modern era, the uncanny was concealed within settled, traditional devices and locations. Churches, homes, cities, cemeteries, etc. prescribed spaces that were both forbidden and attractive, used in ritual, surrounded by narrative and tradition. With the rationalization of space and time as a continuum by the Enlightenment, the uncanny was set loose, so to speak, as a kind of free radical in the cultural bloodstream. Although the modern uncanny is Vidler's main preoccupation, he does not exploit this curious system of fractal structures (Figure 5).

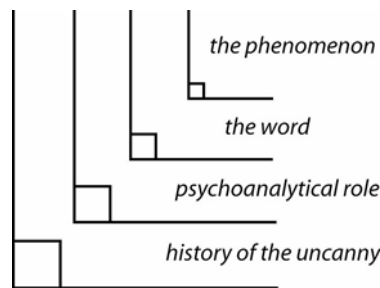


Figure 5. The uncanny as a 'fractal' replicating its structure at multiple levels.

Add, to this mirroring of the uncanny by its own etymology and intellectual history the uncanny's centrality to psychoanalysis and the inside-outside relationship, and one gets an extremely useful revisionistic and multimedia term for critical theory. In short, the uncanny *is* uncannily uncanny. It transcends categories because it goes to the heart of space, which it converts through its reciprocal action of isolation and contamination, constructing distance then collapsing it. This shows how the concept of the matheme (∞) as a topological relationship between artifact and representation works, in all media and at all levels, as a means of 'keeping open the gap' that ideology and the natural attitude seek to close.

The Sandman

Let the first apples fall close to the tree. Freud's exposition on the uncanny focused on the enigmatic short-story written by E. T. A. Hoffman, 'The Sandman' (1817). The story is divided into three parts. In the first, the child Nathanael grows curious about his father's late-night dealings with his mysterious lawyer-friend Coppelius (= 'eye socket'). Despite his nurse's warning that the Sandman will throw sand into the eyes of unsleeping children so that he can collect them to feed to the children of the New Moon, Nathanael conceals himself and observes his father and Coppelius conducting an alchemical experiment. The experiment results in an explosion, which kills the kindly father; Coppelius disappears. In the second part, Nathanael undertakes studies with a Professor Spalanzani and is attracted to the Professor's mysteriously beautiful daughter, Olimpia. He does not know that Olimpia is a mechanical doll constructed by the Professor with help from an itinerate optics peddler, Coppolo, who is Coppelius in a second incarnation. Nathanael breaks off his engagement with Clara, sister of his close childhood friend, and devotes himself to Olimpia, who says little and sings 'a little too perfectly'. The horrible truth is revealed when Spalanzani and Coppolo argue over the automaton, dismembering her body in front of a horrified Nathanael. Nathanael suffers a nervous breakdown. In part three, he's nursed back to health by Clara and her brother. Before his marriage, however, the three go on an outing to a nearby town church and decide to climb its steeple tower to take in its famous view. Nathanael spies Coppelius in the crowd below, reverts to his madness, and throws himself from the tower. Coppelius melts into the crowd.

Freud identifies two clear signatures of the uncanny: threats to identity (the disguises of Coppelius, the automaton, the doubled roles of the nice father and the evil 'father' Coppelius) and matters of eyes and optics. It is Olimpia's *clear eyes* that fascinate Nathanael and turn *him* into an automaton; it is the attraction to a *view* and final sighting of Coppelius that drives Nathanael to suicide; and in the beginning it is the nurse's tale of the Sandman designed to warn Nathanael off spying on his father. Dolar arranges the characters into a quadrangular scheme, roughly following Lacan's 'L-scheme' of the imaginary ego's relation to the Other and the symbolic order following the 'mirror stage' (Figure 6).

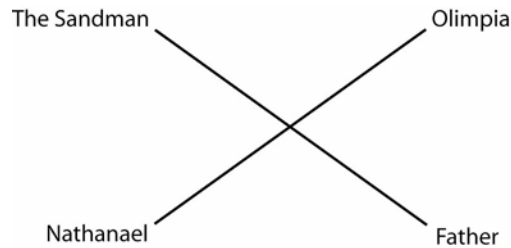


Figure 6. Mladen Dolar's 'L-Scheme' of characters in 'The Sandman'.

The disadvantage of this arrangement is that it is difficult to visualize the topographical complexities that involve doubles, the optics of appearance and disappearance, and the system of exchanges that seems to bind Coppélius and Nathanael in some silent 'contractual obligation'. The real focus should be on the 'twists' that allow an association-with-antagonism to regulate the action. Like the 'train joke', these twists rely on the matheme relationship. Just as the computer scientists were unaware of the concealed but obvious truth that they were a component of the professors' ultimate plan, Nathanael is unaware that *he* is the consciousness of Olimpia, projected by him on account of his fascination with her blank stare and incomplete conversation. When the 'artifact' of his own role in the 'representation' of this exemplary woman are revealed, the encounter with his own double is uncanny. Similarly, when the casual nursery tale of the Sandman is revealed as the 'inner kernel of truth' about Nathanael's 'nice father', the effect is equally striking (Figure 7).

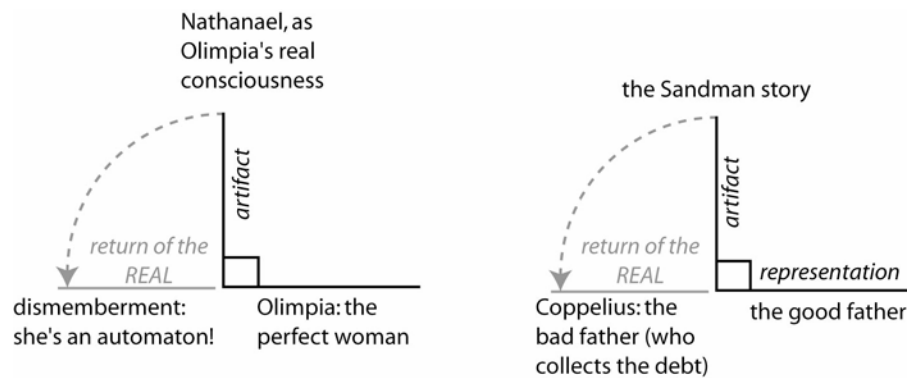


Figure 7. The Sandman's two mathemes: Olimpia and the two fathers.

Nathanael, Dolar remarks, has two fathers: his kind natural father and his imaginary evil father, Coppélius. Coppélius is a lawyer and, later, an optician who 'will see to it' that the ultimate debt — Nathanael's life — is paid. This payment is exacted by a glance, in fact, echoing the Sandman theme of eye-balls stolen from unsleeping children. This matheme's mirror image is a matheme connecting Nathanael with Olimpia. The automaton fascinates Nathanael, who spies on her just as he spied on his father as a child. Although the doll's actions are suspiciously mechanical, it is Nathanael who becomes the actual automaton, unable to tear himself away from her blank gaze, minimum conversation, and all-too-perfect singing. A 'model woman', Olimpia conceals Nathanael's unconscious investment of her consciousness.

The mathemes can be combined to replace the general quadratic equation proposed by Dolar. This revision adds the important element of the 'twist' (trick, return, etc.) in keeping with the uncanny's use of accelerated, chiasmic time in revealing 'what was always familiar but ought to have remained concealed' (Figure 8).

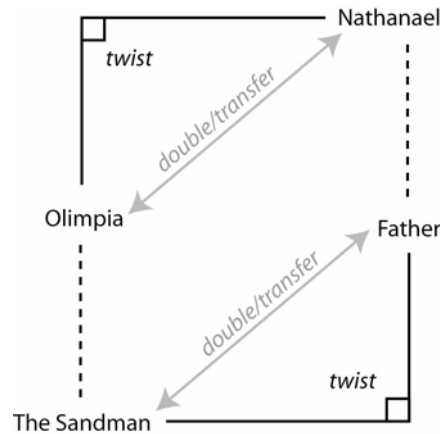


Figure 8. Two 'mathemes' constitute a 'Möbius-band' type relationship connecting the four characters.

The uncanny is present in the transfer of Nathanael's humanity to the 'remote' doll and the reciprocal piracy of his soul by Olympia. On the side of the two fathers, nice and nasty are exchanged in a literal alchemy, where the doll 'catches Nathanael's eye' with her beauty and silence, Coppelius is out for Nathanael's eye in payment of the debt for spying. Putting the two mathemes together creates a square, but their Möbius quality requires a twist to combine the 'purely contractual' aspect of Nathanael's relation to Coppelius as well as the 'anamorphic' theme of the doll, spying, and other eye references (Figure 9).

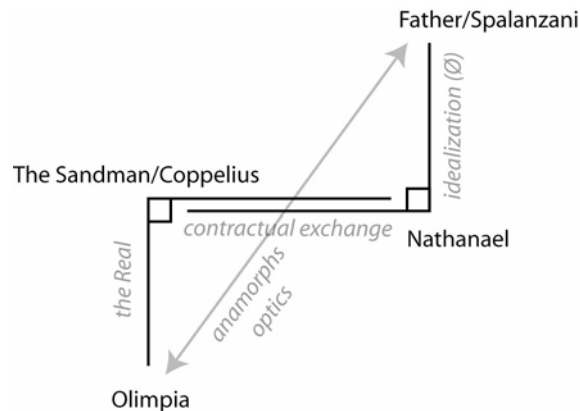


Figure 9. Reconfiguring the square to reveal a Möbius structure.

Such a combination contrasts the 'normative' contractual exchange with the 'intransitive' transgressions associated with spying, fascination, and (finally) the drive to suicide. The vertical lines also now reveal (on the right) the role of imagination in projecting an ideal point-of-view in Nathanael's good father and (on the left) the theme of the 'return of the Real' when Olympia is dismembered at the hands of Coppolo. These can be seen as representations in the more literal sense: the good father represents ideal family relations; the beautiful Olympia is 'the model woman'. As the concealed artifacts 'collapse' on to the axis of the contractual exchange (paying in real eyes for the crime of stealing a glance), we have the uncanny return of what was concealed to the order of the law, exacted by Coppelius in the final scene. But, it is the doubling of the two mathemes, Nathanael-Olimpia and Father-Coppelius, the original artifact-representation pairs, that orchestrates a symmetrical ending. Nathanael has 'caught a glance' of a secret experiment, then 'paid with his eyes' as Olympia binds him with her beauty, then finally paid with his life when he sees the second father.

Hoffman's 'Sandman' suggests that since the 'uncanny', historically hidden away in well-guarded traditional precincts, has escaped into fictional fantasy, it must be trapped and re-domesticated

through the matheme's network of mirrors. In this regard, the story structure is duplicated throughout modern literature, not just by the gothic novel. Architects may find the perfect spatial demonstration of the matheme in Jorge Louis Borges' 'Death and the Compass', where an arch-criminal uses an accidental murder to lure a master detective to his death in a villa filled with mirrors.¹⁰ The theme of Medusa and Perseus looms large.



Figure 10. Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656).

Thus, mathemes abound in literature, indeed all art, as a hallmark of the modern and modernity's debt to the uncanny. This is evident in works considered pivotal. The mirrored image of the king and queen gazing out from the depths of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* shows that the 'art of the matheme' must have been well known by the Seventeenth Century (Figure 10). Particularly when we consider that the reflected images come from the canvas shown inside the painting, and that the optics involves a triangulation of two sets of gazes, can we see that it is not just the idea but the particular mechanical details that are the 'secrets long hidden' that 'should not come to light' — but when they do, what a light!

Staging of this 'coming to light' requires rhetorical schemes such as chiasmus to manage the multiple intersections of optics and scrambled identity. In *Las Meninas* we again encounter the anacoluthon, not just because the mirror occupies the 'end' of the room but because its position and scale dramatically revise our understanding of what is 'at the front' of the painting. The role of the uncanny in undoing the natural attitude could not be clearer than in this image. The infamous 'Hockney-Falco thesis' holds that painters relied on *cameræ obscuræ* of various kinds to produce a 'scientifically accurate' image in paint. But, if Velázquez

did this, it was to prove the opposite point about space itself. Just as Einstein moved from a limited view of Relativity in holding that 'ordinary space' could be bent by the presence of large mass, his revised, stronger view was that space itself was curved. The lesson of the matheme is that naturalism is a cover for an uncanny truth that will eventually return, as a Real erupting in the midst of naturalistic content.

From Joke Train to Mystery Train

If the uncanny indeed makes the modern into a mystery train, there are still those devoted to the natural attitude who want to ride the train for free.¹¹ The trick of the free ride is the dichotomous opposition of topics, often mis-quoting Hegel in the process, in a polemical search for a 'balance' or 'resolution'. Whether mind-body, theory-practice, form-substance, material-ideal, or some other version of idea-*versus*-substance, the enemy of the uncanny is ideological. It obfuscates the gap that is the generative energy behind culture and art. It replaces science ('knowledge') with technique, and at the same time reduces *technē* to protocol.

While it is difficult to counter the commands of those who wish to transform architectural education into formalist exercises using parametric, computer-generated patterns, or to those who would reduce architecture to a problem-solving enterprise, it is necessary — ethically and philosophically — to assert architecture's status as an art, and to place art and architecture at the center of the 'crisis of modernity'. With my review of the uncanny's relation to modernity (as its very hallmark), I believe it is possible now to state clearly just why this crisis should be *maintained as such*, that it should resist attempts, such as the natural attitude, to close the gaps that constitute 'crisis' or to translate crisis into apparent correspondences with social and cultural problems that do require compassionate solutions.

The uncanny, in brief, shows that modernity is accompanied — if not caused — by a cultural redistribution of 'that which is familiar but should have remained hidden'. This now is the substance of

art, popular culture, and politics. The alternative to an ideological 'false solution' to the gap created by the uncanny (Lacan's 'master signifier', the creation of ideological mandates such as 'the Jew' or 'technological solutions') is the uncanny itself, fashioned into the potentiality of an *ars topica* that takes the 'matheme' rather than the master signifier as its principal creative mechanism. There are two directions to this suggestion: (1) reinterpreting past events and works of art in terms of the uncanny gap between desire and demand and (2) staging events and works to make visible the operation of the uncanny without canceling its (ethical) effects.

Specifically, this agenda calls for a re-alignment with psychoanalysis, whose heart is also constituted by the phenomenon of the uncanny. Taken as a whole, modernity, architecture, and psychoanalysis have a shared fate that underscores their common debt to the uncanny. My part of this program of re-alignment is to demonstrate the usefulness of an economical set of diagrams that demonstrate 'primary relationships' that can be found in works of architecture, art, literature, and cultural-historical settings. Just as Lacan's L-scheme served as an algebra that, through the matheme, insisted on keeping open the structures that define principal relationships among the fundamental components, my diagrams condense the effects of self-reference (short-circuiting) that is the essence of the uncanny. Because this short-circuiting has mathematical as well as poetic meaning, it is useful to consider the general 'logic' surrounding the use of boundaries that, for appearances' sake at least, attempt to separate inside from outside.

I begin, following Dolar's adaptation of Lacan, with a quadrangle whose vertices participate in various 'diagonal relationships' (Figure 11). The quadrangle's two sides are made up by two mathemes: a 'subject-matheme' and an 'object-matheme'. This is not a definitive division of 'self and world' or any comparable division but rather a distinction of potential points of view that may be 'written' in two alternative ways. The language of objects suspends the identity and location of the points of view that are nonetheless implicitly present in any 'objective' description or encounter. A language of subjects fictionalizes the point of view explicitly — by identifying characters, experiences, responses, etc.

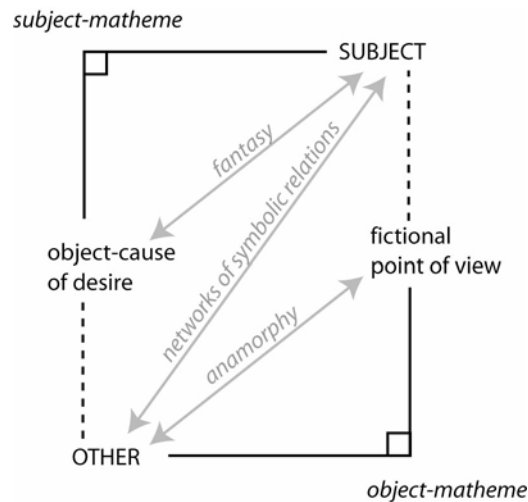


Figure 11. Primary relationships of the subject-matheme and object-matheme.

Typically, both modes are present in any articulation. Just as in a novel, exposition locates the action and gives the reader the background required to understand the characters and their actions, the subject-matheme requires an object-matheme even if it suspends its objectivity by refracting it through subjective perceptions. The subject-matheme treats 'subject' as a construct in constant tension with the imagined objectifications of desire, the Lacanian *objet petit a* or 'object-cause of desire'. The official form of the subject matheme is Lacan's matheme for fantasy, $\$ \diamond a$. To complement this matheme, I propose that the phenomenon grounding the algebra of the Other's relation to various (fictionalized/constructed) points of view is 'anamorphy'.

It is easy to fit works of art that are conventionally attached to modernism within this quadrilateral schema. For example, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* begins when the hero encounters his (good) father's ghost — a 'fictional point of view' if there ever was one! His fantasy involves his mother and her

relation to the (bad) father (Hamlet's uncle). The dramatic action pivots around the contrast between the presumed official symbolic network (Hamlet as the vassal of the new King and the traitorous mother) and the 'anamorphic' hauntings that create Hamlet's 'delusional' speech and action.

The good father / bad father dichotomy that propelled 'The Sandman' is evident in *Hamlet's* structure, just as in my original joke, there were the 'good' philosophers and the 'bad' computer scientists. The system's 'reality' resides along the diagonal connecting the subject and the Other. The lines 'completing' the triangles of each matheme relate to the imagination and appearance/disappearance. This is the dimension of concealment — developed through optics and identity. Returning to the exemplary painting, *Las Meninas*, the reticulation of the uncanny quadrangle is easy to spot. Between the Other and the fictionalized point of view (Velázquez₁, who stood before the present canvas, or Velázquez₂, shown as a self-portrait within the painting) anamorphy establishes a crisis of identity, as we must conclude that both Velázquezes must have existed 'simultaneously'. The symbolic network that regulates the relations between artworks to audiences must pass the threshold of the transparent screen, the canvas holding the image. Yet, if the audience is the subject, the object-cause of desire becomes the anacoluthic terminus that revises the mirror-like function of the image. Instead of a face-to-face relationship, there is a triangle involving the unseen face of the canvas turned away from us. The object-cause of desire is the point of fantasy, the 'familiar' thing that ought to have remained hidden'. It is the Lacanian mirror stage (literally!), revisited and multiplied.

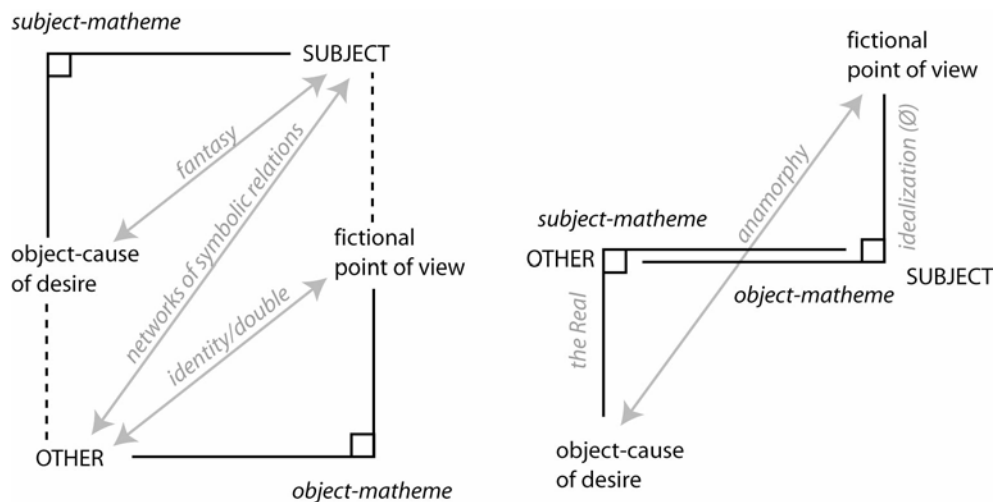


Figure 12. The Möbius-band, or 'flipped', version of the matheme quadrangle.

Because anamorphy is central to architectural conception and reception, collapsing the quadrangle into a simpler Möbius-style diagram emphasizes the way in which the point of view can be controlled in relation to the object-cause of desire (Figure 12). It is important to note a few Lacanian rules concerning what Lacan considered his greatest contribution to psychoanalysis. The *object petit a* cannot be symbolized. It is a perpetual surplus of our networks of symbolic relationships. At the same time, it is a missing element, a lack, a materialization of the fact of a lack. In the Garden of Eden, it is the apple, but the apple is (it is important to note) *not* a symbol. It is an 'operator', a part of an algebra relating forces and persons within the special topological construct of Eden. The apple is the hinge that flips Eden into Wilderness, but it is also the eruption of the Real as a kernel of Elsewhere which appears in the heart of the reality of the Garden and also at the center of the covenant between God and humankind.

The Natural Attitude and Ethics

Ethics and esthetics are customarily contrasted, but what if the *main* question of ethics is not a rational one but, rather, the question of what is the subject's relationship to fantasy? Lacan's matheme for fantasy, $\$ \diamond a$, makes an interesting case. The matheme poses an indefinite relationship between the subject and the 'object-cause of desire', the unsymbolizable materialization of desire. How can we understand this? The standard Lacanian definition is 'the barred subject in relation to the object' or '*Che vuoi?*' ('What do you want of me?'), the subject's plea in the face of the desire of the



Figure 13. The Marlboro Man

Other. But, fantasy also involves the subject's projection of alternative, idealized points of view that stand in a direct relationship with the objects of desire. It is here that the structure of the uncanny resides *within* the natural attitude, which is the desire constructed in the subject by the Other.

An actual fantasy projection, the 'Marlboro Man' (Figure 13), can reveal the Hegelian irony behind the master signifier of commercial cultures.¹² In need of an image to attract veterans of World War II trapped behind desk jobs, the advertising firm Leo Burnett in 1954 conceived of a smoking cowboy who would direct the fantasy of potential customers. No one need specify that Marlboro Country has no laws, that its rugged landscape tests natural strength and character, or that it resembles a battlefield. The Marlboro Man, at first a summation of these qualities and conditions, becomes a cause as he figuratively fills the semantic field of dreams. Just so, the discourse of the university, which appropriates fantasy for ideological purposes, substitutes cause for summation through ideology.

Advertising is not simply one domain of modern commercial activity, it is a model for the ideological transformation of institutions of all kinds. The key to the Marlboro Man's appeal has to do with its target audience of World War II veterans. The seemingly natural exploitation of the desk-bound veterans' *Wanderlust* in fact goes deeper, touching on the transformation of the traditional soldier-commander relationship into one where the soldier-servant takes initiative *in the absence* of the master.

There is the recently well-known situation of the soldier, working at a military facility in the Midwest U. S., controlling drone aircraft in pursuit of assigned targets — operatives of Al-Qaeda, for example — who become victims similar to the constantly surveilled characters in the Terry Gilliam film *Brazil* (1985). The soldier's identity from the beginning is obscured by the very beginning, by being a uniformed soldier subject to orders (S_1) and thereby deprived of the normal rights of a citizen. Knowledge (S_2) is reduced to technological facts shown on the digital screen that shows the soldier details of his target. The subject is a 'fugitive' concealed beneath the 'pleasure' of the successful contact of the weapon and is a counterpart to the soldier 'concealed' beneath the pleasure of the order to kill without repercussions or even the unpleasant proximity of one's victim.

The desk-bound veteran shares some key similarities to the soldier at the computer console directing the drone aircraft. Both are surrounded by the technology of their trade, isolated by the duty of the job. In this particularly informative case, both project the image of 'a man in the desert', in the case of Marlboro Man as an ideal who has an 'anamorphic' access to the ineffable objects of enjoyment of a life unfettered by social convention, in the drone controller case as a target whose freedom becomes the very basis of the weapon's destruction. It doesn't really matter whether the bound subject (\$) projects to identify or to destroy, or whether one uses imagination to simulate the operation of technology. Desire is structured by the Other for ideological-commercial-military reasons! It is interesting in this regard that the Israeli military are astute followers of not only Deleuze and Guattari ('smooth' and 'striated' space turn out to have specific military applications!) but also of Gordon Matta-Clarke, whose deconstructive techniques teach how to get to targets by blowing holes through walls in successive apartment buildings rather than risk exposure in the hostile street.¹³

Lacan proposed four forms of discourse: the master-servant (drawing from Hegel's classic description in *The Phenomenology*), the hysteric (the central feature of Freudian psychoanalysis), the university, and the analyst. Four elements rotate in fixed order through the 'positions' of the agent, truth, the other, and production. There is a sense in which the agent and the other serve as signifiers (representations) and truth and production are concealed beneath them. The arrow that connects the upper two positions (agent → other) was interpreted by Lacan as 'impossibility'.

The ideological quality of university discourse becomes evident when Lacan asserts that this is the discourse that most characterizes 'everyday life'. The subject, who is normally 'representational' in the sense of being caught up and 'interpellated' by networks of symbolic relations, is concealed, made into

an artifact. The object-cause of pleasure, *a*, is put into the role of a signifier, meaning that the subject suffers the injunction 'Enjoy!' but does not know what or how to enjoy. The unsymbolizable object-cause of desire is put into the representational position of a signifier, meaning that we are commanded to do something but not told how to do it. This '*Che vuoi?*' dominates modern life.

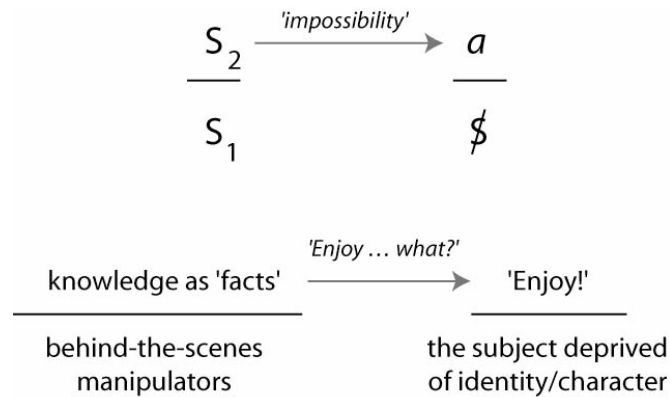


Figure 14. Lacan's 'discourse of the university' as a hallmark of contemporary life.

University discourse takes an interesting turn when considered in light of the uncanny. The uncanny 'sutures' the extreme exterior at the heart of the protected interior, and projects the interior to the remote antipodal point of the exterior. At the same time, the uncanny structures the relation Lacan called 'between the two deaths' as a relation between doubles, between anamorphic components of images, and (more generically) as the space defined by the two 'antipodes' of inside-outside. Thus, when Nathanael projects consciousness and intelligence into the mechanical doll Olympia, he locates that projected humanity to the doll's imagined center, her impenetrable heart, her desire for him. The distance maintained by this illusion is brutally collapsed with the doll's destruction, revealing that it is the alternative creation and collapse of distance that is the uncanny's hallmark.

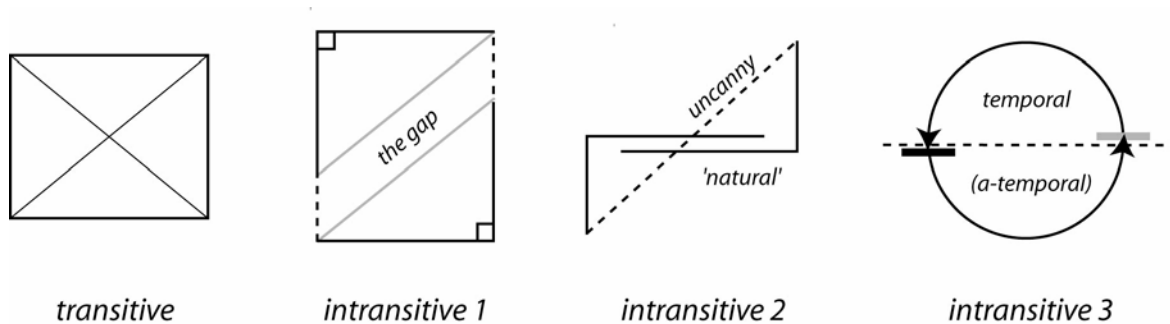


Figure 15. Three versions of the intransitive.

With the advertising objective of the Marlboro Man and the uncannily similar assignment of the soldier behind the computer console, distance is created for ideological-material reasons and then collapsed by imagination or ordinance. This is perhaps the only stable feature of a model that continually re-circulates its components, characters, and causes. The quadrilateral diagram of Dolar's is in fact a matrix where each element establishes adjacency to every other in the group. By demonstrating the role of the 'gap', facts of simple adjacency are sequenced with a Möbius twist (the return of the Real), and condensed and collated by the function of anamorphosis, but the principle of adjacency and interchange is not forsaken. Coppola as Nathanael's 'second father' could as easily serve as an anamorphic agent for the super-ego Other. The contrast (which is also a proximity) is that between

the 'natural' and the 'uncanny' (intransitive 2), where imagination projects a hypothetical point of view or takes the role of the 'impossible-Real' subject.

With the condensation of subject and object mathemes within the function of anamorphy, it is easier to translate to the 'natural' world (and, hence, the 'natural attitude') of conventionalized space and time. The Marlboro Man and the Al Qaeda operators are both very much 'men of the desert', both regulated by the orthogonal subordination of the subject to (un)representational desire. The ethical issue is that there is no apparent ethical issue in either case. The Marlboro Man is too far away to suffer from conventions that would fetter his desire to shoot his sidekick or the occasional native. The computer soldier leaves the console to return home to watch sports on TV. All of this is natural. Distance has been used to disconnect any ethical question, and the collapse of that distance has been associated with pleasure. This is 'the natural attitude'.

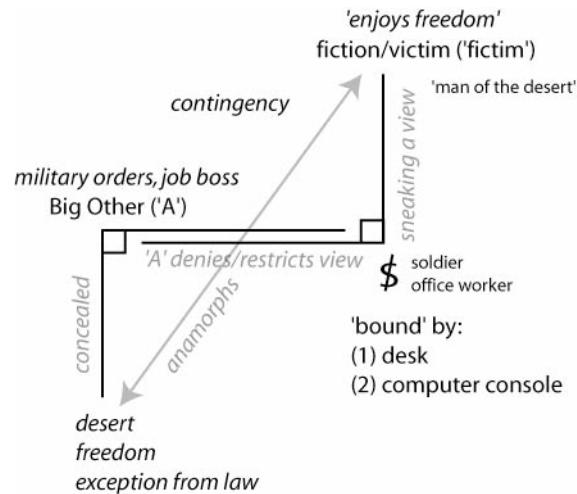


Figure 16. The veteran and computer soldier share a similar place in the topography of looking's relation to enjoyment.

The third version of the intransitive emphasizes the role of the gap in creating circularity, a return to a fundamental impasse, which seems to be 'naturally' balanced by an element that, though its absence, creates a dynamic instability. This is the Möbius band's 'missing' other side, the mismatch in perception of the lengths of the original and the return trip, the identity and difference of twins. Mathematically, this is the condition of feedback, modeled in terms of removing one from the required set of two 'converters' that keep a signal either +1 or -1, off or on, inside or outside. Remove one converter and the circularity is between 'possibly true' and 'possibly false' — the condition of imaginary numbers. The architectural significance of these has already been demonstrated: the golden section, the Greek system of musical proportions that gave rise to the Parthenon, the 'sacred cut' that allowed carpenters and masons from ancient times onward the ability to involve each building with the cosmos.¹⁴

This short circuit (literally made short by the presence of a resistant remainder, a gap) also gives rise to the 'curtain' in Western thought: the curtain that baffled the judges of Zeuxis and Parrhasius, the curtain behind which Parminides taught, the curtain hiding the control room of the Wizard of Oz.¹⁵ The diagram almost literally represents the symmetry of twins that accompanies the foundation rites of cities in ancient Italy and Greece, where the sacrifice of one king would insure the success of his living brother. Life and death, in the origins of thought, involves a stereognostic, left-right, model of the universe. The drawing of a boundary around a city, another version of stereognosis, guaranteed the sacred short-circuit required to ally the separate family gods beneath the rule of one civic hearth.

There is no solution to the cultural situation that faces us *vis à vis* the university model of discourse, which subordinates ethics and its relation to beauty to a distancing model. We have no access to the alternatives of the master-servant; the relation to the discourse of the analyst is entirely a personal one; only the hysteric offers comic relief, as a model for our own manic rejections of this marriage of tyranny and technology. I would however suggest a return to the ethics of the voice, the acousmatic

voice, and propose an entirely new incorporation of the voice at every level of architectural theory. As with the case of Eden, voice must be correlated with ... location! location! location! From the topological exchange of garden for wilderness, temple for tower of Babel, Ptolemy for Copernicus, soldier for cowboy, the voice plays a key spatial and temporal role. AND, the voice is undeniably the hallmark of the ethical, from the question of the speech of the serpent, to the Socratic *dæmon* of conscience, to the role of the voice in either validating or destroying the political fabric (think of the role of the radio during World War II, for example), to the voice's identity with what is *essentially* human but also surplus to phonic language.

My proposal would be for a philosophical-critical project within the field of architecture theory. This project would treat the voice as a determinant of the issue of location within both the external fields of space and time and the internal fields of the personal. I am intrigued by a comment of Žižek's in relation to virtual space: that in the process of disembodiment through experience of computer-generated 'realities' we return to 'ourselves' only to discover that *we never really had a body all along*.¹⁶ The *zoē* of our animal body was reconstituted into the *bios* of a life within the *polis*, constructed by the Other through *phronesis* and *praxis*. Only the voice retains the status of the *zoē*, the animal body. Entirely 'unnatural' within conceptualized nature, it is the last remainder, a composite of truth and beauty.

Patricia Highsmith has written a series of short stories having to do with the revenge of abused animals on their masters.¹⁷ One reads this with a curious glee, as the cruel camel driver is trampled beneath vengeful hooves and dog-torturers meet horrible ends. At this point in history, where discourse itself has been subverted for ideology, it is only the animal that remains, the poor donkey, the chained dog, the abandoned cat. As elephants and frogs have been recently telling us, they have had enough, and our *zoē* within should be agreeing. Perhaps this is a part of the slow food and slow fish movements — the film by Agnes Vargas, *The Gleaners and I*, comes to mind. This could be called 'slow architecture' on behalf of its detachment from the commerce of the image and the inanity of computer-generated books with big images and short captions. For mind to survive, there must be a body, but a real body, an animal body. Perhaps that's what Hamlet's father was asking for.

Endnotes

1. BIOGRAPHY: Donald Kunze has taught at Penn State University since 1984. He earned his professional degree in architecture at North Carolina State University in 1970, his M. A. in Geography from Georgia State University in 1974, and his Ph.D. in geography from Penn State University in 1983. His research has engaged a range of topics dealing with the dimensionality of experience. His book on Giambattista Vico studied the metaphoric imagination. As a Shogren Fellow (NCSU, 1997-98) he developed notation systems for exploring intransitive boundary conditions. As the 2003 Reyner Banham Fellow at the University at Buffalo, NY, he extended this work to problems of the boundary in art, architecture, film, and geographical imagination.
2. This new thematic has been most energetically investigated by Giorgio Agamben, in (to name a few titles) *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005); *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1998); *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2004). Of the many possible approaches to this complex topic, I prefer 'the voice' as one offering the best bridge between *zoe* and topics of meaning, spatiality, and civility. This approach has been opened up by Mladen Dolar's exceptional book, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006). Clearly, other approaches can be equally fruitful: the role of blood in the foundation and maintenance of city states; the geometry of twinship in the function of sacrifice, the 'Hermetic' themes of whisper, eros, and theft; the theme of spatial remainders in mathematics, psychology, and philosophy; the elusive character, the 'wild man', spanning literature from ancient times through a richly embroidered Medieval tradition, through Enlightenment interests in feral mankind documented by modern cinema, e. g. *The Wild Child* (François Truffaut, 1969) and *Kaspar Hauser* (Peter Sehr, 1993); or the even broader genre of the fool, for which there are few guides as helpful as William Willeford, *The Fool and His Sceptre: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*, transl. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington IN: Indiana University, 1984), or Richard Bernheimer's *Wild men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970).
3. The train joke fits nicely into Lacan's formula for the discourse of the Hegelian master-servant, where the professors occupy the position of the masters (S_1) who nonetheless need the servants (\$) to enact the trick/method of the joke (S_2). The ticket and the conductor's voice occupy the position of the always-surplus object-cause of desire (*a*) and are literally 'outside' in a way that supports the computer scientists' imagined 'outside' of the neutral-instrumental spectator position. The scientists themselves are supporters of the

'university discourse', where the subject is commanded to 'Enjoy!' ($a/\$$) and facts are manipulated by know-it-all masters of signification (S_2/S_1).

4. The 'matheme' is a neologism coined by Jacques Lacan in the 1970s, intended to suggest a quasi-mathematical relationship between two constituents of an idea. The most famous, $\$ \diamond a$, signifying fantasy, specifies a complex topology that is 'not meant to be understood but used'. Lacan advised that mathemes were constructed to resist any attempt to reduce them to a 'univocal' signification and to prevent the reader from forming a picture or familiar intuitive idea of a psychoanalytic concept. Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1996), p. 108-109. I am attracted to two features of the matheme: (1) its permanent, structural openness and, therefore, resistance to paraphrase and reductionisms; and (2) its suggestion of a relation to mathematics. This latter feature connects not just to the well-recognized topological interests of Lacan but, for me, to the 'boundary calculus' of George Spencer-Brown, whose non-numerical symbolic system comes close to providing a notational account of perceptual and philosophical conditions. Architecture theorists have neglected Spencer-Brown's calculus, even when they recognize its proximity to central issues and theories. See, for example, Kojin Karatani's short but alluring reference in *Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money*, trans. Sbu Kohso, Writing Architecture Series, ed. Michael Speaks (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), p. 56.
5. Mladen Dolar, *op. cit.*
6. Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University, 1999). Chion was the first to give a name to the diegetic but off-screen voice that cannot be located: the acousmatic voice (*la voix acousmatique*). The acousmatic voice has a role outside of cinema, however. It is the voice that, by freeing itself from its locatable origin, collapses distance.
7. Mladen Dolar, "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding Night': Lacan and the Uncanny," *October* 58, Rendering the Real (Autumn 1991): 5.
8. No better illustration of the reason for contrasting the 'natural attitude' to the view of the uncanny as 'extimate' can be found than in Tsvetan Todorov's widely read book, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1975). Todorov characterizes the uncanny as something that is immediately dispelled once a 'scientific explanation' is provided. This view relies on the natural attitude as a normative basis, against which the uncanny is an exception, an error, a deviation. Freud, Lacan, and Dolar would emphasize that the real case is precisely the opposite.
9. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968); Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward Casey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973). The use of these well-known texts illustrates another virtue of the uncanny: its ability to link traditional philosophical inquiry, not just in phenomenology but beyond. For example, one could return as far as Plato (the use of myth, the Socratic *dæmon*, etc.) and even the pre-Socratics (Parmenides' use of a curtain to instruct initiates) or revise views of classical standards, as Kojin Karatani did with his reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.
10. Jorge Luis Borges, "Death and the Compass," *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 147-156.
11. The truth of the matter is that discourse in architectural education suffers from a backlash against theory that amounts to an anti-intellectualism focused on philosophy, psychology, and critical theory. Against 'intellectualism', ramparts are built that do not entirely deserve their conscription: design-build, community design, parametric design, popular culture, and digital fabrication. Each topic deserves attention, but in many cases topics have been used to construct an ideological 'front' to advance the cause of anti-intellectualism. The strategy has been to emphasize visual representations, concentrated captions, and 'streamlined' terms that emphasize blurring, fuzziness, and indefinite relationships. While attractive to those who wish to bypass any serious study of critical theory, the upshot of this trend is to create a climate that owes more to advertising than to pedagogy.
12. For a readily accessible history of the Marlboro Man, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlboro_man. Although I'm drawing my ideas on the Marlboro Man from Slavoj Žižek, I cannot locate the original reference.
13. Eyal Weizman, "The Art of War," *Frieze.com*, www.frieze.com/feature_single.asp?f=1165. I am grateful to Nadir Lahiji for bringing this intriguing source to my attention. Weizman writes: "I asked [Brigadier-General] Naveh why Deleuze and Guattari were so popular with the Israeli military. He replied that 'several of the concepts in *A Thousand Plateaux* became instrumental for us [...] allowing us to explain contemporary situations in a way that we could not have otherwise. It problematized our own paradigms. Most important was the distinction they have pointed out between the concepts of "smooth" and "striated" space [which accordingly reflect] the organizational concepts of the "war machine" and the "state apparatus." In the IDF we now often use the term "to smooth out space" when we want to refer to operation in a space as if it had no borders. [...] Palestinian areas could indeed be thought of as "striated" in the sense that they are enclosed by fences, walls, ditches, roads blocks and so on.' When I asked him if moving through walls was part of it, he

explained that, 'In Nablus the IDF understood urban fighting as a spatial problem. [...] Travelling through walls is a simple mechanical solution that connects theory and practice.'

14. It would be possible to write a considerable thesis on this 'circular-noncircular' diagram used to represent intransitivity. The mathematical reference yielding the most insight might well be Louis Kauffman's 'Self-reference and Recursive Forms', *Journal of Social and Biological Structures* 10 (1987): 53-72. Kauffman demonstrates how boundary conditions determine the relationship between 'natural' and 'imaginary' numbers, and how the 'square wave' produced by self-referential (short-circuit) conditions create what critical theorists might describe as 'anamorphic' conditions. Another approach would involve the complex relationship between architectural ratios and musical harmonics, where it has been possible to connect such extensive architectural projects as the Parthenon to Greek musical notation. See Ernest McClain, *The Myth of Invariance: The Origin of the Gods, Mathematics, and Music from the Rig Veda to Plato* (New York: N. Hays, 1976). The most vivid application of the circle diagram, in my view, is the theme of twins in foundation rites and civic lore, as in the case of Castor and Pollux, twins who were guaranteed eternal life as long as they alternated between life on earth and death in Hades. This is the definitive Lacanian 'impossible-Real' situation, guaranteed by an 'idiotic symmetry' of opposed conditions.
15. The curtain is also curiously related to the theme of the 'blind man' from myth to the lore the Enlightenment. In most literary cases, blindness is the payment for insight, as in the case of Tiresius. In rationalized optics, the tables are turned, and the knowledge of sight is re-consigned to a projective geometry that replaces sight with a logic of touch.
16. Žižek, writing on virtual space, reminds us we never had a body anyway: 'Cyberspace thus designates a turn, a kind of "negation of negation," in the gradual progress towards the disembodiment of our experience ... However, the ultimate lesson of cyberspace is an even more radical one: not only do we lose or immediate material body, but we learn that there *never was* such a body — our bodily self-experience was always-already that of an imaginary constituted entity.' Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 54-55.
17. Patricia Highsmith, *The Animal-Lover's Book of Beastly Murder* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).