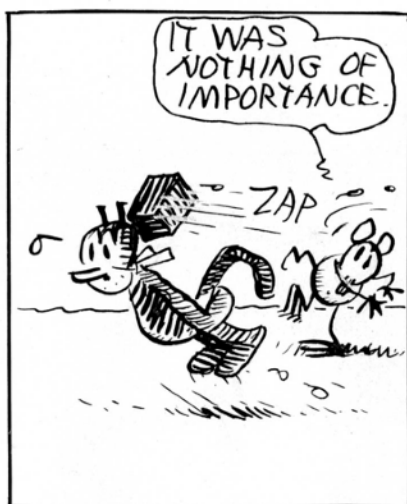


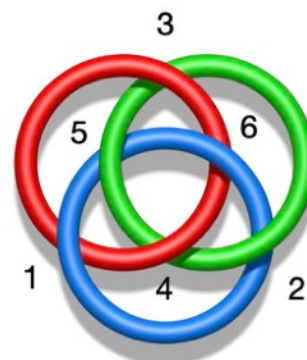
# Frustration



Frustration is classic for almost every reader of Lacan. Difficulty of learning theory is what theory is about! Take for example the difficulty of understanding the ‘RSI’ system, which is about domains rather than any definable entities; they are functions and forms that constitute the effectiveness of the psyche, but they are not delimited in the normal way that allows us to ‘draw a circle’ around them (hence the difference between Venn and Euler circles that Lacan harps on, and the reason why the Borromean knot is not a Venn diagram).

The Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary are not signifiers in the usual sense. In mathematics, we can have signs for things we can’t talk about and which exist in only an abstract way, and this is very helpful. We cannot easily talk about the Real although we know it

exists and is powerful. It is a *domain*. Its relation to the other domains is in terms of its resistance to being absorbed by them. This is not a difficult idea! We know that a shadow, which has a definite material presence, cannot be merged with the body that creates it.<sup>1</sup> Vico would say that we ourselves have made the rules by which this seems to be impossible. None of the three domains can be fully explained by the others, but they play a role in the relations of the other two. The fact that this is ALSO the logic of the Borromean knot attracted Lacan's attention and has been helpful. If you mark how the rings go over and under each other and make a table, you can see clearly that there is a ‘fourth ring effect’. That effect is that there is no fourth ring. This is tied into the version of the Cretan Paradox of self reference: **‘There are three errors in the sentence’** ... but when you count there are only two (**errors, sentence**), but then you realize that the third error is that **there are only two errors**. The ‘mathematical’ evaluation of this situation reflects back to the relation in *experience and thought* that is evident in everyday life, which leads us to conclude that in some situations math and geometry have some value in understanding questions about personal meaning.



<b>blue</b>	+	-	⊗	⊗	-	+
<b>red</b>	-	⊗	+	+	⊗	-
<b>green</b>	⊗	+	-	-	+	⊗
	1	2	3	4	5	6

We get hung up when we ask for definitions. What if this question itself is the problem? Then ‘our problem’ (not finding or knowing the definition) is helping us to find some kind of answer that will be personally helpful. Vico's advice in §345 of *The New Science* is about how to convert the negative *jouissance* of a problem to a positive

<sup>1</sup> Painters, especially since Claude Lorraine, for example, knew that the eye seeks homeostasis — a balancing out of the spectrum by ‘generating’ complementary colors — and knew that in ordinary visual experience the shadow is invested with the complements of the figures illuminate directly.

*jouissance*.<sup>2</sup> (By the way, we know medically that dopamine, the chemical of *jouissance*, doesn't care whether it's positive or negative, it's just there to do a job!) Vico says that you have to 'feel it in your bones' to prove to yourself that something is true. This is one of the most misunderstood/misinterpreted passages



If 'standing before' is the same way of indicating the durability of the shadow, then possibly strangulation is the same as suddenly forgetting a name and spending umpteen hours trying to remember it.

in Vico's *New Science*. Most Lacanians, however, would recognized immediately the +/- features of Vico's statement, its reference to 'divine corporeal pleasure', and readily know the connection. It's the '*passage à l'acte*' of psychoanalysis, the moment when the Analysand 'knows personally' that he/she has reached the end of treatment. Now we can try to define the 'act' (Lacan writes a lot about it) and the *passage à l'acte* that is different. Lacan says that 'running an errand' is not acting. However, the kind of travel that Odysseus does in *The Odyssey* is an act. It involves *jouissance*. To read Lacan you need to be able to 'get off on' your own difficulties. What things are there to slow you down, make you think? This is the point of Lacan's style (*lexis* he says is style, *phasis* is the literal word).<sup>3</sup> Once you realize, as Lacan and Vico do and repeatedly emphasize, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS LITERAL MEANING. In other words there are no 'definitions' that do not lead us in circles (obsessional repetitions that alternate between our belief that something 'should hold water' — the function of continence — and at the same time respond to the desire of the Other, who 'pulls our strings' and saves us when we are 'too far out', i. e. psychotically *over-extended*.

When we want to show something, point out some meaning, we are emotionally invested in this act. Affect (feeling) is the sign of anxiety about the desire of the Other, so we have to ask, what is this Other? It is a barred A,  $\bar{A}$ , and it has a signifier,  $S(\bar{A})$ , that Lacan has already thought about. It is not a 'thing' — it is a *structure of relations*. So we can talk about things that are related in a certain way, an 'x' or unknown, and look for something that that is missing in the desire to point out. This is a condition that Freud has already identified as 'parapraxis'. When he couldn't remember the name 'Signorelli', he constructed relations among OTHER signifiers: Herzegovina, Herr, Boticelli, Boltraffio, Trafoi, stories about Turkish patients of doctors, stories about Turks afraid of losing their sexual power, of a former patient who was impotent and committed suicide in a town in the Alps in BO-lzano.

The structure of these signifiers was a crisscross inversion of the original suppression of Signorelli, which had a component in it that a foreigner could see but a native speaker would not see. An Italian would not

<sup>2</sup>Vico's Big Lacanian Moment, his *passage à l'acte*: '§345 Thus the proper and consecutive proof here adduced will consist in comparing and reflecting whether our human mind, in the series of possibilities it is permitted to understand, and so far as it is permitted to do so, can conceive more or fewer or different causes than those from which issue the effects of this civil world. In doing this the reader will experience in his mortal body a divine pleasure as he contemplates in the divine ideas this world of nations in all the extent of its places, times and varieties. And he will find that he has in effect convinced the Epicureans that their chance cannot wander foolishly about and everywhere find a way out, and the Stoics that their eternal chain of causes, to which they will have it the world is chained, itself hangs upon the omnipotent, wise and beneficent will of the best and greatest God'

<sup>3</sup> In Seminar IX, *Identification*.

'care' about the 'signor' in Signorelli, but a foreigner who spoke German would readily note how unfamiliar words in another language work like a rebus: they are *pictures* more than conventional arrangements of letters to create sounds to create 'meanings'. Words mean more to foreigners who do not immediately see the intended designation that allows Mr. Signorelli to *sign* his name Sign-orelli.

Freud has had an experience in the cathedral of Orvieto, where Signorelli 'signs his name' by painting himself into the lower left corner of a scene of the anti-Christ. Behind him is Fra Angelico, the 'angelic brother', and we know that this is a kind of shadow because Signorelli paints it that way. Also Fra Angelico was called away before he could paint a mural in *exactly this same space* that Signorelli now occupies. The master, the Herr, has a double, a shadow, just as Christ has the anti-Christ. Fra Angelico's work is in the 'spandrel', which is the part of the arch that is the 'left-over'. Žižek writes about this but does not successfully complete his idea! Nadir has pointed this out. Žižek uses worn-out conventions of architecture criticism to say that in Gehry's house in LA and the movie *Psycho*, two programs have been shown. In the house they are merged in an 'anamorphic' mishmash but in *Psycho*, one program is for the motel, another for the Victorian house on the hill. Žižek does not use this opportunity to talk about parapraxis!!! And Nadir misses it also!!! There is now a void, an opportunity to address what is missing in these very intelligent writers' writing!

We face difficulties in pointing out these holes in writing. Lacan has many of them, but he makes every effort to fill them in later, but later he will create a hole to fill a hole. This business about making holes is about the lipogram, which is what happens in the novel without the letter 'e' of Georges Perec, and what happens when the pickpocket creates the voids around his victim's body in a process called 'body loading'. I mention these because they are a part of the *technē* of artists working in a skilled way. A magician is also a technician whose techniques we should pay attention to, on account of this creation of holes.

We cannot address holes that one makes without being aware without running into the 'affect' problem. When we are pointing out, we are looking for the literal, and the criticism from good Lacanians should be that there is no such thing. This does not mean she should not look at examples in architecture, landscape, painting, or literature, but that we should include this problem of the unreality of the literal. What is in its place? METAPHOR. Lacan tells us this. Then he tells us how metaphor is a STRUCTURE and an EXPERIENCE. We-who-would-wish-to-point-out-an-example should be writing about the  $\text{Å}$  and *jouissance*, the pleasure-pain of the shadow not merging with the body. Now, wouldn't that be interesting, rather than the 'expert' saying 'look at this, I am telling you what it means, "literally"!'? ?

Retroaction is when you have said 'there are only two errors in the sentence/sentence you have asked me to evaluate!' and you *already have the answer* but it is not literal, it is that *you already have the answer to the problem you identify, and that you have 'already had it' in a retroactive way*. This is the *après coup* or *Nachträglichkeit* that means that literality constructs linear time and thus causality but meaningfulness deconstructs this literal time to show us how a 'future anterior' is both past and future, crammed into one single 'now'.

The now belongs to the magician and the pickpocket, and to Lacan who talks and writes so that the audience will have the opportunity to finish what he has completed only half-way (*mi-dire*). The magician works in *exactly the same way*. Without leaving the work half-done, the illusion of the magician would not work, would not be EFFECTIVE. The virtuality by which the invisible is added to the visible is a 'secondary' virtuality of effectiveness. It is not the virtuality of Euclidean perspective, which denies that the vanishing point can exist, but the projective point that is simultaneously on the edge between the visible and the invisible AND in the center, where the viewer can see all of reality, in equal amounts and extents, in all directions. To see this relation you must fold the horizon over to the center, and doing this you create the Boys Surface or 'real projective plane'. Here, an arrow shot in one direction simultaneously goes in the other direction, and *voilà*, you have the story of Apollo and Daphne, and the 'eternity' of time that is the laurel tree. Then of course you have someone tell this story who leaves out the part about Eros being angry about Apollo's insulting his archery skills (= ignoring his projective geometry), and we have another hole in writing that we can exploit just as we exploited Zizek's about the spandrel, which would have taken him directly to Fra Angelico and the issue of parapraxis, which is the relation of architecture to psychoanalysis. What he *wanted to prove* was left, as a hole in his writing, and we must go and create our own holes while we 'fill' his. We can't really fill the void (the Real), but we can *circulate* around its edge. We have clear diagrams about how to do this. It is a double circulation that follows a plan of 'symmetrical difference'. This is the difference by which Castor and Pollux 'kept each other alive', i.e. by taking turns in the invisible and visible, or living and dying.

Many people stop reading Lacan after the first two pages because they project their problems onto others, and for some reason they take no interest in what they themselves have done, they do not include it in the 'package of evidence', they foreclose it. They somehow do it and then say that not only that they did not do it but no one else does it either; then they say that 'denial' — which they are doing — 'does not exist'. So already you have a lot of psychoanalytical theory! But, their rejection does not benefit them and they go on to say nasty things about Lacan. Even Zizek says nasty things. Lacan would not tolerate Zizek's lack of reflection about his own style. Zizek is angry when other people note his compulsive gestures (pulling on his clothes, his nose, his shabby appearance, etc.). Lacan went the other way, always dressing in a fancy style, wearing bow-ties, etc. AND, he acknowledges these affectations by distinguishing *lexis*, style, from *phasis*, 'content'.

Architecture gets us in the habit of dissecting the magical power of words through etymology, in a rabid search for 'the true meaning' concealed within etymology. this is not just a belief in the literal, it is an obsession about the unreality of the Symbolic, the claim that some Other is maliciously hiding something from us, but — ahah! — we are clever and have gotten a grant to travel to a special collection in some foreign land (we even have one made by Werner Oechslin just for this purpose!). Then the *magus* who has gotten the grant and visited Einsiedeln and shaken Werner's hand comes back to claim victory and now he (because this is the action of 'he who would call himself a man' rather than the 'not-all' of the woman) no longer has to give answers or pursue questions (voids) because he has achieved the status of the one exempt from castration ( $-\varphi$ ) but we know that this cannot be the case. Because we are good Lacians, and we know that the *claim* is a demand made to the Other, whose very desire is constructed in this claim. But we cannot tell the Emperor that he has no clothes. His nakedness reveals that he has a penis but he does

not himself possess the phallus that this anatomical object is often employed to represent. We also have to forget that the foremost theorist in architecture's version of phenomenology *does not recognize the difference between the penis and the phallus!* This is not a minor or petty point. It is an 'imposture' that denies the possibility of (symbolic) castration, i. e. castration *by* the signifier (penis by the phallus) that is the key to our membership in the Symbolic. These 'trivial' issues tell us a lot about why Lacan is so unpopular in architecture.

Our theoretical advantage is our understanding of the obsession to build more buildings as a demand to a constructed structure, the Other. This is a 'toroid' claim, and it is valuable. We have been making it for many years, but it is not about a recent problem but something that goes back to the foundation not just of architecture but the building itself, where the poor mother is killed and buried but whose breasts are exposed in stone so that people walking in the street can have an imaginary relation to something they can never explain in the Symbolic.<sup>4</sup> This gap holds together the Symbolic and Imaginary and you tell me you don't understand the Real of this? I see clearly that we DO understand it, but we are continually compelled to deny it (*Verleugnung*). Furthermore, we know from the story of the broken kettle that *Verleugnung* leads to *Verwerfung* (foreclosure) where it is not enough to deny something but to tear down the Symbolic itself, first as 'the teaching' but the whole structure of the teaching, the A that must now be the  $\bar{A}$ , and we must represent it to everyone, S( $\bar{A}$ ). It could be said that this denial is 'psychotic' but it is neurotic *par excellence*, since it proved the *metaphoric* power of the unconscious, and we know through experience that psychotics do not have an unconscious because they have no access to the (paternal) signifier that would hold it in place.<sup>5</sup>

A man who was accused by his neighbor of having returned a kettle in a damaged condition offers three arguments.

1. That he had returned the kettle undamaged

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<sup>4</sup> One could say that the breast 'refuses to be a signifier' and in this sense becomes, automatically, a *Vorstellungrepräsentanz*, a 'non-signifier' that, like breasts that Lacan refers to as a 'cloud' in Seminar XIV, a relational set rather than a specific (literal) meaning. This is how it functions in the foundation rite's sacrifice of the lactating woman, and ethnography 'teaches us to understand Lacan' in this example of internment (desiccation) of 'that which refuses to be desiccated' but continues to give 'eternal milk' — i. e. perpetual protection — to the walls and their *continence role*. In this sense, the protruding breast is the same as the pomœrium of the ancient city, the space reserved between the two walls that had to be maintained with annual rituals.

<sup>5</sup> The paternal signifier interrupts the continual circuit that the nursing child has with the mother, because the signifier is itself fundamentally 'paternal'. It offers mastery but, as in Hegel's parable of the Master and Servant, ironically forecloses what it demands, and is essentially 'toroid'. This is the irony of the Symbolic, that it asks us to Enjoy! without specifying what or even who is to be enjoyed. The irony is that the system will enjoy us, at our expense. Psychotics refuse this offer and write themselves out of the networks of symbolic relationships that constitute society. They are the 'odd man out' and used as scapegoats, in the costume of the fool and/or wild man. See Bernheimer's book, *The Wild Man and the Middle Ages* for the real skinny on Agamben's *homo sacer*, which makes no reference to Bernheimer.

2. That it was already damaged when he borrowed it
3. That he had never borrowed it in the first place

You can tell from this joke that the effectiveness of negation is that it negates itself. Already we are into geometry! — self-intersection and non-orientation, the classic traits of projectivity.

So, we who complain about the sticking points in Lacan are **in a very good position** to study Lacan, thanks to our own *Verleugnung*! We only have to worry about the suffering that this causes because our *jouissance* is all negative, although as good hysterics ( $\$/a$ ) we can invert our *jouissance*,  $/a$ ) to make pleasure and report it as pain, which we have just done. There are no Others who know everything, just little others we complain to informally, but this works just as well; we all need someone to talk to, to complain to, to repeat our demands to. We must 'be true to our desire' and resist being tour-guides and get into writing — with style. We need to copy the master of excess, Góngora!

Writing is the point, reading should not be thought to be required. As the writer Walker Percy said, every true text is made to be put into a bottle and thrown out to sea. Or, as Petrarch put it, we write only to the dead because we can be assured that they will not read it although they are the only ones who could! This possibly means that reading it will be a *katabasis* visit to Hades to get a taste of the nature of *jouissance*, the perfect pharmakon, both elixir and poison.

The Greeks said that if a God was accused of lying, he/she had to drink from *Okeanos*, and if the accusation were true, it would paralyze the god for a Great Year. So there's something in this story about the horizon and the truth that connects to projective geometry. Simplistically, I would translate projective into the idea of The Project, what we all need to use this energy that comes from reading and failing to understand. So, we shouldn't get stuck on the literality of these words that give us problems. There is none, but there is a story behind each one of them, and we can find a way to tell it.

## teaching versus instruction



The pointing finger is, as Cassirer has written, an attenuated grasp, substituting a spatial vector for the lost possession of some object in the distance. The aggressive index finger fires a ballistic gaze, while its companions look the other way in passive complicity.

A few years ago, a highly respected architecture educator distributed a call for papers in the style of Elaine Scarry's book on thoughtful action (*Thinking in an Emergency*). This interpreted thought as a way of slowing down rash expediencies, subjecting them to 'phenomenological' reflection. Thoughtfulness was contrasted with disastrous haste, exemplified by the case of the finger close to the nuclear 'button', able to destroy the world in a moment of potentially misinformed emotion. Certainly this case justified the idea of thoughtfulness as something necessarily slow, action as something necessarily fast, often too fast.

As logical as this premise sounds, it overlooks the way in which artists, poets, performers, magicians, and others who must execute flawless and effective actions must *suppress thought*, at least the kind of thought that requires time. A pianist, no less than a cyclist, must forget 'how to' play the piano or ride the bicycle in order to avoid mistakes. The knowledge must be unconscious, latent, to be effective. Brought into consciousness, it becomes a force against itself, it introduces a self-destructive irony in the manner of the Hegelian master.

Teaching is the transfer of ability to create and use latency. Instruction is the 'look at this' of the framed example. It points without fully saying what it is pointing out. It says 'Enjoy!' without saying what there is to be enjoyed, and failing to mention that the specified object will be doing the enjoying, thanks to the *che vuoi?* of the addressee. Teaching is always 'a teaching', an experience requiring a two-part invention of the teacher and the learner, who often change parts (in piano, the duet where the players cross over each others hands, hence the idea of *Verschränkung*, or crisscross, which is also the closet of latency). Instruction involves the Master who claims mastery, but conceals the basis for this mastery. The magician and pick-pocket conceal their mastery, clearly; but the equation is balanced by giving over the effect of wonder (or surprise at loss) to the 'victim'. In the kind of instruction used in education, there is no such compensation. The Master willingly takes the part of the One Supposed to Know. The Master uses the Example to 'show what he/she means', but the meaning of this is that meaning will be concealed and meaningfulness will be foreclosed. The master will have all the *jouissance*, at the expense of the instructed. The example will force learning to fade on behalf of the imposture of the Master.

Latency is inseparable from metaphor, and teaching/learning are a metaphorical process using *Verschränkung* in the form of the joke, the story, the parable, and the trick. Teaching becomes 'a teaching' when the learner is empowered to see how the effectiveness of crisscross works.

