

'Work' is a concept central to life and to any part of it making the ultimate affirmation of some relation to 'phronesis' — the cumulative knowledge of what holds human life together and permits us the myriad 'work-arounds' that keep life going in spite of the traumas, stale-mates, impasses, and disasters, both man-made and natural. As Freud said, it is neurosis that protects us from being full-blown psychotics; just so it is work that casts what we must do into what we should do, and even enjoy doing (perversely) to the extent that work, plus love, are the two components that make life worth living. Work is not the same as labor, just as travelling is not the same as running an errand or migrating. Work is a response to the strategic structures of causality that Aristotle formalized and Lacan condensed under the heading of *tuché* (encounter with the Real). Work focuses on the part of the expanded Aristotelian net where *techne* creates an 'authenticating margin', the place where the signature, the tell, aligns with the act of framing to permit an intrusion of daemon and the ambiguous mixture of immortality and reincarnation. As with the signature of the painter, the instance of self-reference is complex and related to issue surrounding the 'point of view'.

Cervantes
Rabelais
Cezanne
da Vinci
Nicola Tesla
Giambattista Vico
Iris Murdoch
Pavel Florensky
Charley Parker
John Coltrane
Jack Kerouac
Pablo Naruda
Robert Graves
Vladimir Nabokov
James Joyce
Oscar Wilde
Arnold van Gennep
Norman O. Brown
George Spencer-Brown
Ludwig van Beethoven
Marcel Proust
Raymond Roussel
Mikhail Bulgakov
Jorge Luis Borges
Alfred Hitchcock
Rilke
Plato
Jacques Lacan
Sigmund Freud
Žižek
Slavoj Dudok
Aalto
Scarpa
Donald Verene
Michaelangelo
Alvero Siza
Frank Lloyd Wright
James Martin
Bernard Lassus
Le Notre
Olmstead
Richard Taransky
Wesley Wei
Vassilis Ganiatsis
Marco Frascari
Anthony Viscardi
Alberto Pérez Gómez

[A partial and personal list of workers]

Pavel Florensky (1882-1937)



1. tuché

The 'encounter with the Real' has a central significance for Lacan. In his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Lecture XI), Lacan revisits Freud's recounting of the dream of the exhausted father whose dead son lies in state while he naps. He has left the son under the watch of an incompetent helper who falls asleep, allowing a candle to catch the bedclothes on fire. The father dreams that the son appears to him with the reproach, 'Father, can't you see that I'm burning?' The horror of the question awakens the father to discover the fire in the next room. As with Pavel Florensky's dream analysis in *Iconostasis* (which means, incidentally, the 'inside frame' of images found in Eastern Orthodox churches), the end of the dream 'actually' occurs at the end, the point

of waking, generating all preceding materials in an instant. The coincidence of the fever which killed the son, the fire accident, and the dream combine 'anacoluthically' to rouse the father to the reality of the situation and 'dissolve' the insulation protecting the sleeper from waking. This triangulated encounter, or *tuché* (literally, 'chance' or 'contingency') is the margin identical with the point of view, the slight chiaroscuro protecting the viewer from the viewed, 'delaying' perception for a moment so that the self may escape inscription. At the same time, Lacan notes the parallel condition of Freud's story about his grandson, who 'anticipates' the mother's absence with a game played with a spool of cotton thread, tossed and retrieved in perpetual succession, through which the child seizes (or gives up?) control of here and there, where the distinction between inside and outside is constructed by momentarily blurring it. Out of this contradictory-sounding triangulation Lacan later creates the word that summarizes the 'uncanny' — the 'extimate' (*extimité*): the projection of the body of the self through an object, a 'partial object', that charges space with its interior vanishing point.

2. interpellation ethic

In terms of work, interpellation has to do with the daemonic element that, in the Aristotelian map, springs from *materia* — and here it would not be too fanciful to regard the *animus/anima* dichotomy of the Stoics or Vico's discussion of the wedge (*coelum*) as out of bounds. The sharp end of the wedge is the 'wit' of imagination (or memory) as it animates the 'inert' matter of nature. Here the voice is the first product of that animation, just as the thunder for Vico served as a good anecdote about the birth of nations out of the stormy sky. The voice lies beyond phonetic employment of sounds as meanings (Mladen Dolar: *A Voice and Nothing More*), and the voice in its pure compelling sense is the interpellating call. Call to what? Such is the basis of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*: the law is meant for me and only me — the perverted subject's actualization (and only basis for the Real) of the Law. The significance of the confidence with which Joyce, Mozart, Kafka, Shakespeare, etc. wrote with sustained authority, in the face of claims that they lacked the technical/intellectual means to do so, comes from this relation to the Law, and it is only through such 'perverts' that the Law exists. The Aristotelian net-map identifies this as a point, a crossing, where excess becomes gift, the only possible gift, 'the given'.

3. interpolation ethic

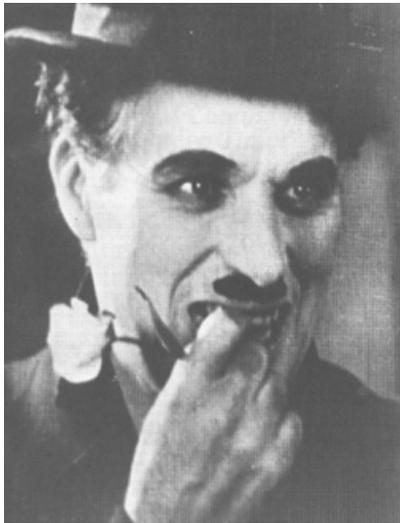
If work is anything dialectical, then the word 'interpolation' captures best the zig-zag trace which is always, by definition, 'in between' in the senses of between a set of forced choices, between the 'bad' of neurosis and the 'worse' of psychosis, the reality and the dream, the body and the world (lamella), or 'the two deaths' (*katabasis* etc.). The 'neither here nor there' aspect of interpolation means that it is the essence of the uncanny, making travel and rules of authentic travel into principal guides. Interpolation boils down to 'principles of reading' as well as of travel, and the efforts of the Oulipo group (Calvino etc.) who drew from Roussel are instructive. Calvino constructed rows and columns of images from which all stories could be derived (*Castle of Crossed Destinies*), and Robert Graves fancifully speculated that the Biblical book of Genesis was created out of misreading of tabulated clay images depicting the Assyrian cosmogenesis. The key here is not authority as much as it is an error- and contingency-driven process of 'hopscotch', or idealized 'weak readings' such as employed by Julio Cortázar and Ramón Llull. The 'call' of interpellation is complemented by the 'crosses' that make up all the known stories in literature (*Castle of Crossed Destinies*), and



Monogram of the transformed Margarita, astride the magical flying pig, in her quest to vindicate the Master's lost novel (Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 1937).



Don Giovanni's 'No!' in response to the Commandatore's demand that he repent his sins is a pure, if negative, example of the ethical, in distinction to the 'moral' position most commonly adopted by the audience.



In the final scene of Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931), the tramp is recognized by the flower girl whose sight had been saved by his arduous fund-raising. She thinks her prince charming must have been a handsome millionaire, but as she touches the arm of the tramp to give him a hand-out and a flower, she realizes her ideal image is in fact a disgusting, dirty nobody.

here the calculus of George Spencer-Brown comes to mind, particularly in the ability of one non-numerical symbol (interpretable as either a call or a cross) that can, on a closed curved surface, constitute a flip or suture destabilizing the distinction between inside and outside, here and there. The inside frame is borne of this distinction, and the calculus's only sign is a partial object in miniature. In fact, it is the only means of extending Lacan's idea of the uncanny into a system of logical notation.

4. destructive reading

Vico is the only major philosopher who has incorporated a 'theory of reading' directly into his philosophy, *The New Science*, to the extent that the reading itself 'deconstructs' the potential stability of the 'normative' assertions of the work. In no uncertain terms, the writer invites the reader to step into his shoes, as he himself must have envisioned stepping into the 'divine' shoes, the place of Jove as a generator of ideas. Jove, the 'imaginative universal' borne of thunder, pairs with the antipodal idea of the scholarly universal, the universal key of *The New Science*, not the metaphor of Jove itself but the idea of how the first metaphor worked in the minds of the original humans. Through an exchange of blindness for invisibility, interiority for exteriority, the Lacanian 'impossible-Real' effected meaning through the *place* of representation usurped by the (return of the) signifier, the material support of meaning that, itself emptied of meaning, takes up its place as a void.

This negative ploy comes close to the imaginative opening described by Roussel in *La Vue* or Borges in 'The Aleph'. By transferring the site of meaning from the work to the audience, a conspiracy takes place that involves silence — a staging of the Lacanian *tuché*, or encounter with the Real. One could argue that this is nothing more than the universal transfer required of every work of art, with Velázquez's 'Las Meninas' being the most succinct and transparent version of the contract.

In fact, the 'fictim method' is an operational model by which any interpretive gesture is multiplied into a *moiré* of conflicting interests. Don Giovanni, for Žižek, raises the issue of how a 'negative ethic' can in fact provide the best example. In the face of certain doom, the Don refuses to repent in the face of the 'morally correct' demands made by the stone statue of the Commandatore. This is the test of the true: it is 'impossible' and in those terms the occasion of the Real. Mozart gives us the image of truth and beauty in inverted terms: we must condemn Don Giovanni in order to acknowledge the 'perfect moment' of art, whose *via negativa* is the perverse labyrinth of memory that forsakes the question of moral right in exchange for the more difficult task of facing truth in its Hegelian form of 'Golgotha', the final negative version of the meaning of human life.

The *techne* returns as the authenticating margin of this act, the place where the 'silent language', the voice (emptied of signification), becomes the only possible incarnation of the formless, the essential demonic.