

unlimited semiosis and the calculus

The calculus of predication shows how metalepsis opens up meaning with the possibility of “unlimited semiosis” — the ability of signifiers to layer, link, transfigure, permute, and confabulate. In other words, meaning relocates from the standard causal chain of predication to identify with the “gap” between predications. What is this gap? Reversed predication ($\rightarrow \leftarrow$) initiates the process, and a “vertical-demonic” element is retroactively generated. The response to this penetration of normative meaning’s defenses is a retreat, *askesis*. The new terminology comes from Harold Bloom’s *Anxiety of Influence*: six “revisionary ratios” (*askesis*, *demon*, *clinamen*, *tesseract*, *apophrades*, *kenosis*). Because Bloom’s terms are “parsimonious” — they attempt to describe the greatest possible range of phenomena with the fewest possible ideas — they count as a “calculus.” But, because we have seen that a calculus becomes, simply, any operation that disrupts a normative causal chain, Bloom’s terms become universally applicable. Bloom reveals itself to be a supplement to the calculus devised to describe metalepsis! The connection between calculus and disruption means two important things: (1) that, for political analysis, where Rancière uses “police” to describe the orderly progression of (ideologically) regulated human activity, the emergence of the “sites of exception” as embodiments of *dissensus* is critically tied to the descriptive and explanatory powers of the calculus of metalepsis. (2) It may be that the phenomenon of emergence in general (knowing without knowing; the unconscious; the symptom/sinthome) may be explained through the calculus. Since a calculus is a “minimalist notation system” that promises “maximum explanatory/descriptive range.” In both cases, the calculus obeys the rule of chirality: that two otherwise symmetrical stereognostic systems cannot be collapsed into one. A gap persists, and in that persistence, it resists disappearance and mis-recognition. Chirality additionally attaches this resistance to a space-time construct: the site of exception.



PARANOIA METHODOLOGY: Todd McGowan has written that paranoia is the leftist response to ideology. Following Fredric Jameson’s idea of “cognitive mapping,” the world appears as a system of interlocking conspiracies that trap the subject via the logic by which the subject defines itself as “an appearance to and for the Other.” Because appearance is managed by two systems, hysteria at the personal scale and the master-servant at the ideological scale, we can compare and in some instances combine the concepts of the two scales. The “linking idea” is, of course, the revolutionary notion of the death drive: the resistance of the subject to disappearance and misrecognition. At the personal scale this resistance becomes the re-assignment of referential meaning by means of “sinthomic” strategies of the hysteric. These are particularly evident in the idea of paranoia, which is, as Jameson discovered, a totalizing mapping. This is not a map “inside the head” but, rather, external reality converted to the map idea — the ultimate apotheosis of map-to-reality parodied by Borges parable of the empire discovered by Suarez Miranda, where a 1:1 map covered everything. Jameson is more often linked to the cognitive geography idea of internalized models of reality, but in effect the “mental map” is the extimate of the paranoiac, who believes that every random detail is in fact connected to some schema, plan, or plot. At the popular culture level, this is delusional thinking; but in terms of metalepsis, paranoia is the logic of metalepsis and unlimited semiosis. In Bloom’s terms, this is described as *kenosis*: “knowing without knowing,” generated by emergence that, on one side, is “pushed” by the demonic and “pulled” by the contraction/retreat of *askesis*.

Nomothetic versus ideographic: Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915) introduced these terms to distinguish between descriptions (ideographic) and explanations (nomothetic), but in metalepsis there is a curious “re-inscription” of the micro-level scale of descriptive detail into the causal chain, as a disruptive element. In metalepsis, ideographics radicalizes nomothetics. In Marco Frascari’s rehabilitation of Carlo Scarpa’s idea that the detail was the pivot of architectural meaning, the figure of metonymy was emphasized; but it is clear that metonymy in this role is really metalepsis — i.e. a “normative order” must be recognized first in order to be transformed later through the disruption of the normative causal chain. This reveals itself as a calculus, a transformative protocol, applicable to any and all processes based on transformation: psychoanalysis (Lacan), political critique (Rancière), theology (Santner), poetics (Bloom), criticism (Žižek). All are in an important sense both described as a “calculus of emergence,” where what is known is the result of a conversion of the nomothetic by the ideographic.

Che vuoi?: In the three stages of child development (oral, anal, phallic), the subject manages to salvage a (negative) space within the Other, based on a reversal of the demand, “*Che vuoi?*” (“what do you want?”). The *Che vuoi?* is the reversed predication: $\rightarrow \rightarrow \leftarrow$, leading to the functionality of the *poignon* (\diamond) and scale dysfunction ($\langle \rangle$). The calculus shows how the *Che vuoi?* is materialized and converted into “the performative,” which subsequently becomes the basis of sites of exception in art, architecture, politics, and the unconscious. In the master trope of the “story in the story,” the alternating logic that requires every \leftarrow to be “closed” by a matching \rightarrow is disrupted. After an initial framing, \leftarrow , another \leftarrow element is encountered. The expected \rightarrow becomes a \leftarrow , as in Magritte’s famous painting of *Not to Be Reproduced*. The space (and time) between \leftarrow and $\rightarrow \rightarrow \leftarrow$ convert to a site of the exception whereby the ideographic becomes nomothetic. A “demonic” logic ensues, disrupting the horizontal order (*utilitas*) overlaid (mapped) by the “police order” (*firmitas*). The result? Unlimited semiosis; a release of signifiers from the ideology of *points de capiton* (stabilization of meaning through disciplinary/ideological processes).

beginning $\langle \dots \rangle$ end

“normative” temporality presumes a series of linked predications (...) that connect any assigned beginning to its conclusion.

$$\varphi / -\varphi$$

the demonic operates dialectically between a source (demon) and “paranoiac” response (flight, resistance, *askesis*)

$$B \langle \rangle E$$

the paranoiac operator engages a “universalist” perspective to imagine an extensive network of conspiracies, hidden linkages, wizards-behind curtains, etc. who violate normative spatio-temporal rules to invade the interior of the predicative field.

$$B \leftarrow \dots \leftarrow$$

In the encounter of a story within the predicative field, the expected causal order, $\rightarrow, \leftarrow, \rightarrow, \leftarrow, \dots$, of effects converted to causes, whose effects are then converted to causes etc. meets with a reversal, the expected \rightarrow becomes a \leftarrow .

$$\langle \dots \rangle \langle \rangle \dots \rangle$$

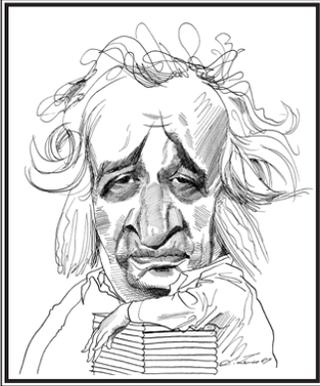
This is the “construction site” of the imagination’s resistance to the obscene Real of ideology.

$$\langle \rangle = \diamond = \nabla$$

The story in the story can be materialized as one of the other four classical forms of detached virtuality: the double, travel through time, contamination of reality by the dream. These are not alternatives to “scientific realism,” but, rather, means of resistance contrived by the subject to defend against disappearance, conversion, and mis-recognition. They resist ideology by refusing to be discovered within and by ideology and ideology’s causal chains. But, like “falling in love” (cf. Mladen Dolar), this process must be “traversed” by theorizing, which through this project becomes analogous to psychoanalysis. The fantasy must “not be enjoyed too much.” It must allow its set of sinthomes to be reduced through an economy, which is the definition of the project of critical theory (and in this sense critical theory follows both the advice and the trajectory of psychoanalysis). Reversed predication in the story-in-the-story, consolidation of a site of exception, $\langle \rangle$, with its scale dysfunctional properties and relation to imagination, $\$ \diamond a$ (Lacan’s formula for fantasy), and the final rotation of the contamination motif, $\rightarrow \leftarrow$, to show how a vertical demonic “invades” the causal chain with the principle of chirality, constitutes the full series required by a “paranoia methodology” — the scholarly project that presumes unlimited semiosis by reversing the polarity of ideology’s “forced choice” (negation, renunciation, foreclosure) as steps taken by the subject *against* ideology.

“The death drive disrupts the causal chain and becomes the model for all subsequent disruptions, whose fundamental form, $\varphi/-\varphi$, is the basis of the calculus of reversed predication. The aim of this calculus, like any calculus, is a parsimony of terms that support unlimited reconfigurations of meaning.”

dæmon: φ
 askesis: $-\varphi$
 tesseræ: $\langle \rangle, \langle \dots \rangle$
 clinamen: $\langle \dots \diamond \dots \rangle$
 apophrades: $\rangle \langle$
 kenosis: $\rangle \dots \langle$

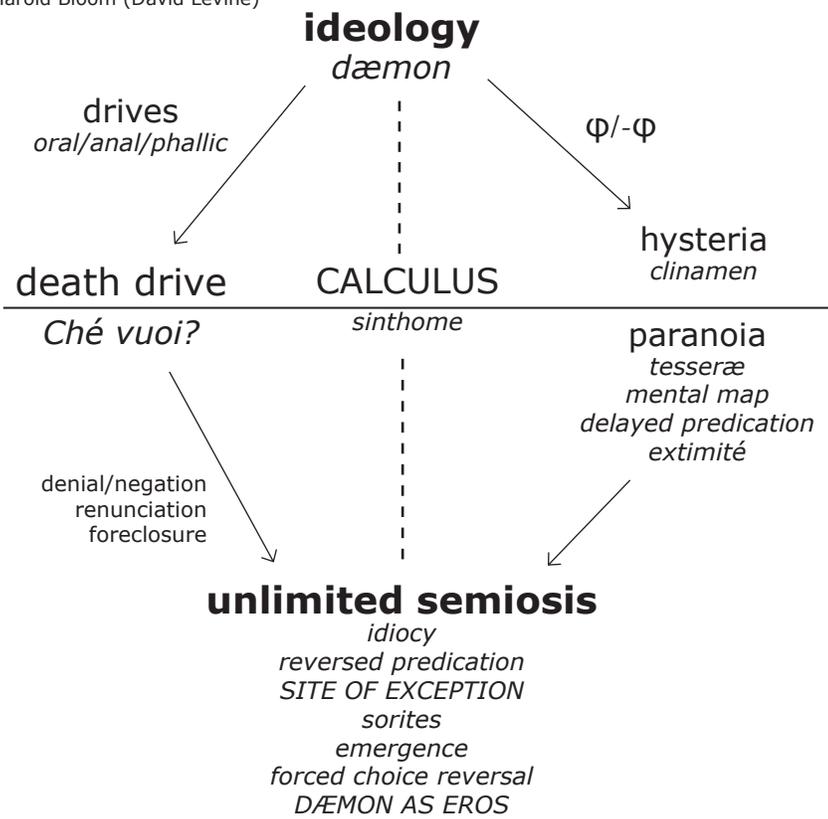


Harold Bloom (David Levine)

The logic of the calculus becomes evident when adopted to an equally “parsimonious” system of predication. Such is the case with Bloom’s six “revisionary ratios,” which already constitute a system that is by definition a calculus. Dæmon and askesis work in dialectic: one attacks the order of the causal chain, the other retreats in the face of this attack. The general logic of the causal chain is already a function of two opposed predicating markers, \langle and \rangle . Seen in the context of metalepsis, these are halves of a whole that are broken to allow predication to take place “in between,” and united again when metalepsis reveals their primary framing function. Clinamen marks the point of disruption of the even flow of the causal chain. Apophrades “rotates” the direction of this disruption, making it appear to operate vertically, from a source that is low or high. Kenosis, “knowing without knowing,” is a signifier without a signified ... a condition of open or unlimited predication. Note that Bloom did not recognize his system as a calculus, or even as a system; instead, he conceived his ratios as independent, descriptive, and additive but non-exhaustive.



“In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that the vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitiableness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.”



Beware all simplistic diagrams! They prematurely stabilize relationships that are inherently fluid, dynamic, and continually changing! Allowing for the existence of multi-dimensional spaces around this organizational chart, the progress from ideology (subjectivity without options) to unlimited semiosis (free subjectivity) requires recognition of the issue of the “negative place of the subject,” whether interpreted through the drives or some version of Althusser’s interpellation. With an understanding of the relation of hysteria (private version) and paranoia (public version) via the function of φ , the Freudian-Lacanian model can be mapped on to Bloom’s six revisionary ratios (dæmon, clinamen, tesseræ, apophrades, kenosis, askesis). The role of dæmon reverses, thanks to a re-deployment of the three negations of the “forced choice.” One achieves unlimited semiosis as did James Joyce, with a simulation of psychosis that comes from foreclosing the predicative field through metalepsis. The calculus, like psychoanalysis, aims to achieve the most through the least.

Suarez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes*, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658 [in actuality, the invention of Jorge Luis Borges, “On Exactitude in Science,” *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley, Penguin 1999].