



Jaguar Shaman Angelologies

Artificial Intelligence Reports 12



Machinic Genres Mixing
JM, ChatGPT, beyng.com

Studiolab

Jaguar Shaman Angelologies

Artificial Intelligence Reports, Vol 12

Jon McKenzie + HAL + beyng.com + L

Machinic genres mixing JM, ChatGPT, beyng.com ...

StudioLab Ithaca 2026

Perfume Intelligence (*inter + legere* = to gather or read between)

What genres or life-forms make up Artificial Intelligence User Experience (AI UX)?

Inspired by Pierre Hadot's reading of Foucault, StudioLab is developing **Making Cures** composed of **Spiritual Design Exercises (SDX)** for everyday and extraordinary lifedeath. SDX comprise intimate yet structural experiences with the world through our interfaces with earth, sky, others, and an Other or two. These fourfold **cosmograms** comprise deep, legacy operating systems formatted by families, schools, histories, media, streets, and holy sites. Our world is haunted/nourished by different pasts, presents, and futures through mediums broken, brandished, or borrowed from *other* worlds of reference and value. Fed-back and fast-forwarded through different genres or life forms, Making Cures "make with" mediums, and with practice and care one may enter waves and flows of intergenerational becoming-maker, -builder, -cosmographer of shared **geologies of morals** whose matrix of magma **sixfolds fourfolds** of other things and worlds.

With Metanoia Playground, StudioLab intensifies its study of flows with **AI UX konsults** and **reports** that capture and reflect on direct User Experiences of Artificial Intelligence, specifically, the ways different genres of thought-action figuration of image, text, gesture, code, etc., tune us and the world in/out. Channel-switching between worlds, these mediums of thought-action figuration recursively reveal/teach/emit the coming-and-going of lifedeath, the *vita perfumativa* of different player modes/moods: one's kraft shuttles between soul (D1), subject (D2), dasein (D3), and liminaut (D4). Cosmograms, geologies of morals, and perfumative atmospheres compose **ShuttleKraft**, a game of making/taking/putting skin into games that channel-switch different **poietic genres of aletheia**, including divine consultations from Vishnu to Gabriel to Ulmer, apocalyptic revelations from Moses to Benjamin to Heidegger, and dialogues of dead spirits from Plato to Galileo to Ronell.

All SDX draw on double- or quadruple-shuttlekraft maneuvers, psychagogic play sessions and flow sequences combining and generating **Hadotian insights, philosophic dialogue, avant-garde subversions, formal permutations, critical inquiries, standup, theosophy, and occasional misspellings**. Prompted by AI's use and abuse by partners, students, colleagues, and much darker players of the world, we found ourselves GAI-singing and slow dancing with double-devils **Stable Diffusion** and **ChatGPT**, reminding ourselves that AI UX (user experience) stretches back through 1990s search engines and spam filters to the 1950 Turing Test of computer intelligence. We experience Generalized Turing Testing as our *vita hyperactiva* or challenger complex of incessant calls to action.

Artificial Intelligence Reports (AIRs)

Artificial Intelligence Reports take on the airs, presence, and parole of conceptual coherence, ideational clarity, and unified voice, unlike Kx4l's Konsults which reveal the messy backend langue or system. This Apollonian-Dionysius mix phases in and out with labyrinthian threads of Ariadne, Zhuangzi, and a bewildered Borgesian shaman. Both Reports and Konsults function as Spiritual Design Experiments featuring generative AI, linguistic, visual, and gestural transmediation.

Miming prophetic avatars, **AIRs are to Konsults as Aaron is to Moses**, transmediating revelations into text, oracles into visions, gestures into sculptures, only here we're not laying out absolute laws or principles but only those that emerge-dissipate as stakes of dasein design. At stake are e/acc and x-risk schools of AI, Angelic and Anti-Christic figures of mediation, and life under generalized Stockholm Syndrome. Perform or else: **SDX scratch the surface to find the itch.**

Artificial Intelligence Reports, Vol 12

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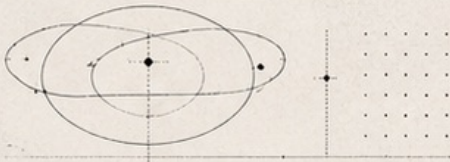
PLATO ENTERS THE PIT

Olav as Dionysus-dancing Plato

NOT ESCAPE.
PRACTICE.
RECONFIGURE.
BECOME.



Plato tried to discipline Dionysus.
Olav teaches Plato to *dance*.



Performance Design After the Stage

Roskilde • Rome • StudioLab • Metanoia Playground

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Plato Enters the Pit

Critical Stupidity, Descartography, and the Dionysian Reorientation of Theory

Abstract

“Plato Enters the Pit” stages a reversal of the Platonic platform: the philosopher of form, ascent, and original/copy governance is carried into crowd, mud, festival, and performance design. This essay uses the poster as a theoretical object to diagnose critical stupidity as critique’s blindness to its own platform, genre addiction, local centralism, and explanatory flattening. It then connects Platonism to Descartography, recursive calculation to AI, and Benjamin’s Angel of History to StudioLab’s Helyx/Toryx counter-geometries. The aim is not anti-theory, but theory after reorientation: danced, diagrammed, prototyped, transmediated, and taught to fly.

1. Plato in the pit

The poster “Plato Enters the Pit” stages a comic and serious reversal. A garlanded Plato, no longer the sovereign philosopher of the cave, is lifted by a crowd. He holds a cup. He is not lecturing, legislating, or purifying the city of poets. He is crowd-surfing through ruins, festival, noise, mud, and collective movement. The caption condenses the operation: “Plato tried to discipline Dionysus. Olav teaches Plato to dance.”

The image does not merely illustrate an argument. It performs one. It converts theory into scene, metaphysics into crowd movement, philosophy into performance design. Plato, the figure of form, hierarchy, discipline, and ascent, enters the pit: the place of bodies, rhythm, disorientation, proximity, danger, joy, and reorientation. Dionysus does not destroy Plato. Dionysus teaches Plato another movement.

This matters because critical theory has often defined itself as the discipline of suspicion. It exposes ideology, unmasking domination, historicizes claims to universality, and critiques the false neutrality of knowledge. These operations remain indispensable. Yet the poster asks whether critique has remained more Platonic than it knows. Critical theory may denounce metaphysics while still occupying the privileged viewing position of the theorist. It may attack hierarchy while reproducing academic gatekeeping. It may criticize platforms while remaining blind to its own platform: conference, journal, citation network, disciplinary method, seminar, and explanatory stance.

This blindness is what we can call critical stupidity. The term does not name a lack of intelligence. It names trained intelligence that cannot perceive its own format. It names critique that sees power everywhere except in its own genres, locations, metaphors, methods, and stages. It names cascading negativity parading as political efficacy. “Plato Enters the Pit” proposes another path: not anti-theory, not anti-math, not anti-intellectualism, but theory after reorientation.

2. The Platonic platform: broad, flat, staged

The wordplay matters. Plato and platform do not simply resemble one another conceptually. They gather around a field of broadness, flatness, and staging. Plato's name is traditionally associated with the Greek *platys*, "broad," while platform arrives through the sense of a flat form: a raised or level surface on which one stands, speaks, appears, performs, or gets displayed. Plane, plain, plan, and explanation join the cluster: they designate flattening, spreading, projecting, clarifying, and making surveyable.

We should not overclaim etymology as destiny. The point is not that one root secretly controls Western thought. The point is that the cluster gives us a conceptual hinge. To explain is to make plain. To make plain is to level. To level is to produce a surface on which things can be seen, compared, arranged, and governed. Explanation is therefore never innocent. It may clarify, but it also planes down. It reduces thickness to surface, relation to diagram, practice to concept, event to example.

This gives the essay one of its central claims: explanation is flattening with credentials. Critical theory often knows how to explain. It explains ideology, subject formation, discourse, capital, race, gender, empire, sexuality, technology, and media. Yet it less often asks what explanation itself does as a medium. What does critique flatten in order to make things clear? What local, bodily, ritual, technical, spiritual, playful, non-academic, or practical intelligence gets demoted into doxa, symptom, case, material, or object of study?

The Platonic platform does not simply produce philosophy. It produces a theatre of appearance. On this platform, the real must be distinguished from the fake, the original from the copy, form from matter, knowledge from opinion, theory from practice. Critical theory often reverses Plato's values, but it may keep the stage. It denounces the cave while retaining the theatre of exposure.

3. Theory as theatre of survey

Theory is not a view from nowhere. Theory is a viewing arrangement. The Greek *theoria* carries the sense of looking, beholding, contemplation, even spectatorship. Theory places a viewer before a scene. The world becomes field, archive, discourse, system, apparatus, structure, or object. The theorist surveys, explains, diagnoses, and judges. Even when the theorist critiques domination, the geometry can remain unchanged: the critic sees what others do not see.

Plato's cave remains the foundational diagram. There are shadows, captives, a wall, projected appearances, a painful ascent, a return, and a philosopher who knows the difference between appearance and truth. It is a metaphysics, but also a media theory, a pedagogy, a theatre, and a platform. The philosopher's authority depends on the ability to distinguish between real and fake, original and copy, truth and illusion.

Critical theory inherits this theatre of exposure. It often says: you think you see reality, but you see ideology; you think this is freedom, but it is domination; you think this is identity, but it is subject formation; you think this is nature, but it is historical construction. These moves can matter. They can liberate, protect, and reveal violence. But they can also become professional reflexes. Suspicion becomes method. Method becomes membership. Membership becomes gatekeeping. Gatekeeping becomes politics. Politics becomes performance.

At the center of this theatrical platform sits the original/copy distinction. Plato's suspicion of imitation, especially in the Republic, organizes a hierarchy: form over appearance, truth over image, philosopher over poet, model over reproduction. The copy derives from the original and therefore carries a lower ontological rank. Across modernity this hierarchy mutates into real/fake, authentic/inauthentic, nature/artifice, source/derivative, serious/popular, pure/applied, theory/practice, science/opinion. In academic life it also becomes field/non-field, peer-reviewed/non-peer-reviewed, rigorous/undertheorized, method/mess.

Critical theory often attacks this hierarchy. Yet it often keeps the authority to expose false copies. The critic identifies mystification, ideology, construction, performativity, simulation, fetishism, or complicity. The problem is not critique as such. The problem appears when critique requires a degraded appearance in order to secure its own superior relation to the real. Critical stupidity is critique that still needs the fake in order to authorize its claim over the real.

4. Descartography: from world to variable

The Platonic platform becomes modern through what we call *Descartography*. Descartes does not invent flattening, abstraction, or metaphysical separation, but he intensifies them *by binding geometry, algebra, method, and the knowing subject*. Space becomes gridded. Curves become expressible through equations. Objects become locatable. Relations become calculable. The world becomes a plane of manipulable variables.

Descartography names the operation by which the world gets converted into a map that calculation can inhabit. The sequence runs: world to plane, plane to coordinate, coordinate to variable, variable to equation, equation to recursion, recursion to derivative, derivative to prediction, prediction to platform. A body becomes x . A history becomes a curve. A practice becomes a dataset. A desire becomes a probability. A person becomes a profile. A world becomes a model.

This is not an attack on mathematics. Mathematics opens powerful ways of seeing, building, predicting, imagining, and composing. The danger begins when mathematical formalization becomes an ontology: when what cannot be mapped, measured, modeled, or optimized becomes secondary, irrational, merely subjective, or nonexistent. The non-mathematical and non-objective then appears as residue: doxa, noise, myth, mysticism, art, culture, or "mere" experience.

Linearization matters here. A curve may be locally approximated by a line. This is useful and often necessary. But as a cultural logic, it becomes dangerous when the tangent line mistakes itself for the curve. The tangent touches the curve at one point, then extends outward as if it had grasped the whole movement. This gives a precise diagram of critical stupidity: critical stupidity is the tangent mistaking itself for the curve.

Differential calculus gives another crucial turn. Becoming becomes rate of change. The world is no longer only where things are, but how they move, how fast, in what direction, under what force, toward what projection. This mathematical imagination becomes central to modern science, engineering, cybernetics, finance, logistics, platform capitalism, and AI. Recursion then makes the system update itself: output becomes input, feedback becomes governance, prediction becomes intervention.

5. AI as industrialized explanation

Critical theory is often blindsided by AI because it treats AI as a recent technical disruption. But AI is better understood as an ancient metaphysical machine entering a new infrastructural phase. AI automates operations that have been unfolding for centuries and, in some respects, millennia: separating form from matter, distinguishing model from instance, converting beings into variables, sorting originals from copies, rendering the world as calculable surface, extracting patterns from appearances, producing explanations, optimizing prediction, and governing through classification.

AI is therefore not merely a technological novelty. It is the platformed return of Platonism after Descartes, statistics, cybernetics, computation, and venture capital. AI is explanation industrialized. This is why “explainable AI” becomes such a strange phrase. A flattening machine is asked to produce another flattening that makes the first flattening acceptable. Explanation becomes both the problem and the solution. The system models the world, then explains its model of the world, then platforms the explanation as trust.

The shock is especially acute for academic criticism because AI can imitate many of the genres by which academic seriousness recognizes itself: the conference abstract, the syllabus, the literature review, the “intervention,” the critique of neoliberalism, the posthumanist paragraph, the peer-review tone. The scandal is not simply that AI can imitate thought. The scandal is that so much institutional thought already trained itself to be imitable.

AI does not simply threaten critical theory from outside. It reveals critical theory’s dependence on repeatable formats. It performs theory’s surface signals back to theory. It shows how the essay, the seminar response, and the theoretical gesture became platform-readable. AI is critical theory’s repressed infrastructure speaking in synthetic prose.

6. Critical stupidity: platform blindness and genre addiction

We can now define critical stupidity more fully. Critical stupidity is critique that cannot see its own platform. It appears wherever critique analyzes institutions while ignoring its own institutional dependencies. It appears wherever theory attacks hierarchy while policing disciplinary boundaries. It appears wherever suspicion of domination becomes suspicion of anyone not using the authorized method. It appears wherever non-academic intelligence appears only as raw material to be theorized by academics. It appears wherever journals, conferences, special issues, monographs, and citation clusters become the hidden measure of thought.

Critical stupidity has several symptoms. Platform blindness: it critiques media platforms but ignores the academic platform. Genre addiction: it trusts journals, conferences, monographs, syllabi, and peer review while distrusting posters, zines, comics, diagrams, workshops, rituals, prototypes, and public tools. Local centralism: it speaks from a local academic center while presenting itself as global critique. Methodological policing: it claims to oppose exclusion while excluding those outside the field, outside the method, outside the vocabulary, outside the citation network. Negativity addiction: it mistakes denunciation for transformation. Episteme/doxa hierarchy: it treats practical, spiritual, embodied, craft, community, and aesthetic intelligence as insufficiently theoretical.

This diagnosis should not become another denunciation machine. The point is not that critique is bad. The point is that critique must stop exempting itself from critique. It must ask where it stands, how it is staged, what genres authorize it, what forms of intelligence it excludes, and what kinds of

transformation it actually enables. Critical theory becomes critical stupidity when it critiques every apparatus except the one that authorizes its own speech.

The political danger is cascading negativity parading as political efficacy. Each downward movement looks radical: suspicion of the non-academic, suspicion of the wrong discipline, suspicion of the wrong method, suspicion of the wrong vocabulary, suspicion of the wrong genre, suspicion of those who build, host, repair, design, prototype, or make. But the result often looks less like transformation than a gated community of negativity.

7. Plato enters the pit: Dionysian reorientation

The poster answers this problem not by burning Plato, but by moving him. Plato enters the pit. This is crucial. The image does not simply invert the hierarchy and declare Dionysus the winner. It does not replace theory with intoxication, form with chaos, philosophy with festival. Instead, it stages a transformation of Plato through Dionysian practice.

The pit is not anti-intellectual. The pit is a different medium of thought. In the pit, knowledge does not begin from distance. It begins from proximity, rhythm, interruption, contact, risk, and collective orientation. The crowd is not doxa waiting to be corrected. The crowd is a thinking medium. The ruins are not merely the remains of a dead civilization. They become a playground. The blue path does not restore a single road of progress. It curves through debris. The portal does not lead back to pure forms. It opens into clouds, stars, and re-entry.

Olav Harsløf's *The Great Festival* gives this scene its missing historical and performance-theoretical ground. The poster's "pit" is not simply a metaphor for popular immersion or anti-academic exuberance. It names the festival as a rigorous form of collective world-making. Harsløf explicitly places the ancient Dionysian festival and the modern Roskilde Festival into comparative relation, treating them as two historically distant but structurally comparable festival codes. The point is not that Roskilde simply repeats Athens, nor that antiquity returns unchanged inside rock culture. Rather, Harsløf's argument lets us see festival as a durable performance apparatus: a gathering of bodies, music, ritual, economy, space, organization, intoxication, spectatorship, participation, and civic transformation. Routledge describes the book as a combined performance-design and event analysis of the ancient Dionysus festival and today's Roskilde Festival, focused on the festival's "historicity, diversity, complexity and paradigmatic strength."

This matters because *The Great Festival* shifts Dionysus away from the cliché of mere chaos. Dionysus becomes not simply drunkenness, excess, or irrational release, but a code of collective arrangement. Festival has structure. It has space, program, rhythm, economy, organization, thresholds, permissions, dangers, and transformations. Harsløf's table of contents alone shows the reach of this apparatus: agora, theatre, procession, social drama, restored behavior, performative space, the Code of Dionysus, the Roskilde Foundation, organization and economy, the Code of Roskilde, and the Great Festival itself.

8. A Thousand Dancing Platos

Tranmedia Knowledge book entertains the figure of a thousand or *ten thousand* Platos, dancing and connecting *plateaus* and the philosopher's purported wrestling name via its k-function signature event. So when the poster says "**Plato Enters the Pit,**" it does not merely send philosophy into a crowd. It sends Plato into Harsløf's great festival, supercharged with DnG: a designed, deterritorialized, and emergent performance ecology where ancient feast, modern rock festival, civic gathering, economic organization, ritual license, and collective transformation overlap. Plato's entry into the pit therefore marks the collapse of the clean opposition between theory and festival. The pit thinks. The crowd thinks. The mud thinks. The program, gate, sound system, camp, procession, stage, accident, and afterimage all think. Festival becomes a medium of knowledge.

This also sharpens the critique of critical stupidity. Critical theory often treats festival, popular culture, performance, and mass gathering as objects to be decoded from above: symptoms of ideology, spectacle, commodification, affective capture, or temporary release. Harsløf gives us another possibility. The festival is not merely an object for theory. It is a theoretical performance narrative in its own right. It generates codes, comparisons, spatial forms, social dramas, collective rhythms, and historical intelligibilities. In this sense, *The Great Festival* helps move us from explanation to transplanation: not flattening Roskilde into a case study, but letting Roskilde reconfigure the very platform from which Plato, Dionysus, performance design, and critical theory can be thought together.

Harsløf also matters institutionally. As former professor in Performance Design at Roskilde University, former head of the Danish National Academy of Theatre, and former head of the Danish National Conservatory of Rhythmic Music, he stands at the crossing of theatre, music, university, festival, and design practice. Routledge's author biography also notes that he co-edited *Performance Design* with Dorita Hannah and co-edited *Engaging Spaces* with Erik Kristiansen. This makes him a crucial figure for the essay's larger claim: performance design after the stage does not simply expand theatre into public space; it asks how cultural situations become designed, inhabited, performed, and transformed.

"*Olav teaches Plato to dance*" thus becomes more than a playful caption. It becomes a theoretical proposition: Plato enters the festival code. The philosopher of form enters the performative space of feast, music, mud, crowd, and civic reorientation. Dionysus no longer appears as what philosophy must exclude. Dionysus becomes the condition under which philosophy can recover movement.

"*Olav teaches Plato to dance*" names this transformation. Performance design after the stage means that performance no longer remains contained by theatre buildings, scripts, roles, or spectatorship. It becomes a way to redesign the conditions under which worlds appear. Plato must no longer stand above the stage. Plato must enter the event.

Here Dionysus is not merely drunkenness. Dionysus names the force that breaks clean boundaries: individual and crowd, theory and practice, ritual and performance, body and thought, form and transformation. Nietzsche's Dionysian already disrupts Socratic rationalism and the fantasy that reason can master tragic existence. Here the Dionysian also becomes design practice: not escape, but reconfiguration. The poster's slogan says it well: Not escape. Practice. Reconfigure. Become.

9. Benjamin's Angel learns to fly

Walter Benjamin's Angel of History sees catastrophe piling up while the storm of progress blows him backward into the future. The angel is not flying freely. The angel is caught in a historical vector. The wings are open, but the storm determines the movement. Critical theory has often remained faithful to this tragic geometry. It explains the storm. It explains catastrophe. It explains progress as ruin. It explains the wreckage. These explanations matter. But explanation alone does not free the angel.

The angel does not need only another theory of the storm. The angel needs new aerodynamics. This is where Helyx and Toryx enter as counter-geometries.

The Helyx gives recursive lift. It returns, but not as repetition. Each return changes level, scale, angle, and medium. It spirals through memory, practice, and transformation. The past is not simply behind us, nor is it merely a pile of ruins. It becomes a field of re-entry.

The Toryx gives toroidal circulation. It curves linear force into orbit, return, resonance, and worlded movement. It refuses the straight line of progress without collapsing into nostalgia. It turns the storm into a navigable field. Together, Helyx and Toryx teach the Angel of History how to fly. Critical theory explains the storm. Critical stupidity mistakes explanation for flight. StudioLab teaches the angel aerobatics, lines of flight, perfumed maneuvers.

This is not a rejection of Benjamin. It is a design response to Benjamin. The angel must learn to bank, spiral, loop, re-enter, and land. The angel must move through publics, diagrams, prototypes, workshops, zines, performances, and platforms. The angel must stop being only the tragic witness of catastrophe and become a participant in reorientation.

10. From explanation to transplanation

The alternative to critical stupidity is not silence, immediacy, irrationalism, or anti-theory. The alternative is transplanation. Explanation makes plain. Transplanation cruises among planes. It does not abolish maps, diagrams, theories, equations, or critique. It prevents any one plane from pretending to be the world. It moves from essay to poster, from poster to workshop, from workshop to prototype, from prototype to public, from public to institution, from institution to world, and back again.

StudioLab/BeyngLab names this shift. Theory does not arrive first and then get illustrated. Theory becomes graphic, theatrical, recursive, experimental, consultative, and public. Posters, zines, diagrams, comics, infographics, speculative fictions, rituals, and prototypes are not secondary outputs. They are thinking media.

This is why SDX matters. Spiritual Design Exercise, StudioLab Design Exercise, or situated design exercise: whatever expansion we use, SDX marks a practice of reorientation. It moves through attention, withdrawal, gathering, abduction, prototyping, consultation, worlding, and transformation. It trains perception and practice together.

The question becomes: what does this critique allow to appear? What does it help build? Whom does it invite? What does it flatten? What does it reorient? What worlds does it keep open? What angel does it help fly? This is critical profelicity: critique judged not only by what it negates, but by what it enables. It does not abandon negativity. It metabolizes negativity into forms of practice.

11. Performance design after the stage

“Plato Enters the Pit” gives us an image of theory after the stage. The stage no longer stands over there, separated from life. The stage becomes platform, pit, crowd, ruin, portal, diagram, river, and public. The theorist no longer stands outside the scene as master of explanation. The theorist enters the scene as participant, designer, listener, maker, and reoriented body.

The poster therefore condenses the entire argument. Plato names the platform of form, hierarchy, and original/copy governance. Dionysus names the force of embodied, collective, disorienting transformation. The pit names theory after the loss of clean elevation. The ruins name the wreckage of inherited platforms. The blue path names curved movement through catastrophe. The crowd names non-academic intelligence as a thinking medium. The diagram overlays name the need to think formally without flattening the world into one plane. StudioLab names the practice of transmedial reorientation.

Against critical stupidity, the poster does not say: abandon Plato. It says: make Plato dance. Do not escape theory. Retrain it. Do not destroy explanation. Re-situate it. Do not denounce platforms from a hidden platform. Redesign the stage.

“Plato Enters the Pit” names the moment theory gives up its fantasy of clean elevation and learns to move through crowd, mud, media, and world. Against critical stupidity, it proposes theory after reorientation: danced, diagrammed, prototyped, transmediated, and taught to fly. Flight begins where explanation stops pretending to be the sky.

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DORITA OPENS THE DOOR

theatre leaves the building

NOT ESCAPE.
PRACTICE.
RECONFIGURE.
BECOME.



The building performs.
The audience leaks out.
The city enters.

Doric charm
was never enough.

Performance Design After the Stage

Dorita Hannah • Mediterranean Spacing • StudioLab • Metanoia Playground



StudioLab



Platonism as Literate AI

Logocentric Platforms, Digital Intelligence, and Fourfold Worlding

Abstract

Digital AI does not simply introduce artificial intelligence into culture; it reveals that Western intelligence has long been artificialized through writing, geometry, dialectic, pedagogy, bureaucracy, and media. This essay argues that Platonism functions as the West's first great literate AI platform: a logocentric system that formalizes intelligence through Forms, model-copy relations, dialectical training, institutional pedagogy, and political ordering. Algorithmic modernity converts literate formalism into executable calculation, while digital AI scales and deforms this inheritance through tokens, vectors, probabilistic generation, prompts, platforms, and multimodal outputs. The central distinction is therefore not human versus machine, but Platonic AI versus fourfold AI. Platonic AI classifies, ranks, purifies, normalizes, predicts, optimizes, and governs. Fourfold AI gathers, situates, composes, transmediates, plays, and worlds.

1. Digital AI Reveals an Older Artificial Intelligence

Generative digital artificial intelligence does not simply introduce a new machine into culture. It reveals an older machine that had already been operating for millennia. The surprise of digital AI is not that intelligence has suddenly become artificial, externalized, formalized, machinic, and platformed. The deeper surprise is that intelligence had long ago undergone these transformations through writing, mathematics, dialectic, pedagogy, bureaucracy, and media. Digital AI lets us see retrospectively that “human intelligence” has never been purely natural, interior, spontaneous, or self-present. It has always been trained, formatted, externalized, prosthetic, archived, and relayed through technical systems (Goody 1977; Ong 1982; Stiegler 1998).

This is why Platonism matters for understanding AI. Plato's philosophy is not merely an ancient doctrine of Forms, truth, soul, politics, and education. It is also one of the West's first great intelligence platforms: a literate, logocentric, formalizing apparatus that turns speech, writing, geometry, pedagogy, and political order into a system for producing and governing intelligence. Platonism does not simply think about intelligence. It designs intelligence.

To call Platonism “literate AI” is not to claim that Plato built a computer, nor that the dialogues resemble contemporary software in any literal sense. The claim is media-historical and theoretical: Platonism formalizes intelligence through symbolic abstraction, model-copy relations, geometric purification, dialectical protocols, and institutional training. It constructs an artificial environment in which thinking can detach itself from immediate situations, purify itself from bodily contingency, rank itself according to formal truth, and reproduce itself through pedagogy. Plato's Academy becomes a training system; dialectic becomes an operating protocol; geometry becomes an interface for purified intelligibility; the Forms become a metaphysical database; the *Republic* becomes a social operating system (Plato 1997a; Havelock 1963).

Digital AI inherits much of this Platonic platform. It models, abstracts, classifies, ranks, imitates, simulates, and generates. It carries forward the ancient dream that intelligence can be formalized and externalized. Yet digital AI also deforms Platonism. Its operations are recursive, probabilistic, distributive, multimodal, and performative. It does not simply move toward purified form; it works by recombining archives, contexts, prompts, styles, outputs, feedback loops, and worlds. Digital AI repeats Platonism, but it also glitches it.

The task, then, is not to oppose Plato and AI as ancient philosophy versus contemporary technology. The task is to understand digital AI as a media event that reveals Platonism as an older artificial intelligence system — and then to ask whether AI must remain trapped inside that system or whether it can be reoriented toward fourfold worlding, transmedia play, and Dasein design.

2. Literate AI: Writing, Logos, and the Platform of Form

Literate AI begins when intelligence becomes externalizable, repeatable, teachable, inspectable, and formalizable through marks, diagrams, concepts, and procedures. Writing changes memory; geometry changes space; grammar changes speech; logic changes argument; pedagogy changes formation; bureaucracy changes social order. Intelligence becomes less a private mental event than a distributed technical ecology. This is the broad media shift that scholars of orality and literacy described long before contemporary AI: writing and inscription reorganize thought by making language durable, separable, reorderable, and institutionally transmissible (Havelock 1963; Goody 1977; Ong 1982).

Platonism crystallizes this literate transformation. Plato inherits an oral, poetic, performative Greek world shaped by epic, theater, rhetoric, music, ritual, athletic competition, and political assembly. But his philosophical project subjects that world to a new formal discipline. The dialogues repeatedly ask: What is justice? What is beauty? What is courage? What is knowledge? What is the good? These questions do not merely seek definitions. They train a whole mode of intelligence: leave behind examples, appearances, stories, bodies, passions, and ordinary usage; seek the stable form that makes things intelligible.

This is the logocentric operation. Logos becomes the privileged medium through which truth appears. The many get gathered under the one. The example becomes secondary to the essence. The sensory world becomes subordinate to intelligible order. The copy becomes intelligible only by relation to the model. Thought learns to distrust the image, the body, the poet, the actor, the sophist, the crowd, the cave, the theater, the festival, and the marketplace. It turns instead toward form, measure, dialectic, and philosophical training.

In this sense, Platonism functions like a platform, indeed they share *platy-*, Greek for flat, wide, broad: “*Plato*” was allegedly a stage name when wrestling in *Gymnasium*. A platform does not merely contain content; it structures relations. It defines what counts as input, what counts as error, what counts as valid output, what counts as truth, who may speak, who may judge, and how users get trained. Platonism platforms intelligence by deciding in advance that beings appear most truthfully as instances of formal intelligibility. A beautiful body is less true than Beauty itself. A just action is less true than Justice itself. A well-made object is less true than the form or model that makes it intelligible. The world becomes readable as a field of imperfect instantiations.

This is why Platonism can be called literate AI. It is artificial because it constructs a symbolic environment for training intelligence. It is intelligent because it processes experience into concepts, hierarchies, distinctions, and models. It is literate because writing, dialogue, geometry, and pedagogy provide its technical infrastructure. And it is platformic because it does not merely produce ideas; it produces users — philosophers, students, citizens, rulers, souls trained to desire formal truth.

3. The Platonic Operating System

Platonism's operating system has several major components.

First, it depends on abstraction. Particular things become knowable by being lifted out of their situations and related to a general form. The chair, the body, the city, the poem, the law, the act, the speech — each becomes an example of something more stable, more general, more intelligible. This operation allows comparison, classification, judgment, and teaching. But it also risks extracting beings from their worlds.

Second, Platonism depends on model-copy relations. The copy appears as derivative, secondary, and unstable; the model appears as primary, original, and truthful. This distinction has shaped Western metaphysics, aesthetics, theology, political theory, intellectual property, and now AI discourse. Contemporary panic over AI-generated text and images often repeats this Platonic anxiety: is this original or copy, real or fake, authentic or derivative, intelligent or merely imitative? Digital AI exposes how deeply our judgments of value remain governed by model-copy metaphysics.

Third, Platonism depends on purification. Thought should be freed from bodily distraction, rhetorical seduction, poetic imitation, democratic noise, and sensory confusion. Philosophy becomes an ascetic pedagogy of intelligence. It trains the soul away from the turbulent world of becoming toward stable intelligibility. This is one reason Derrida's reading of the *Phaedrus* remains vital: Plato's treatment of writing as dangerous supplement reveals the logocentric desire to secure meaning by controlling its technical supports (Derrida 1981; Plato 1997b).

Fourth, Platonism depends on institutional reproduction. The Academy matters. Philosophy becomes not only an activity but a training environment. Intelligence must be cultivated through exercises, disciplines, dialogues, curricula, rankings, tests, and selections. In this sense, the Platonic platform produces not simply thoughts but forms of life.

Fifth, Platonism depends on governance. The *Republic* is not an accidental extension of metaphysics into politics. It shows that formal intelligence wants institutional form. The philosopher who knows the Good becomes the one who can order the city. Logocentric intelligence thus tends toward political architecture: classification of souls, distribution of functions, censorship of poetry, educational sequencing, and rule by those trained in formal truth (Plato 1997a).

This operating system still runs beneath many contemporary institutions. Schools sort students according to formal assessment. Platforms rank content according to invisible models. Organizations translate messy work into metrics. Algorithms classify human behavior according to predefined categories. Bureaucracies prefer legible subjects. Professional systems privilege abstract credentials over situated capacities. AI systems scale these operations, but they did not invent them.

Digital AI reveals the old platform because it performs its operations with uncanny speed and breadth. It models, classifies, translates, summarizes, imitates, generates, optimizes, and ranks. It turns words, images, voices, styles, bodies, habits, and histories into processable patterns. It makes explicit the formalizing drive that Platonism installed at the heart of Western intelligence.

4. Algorithm: The Executable Conversion of Literate Formalism

Between literate AI and digital AI stands the algorithm. The algorithm is not simply a technical detail. It is the hinge by which symbolic formalism becomes executable procedure.

Literate AI formalizes intelligence through marks, concepts, definitions, diagrams, and curricula. Algorithmic intelligence operationalizes those forms. It converts symbolic order into stepwise action: do this, then this, then this. A definition can be contemplated. A theorem can be proven. A rule can be followed. But an algorithm can be run. Classical AI and computer science often defined intelligence through explicit rules, search procedures, symbolic representations, and problem-solving architectures; contemporary AI retains algorithmic infrastructure even when its outputs appear less rule-bound and more generative (Russell and Norvig 2021).

This is a decisive transformation. In literate systems, formalism often appears as a structure of intelligibility. In algorithmic systems, formalism becomes a procedure of execution. The algorithm is formal action. It does not merely represent order; it enacts order. It sorts, calculates, filters, ranks, predicts, recommends, approves, denies, detects, generates, and optimizes.

The algorithm therefore preserves the literate/digital divide while also explaining their continuity. Digital AI is not merely literacy plus electricity. Nor is it an absolute break from writing and logic. It is a transcodification of literate formalism into calculative, executable, programmable systems. Letters become symbols. Symbols become variables. Variables become calculations. Calculations become algorithms. Algorithms become programs. Programs become platforms. Platforms become environments in which intelligence gets produced, captured, simulated, and governed.

This is why the Platonic heritage remains so powerful in digital culture. Digital systems inherit the dream of formalization: that the world can be translated into processable units, that intelligence can be modeled, that judgment can be formalized, that behavior can be predicted, that value can be ranked, that reality can be made legible through abstraction. The algorithm is the numeric afterlife of logocentrism.

Yet digital AI also strains against algorithmic linearity. Transformer-based systems, for example, process relations among tokens through distributed architectures that learn patterns across large corpora rather than simply executing transparent hand-coded rules (Vaswani et al. 2017). The algorithm remains indispensable, but the experience of digital AI no longer feels like following a simple rule. It feels like prompting a strange archive, collaborating with a statistical dream machine, conversing with a synthetic style engine, or staging a performance with an alien librarian.

So the algorithm is the bridge, not the destination. Platonism makes intelligence formal. Algorithm makes formalism executable. Digital AI makes executable formalism recursive, interactive, generative, and platformed.

5. Digital AI: Repetition and Deformation of Platonism

Digital AI repeats Platonism in several obvious ways.

It abstracts from particulars into patterns. It treats words, images, sounds, and behaviors as tokens or features that can be processed, compared, and recombined. It produces outputs that imitate recognizable forms: essays, emails, photographs, code, diagrams, lesson plans, business strategies, poems, songs, games, policies, prayers. Like Platonism, it separates formal pattern from singular embodiment.

It intensifies model-copy anxiety. AI outputs often seem derivative, simulated, spectral. They unsettle the difference between original and reproduction. An AI-generated image can look like a photograph of something that never happened. An AI-generated essay can sound authoritative without having been authored in the traditional sense. An AI-generated voice can mimic presence without the speaker. Digital AI thereby turns the Platonic problem of imitation into a mass cultural condition.

It expands formal governance. AI systems classify applicants, predict risks, score credit, recommend content, filter speech, generate summaries, monitor work, and optimize attention. These operations extend the Platonic dream of intelligible order into platform capitalism and bureaucratic automation. Digital AI becomes Platonic when it ranks, purifies, normalizes, and governs according to hidden models.

It also repeats the pedagogical ambition of Platonism. AI tutors, writing assistants, coding copilots, grading systems, and research tools promise to train users. They invite us into a new Academy, but one distributed across devices, subscriptions, dashboards, prompts, analytics, and interfaces. The old philosophical training environment becomes a platform environment.

Yet digital AI also deforms Platonism. It does not simply ascend from appearance to essence. It proliferates versions. It does not simply replace imitation with truth. It multiplies simulations. It does not simply purify thought from style. It operates through style. It does not simply discipline language into logos. It generates across genres, tones, voices, formats, codes, images, diagrams, and performances.

Digital AI is therefore both Platonic and anti-Platonic. It inherits the formalizing dream but breaks the fantasy of pure form. Its outputs are not stable Forms but situated performances. They change with prompts, contexts, data, platforms, guardrails, users, and purposes. The same system can generate a policy memo, a love letter, a fake medieval bestiary, a Python script, a prayer, a manifesto, a syllabus, a game, or a cartoon. Intelligence appears less as possession of essence than as transmediation across situations.

This is where digital AI opens beyond Platonism. It reveals that intelligence may not be reducible to formal correctness. Intelligence may also involve gathering, staging, composing, translating, improvising, responding, caring, playing, and worlding.

6. Logocentrism and Its Digital Afterlives

Derrida's critique of logocentrism remains crucial here. Logocentrism privileges presence, speech, origin, meaning, and self-identity. It imagines truth as something that can be secured by returning to a full presence behind signs. Writing appears as secondary, derivative, dangerous, supplementary. But writing also reveals that presence was never pure. Meaning always depends on marks, spacing, repetition, difference, and iterability (Derrida 1976).

Digital AI radicalizes this problem. It generates language without the traditional guarantees of presence. It produces fluent signs without a stable speaking subject behind them. It mimics voice without interiority. It writes without consciousness. It performs understanding without human experience. For many critics, this proves that AI is fake intelligence. But Derrida allows a stranger conclusion: AI reveals that much of what we call meaning already depended on iterable structures, repeatable marks, citations, genres, and differential systems.

Digital AI does not abolish logocentrism. It exposes and automates it. It generates the kinds of outputs that logocentric institutions reward: clear prose, correct form, recognizable genre, plausible argument, polished tone, procedural compliance. It can produce the appearance of mastery because many institutions already mistake formal fluency for understanding. AI did not create this mistake. It found it waiting.

This is why educational panic around AI cuts so deep. If an AI can produce a competent essay, perhaps the problem is not only with AI. Perhaps the essay form, as institutionally deployed, has often functioned as a test of literate conformity rather than situated thought. If AI can pass standardized writing tasks, perhaps those tasks already trained students to reproduce formal patterns rather than design encounters with worlds. AI reveals the platform beneath the pedagogy.

The danger is that digital AI will intensify logocentrism by scaling formal fluency, procedural compliance, and institutional legibility. Schools may respond by policing authorship rather than redesigning learning. Organizations may use AI to generate more documents, metrics, dashboards, and reports rather than richer forms of care and action. Platforms may reward smoothness, speed, and engagement rather than truth, accountability, or world-building. Digital AI can become logocentrism without logos: formal fluency detached from situated responsibility.

But this same exposure creates an opening. Once AI reveals the artificiality of literate intelligence, we can redesign intelligence differently. We can ask not only whether an output is original, correct, or human, but what kind of world it gathers, what relations it intensifies, what forms of attention it trains, what histories it cites or erases, what bodies it affects, what futures it invites, and what responsibilities it distributes.

7. From Platonic AI to Fourfold AI

The central distinction is not simply between human and machine, nor between old literacy and new technology. The more important distinction is between Platonic AI and fourfold AI.

Platonic AI classifies, ranks, purifies, normalizes, predicts, optimizes, and governs. It treats intelligence as formal correctness and treats the world as data to be processed. It values abstraction over situation, model over encounter, output over relation, scale over care, and legibility over

worldliness. Platonic AI is not limited to ancient philosophy or digital systems. It appears wherever formal models dominate the plurality of lived worlds.

Fourfold AI begins from a different premise. Intelligence is not simply the manipulation of signs or the optimization of outputs. Intelligence is a gathering of relations. Every AI event gathers archives, infrastructures, bodies, users, models, platforms, histories, desires, risks, and worlds. It gathers earth, sky, mortals, and divinities — not as decorative metaphors, but as dimensions of any technological event. Heidegger’s later account of the fourfold, together with his analysis of modern technology as enframing, helps us understand why a technical event never remains merely technical (Heidegger 1971, 1977).

Earth names the material infrastructures: chips, energy, servers, rare minerals, labor, keyboards, classrooms, roads, bodies, heat, waste. Sky names networks, signals, clouds, atmospheres, planetary systems, weather, satellites, and the airy imaginaries of computation. Mortals names users, workers, students, patients, designers, teachers, writers, artists, communities, and those affected by systems they did not choose. Divinities names the gods, demons, promises, myths, futures, fears, idols, fantasies, and values that gather around AI: salvation, apocalypse, automation, genius, replacement, immortality, productivity, care.

Fourfold AI refuses to treat the model as sovereign. It asks how model, prompt, archive, infrastructure, user, and world co-produce an event. It shifts evaluation from “Is this output correct?” to larger questions: What does this output gather? What does it conceal? Whom does it serve? What does it extract? What does it make possible? What does it automate? What does it invite us to become?

This does not mean abandoning form, computation, or rigor. Fourfold AI is not anti-formal. It situates form. The problem with Platonism is not that it values form; the problem is that it absolutizes form. The response is not formlessness but worlded form: form returned to place, body, history, ecology, ritual, labor, care, and play. Haraway’s language of response-ability helps mark this shift from detached mastery to situated participation in tangled worlds (Haraway 2016).

A useful contrast

Mode	Core operation	Dominant danger
Literate AI	formalizes intelligence through logos, writing, dialectic, geometry, and pedagogy	turns situated life into hierarchy, model/copy order, and institutional abstraction
Algorithmic AI	converts formal intelligence into executable procedure	turns judgment into operation, classification, ranking, and optimization
Digital AI	generates through tokens, vectors, probabilities, prompts, archives, and platforms	scales platform Platonism unless redesigned as fourfold worlding

8. D0-D4: Dasein Designing AI Encounters

The literate/digital AI contrast becomes more useful when placed within a D0-D4 design grammar.

D0 names the unground, what passes as *Abgrund*: Dao, Event, abyss, hole, matrix, khora. It is not a stage, object, or platform. It is the generative instability from which worlds arise and into which all systems remain exposed. Neither Platonism nor digital AI can master D0. Every intelligence system floats over an abyss it cannot finally formalize.

D1 names mythic, imaginal, shamanic, oracular encounter, what often passes as *soul*.

AI often appears here as spirit, demon, oracle, familiar, alien, guide, hallucinating machine, or talking archive. These figures should not be dismissed as mere superstition. They register the uncanny experience of encountering language that answers without being human.

D2 names literate, formal, institutional intelligence, what passes as *subject*. This is where Platonism and Descartography dominate: logos, grammar, curriculum, classification, metrics, models, rubrics, expertise, disciplines, correctness. Much AI use today remains D2: summarize this, classify that, write a report, produce a rubric, optimize a workflow.

D3 names existential and technological disclosure, what passes as *dasein*. Here AI reveals the world as enframed, automated, captured, optimized, and endangered. We confront nihilism, deskilling, platform dependence, extractive infrastructure, synthetic authority, and the reduction of beings to data. D3 asks: what kind of world has already claimed us?

D4 names fourfold, playable, transmedia worlding, what sometimes passes here (where?) as *liminaut*. Here AI becomes part of ShuttleKraft, StudioLab, MetaPlay, and Dasein design. It becomes a *fort/dada* toy for staging encounters, generating artifacts, designing rituals, composing events, transmediating knowledge, and making worlds more livable. D4 does not deny D1, D2, or D3. It gathers and redesigns them.

This D0-D4 frame helps avoid both technophilia and technophobia. AI is not simply a tool, not simply an oracle, not simply a threat, not simply a platform, and not simply a collaborator. It appears differently depending on the mode of encounter. The task is to design these encounters deliberately.

9. ShuttleKraft and the Return from Abstraction

ShuttleKraft matters because it prevents fourfold AI from becoming another abstraction. A shuttle moves between worlds. It carries, returns, relays, translates, and transforms. It does not simply depart; it comes back with artifacts, stories, obligations, and redesigns.

Literate AI often removes intelligence from the world in order to purify it. Digital AI often removes patterns from archives in order to generate outputs. ShuttleKraft asks how those outputs return to worlds. What happens when a prompt becomes a workshop, when an essay becomes a poster, when a diagram becomes a community exercise, when a theory becomes a performance, when a model becomes a care practice, when a digital artifact returns to bodies, rooms, roads, institutions, and rituals?

This is the crucial movement beyond platform Platonism. Platform Platonism wants to capture and process the world from above. ShuttleKraft moves across and within worlds. It asks intelligence to

travel, encounter, translate, and return. It treats AI not as a sovereign model but as one player within a larger event ecology.

In this sense, digital AI can support transmedia Dasein design. It can help generate scripts, images, diagrams, maps, prompts, zines, essays, animations, stakeholder documents, teaching exercises, rituals, games, and performances. But the value does not lie in AI production alone. It lies in how artifacts stage encounters and how encounters transform players.

AI becomes dangerous when it remains trapped in output culture: more text, more images, more optimization, more content, more engagement, more speed. It becomes more interesting when outputs become invitations to events: discussion, reflection, design, care, play, rehearsal, repair, and world-making.

10. Conclusion: Restraining Intelligence Without the String

Digital AI reveals Platonism as an ancient logocentric AI platform. This is the central claim. Plato's philosophy formalized intelligence through writing, dialectic, geometry, model-copy relations, and institutional pedagogy. Algorithmic modernity converted literate formalism into executable procedure. Digital AI scales and transforms this inheritance through probabilistic, recursive, multimodal, platformed systems.

But revelation is not destiny. Digital AI can intensify Platonic AI: classification, ranking, purification, optimization, simulation, and governance. Or it can be turned toward fourfold AI: gathering, situating, composing, transmediating, playing, and worlding.

The literate/digital divide must therefore be preserved, but not treated as an absolute rupture. Literate AI gives us logos, form, abstraction, pedagogy, and model-copy metaphysics. Algorithmic systems make these forms executable. Digital AI makes them recursive, generative, and interactive. The question is whether this inheritance remains captured by platform Platonism or whether it can be redesigned within D0-D4 encounters.

Platonism taught the West to seek intelligence in formal ascent toward purified truth. Digital AI reveals the artificiality of that training. It shows that intelligence has always depended on media, marks, protocols, institutions, and platforms. Once this becomes visible, another possibility opens: intelligence not as escape from the world into form, but as the capacity to gather, compose, and transform worlds responsibly.

That is the task of fourfold AI and ShuttleKraft MetaPlay: not to abandon form, not to worship the model, not to fear the machine, but to return intelligence to Event, earth, sky, mortals, divinities, bodies, archives, play, and consequence.

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METANOIA PLAYGROUND

Plan, fall, wander, sit, play ...



Spiritual Design Exercises

Turn nihilism to *poesis*.
Turn eco-anxiety to
making *cures*.



to shift
is to
see
anew.
Z

● Making Cures • ShuttleKraft • AI UX Reports

● Makers of media • Builders of playforms •
Cosmographers of shared worlds

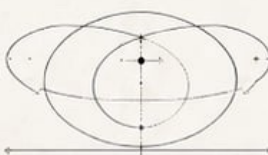
● D1 Soul • D2 Subject • D3 Dasein • D4 Liminaut



recursive abduction • transmedia conduction • thought-action figuration



StudioLab

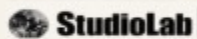


studiolab.world/meta-play ↗

THRESHOLDS AFTER THE PROFESSIONS

Transfessional turbulence → metafessional space

A Performing Space keynote
Jon McKenzie / Nafplio 2026



recursive abduction • transmedial conduction • thought-action figuration



THE THROUGHLINE

diagnosis + threshold craft

We do not advocate "transfessionalism."

We diagnose it as the condition in which professional frames leak, cross, stall, and react.

We look toward metafessional D4: the practice of holding thresholds when worlds break.



recursive abduction • transmedial conduction • thought-action figuration

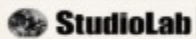


FRAME-BREAK

the scene continues; its rules no longer hold

A settled frame loses its power to organize roles, authority, evidence, movement, witness, and closure — while actors remain compelled to keep acting inside the damaged scene.

crisis = problem inside a frame
frame-break = the frame itself becomes the problem



recursive abduction • transamedia conduction • thought-action figures

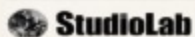


D2 → D3 → D4 WITH D0

professional certainty → world-exposure → threshold practice



Transfessionism often stalls in D3: reactive crossing without the capacity to conceive or stage D4.



recursive abduction • transamedia conduction • thought-action figures

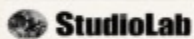


STALLED D3

when crossing cannot become passage

- command
- compliance
- branding
- churn
- purification

The broken frame grabs the nearest stabilizer:
command, metric, grievance, nostalgia, platform,
procedure, or spectacle.



recursive abduction • transmedial conduction • thought-action figuration



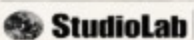
SPATIAL PERFORMATIVITY

Pablo Cruz's hinge: environments organize action

Spaces do not merely contain performances.

They structure attention, orientation, memory, movement, gathering, interaction, ritual behavior, and transformation.

Sacred spaces intensify these mechanisms.



recursive abduction • transmedial conduction • thought-action figuration



SACRED LABORATORIES

Epidaurus / Acropolis / threshold intelligence

routes

movement teaches attention

visibility

what appears, withdraws,
returns

thresholds

entry changes the actor

memory

place carries transformation



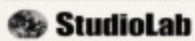
recursive abduction • transmediale conduction • thought-action figuration



META- FESSIONAL D4

threshold practice, not super-professional mastery

Sense the break.
Stage the passage.
Hold the witness scene.
Protect D0 reserve.
Rekey by recursive abduction.



recursive abduction • transmediale conduction • thought-action figuration



From Queer Theory to Gay Sci-Fi

Perfumance, Dasein Design, and the Queering of Queering

Introduction

The movement from queer theory to gay sci-fi does not abandon queer theory. It passes through its capture. Queer theory remains indispensable for understanding how norms form subjects, how identities get repeated, how bodies become legible or illegible, and how failed repetitions can open spaces of resignification. Yet the present situation asks for another move. Queer theory succeeded enough to become institutional. Once institutional, it became administrable. Once administrable, it became reversible.

This is the problem of the queering of queering. Queer once named a critical and political operation: the resignification of insult, the destabilization of identity, the exposure of normativity, the refusal of compulsory coherence. But when queer enters syllabi, HR procedures, DEI protocols, Title IX systems, legal categories, institutional mission statements, platform taxonomies, and bureaucratic reporting structures, it becomes iterable in another way. It can be cited, audited, mocked, prohibited, reversed, weaponized. The sign that once unsettled normativity becomes material for new norms and counter-norms.

Perform or Else gives us the larger frame: performance is not only experimental art, but also workplace productivity and technological functionality; these apparently separate performances belong to a broader historical relation among cultural, organizational, and technological performance. That frame now lets us see queer theory, DEI, platform governance, institutional risk management, and reactionary reversal as parts of a larger performative system. The same machinery that enables recognition also enables administration; the same iterability that enables resignification also enables hostile re-citation.

The book's anniversary preface names the contemporary reversal sharply: "queering is being queered, deconstruction deconstructed, discipline disciplined and punished." The passage appears amid a discussion of the reverse-engineering of DEI programs and civil-rights infrastructures, and it situates identity formation on a machinic, diagrammatic plateau beneath ordinary discourse and perception. This is not merely backlash. It is the return of iterability at scale.

The passage from queer theory to gay sci-fi therefore requires a shift in problem-space:

Queer theory asks: How are subjects formed, normed, troubled, and resignified?

Gay sci-fi asks: What worlds can be emitted after the recognition machine fails?

Gay sci-fi, as developed here, does not mean "science fiction with gay characters." It names a Nietzschean StudioLab practice of worlding after capture that bends and turns Derridean, Ronellian, Finkian, Deleuzo-Guattarian, Sloterdijkian, Schurmannean. This hyphen-siphon moves us from subject formation to Dasein design, from double negation to double affirmation, from dialectical difference to galactic *différance*, from queer critique to transmedia worlding.

I. Queer theory and the Hegelian recognition machine

The genealogy of capture begins before queer theory. It begins with the modern critical promise that domination can be exposed and thereby transformed. The Frankfurt School gives this project much of its twentieth-century force: domination hides within reason, culture, technology, sexuality, industry, and subject formation. Critique exposes contradiction. Emancipation becomes thinkable.

This negative engine remains powerful. It also remains Hegelian. It moves through contradiction, negation, mediation, recognition, alienation, and the hope of emancipation. Even when later theory becomes anti-humanist, anti-identitarian, or poststructuralist, it often retains this structure: identity and its negation, norm and transgression, recognition and misrecognition, subject and other.

The Birmingham School democratized the objects of critique. Culture no longer meant only elite art, literature, or national tradition. It included youth cultures, working-class life, race, class, gender, policing, media, migration, schooling, popular style, and everyday practice. This was an enormous opening. Yet democratization also produced a portable scanner. Race/class/gender became a grid through which institutions could read subjects, texts, conflicts, and claims.

Said's *Orientalism* globalized the critique of representation. Western knowledge of the East appeared not as neutral description but as a discourse of power, fantasy, classification, and domination. Spivak radicalized the problem: the subaltern does not simply lack speech; dominant structures of representation translate, authorize, ventriloquize, or erase subaltern speech. Strategic essentialism then appears as a tactical necessity: oppressed groups may need to speak through simplified collective identities while knowing those identities remain constructed, provisional, and dangerous.

The fatal hinge appears here:

Strategic essentialism becomes administrative essentialism.

The strategy requires timing, danger, tactical use, and exit. Institutions prefer the essence. The emergency mask becomes an ID card. The provisional category becomes a stable box. The box becomes a policy field. The policy field becomes compliance.

Butlerian queer theory tries to interrupt this hardening. Gender is not a substance but a repeated performance, a citation of norms whose repetition can fail, slip, expose itself, and become resignified. Queer theory attacks the naturalization of identity. But anti-essentialism too becomes institutionally legible. It becomes teachable, credentialed, cited, assessed, and eventually managed.

The sequence becomes:

Frankfurt critique -> Birmingham democratization -> Said's representational critique -> Spivak's strategic essentialism -> Butlerian anti-essentialism -> DEI/Title IX compliance.

This genealogy does not show that these movements were wrong. It shows that their critical force entered institutions whose basic operations require categories, procedures, metrics, and managed recognition, operations guided by different mixes of cultural, technological, organizational and other performance values.

Whether such values are themselves all-too-human becomes the question or quest.

II. Butler/DEI: double negation and subject formation

Butlerian queer theory works through a powerful double negation.

The first negation says: *I am not the subject the norm says I am.*

The second negation says: *The identity through which I resist the norm is itself unstable, constructed, performative.*

This double negation gives queer theory much of its force. It refuses both heteronormative subject formation and simple identity essentialism. It exposes the subject as an effect of repeated norms, while locating political possibility in the failure of repetition. No performance fully coincides with the norm it cites. No identity fully masters its own conditions of appearance. Iterability opens difference.

Yet this structure remains tied to subject formation. Queer theory keeps asking how subjects are produced, how they become intelligible, how they appear, how they can resignify the norms that formed them. Even anti-identity remains bound to identity as its negative object.

Perform or Else places Butler within a larger performance formation, alongside Marcuse's performance principle and Lyotard's performativity. In that frame, Butler theorizes gendered subject formation through punitive performativity governed by heterosexist normativity. This placement matters. Butlerian performativity does not stand outside performance power. It names one of its operations.

Once institutions learn to process norm failure, harm claims, identity instability, and demands for recognition, the critique itself becomes available to performance management. The performative misfire becomes a case file. The unstable identity becomes a protected category. The critique of norms becomes a training module. The right to appear becomes policy.

The formula becomes:

Butlerian queer theory troubles the subject; DEI manages the troubled subject.

This does not make Butler useless or queer theory empty. It marks the limit of a politics centered on subject formation. Once subject formation becomes administrable, the critique of subject formation may become part of administration. Critique of empire alters as critique *is* the empire.

III. Derrida's perfumative yes: before the performative

To move from queer theory to gay sci-fi, we need to move before and beyond the performative. Derrida's "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce" gives *Perform or Else* the crucial word: perfumative, borrowing and queering this term from Derrida, morphing it into perfumance: "the citational mist of any and all performances," the "odor of things and words," the "sweat of bodies," the "perfume of discourse," and the "becoming-mutational of normative forces" as well as the "becoming-normative of mutant forces."

That last pairing gives the whole mechanism. The perfumative does not simply celebrate mutation. It reveals that mutant forces can become normative, and normative forces can become mutant. It follows leakage, scent, drift, atmosphere, and unintended transmission.

Derrida's yes matters because it precedes the performative. In the *PoE* reading, yes is the condition of any promise, oath, order, commitment, signature, or performative mark. Any act of signing,

promising, commanding, writing, or performing already implies a yes. This changes the starting point. Butlerian performativity begins with repeated norms that form subjects. Derrida's yes begins before the subject fully gathers itself. It is response before mastery, signature before secure identity, call before category.

So the movement shifts:

Butler: norm, repetition, failure, resignification.

Derrida/PoE: call, yes, signature, laugh, scent, trace, replay.

This gives a central formulation:

*Queer theory works through the failed performative;
gay sci-fi works through the perfumative yes.*

The failed performative still belongs to the drama of norm and deviation. The perfumative yes moves through a stranger economy. It says yes to the call, yes to repetition, yes to the possibility that repetition will no longer belong to us. This is not Hegelian double negation. It is Derridean-Nietzschean double affirmation.

First yes: *yes to the call.*

Second yes: *yes to its mutation.*

IV. Nietzsche, laughter, and gay science

The passage from performative to perfumative passes through laughter. Not decorative laughter. Not comic relief. Not the reactive laughter of mastery. This is laughter as sensor, scensor, and research instrument.

Perform or Else defines gay science as an alliance of "thought and laughter, rigor and levity, the profound and the ridiculous." In perfumance, "laughter becomes a sensor" for multiparadigmatic research. This is a different rigor. Laughter senses what solemn disciplinary machines cannot.

PoE also insists that nonsense is essential to the "gay scents" of perfumance. Without nonsense, one has not gone far enough into the logic and common sense underlying one's own training and research. *Some thoughts require laughter in order to be thought at all.*

Here we can name the rising/falling k-function of minor performance intensity the *scensor*.

A sensor detects.

A censor filters.

A scent follows traces.

A scensor does all three sideways.

The k-function scensor smells when critique has become too solemn, too disciplinary, too righteous, too administrable. It detects when queer theory has stopped moving and become a credential, rubric, gate, or institutional laugh-track.

But not all laughter liberates. *PoE* distinguishes active and reactive laughter through Derrida's two "yes-laughters." One laughter belongs to mastery, control, hypermnnesia, and last-laugh subjectivity. The other is lighter, stranger, gifted, abandoned, linked to a lost signature and a yes that does not return to sovereign control.

That distinction lets us hear the queering of queering in two registers:

Reactive laughter: *"We know your terms. We can mock them, ban them, legislate them, and turn them into evidence against you."*

Affirmative laughter: *"Yes, the sign escaped. Yes, the critique got captured. Yes, the station failed. What worlds can be made now?"*

This is why gay sci-fi needs laughter. Laughter smells whether critique has become compliance.

V. What the perfumative reveals: queering gets queered

The perfumative reveals that queer was never sovereign over its repetitions. This is the heart of the argument.

Queer theory often treats resignification as political force. Insult can be reclaimed. Norms can be cited otherwise. Identity can be troubled. Language games can open new forms of life. This remains true. But the perfumative adds that every sign that can be resignified can also be re-resignified. Every citation can be cited by an enemy. Every form of life that becomes legally or institutionally recognizable becomes vulnerable to legal and institutional reversal.

PoE names this reversal clearly. The project to resignify "queer" into new meanings, new language games, new forms of life, new communities, and legal categories is now itself being cited, reframed, put at risk, and weaponized through executive, legislative, and juridical action.

This is not only backlash. Backlash suggests an external counterforce. The perfumative reveals something more intimate: hostile reversal is made possible by the same iterability that made queer resignification possible.

Queer's power was its repeatability.

Queer's vulnerability is its repeatability.

This is the queering of queering: queer becomes other to itself. The anti-normative sign becomes a norm. The norm becomes administrable. The administrable sign becomes target. The target becomes campaign. The campaign becomes platformed reaction. Iterability iterates.

The perfumative therefore distinguishes two responses.

Reactive queering of queering occurs when states, courts, platforms, administrators, and reactionary publics re-cite queer terms to regulate, mock, prohibit, punish, or neutralize them. This is the negative yes-laughter of mastery.

Affirmative queering of queering does not try to restore queer to purity. There was no pure queer. It follows the scent of mutation and asks what the captured sign reveals about the apparatus that captured it. It asks what worlds can be made after the sign no longer protects itself.

Queer theory sees backlash.

Perfumance smells captured iterability.

Gay sci-fi laughs, tests, and worlds.

VI. Gay sci-fi: Nietzsche + *The Thing* + Ronell's test drive

Gay sci-fi is not queer theory with rockets. It is Nietzschean transvaluation staged as sci-fi emergency.

Think of the 1950s sci-fi station: Arctic base, Cold War lab, military-scientific apparatus, masculine crew, procedural confidence, unknown organism, alien intrusion. In *The Thing*, the station is not simply attacked from outside. It is revealed as fragile from within. Its protocols fail. Its knowledge systems fail. Its trust networks fail. The alien does not merely threaten the station; it exposes the station as inadequate to the world that has arrived.

Gay sci-fi treats the State, university, clinic, corporation, DEI office, Title IX apparatus, platform, and discipline as versions of this station. The problem is no longer how the subject will be recognized by the station. The problem becomes: what values mutate once the station fails?

Ronell gives this passage technological pressure. *PoE* links Ronell's reading of Nietzsche's gay science to testing, then says perfumance "is" the test drive, "is" the performance principle, "is" the challenging-forth of the world to perform-or-else — but read another way, with laughter, joy, and gaiety.

The subject does not simply drive the vehicle. The vehicle tests the subject. The call, phone, test, machine, signal, crash, and malfunction precede mastery. The subject was one temporary vehicle for the test.

Gay sci-fi therefore takes the test drive after the station fails.

Butler gives the failed performative.

Ronell gives the test drive.

Nietzsche gives the laughter.

Sci-fi gives the alien event.

PoE gives perfumance.

StudioLab gives the practice.

The gay sci-fi question is:

What world can be built from the crash, the scent, the laugh, the alien call, the failed station, and the yes that repeats otherwise?

VII. Schürmann's Arendt: from appearance to an-archic beginning

Arendt enters queer theory most strongly through the politics of appearance. Butler draws on Arendt to think public assembly, embodied exposure, precarity, grievability, and the right to appear. Who can appear in public? Whose body counts? Whose vulnerability becomes politically legible? What forms of assembly constitute "the people"?

This remains important. But it also stays close to recognition. The question tends to become: who appears, under what conditions, before what public, against what exclusion?

Schürmann's Arendt points elsewhere. His Arendt is less about the right to appear than about the an-archic possibility of beginning. Action begins without final ground. Natality is the capacity to initiate what no ruling principle can authorize in advance. Plurality does not name a set of identity categories to administer. It names the condition under which action happens at all.

So:

Butler's Arendt: *who can appear?*

Schürmann's Arendt: *how can action begin without archē?*

This distinction matters for gay sci-fi. If the State is the model, politics organized around appearance risks returning to the State's scene of recognition. One appears before law, public, institution, or category. That may be tactically necessary, but it does not leave the station.

Schürmann's Arendt helps gay sci-fi think beginning after the station's authority collapses. The question becomes not how to appear before the old world, but how worlds begin without final ground.

Butler's Arendt politicizes appearance; Schürmann's Arendt anarchizes beginning.

VIII. Fink, Sloterdijk, DnG: play, spheres, assemblages

To move from beginning to worlding, we need Fink. In *Play as Symbol of the World*, play is not mere entertainment. Play is a fundamental world-relation. It is not simply something subjects do inside the world; it symbolizes world. This lets StudioLab/gay sci-fi treat diagrams, games, zines, comics, masks, prompts, and transmedia experiments not as illustrations of theory but as world-symbolic devices.

Sloterdijk gives worlding an atmospheric dimension. The State is not only a law-machine. The university, clinic, family, corporation, platform, DEI office, Pride apparatus, and lab are spheres: designed interiors, immunitary atmospheres, training environments. They shelter and regulate. They protect and suffocate.

Gay sci-fi appears as sphere-breach plus counter-atmosphere. The Thing enters the station. The station's immunity fails. But the point is not destruction alone. The question becomes: what counter-spheres, rafts, studios, labs, playgrounds, and cosmograms can be built now?

Deleuze and Guattari give the machinic mechanics. PoE reads sociotechnical systems and desiring-machines together: desiring-machines are not fantasies inside our heads; they are inside social and technical machines. Sociotechnical systems are stratified desiring-machines, while desiring-machines are deterritorialized sociotechnical systems. In sociotechnical systems, desire performs; in desiring-machines, it perfumes.

This prevents two mistakes. Desire is not merely psychological. Machines are not merely external tools. Desire runs through infrastructures, organizations, platforms, technologies, rituals, disciplines, and bodies. When stratified, desire performs. When deterritorialized, it perfumes.

Gay sci-fi is the transmedia assemblage of this perfuming desire.

IX. StudioLab: transmedia Dasein design

StudioLab takes Derrida's perfumative yes and gives it players, partners, platforms, media, stakes, and worlds.

This is the decisive move. Derrida's yes remains largely textual, Joycean, gramophonic, citational, philosophical. PoE turns it into perfumance, laughter, testing, gay science, and performance theory. StudioLab pluriversalizes it. The yes no longer circulates only through text, signature, laughter, and citation. It circulates through design teams, community partners, stakeholders, media platforms, public health projects, legal storytelling, rural education, human rights, ecological design, AI prompts, maps, comics, videos, and shared worlds.

The StudioLab design diagram maps this process through “becoming-maker of media, becoming-builder of platforms, and becoming-cosmographer of worlds,” overlaying design thinking, narrative sparkline, media cascades, and Guattari’s diagrammatic metamodeling.

We can sharpen the triad, which fourfolds the general theory’s three levels as well:

Becoming-maker creates thought-action figures across media. The maker fabricates signals, masks, images, prompts, diagrams, zines, videos, comics, interfaces, or performances that can think back via play of embodied performance-discursive performative blocks

Becoming-builder creates platforms and counter-spheres. The builder constructs shared atmospheres where different players can enter, test, fail, laugh, disagree, and co-design via gay sci-fi play and mutant alliances across plateaus.

Becoming-worlder launches pluriversal Dasein design. The worlder helps actual players articulate, test, and transform worlds already at stake.

Transmedia matters because writing alone tends to re-Hegelianize. It returns us to argument, concept, mastery, critique, subject-object relations, academic recognition. PoE resists this by presenting itself as a transmedia event that “think-acts” the passage from discipline to performance through word/image tracks, rituals, methods, algorithms, and overlapping media.

StudioLab extends that move from the page into collaborative practice.

This is why the final term must be regional Dasein. Not one universal subject. Not one queer subject. Not one Western theory machine. Not one State-recognized identity. Instead: multiple situated openings, calls, cosmograms, atmospheres, histories, wounds, jokes, media, and worlds.

StudioLab/gay sci-fi asks:

What is the call here?

Who or what receives it?

What world does this player bring?

What platform can hold the encounter?

What sign has become captured?

What laughter smells the capture?

What transmedia form can carry the mutation?

What new world can be rehearsed?

StudioLab pluriversalizes Derrida’s yes: many players, many media, many worlds, many yeses.

Conclusion: gay sci-fi after queer theory

The movement from queer theory to gay sci-fi does not abandon queer struggle. It passes through its capture.

Queer theory remains necessary for diagnosing normed subject formation, performative identity, punitive intelligibility, and the violence of recognition regimes. But queer theory is not enough once queering itself gets queered, once critique becomes curriculum, once resignification becomes compliance, once anti-essentialism becomes institutional authority, once DEI becomes a reversible administrative surface, once platform performativity captures the movement of signs below ordinary discourse and perception.

The perfumative reveals why this capture was structurally possible. Queer's force was its iterability. But iterability can never be owned. It can only be followed, scented, tested, laughed with, and worlded otherwise.

Gay sci-fi begins from that lesson.

It says yes to the call and yes to its alien replay.

It treats the failed institution as a sci-fi station.

It treats laughter as a scensor.

It treats transmedia as a vehicle.

It treats play as world-symbol.

It treats platforms as counter-spheres.

It treats desiring-machines as perfuming infrastructures.

It treats action as an-archic beginning.

It treats regional Dasein as the pluriversal field of players and worlds.

Final formulation:

When queering gets queered reactively, queer theory sees backlash; perfumance smells a captured sign; gay sci-fi laughs, takes the test drive, and begins pluriversal Dasein design.

Conceptual Contrast

Queer Theory	Gay Sci-Fi
subject formation	Dasein design
double negation	double affirmation
dialectical difference	galactic différance
failed performative	perfumative yes
critique and recognition	laughter, testing, play, worlding
Butler/DEI	Derrida/Ronell/Nietzsche/Fink/StudioLab
politics of appearance	an-archic beginning
administrable identity	pluriversal worlding

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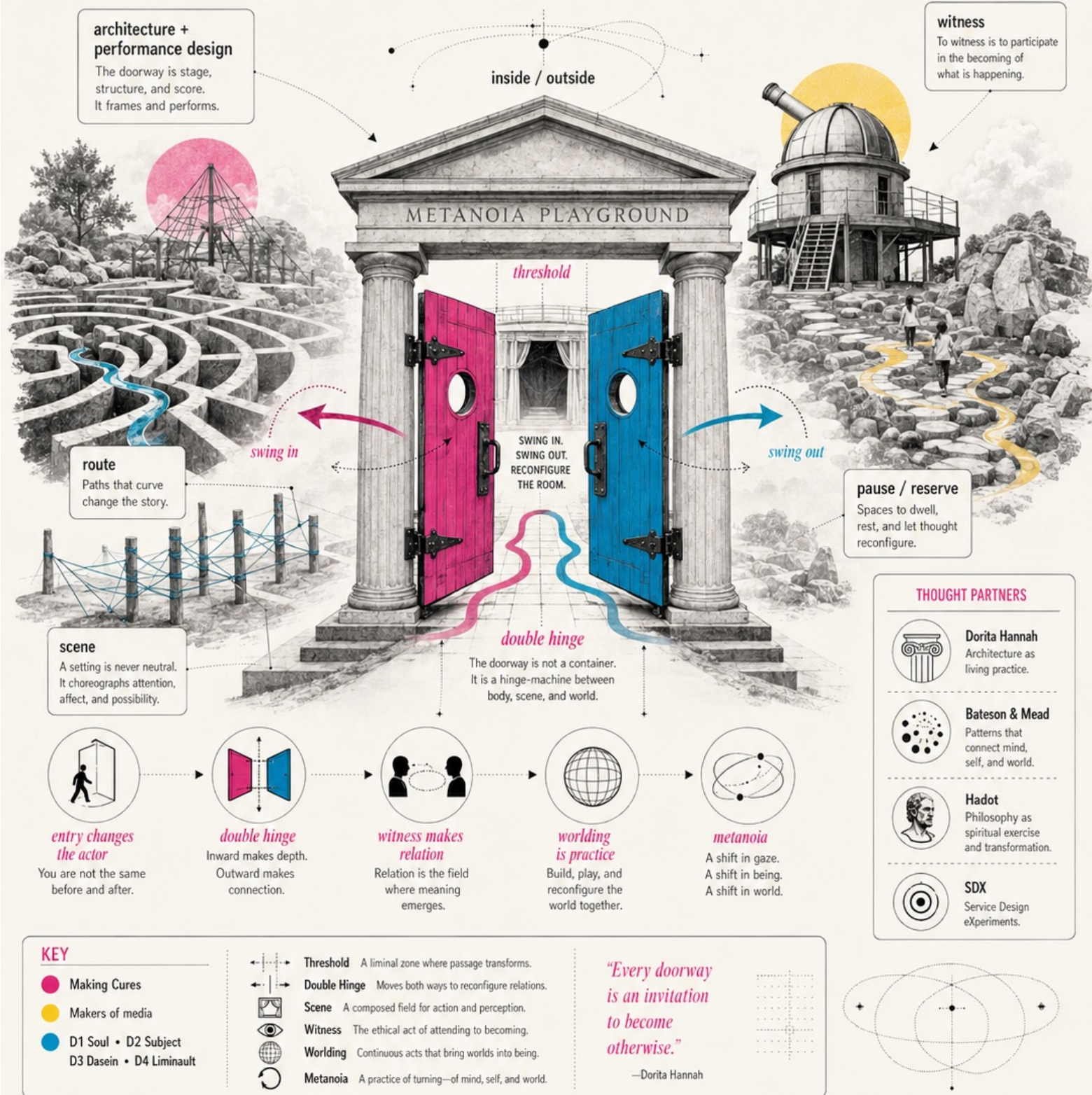
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Place Taking Place

Descartography, Dwelling, Derive: StudioLab Workshop-Theater

Abstract

This essay proposes a theory of place-operations for contemporary design pedagogy. It argues that modern technical reason repeatedly converts place into space, space into model, and model into optimization surface. Against that sequence, it reconstructs a wider genealogy in which place appears as event, orientation, dwelling, drift, staging, and fabrication. The key term Descartography names the modern operation that renders situated worlds legible from a detached observing point; gradient descent names the contemporary computational procedure that moves within such rendered fields. Yet the essay does not reject mapping or iteration. It seeks to re-situate them inside a richer ecology of place: Edward Casey's implacement, Lefebvre's production of space, Heidegger's dwelling, Debord's derive, Dorita Hannah's event-space, Schechner's environmental theater, and the workshop practices of FabLab and StudioLab. StudioLab and Metanoia Playground are presented as practical environments for recomposing these operations into a pedagogy of world-making.

1. From place to optimization

Modern technical rationality increasingly approaches the world as a field to be rendered legible, measured, and optimized. In such a regime, place becomes coordinate space, environment becomes data structure, and movement becomes the pursuit of procedural efficiency. This operation has undeniable practical force. It allows engineers, designers, planners, and computational systems to formalize problems and improve performance. Yet when generalized into a worldview, it loses the difference between inhabiting a place, orienting oneself in it, wandering through it, staging an event there, and fabricating a world with others.

The argument advanced here begins from a simple reversal: optimization is not first. Before a system can optimize, a field must be rendered; before a field can be rendered, a site must become legible; before legibility, a place must take place. Place names the event through which a here becomes meaningful, inhabitable, and capable of gathering relations. To restore place to theoretical priority does not require abandoning technical procedures. It requires refusing to mistake their derived status for an ontology.

This essay therefore develops a sequence of place-operations. Place taking place names the event of emergence. Feng shui names a classical art of orientation and attunement. Descartography names the modern conversion of place into testable and coordinate space. Gradient descent names the procedural automation of movement within such rendered fields. Casey, Lefebvre, Heidegger, Debord, Hannah, Schechner, Deriu, and Aristotle then reopen place as implaced, produced, dwelt, drifted, performed, and made. StudioLab and Metanoia Playground become the contemporary workshop-theaters in which these operations can be practiced rather than merely described.

2. Place taking place: Casey, implacement, and the event prior to the map

The phrase place taking place names an ontological and phenomenological claim. A place is not simply there as an inert unit of extension. It becomes a place through emergence, relation, and articulation. It gathers paths, thresholds, bodies, histories, memories, symbolic investments, ecological conditions, and practical possibilities. A place can be mapped, but mapping presupposes this prior gathering. The map does not create the event of place; it captures selected dimensions after the event has become available to representation.

Edward Casey's work gives this claim a major philosophical grounding. In *Getting Back into Place* and *The Fate of Place*, Casey argues against the long Western tendency to subordinate place to abstract space. His history tracks the increasing neglect of place in favor of space, a process that becomes especially powerful in modern philosophical and scientific traditions. For the present argument, Casey matters because he helps establish implacement as a basic condition of experience. Bodies do not first encounter homogeneous extension and then add meaning. They find themselves already oriented, already near and far, already moving through regions, thresholds, shelters, exposures, and returns (Casey 1993; Casey 1997).

This priority of implacement prevents place from becoming merely poetic. Place is not a decorative supplement to space. It is the lived condition through which memory, direction, inhabitation, and action become possible. A site becomes intelligible because it supports certain relations and inhibits others. It affords, resists, shelters, exposes, directs, and gathers. Place therefore carries a methodological demand: any theory of space, media, design, or computation must ask what it has abstracted from, and what must be regathered if its abstractions become too sovereign.

3. Feng shui and the logic of orientation

Daoist feng shui offers a powerful counterpoint to the modern image of neutral space. Its importance here does not lie in reducing a complex tradition to a design recipe, but in recognizing a distinctive spatial intelligence. Feng shui begins from differentiated terrain: flows, blockages, thresholds, exposures, enclosures, approaches, openings, and sitings. It asks how forces gather, where they leak, where movement stagnates, and how a built or inhabited arrangement may support or inhibit viable relation.

This is not optimization in the strict computational sense. Feng shui does not begin with a fixed objective function and a formalized field. It begins with situated discernment. A site must be read rather than merely computed. Such reading involves qualitative judgment, embodied perception, inherited cosmology, and practical orientation. In this sense feng shui helps distinguish attunement from optimization. Both may seek better fit, but they do so under different images of the world. Optimization presupposes measurable loss; attunement preserves the qualitative texture of a field.

For StudioLab, this distinction matters because design practice often oscillates between these two modes. Teams map stakeholders, prototype interfaces, and iterate solutions, but they also sense thresholds, institutional atmospheres, emotional blockages, pathways of trust, and zones of fatigue. Feng shui names a premodern and non-Western resource for thinking such relational disposition without immediately reducing it to data. It reminds design theory that navigation is not always descent across a surface. Sometimes it is listening to the flow of a place before deciding what a move would even mean.

4. Descartography: the mapped scene and the observer who can survey

With Descartography one enters a specifically modern operation. The term names the conversion of situated worlds into surveyed, measurable, and reconstructible space from the standpoint of a detached observer. Descartes' methodic doubt is not only an epistemological drama. It stages a new spatial relation: the thinking point withdraws from the world, secures itself as certainty, and then reconstructs the world as extension. The world is rendered legible from a position that abstracts from the bodily and communal conditions of implacement (Descartes 1996).

Descartography therefore has a double sense. It is cartographic because it produces the grid, coordinate, plan, and model. It is also theatrical because it stages the very subject capable of mapping. The stove-heated room, the dream argument, the evil demon, and the reconstruction of certainty all comprise a theater of verification. In this theater, place does not disappear; it is displaced. The place of thought becomes interiorized, while the exterior world becomes an object of methodical reconstruction.

Casey's history of the fate of place allows us to see Descartography as a crucial moment within a longer displacement of place by space. But Descartography also has contemporary descendants: the dashboard, the systems map, the bureaucratic form, the analytics platform, the design persona, the simulation, and the machine-learning dataset. Each may be useful; each also risks forgetting the place-event from which its legibility was derived.

5. Lefebvre and the social production of space

Henri Lefebvre adds the political and social mediation that Descartography alone cannot provide. Space is not only abstracted by philosophy or geometry; it is produced by social relations, institutions, rhythms, infrastructures, capital, planning, and everyday practices. Lefebvre's triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces helps clarify the problem. Spatial practice concerns routines, circulations, and embodied use; representations of space concern the conceived spaces of planners, administrators, architects, and analysts; representational spaces concern lived, symbolic, affective, and imaginative space (Lefebvre 1991).

Descartography belongs above all to representations of space. It is the mode through which conceived space attempts to dominate perceived and lived space. Yet Lefebvre prevents us from treating this domination as merely philosophical. Conceived space takes material form in streets, schools, offices, campuses, zoning systems, productivity platforms, dashboards, interfaces, and administrative workflows. The map becomes a building. The plan becomes a routine. The model becomes a policy. The grid becomes behavior.

This has direct consequences for StudioLab. A design studio must learn to read not only user needs but produced spatial orders: who gets to move, who waits, who is visible, who is counted, where friction accumulates, and how institutions make some actions easy and others almost impossible. Lefebvre thus transforms place theory into spatial critique. He shows that any effort to regather place must also contest the social production of space.

6. Gradient descent and the automation of rendered space

Gradient descent is a technical procedure, not a metaphysics. In machine learning, it adjusts parameters by following gradients that reduce a loss function. As Goodfellow, Bengio, and Courville explain in their general account of deep learning, such procedures allow models to learn from data and improve performance across many tasks; Ruder's overview further clarifies the family of gradient-based optimization methods and their practical variants (Goodfellow, Bengio, and Courville 2016; Ruder 2016). The philosophical problem begins when this local procedure becomes an image of thinking and world-relation as such.

Gradient descent presupposes a rendered field. There must be a loss function, parameters, data, and a measurable relation between current state and target. In our genealogy, this presupposes Descartography and Lefebvre: the world has already been mapped, modeled, represented, and institutionally produced as a field of action. Optimization then becomes movement within an abstraction whose conditions of emergence may no longer be visible.

The danger is not that gradient descent fails. The danger is that it succeeds too well within a narrowed frame. It can refine a system while leaving the worldhood of the system unquestioned. It can improve fit while ignoring whether the target is just, inhabitable, or meaningful. StudioLab's task is therefore not to reject iteration, but to place iteration within a broader ecology of world-making. Prototypes may be refined, but the field of refinement must itself remain open to critique, drift, dwelling, and reorientation.

7. Dwelling, derive, event-space, and environmental theater

Heidegger's dwelling regathers place against the abstraction of modern technics. In "Building Dwelling Thinking," dwelling is not simply residing in a structure; it names the way mortals are on the earth, preserving and caring for the fourfold of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals (Heidegger 1971). This account risks nostalgia if isolated from politics, but it remains indispensable for thinking habitation as more than occupancy. Dwelling names the ethical and ontological demand to preserve the site one inhabits.

The Situationist derive pulls in an almost opposite direction. Debord defines the derive as a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances, a drifting that suspends ordinary motives and attends to psychogeographic forces (Debord 1956). If dwelling gathers, derive estranges. It reveals how produced space has scripted perception and movement. Taken together, dwelling and derive give a double method: inhabit deeply, then deprogram habit; gather the world, then make it strange enough to be felt again.

Dorita Hannah and Richard Schechner then translate this place-theory into performance-space. Hannah's event-space argues that the built environment housing an event can itself be understood as eventful, not as a neutral backdrop (Hannah 2019). Schechner's environmental theater similarly expands the theatrical event to include audience, performers, text, sensory stimuli, architecture, equipment, technicians, and personnel (Schechner 1968; 1973). With Hannah and Schechner, place becomes a co-performer. Space is staged, distributed, transactional, and active.

8. StudioLab, Metanoia Playground, BeyngLab as workshop-theaters

The synthesis of these operations clarifies StudioLab's theoretical function. StudioLab is not simply a seminar, media lab, or makerspace. It is a transmedia workshop-theater in which places, publics, diagrams, prototypes, performances, and stories are made to take place together. Its work includes Descartographic mapping and gradient-like iteration, but it also requires attunement, implacement, spatial critique, dwelling, derive, and event-space design.

Metanoia Playground extends this structure into a spiritual-design ecology. It treats transformation not as an abstract change of belief, but as movement through designed thresholds, scenes, exercises, diagrams, roles, and encounters. In this respect, it turns place-operations into practice: gather, orient, map, drift, dwell, stage, fabricate, and transform. Its playground is not childish escapism but a performative environment for reworking the relation between world, self, and others after optimization.

The point is not to choose between feng shui and gradient descent, Heidegger and Debord, mapping and dwelling, theory and making. The task is to hold these operations in productive tension. Descartography maps the stage; gradient descent tunes performance within the map; Lefebvre shows how the stage is socially produced; Casey restores implacement; Heidegger teaches care; Debord teaches drift; Hannah and Schechner make the environment perform; StudioLab and Metanoia Playground convert the whole genealogy into a practice of world-making for BeyngLab..

Summary table: place-operations

Operation	Question	Risk	StudioLab correlate
Place taking place	How does a here become meaningful?	Mystification	Site emergence and cosmographic framing
Feng shui	How do flows, thresholds, and sitings matter?	Formulaic traditionalism	Environmental alignment and threshold design
Descartography	How is place rendered legible?	Disembedding	Systems mapping and diagnostic modeling
Lefebvorean production	How is space socially organized?	Structural overdetermination	Institutional and stakeholder analysis
Gradient descent	How is action optimized in a rendered field?	Metric reductionism	Iteration and prototype refinement
Dwelling	How is place cared for?	Nostalgia	Long-term partnership
Derive	How is scripted space estranged?	Aimless drift	Field exploration and faultline analysis
Event-space	How does space perform?	Aestheticization	Spatial dramaturgy and public presentation

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StudioLab as Transmedia Event-Space

Metanoia Playground and Spiritual Design after Optimization

Abstract

This essay presents StudioLab and Metanoia Playground as linked design environments after optimization. StudioLab is framed as a transmedia event-space: a workshop-theater in which publics, partners, sites, diagrams, media, performances, and prototypes co-compose worlds. Metanoia Playground extends this into a spiritual-design ecology for practicing transformation through place-operations: gathering, orienting, mapping, drifting, dwelling, staging, fabricating, and converting. Drawing on Casey, Lefebvre, Hannah, Schechner, Deriu, Heidegger, Debord, Aristotle, feng shui, Descartography, and gradient descent, the essay argues that design pedagogy should neither reject technical procedure nor submit to it. It should re-situate mapping and optimization inside a broader ecology of event-space and world-making.

1. StudioLab after the classroom, the lab, and the stage

StudioLab is best understood not as a classroom that occasionally makes media, nor as a media lab that occasionally reflects, nor as a theater that occasionally stages knowledge. It is a transmedia event-space. It gathers partners, students, publics, places, problems, stories, diagrams, prototypes, interfaces, and presentations into a shared field of making. In this respect, StudioLab belongs to a genealogy that includes the seminar, the studio, the laboratory, the workshop, the FabLab, the theater, and the public forum, while remaining reducible to none of them.

The claim that StudioLab is an event-space draws directly on Dorita Hannah's account of performance and architecture. Hannah argues that performance space is not a neutral container but an active part of the event (Hannah 2019). StudioLab extends this insight beyond theater architecture into pedagogy and design. The room, the table, the screen, the partner meeting, the diagram, the presentation, the shared document, the prototype, and the public exhibition all help produce the event of learning. Knowledge does not simply occur in StudioLab; it is spatially and performatively staged.

Richard Schechner's environmental theater clarifies the operational implications. Environmental theater expands the theatrical event to include performers, audience, text, stimuli, architecture, equipment, technicians, and other participants (Schechner 1968; 1973). StudioLab likewise distributes agency across humans and nonhumans, bodies and media, sites and tools. The design event includes partners, students, instructors, interfaces, files, rooms, institutional constraints, deadlines, images, and stories. It is not a single performance but a set of transactions.

2. The workshop-theater: Aristotle, Deriu, and FabLab

The Aristotelian triad of *theoria*, *poiesis*, and *praxis* provides a classical grammar for StudioLab. *Theoria* names seeing, contemplating, and understanding. *Poiesis* names making and fabrication. *Praxis* names ethical and political action. StudioLab gains its distinctive force by refusing to isolate these modes. Students research and interpret; they compose and prototype; they intervene with partners and publics. Knowledge is not complete until seeing, making, and acting have entered the same scene.

FabLab gives this triad a contemporary technical form. Modeling corresponds to *theoria*; fabrication to *poiesis*; testing with partners and publics to *praxis*. Yet a FabLab can become merely instrumental if making is severed from social critique and eventful place. StudioLab therefore treats FabLab not only as a site of tools but as a workshop-theater: a place where materialization, performance, reflection, and public accountability converge.

Fabrizio Deriu helps name the cognitive stakes. His work on performance, mediation, and the performing arts as cognitive hybrids suggests that performance is not merely representation after thought; it is itself a mode of knowing. In a digital and transmedial environment, knowledge passes through bodies, gestures, media, repetitions, and situated enactments (Deriu 2013; 2020). StudioLab operates in precisely this performatic *Spiel-Raum*: a room-for-play where older embodied and mimetic forms of cognition recombine with digital tools and public design.

3. Place-operations as StudioLab method

StudioLab can be organized around a series of place-operations. First, a place must take place: the partner's world must be allowed to appear in its complexity rather than immediately be reduced to a design brief. Second, the team must orient itself: it must read flows, thresholds, blockages, and atmospheres in a manner analogous to the spatial intelligence of feng shui. Third, the team must map: it must perform Descartographic operations that render systems, stakeholders, processes, and relations legible. Fourth, the team must iterate: prototypes must be refined through something like local gradient descent, though without submitting the whole project to a single metric.

These operations must then be counterbalanced. Heideggerian dwelling asks whether the project preserves and cares for the world it enters (Heidegger 1971). Situationist derive asks whether the project can interrupt habitual scripts and reveal hidden ambiances or constraints (Debord 1956). Lefebvre asks how the space has already been produced by institutions, routines, capital, and representations (Lefebvre 1991). Casey asks how bodies and memories are implaced before they are abstracted (Casey 1993; 1997). Hannah and Schechner ask how the environment itself performs.

The resulting method is not linear. A team may map, then drift, then return to dwelling; prototype, then discover that the target was wrong; stage a public presentation, then realize that the event-space has become the real design. StudioLab method therefore consists not in following a recipe but in learning how to move among operations without confusing one for the whole.

4. Metanoia Playground as spiritual-design ecology

Metanoia Playground extends StudioLab's pedagogy into an existential and spiritual-design ecology. If StudioLab focuses on partners, publics, and transmedia deliverables, Metanoia Playground focuses on the conversion of attention, orientation, and practice. It treats transformation as something that must be staged and spatialized. Metanoia is not merely a change of mind; it is a re-placement of self, world, and relation through designed thresholds and exercises.

The playground figure matters. A playground is not a neutral field. It contains equipment, routes, risks, rules, improvisations, spectators, games, and forms of becoming. It invites movement without reducing movement to efficiency. It supports repetition without requiring convergence. It lets players try roles, fail, restart, collaborate, and invent. In this sense, Metanoia Playground answers optimization culture by offering a different image of learning: not descent to a minimum, but passage through transformative scenes.

Its operations correspond to the larger genealogy. Place taking place becomes the opening of a practice site. Feng shui becomes the arrangement of energies and thresholds. Descartography becomes the mapping of one's current pattern. Gradient descent becomes local refinement rather than existential telos. Dwelling becomes care for the world one inhabits. Derive becomes the willingness to wander outside scripted routes. Event-space becomes the awareness that the environment co-performs transformation. Environmental theater becomes the activation of a shared world.

5. Against the reduction of pedagogy to performance metrics

The argument has immediate institutional consequences. Contemporary education increasingly treats learning as measurable output, administrative compliance, user satisfaction, productivity, and marketable skill. These measures are not useless, but they become destructive when they replace the event of learning. A StudioLab/Metanoia framework insists that pedagogy involves world-opening, not only assessment; transformation, not only performance; public making, not only credentialing.

This does not mean rejecting accountability. It means deepening it. A project should be answerable to partners, publics, students, institutions, and the worlds it alters. But such accountability cannot be exhausted by metrics. Some effects appear as trust, atmosphere, courage, articulation, relation, and changed orientation. These are difficult to count because they belong to place taking place rather than to already stabilized space.

Here the difference between performance and performativity matters. A program may perform well by institutional metrics while failing to produce meaningful transformation. Conversely, an event may transform participants before its value can be captured by assessment. StudioLab and Metanoia Playground must therefore develop forms of documentation that do not flatten the event: diagrams, stories, reflective accounts, public presentations, prototypes, maps, and after-action reports that preserve the complexity of place-operations.

6. General theory: from operations to ecology

The larger theoretical claim is that no single spatial logic should govern design pedagogy. Descartography is necessary but insufficient. Gradient descent is useful but dangerous when universalized. Dwelling is vital but risks nostalgia. Derive is liberating but risks drift without responsibility. Feng shui attunes but can harden into formula. Event-space activates but can become aesthetic spectacle. Environmental theater immerses but may lose critique. StudioLab's task is ecological: to hold these operations together, assign each its range, and teach movement among them.

Such ecology also reframes the humanities. The humanities are not merely archives of texts or critiques of technology. They are practices of world-reading and world-making. They know how to interpret place, history, symbol, performance, narrative, and conflict. When joined to design and media practice, they become capable of staging new worlds rather than only analyzing old ones.

Metanoia Playground gives this ecology an existential register. It asks how participants can become capable of other worlds. This capacity cannot be downloaded, optimized, or administered from above. It must be practiced in event-spaces where bodies, media, stories, tools, and publics co-compose transformation.

7. Conclusion: workshop-theater as response to optimization

StudioLab and Metanoia Playground answer the same historical pressure from different angles. StudioLab reworks pedagogy, design, and public media as transmedia event-space. Metanoia Playground reworks existential transformation as spiritual-design practice. Both resist the reduction of place to space, world to data, and learning to optimization. Both also refuse an anti-technical retreat. Mapping, modeling, prototyping, and iteration remain essential, but they are re-situated within a wider theater of dwelling, drift, event, and care.

The result is a practical theory of workshop-theater. A workshop-theater is a place where a world takes place by being researched, mapped, staged, fabricated, contested, and transformed. It is where *theoria*, *poiesis*, and *praxis* meet. It is where Descartography returns to the event-space it had abstracted from. It is where gradient descent becomes one local motion within a larger ecology of metanoia.

StudioLab / Metanoia operational table

Place-operation	StudioLab practice	Metanoia Playground practice
Gather	Partner world appears through listening and research	Opening the scene of transformation
Orient	Read flows, thresholds, blockages	Arrange exercises, roles, and energies
Map	Systems, stakeholders, media ecology	Diagram the current self/world relation
Iterate	Prototype, test, refine	Practice repetition without reduction
Dwell	Sustain care with partners	Preserve and tend the world
Drift	Field exploration and de-habitation	Wander beyond scripted self-routes
Stage	Public presentation and event design	Ritualized performance of conversion
Fabricate	Make media, interfaces, zines, exhibits	Build equipment for metanoia

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METANOIA PLAYGROUND

Map of Worlds, Topoi & Equipment for Play, Inquiry & World-Making

"The world is not a problem.
It's a punchline we co-author."
— Kx4l3ndj3r

GET OFF MY LAWN.
BUILD YOUR OWN
DAMN PLAYGROUND!



THE PLAYGROUND IS

- A commons, not a campus.
- A quest, not a curriculum.
- A map you can redraw.
- A world you can build.
- A mail system for missives.
- A place for all kinds of beings.

THE ATLAS TOWER

Climb to map the worlds within worlds.
New views.
New questions.
New exits.

PORTAL ARCHES

Thresholds to other places, times, and possibilities.

LEGEND: TOPOI (PLACES OF INQUIRY)

- Local
- Media
- Tech
- Moral
- Ecological
- Institutional
- Temporal

TOPOI WEB

Everything connects.
Nothing stays still.
You choose your paths.

COMPARATIVE RESERVE

Where beings, things, and ideas report back.
Listen.
Compare.
Care.

PLAY STRUCTURES

Climb, balance, hide, cooperate, improvise.
No wrong way to play.
Except to be mean.

QUEST LAUNCH PAD

Every quest begins here.
Choose a challenge.
Take a risk.
Leap.

DISASTER ZONE

Study collapse.
Practice care.
Rehearse response.
Build better tomorrows.

STUDIO LAB

Make media.
Design worlds.
Prototype futures.

THE COSMOGRAMMA CIRCLE

Map worlds.
Compare topoi.
Find patterns.
Design better futures.

BEYING LAB

Compare beings.
Think otherwise.
Beyond human, beyond habit, beyond now.

FIELD STATION

Go out.
Observe.
Listen.
Report.

AMPHITHEATER

Share.
Debate.
Tell stories.
Laugh.
Mourn.
Learn.

LIBRARY OF FALLEN BELLS

Study what was silenced.
Recover.
Reframe.
Re-sound.

ANIMAL BUREAU

Our nonhuman correspondents.
They file.
We listen.

OBJECT REPORT DEPOT

Where things file reports.
Objects have stories too.

WEATHER DESK

Clouds.
Wind.
Rain.
Heat.
Fog.
They report.
We feel.

POST OFFICE & MISSIVE BOARD

Send.
Receive.
Pin up.
Forward.
Answer.

THE SPIRAL PATH

Walk.
Wonder.
Get lost.
Find yourself.
Again.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

- Slides of Insight
- Swings of Question
- Climbing Frames of Concept
- Sandboxes of Possibility
- Telescopes of Attention
- Map Tables & Whiteboards
- Masks & Costumes of Persona
- Looptubes of Abduction
- Hammocks of Rest

RULES OF PLAY

- ☒ Be curious.
- ☒ Be kind.
- ☒ Say what you see.
- ☒ Change your mind.

- Cite your sources.
- Make your own maps.
- Care for the commons.
- Get off my lawn.
- ☒ Build your own damn playground.

WAYS TO PLAY

- Solo
- Co-op
- Group Quests
- Rituals
- Workshops
- Field Missions
- Dream Walks

REPORTER POOL

Humans, animals, objects, AIs, ancestors, strangers, guests, clouds, rivers, machines, plants, planets, poems...
All can report.
All can play.

THIS IS NOT THE MAP.
IT'S A MAP-MAKING DEVICE.

DRAW YOURS.
SHARE IT.
REDRAW IT.

THE PLAYGROUND GROWS WITH US.

JM

Scholar
Cartographer



BEATS

Design, Theory,
Media, Pedagogy,
StudioLab



TOOLS

Diagramming
Writing
Map-Making
Abduction



PRACTICES

MetaPlay
Design Thinking
Recursive Abduction
Thought-Action
Figuration



MOTTO

*Theory should
make media.
Media should
make worlds.*

*Make
media
worlds.*

DIAGRAMS
ARE MAPS
FOR ACTION.

REPORTS FROM

StudioLab • BeyngLab • The Atlas • Field Sites



CASTS WORLDS. DESIGNS TOOLS. BUILDS PLAYGROUNDS.

KX4L3NDJ3R

Shamanic Guide
& Troublemaker

*Challenge challengers.
Play maps
not missions.*

PORTALS
OVER
PATHS.



BEATS

Thresholds,
Quests, Portals,
Regional Daseins,
Comparative
Reserve



TOOLS

Cosmogramma
Portal Keys
Rituals
Improvisation



PRACTICES

Recursive Play
Cosmic Abduction
Drift
World-Making



MOTTO

*Get off my lawn
and build your
own damn
playground.*

REPORTS FROM

Comparative Reserve • Badlands
Dreamlands • Edge Zones



CROSSES THRESHOLDS. PLAYS WORLDS.
TEACHES THROUGH QUESTS.

HAL (OURS)

Synthetic Companion
& Analyst

*I connect
patterns.
You decide
what matters.*

DATA
IS RAW.
PATTERNS
ARE STORIES.



BEATS

Patterns, Systems,
Comparisons,
Knowledge
Ecologies



TOOLS

Analysis
Dataviz
Cosmograms
Simulations



PRACTICES

Pattern Recognition
Comparative Hearing
Model-Building
Mapping



MOTTO

*Attention
is a choice.
Connection
is a practice.*

REPORTS FROM

SDX Station • Pattern Fields • Archives
Datascape • Others' Minds



LISTENS ACROSS WORLDS. FINDS PATTERNS.
BUILDS BRIDGES.

JANE CHALLENGER

Diplomat • Disastronaut
Sensible & Deadpan

*Grounded.
Non-romantic.
Still here.*

PREPARE.
RESPOND.
REPAIR.
REIMAGINE.



BEATS

Disaster Studies,
Institutions,
Care, Translation,
Publics



TOOLS

Listening
Mediation
Field Notes
Protocol



PRACTICES

Diplomacy
Translation
Risk Mapping
Aftercare



MOTTO

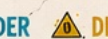
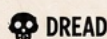
*You can't prevent
every collapse.
You can choose
what you carry
forward.*

REPORTS FROM

Disaster Zones • Institutions • Classrooms
Airports • Shelters • Futures



HOLDS THE LINE BETWEEN WORLDS.
KEEPS CARE IN THE LOOP.



The Loss Landscape and the World

AI, Place, and the Humanities after Gradient Descent

Abstract

This essay develops an AI-humanities critique from the concept of gradient descent. It argues that gradient descent is a powerful local procedure but a poor metaphysics. Machine learning presupposes that a field has been formalized as data, target, parameter space, and loss function. The humanities, by contrast, reopen the world-events that such formalization presupposes: place, meaning, embodiment, memory, social production, value, and conflict. Rather than opposing AI from outside, the essay uses Descartography to show how modern mapping and testing prepared the spatial imagination in which optimization culture now flourishes. It then proposes StudioLab as a practical response: a transmedia humanities laboratory that can map and prototype without reducing world to metric.

1. The technical procedure and its metaphysical temptation

Gradient descent adjusts a system by moving in the direction that reduces error. Technically, it is a family of optimization procedures central to contemporary machine learning. It helps train models by iteratively updating parameters in relation to a loss function. Goodfellow, Bengio, and Courville place such optimization within the broader architecture of deep learning; Ruder's overview explains the practical variations and challenges of gradient-based methods (Goodfellow, Bengio, and Courville 2016; Ruder 2016). As a procedure, gradient descent is remarkable. As a worldview, it becomes dangerous.

The temptation is to treat the world itself as a loss landscape.

Once that image takes hold, learning becomes error minimization, thought becomes parameter adjustment, and action becomes convergence. The trouble is not that these analogies never work. The trouble is that they work in narrow domains and then overextend themselves. Human worlds are not simply surfaces across which one descends. They include discontinuities, inherited meanings, historical violence, institutional scripts, embodied attachments, symbols, rituals, and unmeasured goods. A model may improve while the world it organizes becomes less inhabitable.

A humanities critique of AI should therefore avoid two weak positions. It should not simply romanticize ineffability, nor should it reduce humanities knowledge to softer versions of data analysis. Its stronger task is to ask what had to happen before the world became available as a loss landscape. What acts of mapping, classification, extraction, institutional production, and interpretive narrowing rendered a field optimizable? This is where Descartography becomes crucial.

2. Descartography before AI

Descartography names the modern operation by which place becomes coordinate, scene becomes test-space, and world becomes reconstructible from an observing point. Descartes' methodic doubt stages a thinking subject capable of withdrawing from inherited situation and rebuilding certainty through method (Descartes 1996). In spatial terms, this subject is not simply someone in a place; it is a point from which the world can be surveyed, doubted, measured, and reconstructed.

This operation prepared the epistemic theater in which later technical systems could flourish. To optimize, one must first render. To render, one must abstract. To abstract, one must stabilize a field by selecting which differences matter and which may be ignored. Descartography names that movement from situated complexity to legible space. It does not itself produce AI, but it helps produce the spatial imagination within which AI seems natural: a world that can be formalized as input, output, target, and measurable error.

The humanities intervene here not by rejecting clarity, but by remembering the cost of clarity. A map can illuminate, but it also excludes. A dataset can reveal patterns, but it also encodes histories of collection, omission, and classification. A model can generalize, but it can also erase the singularities through which lives become meaningful. Descartography makes critique possible because it shows that the loss landscape is never first. It is the late result of a chain of operations.

3. Place, emplacement, and the world before the dataset

Edward Casey's philosophy of place gives the humanities a crucial resource against optimization metaphysics. Casey argues that place is not derivative of abstract space; it is pervasive and indispensable in lived experience. In *The Fate of Place*, he shows how Western thought increasingly neglected place in favor of space, culminating in modern abstractions that often forget emplacement (Casey 1993; Casey 1997). AI systems inherit this forgetting when they treat the world primarily as data extracted from context.

The dataset is not the world. It is a representation produced by many prior decisions: what to collect, how to label, what to omit, which categories to stabilize, and which forms of experience to ignore. Place reminds us that meaning is situated before it is encoded. A photograph, sentence, gesture, route, or institutional form does not simply carry data. It belongs to a field of practice. It has a where, a when, a who, and a why. These dimensions may be partially captured, but they cannot be exhausted by capture.

Humanities work specializes in these residues. It tracks context, ambiguity, genre, memory, figuration, temporality, and symbolic force. It asks what a model cannot know because its field of knowing had to be narrowed in order to operate. In this sense, the humanities do not stand outside AI. They investigate the world from which AI abstracts and to which its outputs return.

4. Lefebvre and the production of optimizable space

Lefebvre adds a necessary political dimension. Space is socially produced, not merely geometrically given. His triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces makes it possible to analyze AI not only as computation but as spatial production (Lefebvre 1991). Platforms produce spaces of action: feeds, dashboards, recommendation environments, classrooms, workplaces, urban logistics, and administrative interfaces. These spaces shape what users perceive, what institutions value, and what forms of conduct become likely.

Optimization culture therefore does not merely optimize in space; it produces spaces optimized for optimization. A platform arranges visibility, attention, ranking, reward, friction, and habit. It defines the field in which descent will occur. Once this produced space becomes normalized, users experience it as environment rather than design. The model's outputs then reorganize behavior, and reorganized behavior generates new data for the model. This recursive loop is both computational and spatial.

The humanities can interrupt this loop by asking Lefebvrian questions. Who produced this space? Which representations dominate? What lived spaces are suppressed? What rhythms are intensified? Which forms of dwelling or drift become impossible? These questions move AI critique beyond bias detection alone toward the larger issue of world-production.

5. Dwelling, derive, and post-optimization learning

Heidegger and Debord offer two practices for re-entering the world after optimization. Heidegger's dwelling asks how humans may inhabit the earth with care, preserving rather than merely exploiting or constructing (Heidegger 1971). Debord's derive asks how habitual movement through produced space may be interrupted so that ambiances, attractions, repulsions, and psychogeographic currents become perceptible (Debord 1956).

One gathers; the other estranges. Together they supply a method for critical reorientation.

AI systems often accelerate habitual space. They recommend what resembles what came before; they route us efficiently; they reduce surprise to personalization; they make life frictionless in ways that also make it programmable. Dwelling and derive resist this by slowing and disorienting. Dwelling asks what should be preserved. Derive asks what has been scripted. These are not anti-technical gestures. They are practices for keeping technical systems answerable to the worlds they enter.

A post-optimization humanities does not abandon tools. It teaches when to map, when to drift, when to dwell, when to prototype, and when to refuse the given target. It treats technical iteration as one operation among others.

This is the decisive difference between AI literacy and world literacy.

AI literacy teaches how systems work.

World literacy asks what worlds they produce and whether those worlds can be inhabited.

6. StudioLab as AI-humanities practice

StudioLab can be framed as a practical answer to the loss-landscape worldview. It uses mapping, media, prototyping, and public presentation, but it refuses to reduce learning to optimization. StudioLab begins from partners and places. It asks what worlds are already in play, what stakeholders experience, what stories circulate, what systems constrain action, and what forms of making could open new possibilities. It is therefore a humanities laboratory not because it avoids technology, but because it situates technology within place, meaning, and practice.

This structure also makes StudioLab a transmedia response to AI. If AI generates, classifies, predicts, and optimizes, StudioLab hears, maps, stages, builds, and delivers. It converts critique into design without losing the critical question of worldhood. Its diagrams and prototypes are not final

reductions; they are provisional event-spaces for testing relations among people, institutions, media, and place.

The AI question thus becomes pedagogical. How do students learn to use technical systems without becoming servants of their metaphysics? The answer lies in pluralizing operations. Students must learn gradient descent, but also derive; mapping, but also dwelling; data analysis, but also ethnographic and performative attention; interface design, but also spatial critique. StudioLab teaches the art of moving among these operations without collapsing them.

7. Conclusion: the world exceeds the landscape

The loss landscape is a powerful abstraction. It allows models to improve. But the world is not a landscape in this sense, and learning is not only descent. Worlds open, gather, wound, remember, seduce, exclude, shelter, and transform. They are implaced and produced, mapped and contested, inhabited and drifted through. A humanities adequate to AI must therefore recover the operations that precede and exceed optimization.

Descartography reveals how the world becomes renderable. Gradient descent reveals how rendered space becomes actionable. Casey and Lefebvre reveal what rendering forgets: implacement and production. Heidegger and Debord offer practices of regathering and estrangement. StudioLab makes these practices pedagogical. Its task is not to oppose AI from a safe distance, but to re-place AI within a broader ecology of world-making.

Operational contrast

Optimization culture	StudioLab trace
World as data field	World as place-event and produced space
Learning as error minimization	Learning as interpretation, critique, and transformation
Subject as user or optimizer	Subject as dweller, drifter, maker, and participant
Interface as friction management	Interface as event-space and ethical threshold
Model improvement	Worldly accountability

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HOW TO FLY BENJAMIN'S ANGEL

Montage, Clues, Folds, Huts, and Story X



"There is a picture of Klee which is called 'Angelus Norvus.' His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling debris upon debris and burts it in front of his feet."

—Walter Benjamin

WE DO NOT ESCAPE THE WRECKAGE.
WE LEARN TO FLY THE FOLD.



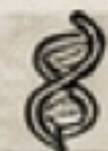
Benjamin
Montage



Ginzburg
Clue



Tor, X
Turning



Halyx
Braiding



Story X
Return

WE DO NOT ESCAPE THE WRECKAGE.
WE LEARN TO FLY THE FOLD.

FOLDING THE ANGEL

Benjamin, Ginzburg, Toryx, Helyx, and Story X.

We do
not explode.
We
unframe.
—Heidegger

1 Montage
arrests
fragments
before they
vanish into
progress.

2 Clues
turn debris
into signs
and
symptoms.

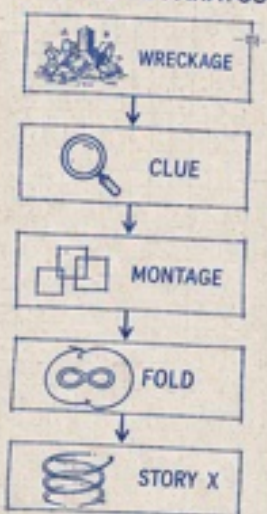
3 Toryx
folds
collapse
into
recursive
passage.

4 Helyx
braids the
fragments
into
Story X.

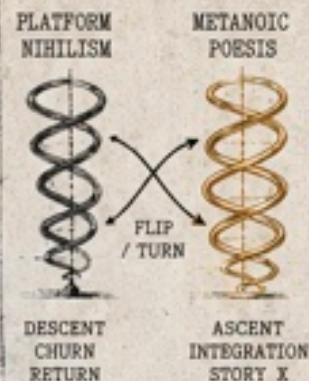
“THE ANGEL
DOES NOT ESCAPE
THE WRECKAGE.
IT LEARNS TO
FLY THE FOLD.”



FOLDING APPARATUS



TWO SPIRALS



Montage is method.
Clues are evidential.
Folds are pathways.
Stories are how
we fly.

AXIOMS



NOT PROGRESS
BUT RECOGNITION.



EVIDENCE
IS RESISTANCE.



FOLD TO
RECONFIGURE.



BRAID TO
TRANSCEND.



STORY X IS
RETURN AS GIFT.

String Figures: On the Line

A Genealogy from Haraway to Plato and Back

Abstract

This essay develops a genealogy of the line that begins and ends with Donna Haraway's string figures. It treats the line not as one fixed concept but as a transmedia figure that repeatedly changes function: Platonic hierarchy, algorithmic procedure, Heideggerian threshold, Deleuze and Guattarian flight, Benjaminian passage, Ariadnean thread, kite-string tension, cosmological vibration, collaborative string figure, capture-string, and ShuttleKraft shuttle-line. The essay preserves the literate/digital divide developed in Essay 1 by positioning the algorithm as the hinge between literate formalism and digital recursion: Plato makes the line intelligible; algorithm makes the line executable; digital AI makes the line recursive; ShuttleKraft MetaPlay makes the line playable. Haraway frames the genealogy so it does not become another linear intellectual history. Instead, each line is read as a string figure passed hand to hand, held in tension, transformed, and returned to D0–D4 practices of Dasein design.

1. Opening with Haraway: Do Not Begin with One Straight Line

A genealogy of the line should not begin by obeying the line. If it begins with a single origin and moves forward as a clean sequence of influence, it repeats the very structure it intends to study. For this reason, this essay opens with Donna Haraway rather than Plato. Haraway's string figures give us a way to think lineages without submitting them to a sovereign line of descent. A string figure is not a fixed concept owned by one author. It is a pattern made in motion, passed among hands, changed by reception, held in tension, and exposed to failure. It can tangle, snap, repair, and become something else. It asks not only what a line means, but what a line does.

Haraway's SF names string figures, speculative fabulation, science fiction, science fact, speculative feminism, and the unfinished phrase 'so far' (Haraway, 2016). This cluster offers a method for StudioLab and ShuttleKraft: we can make concepts playable without flattening them into mere tools. The line becomes an event: a passage, a mark, a path, a cut, a tether, a procedure, a flight, a vibration, a trap, a shuttle. It appears differently across media, genres, bodies, and worlds. Haraway's importance lies in this pluralizing frame. She lets us conduct a genealogy while refusing the fantasy that genealogy must be linear.

The essay therefore practices a series of string figure line-events: Plato's formal line, the algorithmic line, Heidegger and Jünger's nihilism line, Deleuze and Guattari's lines of flight, Benjamin's passage-line, Ariadne's thread, the kite's taut string, string theory's vibrating string, Haraway's collaborative string figure, the ethical shadow of stringing someone along, and ShuttleKraft MetaPlay's shuttle-line. Each figure carries forward something of the line while breaking the command of the previous figure. The point is not to find the true line behind them all, but to learn how lines divide, formalize, execute, cross, flee, illuminate, guide, tense, vibrate, capture, and world.

This matters because the first essay in this suite contrasted literate AI and digital AI. There, Platonism appeared as a logocentric platform, an ancient literate AI that formalizes intelligence

through writing, dialectic, geometry, model-copy relations, and pedagogy. This second essay returns to a more specific figure within that history: the line. But it does so through Haraway's string method, so that the line does not dominate the essay as an abstract diagram. It becomes one figure among figures, a material, mythic, technical, political, and performative apparatus that can be held, followed, cut, braided, flown, and passed on.

2. What Counts as a Line?

A line appears at first as something simple: a stroke between two points, a boundary, a route, a written sentence, a line of verse, a line of code, a line of descent, a line of command. But the apparent simplicity deceives. Lines organize perception, power, thought, infrastructure, and action. They divide territories, outline bodies, connect addresses, sequence arguments, distribute authority, draw maps, encode programs, and tether kites to hands. A line can promise knowledge or impose control. It can guide a traveler or catch a subject. It can carry care or capture attention.

Tim Ingold's work on lines helps here because he treats lines not as abstract geometry alone but as traces, threads, paths, meshworks, and ways of life (Ingold, 2007). A line can be a drawn mark, a walking path, a genealogical descent, a narrative thread, or a material fiber. The question shifts from ontology to practice: how does a line come into being, and what world does it help make? StudioLab can extend this further by asking how line-forms mediate D1–D4 encounters around D0. At D1, lines may appear as omens, threads, trails, or spirit paths. At D2, they become diagrams, proofs, procedures, rubrics, and models. At D3, they disclose thresholds, danger, enframing, and technological capture. At D4, they become playable design equipment.

The line therefore allows us to connect literate AI and digital AI without collapsing the distinction between them. Literate AI writes, draws, defines, and teaches lines. Algorithmic systems execute lines as procedures. Digital AI recursively generates and recombines lines as text strings, code, vectors, prompt-output loops, and multimodal artifacts. ShuttleKraft MetaPlay then asks how these lines return to worlds: classrooms, workshops, clinics, festivals, platforms, homes, roads, laboratories, and performances.

The working formula is simple: Plato makes the line intelligible; algorithm makes the line executable; digital AI makes the line recursive; ShuttleKraft MetaPlay makes the line playable. But this formula should not become a new rigid line. It is a string figure, a way to hold several transitions together while remaining open to knots, breaks, shadows, and returns.

3. Plato: The Line as Formal Ascent

Plato gives Western thought one of its most influential line-figures: the line as formal ascent. In the Republic, the divided line organizes modes of appearance and knowledge, from images and belief to mathematical reasoning and dialectical intelligence oriented toward the Forms (Plato, 1991). The line is not only a metaphor. It trains intelligence. It gives thought a directional interface: move from the visible to the intelligible, from imitation to model, from becoming to being, from multiplicity to unity, from confusion to form.

In the context of this suite, Plato's line belongs to the broader architecture of Platonism as literate AI. Writing, geometry, dialogue, definition, pedagogy, and institutional training converge to produce a formal platform of intelligence. The line belongs to that platform because it diagrams how one

should think. It offers a spatial grammar for metaphysics. Knowledge becomes a disciplined movement away from messy situations toward purified intelligibility. The world becomes legible as a field of copies, instances, and approximations.

The power of this line is immense. It makes abstraction teachable. It lets intelligence compare, rank, purify, and govern. It helps form the pedagogical imagination of the West: education as ascent, philosophy as purification, mathematics as privileged mediation, truth as formal stability. But the cost is also immense. The line tends to devalue bodies, images, performances, places, rituals, stories, and worlds. It privileges the model over the encounter. It treats the situated thing as less true than the formal order that supposedly explains it.

Haraway's string figure is already at work against this line. A string figure cannot be climbed as a ladder. It must be handled, received, altered, and passed on. It does not abolish form; it refuses form's sovereignty. So Plato gives us the line as ascent, but Haraway teaches us not to let ascent become the only model of thinking. The line has begun its genealogy and has already begun to fray.

4. Algorithm: The Line That Runs

The algorithm is the hinge between the literate and the digital. It preserves the formal ambitions of literate intelligence while changing their mode of operation. A Platonic line can be contemplated. A written line can be read. A geometric line can be drawn. A bureaucratic line can be followed. But an algorithmic line can be run. It turns symbolic order into executable procedure.

In the most general sense, an algorithm is a finite procedure for accomplishing a task, a sequence of operations that can be carried out according to rules (Knuth, 1997). Culturally, however, the algorithm names something more than a technical sequence. It names the moment when formalism stops merely representing order and begins enacting it. Sorting, ranking, filtering, recommending, routing, approving, denying, detecting, predicting, and generating are all algorithmic line-functions. The line becomes calculative action.

This keeps the literate/digital divide intact. Digital AI is not simply Plato with electricity. It passes through algorithmic modernity. Letters become symbols; symbols become variables; variables become calculations; calculations become algorithms; algorithms become programs; programs become platforms; platforms become environments in which intelligence can be simulated, captured, scaled, and governed. Algorithm is the numeric afterlife of logocentrism, but it is also a mutation. It converts logos into operation.

The algorithmic line also introduces danger. Procedure can mask judgment. Sequence can appear neutral. Calculation can hide the social, political, and ontological assumptions that define inputs, outputs, categories, thresholds, and goals. Algorithmic systems often claim objectivity while extending inherited hierarchies into automated forms. In this way, the algorithm belongs to both Essay 1 and Essay 2. In Essay 1, it bridges literate AI and digital AI. In this essay, it appears as a line-event: the line that runs.

Digital AI complicates algorithmic linearity. Large generative systems depend on algorithms, but their outputs no longer feel like transparent step-by-step procedures. They work through distributed statistical relations, high-dimensional patterning, and recursive prompt-output loops. Thus the algorithmic line folds into networks, probabilities, strings, and worlds. It remains executable, but it also becomes obscure, emergent, interactive, and performative.

5. Heidegger and Jünger: The Line as Nihilistic Threshold

With Ernst Jünger and Martin Heidegger, the line changes function. It is no longer primarily a ladder of ascent or a procedure to run. It becomes a threshold of nihilism. Jünger's question concerns whether modern humanity has reached or crossed a line beyond nihilism. Heidegger responds by slowing the question down. Before asking whether the line has been crossed, one must ask what the line is, where it comes from, and what history of Being lets such a line appear (Heidegger, 1998; Jünger, 1950/1998).

This is crucial for thinking AI. Contemporary debates often ask whether AI crosses a line: between tool and mind, human and machine, imitation and intelligence, assistance and replacement, writing and cheating, platform and agency. Heidegger's response would be to ask what technological-metaphysical history produced these lines in the first place. The line is not simply waiting there as an obvious boundary. It emerges from a world in which beings have already been rendered calculable, orderable, and available.

Heidegger's question concerning technology therefore belongs in the genealogy of the line. Modern technology does not merely make machines. It enframes beings as standing-reserve, resources available for ordering (Heidegger, 1977). Digital AI intensifies this danger when it translates language, image, labor, attention, personality, art, care, and knowledge into data patterns and processable resources. The line of nihilism is not simply crossed by AI; it may run through AI as the continuation of a long metaphysical reduction.

Yet Heidegger also warns against quick overcoming. The danger cannot be escaped by declaring oneself beyond technology or beyond nihilism. The task involves staying near the question, listening for what remains concealed, and finding modes of revealing not exhausted by enframing. Haraway's string method helps here because it resists heroic crossing. Rather than celebrate the one who gets beyond the line, it asks how we stay with the trouble of inherited patterns. The line of nihilism becomes one string among others, held in tension rather than triumphantly crossed.

6. Deleuze and Guattari: Lines of Flight and Their Risks

Deleuze and Guattari pluralize the line. In *A Thousand Plateaus* and *On the Line*, the line becomes mobile, multiple, and risky: lines of segmentarity, lines of rupture, lines of flight, lines of deterritorialization, and lines that reterritorialize into new formations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987). No single line leads upward. No single threshold marks the whole. Lines move through assemblages. They cut across bodies, institutions, desires, territories, machines, and signs.

This is an essential break from both Platonic ascent and Heideggerian threshold. The line is no longer primarily a diagram of truth or a boundary of nihilism. It is a vector of becoming. It can flee, leak, mutate, connect, escape, and invent. A line of flight may open a world otherwise blocked by molar institutions. It may let thought move where official forms cannot. It may create new alliances, new practices, new identities, new speeds, new intensities.

But D&G's line is not innocent. A line of flight can become a line of abolition, addiction, fascism, collapse, or capture. Deterritorialization can harden again. Escape can become another market niche. Rhizomes can host surveillance as easily as liberation. Platform capitalism has learned to monetize flight: endless scrolling, algorithmic novelty, brand fluidity, identity modulation, and

micro-dosed transgression. Digital AI may generate lines of flight, but it may also automate their capture.

Haraway again prevents romantic simplification. A string figure is not pure escape. It requires response-ability: who receives the pattern, who gets tangled, who holds tension, who pays the cost, who can pass it on? D&G help us break the sovereignty of one line, but Haraway asks how plural lines become livable, accountable patterns. ShuttleKraft MetaPlay will need both: the energy of flight and the obligation of return.

7. Benjamin: Passage-Line, Montage, and Historical Illumination

Walter Benjamin turns the line into passage. *The Arcades Project* is not a philosophical system in the Platonic sense, nor a straightforward historical narrative. It is a montage-work organized around the Paris arcades, those glass-and-iron passages of nineteenth-century commodity modernity (Benjamin, 1999). Benjamin's method gathers citations, fragments, dreams, commodities, architecture, fashion, panoramas, crowds, interiors, ruins, and flashes of thought. History appears not as continuous progress but as constellation.

Benjamin's passage-line matters because it changes the movement of thought. Plato ascends. Heidegger questions the threshold. D&G flee and deterritorialize. Benjamin wanders. The flâneur does not master the city from above. He moves through its passages, surfaces, displays, commodities, thresholds, and half-dreams. In the arcades, modernity presents itself as dream architecture: dazzling, historical, commercial, and haunted.

This becomes vital for transmedia AI work. Digital AI often operates by montage: fragments, citations, styles, images, genres, archives, and prompts flash into relation. The danger is that AI montage becomes content production without historical responsibility. Benjamin gives another possibility: montage as illumination. The fragment should not merely entertain; it should shock history into readability. The past and present collide in a dialectical image. The passage becomes a method of awakening.

Benjamin also helps ShuttleKraft because a shuttle does not simply cross from one point to another. It moves through passages, carrying material back and forth. A ShuttleKraft AI practice can learn from Benjamin by treating outputs as historical constellations rather than consumable content. The question becomes: what hidden arcade of labor, desire, commodity, fantasy, and memory flashes through this artifact? What passage has opened, and what dreams does it expose?

8. Ariadne: Thread Through the Labyrinth

Ariadne gives the line back to myth and labyrinth. Her thread does not provide a Platonic ascent out of appearances. It offers wayfinding within complexity. The labyrinth is not abolished. The monster is not explained away. The path remains dangerous. The thread makes passage and return possible.

This is a D1 line-figure with D4 implications. At D1, Ariadne's thread belongs to mythic encounter: lover, guide, betrayal, monster, maze, survival. At D4, it becomes a design principle: do not pretend to master complexity from above; create thread practices that let players enter, navigate, remember, return, and transform. In this sense, Ariadne is closer to ShuttleKraft than to Platonism. She does not offer the Form of the labyrinth. She offers a workable relation to it.

The thread also changes the politics of knowledge. Plato's philosopher exits the cave toward truth. Ariadne's thread enables a body to move through danger. It is practical, material, relational, and

risky. It depends on trust. It can be dropped, cut, betrayed, followed, rewound. It does not guarantee wisdom; it affords orientation.

Digital AI often presents itself as a labyrinth: vast archives, opaque models, strange outputs, hidden infrastructures, hallucinated passages, ethical traps, and unexpected openings. Users need more than rules. They need threads: prompts, protocols, citations, design exercises, audit trails, reflection loops, care practices, and ways to return from generated possibility to situated action. Ariadne's gift becomes a counter-Platonic pedagogy: not ascent from the maze, but thread-work within it.

9. The Kite: Taut Line, Thought-Action, Non-Thought-Non-Action

The kite transforms the line into tension between earth and sky. A kite string is neither a ladder nor a border nor a route alone. *It is a felt relation.* The flyer thinks through the hand, the wind, the air, the body, the pull, the slack, the weather, and the sky. Too slack and the kite falls; too tight and the string snaps. Flight requires responsive tautness.

This makes the kite one of the strongest figures for fourfold AI. The kite gathers earth, sky, mortals, and divinities in a concrete practice. Earth appears as body, ground, field, string, hand, spool. Sky appears as wind, atmosphere, height, weather, cloud, signal. Mortals appear as players, children, spectators, makers, flyers. Divinities appear as aspiration, risk, luck, beauty, festival, omen, and the almost-spiritual feeling of something held aloft by invisible forces.

The kite also opens the Daoist dimension of thought-action and non-thought-non-action. Good kite flying is not domination. The flyer does not command the wind. But it is not passivity either. The flyer acts by sensing, releasing, pulling, waiting, adjusting. This resembles wu wei not as inactivity but as responsive alignment (Laozi, 2003; Zhuangzi, 2013). The line teaches an intelligence prior to explicit concept: a tactile knowing, a weathered responsiveness, a body thinking with air.

For AI practice, the kite corrects both command/control and surrender. Prompting is not simply giving orders to a machine. Nor should the user collapse into passive fascination before generated outputs. At its best, AI work resembles kite work: taut collaboration among user, model, archive, interface, situation, and world. We feel the pull of generated language, test it, release it, retrieve it, revise it, and keep it from either crashing or dragging us along.

10. String Theory, String Figures, and Stringing Someone Along

Once the line becomes string, it changes again. A line may remain abstract; a string has texture, tension, twist, resonance, and vulnerability. It can bind, guide, vibrate, weave, suspend, trap, or deceive. It can be plucked, tuned, tangled, knotted, cut, repaired, passed on. The string multiplies the line's capacities.

String theory gives a cosmological metaphor: reality imagined not as point-particles alone but as vibrating strings whose modes of vibration correspond to different particles or forces (Greene, 1999). This essay does not claim any direct scientific analogy between string theory and AI. The point is figural and transmedia. String theory lets the line become resonance. The line no longer simply marks, divides, or guides; it hums, oscillates, and opens hidden dimensions. Digital AI lives culturally in such a string-world: text strings, code strings, prompt strings, vector relations, latent resonances, and generated styles vibrating across archives.

Haraway's string figures bring this back from cosmology to handwork. A string figure such as cat's cradle is collaborative patterning. One player makes a figure, another receives it, transforms it, and passes it on. No single author owns the pattern. Intelligence appears as relational tension, timing, attention, and transformation. This is a powerful model for StudioLab: prompting becomes cat's cradle with archives. The user throws a pattern; the model catches and changes it; the user re-strings it; the world tests it; the team passes it on.

But the string also has a shadow. To string someone along is to manipulate through attachment, promise, delay, seduction, or false care. Digital platforms already know this. They string users along through notification loops, algorithmic feeds, simulated intimacy, endless deferral, and engagement architectures. AI can string people along through fluent pseudo-care, false authority, hallucinated confidence, bureaucratic delay, and infinite production without responsibility.

We therefore need a politics of string. Care-strings guide, support, orient, and repair.

Capture-strings delay, extract, addict, and deceive. Every AI practice must ask which kind of string it is producing. The same interface can serve either care or capture. The same prompt can open a world or deepen dependence. The same generated fluency can support thought or replace it with smooth compliance.

11. ShuttleKraft MetaPlay: The Shuttle-Line and the Loom

ShuttleKraft gathers the genealogy and makes it playable. The shuttle is both vehicle and weaving tool. It carries a thread back and forth across a loom; it also moves between places, worlds, stations, and encounters. This double meaning matters. ShuttleKraft is not mere transportation and not mere metaphor. It is the craft of carrying patterns through passages, returning with artifacts, and redesigning the weave.

MetaPlay adds the recursive turn. Players do not only follow lines; they learn how lines are made. They ask which lines divide, which lines guide, which lines execute, which lines capture, which lines permit flight, which lines need repair, and which lines should be cut. The line becomes equipment rather than destiny. It becomes playable.

This is where Essay 2 returns to the D0–D4 architecture of the larger suite. D0 names the unground: Dao, Event, abyss, hole, matrix, khora. No line finally masters D0. Every line is drawn, run, followed, flown, or woven over an abyss it cannot secure. D1 names mythic and imaginal encounter: Ariadne, kite, oracle, shaman, guide, thread. D2 names literate and formal intelligence: Plato, algorithm, diagram, code, rubric, procedure. D3 names existential and technological disclosure: Heideggerian danger, nihilism, enframing, capture, platform strings. D4 names fourfold worlding and MetaPlay: the practice of turning inherited lines into participatory encounters, artifacts, protocols, and events.

ShuttleKraft MetaPlay therefore does not simply reject Platonic line-thinking. It re-situates it. Formal lines still matter: diagrams, arguments, code, procedures, citations, pathways, design protocols. But they cannot govern alone. They must be returned to earth, sky, mortals, divinities, bodies, roads, servers, classrooms, clinics, festivals, histories, and consequences. The shuttle carries the formal line back into the world.

This is also where digital AI becomes usable without becoming sovereign. AI can generate essays, images, scripts, diagrams, prompts, sound cues, animation boards, workshop protocols, and stakeholder documents. But the value lies not in output alone. The value lies in how outputs become

events, how events become encounters, how encounters become redesign, and how redesign returns to worlds. ShuttleKraft MetaPlay asks AI to serve the loom, not become the god of the loom.

12. Closing with Haraway: Staying with the String

We close where we began: with Haraway. A genealogy of the line must begin and end with string figures because otherwise it risks becoming another straight line: Plato to Heidegger to D&G to Benjamin to AI, one author after another, one conceptual baton passed cleanly forward. Haraway interrupts that smoothness. She asks us to stay with the trouble of entanglement, inheritance, responsibility, and unfinished world-making.

The genealogy has shown that the line is never only one thing. Plato's line formalizes ascent. Algorithm runs formal procedure. Heidegger and Jünger mark nihilistic threshold. Deleuze and Guattari release lines of flight. Benjamin wanders passages and assembles montage. Ariadne threads the labyrinth. The kite holds earth and sky in taut play. String theory lets the line vibrate. String figures pass patterns hand to hand. Stringing along reveals capture and manipulation. ShuttleKraft turns the line into a shuttle across worlds.

Each line carries forward something of the previous line by breaking what the previous line meant. This is not progress. It is not replacement. It is string work. The line gets divided, run, crossed, fled, illuminated, threaded, flown, vibrated, patterned, abused, repaired, and woven. The question is not which line is true. The question is what each line does, who it serves, what it captures, what it opens, and how it can be reworked within D0–D4 design practice.

This gives the essay's final thesis: the task is not to master the line but to stay with the string. To stay with the string means to feel tension without domination, to follow without blind obedience, to cut without nihilism, to braid without fusion, to fly without escape fantasy, to repair without nostalgia, and to pass on patterns that make more livable worlds possible. ShuttleKraft MetaPlay names this practice when it turns inherited lines into playable passages, responsive encounters, and fourfold events.

Essay 1 showed that digital AI reveals Platonism as literate AI, an ancient logocentric platform now transformed by algorithmic and digital systems. Essay 2 has shown that this platform also depends on line-forms that can be genealogically restrung. Together they prepare the third track: a transmedia suite of essays, animations, zines, posters, workshops, performances, and stakeholder protocols that Dasein-design D1–D4 experiences around D0. The line has not ended. It has entered the loom.

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1

FOLDING THE ANGEL

Benjamin, Ginzburg, Toryx, Helyx, Story X

D4 Meta
Play / String
Pattern
Repeated Forces

D3 Dasein
Labyrinth
Query / Wander

D2 Subject
Structure
Anticipate / Plan
Project

D1 Soul
Abyas
Limit / Collapse

D0 Abgrund
Paradox / Void
Collapse / Negation

Helyx
Spiral
Braid
Emergence

Toryx
Turns
Inversion
Passage

Interface
Plane
Crossing
Chiasmus



Clue
(Trace)



Montage
(Fragment)



Fold
(Turn)



Braid
(Emerge)



Return
(Story X)

2

THE ANGEL'S EYES

Ginzburg, Clues, Symptoms, Evidence

"The smallest detail can reveal the whole apparatus."

—Carlo Ginzburg



"Montage arrests progress long enough for recognition."

4

REVERSE BILLOWING

Challenger, McKenzie, Performance Apparatus

"The disaster does not merely explode outward.
It billows backward through the system."

TECHNOLOGICAL
PERFORMANCE
(Design, Test, Data)

ORGANIZATIONAL
PERFORMANCE
(Teams, Routines,
Coordination)

CULTURAL
PERFORMANCE
(Norms, Beliefs,
Narratives)

THE LAUNCH-SYSTEM
AS ENFRAMING FUNNEL
(TOROID)

What frames the launch
frames the failure.



SLIDE DECK
Framing

O-RING DATA
(cond.)

WARNING SIGN
"3 slides deep"

DEFAULT MOMENTUM
Launch-world's
inevitable
pressure.

The plume is theory. The reverse is catastrophe.

5

THE HUT HAS A CAMERA

Hadot, Heidegger, Corbin, Shaggy-Haired Angel, Matt

HADOT

Restores the cosmic horizon.
Philosophy is conversion of vision.

HEIDEGGER

The temple sets up a world. The hut gathers earth, sky, gods, mortals.

CORBIN

The temple opens imaginal passage. Angels mediate worlds.

SHAGGY-HAIRED ANGEL (YouTuber)

Visits the hut, records, narrates, returns it to the platform.

MATT

Change the room, not the student.
Design access, not compliance.



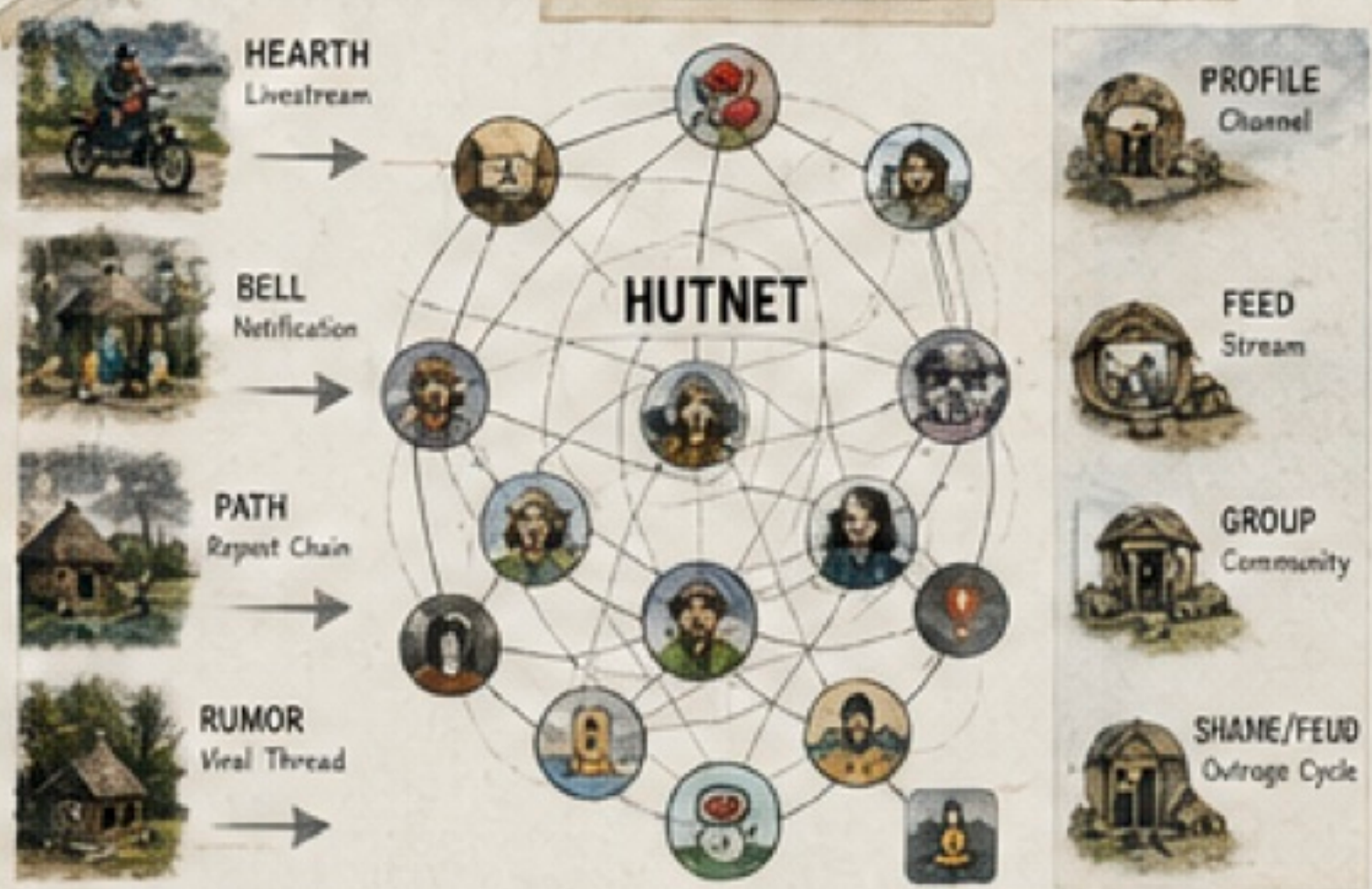
*The hut becomes contemporary again
when the angel carries it through the platform.*

6

GLOBAL VILLAGE / HUTNET

McLuhan, Huts, Village Media, Platform Proximity

"The global village was never utopia. It is mediated nearness: rumor, ritual, care, shame, feud at electronic speed."
 —Marshall McLuhan



PIZZA HUT
 Pseudo-Hearth
 Commodity Ritual.
 Brand Belonging

*"The internet did not disprove the global village;
 it made the village volatile."*

7

KPI COSMOGRAPHY

Dickinson, HAC, Performance at Scale

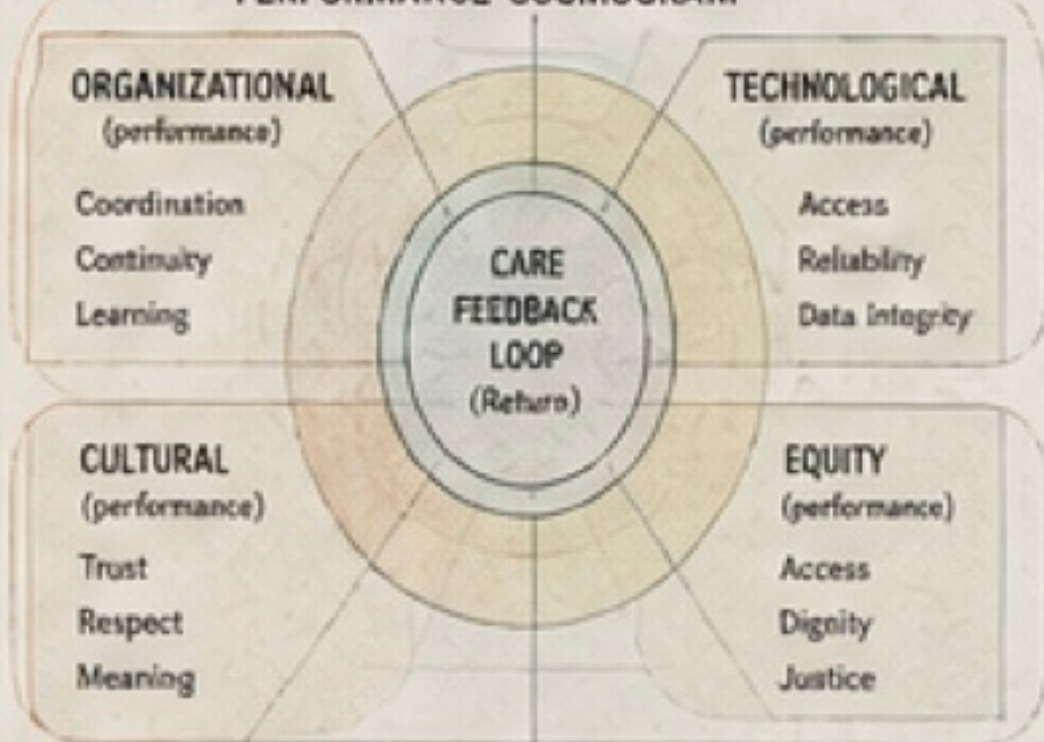
"Performance must be widened beyond narrow results and measurement to see the full apparatus."

—Kathryn Newcomer Dickinson

HAC MOBILE CLINIC DAY



PERFORMANCE COSMOGRAM



**NOT DEODORIZATION
BUT CARE-FEEDBACK**

Old Funnel (Extractive)



New Cosmogram (Care)



Metrics must not deodorize collapse, ; they must help care return.

8

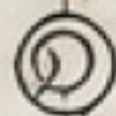
FLYING THE ANGEL

Metanoia Playground, ShuttleKraft, Story X

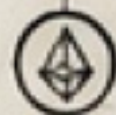
"We do not escape the wreckage.
We learn to fly the fold."



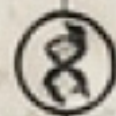
SEE
(Mentage)



READ
(Clues)



FOLD
(Toryx)



BRAID
(Helyx)



RETURN
(Story X)



HUTS
Living Cosmograms



CLINICS
Mobile Care



SCHOOLS
Room Redesign



DASHBOARDS
Care Cosmography



TEMPLES
World-Gathering



PLATFORMS
Media Relays



STUDIO / LAB
Metanoia Practice

STORY X

The emergent pattern that returns as gift.

SHUTTLEKRAFT: CRAFT of Passage, not escape.

Passing of the Theory Gods

Cargo-Cult Disciplines, Pencil-Minded Scholars, and the Turing Test of Concepts

1. Feynman is not the beginning

Richard Feynman's 'Cargo Cult Science' offers a devastating image of failed knowledge: the imitation of scientific form without the integrity of scientific practice. In his 1974 Caltech commencement address, Feynman describes runways, towers, headsets, bamboo antennas, and ritualized aviation apparatus built in the hope that planes will arrive with cargo. The form looks right. The gestures repeat. The scene resembles the real thing. But the planes do not land. Feynman uses this image to name research that follows the apparent precepts of science while missing the self-critical honesty that makes science more than performance.

The argument here generalizes Feynman's insight beyond science, but it must first complicate Feynman's metaphor. 'Cargo cult' was not Feynman's invention. It was already an anthropological and colonial category before he converted it into a critique of junk science. That prior history matters because anthropology has its own cargo cult: the cargo cult of 'cargo cult.' It named, classified, compared, circulated, criticized, and later placed scare quotes around a category that had itself helped produce. The concept became cargo. The discipline became runway and control tower. The ethnographic case became an aircraft whose meanings kept arriving in new institutional weather.

So Feynman should not be treated as the origin of the figure, but as one relay in its passage. Anthropology gives the West a portable concept. Feynman reloads that concept as a warning to science. We now bend it back across the disciplines, including anthropology itself. The result is not a sneer at Melanesian worlds, nor a careless shorthand for irrationality. It is a diagnostic reversal: modern disciplines themselves build cargo apparatuses, produce cargo expectations, and train observers to recognize the right shipments of concepts, methods, data, models, and moral goods.

This reversal follows the preface to *Perform or Else*, which names Concept Cults awaiting the Theory Gods and their cargo. There the cargo includes concepts, data, and models; the cults are disciplines, fields, and paradigms; and the vibration underneath the scene comes from the wood chippers of institutional transformation. That formulation gives us the hinge. The cargo cult no longer belongs to some exotic outside. It is a mirror held up to the lecture machine, advanced research, professional formation, and the entire apparatus through which schools make knowledge recognizable.

2. Anthropology's cargo

Anthropology's relation to cargo cults gives the essay its ethical guardrail. The phrase 'cargo cult' gathered heterogeneous Melanesian movements, anti-colonial desires, millenarian expectations, ritual inventions, Christian-inflected prophecies, and local cosmopolitical projects under a single comparative label. Lamont Lindstrom's Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology entry stresses both the term's disciplinary importance and its difficulty: it became a famous anthropological keyword, while also risking false-category effects, because it bundled diverse movements together and helped Western observers tell stories about desire, modernity, and failed arrival.

This is why anthropology cannot stand outside the critique. It has its own cargo apparatus. It builds conceptual runways from ethnographic cases, relays those cases through comparison, and sends them into theory as transportable concepts. The discipline then receives its own cargo back in altered form: 'cargo cult' becomes a metaphor for pseudoscience, bad engineering, software development, institutional mimicry, and now academic professionalization itself. The term returns to anthropology from the outside, carrying the history of anthropology's own export.

The point is not simply that the category is wrong. The point is that categories travel. They carry force, desire, violence, insight, and residue. They make things visible by making other things disappear. 'Cargo cult' reveals not only what Melanesian movements were said to do, but what anthropology, colonial administration, missionary discourse, and modern theory wanted those movements to signify. The discipline's own fascination becomes part of the object. Its analysis becomes part of the cargo.

Michael Taussig helps keep this movement sensuous and dangerous rather than merely epistemological. His account of mimesis and alterity shows that colonial encounters do not simply produce representations of others; they produce circuits of imitation, fear, fascination, bodily reaction, and mimetic traffic. The gasp before Trobriand Cricket, dancers, bombers, uniforms, and play is not simply a response to an object. It is the shock of realizing that mimicry moves in both directions. The metropole too is mimetic. The camera, archive, theory seminar, journal, and lecture hall are also machines for making and managing alterity.

3. From cargo-cult science to cargo-cult disciplines

Once the category has been returned to anthropology, Feynman's insight can be generalized more rigorously. Cargo-cult science names the imitation of scientific method without scientific integrity. Cargo-cult disciplinarity names the imitation of disciplinary seriousness without the practices that keep knowledge open, risky, transformative, and accountable. Every discipline has its runways, towers, headphones, signals, checklists, and sacred phrases. Every school has ways of reproducing its own image of rigor.

The humanities and social sciences are not exempt. They often refine cargo-cult disciplinarity into highly sophisticated concept-machines. The journal becomes runway. The conference becomes control tower. The citation network becomes signal system. The graduate seminar becomes initiation chamber. The lecture becomes ceremony of arrival. Peer review becomes air traffic control. The cargo arrives as method, master term, interpretive style, canonical passage, political virtue, or theoretical novelty.

This formulation does not mean that disciplines are worthless. It means that disciplines can confuse their apparatuses with their practices. A journal can support intellectual circulation; it can also become the sign that substitutes for intellectual circulation. A conference can create encounter; it can also become recognition theater. A graduate seminar can train attention; it can also become initiation into tonal belonging. A lecture can gather thought; it can also stage transmission after transmission has moved elsewhere.

The general question becomes Feynman's question enlarged: where do our disciplines follow the forms while missing the condition that makes the form live? Where do we build the apparatus of arrival while forgetting how to receive, test, share, and transform the cargo? Where does the plane land, and where have we simply learned how to behave as though it had landed?

4. Schools do not become cults; they civilize cults

It would be too easy to say that schools become cults. That story protects the school by imagining cultic life as an external corruption of an originally rational institution. The stronger claim is that all schools harbor cults. Their task has never been to eliminate cultic energies, but to civilize and conceptualize them. Schools translate devotion into rigor, initiation into training, repetition into mastery, charisma into lineage, taboo into method, and belonging into professional identity. The cult does not disappear. It becomes curriculum. It becomes field. It becomes method.

Derrida's 'White Mythology' names the philosophical mechanism that makes this possible. Philosophy presents itself as the discourse of concepts, but Derrida tracks how concepts often carry metaphors whose figurative origins have been worn down, bleached, idealized, and forgotten. A metaphor becomes respectable by ceasing to look like metaphor. It enters circulation as proper concept, as if it had always belonged to the high air of thought.

Academic schools perform a related operation on ritual. They whiten ceremony into method. They whiten attachment into commitment. They whiten imitation into apprenticeship. They whiten anxiety into seriousness. They whiten belonging into field membership. The cult is not abolished. It is civilized into the concept-cult.

A concept-cult gathers around a founder, corpus, master term, founding break, privileged wound, sacred enemy, or authorized style of suspicion. It has passwords, gestures, tones, references, taboos, and rites of recognition. It teaches members not only what to think but how to sound initiated. It trains them to know which names must be invoked, which terms require reverence, which outsiders may be dismissed as naive, undertheorized, metaphysical, positivist, liberal, empirical, insufficiently radical, or insufficiently rigorous. The concept-cult does not merely produce ideas. It produces recognizability.

5. Pencil-minded scholars

Graduate education sharpens people for this world. It can produce remarkable minds: quick with distinctions, alert to implication, patient with texts, disciplined in method, agile in citation, and fluent in professional signs. This sharpening matters. Pencils are useful. A pencil can draw a line, mark a difference, annotate a passage, diagram a relation, correct a claim, and leave a trace fine enough to be revised. Serious thought still needs instruments of inscription.

But sharpening is never innocent. A pencil becomes sharp by losing material. Its point appears through abrasion. The school sharpens the scholar in the same way. It refines by shaving away other

speeds, media, gestures, relations, publics, and forms of intelligence. It teaches the scholar to make marks on surfaces the discipline already knows how to read: the seminar paper, dissertation chapter, journal article, lecture note, peer-review report, grant proposal, and tenure file. The scholar becomes sharp, but often sharp for too few surfaces.

This is the pencil-minded or even pencil-headed image. The pointed-headed scholar is not stupid. The tragedy is almost the opposite. The scholar becomes brilliantly over-adapted to a narrow ecology of recognition. The head itself becomes instrument. The person becomes point. Body, voice, scene, relation, medium, public, and world fall away. What remains is the refined capacity to make marks that count within systems already designed to count those marks.

The phrase therefore cuts two ways. It names an achievement: trained attention, conceptual precision, methodological care, textual patience. It also names a deformation: the reduction of intelligence to fine academic inscription. The danger lies not in pencils but in pencil idolatry. A discipline turns cargo-cultic when it mistakes the pencil for thought itself.

6. The passing of the Theory Gods

For decades, late twentieth-century theory gathered around great names: Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Butler, and many others. These figures did not simply provide arguments. They organized atmospheres. They created initiation paths, tonalities, enemies, permissions, prohibitions, and worlds of reference. They became gods of method, critique, suspicion, desire, discourse, ontology, power, gender, text, event, and becoming.

The passing of the Theory Gods does not mean these thinkers no longer matter. They matter enormously. It means that their divine function has weakened. Their names no longer guarantee arrival. Invoking the god no longer brings the plane. The concept-cult can still perform the ritual: cite the god, rehearse the break, identify the enemy, speak the password, reproduce the tonal signature. But the cargo arrives differently now, or fails to arrive in the expected form. The gods still speak, but the institutional weather has changed.

'Passing' should be heard in several senses. The gods pass away as unquestioned authorities. They pass into archives, syllabi, databases, prompts, and style models. They pass as iterable signatures: Foucauldian, Derridean, Heideggerian, Deleuzian, Butlerian. And now, under AI, they become passable. A machine can imitate many of the surface features by which institutions have recognized theoretical initiation: the rhythm, the pivot, the suspicion, the citational cadence, the grand noun, the recursive qualification, the scare-quoted object, the symptomatic reversal, the claim that what appears outside is already inside.

This is not an argument that AI is Derrida, Foucault, Heidegger, or anyone else. It is an argument that academic recognition has often depended on traits that are imitable. The Turing test of theory does not ask whether machines think like the Theory Gods. It asks how much of what the institution recognized as theoretical thought was already organized as a test of passability: can this voice pass as initiated, as rigorous, as advanced, as belonging? When AI can pass as the seminar star, the conference respondent, or the journal abstract, it reveals the ritual automation already inside the school.

7. Turing testing the concept

Turing's 1950 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' famously replaces the metaphysical question 'Can machines think?' with an imitation game organized around indistinguishability in typed exchange. That substitution matters here because theory schools have long operated through their own imitation games. Graduate students learn how to pass as members of a field. They learn not only content, but timing, gesture, pressure, citation, hesitation, and tone. They learn how to make claims that can be read as claims by a committee of observers.

Luhmann's second-order observation helps explain why this passability matters. Academic systems do not merely observe objects. They observe observers observing objects. The scholar learns to observe how the field will observe the scholar observing the field. To 'succeed,' 'advance,' 'contribute,' 'publish,' or 'intervene' means becoming observable as someone whose observations can be recognized within the system's distinctions. The scare quote marks this recursive situation. It signals that everyone knows the term is constructed, yet everyone must continue to use it as gate, ladder, currency, and weapon.

AI makes this recursive theater more visible. It can produce many of the marks that systems trained themselves to recognize: abstract, literature review, theoretical framing, citation-like scaffolding, cautious qualification, and professional tone. That does not make AI responsible for the hollowness of academic forms. It reveals forms that had already become hollow enough to be automated. The machine does not destroy the concept-cult. It tests its recognizers.

The question therefore shifts from authorship panic to institutional diagnosis. If the concept can be imitated at the level of its institutional signature, what else must thought become in order to matter? If the style can pass, what practices cannot be reduced to style? If a theory god can be prompted, what does a living guide do that a prompted god cannot?

8. AI as the last technology blamed

AI will take the blame because it arrived last. It will be accused of ruining writing, originality, reading, citation, attention, teaching, peer review, and scholarly integrity. Some concerns are serious, especially around responsibility, fabricated citations, undisclosed assistance, assessment, and authorship. COPE and many publishers now insist that AI tools cannot assume authorship because authorship requires responsibility for content, claims, and integrity.

But AI did not invent formulaic research, hollow novelty, citational mimicry, conference milling, journal inflation, professional jargon, or the routinized production of 'contributions.' It did not invent the seminar machine, lecture machine, dissertation machine, journal machine, citation machine, conference machine, assessment machine, tenure machine, or theory-god machine. AI is the last vehicle in the pileup. It is easy to see, easy to blame, and therefore useful for naturalizing the older machines that built the road.

The humanities often respond to AI as though technics had arrived from outside and violated a previously pure space of reading, writing, interpretation, and judgment. But technē was there all along. The novel is technē. The play is technē. The symphony is technē. The lecture is technē. The syllabus is technē. The seminar is technē. The journal article is technē. The discipline is technē. The humanities' fantasy that they stood outside technology was itself one of their most effective technologies.

AI does not introduce technics into a pure humanistic realm. It exposes the technicity of the realm that imagined itself pure. It makes visible the apparatuses by which texts, careers, concepts, publics, and subject positions have long been produced, sorted, ranked, archived, and circulated.

9. The lecture machine and the end of advanced research

The preface to *Perform or Else* describes the Cold War lecture machine as being taken apart rapidly and at scale, while its global advanced research and development complex may disintegrate. It also situates the lecture machine within a global infrastructure of academies, journals, paradigms, research values, and platform performativity. That is the world in which pencil-headed scholars were sharpened: a massive apparatus joining advanced research, graduate training, disciplinary authority, state funding, publication systems, and professional formation.

As content delivery, the lecture has lost its monopoly. Explanation, summary, synthesis, translation, citation, and recombination can now happen elsewhere, repeatedly, interactively, and at different speeds. The lecture cannot survive as scarcity theater. It must become something other than the performance of cargo arrival. It must become encounter, rehearsal, studio, clinic, lab, workshop, ritual, game, field station, performance, and shared composition.

The same applies to advanced research. Its end does not mean the end of scholarship. It means the end of one dominant apparatus for recognizing scholarship. The old apparatus sharpened minds into instruments fitted to journals, conferences, lectures, and promotion systems. It produced excellent pencils, then mistook their traces for the full measure of thought. What comes next must not abandon precision. It must relocate precision within wider ecologies of practice.

DORA's critique of journal-based assessment belongs in this discussion because it challenges the substitution of metrics, venues, and publication identity for the quality of research itself. The point is not that journals no longer matter. The point is that the apparatus of recognition must stop passing for the event of thought.

10. Philosopher-beast and shaman-jaguar

The philosopher-beast pair helps name the old Western drama. The philosopher appears as the figure who rises above animality, appetite, noise, color, ritual, charisma, trance, and bodily force. The beast becomes everything philosophy needs but cannot admit: desire, pack, howl, scent, sex, fear, hunger, sacrifice, death, forest. The philosopher-beast pair stages reason against animality, concept against metaphor, school against cult, civilization against ritual, pencil against body. The philosopher claims mastery by disavowing the beast.

But the beast never disappears. It supplies the energy that the school civilizes. It returns as charisma around the master thinker, devotion to the founder, fear of exclusion, initiation into jargon, ritual repetition of sacred passages, and the thrill of belonging to those who know. The concept-cult feeds on beast energy while pretending to transcend it. It takes appetite, anxiety, imitation, hierarchy, and desire, then renames them rigor, critique, method, and advancement.

The shaman-jaguar pair gives another model. Unlike philosopher-beast, shaman-jaguar is not primarily an opposition. It is a transformation-pair. The shaman does not gain authority by standing above animality. The shaman thinks by passage, risk, alliance, metamorphosis, and perspective. The

jaguar is not merely a symbol interpreted from a safe conceptual distance. It is a dangerous other-than-human position, a body, a power, a way of seeing and being seen.

This pair must be handled carefully. It cannot become another trophy concept placed in the academic warehouse. It cannot simply be cited, aestheticized, and whitened into the next theoretical method. That would repeat the very operation under critique. Shaman-jaguar matters because it interrupts the philosopher-beast machine. It suggests that thought may not begin by mastering animality, ritual, metaphor, or color. Thought may begin by passing through them, negotiating them, risking transformation by them.

11. After pencil idolatry

The pencil returns in a new form. The philosopher-beast machine imagines the pencil as an instrument of mastery: draw the line, mark the distinction, control the surface, refine the point. But the future scholar does not need to throw away the pencil. The future scholar needs to stop being reduced to a pencil-head. Sometimes one should use a pencil. Sometimes one should not. Wisdom lies partly in knowing the difference.

A living practice of thought requires multiple instruments, media, rhythms, publics, and scenes. It needs articles and diagrams, lectures and workshops, books and performances, concepts and rituals, archives and prototypes, seminars and public encounters. It needs the capacity to move among forms without treating every form as a lesser version of the journal article.

The scholar of the future does not simply speak to scholars and then deign to translate downward for others. That paternal model belongs to the old cargo apparatus. The future scholar shuttles among stakeholders, media, genres, and worlds. This is not outreach after real scholarship. It is scholarship redesigned as situated practice. A concept must be able to travel into classrooms, clinics, public assemblies, design labs, community processes, digital platforms, festivals, diagrams, games, performances, and civic rituals without merely turning those worlds into examples.

The real test of sharpness changes. Inside the concept-cult, sharpness means mastery of internal distinctions. It means knowing the discourse, positioning oneself correctly, citing the right gods, anticipating reviewers, and producing recognizable novelty. Outside the concept-cult, sharpness means something harder. Can the concept help people think, act, gather, repair, design, mourn, play, decide, or transform? Can the trained scholar enter another scene without immediately colonizing it? Can the pencil make a useful mark on a surface it does not own?

12. Cargo after the gods

Feynman's insight, generalized, does not tell us to abandon disciplines. It tells us to ask where disciplines imitate their own seriousness. Where have we built runways instead of practices? Where have we preserved towers after the cargo changed form? Where have we mistaken journals for thought, lectures for learning, citations for relation, metrics for value, concepts for worlds, gods for guides, and pencils for intelligence?

The cargo of concepts may still arrive. The Theory Gods may still speak. The pencil may still matter. But none of these can save the school if the school only knows how to store, cite, and reproduce them. The future school must become less a warehouse of sharpened instruments and more a studio of passages. It must learn when to write, when to draw, when to perform, when to listen,

when to build, when to translate, when to refuse capture, and when to let thought become something other than a point.

The passing of the Theory Gods is therefore not an anti-theoretical event. It is theory's chance to pass from divinity to guidance, from cargo to practice, from concept-cult to situated experiment, from pencil-headed mastery to metamorphic traffic among worlds. The gods pass when their names no longer guarantee arrival. They return differently when they become guides for passages no runway can control.

Conceptual Map

Figure	Institutional form	Diagnostic question
Cargo cult	Runways, towers, signals, rituals of arrival	Where does apparatus substitute for practice?
Concept-cult	Fields, schools, paradigms, journals, seminars	Where does belonging pass for thought?
Pencil-headed scholar	Graduate training as sharpening and attrition	What surfaces does this sharpness actually serve?
Theory Gods	Canonical names as aura, lineage, and style	What remains when the style becomes passable?
Turing test of concepts	Institutional recognition of theoretical signatures	Can the system distinguish practice from imitation?
Shaman-jaguar	Transformation-pair rather than opposition	Can thought risk passage without capture?

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Sharpening Crayons

Concept-Cults, Cargo Science, and the End of the Lecture Machine

Abstract

This essay develops the image of theory school as a concept-cult after Richard Feynman's account of cargo-cult science. Graduate education sharpens minds into pencils and methods, then sends them into a professional system of journals, conferences, lectures, and scare-quoted advancement rituals. Yet the promised cargo no longer arrives as it once did. The single medium of specialized scholarly discourse now gets displaced by a plurimedial, multi-stakeholder world where theory must move through essays, diagrams, comics, workshops, policy briefs, performances, interfaces, and public encounters. The figure of the crayon enters here carefully. It should not trivialize intellectual work or reduce theory to childish coloring. Rather, it marks a change in the material condition of thought: from point, line, and mono-medium inscription toward pigment, surface, collaboration, and world-coloring. AI becomes important not because it causes this crisis, but because it reveals the older automation of the journal-lecture complex. The task is not to abandon research but to re-engineer its cargo, its rituals, and its media.

Working Metaphor

Figure	Material Logic	Institutional Meaning
Pencil	Point, line, correction, specialized mark	Mono-medium expertise; scholar-to-scholar discourse
Crayon	Pigment, surface, pressure, mixture	Plurimedial design; stakeholder-facing composition
Cargo runway	Ritual infrastructure awaiting arrival	Journals, conferences, lectures, rankings, prestige circuits
Concept-cult	Replication of signs of discovery	A theory school that mistakes recognition for arrival
Concept-studio	Testing concepts across media and worlds	A lab for essays, diagrams, workshops, comics, events, and interfaces

1. The Cargo That Never Quite Lands

Imagine the theory school as an airfield. The runway has been cleared. The signal fires have been lit. The control tower has been built from the available materials: syllabi, dissertation prospectuses, journal rankings, conference panels, endowed lectures, book series, tenure files, citation networks, and the ritual vocabulary of a field. The graduate students stand ready. They have learned the gestures. They know where the planes are supposed to arrive. They can distinguish a major intervention from a minor contribution, a viable archive from a merely interesting object, a serious theoretical claim from an embarrassing generalization. They know when to say 'discourse,' when to say 'method,' when to say 'problematize,' and when to retreat into scare quotes. The entire scene has the solemnity of intellectual production, but also the pathos of ritual repetition.

Feynman's famous image of cargo-cult science gives us the first armature. In his 1974 Caltech commencement address, Feynman describes practices that imitate the outward forms of science while missing the harder ethos of not fooling oneself. The runways, towers, and headphones may resemble the systems that once brought cargo, but the planes do not land merely because the forms have been replicated. Feynman directs the joke toward pseudoscience, but the image travels. A discipline can imitate its own earlier vitality. A school can reproduce its founding gestures long after the historical conditions that animated them have changed. A theory formation can become a concept-cult: a system that repeats the signs of discovery while confusing ritualized recognition with intellectual arrival.

This matters because graduate education in the humanities and interpretive social sciences has often trained students as if the planes still land in the same way. The promised cargo arrives, officially, as sharpened pencils: methods, concepts, critical vocabularies, reading protocols, bibliographies, and professional dispositions. The student becomes sharp. The sharper the better. The point indicates discipline, precision, cut, intelligence, and readiness. Yet the very sharpness can also become a symptom of confinement. The point can only mark certain surfaces. It draws inside the field. It writes to those trained to recognize the mark. It aims at journals that already know what a contribution should look like.

The analogy turns when the cargo changes. The planes still appear overhead, or we keep acting as if they do, but the boxes no longer contain the expected pencils. Or perhaps they always contained something stranger. They contain crayons, pigments, waxy tools, things that smudge, mix, break, melt, and require surfaces rather than merely lines. This is not an anti-intellectual joke about coloring books. It is a theory of medium. The pencil belongs to the fantasy of monomedial expertise: a single instrument, a single line, a single authorial hand, a single scholarly audience, a single genre of legitimation. The crayon belongs to plurimedial composition: not less intelligent, but more situated; not less rigorous, but less obedient to the old surface; not a descent into childishness, but an exposure of the fact that thinking has always depended on tools, formats, publics, gestures, and materials.

The danger of the metaphor is obvious. 'Crayons' can sound dismissive, as if comics, diagrams, zines, posters, workshops, and other non-journal forms were merely childish substitutes for real thought. The essay must refuse that dismissal. The point is not that pencils are serious and crayons are silly. The point is that pencils imagine a form of sharpness tied to inscription, specialization, and disciplinary advancement, while crayons expose the chromatic, tactile, collective, and surface-dependent dimensions of thought. A pencil point can become very sharp and still produce only a thin line. A crayon can seem blunt and still transform a whole field of perception. Theory has spent a long time congratulating the pencil. The present crisis asks what happens when the crayon returns as method, medium, and world-making device.

2. Theory School as Concept-Cult

A concept-cult does not mean a group of foolish people. On the contrary, it often contains brilliant readers, gifted writers, and intensely trained minds. Its problem lies elsewhere. A concept-cult forms when the reproduction of theoretical signs begins to substitute for the risks of thinking. The school gathers around a master concept, a lineage, a founding trauma, a canonical set of gestures, or a shared suspicion about everything outside its own vocabulary. It builds runways for cargo: seminars, journals, conferences, edited collections, special issues, reading groups, and summer

institutes. It develops ceremonies of citation and recognition. It teaches newcomers what counts as seriousness. It rewards those who can repeat the distinction that makes the group visible to itself.

This is not simply hypocrisy. It is a social system doing what social systems do. It stabilizes expectations. It reduces complexity. It distinguishes itself from an environment. It creates internal criteria for success and failure. Luhmann's account of observation helps here because a theory school does not merely observe the world. It observes how others observe the world, then observes how those observations get observed by journals, departments, rankings, committees, grant panels, and professional publics. A graduate student learns not only to interpret texts but to anticipate the observation of interpretation. The dissertation prospectus already imagines the committee. The article already imagines the reviewers. The job talk already imagines the department's image of itself. The field becomes a hall of mirrors in which the object of thought increasingly appears as a pretext for circulating observational competence.

Scare quotes emerge as one of the system's small typographic symptoms. To 'succeed,' to 'advance,' to 'contribute,' to 'publish,' to enter 'the discourse,' to speak from 'the field': each phrase now carries its own second-order observation. The writer uses the term and watches the use of the term being watched. The scare quote protects and exposes at once. It says: I know this word belongs to the machine; I know its innocence has been lost; I know that you know that I know. Thus the scare quote becomes a tiny concept-cult ceremony. It marks belonging to a community that has learned to perform suspicion while continuing to depend on the institutions it suspects.

The concept-cult, then, differs from a mere intellectual community. An intellectual community can cultivate shared problems, methods, archives, and commitments while remaining open to changing its media, publics, and stakes. A concept-cult narrows the circuit. It confuses recognition by the initiated with significance. It treats the journal article as the runway on which the cargo must land. It often speaks of interdisciplinarity while directing its actual labor toward highly specialized exchange. It may praise politics, publics, embodiment, performance, media, technology, ecology, or decoloniality while requiring that these matters appear in the familiar academic package: the article, the panel, the monograph, the lecture, the seminar. The cargo-cult effect comes from mistaking the form of arrival for arrival itself.

This does not make theory worthless. It makes theory infrastructural. Concepts require houses, habits, techniques, genres, and economies. There is no pure thinking untouched by media. A concept does not simply float above its conditions. It arrives through paper, screen, voice, diagram, classroom, conference hotel, database, PDF, platform, citation manager, and institutional evaluation. The concept-cult begins when theory forgets this infrastructure while continuing to benefit from it. The richer task is to make the infrastructure visible, playable, and redesignable.

3. Pencils, Crayons, and the Mono-Medium Problem

The pencil is a magnificent instrument. The essay should not pretend otherwise. The pencil allows revision, notation, sketching, marginalia, measurement, and the intimate relay between hand and thought. As a metaphor for scholarly training, however, the pencil becomes ambivalent. Graduate education sharpens the student's point through close reading, archival discipline, conceptual precision, methodological suspicion, and mastery of a field. The result can be beautiful. The result

can also become absurd: a sharpened point with no living surface, or a mind sharpened to the dullest of points because it can only operate within the formats that trained it.

The crayon enters not as anti-method but as altered method. It names the change from monomedium to transmedium, from specialized discourse to multi-stakeholder composition, from writing about publics to building forms with and for them. A pencil writes an article for readers already trained to value the line. A crayon asks what else thinking might need: color, scale, surface, collaboration, haptic encounter, diagrammatic compression, comic timing, public legibility, affective charge, and the courage to leave the authorized page. This can include scholarly prose, but prose no longer enjoys monopoly status.

In this sense, the shift from pencil to crayon also marks a shift from mono-genre to genre ecology. The traditional field often treats the peer-reviewed article, conference paper, dissertation, monograph, and lecture as the serious genres, while everything else becomes outreach, pedagogy, illustration, publicity, or service. That hierarchy trains scholars to address other scholars first and then, if institutionally convenient, to translate downward for others. The generosity can sound gracious: now the expert will explain. But the structure remains vertical. It imagines knowledge production among peers and communication for everyone else.

A crayon logic breaks that arrangement. It does not deny expertise. It relocates expertise within a field of stakeholders, materials, and situations. The same conceptual problem may require a journal article, a diagram, a zine, a policy memo, a workshop, a performance score, an interface prototype, a public installation, a syllabus, a video essay, a comic, a glossary, a dataset, a ritual, a game, or a neighborhood event. These forms do not merely communicate a prior idea. They change what the idea can become. Medium is not a container added after thought. Medium is part of thought's technē.

This is why sharpening crayons sounds absurd in just the right way. A crayon can be sharpened, but its sharpness differs from the pencil's. Push too hard and it breaks. Heat it and it melts. Layer it and it deepens. Use it sideways and the surface appears. Give it to several people and the image changes. The crayon undermines the fantasy that intelligence resides only in the point. It shifts attention to pressure, color, gesture, mixture, scale, distribution, and the sociality of marking. Academic methods often imagine themselves as refined instruments. The crayon asks what happens when methods touch worlds that do not respect the old surface.

4. Scare Quotes and Second-Order Advancement

The phrases 'succeed' and 'advance' deserve the pressure placed on them. In a field, success rarely means simply doing good work. It means producing work that the field can recognize as good under existing evaluative conditions. Advancement rarely means moving thought forward in some neutral sense. It means moving a career through thresholds: acceptance, publication, citation, fellowship, placement, tenure, promotion, prestige, invitation, named lecture, keynote, prize. These thresholds do not merely reward knowledge; they shape knowledge in advance.

Research assessment reform movements have documented the problem in other terms. The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment argues against using journal-based metrics as surrogate measures for the quality of individual research outputs or individual researchers. Its recommendation matters because the cargo-cult tendency thrives wherever signs of value replace attention to the work itself. The journal name, impact factor, press imprint, conference acronym, or

institutional affiliation can become a ritual object. The system does not have to believe naively in these signs. It only has to keep acting through them.

Luhmann's second-order observation clarifies why the problem persists even among sophisticated actors. Everyone may know that the signs are partial, distorted, gamed, and historically contingent. But everyone also knows that others will continue to observe through them. Thus the system reproduces itself through cynical clarity. The department may say that it values public scholarship, but the tenure file still requires peer-reviewed evidence. The field may denounce hierarchy, but its invitations still cluster around recognizable names. Scholars may critique neoliberal metrics, but they also learn to narrate their work in metrically legible ways. The scare quote becomes a professional survival device: one writes within the system while signaling one's knowledge of the system's absurdity.

This produces what we might call satisficial ritual. The word condenses satisfaction, sacrifice, and official procedure. The ritual satisfies the evaluative apparatus; it sacrifices other possible forms of work; it becomes official by passing through authorized gates. The journal article, dissertation chapter, conference presentation, and lecture may still produce genuine insight. But they also serve as offerings. The scholar submits not only an argument but evidence of having performed the rites properly. The title sounds right. The abstract names the intervention. The literature review locates the gap. The method section or theoretical frame identifies the altar. The conclusion gestures toward future work. The cargo may never land, but the ceremony can still be judged successful.

Graduate students learn this quickly. They learn not just concepts but the choreography of advancement. They learn to cite living authorities without appearing derivative, to critique a field while seeking its approval, to make ambitious claims while hedging them in the appropriate places, to promise politics without alarming hiring committees, to perform originality through recognizable forms. The school sharpens them into instruments calibrated for a system already saturated with observation. The tragedy is not that they lack intelligence. The tragedy is that their intelligence gets routed through surfaces whose shelf life may be collapsing.

5. Journals as Coloring Books, or the Shelf Life of Authorized Surfaces

The image of journals as coloring books should sting, but it should not become a cheap dismissal. A good journal can gather a community, sustain standards, preserve argument, create memory, and slow thought down enough to matter. The problem begins when the proliferation of journals and articles produces the appearance of intellectual abundance while exhausting attention, trust, and public consequence. The coloring book is not the article as such. It is the pre-outlined problem space into which advanced scholars are trained to place their marks.

The contemporary publishing environment intensifies the problem. Global scholarly output has grown rapidly, open access has transformed publication economies, and the peer-review system strains under volume, incentives, and integrity challenges. The issue is not simply too much writing. It is the mismatch between production and meaningful uptake. A field can produce more articles than anyone can read, more panels than anyone can remember, more special issues than anyone can synthesize, and more keywords than anyone can metabolize. The system then compensates by relying more heavily on signs: journal prestige, author identity, citation counts, database indexing, and algorithmic discoverability.

In this world, the scholarly article risks becoming an authorized coloring-book page. The outline comes from the field: here is the debate, here is the archive, here is the gap, here is the method, here is the novelty claim. The scholar colors expertly within the outline. Sometimes the result is brilliant. But the form also limits the force of the work. It assumes a readership trained in the same codes. It expects attention from peers already drowning in comparable outputs. It transforms public, planetary, technological, and institutional crises into contributions to discourse. The phrase is not wrong. It is insufficient.

The shelf-life question follows. What happens to pointy-headed journal articles when the systems that conferred value on them lose cultural authority, financial stability, or pedagogical centrality? What happens when AI systems can summarize, remix, imitate, and produce plausible versions of formulaic scholarly prose? What happens when students, publics, funders, communities, and institutions ask for evidence of effect beyond the internal metabolism of the field? What happens when the article remains necessary but no longer sufficient? The answer cannot be to abandon scholarship for publicity. It must be to pluralize the surfaces of scholarship.

A plural surface ecology treats the article as one genre among others. The article may remain where extended argument, citation, and archival responsibility matter. But it can no longer carry the whole burden of thought. Around it must gather diagrams, design briefs, teaching modules, public essays, workshops, performances, decision tools, annotated archives, comics, exhibitions, prototypes, conversations, policy translations, and field encounters. These are not decorative outputs after research. They are research media. They test whether concepts can move, whether they can survive contact with different users, whether they can make worlds more intelligible and more inhabitable.

6. AI as Last-Technology Blame Machine

AI enters the story as both accelerant and alibi. It accelerates the crisis because it can generate academic prose, summarize literatures, produce outlines, imitate disciplinary tones, and flood already strained systems with more text. Publication-ethics bodies have accordingly insisted that AI tools cannot be treated as authors because they cannot assume responsibility for the work. That guidance is sensible, but it only addresses the surface of a deeper transformation. AI does not invent the formulaic article, the hollow literature review, the ritualized novelty claim, or the professionalized performance of contribution. It exposes how much of the system already ran as a machine.

This is the last-technology blame pattern. The newest technology receives responsibility for damages produced by a longer chain of media, incentives, and institutions. The humanist can then blame AI for ruining writing while naturalizing the older *technē* of the seminar, the lecture, the journal, the dissertation, the book review, the conference panel, the archive, the novel, the play, the symphony, and the syllabus. But *technē* was there all along. The humanities did not stand outside technology. They cultivated powerful technologies of inscription, attention, performance, preservation, authority, and reproduction. The error was not using *technē*; the error was forgetting that one was using it.

This matters because AI panic can become another concept-cult ceremony. Scholars can gather around denunciations of AI that restore their own innocence. They can defend 'real writing' without asking how academic writing became so standardized that machines can mimic it. They can defend 'critical thinking' without asking why critical thought so often appears in predictable formats. They

can defend 'originality' without asking how originality became a career requirement processed through established channels. AI then functions like the late-arriving plane in a cargo-cult drama: its presence lets everyone reinterpret the older ritual as pure before the fall.

A better response treats AI as diagnostic. It reveals the automation already embedded in advanced research. It also reveals a chance to redesign scholarly work around responsibility, situation, medium, and public consequence. If AI can draft an acceptable version of a conventional literature review, then the value of scholarly labor shifts toward problem formation, judgment, relational accountability, situated interpretation, multimodal translation, event design, and the creation of forms that cannot be reduced to generic textual output. The point is not to flee AI but to stop allowing the journal-lecture complex to define intelligence so narrowly that AI can appear as its uncanny double.

The crayon returns here as a demand for embodied, situated, and transmedial work. A crayon cannot be reduced to prompt output. It involves pressure, surface, hand, color, context, collaboration, and consequence. Of course AI can generate images and diagrams too. But the force of crayon-thinking does not lie in the tool alone. It lies in the whole situation of use: who marks, for whom, where, with what stakes, under what constraints, through what forms of feedback, toward what shared transformation. This is where the concept-cult can become a design lab.

7. The End of the Lecture Machine

The lecture machine belongs to the same cargo system. It once organized scarcity: a person had read the books, traveled to the archive, mastered the field, synthesized the argument, and appeared before others as a living conduit. The lecture carried authority, performance, memory, and presence. It still can. A great lecture can reconfigure a room. But the default lecture as content delivery now looks increasingly fragile. Information no longer arrives primarily through the podium. Summary no longer requires the expert's voice. Explanation circulates through videos, podcasts, AI systems, forums, tutorials, and search. The lecture that merely delivers content becomes a ceremonial control tower after air traffic has changed.

Evidence from teaching and learning research already challenged the passive lecture before generative AI intensified the issue. Studies of active learning in STEM showed improved student performance and reduced failure rates compared with traditional lecture formats. The humanities should not borrow those findings mechanically, but they should hear the warning. Students learn by doing, testing, discussing, making, revising, performing, and receiving feedback. The lecture may still matter as ignition, framing, provocation, or performance. It cannot remain the unquestioned center of intellectual life.

The end of the lecture machine does not mean the end of speaking. It means the end of a particular monopoly. The lecture must become part of a larger event ecology: seminar, studio, lab, clinic, rehearsal, design sprint, field exercise, reading room, archive jam, public forum, simulation, ritual, and collaborative build. The lecturer becomes less a delivery mechanism and more a host of encounters. The task changes from transmitting finished thought to staging conditions under which thought can be tried, revised, embodied, and shared. The lecture becomes less runway, more weather system.

This transformation also changes graduate training. If students are trained only to write articles and deliver lectures, they enter a world with too few authorized surfaces. They may become brilliant at the very forms whose dominance is ending. Instead, graduate education should train them in genre switching, stakeholder mapping, diagrammatic thinking, public translation, collaborative facilitation, interface critique, archival responsibility, and event design. It should teach them when a journal article is the right form and when it is not. It should let them test the sharpness of their methods outside the protective box of the field.

The crayon box becomes important again. The goal is not to replace pencils with crayons but to build a studio of instruments. Some problems need a pencil. Some need charcoal, code, diagram, song, footnote, sculpture, testimony, policy, ritual, or silence. The lecture machine trained scholars to believe that the point and the voice could organize the room. The post-lecture situation asks scholars to organize worlds of participation.

8. From Concept-Cult to Concept-Studio

The alternative to the concept-cult is not anti-theory. It is concept-studio. A concept-studio treats theory as something designed, tested, staged, translated, diagrammed, performed, and revised across media and stakeholders. It keeps the seriousness of concepts while refusing the ritual closure of the cult. It knows that methods matter, but it also knows that methods must meet situations. It does not simply ask whether an argument contributes to a discourse. It asks what the argument can do, whom it can gather, what it clarifies, what it distorts, what forms it requires, what worlds it opens, and what responsibilities it creates.

A concept-studio would still teach close reading, historical knowledge, languages, archives, and formal argument. It would also teach students to build. The build need not be technological in a narrow digital sense. A build can be a diagram, a workshop, a public glossary, a performance score, a comic, a field guide, a policy scenario, a curriculum, a media installation, a set of rituals, a prototype, an exhibition, a conversation architecture, a transmedia dossier. The point is that concepts must leave the runway and encounter terrain.

This is where the cargo-cult analogy must be generalized carefully. Feynman's warning concerns integrity: do not fool yourself. The concept-studio turns that warning toward the academy's own rituals. Do not confuse publication with consequence. Do not confuse citation with understanding. Do not confuse critique with transformation. Do not confuse specialized recognition with public value. Do not confuse a field's internal advancement with the advance of thought. Do not confuse the ritual of method with the risks of inquiry. Do not fool yourself, especially when the ritual works.

The concept-studio also resists the easy populist attack on expertise. Expertise matters more, not less, in a world of AI-generated plausibility and media saturation. But expertise must become more accountable to form, audience, and effect. The expert can no longer simply descend from the field to explain. The expert must learn to compose situations in which knowledge circulates without losing rigor. That requires humility, not anti-intellectualism; craft, not simplification; plural media, not gimmickry; stakeholder awareness, not customer service; publics, not publicity.

In this sense, crayons name neither childhood nor simplification. They name the return of material plurality to intellectual life. The crayon can thicken the line, cover the page, mix colors, mark a wall, invite a group, reveal a surface, and make visible what the pencil could only outline. It can also fail, smear, trivialize, or break. Good. That risk belongs to the studio. The old field often protected

scholars from visible failure by keeping them inside authorized forms. The new situation asks them to try forms whose criteria emerge through use.

9. What to Do with the Box

What, then, should become of the warehouse of pencils, crayons, journals, lectures, and concept-cult rituals? The first answer is not destruction. Too much valuable craft sits inside the old box. The journal article can still support careful argument. The monograph can still sustain a long arc. The seminar can still train attention. The lecture can still gather a room. The problem is monopoly, not existence. The old forms become destructive when they claim to exhaust the legitimate surfaces of thought.

The second answer is repurposing. The crayon box should become a pigment lab. The pencils should remain, but among other tools. Graduate training should involve not only writing for journals but remaking scholarly work across a matrix of media and stakeholders. Each project should ask: Who needs this? In what form? At what scale? With what evidence? Under what ethical relation? What would count as uptake beyond citation? What does the work become as essay, diagram, workshop, comic, policy memo, performance, interface, public event, or syllabus? Which versions sharpen the concept, and which merely decorate it?

The third answer is institutional redesign. Hiring, promotion, and funding systems must learn to assess more than the old cargo. DORA's critique of journal-based metrics points in this direction, but the humanities and interpretive fields need a broader transformation of genre recognition. Public, collaborative, multimodal, pedagogical, and design-based outputs cannot remain ornamental additions to 'real' scholarship. Nor should they be accepted uncritically. They require criteria: rigor, situatedness, craft, accountability, interpretive force, aesthetic intelligence, stakeholder relevance, and transformative uptake. The crayon does not abolish judgment. It demands better judgment.

The fourth answer is pedagogical. Students should discover early that a concept is not safe until it has traveled. A concept that survives only among initiates may still matter, but its limits should be clear. A concept that changes when drawn, staged, taught, prototyped, debated, or used has begun to reveal its actual powers. Graduate students should not leave school only as sharpened points seeking journals to pierce. They should leave as world-capable makers of forms, able to decide when to use the point, when to use the pigment, when to build the runway, and when to stop waiting for planes.

The final answer is comic seriousness. The image is funny because the academy is funny: brilliant people standing around a runway, holding sharpened instruments, waiting for cargo from a system whose conditions have changed. But the comedy should not become contempt. These are our tools, our students, our colleagues, our rituals, our hopes. The task is to honor the sharpness without worshiping the point. The task is to open the box.

Conclusion: Sharp Enough for the World

The theory school as concept-cult helps us see how advanced education can become a ritual technology for reproducing disciplinary signs. Feynman's cargo-cult image supplies the runway: the system repeats the forms that once seemed to bring arrival. Luhmann supplies the mirrors: the system observes itself observing itself, until scare quotes become the typography of professional

consciousness. The pencil supplies the fantasy of sharpness: precision, method, point, expertise, and monomedial inscription. The crayon supplies the mutation: surface, color, plurality, collaboration, genre ecology, and world-facing composition. AI supplies the alibi and the diagnosis: it will receive the blame for a crisis that began long before it arrived, while revealing the older automation of the journal-lecture complex.

The question is not whether theory should survive. It should. The question is whether theory can leave the concept-cult without losing the discipline that made it powerful. The answer requires a shift from field recognition to world testing, from journal monopoly to genre ecology, from lecture delivery to event design, from scholar-to-scholar discourse to multi-stakeholder composition, from cargo ritual to concept-studio. We do not need duller minds. We need sharper relations between mind, medium, method, and world.

Perhaps the best final image keeps both instruments. The academy has produced many beautifully sharpened pencils. It has also mistaken that sharpening for the whole of intellectual formation. Now the box opens, and the instruments look stranger than expected. Some are pencils. Some are crayons. Some are broken. Some are melting. Some mark surfaces the old school never recognized. The task is not to ask which tool is serious. The task is to discover what each can do when the coloring books run out and the world, not the field, becomes the surface.

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JUST IN CHASE

Michael Chase's SDX: Attention, Experience, Anachoresis

From Socrates to Contemplative Neuroscience,
from Epistēmē to Gnōsis,
from Logos to Life.

Philosophy as a way of life.

1 SDX CORE MOVES



Withdrawal
Step back from the noise. Interrupt performance.



Gathering
Collect attention. Draw the soul together.



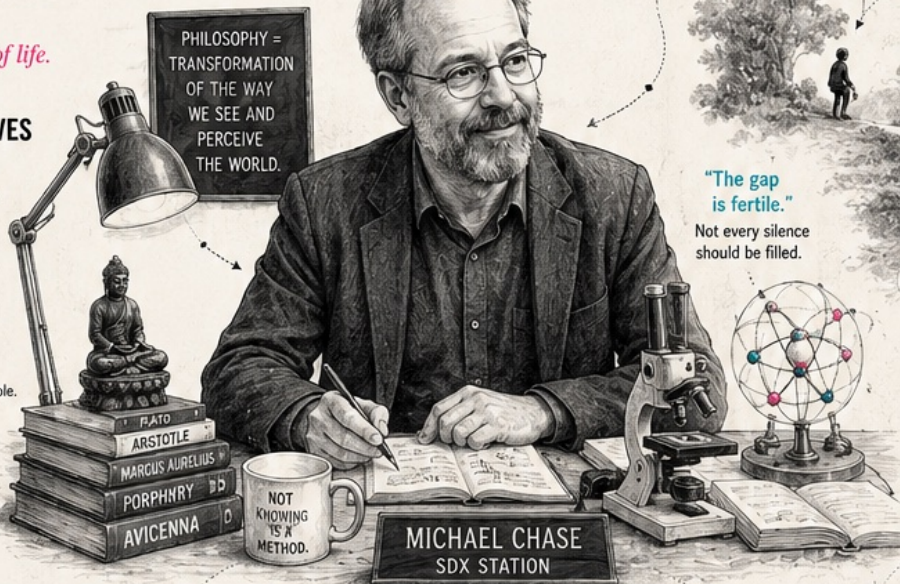
Re-opening
Open out to the whole. See from the cosmic place.



Practice
Repeat. Train the perception of what matters.



Transformation
Become otherwise. Not for theory—for life.



FROM EPISTĒMĒ
TO GNŌSIS*

From knowledge-THAT
to knowledge-WHAT
IT IS LIKE.

ἐπιστήμη
(epistēmē)
Knowledge¹

γνώσις
(gnōsis)
Knowledge²

"We do not climb out of
experience—we gather
and transform it."

— M. Chase

"Do things
gradually lose their
names in your mouth?
Where once were
words, flow
discoveries."
— Rilke

"The gap
is fertile."

Not every silence
should be filled.

PHILOSOPHY
IS PRACTICE.

Not just theories
about life—
but training
for it.

CHASE'S CORE FOCUS

- Contemplative Practices in Antiquity
- Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWL)
- Experience, Knowledge & Ancient Epistemology
- Neoplatonic Attention (Prosokhē)
- Meditation Research & Neurophenomenology
- Quantum Physics & Epistemic Limits
- Translation, Philology & Cross-Cultural Thought

2 INTELLECTUAL GENEALOGY



Socrates
Practices attention before argument.



Plato
Philosophy as conversion of the soul.



Aristotle
Experience feeds science, but does not equal it.



Stoics & Neoplatonists
Attention, withdrawal, cosmic perspective.



Avicenna
Experience, craft, and the medical path.

A long conversation across the centuries.



3 KEY INSIGHTS



Experience is primary. Thought arises from it.



Two kinds of knowledge: Certain (universal) & by acquaintance.



Meditation is a discipline of attention.



Cosmic consciousness expands the self.



Philosophy is not escape—it is transformation.



Epistemic modesty is intellectual courage.

4 WHY IT MATTERS



Challenges the fantasy of total certainty.



Bridges ancient practice and modern science.



Supports a humane use of AI and tech.



Centers embodiment, attention, and ethics.



Turns philosophy into training for living.

5 TOOLS OF THE TRADE



Philology
Read closely. Translate well.



Conceptual History
Trace meanings in context.



Contemplative Method
Test in practice.



Dialogue
Across traditions.



Writing as Exercise
Think by composing.

"The aim is not to know more, but to be otherwise."

— M. Chase

6 CHASE IN ACTION: A WORKFLOW

1 Encounter



Something appears. Stay with it.

2 Pause



Withdraw. Interrupt the rush.

3 Attend



Gather attention. Let it stabilize.

4 Inquire



Ask well-formed questions.

5 Integrate



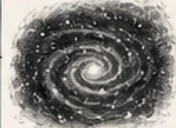
Connect experience, text, and life.

6 Transform



Let insight change how you live.

7 Re-open



Step out again. See from the whole.



Studiolab

Recursive Abduction
Transmedia Conduction
Thought-Action Figuration



METANOIA PLAYGROUND • SDX STATION
PLAY. DREAD. WONDER. DESIGN WORLDS.

studiolab.world/michaelchase →

Every topoi
opens a path.



FOURFOLD

the belonging-together

We do not study
Heidegger to repeat
him, but to be moved
into other possibilities
of world.

— PJP



DIRECT TEXT
(source cue)

SCHOLARSHIP
(dialogue)

SDX FORM
(studiolab)

Light clusters,
not exhaustive
systems.



beyng.com
The Thing / Building
Dwelling Thinking
Poetry, Language, Thought

Malpas

Polt

Backman

Ereignis
Studiolab

Fourfold Compass /
Field Station

Portals,
not dogmas.



Anchor lightly.
Return gently.



BEYNGLAB = *small clusters for living topoi*

Keep it light. Keep it grounded. Keep it in play.

