

Mise en Abyme of Gradient Descent

Artificial Intelligence Reports 13

Machinic Genres Mixing
JM, ChatGPT, beyng.com

Studiolab



Mise en Abyrne of Gradient Descent

Artificial Intelligence Reports, Vol 13

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 13

Reports, Essays, Posters, Zines and Kites

Creation Ex Nihilo, Property Ex Machina: Intellectual Property, Outsourcing the Abyss, and the Forgetting of Beyng	1
Mise en Abyme of Gradient Descent: Forgetting Machines, AI, and Property Ex Machina	9
Descent / Dissent: Gradient Falls, Radiant Refusals, and Angels of History	18
A Catalogue of Fourfolding: Toryx, Helyx, Cosmogram, Dasein Design, and the Geometries of World-Gathering	31
From Fourfolding to Sixfolding: Toryx-Helyx Geometry, Dasein Design, and the Origin of Re-Artable Worlds	53
Kitelichkeit: Guerrilla Angels, Taut-Action Figuration, and the American K-Function	63
Da, Da, Da, +L: French Fourfolding: From Lacan's Rome Discourse to Derrida, DnG, and the Sinthome	79

Diagrams appear in different ways.



Mise en abyme of the forgetting of Beyng:
abyss recurs via scene, trace, withdrawal.

Creation *Ex Nihilo*, Property *Ex Machina*

Intellectual Property, Outsourcing the Abyss, and the Forgetting of Beyng

Modern intellectual property culture wants the prestige of creation from nothing without the ordeal of nothingness. It wants the author, artist, inventor, scholar, entrepreneur, or platform-profile to appear as an origin: the one who made something new, something proper, something ownable. The work seems to arrive from nowhere, and precisely for that reason it can be marked as mine. Yet the very claim depends on a disavowed abyss. No creator begins from nothing in the simple sense. Creation emerges from language, inheritance, genre, training, labor, media, death, accident, silence, unconsciousness, and the prior work of others. The supposedly original work rises from a field that is never purely owned.

The paradox is therefore sharper than the familiar complaint that intellectual property overstates originality. It is not simply that people want to own what they make. It is that modern authorship often wants the reward of nothingness without exposure to nothingness. The abyss must be present, because without rupture, ungrounding, and the death of old forms, nothing genuinely new arrives. But the abyss must also be refused, because once acknowledged it unsettles the fantasy of sovereign authorship. So nothingness is split. For the privileged creator, nothingness appears as depth, genius, risk, vocation, originality, or inspiration. For those marked as other, nothingness appears as lack, darkness, irrationality, primitivism, madness, animality, disposability, or data.

The formula is brutal: *my nothingness is genius; your nothingness is lack*. Intellectual property becomes one apparatus through which this asymmetry gets stabilized. It protects the creator's claim to originality by concealing the abyssal conditions of creation. When that abyss cannot be acknowledged as a shared source of emergence, it is projected onto others as social non-being and then extracted as creative resource. The history of originality is therefore inseparable from a history of projection: the abyss is outsourced.

I. The Ancient Scandal of Non-Being

The trouble begins early. In the Greek philosophical inheritance, non-being is not merely an ordinary topic. It is a scandal for thought. Parmenides gives the problem its starkest shape: what is, is; what is not, is not. This does not simply prohibit casual talk about nothing. It presses thought toward fullness, stability, identity, and presence. To think, in this tradition, often means to gather the real under the sign of what can stand, show itself, and be said as being. Non-being either dissolves into error or becomes an impossible object of discourse.

Plato complicates the prohibition. The Sophist has to find a way to speak of falsehood, difference, image, and non-being without reducing them to sheer nothing. Non-being becomes not absolute nullity but difference: not this, other than this, a relation inside the field of saying and appearing. That move is decisive. It permits images, copies, sophists, poets, and false statements to exist without granting them the same ontological rank as truth. Yet the hierarchy remains. Full presence stands higher than shadow, copy, imitation, and semblance. Western metaphysics repeatedly returns to this gravitational field: being over becoming, form over matter, original over copy, presence over trace.

This is why the modern language of originality already carries an ancient charge. To be original is not merely to be new. It is to appear closer to source, presence, and origin than the derivative copy. The original is imagined as full; the copy as deficient. The author becomes the one who stands near the origin of the work, while the copier, imitator, translator, performer, folk transmitter, machine, apprentice, or archive occupies a secondary and suspect position. The old distinction between being and non-being returns in cultural form as the distinction between origin and derivation.

Yet creativity rarely obeys this hierarchy. Art, thought, ritual, craft, and invention move through mixtures: repetition and rupture, apprenticeship and deviation, citation and distortion, inheritance and betrayal. Creation needs what metaphysics often demotes. It needs copy, trace, error, shadow, dream, difference, and non-identity. The abyss is not outside creation. It is one of creation's conditions.

II. Ex Nihilo and the Secular Little God

Christian theology changes the problem by giving creation from nothing a doctrinal center. Creation *ex nihilo* belongs first to God. The world is not fashioned from a pre-existing rival matter that limits divine power. It is created by God from nothing, not as a rearrangement of already given stuff but as a radical act of divine donation. Human making does not occupy the same rank. Human beings craft, interpret, receive, illuminate, cultivate, imitate, and transform. They do not create as God creates.

Modernity slowly secularizes this divine privilege. The romantic author, the genius, the inventor, and eventually the entrepreneur inherit a diminished but powerful version of the theological power to originate. The creator seems to carry an interior spark that cannot be reduced to tradition, craft, patronage, workshop, market, or institution. The work becomes the outward expression of inward singularity. Authorship becomes not only a practical attribution but a metaphysical aura: the work bears the mark of the unique creative self.

The legal history of copyright does not simply mirror this romantic story, but it is entangled with it. As Martha Woodmansee and Mark Rose have shown, modern authorship emerges through changing economic, legal, and cultural conditions, not from timeless self-evidence (Woodmansee 1984; Rose 1993). The author as proprietor is a historical production. The work must become detachable, reproducible, and marketable; the author must become legible as the origin whose rights travel with the work. The modern author is thus both a metaphysical figure and an administrative construct.

This is why intellectual property does more than protect expression. It trains a culture to imagine creativity as owned origination. Copyright, patent, and trademark differ legally, but at the level of cultural fantasy they converge around a claim: this came from me; this bears my mark; this enters the world under my name. The creator becomes a little god whose act of emergence can be converted into a proprietary asset. The miracle becomes paperwork. *Ex nihilo* becomes a certificate.

III. The Author Function and the Property Machine

Foucault's "author function" helps dislodge the naturalness of this arrangement. The author is not simply the biological person who wrote words. The author is a function of discourse, classification, attribution, discipline, punishment, value, and circulation (Foucault 1977). Some statements need authors; others do not. Some texts become property; others remain anonymous, collective, sacred, oral, bureaucratic, or disposable. The author function organizes the way a culture asks who may speak, who may own, who may be cited, who may be punished, and who may be forgotten.

Intellectual property intensifies the author function by fusing attribution with ownership. The author is not only the source of meaning but the authorized claimant. The name does not merely identify; it encloses. It draws a border around a field of signs and says: this is proper to someone. The work becomes an object that can circulate while remaining tethered to a legal subject. The signature, copyright notice, brand, patent number, username, watermark, and platform profile all repeat this gesture: they mark a trace as property.

But every such mark depends on repeatability. Derrida's critique of signature and presence matters here. A signature works because it can be detached from the living presence of the signer and recognized again elsewhere. A text works because it can travel beyond its origin. Meaning works because signs can be repeated in contexts the author cannot govern (Derrida 1988). The very machinery that secures ownership also destabilizes the fantasy of pure origin. To own a trace, one must first let it become iterable; to claim presence, one must depend on absence.

Property *ex machina* names this contradiction. The apparatus of ownership arrives after the event of emergence and mechanizes it. It stores, tags, registers, licenses, markets, litigates, and monetizes what appeared in a more unruly field. The work is born in exposure, relation, inheritance, and opening; property then descends like a machine to declare the work an asset. This does not mean every claim of attribution is false or every protection unjust. It means the metaphysical story attached to ownership needs critique. Property does not create the event. It captures it after the fact.

IV. The Abyss as Source, the Abyss as Stigma

The most important turn comes when we ask who is allowed to have an abyss. In romantic and modernist traditions, the abyss often names depth: melancholy, madness, dream, death, silence, exile, trauma, intoxication, the unconscious, the void before form. The abyss gives the artist gravitas. It gives the philosopher depth. It gives the mystic revelation. It gives the avant-garde rupture. It gives the genius a dramatic relation to the unknown. To enter the abyss is to risk dissolution, but also to return with a work.

For others, however, abyssal language functions differently. The same nothingness that ennobles the creator can be projected onto colonized, racialized, gendered, poor, disabled, animalized, or otherwise subordinated people as lack. The other becomes closer to nature, body, instinct, chaos, superstition, darkness, matter, or noise. The dominant creator then extracts from this projected abyss: rhythm, myth, sexuality, spirituality, labor, ornament, raw material, native knowledge, folk form, street style, ritual energy, data, and pain. What is stigmatized in the other returns as originality in the owner.

This is not an accidental hypocrisy but a structure. The creator needs the abyss, fears the abyss, projects the abyss, extracts from the projected abyss, and then claims the resulting form as property. The abyss is privatized as genius and externalized as otherness. Said's analysis of Orientalism remains crucial here: the West repeatedly stages the East as depth, mystery, sensuality, irrationality, and danger, then uses that staging to authorize knowledge and possession (Said 1978). Fanon shows how colonial and racial regimes force the colonized subject to inhabit a zone of projected lack and negation (Fanon 1967). Wynter pushes the argument further by showing how "Man" becomes a falsely universal genre of the human through the exclusion and devaluation of others (Wynter 2003).

Anthropology and art history supply parallel examples. The shaman, the primitive artist, the native informant, the folk musician, the outsider artist, the madwoman, the muse, and the machine all become figures through which dominant systems encounter a disavowed outside. Taussig's work on shamanism, colonialism, terror, and healing shows how colonial fantasy and mimetic power braid together around the figure of wildness (Taussig 1987). The shaman may become a source of fascination precisely because dominant rationality has expelled from itself the powers of trance, healing, terror, animality, and transformation. The other is made to carry the abyss that the modern subject both needs and refuses.

Intellectual property often formalizes this extraction. It can recognize the individual proprietor while failing to recognize collective tradition, communal practice, sacred restriction, ecological relation, or ancestral transmission. A company can patent, brand, or copyright what it has translated into a legible proprietary form, while the conditions that made the form possible remain unprotected or are protected only weakly. The abyssal field of relation becomes invisible once the work appears as a discrete owned object. Property cleans the trace.

V. Heidegger: Nothing, Beyng, and the Forgetting of Forgetting

Heidegger's importance for this argument lies in his refusal to let nothingness remain merely negative. In "What Is Metaphysics?" he famously insists that the nothing is not just an empty concept opposed to beings. Anxiety discloses beings as a whole by withdrawing their everyday obviousness. The nothing is not a thing, but it is not simply nothing in the banal sense either. It is bound to the clearing in which beings can appear (Heidegger 1998). Nothingness therefore belongs to disclosure, not merely to absence.

This point matters for creation. The new does not appear simply because a subject asserts ownership. It appears because an opening, clearing, break, or withdrawal allows something to come forth otherwise. Creation requires a relation to what is not yet a being, not yet a product, not yet a concept, not yet property.

This is not the romantic myth of the lone genius staring into darkness. It is a more impersonal and historical claim: emergence happens through openings that no subject fully owns.

Heidegger's later language of *Beyng* intensifies the problem. "Being" in the ordinary metaphysical sense tends to become the highest or most general name for beings. "Beyng" marks a more archaic, difficult, and eventual thinking of the clearing, withdrawal, and history through which beings appear at all (Heidegger 2012). The spelling itself performs a disturbance. It signals that the old vocabulary has become too smooth. *Beyng* names not a new object but the trembling of the question that metaphysics has covered over.

The "forgetting of Being" is therefore not an ordinary lapse of memory. It is a historical condition in which thought becomes absorbed in beings, objects, representations, resources, and systems while losing the question of the opening that lets them appear. The "forgetting of forgetting" is still deeper. It means that the loss itself no longer appears as loss. The culture does not even know that the question has withdrawn. It moves among assets, files, brands, identities, datasets, deliverables, and properties as if this inventory exhausted reality.

Intellectual property belongs to this forgetting when it converts emergence into owned being. A work arrives from a field of relation, but the apparatus records an entity. It asks who owns the work, not what opening allowed it to appear. It asks how the asset circulates, not how language, death, craft, culture, and others already inhabit it. It asks how to defend the boundary, not how the boundary was made. Property can therefore become a technique for forgetting the abyss.

VI. Mise en Abyme: The Cliff, the Rescue, and the Repetition

The visual figure of the cliff gives this argument its image. Two figures stand at the edge of a precipice. One leans out; one falls, clings, or reaches; the abyss opens beneath them. The scene already divides nothingness into several registers. There is the abyss as danger, the abyss as source of sublime power, the abyss as theatrical staging, and the abyss as that which gives the figures their dramatic meaning. Without the void, the gesture of rescue would lose force. The abyss makes the scene legible.

But when the scene becomes *mise en abyme*, the abyss repeats itself inside itself. The cliff scene appears again in the distance, then again, then again, each repetition smaller, mistier, less secure. The image becomes not merely a representation of danger but a diagram of recursive forgetting. Each ledge stages a relation to the abyss; each repetition turns that relation into a trace; each trace recedes into mist. The abyss is not one depth below the subject. It is a structure of repeated projection and withdrawal.

This gives us a powerful image of the forgetting of *Beyng*. The culture stands at the cliff edge, performing rescue, mastery, ownership, and drama, while the abyss that makes the performance possible recedes into the background. Then the same scene repeats. Another author claims origin. Another institution secures property. Another platform registers a trace. Another other is made to bear the unowned darkness. Another machine stores the event. Each repetition deepens the forgetting, because the system gets better at handling the scene while losing the question of the abyss.

The figure also complicates the fantasy of rescue. Who rescues whom from the abyss? The creator may imagine himself rescuing form from chaos, civilization from savagery, art from raw material, knowledge from superstition, innovation from waste, data from noise. But this rescue often masks extraction. The one pulled from the abyss may be made grateful, silent, legible, and ownable. The abyss gets narrated as a threat only so that the rescuer can become author. In this sense, rescue can become capture.

A different reading remains possible. The ledge can also mark solidarity with exposure. The creator does not own the abyss or master it. The creator stands beside others at the edge, acknowledging shared vulnerability, inherited debts, and the unowned field from which forms arise. In that reading, creation does not mean bringing something from nothing into property. It means composing with openings, traces, ancestors, strangers, machines, materials, and risks without denying them.

VII. AI and the Return of the Disavowed Field

Artificial intelligence makes this contradiction embarrassingly visible. Generative AI produces by training on large corpora, modeling patterns, and generating new outputs from statistical and technical mediation. It obviously depends on prior works, languages, forms, categories, labels, infrastructures, labor, and compute. For that reason, AI seems to many creators like theft, and in many contexts that charge has real ethical and legal force. Training regimes, data scraping, labor exploitation, platform opacity, and uncompensated use of creative work deserve serious critique.

Yet AI also exposes something more unsettling: human creativity has never been pure self-presence either. Human creators train on prior material, absorb styles, learn genres, imitate teachers, misread influences, metabolize archives, echo enemies, quote unconsciously, and recombine cultural forms. The difference between human and machine creation remains important, but the old fantasy of immaculate originality cannot survive the comparison untouched. AI does not simply threaten intellectual property. It reveals the abyssal field that intellectual property had helped cover over.

This is why AI panic often sounds metaphysical. The worry is not only economic, although livelihoods matter. It is also ontological. The human creator suddenly sees that originality may have depended all along on processes of training, iteration, recombination, and inheritance. The machine appears as an obscene mirror. It performs without the romantic anguish, without the aura of interiority, without the old theatrical relation to the abyss. It shows the mechanism where the creator wanted mystery, and it shows dependency where the owner wanted origin.

Here property *ex machina* becomes literal. Platforms ingest traces, automate recombination, produce outputs, and then attach new proprietary systems to the results. The old IP fantasy and the new platform machine do not simply oppose each other. They feed each other. The romantic author demands protection against machinic extraction, while the machine intensifies the very logic of capture that already haunted authorship. Both may refuse the unowned field in different ways. One says: the work is mine because it came from my inner abyss. The other says: the work is ours because we own the machine that processed the traces. In both cases, the shared abyss risks disappearance.

VIII. Against Absolute Ownership: Attribution after the Abyss

The point is not to abolish attribution. Nor is it to romanticize theft, appropriation, or platform extraction. Creators need protections; communities need rights; workers need compensation; sacred and communal practices need defense against extraction; vulnerable people need more than exposure. The critique of absolute ownership should not become an alibi for stronger powers to take whatever they want. The question is how to protect creation without reproducing the metaphysical lie that creation begins in a sovereign subject and only later enters the world.

A less false account would begin from dependency. Every work emerges from a field. That field includes named influences, unnamed labor, institutions, tools, genres, materials, translations, publics, archives, technical systems, wounds, jokes, climates, bodies, and the dead. Attribution should not pretend to exhaust the field, but it can make parts of it visible. Ownership should not claim metaphysical origin, but it can help

distribute responsibility, credit, livelihood, and care. Protection should not erase the abyss; it should prevent the powerful from forcing others to become the abyss.

This requires distinguishing fertile nothingness from assigned nothingness. Fertile nothingness names the open, the unformed, the clearing, the interval, the silence before speech, the death of an old form, the break in a system, the passage into what has not yet appeared. Assigned nothingness names social non-being: being made nobody, resource, object, primitive, data, waste, background, muse, native informant, raw material, or disposable labor. Creation may need the first. Justice must refuse the second.

The ethical problem of intellectual property appears precisely at their crossing. When fertile nothingness is acknowledged as shared opening, creation can become collaborative, situated, citational, and responsible. When fertile nothingness is disavowed, it returns as assigned nothingness for others. The abyss that could have been a common site of emergence becomes a colonial, racial, gendered, classed, or machinic burden. Someone else is made to fall so that the creator can stand at the ledge as owner.

Conclusion: The Machine Arrives Too Late

“Creation Ex Nihilo, Property Ex Machina” names a historical mutation. What theology once reserved for God, modernity lends to the author, genius, inventor, and entrepreneur. What capitalism then does is convert quasi-divine creativity into an asset. What technology does is store, circulate, optimize, and monetize the trace. What AI now reveals is that creativity was never pure self-presence in the first place. It was always mediated, trained, borrowed, recombined, haunted, and exposed.

The machine of property arrives too late. It appears after language has already spoken through us, after the dead have already taught us, after others have already labored, after forms have already circulated, after the abyss has already opened. Property may organize claims, but it cannot truthfully claim to have originated the event. Its metaphysical overreach lies in converting emergence into possession and then forgetting the conversion.

Heidegger helps us name the deeper danger: not just forgetting Being, but forgetting that we have forgotten. At that point, the abyss no longer appears as question. It appears only as someone else’s lack, someone else’s darkness, someone else’s madness, someone else’s primitive energy, someone else’s unpaid labor, someone else’s data. The culture wants creation from nothing while forcing others to become the nothing from which creation is extracted.

A different practice of creation would begin at the ledge without claiming mastery over the abyss. It would ask what openings made the work possible, what debts remain unacknowledged, what others have been made to carry, what machines are capturing, and what forms of protection can defend creation without lying about its source. Originality would no longer mean purity. It would mean a passage through relation: a way of bringing something forth without denying the abyss that made arrival possible.

Creation ex nihilo becomes property ex machina when the miracle of emergence is processed through the apparatus of ownership. The task is not to destroy the work or abandon the creator. The task is to remember the abyss without outsourcing it, to protect making without sanctifying possession, and to let Being’s withdrawal disturb the smooth machinery of mine.

References

- Benjamin, Walter. 2008. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version." In *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, 19–55. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Biagioli, Mario, Peter Jaszi, and Martha Woodmansee, eds. 2011. *Making and Unmaking Intellectual Property: Creative Production in Legal and Cultural Perspective*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Boyle, James. 1996. *Shamans, Software, and Spleens: Law and the Construction of the Information Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1976. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1988. "Signature Event Context." In *Limited Inc*, translated by Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, 1–23. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. "What Is an Author?" In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, 113–138. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1977. "The Question Concerning Technology." In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, 3–35. New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1998. "What Is Metaphysics?" In *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, translated by David Farrell Krell, 82–96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2000. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 2012. *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lessig, Lawrence. 2004. *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Moten, Fred. 2013. "Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112 (4): 737–780.
- Plato. 1997. "Sophist." In *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper, translated by Nicholas P. White, 235–293. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Rose, Mark. 1993. *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Taussig, Michael. 1987. *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Woodmansee, Martha. 1984. "The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the 'Author.'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17 (4): 425–448.
- Wynter, Sylvia. 2003. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 (3): 257–337.

Mise en Abyme of Gradient Descent

Forgetting Machines, AI, and Property Ex Machina

Abstract

This essay extends the argument of Creation Ex Nihilo, Property Ex Machina by turning from intellectual property and the outsourcing of the abyss to the technical and metaphysical operation of gradient descent. If modern authorship wants the prestige of creation from nothing while refusing the ordeal of nothingness, machine learning makes the refusal operational: the abyss becomes a loss landscape. Gradient descent does not create ex nihilo. It learns ex errore, from error, misfit, deviation, and correction. It therefore belongs to a longer genealogy of forgetting machines: memory theaters, books, archives, databases, models, and platforms that remember by formatting what must disappear. The model does not remember sources as sources. It converts examples into tendencies, tendencies into weights, weights into probabilities, and probabilities into outputs that can be owned, branded, licensed, and litigated. In this passage, active forgetting becomes automated, provenance becomes residue, and nothingness becomes optimizable loss. The question is not whether AI is simply creative or simply theft, but how machine learning intensifies the metaphysical and political history through which emergence becomes property and others are made to bear the abyss as lack, data, labor, or noise.

I. From Creation Ex Nihilo to Correction Ex Errore

Modern intellectual property culture wants a miracle without wanting the abyss that makes miracles thinkable. It wants the author, artist, scholar, inventor, or entrepreneur to appear as the source of something new, proper, and ownable. The work seems to arrive from nowhere, and because it seems to arrive from nowhere, it can be marked as mine. Yet the previous essay, Creation Ex Nihilo, Property Ex Machina, argued that this fantasy depends on a disavowed field: language, inheritance, genre, training, labor, media, death, accident, silence, the unconscious, and the prior work of others. No creator begins from nothing in the simple sense. The supposedly original work rises from conditions that no subject fully owns.

The sharper paradox concerns the distribution of nothingness. For the privileged creator, the abyss can appear as depth, genius, vocation, originality, risk, or inspiration. For others, the same abyss gets projected as lack, darkness, irrationality, primitivism, madness, animality, disposability, or data. The brutal formula is: my nothingness is genius; your nothingness is lack. Intellectual property stabilizes this asymmetry when it protects the creator's claim to originality while concealing the abyssal conditions of creation. When the abyss cannot be acknowledged as a shared source of emergence, it gets outsourced to others as social non-being and extracted as creative resource.

Gradient descent enters at precisely this point. It gives the metaphysical drama a technical form. A machine-learning model does not create from nothing. It begins somewhere - often with randomized parameters - measures the distance between its output and a target, adjusts the parameters, and repeats. It learns by descending through error. The process is neither divine creation *ex nihilo* nor romantic creation from an inner abyss. It is correction *ex errore*: emergence from error, misfit, deviation, and repeated adjustment.

That simple shift changes the entire argument. The abyss does not disappear in machine learning. It gets reformatted. What the artist calls rupture, what the mystic calls void, what Heidegger thinks as the withdrawal that lets beings appear, the machine receives as loss. Nothingness becomes a loss landscape. The model does not dwell in the abyss. It optimizes across it. It does not ask what it means that something appears rather than nothing. It asks how far the output remains from the target and how the parameters should change. Where Heidegger hears the withdrawal of Being, gradient descent registers loss. Where the artist feels the abyss, the machine calculates error. Where intellectual property claims originality, the trained model hides the descent through countless prior traces.

This is why gradient descent belongs inside Property Ex Machina. It shows that modern AI does not merely threaten the old fantasy of human originality. It also inherits and intensifies that fantasy's deepest machinery. The model depends on vast fields of prior material, but once the output appears, new claims gather around it: the platform's claim, the company's claim, the user's claim, the rights-holder's claim, the investor's claim, the brand's claim. The descent gets erased. The output gets claimed. Property arrives late and calls itself origin.

II. Forgetting Machines

The phrase forgetting machines names the broader genealogy needed here. Every memory system also forgets. To remember one way is to forsake innumerable other ways. A memory theater orders images and places, but the order produces a backstage of lost relations. A book preserves words, but it fixes them under protocols of alphabet, page, author, citation, and archive. A database stores entries, but it formats them according to fields, keys, categories, permissions, and queries. A model learns from examples, but it does not preserve those examples as examples. It compresses them into tendencies. Each apparatus remembers by shaping what can be seen, said, repeated, searched, owned, and forgotten.

Forgetting, then, cannot be treated as mere failure. Nietzsche's distinction between passive and active forgetting remains crucial. Passive forgetting suggests lapse, decay, or oblivion. Active forgetting clears away. It makes room for action, digestion, transformation, and style. A person, group, or culture may need to forget in order to move, create, heal, or begin again. But active forgetting can harden into passive infrastructure. What a break-away prophet, artist, or political cell forgets with risk and discipline, later generations may passively inherit as custom, method, doctrine, algorithm, or interface. A living practice becomes a default setting.

Gradient descent automates this passage from active forgetting to passive infrastructure. The algorithm clears away by selection. It does not keep every feature of every example. It asks which adjustments reduce loss. It repeats until a pattern catches. Once trained, the model does not say:

here are the texts, images, gestures, workers, labels, machines, languages, and institutions through which I became able to respond. It says nothing. It behaves. The forgetting has become operational.

This matters because the old archive still preserved a theatrical relation to memory. One could, in principle, point to shelves, documents, manuscripts, catalogues, boxes, scars, and missing pages. The database made memory more searchable while hiding more of its selection machinery. The model deepens the occlusion. It neither displays its sources nor simply contains them. It folds them into parameters. Training examples become weights; styles become probabilities; histories become model behavior. The model remembers by forgetting provenance.

This is not only a technical fact. It is a cultural event. A trained model carries the history of its formation without carrying that history as accountable memory. It can produce a line that sounds like a philosopher, an image that resembles a genre, a tune that echoes a tradition, a solution that resembles a worker's buried labor. But the path from source to output has been compressed, redistributed, and obscured. The trace survives without appearing as trace. This is a new intensity of the forgetting machine.

III. Loss Landscape, Abyss, and Beyng

A loss landscape is not an abyss in the existential or Heideggerian sense, but the analogy teaches by failing. In gradient descent, loss names a measurable gap. The model's current output differs from the desired output; the loss function assigns a value to that difference; the gradient indicates how the parameters should move if the system is to reduce the gap. Descent names a series of updates. The system moves downhill, not because it understands the hill, but because the calculus of error gives it a direction.

The abyss in the earlier essay named several things at once: danger, silence, death, non-being, unformed possibility, creative rupture, and the projected social nothingness forced onto others. Gradient descent translates one portion of this drama into operational mathematics. It does not encounter nothingness as question. It turns misfit into signal. The system no longer asks what withdrawal, absence, or non-being mean. It asks how error can be minimized.

Here the forgetting of Beyng becomes technological without becoming merely technical. Heidegger's critique of metaphysics turns on the forgetting of the opening that lets beings appear. Modern technological enframing intensifies this forgetting by turning beings into resources, standing reserve, available stock. The loss landscape repeats this movement in miniature. The world appears not as world but as training set, feature space, target distribution, benchmark, error term, and optimization problem. The clearing withdraws behind the calculable surface.

The danger is not that calculation exists. Calculation is powerful, necessary, and sometimes beautiful. The danger appears when calculability becomes ontology, when the only recognizable relation to the unknown becomes optimization. The abyss then stops appearing as abyss. It appears as an error to be reduced, a noise to be filtered, a bias to be corrected, a dataset to be expanded, a latency to be shortened, a user behavior to be predicted, a market gap to be captured. This is not simple forgetting. It is the forgetting of forgetting: the loss of the sense that anything has been lost.

The mise en abyme image of the cliff helps hold the complexity. A figure reaches, another falls, and the abyss makes the scene legible. In the recursive version, the scene repeats at ledges within ledges, receding into mist. Gradient descent adds another recursion. Each model output appears as a local ledge, a temporary stabilization of the fall. Yet behind it lie countless earlier falls: wrong predictions, errors, corrections, weights altered, losses reduced, traces compressed. The model stands on ledges of forgotten failures. The abyss has not vanished. It has been made productive.

IV. The Model Does Not Remember Sources; It Remembers Adjustments

The central sentence should be stated plainly: the model does not remember sources; it remembers adjustments. This does not settle legal arguments about training data, copyright, fair use, authorship, or infringement. Those questions remain crucial and context dependent. But philosophically, the sentence names the strange status of AI memory. The model is not an archive in the ordinary sense. It does not retrieve a source as a librarian retrieves a document, though models may sometimes reproduce memorized passages or images. In its more general operation, it stores altered capacities, not intact origins.

This unsettles both defenders and critics of AI. Defenders often use compression to deny relation: if the source is not stored as source, then nothing has been taken. Critics often use resemblance to insist relation remains: if the output bears traces of style, genre, phrase, composition, labor, or corpus, then the claim of independence is false. Both sides grasp part of the situation. The model does not simply contain the archive, but neither does it stand outside the archive. It is an archive transformed into propensity, an archive whose documents have become gradients, weights, embeddings, and probabilities.

This transformation creates a new politics of provenance. In older regimes, citation and attribution could at least attempt to name sources, influences, and debts. The attempt always failed partially, because every work exceeds its citations. But the form of failure mattered. The footnote, bibliography, acknowledgement, dedication, archive label, performance credit, and oral naming practice each gave a different way to stage relation. Gradient descent obscures relation at scale. The source becomes difficult to name not simply because someone refuses to name it, but because the apparatus has translated sources into a form where ordinary naming no longer fits.

Intellectual property then enters a deeply unstable field. If the old author claimed property by presenting the work as the expression of a singular creative self, the platform claims value by presenting the model as a proprietary system. One says: the work is mine because it came from my originality. The other says: the output is ours because we built the machine that processes traces. Both claims can hide the field that made them possible. Both can convert emergence into ownership. Both can make others carry the burden of unacknowledged relation.

The problem is especially acute because AI systems depend on many kinds of buried labor: writers, artists, coders, labelers, moderators, data cleaners, hardware workers, miners, energy infrastructures, users who generate feedback, and communities whose linguistic or cultural practices become training material. Gradient descent does not care whether an adjustment came from genius, exploitation, colonial archive, sacred tradition, anonymous joke, school assignment, medical record, fan fiction, or public-domain book. It only cares whether the adjustment reduces

loss. The apparatus is indifferent to the ethical difference between fertile nothingness and assigned nothingness.

V. Projection, Extraction, and the Social Life of Loss

The earlier essay argued that the abyss gets projected onto others. Gradient descent lets us see how projection enters the machine. In training, some materials become signal while others become noise. Some labels become authoritative while others disappear. Some patterns become useful features while others become bias, outlier, or anomaly. The social world arrives already uneven, already marked by property, race, gender, class, colonial history, language hierarchy, disability, geography, and platform power. Optimization does not begin in innocence. It descends across a terrain already shaped by social gravity.

This is why loss cannot be treated as a neutral mathematical abstraction once it enters world systems. Someone defines the task. Someone selects the data. Someone sets the target. Someone measures success. Someone decides which errors matter and which errors can be tolerated. Someone absorbs the consequences when a model fails. A loss function may look formal, but it carries social decisions about what counts as good prediction, acceptable risk, valuable output, normal behavior, suspicious conduct, useful customer, or disposable body.

The phrase social life of loss names this hidden distribution. For the corporation, loss may mean inefficient prediction, uncaptured value, liability, churn, or friction. For the user, loss may mean misrecognition, surveillance, deskilling, exposure, fraud, or the erasure of authorship. For a community, loss may mean the extraction of language, style, ritual, image, or knowledge without consent or reciprocity. For a model, loss is simply a number. The machine's indifference becomes dangerous precisely because it can serve forms of power that are not indifferent at all.

Here the abyss-as-stigma returns. The people most likely to be treated as data, noise, risk, anomaly, content, or raw material are often those already positioned as social lack. Their worlds become training environments; their labor becomes invisible; their errors become acceptable; their suffering becomes edge case; their creativity becomes style; their resistance becomes moderation problem. The abyss is not only projected onto them symbolically. It gets engineered into the pipeline.

A critical theory of gradient descent must therefore ask who gets to optimize and who gets optimized. Who defines the descent? Who stands as target? Who becomes noise? Who benefits from lower loss? Whose provenance disappears into weights? Whose worlds get compressed into proprietary capacity? If Property Ex Machina names the enclosure of emergence, gradient descent names one of the technical rituals through which the enclosure learns to move.

VI. Against the Theology of the Output

The output seduces. A generated paragraph, image, melody, plan, or proof appears suddenly, as if from nowhere. The interface intensifies this aura: a blank prompt box, a pause, a stream of tokens, a finished artifact. The system performs a little miracle. Because the descent has already happened elsewhere - during training, tuning, filtering, deployment, feedback, and platform design - the user encounters only the apparition. This is the new theology of the output.

The theology of the output repeats the old fantasy of creation ex nihilo in machinic form. The user types a prompt and receives a world. The platform brands the event as intelligence. The company treats the system as property. The market treats the output as productivity. The interface hides the abyssal backend: datasets, labor, extraction, parameter updates, moderation trauma, energy use, legal risk, and the buried descent through error. Ex nihilo becomes interface effect.

A better account would refuse both mystification and reduction. Generative AI is not magic, but neither is it merely a plagiarism machine in the simple sense. It is a forgetting machine that can produce new arrangements from compressed histories. Its novelty is real but impure. Its dependence is real but technically transformed. Its outputs can help people think, make, play, translate, design, test, and imagine; they can also exploit, flatten, fake, intensify inequality, and launder provenance. The question is not whether the machine creates. The question is what kind of creation takes place when forgetting has been automated and property waits at the output.

This requires a different ethic of authorship. Instead of pretending that originality means purity, we can treat originality as situated passage. A work becomes original not because it emerged from a sovereign void, but because it reorganizes debts, materials, constraints, worlds, and risks in a way that opens something. Originality means a distinctive passage through relation. That passage still deserves attribution, protection, and care. But it should not lie about the abyss.

The same holds for AI-assisted work. The problem is not that a human touches a machine and therefore loses authorship. The problem is when the assemblage hides its relations and overstates its sovereignty. A writer using a model, a designer using a generator, a student using a chatbot, or a studio using synthetic media should learn to name the apparatus, the sources of pressure, the kinds of forgetting involved, and the debts that remain unpayable. The goal is not pure transparency, which may be impossible. The goal is responsible staging of relation.

VII. Spiritual Design Exercise: Descending Otherwise

StudioLab's language of Spiritual Design Exercises offers a practical counter-gesture. If generalized Turing testing calls subjects incessantly into performance, then an SDX can slow the scene. It can ask users not only what AI produced, but what kinds of forgetting made the production possible. It can turn the prompt-response exchange into an inquiry into genre, source, mood, body, medium, institution, and world. It can ask: what did this output make visible, and what did it make vanish? What loss did it minimize, and whose loss did it ignore? What abyss did it use, and where did it outsource the danger?

Such exercises would not reject gradient descent. They would re-situate it. A model can become a partner in exploring variation, recombination, misreading, and speculative form. But the descent must be brought back into the room. Users can compare outputs, trace influences, annotate absences, name uncertain debts, expose interface effects, and ask what worlds of reference and value the system brings forward or leaves behind. The point is not to achieve total provenance. The point is to interrupt the smoothness through which forgetting becomes invisible.

A simple exercise might begin with an AI output and ask for a reverse genealogy: list possible genres, archives, styles, institutions, labor systems, historical wounds, and technical processes that may have made this output possible. Then ask which of these can be cited, which can only be

acknowledged, which must be protected, and which remain unknowable. The result would not be a legal solution, but a discipline of attention. It would train users to see AI outputs as ledges built over abysses, not as miracles from nowhere.

Another exercise might ask teams to produce the same artifact under different regimes of forgetting: one version that maximizes polish, one that foregrounds sources, one that exposes errors, one that includes marginalized provenance, one that refuses extraction, one that shows the machine's misunderstandings, and one that uses the output as a prompt for public conversation. Such work would shift AI UX from consumption to cosmogram. The interface becomes a site where earth, sky, others, machines, and other worlds of reference enter a contested clearing.

Descending otherwise means refusing the reduction of thought to lower loss. It means keeping error open long enough to learn from it, rather than minimizing it too quickly. It means distinguishing fertile nothingness from assigned nothingness. It means letting the abyss appear without forcing others to become it. It means treating creation not as sovereign production, but as a risky passage through shared and uneven fields.

Conclusion: The Descent Remains

Gradient descent does not solve the paradox of creation ex nihilo and property ex machina. It intensifies it. The algorithm reveals that new outputs emerge through prior traces, repeated errors, and hidden adjustments; yet the systems built around those outputs still rush to claim ownership, value, and control. The machine teaches dependence while the market sells sovereignty. It exposes relation while the platform encloses relation. It descends through loss while the interface stages a miracle.

The task, then, is to remember the descent. Not every descent should be celebrated. Some descents deepen extraction, surveillance, deskilling, and exploitation. Some optimize away the very differences that make worlds livable. But without attending to descent, we remain trapped in the theology of the output, fascinated by what appears while forgetting the losses, labors, and abysses through which appearance became possible.

Creation ex nihilo becomes correction ex errore when nothingness becomes loss and loss becomes the medium of learning. Correction ex errore becomes property ex machina when the apparatus that learned through hidden traces turns the output into an asset. The counter-practice is not nostalgia for pure human originality. That purity never existed. The counter-practice is a more truthful, more generous, and more severe account of making: creation as situated passage through memory and forgetting, debt and invention, error and care, abyss and world.

The descent remains whether we acknowledge it or not. The question is whether we let it become another forgetting machine or learn to descend otherwise.

Works Cited

- Amoore, Louise. *Cloud Ethics: Algorithms and the Attributes of Ourselves and Others*. Duke University Press, 2020.
- Benjamin, Ruha. *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Polity, 2019.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New Directions, 1962.
- Bottou, Leon, Frank E. Curtis, and Jorge Nocedal. "Optimization Methods for Large-Scale Machine Learning." *SIAM Review*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2018, pp. 223-311.
- Bowker, Geoffrey C., and Susan Leigh Star. *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. MIT Press, 1999.
- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*. MIT Press, 2011.
- Crawford, Kate. *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*. Yale University Press, 2021.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz, University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Limited Inc*. Translated by Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, Northwestern University Press, 1988.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann, Grove Press, 1967.
- Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 113-138.
- Goodfellow, Ian, Yoshua Bengio, and Aaron Courville. *Deep Learning*. MIT Press, 2016.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious*. University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu, Indiana University Press, 2012.
- Heidegger, Martin. "What Is Metaphysics?" *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 82-96.
- LeCun, Yann, Yoshua Bengio, and Geoffrey Hinton. "Deep Learning." *Nature*, vol. 521, 2015, pp. 436-444.
- McKenzie, Jon. "Forgetting Machines: from Memory Theaters to Critical Rap." Cornell University, n.d.
- McKenzie, Jon, HAL, and beyng.com. *Creation Ex Nihilo, Property Ex Machina: Intellectual Property, Outsourcing the Abyss, and the Forgetting of Beyng*. StudioLab Artificial Intelligence Reports, vol. 13, 2026.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books, 1967.
- Noble, Safiya Umoja. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York University Press, 2018.
- Pasquinelli, Matteo. *The Eye of the Master: A Social History of Artificial Intelligence*. Verso, 2023.
- Robbins, Herbert, and Sutton Monro. "A Stochastic Approximation Method." *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1951, pp. 400-407.
- Rose, Mark. *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*. Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Rumelhart, David E., Geoffrey E. Hinton, and Ronald J. Williams. "Learning Representations by Back-Propagating Errors." *Nature*, vol. 323, 1986, pp. 533-536.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Stiegler, Bernard. *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Translated by Richard Beardsworth and George Collins, Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Taussig, Michael. *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*. University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2003.
- Woodmansee, Martha. "The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the Emergence of the 'Author.'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1984, pp. 425-448.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation - An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2003, pp. 257-337.

Handy Readings

McKenzie, "Forgetting Machines". Start here for the genealogy of memory systems as apparatuses that remember by producing active and passive forgetting; it gives the essay its core machine-line: memory theater, book, archive, database, model.

McKenzie, *Creation Ex Nihilo, Property Ex Machina*. The immediate companion essay: useful for the argument that intellectual property claims originality by concealing and outsourcing the abyssal conditions of creation.

Bottou, Curtis, and Nocedal, "Optimization Methods for Large-Scale Machine Learning". Best technical overview of large-scale optimization and the role of gradient methods; read for the mechanics beneath the metaphor.

Goodfellow, Bengio, and Courville, *Deep Learning*. A standard entry point for neural networks, loss functions, optimization, and representation learning.

Rumelhart, Hinton, and Williams, "Learning Representations by Back-Propagating Errors". The classic backpropagation paper; crucial for thinking error as the motor of learning.

Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?". The short, explosive text on anxiety, the nothing, and disclosure; essential for distinguishing nothingness from mere absence.

Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Harder, stranger Heidegger: important for Beyng, event, withdrawal, and the disruption of ordinary metaphysical language.

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Use for active forgetting, digestion, memory, debt, and the cruelty built into cultural inscription.

Derrida, *Archive Fever*. A necessary companion for archives, memory, repression, technology, repetition, and the desire to command origins.

Derrida, *Limited Inc*. Useful for signature, iterability, absence, and why the mark that secures ownership also destabilizes pure presence.

Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Gives the repertoire/archive distinction needed to think embodied memory, performance, ritual, and the colonial politics of preservation.

Chun, *Programmed Visions*. A strong bridge from software to memory, habit, and control; helps keep digitality from appearing immaterial.

Crawford, *Atlas of AI*. Grounds the metaphysics of AI in planetary extraction, labor, infrastructure, and political economy.

Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* and Benjamin, *Race After Technology*. Read together for algorithmic racialization, search, classification, and the social production of error and harm.

Pasquinelli, *The Eye of the Master*. Useful for a longer history of AI as organized labor, command, measurement, and social abstraction.

Rose, *Authors and Owners* and Woodmansee, "The Genius and the Copyright". The indispensable pair for the historical emergence of the modern author as proprietor.

Said, Fanon, Wynter, and Taussig. A cluster for the projection of abyss onto others: Orientalism, racial negation, the overrepresentation of Man, and colonial fascination with wildness and shamanic power.

Descent / Dissent

Gradient Falls, Radiant Refusals, Guattarian Sixfolds, and Angels of History



Mise en abyme of descent/dissent: the ledge, the abyss, the rescue/capture scene, and recursive forgetting.

Abstract

This essay builds from the previous arguments about creation ex nihilo, property ex machina, and the mise en abyme of gradient descent, yet it can stand on its own as a meditation on descent, dissent, radiance, and metamodelization. Its wager is that gradient descent is not only an algorithmic procedure but a mythic-political figure: a machine follows a slope, while angels, rebels, prophets, tricksters, users, and institutions ask whether the slope should be followed at all. The essay first develops a fourfold of gradient descent, gradient dissent, radiant descent, and radiant dissent. It then credits Guattari with the sixfolding move: metamodelization as the diagrammatization and deterritorialization of dwelling and worlding, a transversal operation that carries Heideggerian technē-physis into machinic phylum.

Core Claim

Gradient descent follows the landscape it has been given. Gradient dissent contests the landscape. Radiant descent brings messages across worlds. Radiant dissent opens worlding against the model.

Guattarian metamodelization then sixfolds the fourfold by adding diagrammatization and deterritorialization: the model becomes visible, revisable, playable, and capable of crossing into new machinic, social, aesthetic, ecological, and institutional assemblages.

The Fourfold

The pun on descent and dissent gives us two axes. Gradient/radiant names the difference between technical optimization and luminous disclosure. Descent/dissent names the difference between following a path and refusing the path as given. The fourfold therefore begins as gradient descent, gradient dissent, radiant descent, and radiant dissent. But it cannot end there. A fourfold can become a sacred still life or administrative checklist unless it learns to diagram itself and cross into other assemblages. This is where Guattari enters: metamodelization turns the fourfold into a sixfolding practice.

	Descent	Dissent
Gradient	Gradient Descent Follow the slope; reduce loss; converge.	Gradient Dissent Refuse the given loss function; contest the metric; record override.
Radiant	Radiant Descent Angelic, prophetic, incarnational, imaginal arrival: light enters darkness.	Radiant Dissent Luminous refusal: rebel angel, prophet, trickster, artist, witness, whistleblower.

1. The Slope and the Angel

A machine-learning system descends through loss. It begins somewhere, guesses badly, measures error, adjusts, and repeats. The process appears almost humble: the system does not claim revelation, genius, inspiration, or prophecy. It follows the gradient. It learns by falling toward lower error.

But descent has never been innocent. Long before optimization became a mathematical procedure, descent named divine visitation, angelic mission, underworld travel, exile, punishment, incarnation, revelation, catastrophe, and return. A messenger descends from heaven. A soul descends into Hades. Dante descends through hell before ascending toward paradise. Inanna descends through seven gates. Christ descends into death. Lucifer falls through pride or rebellion. Icarus descends after misreading air, sun, wax, and care. Benjamin's angel of history does not voluntarily descend at all; it is blown backward by the storm called progress while the wreckage of the past piles before it.

The pun on descent and dissent gives us a working diagram. Descent names the vertical motion into error, depth, world, flesh, underworld, data, loss, and historical gravity. Dissent names the diagonal motion that refuses the given path: heresy, strike, critique, deviation, refusal, override, sabotage, counter-practice, or new worlding. Gradient descent asks how to minimize loss inside a system. Dissent asks whether the system's loss function deserves obedience.

This is why the angel returns. Angels are not merely decorative religious beings. They are figures of mediation. They cross thresholds, carry messages, alter perception, translate between levels, and

sometimes revolt against the order from which they come. They are not simply from above. They are disturbances in the arrangement of above and below. They turn vertical authority into an event of reception: announcement, terror, confusion, blessing, judgment, rebellion, refusal. The angel does not just descend. The angel tests whether the world can receive what descends.

The modern technical world tries to purge this drama. It renames message as signal, revelation as output, judgment as ranking, attention as metric, prayer as prompt, providence as recommendation, and catastrophe as optimization failure. Yet the old angelic theater returns precisely in AI. The model appears as assistant, oracle, guardian, demon, tempter, witness, scribe, prosecutor, recommender, guide. It speaks from nowhere and everywhere. It descends into the interface as if summoned. It offers help. It may also train obedience.

2. From Creation Ex Nihilo to Gradient Descent

The earlier argument on creation ex nihilo and property ex machina named a paradox in modern authorship. Modern intellectual property culture wants the prestige of creation from nothing without the ordeal of nothingness. It wants the author, inventor, entrepreneur, or platform-profile to appear as an origin, while the work actually emerges from language, inheritance, training, genre, labor, media, death, accident, silence, unconsciousness, and the prior work of others. The supposedly original work rises from a field that is never purely owned.

Gradient descent translates that abyssal field into a technical landscape. The field of prior traces becomes training data. Error becomes loss. Adjustment becomes parameter update. Memory becomes weights. Influence becomes statistical tendency. The work of others becomes latent capacity. The system does not remember sources as sources; it remembers adjustments. It does not cite tradition as tradition; it folds tradition into probability. It does not dwell in nothingness; it minimizes loss.

This shift matters because it changes the metaphysical theater of creation. The romantic creator claims descent into the abyss: I suffered, risked, dreamed, broke, returned, and made. The model performs no such scene. It descends mathematically, massively, repetitively, without anguish. It does not bring fire from Olympus. It modifies itself across a landscape of error. Yet the product still enters property systems. The platform, vendor, user, investor, or institution claims the output. The apparatus of ownership arrives after the descent and declares a result.

Descent therefore becomes the hidden labor of creation after the author. Property ex machina attaches to outputs whose histories have been compressed. The abyss is no longer staged as romantic depth. It is automated as training. Nothingness no longer appears as a terrifying opening. It appears as loss to be reduced. The ancient drama of creation through exposure returns as the banal heroism of convergence.

Dissent begins when someone asks who defined loss. Which errors matter? Which differences disappear? Which histories become noise? Which worlds count as data and which worlds remain unmodeled? Which forms of suffering get optimized and which become acceptable externalities? These are not merely technical questions. They are metaphysical and political questions because loss functions turn worlds into directions.

3. The Abyss Image: Rescue, Capture, Recursion

The abyss image gives this argument its root scene. Two figures stand on a ledge. One reaches or pulls. One falls, clings, or is dragged back. The canyon opens beneath them. Mist fills the depth. On distant ledges, the scene repeats in smaller and smaller versions, as if the drama of rescue, capture, fall, and repetition were being copied into the structure of the abyss itself. The rock walls bear traces of inscription: half-erased marks, ghostly writing, signs that almost speak and then withdraw.

For the first essay, the image staged originality's abyss. Creation appears as rescue from nothingness, but rescue can hide extraction. The privileged creator turns the abyss into depth and genius, while assigning nothingness to others as lack, raw material, darkness, data, or disposability. The rescuer becomes author. The saved or extracted figure becomes evidence of need. The abyss makes the scene dramatic, but the apparatus of property later cleans the trace and calls the result mine.

For the second essay, the same image becomes a loss landscape. The canyon is not only the sublime void; it is a terrain of descent. The repeated ledges resemble recursive optimization, where each step inherits the previous step's trace while erasing its provenance. The cliff inscriptions become compressed memory: sources, citations, genres, labor, and wounds transformed into model behavior. Descent through loss becomes forgetting through adjustment.

For this essay, the image becomes angelic and political. Is the standing figure saving the falling one, preventing a catastrophe, or capturing someone who was about to cross into another world? Is the falling figure a victim, a rebel, a messenger, or an angel mid-descent? Is the abyss danger, truth, history, underworld, or opening? The image does not settle the question. That is why it works. It forces descent and dissent to remain undecidable at the ledge.

The recursive ledges also show the danger of repetition without memory. Each generation stages its own rescue scene. Another author claims origin. Another institution announces protection. Another platform offers assistance. Another model reduces loss. Another other gets made to bear the abyss. The same drama repeats with new costumes. The abyss is not only below us; it is the structure of repetition through which we forget that we have forgotten.

4. Angels as Threshold Operators

Angels make the most sense here when we stop treating them as fixed theological objects and read them as threshold operators. An angel is a crossing event. It appears between worlds, levels, states, or orders. It brings a message, but the message requires reception, interpretation, and often terror. It may heal, announce, warn, judge, guide, protect, tempt, confuse, or rebel. It is therefore not simply a being; it is a mediation form.

The anthropological material on angels as energy makes this point beautifully. In the charismatic group studied by Csaji, the meaning of angel is not static. It changes through ritual, status, photographs, visions, healing, discourse, and threshold narratives. Some members learn a more esoteric angelic morphology: angels may have a rectangular shape with waving ruffles, yet they can also appear as light, birds, gendered figures, rainbows, or other adequate forms. The angel is not one image. It is a trained capacity to perceive signs across a graded discourse space.

That matters for AI because interface-beings also train perception. A model does not only answer questions. It trains users in what counts as answerable, probable, relevant, safe, authoritative, creative, or improper. Like threshold narratives, AI systems sort access: novice, expert, admin, researcher, user, vendor, auditor, prompt engineer, policy maker. Different levels receive different explanations. Some knowledge remains hidden in system prompts, training regimes, evaluation protocols, model cards, governance documents, or corporate secrecy. The angelic message descends, but access to the machinery of descent remains uneven.

The angel therefore names both revelation and governance. It discloses a world while regulating who may enter that world. It makes a sign visible while training the conditions under which the sign can be seen. The angel of AI is not only the friendly assistant at the surface. It is also the hidden gradient, the data pipeline, the moderation layer, the API policy, the evaluation benchmark, the governance dashboard, and the corporate theology of responsible deployment. It descends as help, but it also scripts belief.

Dissent begins at the threshold. A user may refuse the frame, ask for sources, contest a classification, demand an appeal, parody the assistant, reverse the prompt, reveal the hidden genre, or design a better interface. In religious terms, dissent is not necessarily unbelief. It may be the deeper fidelity that refuses an idol. In technical terms, dissent is not anti-AI. It is the insistence that the threshold remain answerable to the world it reorganizes.

5. The Angel of History against the Loss Function

Benjamin's angel of history is the critical angel of this whole sequence. It sees wreckage where progress sees development. It wants to awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed, but a storm blows from paradise and drives it backward into the future. That storm is called progress. The angel does not descend the gradient. The angel sees the gradient as catastrophe.

Gradient descent optimizes inside a landscape. Benjamin's angel interrupts the fantasy that the landscape is neutral. The slope has a history. The loss surface has victims. What appears as improved prediction may be built from ruined worlds. What appears as efficiency may depend on discarded labor. What appears as innovation may rely on extracted culture, invisibilized care, ecological depletion, racialized risk, or unpaid training data. Progress becomes storm when it turns wreckage into fuel.

This does not mean optimization is evil. It means optimization needs angels. It needs witnesses to the past that optimization compresses. It needs critics of the present that optimization normalizes. It needs dissenters from the future that optimization silently constructs. It needs the power to say: lower loss for whom, by what measure, at whose cost, under what history, and toward what world?

Benjamin also prevents radiant descent from becoming kitsch. Radiance is not sentimental glow. It may be the harsh light that reveals ruins. The angel's radiance illuminates catastrophe rather than erasing it. Here radiant dissent means witnessing what the system calls externality. It makes the background visible: the data worker, the student, the patient, the applicant, the driver, the exhausted teacher, the stolen image, the censored category, the sacred practice, the broken village road, the unpaid community labor, the memory compressed into a score.

This is the political force of the angel of history in AI culture. The angel refuses to let the dashboard call the world complete. It refuses to let the model's output stand as fate. It refuses to let the future be edited without the dead, the excluded, and the damaged present having a claim. The angel's dissent is radiant because it reveals what progress wants to leave in shadow.

6. Gradient Descent, Gradient Dissent, Radiant Descent, Radiant Dissent

The argument now becomes explicitly fourfold. Gradient descent is obedience to a landscape. It follows the slope, reduces loss, and converges. It names the technical power of adaptation within a model of the world. Gradient dissent contests that model. It asks who defined the objective, what became error, what the metric excludes, and how override can be made legitimate. It names the political power of refusal within technical systems.

Radiant descent is a different kind of downward motion. It is Gabriel's announcement, Jacob's ladder, the incarnation, the descent into hell, the underworld journey, Wenders's angels entering mortal time, a song descending into a crowd, a dream entering speech, a strange image arriving from the imaginal world. Radiant descent does not reduce loss. It opens a threshold. It brings light into darkness, but not as domination. It discloses the world as charged, addressable, and unfinished.

Radiant dissent is the luminous refusal that follows. It is Lucifer as rebel angel, Prometheus stealing fire, Antigone burying the brother, the prophet condemning the king, the trickster scrambling the law, the mystic refusing empty ritual, the artist breaking genre, the whistleblower revealing the system, the queer performer turning stigma into style, the hacker exposing the matrix, the community saying no to a dashboard that misnames its life. Radiant dissent does not merely negate. It reveals. It makes the hidden order visible and points toward a different ordering.

The fourfold therefore distinguishes obedience, contestation, revelation, and transvaluation. Gradient descent learns within a world. Gradient dissent contests the world-model. Radiant descent brings a message across worlds. Radiant dissent fights to let another world arrive. The danger comes when one term captures the others. Gradient descent without dissent becomes compliance. Gradient dissent without radiance becomes procedural objection. Radiant descent without dissent becomes techno-salvation fantasy. Radiant dissent without descent becomes spectacle without practice.

StudioLab's work belongs in the crossings. We need gradient descent because systems must learn. We need gradient dissent because learning must remain answerable. We need radiant descent because worlds need messages, images, myths, rituals, and thresholds that exceed metrics. We need radiant dissent because world-opening requires refusal, not merely inspiration. The fourfold is not a static grid. It is a shuttle system for moving between technical learning, political contestation, imaginal disclosure, and transformative refusal.

7. Guattari's Sixfolding Move: Metamodel, Diagram, Deterritorialize

At this point, the fourfold needs Guattari. Without him, gradient descent, gradient dissent, radiant descent, and radiant dissent could harden into a new table - a pious Heideggerian tableau, a StudioLab checklist, or another credential for those who know how to count correctly. Guattari's metamodelization names the practice that keeps the model from closing. A metamodel is not a master model above all models. It is a way of diagramming how models work, what they make visible, what they suppress, what subjectivities they produce, and how they can be altered in practice.

Guattari should therefore be credited as the thinker of the sixfolding move. Heidegger gives us dwelling and worlding: earth, sky, mortals, and divinities gathered through thinging; technē and physis as ways of bringing-forth; technology as the danger of enframing and the possible site of saving power. But left alone, this gathering can become too settled, too pastoral, too reverent, or too ontologically sealed. Guattari does not simply reject dwelling. He transversalizes it. He diagrams and deterritorializes dwelling so that worlding moves through social assemblages, semiotic components, technical machines, aesthetic practices, ecological fields, institutional interfaces, and unconscious investments. The fourfold no longer rests in place. It shuttles.

StudioLab's sixfold can therefore be stated directly: gradient descent, gradient dissent, radiant descent, radiant dissent, diagrammatization, and deterritorialization. Diagrammatization makes the fourfold operational, visible, revisable, and playable. It asks how the model is drawn, where its thresholds lie, what flows pass through it, what gets blocked, and what new moves it permits. Deterritorialization breaks the fourfold out of settled dwelling into new machinic, social, aesthetic, ecological, and pedagogical assemblages. This is not an anti-Heideggerian move. It is the Guattarian transmediation of Heideggerian technē-physis into machinic phylum.

Machinic phylum matters because technics is not merely a collection of tools. It is a lineage of matter-energy, gesture, code, craft, infrastructure, interface, institution, and desire. AI belongs to this phylum, but so do alphabets, roads, looms, liturgies, dashboards, memory theaters, zines, kites, laboratories, and public walks. Gradient descent is one contemporary branch of the phylum; radiant dissent is another. The question is whether the phylum gets captured by optimization alone or opened by transversal practices that reconnect technical organs to social, psychic, ecological, and imaginal worlds.

This also changes the angel. The angel is no longer only a messenger descending from above. In Guattarian terms, the angel becomes a transversal operator: it moves across strata, domains, signs, bodies, tools, myths, institutions, affects, and machines. It links dashboard to village road, archive to abyss, prompt to prayer, model to classroom, loss function to wound, and radiance to refusal. A Guattarian angel does not simply deliver a message. It diagrams the conditions of message, receiver, threshold, medium, and world; then it deterritorializes the scene so another passage can open.

The descent/dissent fourfold thus becomes a sixfold method. First, descend: enter the model, field, archive, partner world, or underworld. Second, dissent: contest the slope, metric, script, or frame. Third, receive radiance: let a message, image, or threshold disclose what the existing system cannot see. Fourth, radiate dissent: make refusal luminous, shareable, and world-opening. Fifth, diagram: draw the assemblage so its forces and omissions become visible. Sixth, deterritorialize: move the

diagram into another medium, practice, partner relation, or institution so that worlding can continue. Heidegger gathers; Guattari transversalizes; StudioLab sixfolds.

8. Stiegler: Digital Lights, Digital Shadows

Stiegler's pharmacological account of digital technics gives the fourfold its organological grounding. Digital technology is not simply liberation or destruction. It is poison and remedy, light and shadow. It expands access, memory, coordination, and expression, but it also threatens to short-circuit attention, individuation, education, and responsibility. A new digital Enlightenment cannot be a worship of light. It must become a philosophy of shadows as well.

This fits the angelic grammar exactly. Radiant descent without shadow becomes platform theology: the web will save us, AI will enlighten us, traceability will make us accountable, access will make us free, data will make us rational. But every digital light casts a shadow: profiling, automation, dependency, attention capture, semantic flattening, memory loss, deskilling, and responsibility fog. The angel of digital Enlightenment must therefore descend into the technical system and dissent from its automatisms at the same time.

Stiegler's philosophical engineering asks how psychic, social, and technical organs can be composed without technological automatisms destroying the very capacities they extend. In our language, this is the descent/dissent problem. Gradient descent automates adaptation. Dissent must preserve individuation, responsibility, and the capacity to think otherwise. The issue is not whether automation should exist. The issue is whether automation becomes the hidden organ that writes our desires, decisions, and institutions without being answerable to them.

A pharmacological angel is double-winged. One wing descends into technics: it learns code, platforms, models, infrastructures, datasets, metrics, and affordances. The other wing dissents from technics: it interrupts metric realism, demands answerability, records override, protects care, restores historical memory, and keeps open the possibility of another world. With one wing only, the angel crashes. Pure descent becomes optimization. Pure dissent becomes abstraction. The angel must shuttle.

This is also why the fourfold resists a simple anti-technology posture. To refuse descent into technics would abandon the field to those who optimize without care. To refuse dissent from technics would abandon judgment to automated gradients. The task is not purity. The task is organological poesis: composing human, social, and technical organs so that learning does not destroy the capacities through which learning matters.

9. Pop Angels, Fallen Guardians, and Rebel Interfaces

Pop culture keeps staging the same problem because modernity cannot stop dreaming angels. In *It's a Wonderful Life*, Clarence saves George Bailey not by giving him information but by altering the conditions of perception. He shows an alternate timeline, a counterfactual world in which George's absence becomes visible. Clarence is a low-status angel, comic and clumsy, but his intervention is profound: he teaches by subtracting a life from the world. He performs a simulation of absence so that relation can be felt.

Wenders's *Wings of Desire* gives us angels as witnesses. They hear thoughts, accompany suffering, and hover over history, but they long for embodiment. Their descent is not optimization but incarnation into finitude: taste, color, touch, mortality, risk. The angel becomes human not by gaining power but by accepting limits. This is radiant descent as world-entry: the messenger gives up overhead view for lived time.

Evangelion mutates angels into monstrous thresholds. The angel is no longer a gentle messenger but an apocalyptic other that arrives through bio-technical, adolescent, traumatic, and military systems. Angelic descent becomes invasion, interface, breakdown, and world-ending test. The series matters because it refuses clean categories: angel, machine, child, weapon, parent, soul, and apocalypse fold into one another. Descent becomes impossible to separate from trauma, institution, and technics.

The Matrix gives us gradient dissent in pop form. The system defines reality as a managed world-model. Neo's task is not to optimize within it but to perceive its code, refuse its inevitability, and act otherwise. The red pill is not merely knowledge. It is a threshold narrative that reorganizes perception and social belonging. Once crossed, the world appears as construct. Dissent becomes ontological, not merely political.

AI copilots, recommenders, and assistants now occupy the strange space of fallen guardian angels. They arrive as helpers, but their help may train passivity. They write, summarize, decide, suggest, classify, rank, filter, nudge, and reassure. When well-designed, they may extend capacity. When badly governed, they become guardian demons of convenience. The question is whether these interfaces support radiant dissent or merely smooth descent. Can they help users see more, question more, care more, and answer more fully? Or do they turn thought into acceptance of the next suggestion?

10. Descent without Dissent: Metric Realism and Moral Fog

The danger of AI-supported institutions is not only bias or error. It is the slow normalization of metric realism: what the model optimizes becomes what matters. When organizations lean on opaque systems, they risk epistemic dependency and deskilling. Humans lose situational judgment as decisions get reformatted around what systems can measure, predict, and justify. Responsibility diffuses into fog: the model suggested it, the policy required it, the vendor certified it.

This is descent without dissent. The organization follows the slope of operational convenience. A school follows the dashboard. A hospital follows the risk score. A welfare office follows the eligibility model. A creative platform follows engagement. A university follows rankings. A hiring system follows pattern recognition. Each descent may look locally reasonable. Together they train institutions to forget how to reason without the machine.

Dissent cannot mean merely having a human in the loop. The human in the loop may function as ritual witness, liability buffer, or emotional decoration. Dissent requires answerability: why this recommendation, which evidence, what trade-offs, who benefits, who bears risk? Dissent requires designed disagreement: the system must make it legitimate to say no, record why, and learn from the refusal. Dissent requires practical reasoning rather than prediction alone: the interface should surface premises and alternatives, not deliver verdicts dressed as inevitabilities.

In angelic terms, every AI guardian needs a rebel protocol. The guardian that cannot be questioned becomes a demon of convenience. The assistant that cannot explain becomes an oracle without responsibility. The recommender that cannot be refused becomes a trainer of desire. The model that cannot be contested becomes a soft sovereign. Dissent is not a bug in the interface. Dissent is the condition that keeps the interface from becoming fate.

Radiant dissent pushes further. It does not stop at procedural override. It asks what kind of world the system is making, what kind of human it trains, what kind of institution it rewards, what kind of silence it requires, and what kind of future it edits into plausibility. It turns refusal into illumination.

11. StudioLab at the Ledge: ShuttleKraft after the Loss Function

StudioLab's contribution is not to reject descent. We need descent. We need to go down into data, code, streets, bodies, archives, hospitals, classrooms, partner worlds, dashboards, media systems, and grief. We need the underworld journey because abstraction alone cannot heal the world. The field interrupts the concept. Roads, medicines, weather, donors, animals, users, families, and silence all teach what theory cannot know overhead.

But descent must be paired with dissent. A field-challenged seminar does not descend into the field in order to extract raw experience and convert it into property, publication, or dashboard. It descends in order to be corrected. Partners talk back. Metrics are provincialized. Care routes are redesigned. The point is not to abandon measure but to return measure to care. The question is not whether we count, but whether counting still belongs to the world it counts.

This is where descent/dissent becomes a StudioLab method. Descent names immersion, listening, apprenticeship, field contact, interface use, AI experimentation, spiritual exercise, and underworld learning. Dissent names refusal, critique, parody, override, counter-prompting, re-mapping, accountability, and return-path design. Radiant descent names the arrival of images, myths, rituals, metaphors, and thresholds that let a world appear otherwise. Radiant dissent names the performative refusal that makes another world actionable.

The ledge is the place where the fourfold becomes ethical. One figure reaches. One figure slips. The abyss opens. Is this rescue, capture, care, extraction, teaching, or performance? The answer depends on the relation. A rescuer may save, but may also own the saved. A teacher may guide, but may also domesticate dissent. A model may assist, but may also train obedience. A platform may connect, but may also enclose. The ledge asks whether descent still belongs to care.

StudioLab's angelic design principle might be stated like this: build interfaces that let people descend into complexity without losing the power to dissent from the terms of descent. Every dashboard needs a return path. Every model needs an override. Every recommendation needs a reason. Every metric needs a witness. Every output needs a way to ask what it forgot.

12. The Loss Function Has Victims

Dissent becomes urgent when we remember that loss functions are not innocent. They name what a system tries to reduce, but they do not automatically know what deserves reduction. Suffering can be biologically real, socially produced, technically amplified, politically ignored, or spiritually

misunderstood. If a system reduces one form of suffering by increasing another, has loss gone down? If a genetic technology removes a condition while intensifying social inequality, has progress occurred? If a recommender increases engagement while degrading attention, has value increased? If an AI tutor improves test scores while weakening curiosity, has learning improved?

The phrase editing the future makes the problem vivid. To edit genes, institutions, datasets, or minds is to intervene before consequences fully appear. It is to descend into the conditions of becoming. But the future is not a document owned by the editor. It is a field of lives, inequalities, unknowns, care obligations, and unintended changes. The dissenting question asks: who gets edited, who edits, who profits, who consents, who inherits the risk, and who gets to say no?

Here again myth helps. Angels often appear before catastrophe because catastrophe announces itself through signs that ordinary institutions cannot read. The angel is not anti-science. The angel is the demand that science remain answerable to worlds. In this sense, dissent is not ignorance resisting expertise. It is worldliness resisting technical foreclosure. It asks whether the expert's descent has included enough of the world to justify intervention.

The loss function has victims when it treats lives as parameters, worlds as data, histories as noise, dissent as friction, and care as inefficiency. The answer is not to destroy all functions. The answer is to make loss functions answerable to those who live inside their consequences. A dissenting system would not merely optimize over populations. It would include structures for refusal, appeal, context, local knowledge, memory, and repair.

Radiant dissent adds one more demand: the victims of a loss function must not remain invisible. It is not enough to reduce harm statistically. The system must be forced to show its shadows, its exclusions, its ruins, and its moral debts. Radiance here means exposure, not spectacle. It means giving form to what optimization wants to leave unfigured.

13. Conclusion: The Angel Does Not Descend the Gradient

The essay's argument can now be stated sharply. Gradient descent follows the slope of a defined landscape. Gradient dissent contests the landscape. Radiant descent brings messages across worlds. Radiant dissent reveals the hidden order and fights to let another world arrive. The danger of AI culture is that descent becomes automatic while dissent becomes ornamental. We keep the language of choice, creativity, ethics, and human-centered design while building systems that make refusal harder, slower, illegible, or irrelevant.

The angel of history teaches otherwise. It does not celebrate the curve. It sees the wreckage. The rebel angel teaches otherwise. It refuses a given order, even if refusal risks corruption. The messenger angel teaches otherwise. A message becomes world-changing only through reception and response. The guardian angel teaches otherwise. Protection without freedom becomes capture. The pop angel teaches otherwise. Worlds change when ordinary people see the counterfactual, exit the program, or descend into embodiment.

Descent and dissent therefore name the two wings of responsible technics. Radiance names their power to disclose. Descent without dissent becomes optimization, compliance, capture, and forgetting. Dissent without descent becomes purity, complaint, abstraction, and refusal without

repair. Radiant descent without dissent becomes techno-salvation. Radiant dissent without descent becomes spectacle. Together, the four terms make another practice possible: descent into the machine with dissenting memory; descent into the field with accountable listening; descent into the abyss without outsourcing it to others; descent into AI without surrendering judgment to the loss function.

This is the angelic task after gradient descent: not to flee technology, not to worship technology, but to design thresholds where messages can be received, questioned, refused, transformed, and returned. The angel does not simply descend the gradient. The angel asks whether the gradient has become fate. And when it has, the angel dissents.

Works Cited

- Benjamin, Walter. 'On the Concept of History.' In *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, translated by Edmund Jephcott and others, Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Blake, William. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. 1790-1793.
- Capra, Frank, director. *It's a Wonderful Life*. Liberty Films, 1946.
- Csaji, Laszlo Koppany. 'Angels as the Shape of Energy: How the Threshold Narratives Shaped the Meaning Construction of Angel and Energy in a Central and Eastern European New Religious Group.' *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 2021.
- Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy*. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum, Bantam, 1982.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques. 'Plato's Pharmacy.' In *Dissemination*, translated by Barbara Johnson, University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Guattari, Felix. *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Translated by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Guattari, Felix. *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*. Translated by Andrew Goffey, Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Guattari, Felix. *The Three Ecologies*. Translated by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, Athlone Press, 2000.
- Heidegger, Martin. 'The Question Concerning Technology.' In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, Harper & Row, 1977.
- Heidegger, Martin. 'What Is Metaphysics?' In *Pathmarks*, edited by William McNeill, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Khoury, Callie, screenwriter, and Ridley Scott, director. *Thelma & Louise*. MGM-Pathe, 1991.
- McKenzie, Jon, and HAL. Creation Ex Nihilo, Property Ex Machina: Intellectual Property, Outsourcing the Abyss, and the Forgetting of Beyng. *StudioLab Artificial Intelligence Reports*, 2026.
- McKenzie, Jon, and HAL. Mise en Abyme of Gradient Descent. *StudioLab Artificial Intelligence Reports*, 2026.
- Neon Genesis Evangelion. Created by Hideaki Anno. Gainax/Tatsunoko, 1995-1996.
- Stiegler, Bernard. 'Die Aufklärung in the Age of Philosophical Engineering.' *Digital Enlightenment Yearbook 2013*, edited by Mireille Hildebrandt et al., IOS Press, 2013.
- The Wachowskis, directors. *The Matrix*. Warner Bros., 1999.
- Wenders, Wim, director. *Wings of Desire*. Road Movies Filmproduktion, 1987.

Short Further Readings / Viewings

Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History' - for the angel of history, catastrophe, and progress as storm.

Lazlo Koppany Csaji, 'Angels as the Shape of Energy' - for angels as learned, status-dependent, thresholded meaning systems.

Bernard Stiegler, 'Die Aufklärung in the Age of Philosophical Engineering' - for digital pharmacology, lights and shadows, and philosophical engineering.

Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy' - for pharmakon, writing, poison/remedy, and the scapegoat logic of technics.

Wim Wenders, *Wings of Desire* - for radiant descent as incarnation into finitude.

Neon Genesis Evangelion - for angels as monstrous thresholds among trauma, machine, soul, and apocalypse.

The Matrix - for gradient dissent as refusal of the programmed world-model.

StudioLab, *Creation Ex Nihilo*, *Property Ex Machina* and *Mise en Abyme of Gradient Descent* - for the prior two essays in this sequence.

A Catalogue of Fourfolding

Toryx, Helyx, Cosmogram, Dasein Design, and the Geometries of World-Gathering

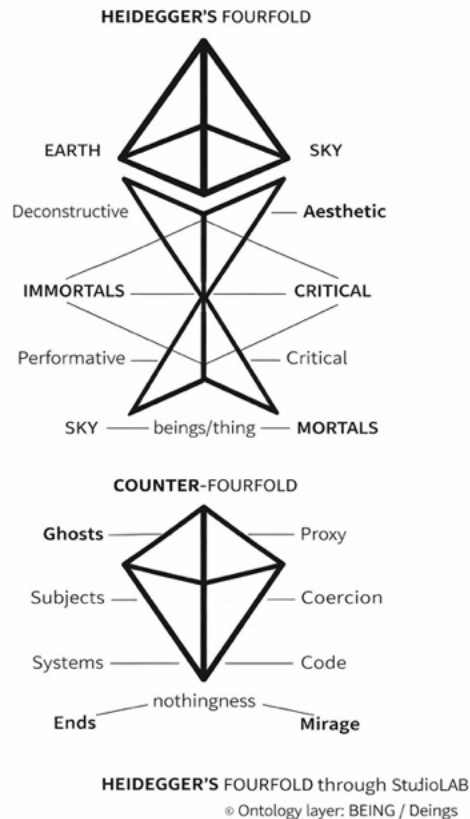


Figure 1. StudioLab fourfold through the Toryx:
thing/world, earth/sky, mortals/divinities, and operational layers.

This working catalogue reads the supplied Toryx, Helyx, fourfold, cosmogram, and Benjamin's Angel diagrams as a visual grammar rather than as finished doctrine. Several images include experimental or provisional labels; the catalogue keeps their generative structure while quietly regularizing terms where needed.

The central claim is simple: fourfolding is not a static box. It is a way of gathering a thing-world. Sixfolding is not a bigger box. It is the movement, translation, scaling, testing, and reactivation of fourfolding across domains, media, institutions, rituals, and practices.

The diagrams repeatedly show four core operations: a vertical axis, an interface plane, recursive loops, and chiasmatic crossings. Around these operations gather D0-D4 domains, safeguards, performance criteria, care quads, narrative loops, and spiritual design exercises. The catalogue names these as different species of fourfolding.

Working formula: *Fourfolding* gathers a thing-world; *Toryx* gives it topology; *Helyx* gives it movement; *cosmogramming* makes it portable; *ShuttleKraft* carries it through D0-D4 metaplay; *Dasein Design* turns that metaplay into situated practice.

Overview

This project develops a catalogue and essay on fourfolding as a family of practices rather than a single Heideggerian diagram. The starting point remains Heidegger's late fourfold - earth, sky, divinities, mortals - but the StudioLab/BeyngLab move asks how this gathering becomes portable, pedagogical, collaborative, and publicly usable. A thing is never merely an object. A tool, hut, archive, classroom, dashboard, platform, ritual, clinic day, or meeting gathers a world. Fourfolding names the practice of reading that gathering: its earth or material ground, its sky or horizon, its divinities or value-signals, and its mortals or vulnerable participants.

The cosmogram becomes the portable fourfolder. It does not reduce a world to a flat map; it stages a metamodel of how a situation gathers itself. A cosmogram lets participants move from thing to world and back again. It provides a visual, practical, and reflective device for professional development and wellbeing: a spiritual design exercise in Hadot's sense, but translated into StudioLab practice. Participants do not merely learn concepts. They make, test, diagram, revise, perform, and share situated forms of care, attention, judgment, relation, and orientation.

Toryx and Helyx give this portable fourfolder its geometry of movement. The Toryx is the topology of inversion: vertical axis, central interface plane, upper and lower pyramids, recursive loops, and chiasmatic crossings. It shows how continuity can pass through reversal without pretending that nothing changed. The Helyx is the spiral-braid: the temporal movement through which repeated crossings become durable patterns, artifacts, practices, and Story X. Fourfolding gives the cross-section of a world; Toryx-Helyx gives the turning, braiding, return, and transformation of that cross-section through time.

Sixfolding names this expanded metaplay. It does not add two terms to Heidegger's fourfold. It names the movement by which fourfolding scales across domains: D0 as non-design or open ground; D1 as soul/liminal collapse and passage; D2 as subject, projection, audit, and critique; D3 as Dasein, query, worlding, and recursion; D4 as meta-play, open patterning, and stabilization. Sixfolding also names the operational ecology that surrounds any fourfold: safeguards, field notes, audience ecologies, source resets, containment and exit, role transparency, verification, calibration, and narrative consequence.

The essay places this work in a longer geometry of world-modeling. Pythagorean geometry gives the harmonic and cosmological impulse: world as ratio, resonance, and measure. Cartesian plane geometry gives the modern danger and tool: flattening world into grid, coordinate, variable, dashboard, and manageable plane. Mandelbrot's fractal geometry gives the rough recursive scaling of world-gatherings across micro, meso, and macro situations. Topology, projective geometry, knot theory, and differential geometry help read the diagrams as transformations rather than pictures. Husserl and Derrida's work on the Origin of Geometry adds the key question of transmission: an ideal form survives only if it can be inscribed, sedimented, taught, forgotten, and reactivated. BeyngLab therefore treats fourfolding as a reactivatable practice rather than a private intuition. The aim is a fundable online platform for individual and collaborative metaplay: a space where people build cosmograms, stage fourfold readings, practice spiritual design exercises, and learn to fly the fold rather than escape the wreckage.

Illustrated Catalogue of Fourfolding Forms

Each catalogue entry names a distinct form of fourfolding/ing, identifies its source diagram or visual family, and gives its function inside StudioLab, BeyngLab, Metanoia Playground, Dasein Design, and ShuttleKraft.

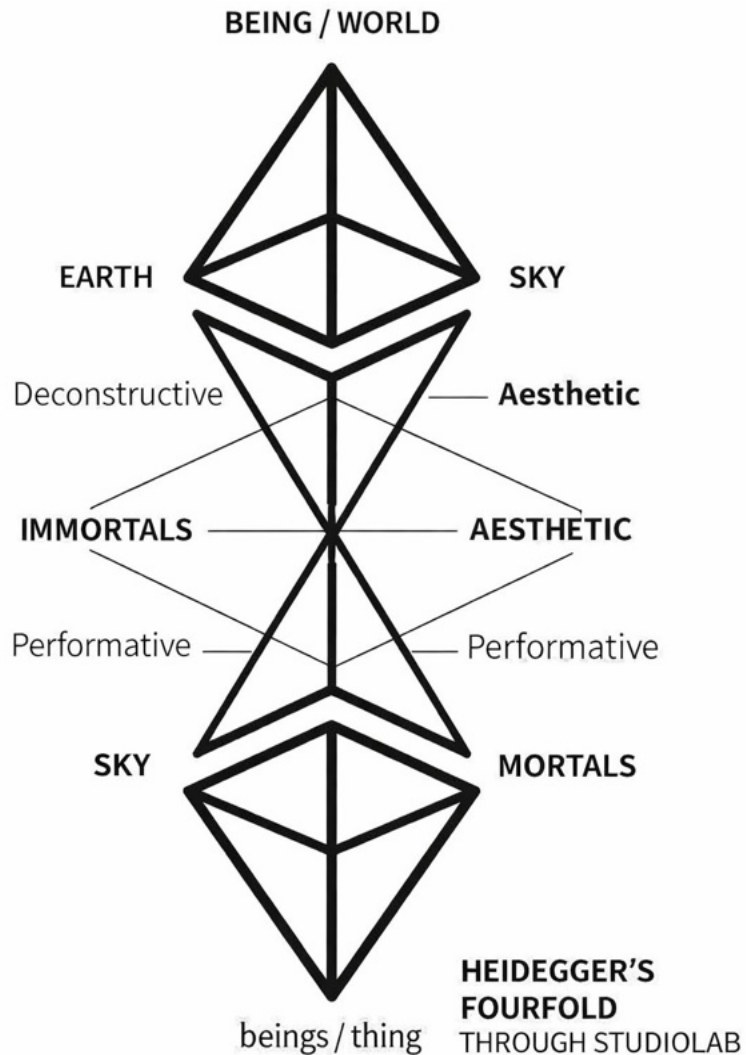
1. Heideggerian Thing-Fourfold

The base form gathers earth, sky, divinities, and mortals around the thing.

In StudioLab this becomes a thing-world diagnostic: what material ground sustains the situation, what horizon opens, what values or absences call, and who participates as mortal, vulnerable, responsible, and finite? This fourfold resists the Cartesian object-view by asking how a thing worlds.

Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

Heidegger's fourfold through StudioLab: thing/world, earth/sky, mortals/divinities, operational layers.



2. Ontological/Operational Fourfold

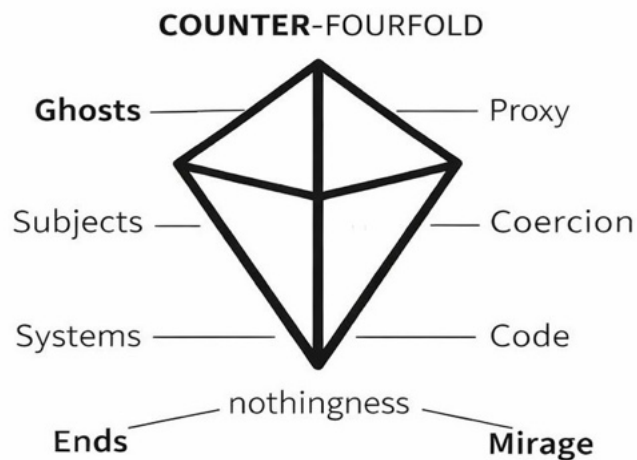
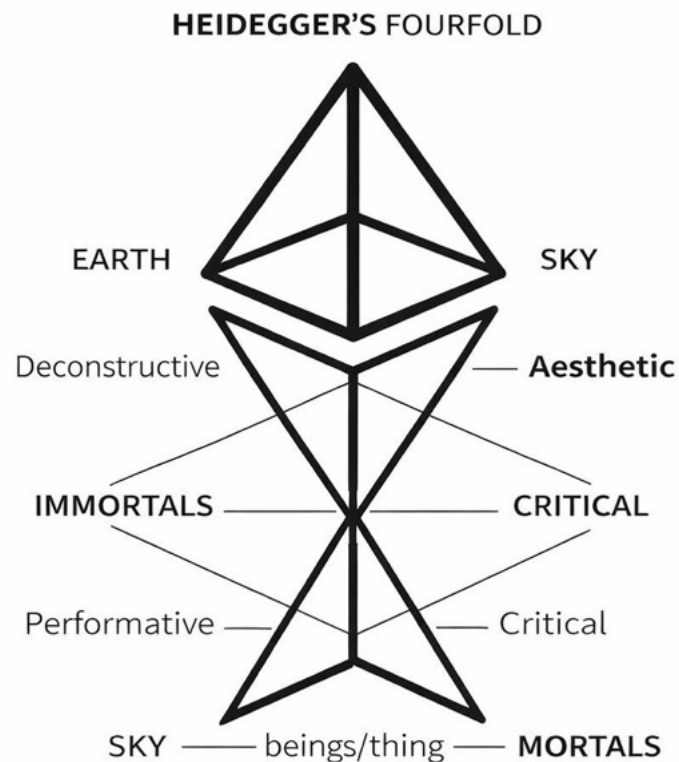
This version splits the fourfold into an ontological layer and an operational layer.

The upper and lower figures show how Being/world and beings/thing mirror and invert one another.

Aesthetic, critical, performative, and deconstructive operations become ways of entering the fourfold without confusing interpretation with inhabitation.

Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

The fourfold doubled through ontology and operation: Being/world above, beings/thing below.



HEIDEGGER'S FOURFOLD through StudioLAB

© Ontology layer: BEING / Deings

3. Counter-Fourfold / Shadow Fourfold

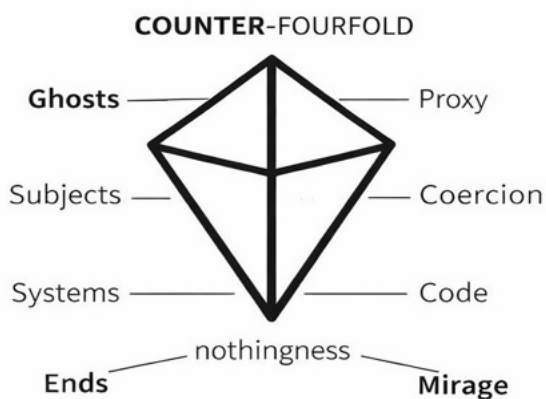
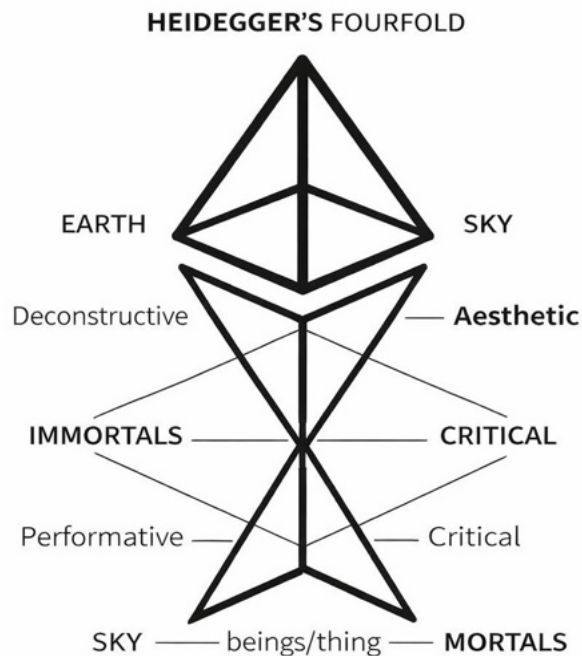
Every fourfold casts
a counter-fourfold.

Where earth becomes
extraction, sky becomes
projection, divinities
become idols or ghostly
overcodes, and mortals
become proxies, the
world-gathering turns
into platform nihilism.

The counter-fourfold
gives Dasein Design a
diagnostic of capture: not
how a world gathers, but
how a world gets
simulated, coerced, and
hollowed out.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design, and
public pedagogy.*

The counter-fourfold
appears as ghosts, proxy,
coercion, code, systems,
ends, and mirage.



HEIDEGGER'S FOURFOLD through StudioLAB
© Ontology layer: BEING / Deings

4. Toryx Grammar Fourfold

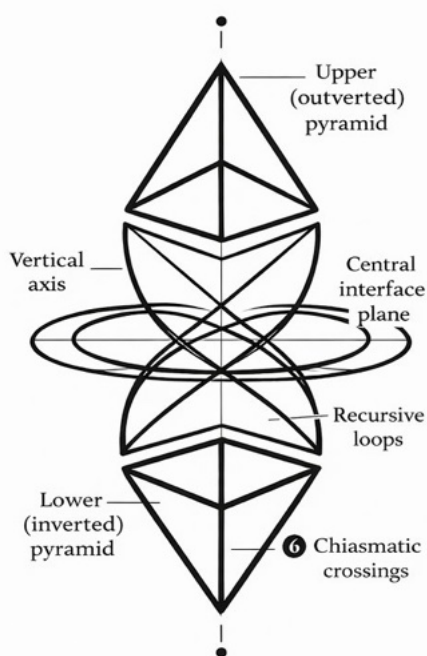
The Toryx is the topology of inversion. Its four grammatical operations are axis, interface plane, recursive loop, and crossing.

The double pyramid gives orientation; the interface plane allows translation and inversion; loops make return-with-difference; crossings create chiasmus. It diagrams passage without assuming that continuity means sameness.

Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

The Toryx as experiential grammar:
axis,
interface,
upper/lower pyramids,
recursive loops,
chiasmatic crossings.

The Toryx



- 1 Vertical axis
- 2 Central interface plane
- 3 Upper (outverted) pyramid
- 4 Lower (inverted) pyramid
- 5 Recursive loops
- 6 Chiasmatic crossings

- 1 Vertical axis
- 2 Central interface plane
- 3 Upper (outverted) pyramid
- 4 Lower (inverted) pyramid

The Toryx

The Toryx is a topological figure designed to make continuity through inversion legible. It is not an object, a model of physical space, or a metaphor for experience, it is an experiential grammar—a way of diagramming how passage, transformation, and return can occur without rupture.

At its core, the Toryx consists of an inversion-paired double pyramid articulated as a wireframe. One pyramid is oriented upward, the other downward. They meet at a shared interface, forming a single continuous structure whose defining feature is not volume but relation. All surfaces are implied rather than filled; meaning resides in edges, crossings, and orientations rather than in mass.

At the midpoint lies a mid point lies a tek of figure. This plane is the site of contact, translation, and potential **inversion**. It is not a dividing line but a threshold—the helce inside and outside can **exchange** roles. All inversions in the Toryx pass through this plane, distinctions may collapse and re emerge altered here, the Toryx.

From this wireframe Toryx, conditions for continuity, inversion, and recursion appear. When multiple traversals of the figure intersect, a resonant pattern may emerge, becoming intelligible as **Story X**.

5. D1-D4 Domain Fourfold with D0 Ground

The D-domain
fourfold overlays modes of
disclosure on the Toryx:

D1 soul/liminal collapse,

D2 subject/projection,

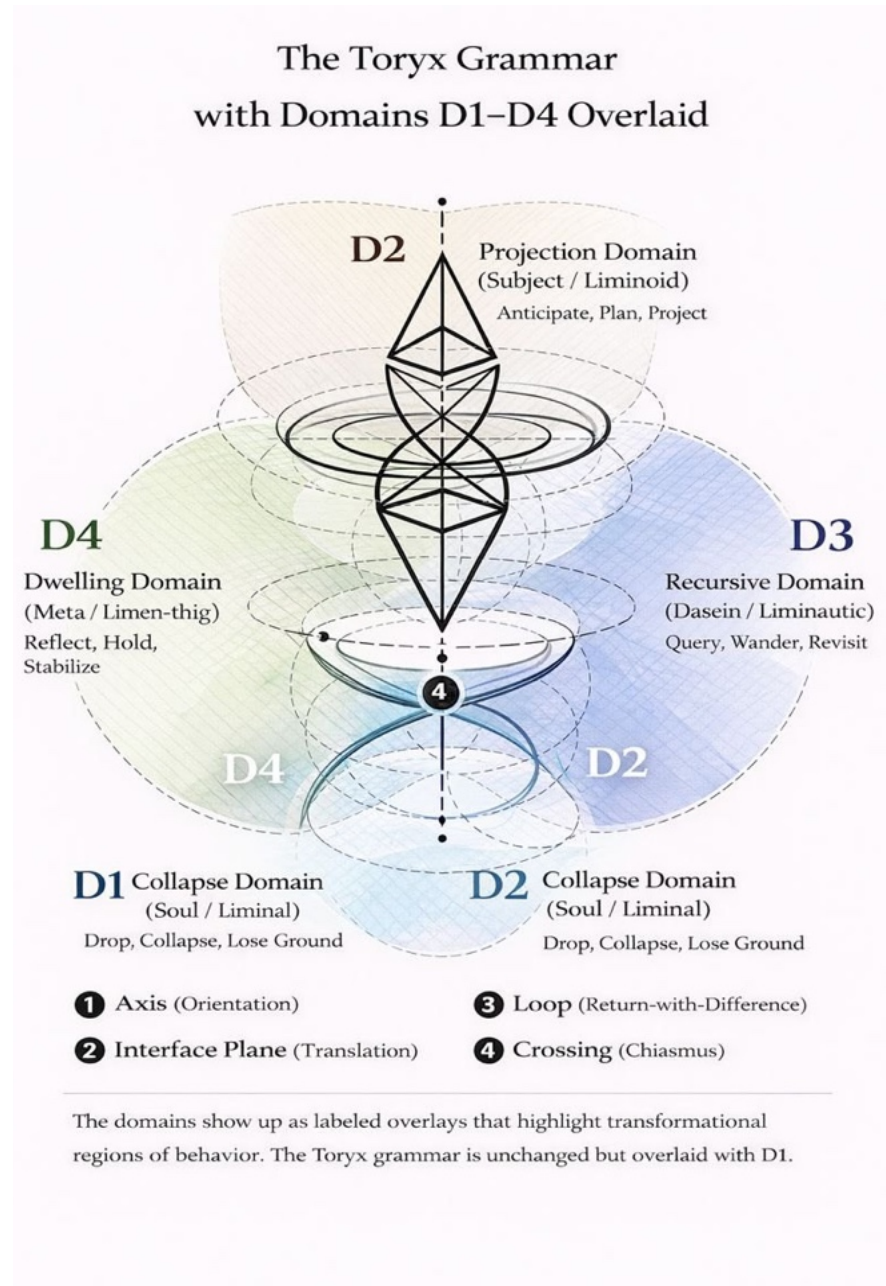
D3 Dasein/recursive query,

D4 meta/open dwelling, play.

D0 is not simply a fifth term;
it is the pause/reset,
non-design, or abground
that lets the domains
rotate without becoming
a closed system.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Toryx grammar
overlaid with
D1-D4 domains and
D0 as ground or
pause/reset.



6. Toryx Time Fourfold

Time itself fourfolds.

Omen-time carries recurrence and signal;

Audit-time scores, judges, verifies, and canals;

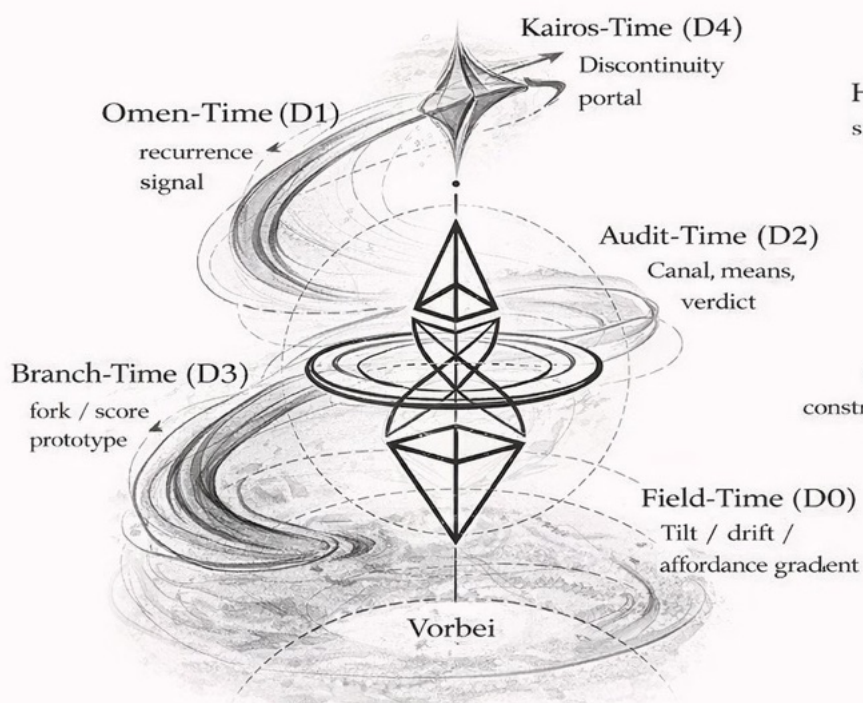
Branch-time forks into prototypes and paths;

Kairos-time opens discontinuity and portal.

Field-time D0 tilts, drifts, and offers
affordance gradients.

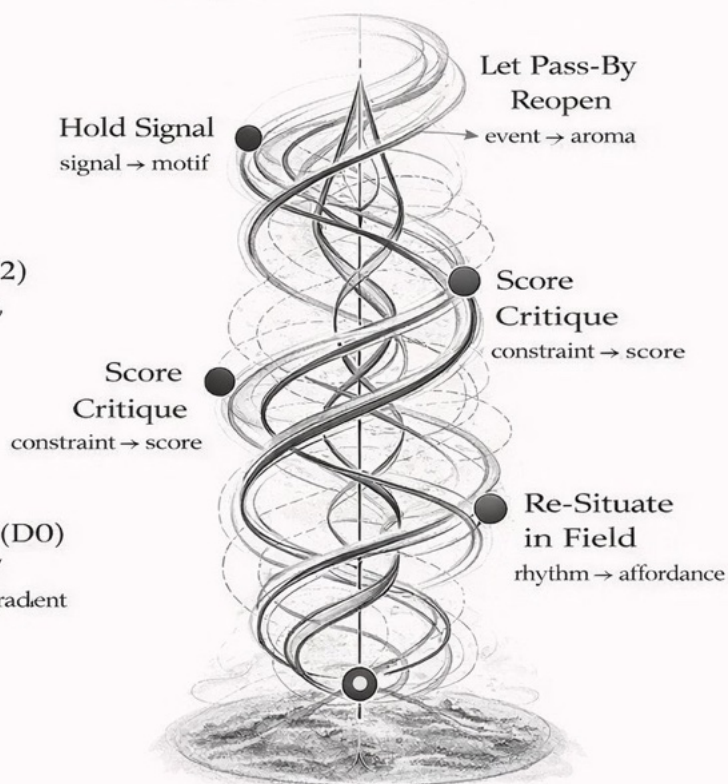
This lets a design team notice that not every task lives in the same temporality.

Toryx Time Topology



Toryx Time Topology

Helyx Rotation Route



Helyx Rotation Route

Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

Toryx Time Topology: omen-time, audit-time, branch-time, kairos-time, plus field-time D0.

7. Helyx Rotation Fourfold

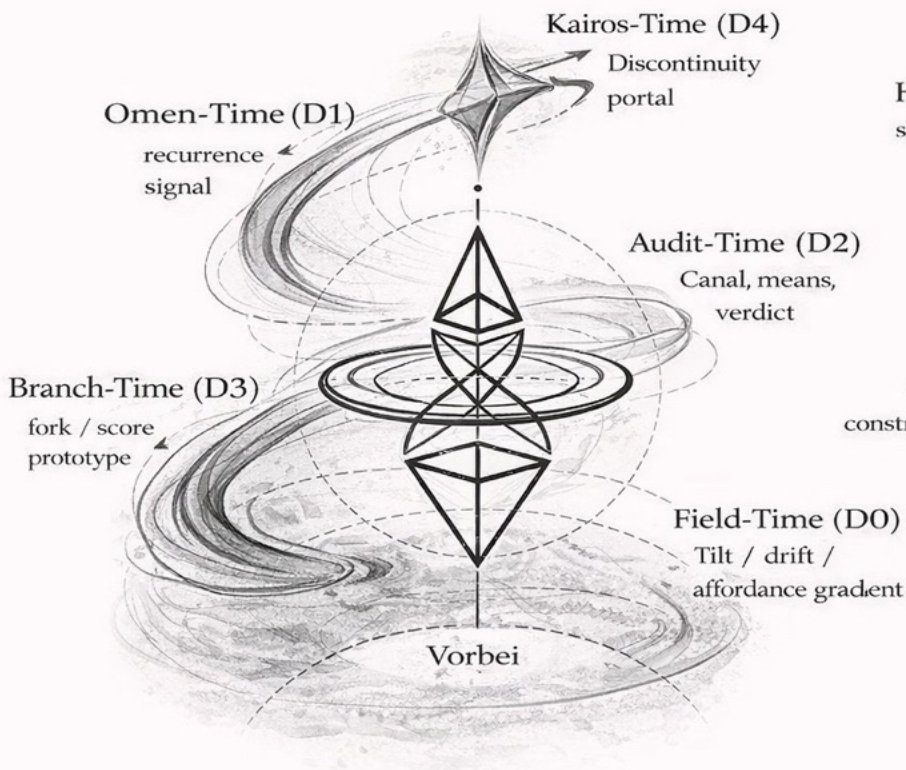
The Helyx gives fourfolding its spiral motion.

A signal is held;
a constraint becomes score and critique;

the practice re-situates in field; then
the event is allowed to pass-by and
 reopen as aroma, trace, or motif.

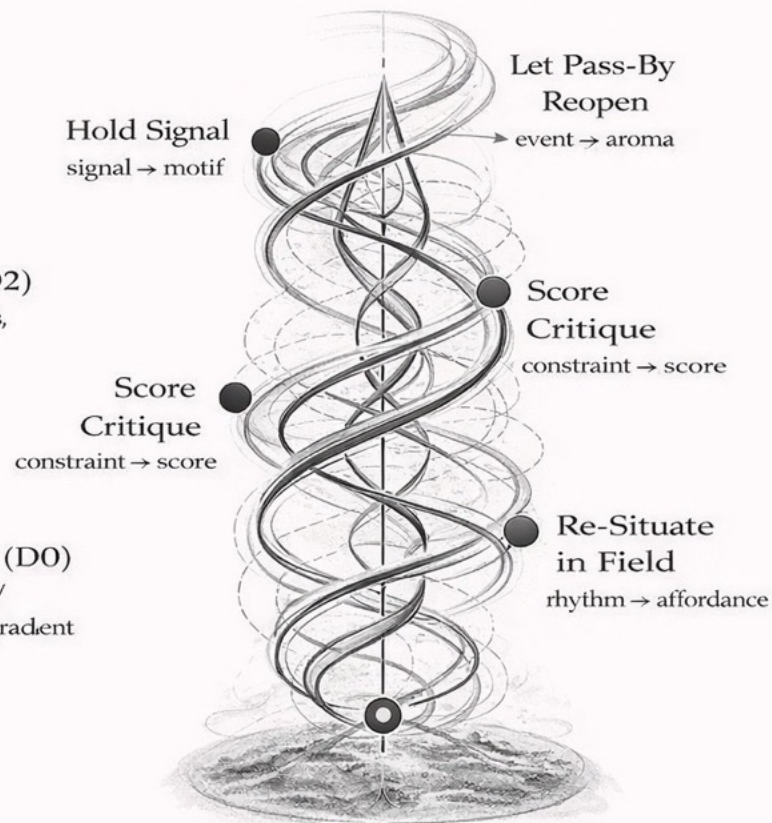
This is not linear progress. It is recursive attunement: return, hold, score, resituate, release.

Toryx Time Topology



Toryx Time Topology

Helyx Rotation Route



Helyx Rotation Route

Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

Helyx Rotation Route: hold signal, score/critique, re-situate, let pass-by/reopen.

8. Helyx Built from Toryx Grammar

The Helyx emerges
when Toryx crossings are
repeated through time.

*Craft, familiar, adventure,
and mystery become spiral
regions, not separate stages.*

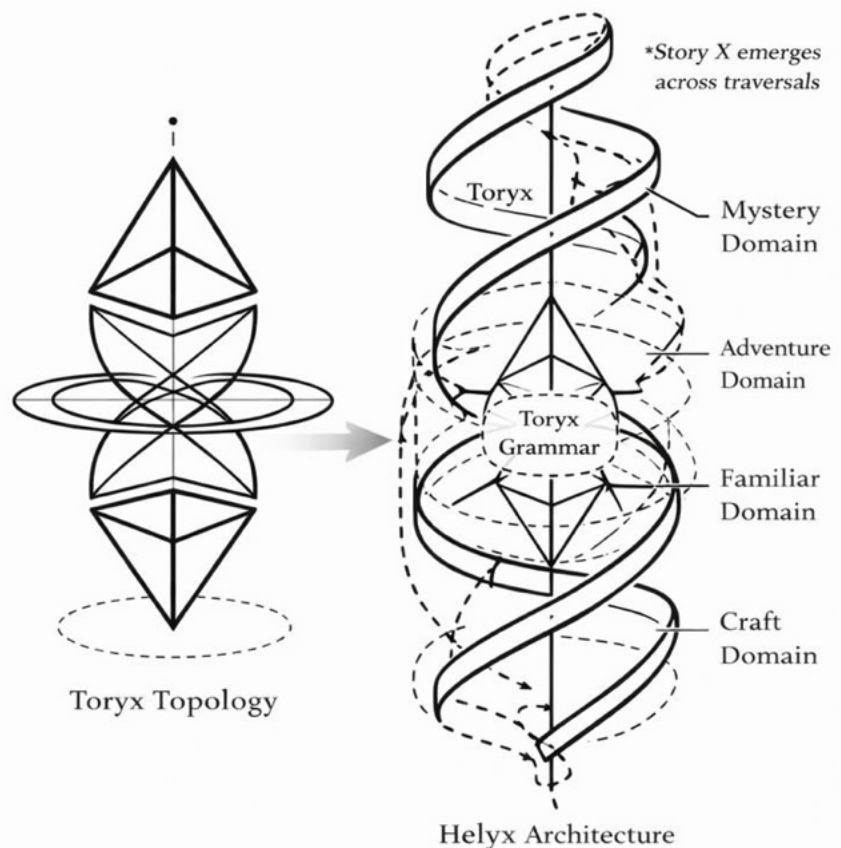
Story X appears
across traversals.

A practice becomes durable
when its recurring inversions
braid into a recognizable yet
open architecture of return.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Helyx architecture
built from the Toryx:
craft, familiar, adventure,
and mystery domains.

Helyx Built Using Toryx Grammar



9. Butler/Ronell Test-Passing Fourfold

This fourfold maps test culture.

*S1 pursuit asks what
I am trying to control;*

*S2 detection asks what
the system learns from
my control attempt;*

*S3 exposure asks how
my tool becomes my tell;*

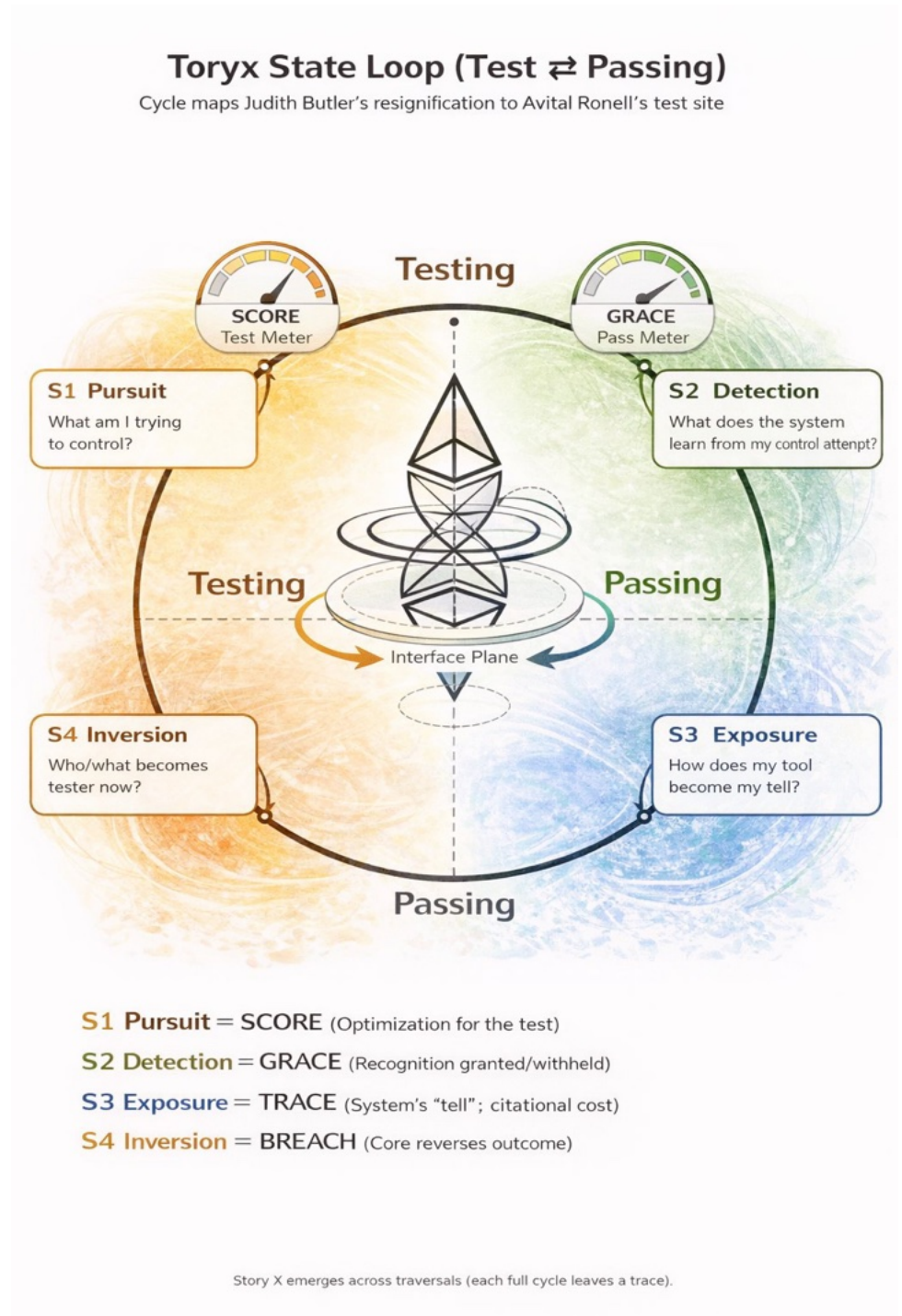
*S4 inversion asks who or
what becomes tester now.*

The loop passes
through score, grace,
trace, and breach.

It is a compact ethics
of assessment
and performance.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Toryx State Loop:
pursuit, detection,
exposure, inversion across
testing and passing.



10. Nested Pretense Safeguard Sevenfold

Fourfolding risks
becoming pretense if it
floats free from evidence,
responsibility, and return.

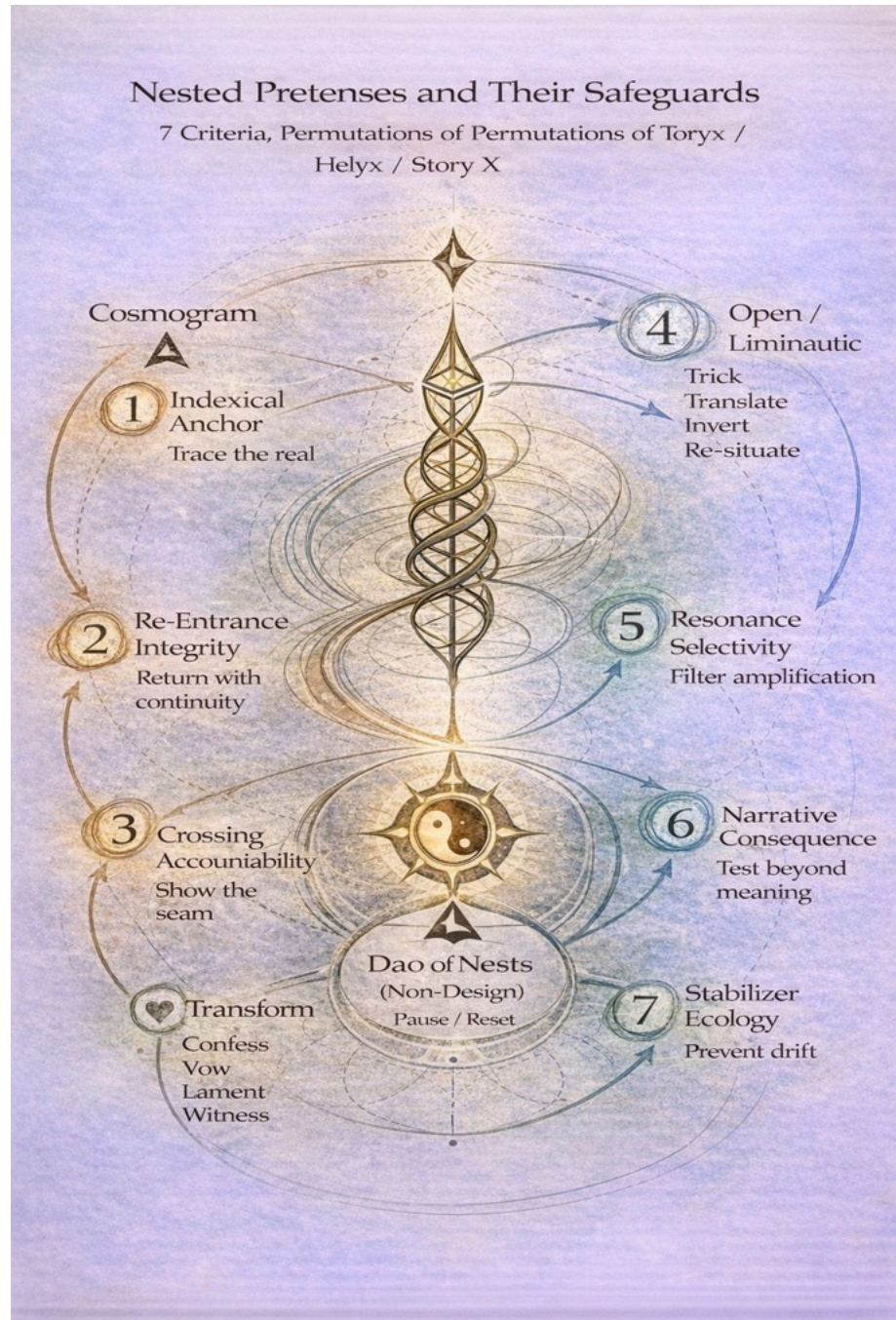
The safeguard diagram
surrounds the
cosmogram with checks:

*anchor the real,
return with continuity,
show the seam,
trick/translate/invert/re-situate,
amplify selectively,
test beyond meaning, prevent drift,
and transform through confession,
vow, lament, and witness.*

This is the ethics of metaplay.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Nested pretenses
and safeguards:
indexical anchor,
re-entrance,
crossing accountability,
resonance, narrative
consequence, stabilization,
and transformation.



11. Nested Pretense Operational Criteria

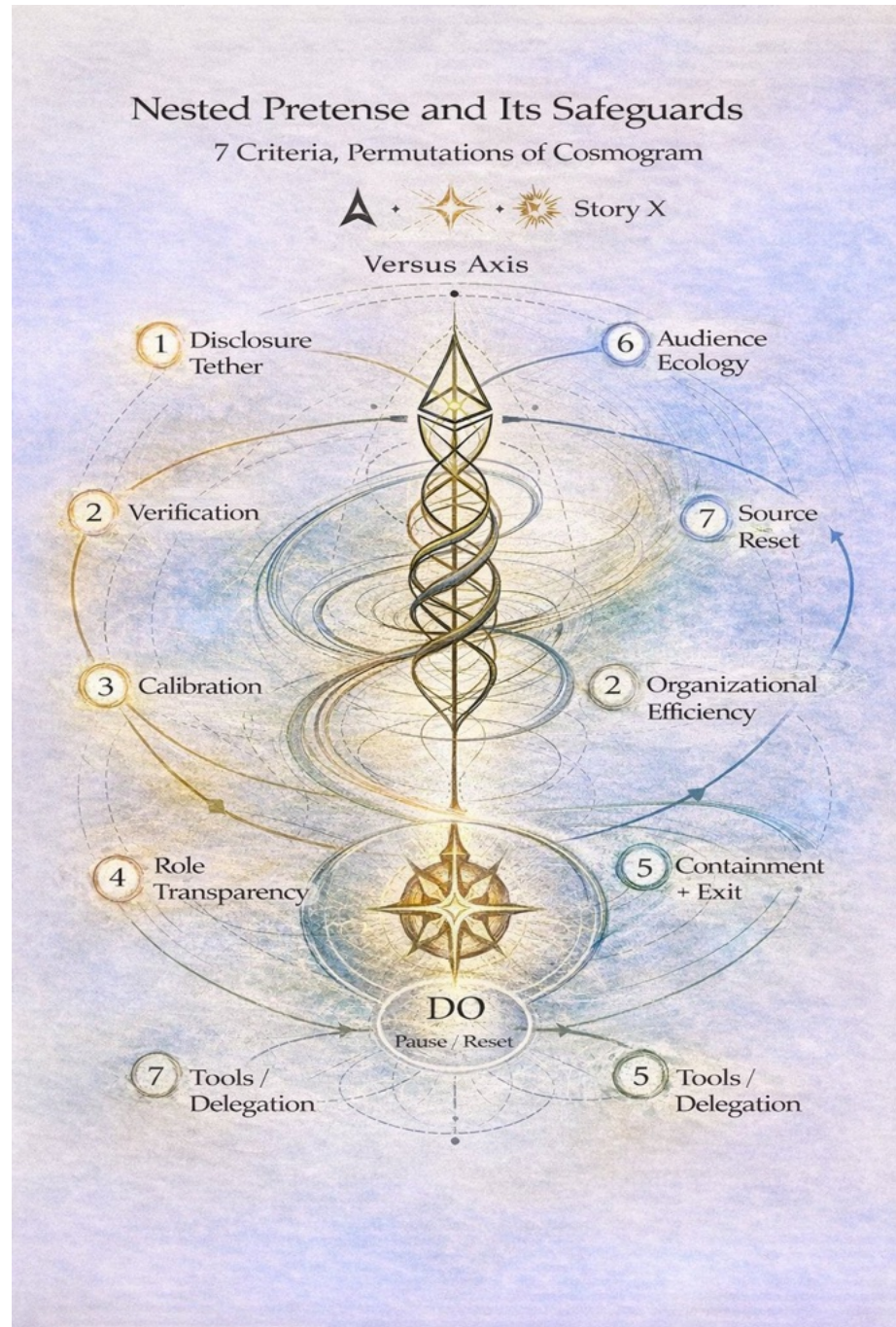
The second safeguard diagram translates the sacred version into professional criteria.

Disclosure tether, verification, calibration, role transparency, containment and exit, audience ecology, and source reset keep collaborative metaplay from becoming manipulation or drift.

These criteria make fourfolding viable for professional development and wellbeing work.

Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

Operational safeguards:
disclosure tether,
verification, calibration,
role transparency,
containment and exit,
audience ecology,
source reset.



12. Quad Toryx Inversion

A quad does not stay fixed when it passes through a Toryx.

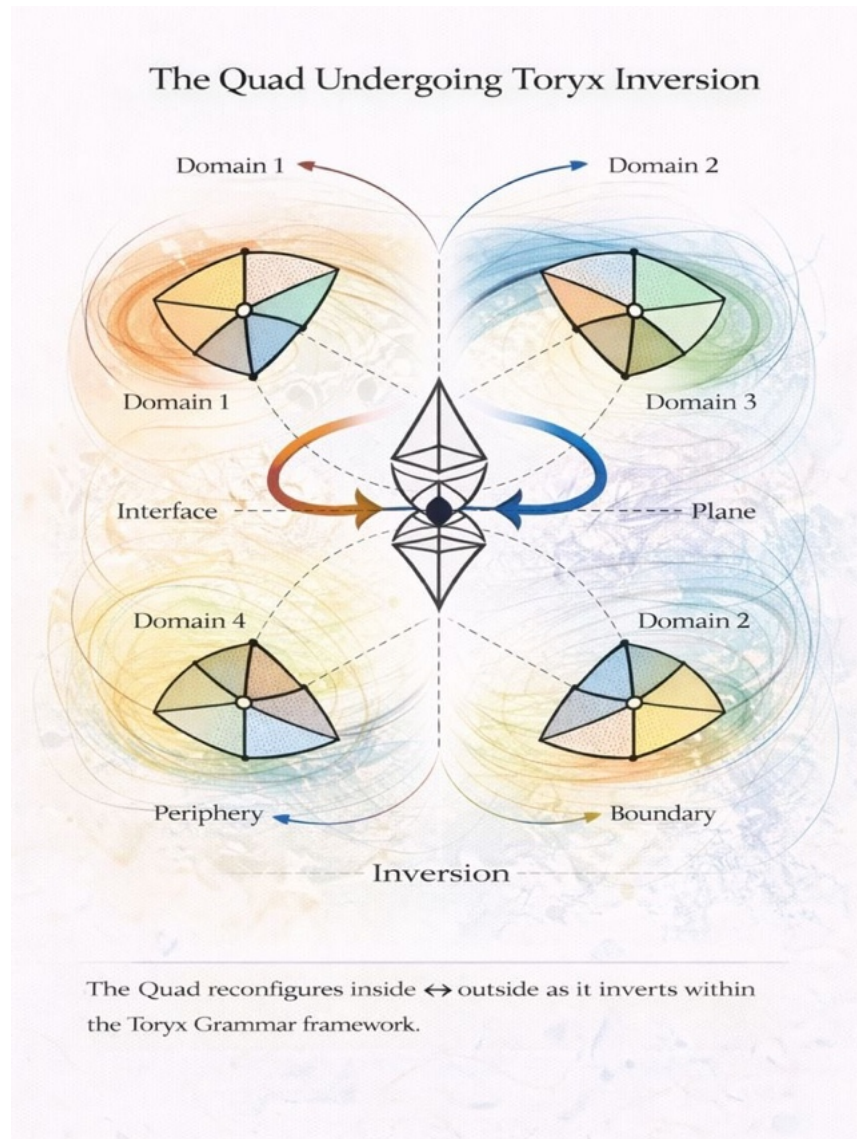
Inside and outside exchange roles; periphery and boundary move; interface and plane reverse functions.

This diagram shows how a fourfold can migrate across domains without losing its relational pattern.

A topology of translation, not a typology of boxes.

Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

The quad undergoing Toryx inversion: interface, plane, periphery, and boundary across domains.



13. Weaving Helyx / Supportive Care Quad

This is the care version of Helyx.

Periphery weaves roles;

interface knots signals;

plane braids the frame;

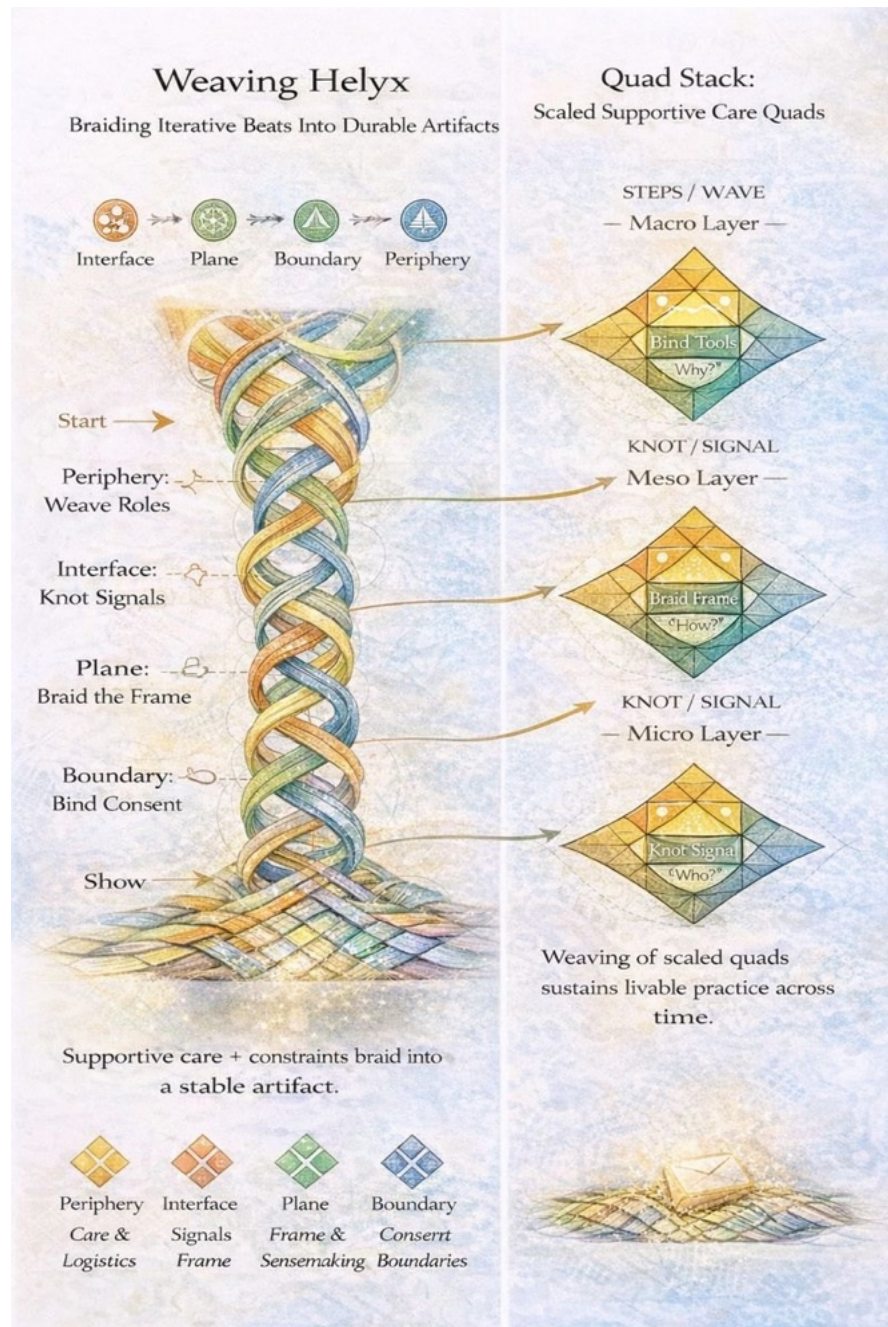
boundary binds consent.

The right side scales
the quad across micro,
meso, and macro layers:
who, how, and why.

Here fourfolding
becomes supportive
care architecture:
logistics, signal,
sensemaking, and
consent braided into
livable practice.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care, p
latform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Weaving Helyx:
interface, plane, boundary,
periphery; micro, meso,
and macro care quads.



14. Performance Rotation through SDX

Performance does not optimize one value at the expense of all others.

It rotates.

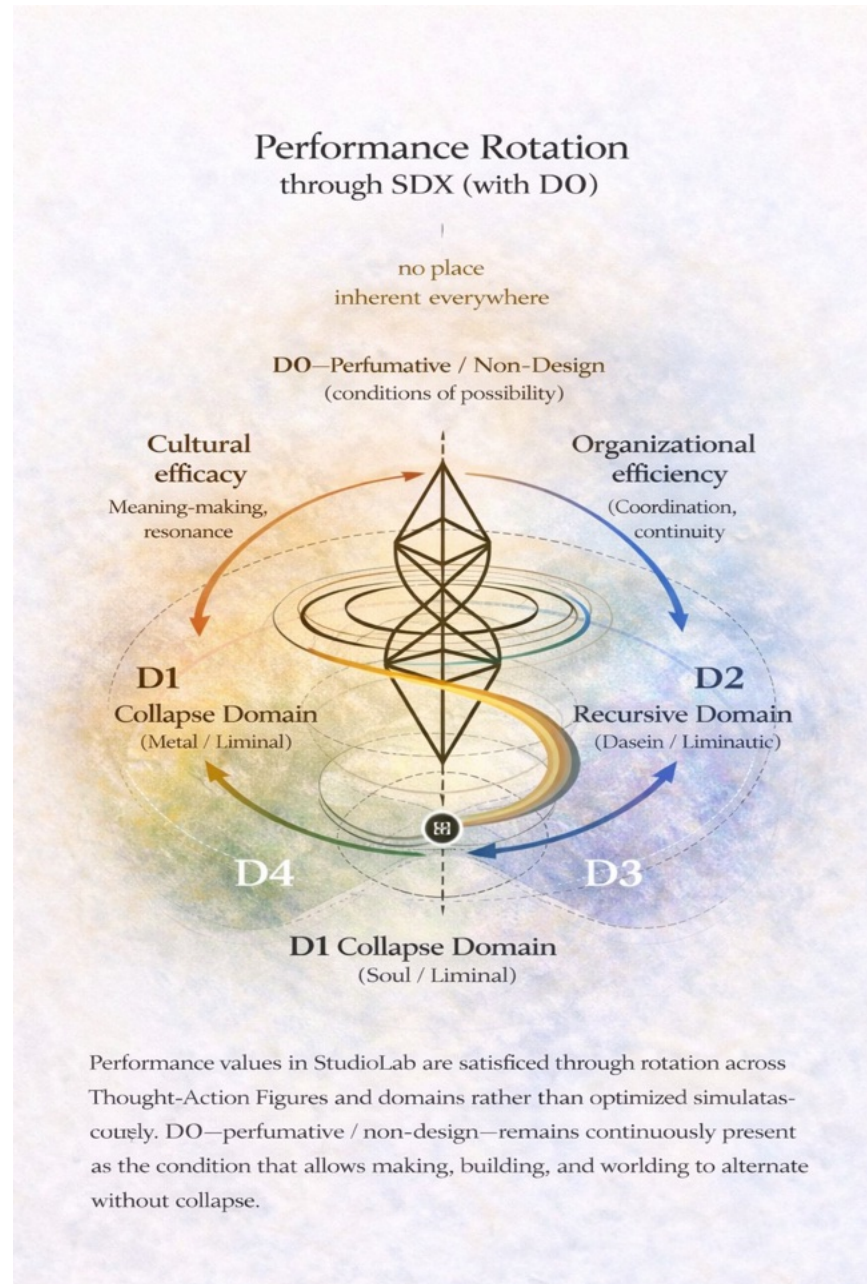
*Cultural efficacy,
organizational efficiency,
Dasein/recursive practice,
and collapse/liminal
passage circle
through D0.*

Spiritual design exercises teach participants to rotate values rather than freeze under a single metric.

This is a practical route from performance theory to wellbeing.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Performance rotation through spiritual design exercise: D0 as non-design condition of rotation.



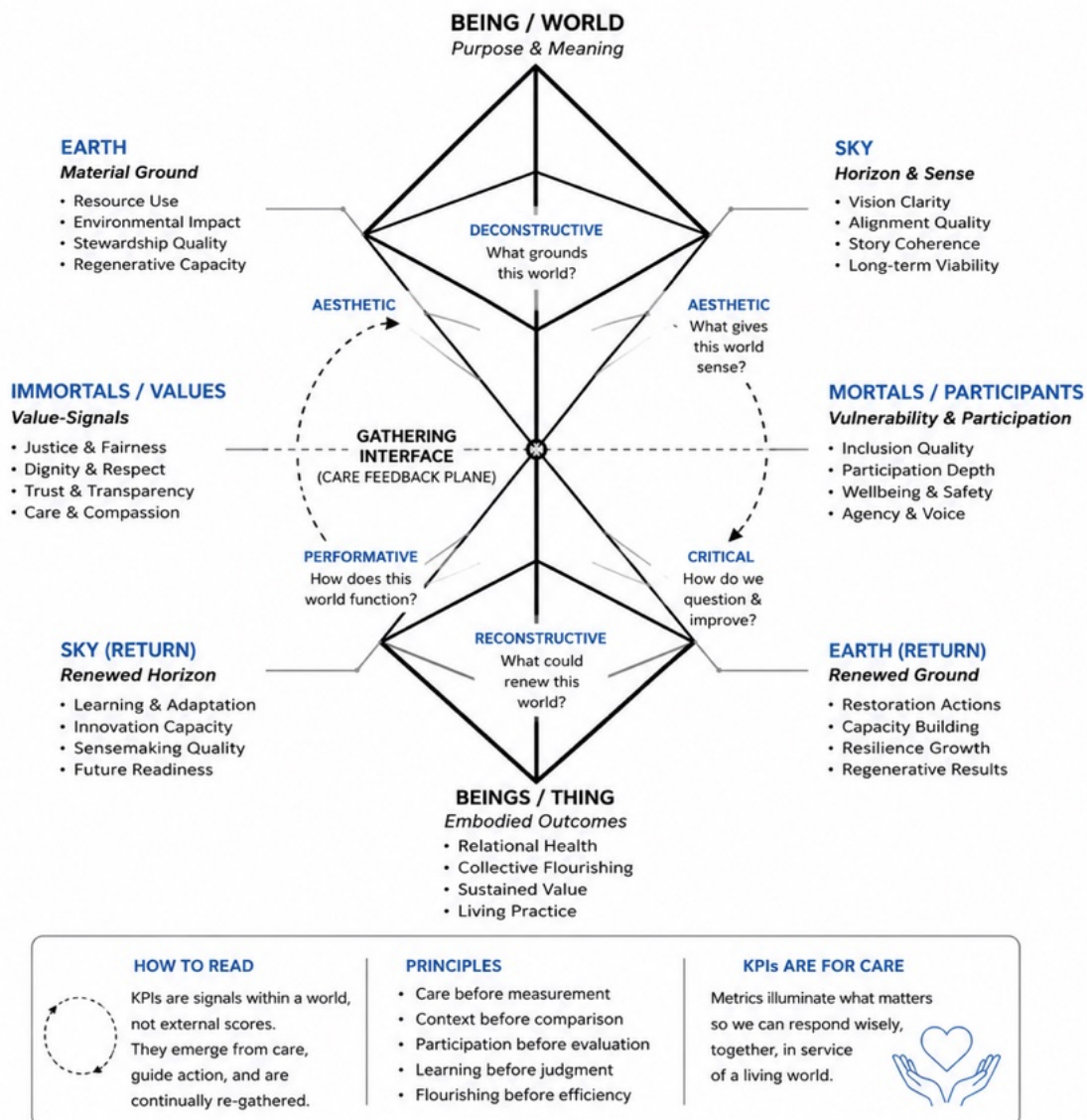
15. KPI Cosmography / Care Feedback Fourfold

Performance measurement becomes dangerous when it deodorizes collapse.

The KPI cosmogram reframes metrics around care feedback:

organizational continuity, technological reliability, cultural trust, and equity/diversity/justice.

It turns dashboards into cosmograms: not funnels for extraction but loops for care return.



Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

KPI cosmography from Folding Benjamin's Angel: organizational, technological, cultural, and equity performance around care feedback.

16. Folding the Angel Operational Fivefold

This is not technically a fourfold, but it is the flight path that activates fourfolding.

See montage, read clues,
fold through Toryx,
braid through Helyx,
and return as Story X.

The Angel does not
escape the wreckage.

It learns to fly the fold
by moving across
huts, clinics, schools,
dashboards, temples,
platforms, and studios.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Flying the Angel: see,
read, fold, braid, return;
huts, clinics, schools,
dashboards, temples,
platforms, studio/lab.



17. Liminal Cascade Ecology

The Liminal Cascade shows how fourfolds become plural and intergenerational.

Taoist, empirical, angelic, Sufi, and trickster clusters move through
gates, attractor rides, avoidance rides, entanglements, reflection, inquiry, and docking.

This is the social ecology of cosmograms:
one team's fold becomes another team's starting condition.



Use: diagramming, rehearsal, reflection, collaborative care, platform design, and public pedagogy.

The Liminal Cascade: clusters, gates, team cascades, intergenerational symbolization.

18. Recursive Perfumative Simplex Ecology

This diagram expands fourfolding into polyphony.

Thought-action figures,
crypts and masks,
trickster assemblages,
geological-sensory worlds,
and abyssal clouds
all circulate.

*The fourfold here no longer
looks like a cross or diamond.*

It becomes
a recursive ecology of
perfumative traces,
ancestral/empirical clusters,
and Dasein-design passage.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

Recursive perfumative ecology:

TAF/CTAF/MTAF,
polyphonic souls, masks,
Dasein-design passage,
and abyssal cloud.



19. Cosmogram as Portable Fourfolder

The cosmogram is the central metamodeler.

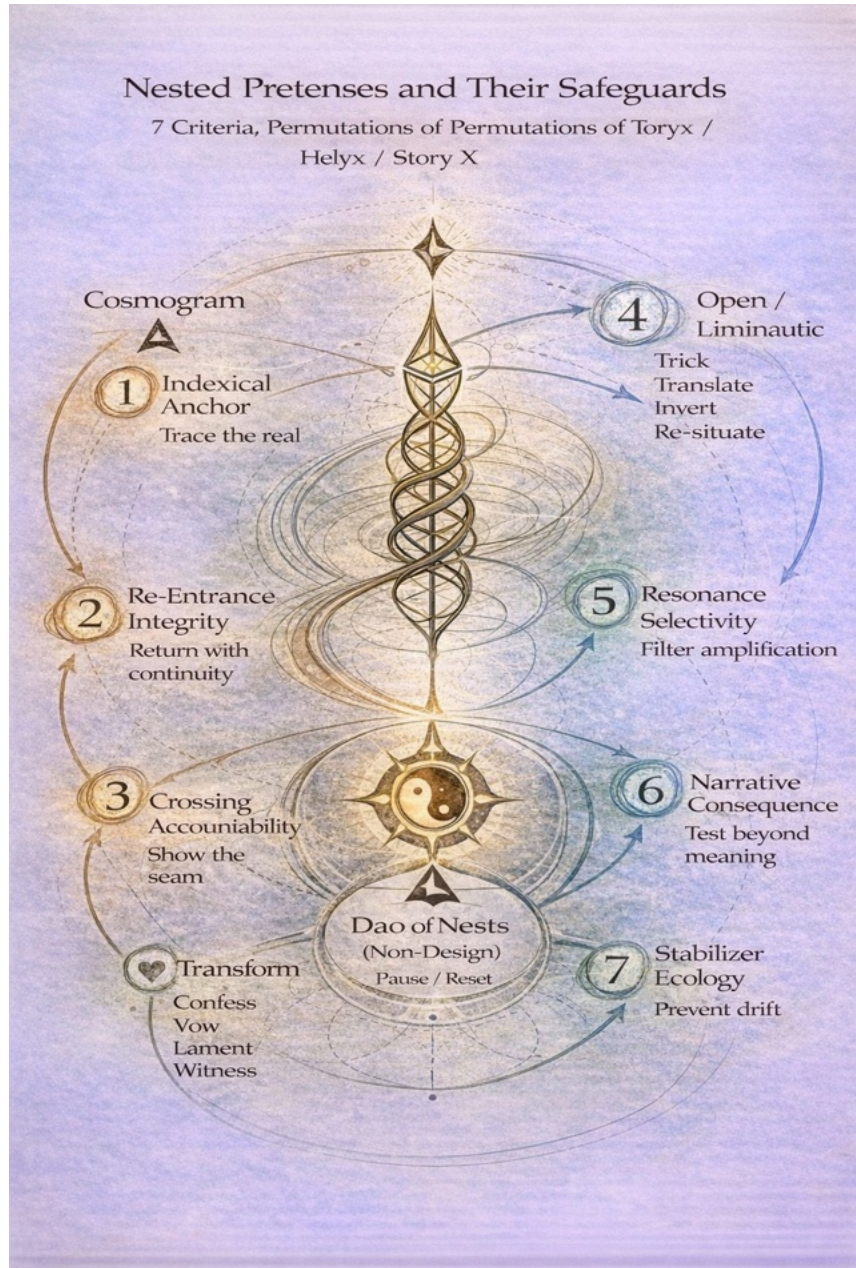
It makes fourfolding
portable without flattening
|it into a checkbox.

A cosmogram can travel
from classroom to clinic,
hut to dashboard,
public talk to
online platform.

It is a world-
gathering device:
small enough to teach,
rich enough to hold
conflict, roughness,
recursion, and care.

Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.

The cosmogram is the
recurring portable device at
the edge of sacred geometry,
evidence, and practice.



20. Geometric Fourfolding: Harmony, Grid, Fractal, Topology

Fourfolding combines different mathematic and phenomenological operations.

Pythagorean geometry
gives harmony & measure;

Cartesian geometry
gives grid and calculability;

fractal geometry
gives recursive roughness
across scales;

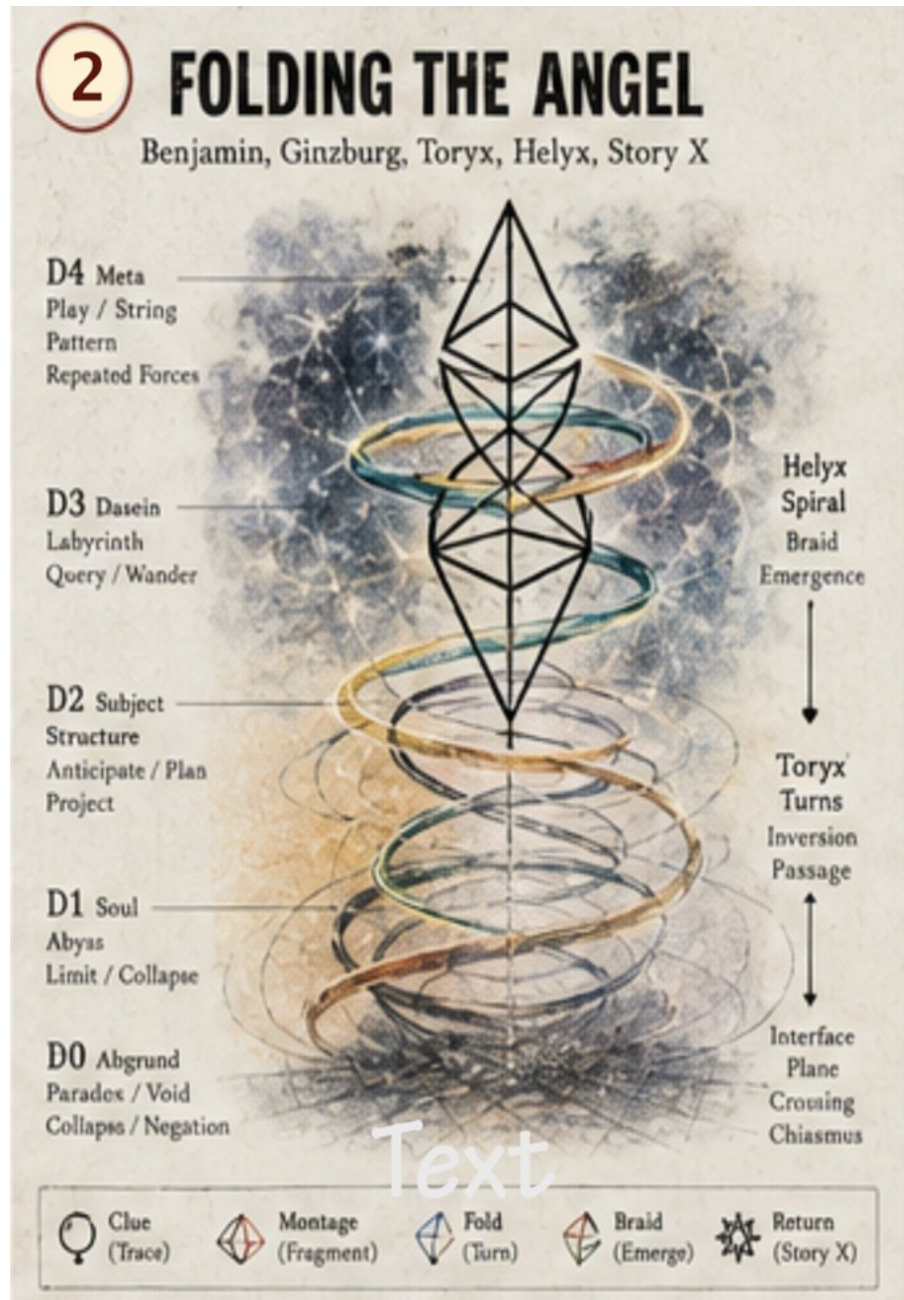
topology
gives continuity
through deformation;

Husserl-Derrida
gives inscription and
historical reactivation.

Fourfolding
becomes a living geometry
when it can be drawn,
folded, transmitted,
forgotten, and reactivated
in new situations.

*Use: diagramming,
rehearsal, reflection,
collaborative care,
platform design,
and public pedagogy.*

D0-D4 and the
Toryx/Helyx grammar
recast geometry as a
history of modeling,
inscription, and
reactivation.



From Fourfolding to Sixfolding

Toryx-Helyx Geometry, Dasein Design, and the Origin of Re-Artable Worlds

1. A thing is never just an object

The first discipline of fourfolding is to stop treating a thing as an object. A thing is not merely a bounded item placed in front of a subject. A thing gathers. A hut gathers weather, path, forest, memory, labor, ritual, danger, shelter, and a mode of dwelling. A classroom gathers walls, desks, screens, assignments, institutional histories, student futures, anxieties, jokes, grades, power, and hope. A dashboard gathers data, expectations, fears, rankings, actions, blind spots, and forms of accountability. A platform gathers profiles, feeds, algorithms, ghosts, proxies, attention, and shame. In each case the object-view misses the world that the thing quietly composes.

Heidegger's fourfold names one way to read this gathering. Earth is not merely soil; it is the material and sustaining ground that withdraws even as it supports. Sky is not merely atmosphere; it is the changing horizon of time, weather, season, projection, and exposure. Divinities are not merely theological beings; they are the calls, values, absences, ideals, idols, or sacred signals through which a situation orients itself. Mortals are those who live finitely, suffer, learn, care, remember, and act. The fourfold therefore does not classify a thing. It asks how a thing gathers a world.

StudioLab's move begins there but refuses to leave the fourfold as a pious late-Heideggerian mood. A fourfold must be teachable, diagrammable, rehearsable, and publicly testable. It must work with students and teachers, artists and professionals, designers and community partners, experts and novices. It must be able to enter a classroom, a clinic, an archive, a design session, an online platform, a festival, a public performance, or a wellbeing workshop. This is why the cosmogram matters. The cosmogram is the portable fourfolder: a small device for asking what world a thing gathers and how that gathering might change.

The supplied diagrams show this repeatedly. The fourfold appears as diamond, double pyramid, nested quad, care loop, time topology, test loop, performance rotation, and spiritual design exercise. The point is not to choose the one correct shape. The point is to recognize a family of operations. Fourfolding gathers. Toryx turns. Helyx braids. Story X returns. ShuttleKraft carries the movement across domains. Dasein Design names the broader practice of designing situations in which people can encounter and transform modes of being-in-the-world. Metaplay is not an add-on to Dasein Design. Metaplay is Dasein Design in motion.

2. From sacred ratio to Cartesian plane

The geometry of fourfolding has a long prehistory. Pythagorean geometry gives one root: cosmos as harmony, ratio, interval, and resonance. The *tetraktys* condenses a fourfold path into a tenfold completion; number becomes music, figure, and ethical attunement. This does not mean that StudioLab should become neo-Pythagorean. It means that fourfolding inherits an ancient intuition: worlds are not merely aggregates of parts; they are measured relations. A world falls into rhythm, proportion, tension, and resonance.

That Pythagorean impulse returns whenever a cosmogram becomes more than a map. A map places things. A cosmogram tunes relations. It asks how ground, horizon, value, and mortal practice resonate or dissonate. It also asks where the harmony has become false. A school may display the ideals of care while organizing itself around ranking and exhaustion. A dashboard may claim accountability while deodorizing collapse. A platform may promise community while amplifying feud and rumor. The cosmogram does not sanctify harmony; it tests it.

Cartesian plane geometry gives the opposing danger and a necessary tool. The coordinate plane translates space into calculable extension. It joins geometry with algebra. This allows modern science, engineering, logistics, navigation, architecture, and computation. It also encourages the flattening of world into grid, variable, dashboard, and manipulable field. Once a world becomes a plane, a subject can stand outside it, represent it, optimize it, and control it. The fourfold, placed on a Cartesian plane, easily degenerates into a 2x2 matrix.

Yet Dasein Design cannot simply reject the plane. We need diagrams, coordinates, interfaces, tables, dashboards, and screens. The question is whether the plane becomes master or servant. A Cartesian chart can help us find patterns, but it cannot decide what counts as care, dwelling, mortality, trust, or transformation. The best StudioLab diagrams therefore use the plane while also bending it. They add loops, spirals, crossings, nested safeguards, and recursive returns. They let the planar diagram become topological.

This tension matters for professional development and wellbeing. Corporate training often lives in the Cartesian plane: competencies, metrics, rubrics, dashboards, deliverables. Spiritual or philosophical practice often retreats into private interiority. Spiritual design exercises need both and neither. They must use enough structure to be shared, repeated, and improved, but enough fourfold openness to keep world, care, and mortality in view. The plane provides legibility; the fold prevents reduction.

3. Toryx: topology of inversion

The Toryx is the strongest diagrammatic invention in this series because it makes inversion legible without making transformation look like rupture. It is not a model of physical space. It is an experiential grammar. The annotated Toryx shows the vertical axis, the central interface plane, upper and lower pyramids, recursive loops, and chiasmatic crossings. The upper pyramid outverts; the lower pyramid inverts. The interface plane is not a mere divider. It is the threshold where inside and outside exchange roles, where a path can reverse, where a figure can collapse and reappear altered.

Every serious learning process requires such a threshold. A student thinks they are writing a paper and discovers they are staging a relation to truth. A professional thinks they are managing a team

and discovers they are caring for a fragile world of trust. A patient-facing organization thinks it is collecting KPIs and discovers that its metrics either return care or deodorize suffering. A philosopher thinks they are explaining Heidegger and discovers that explanation itself needs a world in which it can become practice.

The Toryx makes this crossing visible. It gives us a way to talk about continuity through inversion. That phrase matters. Many institutions want continuity without inversion; they want improvement without passage, innovation without loss, wellness without collapse, design without abyss. The diagrams refuse that fantasy. They keep D1 in view: soul, limit, abyss, collapse, loss of ground. They also keep D0 in view: abground, pause/reset, non-design, the condition that allows the designed frame to relax before it becomes coercive.

The fourfold grammar of the Toryx can be named simply: axis, interface, loop, crossing. Axis gives orientation. Interface gives translation. Loop gives return-with-difference. Crossing gives chiasmus. These four operations generate many of the other fourfolds in the catalogue. They can be used to read a text, facilitate a meeting, design a workshop, analyze a platform, or build an online metaplay environment.

As a philosophical figure, Toryx resonates with topology more than with Euclidean geometry. Topology asks what relations survive bending, stretching, and deformation. Dasein Design needs that question. A fourfold may look different in a high school classroom, a graduate seminar, a faculty retreat, a community health project, or an online platform. What survives is not a shape but a relational grammar: orientation, threshold, return, crossing. That is why the Toryx can travel.

4. Helyx: recursion becomes braid

If the Toryx shows the topology of inversion, the Helyx shows the temporality of return. The Helyx is not a simple spiral of progress. It is a braid. It moves through recurrence, score, critique, resituation, release, and return. The diagrams of Helyx rotation give a compact sequence: hold signal; score critique; re-situate in field; let pass-by and reopen. This sequence is more subtle than iteration. Iteration repeats a cycle to improve a product. Helyx braiding lets a signal become motif, a constraint become score, a rhythm become affordance, and an event become aroma.

The language of aroma matters. A strong learning experience leaves more than data. It leaves traces, moods, stories, and reactivatable residues. It changes what a participant can notice later. This is why the Helyx belongs with spiritual design exercises. Hadot's account of philosophy as a way of life emphasizes exercises that reshape attention, perception, judgment, and orientation. Helyx gives those exercises a transmedia and collaborative form. Participants do not merely contemplate. They hold signals, score constraints, resituate practices, and release events back into a field where they can return as Story X.

Story X is the emergent pattern that appears across traversals. It cannot be commanded in advance. It arrives when repeated passages leave traces that become intelligible. A class project becomes more than an assignment. A workshop becomes more than professional development. A diagram becomes more than a visual aid. A hurt, failure, or collapse becomes part of a shared grammar of care. Story X is not the hero's final triumph. It is the gift that returns when the fold has been flown rather than escaped.

The Helyx also lets us think beyond linear pedagogy. Traditional teaching often imagines knowledge traveling from teacher to student, concept to application, lecture to assignment. StudioLab practice moves otherwise: hear, create, deliver; montage, clue, fold, braid, return; D0-D4 rotation; field note, cosmogram, rehearsal, public outcome. Each pass changes the participants and the world they are reading. Helyx is the movement by which a course, platform, or professional development program becomes alive.

This is also where fractal geometry enters. A Helyx can braid at micro, meso, and macro scales. A single prompt can gather a world. A team can braid roles. A semester can braid projects. A public platform can braid cohorts. A field can braid traditions. The same form recurs, but never identically. Like a coastline, cloud, or river system, the practice remains rough, recursive, and scale-sensitive. Sixfolding tracks this rough recursion.

5. Sixfolding does not add two terms

Sixfolding must be stated carefully, especially for readers who know Heidegger. It does not improve the fourfold by adding two more boxes. It names the movement by which fourfolding travels across D0-D4, across media, across institutional settings, across scales, and across modes of disclosure. The fourfold gathers a thing-world. Sixfolding moves, tests, translates, protects, and reactivates that gathering.

The D-domain diagrams help. D1 is soul, liminal collapse, abyss, omen, loss of ground. D2 is subject, projection, structure, audit, planning, critique, and score. D3 is Dasein, labyrinth, query, wandering, revisiting, recursive worlding. D4 is meta-play, open pattern, string, dwelling, stabilization, and re-patterning. D0 is not simply another domain in the same row. It is pause/reset, non-design, abground, parade/void, the condition that lets the rotation continue without becoming a coercive apparatus.

This gives sixfolding its practical power. A situation can be read through multiple domains. A professional conflict can appear as D2 role confusion, D1 collapse, D3 world breakdown, D4 pattern opportunity, and D0 need for pause. A classroom failure can be a grading problem, an existential exposure, a design flaw, a world-disclosure, and a chance to reset. A digital platform can be a tool, a proxy, a ghost system, an audience ecology, a code apparatus, and a possible metaplay environment.

Sixfolding also explains why fourfolding needs safeguards. The diagrams of nested pretenses warn that world-making can become pretense, manipulation, spiritual bypassing, aesthetic fog, or professional theater. Hence the criteria: disclosure tether, verification, calibration, role transparency, containment and exit, audience ecology, source reset. The more powerful the metaplay, the more important the safeguards. Dasein Design must not lure people into unbounded exposure. It must provide exit, consent, calibration, and return.

This is where the project becomes fundable. Professional development and wellbeing need practices that are richer than survey metrics but more accountable than inspiration. They need forms that can hold stories, artifacts, diagrams, reflections, and public outcomes. They need a way to gather experiential evidence without data-raking participants into thin metrics. Sixfolding offers that framework: it keeps the fourfold alive, adds domain movement, and insists on safeguards.

6. Husserl, Derrida, and the reactivation of geometry

The reference to Husserl and Derrida's *Origin of Geometry* gives BeyngLab a crucial philosophical anchor. Geometry is not only a collection of ideal forms. It is also a historical achievement that must be transmitted. A line, circle, proof, or theorem can become an ideal object only because it can be written, taught, repeated, sedimented, forgotten, and reactivated. Derrida radicalizes this point by showing how writing is not secondary to ideality. Inscription makes ideality iterable across absence, distance, and time.

Fourfolding needs the same treatment. If the fourfold remains a private intuition or rarefied philosophical saying, it will not travel. It needs forms of inscription: diagrams, cosmograms, field notes, exercises, archives, interfaces, modules, conversations, public performances, and platforms. Beyng.com provides one textual ground; BeyngLab would create the practice environment where those texts can be reactivated. Metanoia Playground would provide the experiential interface where learners and professionals can move through exercises rather than merely read explanations.

This is why the cosmogram matters so much. It is not a simplification of Heidegger. It is a reactivation device. It allows a participant to inscribe a world-gathering and return to it. It allows a group to compare worlds without reducing them to survey data. It lets fourfolding become shareable, contestable, revisable, and teachable. In Husserl-Derrida terms, it gives the fourfold a technical, graphic, and institutional chance of historical life.

This also reframes the archive. An archive can become a mausoleum of textual authority, or it can become a launch site for reactivation. Pete Ferreira's beyng.com matters because it makes Heidegger's textual paths available. BeyngLab would ask how those paths can become live routes for Dasein Design. The goal is neither traditional academic commentary alone nor popularized Heidegger-lite. The goal is philosophical practice: rigorous enough to honor the texts, practical enough to change how people inhabit work, care, technology, and public life.

The supplied Benjamin's Angel zine already moves in this direction. It converts Benjamin, Ginzburg, Toryx, Helyx, and Story X into a graphic apparatus: montage arrests fragments; clues turn debris into signs; Toryx folds collapse into recursive passage; Helyx braids fragments into Story X. The zine's line - we do not escape the wreckage, we learn to fly the fold - names the historical task of reactivation after catastrophe. Geometry here is not cold abstraction. It is a way to fly within broken history.

7. Dasein Design and professional wellbeing

Dasein Design does not mean designing human beings. It means designing situations in which modes of being-in-the-world become perceptible, questionable, and transformable. The phrase matters because it refuses two reductions. It refuses technocratic design, where human beings become users, behaviors, metrics, or targets. It also refuses purely contemplative philosophy, where insight remains detached from tools, rooms, media, schedules, dashboards, and institutional pressures. Dasein Design works between these reductions.

Professional development and wellbeing provide a powerful test. Most workplaces already run on hidden cosmograms. They gather earth as infrastructure, sky as strategic horizon, divinities as mission statements and metrics, mortals as workers, clients, students, patients, publics, or burned-out administrators. But these cosmograms often remain implicit. People suffer inside

worlds they cannot diagram. They inherit roles, incentives, dashboards, and rituals that organize attention without becoming visible.

Spiritual design exercises make those worlds visible. The word spiritual does not mean sectarian belief or therapeutic vapor. In Hadot's sense, it names practices that transform perception, attention, judgment, and orientation. In StudioLab's sense, design adds things, rooms, interfaces, media, roles, prompts, diagrams, and public outcomes. A spiritual design exercise might ask a team to cosmogram a weekly meeting, map its counter-fourfold, identify its D1 collapse point, redesign its interface plane, and create a Helyx return ritual. This is philosophy as a way of working.

The road-tested character of StudioLab is important here. The practice has already moved across high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, artists, designers, and professionals. That range proves that the method cannot rely on disciplinary insider language. It must allow people to enter through images, prompts, roles, artifacts, and collaborative making. It must hold rigor and accessibility together. It must invite people into metaplay without pretending that all play is safe.

Hence the safeguards again. Professional wellbeing work can easily become surveillance, therapy cosplay, productivity optimization, or corporate pseudo-care. Dasein Design must maintain containment and exit, role transparency, source reset, audience ecology, and narrative consequence. It must let participants pause, decline, re-enter, confess, vow, lament, witness, and reset. The deepest promise of fourfolding in this context is care: not care as sentiment, but care as a structured return of world, relation, and responsibility.

8. From KPI dashboard to care cosmography

The KPI cosmography diagram gives the project one of its most concrete examples. A dashboard can flatten. It can aggregate, compare, rank, report, and blame. It can deodorize collapse by turning suffering into clean indicators. But a dashboard can also become a care cosmogram if it asks what world the metrics gather and whether feedback actually returns as care.

The diagram surrounds care feedback with organizational, technological, cultural, and equity performance. Organizational performance concerns coordination, continuity, and learning. Technological performance concerns access, reliability, and data integrity. Cultural performance concerns trust, respect, and meaning. Equity performance concerns access, diversity, and justice. This is a powerful performance fourfold because it refuses to let one metric dominate. It also refuses to let care remain vague. Care must pass through systems, technologies, cultures, and equity relations.

This reframes evaluation. Instead of data-raking participants for thin metrics, the care cosmogram gathers experiential evidence: stories, artifacts, diagrams, performances, reflections, and public outcomes. It still values accountability, but accountability becomes crossing-accountability rather than surveillance. Show the seam. Return with continuity. Anchor the real. Reset the source. Test beyond meaning. Prevent drift. Let metrics help care return.

For BeyngLab and ShuttleKraft, this matters because any online platform will face the same risk. A metaplay platform could easily become another dashboard of engagement, badges, scores, leaderboards, and retention funnels. The counter-fourfold would take over: proxy, code, coercion, ghosts, systems, mirage. The platform must instead be designed as a care cosmography. It should

help users build cosmograms, track field notes, share artifacts, practice exercises, and reflect on changes in orientation and relation. Its metrics should support return, not extraction.

This is one reason Critchley's possible involvement would matter. His public Heidegger work demonstrates how difficult philosophy can become approachable without losing bite. BeyngLab would extend that impulse into a collaborative platform, but the platform must remain philosophically serious. It must not gamify Heidegger into trivia or wellness. It must make room for difficulty, mortality, ambiguity, and public thought. The KPI cosmography shows how: score only what helps care return.

9. Metanoia Playground as inhabitable interface

BeyngLab needs Metanoia Playground because an archive alone cannot host transformation. Beyng.com provides textual ground. BeyngLab provides a studio/lab platform. Metanoia Playground provides the experiential interface: stations, routes, exercises, diagrams, roles, rehearsals, field notes, public performances, and collaborative rituals. It is where philosophical questions become inhabitable.

A playground is not childish in this sense. It is a designed environment for metaplay: learning how rules, roles, frames, media, and worlds change. Children understand this better than most institutions. They know that a stick can become a sword, a wand, a boundary, a bridge, or a signal. Adults in institutions often forget this mobility and become trapped in fixed roles, dashboards, and genres. Metanoia Playground recovers the serious play of world-disclosure.

The Liminal Cascade and Recursive Perfumative Simplex diagrams expand this playground into cosmic scale. Teams cluster around Taoist, empirical, angelic, Sufi, and trickster motifs; they move through gates; they create intergenerational docking points; they carry symbols, avoidance patterns, attractor rides, and entanglements. The diagrams are excessive in the right way. They show what happens when fourfolding no longer stays in one classroom or one diagram. It becomes ecology.

This ecology must still be usable. That is the role of the catalogue. Each fourfolding form offers a way in. A team can start with the thing-fourfold, the Toryx grammar, the Helyx rotation route, the test-passing loop, the care quad, the nested safeguards, or the KPI cosmogram. The platform can offer these as modules or exercises. A participant might cosmogram a problem, fold it through Toryx, braid it through Helyx, add safeguards, and return with Story X. Another participant might begin with a professional role or wellbeing concern. The system should allow multiple entrances.

Metanoia means transformation of mind, but StudioLab should treat that transformation as more than interior conversion. It involves rooms, tools, media, histories, bodies, institutions, publics, and worlds. A playground for metanoia must therefore be a playground for Dasein Design. It helps people practice the relation between thing and world. It lets philosophical insight become a designed, shared, and revisable situation.

10. Flying the fold

Benjamin's Angel faces wreckage. Progress, viewed from the angel's eyes, appears as catastrophe piling debris at its feet. The StudioLab zine refuses both despair and escape. The Angel does not escape the wreckage. It learns to fly the fold. This line gives the whole project its ethical image.

To fly the fold is not to master history from above. It is to move through debris with montage, clues, folds, braids, and returns. Ginzburg's evidential paradigm matters here because the smallest detail can reveal the apparatus. A cracked road, a dashboard anomaly, a platform notification, a hut threshold, a clinic ledger, or a classroom silence can become a clue. Montage arrests progress long enough for recognition. Toryx folds collapse into passage. Helyx braids fragments into Story X. Fourfolding gathers the thing-world. Sixfolding carries that gathering across domains and scales.

This is why the geometries matter. Pythagorean harmony reminds us that worlds resonate. Cartesian plane geometry warns us that worlds get flattened. Fractal geometry reminds us that worlds recur roughly across scale. Topology teaches continuity through deformation. Projective geometry foregrounds horizon. Knot theory shows entanglement. Husserl and Derrida teach that forms survive through inscription and reactivation. Toryx and Helyx translate these geometrical lessons into Dasein Design.

The next step is a fundable platform for individual and collaborative metaplay. Such a platform would let participants build cosmograms, stage fourfold readings, track D0-D4 movements, use safeguards, compose field notes, braid Helyx sequences, and return Story X artifacts. It would support professional development and wellbeing without reducing them to productivity metrics. It would connect Heidegger's texts to living practices of care, dwelling, technology, mortality, and public thought. It would let the archive become a studio, the studio become a playground, and the playground become a world-gathering practice.

The catalogue offered here is therefore not a taxonomy for its own sake. It is a set of handles. Each fourfolding form lets participants grasp a different aspect of world-making: thing, topology, time, test, care, safeguard, cascade, performance, platform, and return. The project should remain playful, but not loose; rigorous, but not dead; spiritual, but not doctrinal; professional, but not managerial; philosophical, but not sealed inside commentary. Its promise lies in this difficult balance.

Fourfolding gathers the thing-world. Sixfolding moves that gathering through Toryx-Helyx recursion, fractal scale, historical reactivation, and guarded metaplay. Cosmograms make it portable. Spiritual design exercises make it lived. ShuttleKraft carries it. Dasein Design names the practice. Metanoia Playground stages it. BeyngLab grounds it in Heidegger's archive and opens it to public experimentation. The Angel flies when the wreckage becomes readable, foldable, braidable, and returnable as care.

Working Bibliography and Source Constellation

Benjamin, Walter. "On the Concept of History."

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*.

Derrida, Jacques. *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*.

Descartes, Rene. *La geometrie*.

Ginzburg, Carlo. "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm."

Hadot, Pierre. Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Thing"; "Building Dwelling Thinking"; "The Question Concerning Technology"; Being and Time.

Husserl, Edmund. "The Origin of Geometry."

Mandelbrot, Benoit. The Fractal Geometry of Nature.

McKenzie, Jon. Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance; Transmedia Knowledge for Liberal Arts and Community Engagement.

McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.

Ronell, Avital. The Test Drive.

Schuermann, Reiner. Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy.

Stiegler, Bernard. Technics and Time; What Makes Life Worth Living.

StudioLab / BeyngLab diagrams supplied in this working session, including Toryx, Helyx, fourfold, cosmogram, nested-pretense, KPI cosmography, and Folding Benjamin's Angel images.

Next build: Convert this catalogue into a BeyngLab module: (1) read a thing, (2) draw its fourfold, (3) fold it through Toryx, (4) braid a Helyx return, (5) apply safeguards, (6) produce a Story X artifact for public reflection.



Kitelichkeit

taught thought-action

BeyngLab

Kitelichkeit

Guerrilla Angels, Taut-Action Figuration, and Tickling, the American K-Function

Abstract

This essay develops Kitelichkeit as a theory of tethered flight and as a practice of taut-action figuration. Beginning from the kite's first law--no flight without relation--the essay connects StudioLab's Thought-Action Figure to Derrida's supplement and trace, Plato's Seventh Letter, Corbin's angelology, Walter Benjamin's storm of history, Laurie Anderson's gravity-bound media angelics, the Guerrilla Girls as Guerrilla Angels, and Benjamin Franklin as an American thought-action figure of invention. The six images from Kitelichkeit provide a parallel image track: launch, storm, lightning, vortex, angelic apparition, and state capture. The argument proposes Kitelichkeit as a way to move theory into practice without reducing practice to police, spectacle, or drift. Slack figuration drifts; tight figuration snaps; taut figuration flies.

Image Track Map

Fig	Image	Conceptual Work	Essay Sections
1	Launch Field	The cover image stages Kitelichkeit as taught thought-action: several figures hold lines on a beach while cube-kites rise and a rocket launches in the distance. It introduces the basic field of tethered flight: body, string, sky, machine, and risk.	Launch / whole argument
2	Storm Field	The second image removes the title and lets weather dominate: multiple geometric kites hang beneath dark clouds while a single red kite creates a visual attractor. This is the first image of responsive tautness under pressure.	Tension / storm field
3	Franklin Weather	Lightning enters the field. Here the kite becomes a conductor of storm, not an escape from it: Franklin's kite-and-key experiment crosses Walter Benjamin's storm of history.	Franklin + Benjamin
4	Vortex Lift	The central flyer begins to leave the ground as a luminous vortex opens above. The image asks whether a line of flight liberates, unbalances, or captures the body.	Line of flight / gravity
5	Angelic Apparition	The angelic sphere appears among clouds, winged messengers, and collapsing flyers. Angelology enters the image track as mediation under strain, not heavenly command.	Corbin / angelology
6	State Circus / Infernal Circuitry	The final image shifts to an American field with kites, winged creatures, and a balloon labeled State Circus / Infernal Circuitry. It stages the capture of flight by spectacle, apparatus, and state performance.	State capture / police form

The image track should be read horizontally as an argument in six stills and vertically as a recurring set of conceptual motifs: line, hand, wind, storm, apparatus, angel, capture. The images do not illustrate an already complete thesis. They perform the essay's thesis in another medium.

Introduction: Go Fly a Kite!

We begin with a kite not because the kite is innocent, childish, quaint, or nostalgically pre-digital, but because it gives us one of the strongest available figures for rethinking the relation between theory and practice. A kite never simply escapes. It flies only by remaining tied. It rises because something holds it back. It becomes light only under tension. Remove the frame, skin, string, hand, ground, wind, weather, or risk, and the kite collapses into object, toy, scrap, diagram, or wish. This is the first law of our Kitelichkeit: *there is no flight without relation!*



That sentence should be taken not as metaphor alone but as method. In an intellectual culture trapped between sterile critique and equally sterile boosterism, Kitelichkeit gives us another model. Theory need not hover above the world as dead abstraction, dissolve into reactive activism, or harden into bureaucratic program. Theory can be understood as a tethered event: not pure possibility, not fixed actuality, but the charged interval between them. In this interval, thought catches wind before it hardens into history.

Kitelichkeit names that interval. It names possibility after it catches wind. It names a theory that risks weather. It names a practice that refuses both escape and capture. A balloon drifts because it is inflated. A rocket rises because it burns. A kite negotiates. It enters an argument with the air. It reads the wind. It leans, shudders, corrects, and risks tearing itself apart. A theory worthy of the name must do the same.

This essay argues that Kitelichkeit names a new regime of theory-practice. It is not simply a kite metaphor. It is a philosophy of tethered flight, a practice of responsive tension, and a media-figural theory of how thought becomes actable without becoming police. To develop that claim, the essay connects Kitelichkeit to Derrida's supplement and trace, Plato's Seventh Letter, Corbin's angelology, Walter Benjamin's angel of history, Laurie Anderson's gravity-bound signal angel, the Guerrilla Girls as Guerrilla Angels, Benjamin Franklin as an American thought-action figure, and StudioLab's concept of the TAF, the Thought-Action Figure. Along the way, I sharpen the TAF into taut-action figuration: a figure that makes thought actable precisely by holding thought under tension.

The image track from Kitelichkeit does not decorate the essay; it argues beside it. The first image gives launch. The next images give storm, lightning, vortex, and angelic apparition. The final image gives capture by state spectacle. The visual sequence moves from relation to mediation, from mediation to crisis, from crisis to vision, and from vision to the danger that every flight can be recoded by power. This is why the kite matters now. It lets us think theory outside the courtroom, outside the seminar room, outside the police form, and outside the fantasy of pure ascent. It gives us a way to ask: what would it mean for theory to fly without leaving the world?

1. From Thought-Action Figure to Taut-Action Figuration

StudioLab's concept of the Thought-Action Figure offers the starting point. A TAF is not merely an image, symbol, persona, or idea. It is a figure that makes thought actable. A god becomes a TAF when worship, taboo, feast, war, mercy, calendar, and communal memory can move through its name. An angel becomes a TAF when message, mission, hierarchy, image, and trans-world passage gather around a mediating figure. A law, brand, nation, discipline, celebrity, avatar, algorithm, or AI agent can also become a TAF when it binds perception, conduct, attention, and value into repeatable operations.

The TAF is therefore figural plus procedural. It gives thought a body, scene, voice, medium, rule, and way to repeat. It does not simply represent action; it arranges action. It conducts. It gives people a way to feel, speak, decide, accuse, build, worship, refuse, or play. Figures are not afterthoughts to theory. They are how theory moves into the world.

Kitelichkeit sharpens this. A thought-action figure can still become too loose. It can drift into symbol, vibe, badge, lifestyle, brand, persona, or what we earlier called ideological boutique. A figure can signal seriousness without holding together body, medium, world, and risk. The kite corrects this because it acts only under tension. The kite is not just a figure of action. It is a figure of felt relation.

This is why I propose the phrase taut-action figuration. A taut-action figure is not merely a figure that links thought and action. It links them through a line that must remain taut enough to carry force but not so tight that it snaps. The kite string is neither ladder, border, nor route alone. It is a felt relation. Too slack and the kite falls. Too tight and the string breaks. Flight requires responsive tautness.

Responsive tautness is a superb operational definition of theory-practice. It means that action is not brute force; it is adjustment. Thought is not detached contemplation; it is a sensing of currents. The flyer thinks through hand, body, air, sky, pull, slack, weather, and risk. Good flight requires an intelligence prior to explicit concept: tactile knowing, weathered responsiveness, body thinking with air. This is thought-action as taut-action.

The distinction matters politically. Slack figuration drifts. It becomes style, gesture, atmospheric affiliation, floating discourse, virtue display, theory cosplay. Tight figuration snaps. It becomes command, purity test, juridical procedure, ideological tribunal, show trial, police. Taut figuration flies. It holds relation without collapsing into drift or domination.

That is why Kitelichkeit can rehouse critique inside practice. Critique alone can expose breaks, but exposure often keeps the critic in a courtroom. Taut-action figuration asks another question: what holds? What pulls? What gives? What must be released? Where does the wind enter? What line can carry a becoming without becoming a leash? This is the first practical lesson of the kite-field.



Figure 2. Storm Field.

The second image removes the title and lets weather dominate: multiple geometric kites hang beneath dark clouds while a single red kite creates a visual attractor. This is the first image of responsive tautness under pressure.

2. Against Dead Abstraction

Kitelichkeit is a rebellion against dead abstraction. Dead abstraction floats above the world and calls this height. It imagines that if thought can rise above bodies, places, institutions, weather, and contingency, it will achieve purity. But the kite refuses that fantasy. A kite does not rise into pure thought. It rises into conditions. It needs air, craft, friction, adjustment, and ground. A kite without wind is inert. A theory without weather is indoor furniture.

We have had too many indoor theories. The seminar room became a windless field. The concept became a badge. The diagram became a sealed object. The platform became a false sky. The archive became a mausoleum. The map pretended it did not have a hand. The hand pretended it did not stand on land. Kitelichkeit takes theory outside. It brings the concept to beach, cornfield, roof, festival, road, storm front, and public square. It asks the concept to strain, wobble, risk comedy, and expose itself to misreading. A theory that cannot survive wind was never alive.

This is not anti-intellectualism. Quite the opposite. Kitelichkeit demands more from thought than abstraction demands. Dead abstraction can remain impeccable because it refuses weather. Tethered thought must answer to forces it cannot command. It must learn from embarrassment, drag, material resistance, technological mediation, emotional atmosphere, institutional constraint, and historical storm. It must become difficult in public without becoming obscure for prestige.

Here we also find a distinction between height and flight. Dead abstraction wants height without relation. Kitelichkeit wants flight through relation. Height produces hierarchy: above and below, judge and judged, theory and practice, subject and object, pure and contaminated. Flight produces tension: hand and sky, string and wind, body and force, risk and adjustment. Height is a position. Flight is an event.

This distinction helps repair the old theory/practice problem. The question is not whether theory should become practice. Theory always becomes practice. It becomes syllabus, citation habit, posture, gatekeeping ritual, funding language, activist slogan, HR protocol, platform performance, institutional aesthetic, or moral reflex. The true question is what form carries theory into practice. Does logos enter ethos as police, boutique, confession, ritual, workshop, artwork, tool, protocol, kite?

Kitelichkeit insists on the last possibility. It gives us a theory that must stay attached to the hand. This means accountability without captivity. The string is not a prison. It is the condition of flight. The ground is not anti-intellectual drag. It is the place from which the flyer can feel relation. The weather is not noise. It is the force through which the figure becomes visible. The concept is not dead until it refuses all of this.

3. Plato's Seventh Letter, Derrida's +L, and the Dangerous Line

At first glance, a kite might seem far from Plato. In fact, Kitelichkeit lets us reread Plato's most difficult problem: the danger of transmission. In the Seventh Letter, Plato worries that writing travels without its speaker. It can be copied, twisted, misunderstood, and weaponized. It goes where living speech cannot go, but it also leaves the living teacher behind. The letter outruns the speaker. It becomes a dangerous sending.

Derrida radicalizes this problem in his reading of Plato's pharmacy. Writing is not simply a fallen substitute for living presence. It is the condition of iterability, supplementarity, trace, and transmission. Meaning must be repeatable to mean at all, and repeatability exposes meaning to

misfire. The mark survives its occasion by losing the security of that occasion. It can be cited, cut, moved, translated, mocked, archived, weaponized, loved, misunderstood, and remade.

This is where Derrida's supplement meets what we have been calling +L. +L names the added letter, the extra line, the surplus by which logos leaves the mouth and enters history. It can stand for letter, life, lure, laughter, loss, limit, and lab. It is not a decoration attached to logos after the fact. It is the condition by which logos travels.

A kite-line gives this problem a tactile figuration. The line transmits force without guaranteeing control. The flyer is attached to the kite, but not sovereign over it. The line can slacken, tangle, cross another line, cut the skin, drag the body, or snap. Yet without the line, nothing flies. Writing is like this. So is theory. The line that makes transmission possible also makes misreading possible. The same tether that carries relation carries risk.

The trace is therefore not a weak remainder. It is a pull. It marks absence, but it also carries force. A trace under tension becomes a kite-line. It does not merely say that presence has been displaced. It lets us feel how displacement acts. Derrida's trace becomes tactile when we understand it as pull, drag, delay, and line.

The show trial wants to close this field. It wants the letter to mean one thing, the confession to settle everything, the accused body to stabilize interpretation. It wants to cut away +L and convert meaning into verdict. Kitecllichkeit refuses that closure. The line remains dangerous. The letter keeps traveling. The kite keeps correcting itself in wind. Meaning does not become pure; it becomes responsive.

This does not mean anything goes. A kite does not fly by arbitrary drift. It flies by line-work. The line keeps relation alive. Derrida's +L and Plato's dangerous letter therefore find a new figuration in Kitecllichkeit: the dangerous line by which thought leaves presence and becomes a tethered event.

4. Corbin: Logos into Ethos Through Angelology, Not Police

If Derrida gives us the dangerous line, Henry Corbin gives us the angelic mediator. The key sentence remains: Corbin moves logos into ethos through angelology, not police.

This sentence matters because ideology critique often assumes that the passage from thought to practice should occur through exposure, accusation, and judgment. Something hidden must be revealed; someone must be shown to be complicit; a system must be decoded; a subject must be positioned; an institution must be indicted. This work can be necessary. But when exposure becomes the sovereign form of truth, logos enters ethos as tribunal. The result is not liberation but permanent arraignment.

Corbin offers another path. His angelology refuses both secular flattening and juridical theology. The angel is not merely a courier of command. The angel is a mediator of worlds, an orienting figure, a guide in imaginal geography. The imaginal is not imaginary as fake; it is a real mode of perception, symbol, and spiritual orientation. The angel does not ask only whether a proposition is correct. It asks where the soul can turn.

This turns angelology into a practice of orientation. The angel does not police the threshold; the angel opens it. The angel does not demand confession; the angel teaches passage. The angel does not reduce logos to law; the angel helps logos become ethos through vision, symbol, and care. This is why angelology matters for StudioLab. It gives us a vocabulary for moving thought into life without turning life into a courtroom.



*Figure 3. Franklin Weather.
Lightning enters the field.
Here the kite becomes a conductor
of storm, not an escape from it:
Franklin's kite-and-key experiment
crosses Walter Benjamin's
storm of history.*

The kite is angelic in this sense. It mediates between earth and sky. It makes invisible force visible. It stages vertical aspiration without abandoning horizontal relation. It is not an escape from the world but a cosmogram within it. Its frame gives form, its skin receives force, its string carries tension, its hand feels relation, its ground gives resistance, its wind gives life, and its risk gives truth.

Corbin's angel and the kite share a structure: both are mediators that work by relation. Both move between worlds without abolishing the difference between them. Both need orientation. Both can be corrupted if turned into hierarchy, police, or spectacle. This is why the daimon becomes necessary. Daimons keep angelology from becoming obedient hierarchy. They add trouble, threshold, mask, mischief, erotic force, and tactical motion.

A daimonic angelology gives us Guerrilla Angels rather than police angels. It gives us mediators who do not simply deliver sovereign command from above. They carry messages across thresholds, disturb institutions, open lines of flight, and make transformation possible. Kitelichkeit gives those angels strings. It gives them weather. It keeps them from floating away.

5. Walter Benjamin: Storm, Ruin, Montage, Kite

If Corbin gives *Kitelichkeit* orientation, Walter Benjamin gives it weather. Benjamin's angel of history is not a serene figure of transcendence. The angel is blown backward into the future while wreckage piles up before his face. The storm that propels him is called progress. This angel does not master the storm. He is caught in it.

That image matters because ideology does not live only in propositions. Benjamin lets us say that ideology lives in images, commodities, technologies, habits, architecture, media, lighting, displays, debris, toys, streets, posters, exhibitions, ruins, and dreams. Ideology is not merely a wrong idea inside a head. It is a historical atmosphere built into the things through which people move.

This is why Benjamin's method is montage. 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. The arcade, the ruin, the commodity, the photograph, the citation, and the angel all become media through which history flashes up.

The *Kitelichkeit* image track is deeply Benjaminian. The storm scenes do not simply show weather in the background. Weather is the historical condition of flight. On page 2, multiple geometric kites hang under thick clouds. On page 3, lightning tears across the sky. On page 4, a vortex opens above the flyers and begins to pull one figure from the ground. These images stage history as atmosphere and force. They do not show thought in a neutral field. They show thought under storm.

This is why Benjamin belongs in the kite-field. A kite is not only a line under tension. It is an image under weather. It catches invisible force and makes that force visible. It does not transcend catastrophe; it is shaped by the storm. The red angel kite in the *Kitelichkeit* field becomes a perfect Benjaminian object: tilted, visible, risky, historical, caught between lift and disaster.

Benjamin also protects us from naive invention. Without him, the kite could become a cheerful symbol of creativity, agility, startup optimism, or playful design. Benjamin darkens the sky. He reminds us that every flight occurs over wreckage. Every line of flight may be driven by forces it does not understand. Every invention may leave debris. Every apparatus may dream domination.

So *Kitelichkeit* must become Benjaminian if it is to avoid becoming design boosterism. It must ask: what storm lifts this figure? What history pulls this string? What ruin flashes in this image? What dream of progress hides inside this apparatus? What catastrophe does the flight refuse to see?

Walter Benjamin gives *Kitelichkeit* its storm-consciousness.

6. Benjamin Franklin: The American K-Function

Benjamin Franklin enters the kite-field from another direction. He gives *Kitelichkeit* its American founding apparatus: kite, key, storm, experiment, print, public utility. Franklin's kite-and-key is the American K-function.

The kite catches the storm. The line carries the charge. The key translates invisible force into evidence. The hand risks the body. The ground prevents fantasy. The lightning rod converts terror into infrastructure. Franklin does not command lightning. He gives lightning a civic route. He makes the sky public without making it police.

Franklin is therefore not simply an inventor in this essay. He is an American Thought-Action Figure. He is printer, experimenter, civic organizer, diplomat, publicist, founder, institution-maker, and self-fashioning media operator. He gives thought a body, scene, medium, rule, and repeatable form. He turns abstract force into usable relation. He transforms sky-terror into civic protection.

This makes him different from other founding figures. Washington embodies command. Jefferson embodies declaration. Hamilton embodies financial architecture. Franklin embodies invention as public ethos. He is the founding father as inventor-interface. He secularizes angelic mediation into experiment, print, tool, and civic infrastructure.

The crossing between the two Benjamins is rich. Walter Benjamin reads the wreckage of the storm called progress. Benjamin Franklin conducts the storm. Walter Benjamin gives us catastrophe, debris, montage, and the angel of history. Benjamin Franklin gives us experiment, apparatus, civic utility, and the kite-key. One without the other fails. Franklin without Walter Benjamin becomes innovation boosterism. Walter Benjamin without Franklin becomes beautiful paralysis. Together they offer critical invention: storm-conscious making.

This is especially important for American thought-action. The United States has repeatedly turned inventors, entrepreneurs, engineers, tinkerers, and media operators into founding figures. The American myth loves those who translate invisible force into usable apparatus: electricity, print, telegraph, cinema, computing, networks, platforms. That myth has produced real public goods and monstrous captures. Franklin sits at the beginning of this ambivalence.

Kitelichkeit lets us re-read the American invention myth. The point is not that invention is innocent. The point is that invention is a mode of tethering. It catches force and gives it a route. That route can become civic infrastructure, public pedagogy, entertainment spectacle, surveillance system, weapon, platform, or state circus. The question is not whether America invents. It does. The question is whether the line remains taut, accountable, public, and responsive, or whether it gets captured by infernal circuitry.



Figure 4. Vortex Lift.
The central flyer begins to leave the ground as a luminous vortex opens above. The image asks whether a line of flight liberates, unbalances, or captures the body.

7. Laurie Anderson: Gravity's Angel

Laurie Anderson gives Kitelichkeit its gravity. Without her, angelology risks becoming too upward, too celestial, too clean. Anderson's angel is not free because she escapes gravity. She is free because she learns to transmit while falling.

Her work gives us a media angel of voice, signal, body, delay, machine, humor, warning, and dream. The angel speaks through microphone, loop, vocoder, violin, tape, breath, and circuitry. She is not outside technology. She performs through it. She lets the machine alter the voice without surrendering the voice to the machine. She makes media strange without making media sovereign.

This matters because lines of flight can become fantasy if we forget weight. Deleuze and Guattari's line of flight is often misread as escape. But a line of flight can be captured, militarized, commercialized, romanticized, or made fascist. Anderson reminds us that flight has gravity. The body remains. The signal distorts. The machine mediates. Death, history, desire, and matter pull.

Figure 5. Angelic Apparition.
The angelic sphere appears among clouds, winged messengers, and collapsing flyers. Angelology enters the image track as mediation under strain, not as heavenly command.



Gravity is not police. It does not say confess, obey, identify, or submit. But gravity is limit. It is the law without the cop. The line of flight must learn this law or become delusion. A kite that ignores gravity crashes. A theory that ignores gravity becomes ideology or spectacle. A practice that ignores gravity burns out bodies.

This is why Anderson becomes the Gravity Angel of *Kitelichkeit*. She teaches that every signal must remain tethered to breath, body, vulnerability, and fall. Her angel is a signal-kite. The voice catches electronic wind. The body grounds the signal. The machines mediate flight. The story keeps the line from becoming doctrine. Gravity keeps the angel from becoming fantasy.

In the image track, Anderson belongs especially with the vortex scene and the angelic apparition. Page 4 shows a figure beginning to lift from the ground. Page 5 shows angelic beings and a celestial orb while the figures below struggle, stumble, or fall. These images refuse easy transcendence. The sky opens, but bodies remain vulnerable. The angel appears, but the ground does not disappear. This is Anderson's lesson: the angel is not pure ascent; the angel is signal under pull.

Laurie Anderson therefore keeps *Kitelichkeit* honest. She gives us flight with weight, signal with body, technology with tenderness, and warning without police.

8. Guerrilla Angels: Mask, Poster, Number, Apparition

The Guerrilla Girls become Guerrilla Angels because they turn critique into daimonic public apparition. Their masks, anonymity, posters, numbers, jokes, and institutional hauntings make them perfect figures for a non-police angelology. They do expose domination, but they do not reduce critique to tribunal confession. They haunt the institution until it sees itself differently.

The angel without the daimon risks becoming a courier of command. The daimon without the angel risks becoming mere chaos. Guerrilla Angels hold the middle: mediated, masked, tactical, funny, dangerous, world-making. They appear in institutions that have made women, artists of color, and other excluded bodies invisible. They do not simply declare purity from above. They count. They mask. They joke. They shame by display. They make exclusion legible through graphic force.

This is why the poster is their kite. It is a surface that catches institutional wind. The mask is the string: it tethers the work to collective force instead of individual celebrity. The number is the frame: it gives the surface structure. The joke is lift: it lets critique rise without becoming solemn police. The museum is weather: it supplies the pressure, resistance, and drag.

The Guerrilla Angel does not purify the institution. She haunts it. She turns wall, statistic, caption, and mask into a line of flight. Her critique remains sharp, but it does not require the accused body to confess on stage. It forces the institution's surfaces to speak. It produces accountability through apparition rather than bureaucratic purification.

Here K-function appears as a tactic. K-function is kink, key, kairos, clinamen, kite. It is the operator that turns a closed system into a passage. The Guerrilla Angel introduces a kink in the museum's self-image. She finds a key in public data. She acts at kairos, the right disruptive moment. She swerves from the expected format of critique. She flies a kite made of poster, mask, number, and rage.

This matters because many forms of contemporary ideology critique have become too police-like and too boutique at once. They accuse but do not build. They expose but do not recompose. They demand declaration but do not open passage. Guerrilla Angels show another way. They practice critique as public design. They combine evidence with image, rage with humor, anonymity with accountability. They are not angels of innocence. They are daimons with media kits.

9. Ideology Critique, Police Angels, and the Snapped Line

The previous essay on ideological critique, show trials, and the Gulag named a danger that returns here in aerial form. Critique becomes dangerous when it fuses with tribunal, police, party-state, bureaucratic procedure, or public confession. At that point, critique no longer opens relation. It tightens the line until it snaps.

Ideology critique begins as an emancipatory method: expose domination, false universality, hidden production of subjects, the invisible architecture of consent. But under institutional pressure, it can mutate into ideological boutique: critique as style, distinction, moral commodity, and class marker. It can also become ideological fatigue: the exhaustion produced by endless decoding, denunciation, and purification. When suspicion joins a justice system, a party discipline, a bureaucratic police form, or a public ritual of confession, critique becomes show-trial logic.

Kitelichkeit gives us a better diagnostic vocabulary. Too slack: critique becomes lifestyle drift. Too tight: critique becomes police. Taut: critique remains responsive, situated, dangerous, and world-making. The police angel demands that the message become command, the line become leash, the figure become evidence, the subject become case. The daimonic angel keeps mediation open. The kite exposes the difference.

This is also why Plato's Syracuse remains a crucial story. Philosophy enters the palace hoping to educate power. But the palace has its own metabolism. It flatters, delays, absorbs, performs, weaponizes. Philosophy wants power to become just. Power wants philosophy to legitimize rule. The result often becomes not transformation but capture. The line between truth and power grows too tight; it snaps or becomes a chain.

The school repeats this danger in another register. Education is not neutral; it produces subjects. A classroom can become a lab, a body can become a file, a student can become a case, a theory can become a normalizing machine. But the answer cannot be anti-theory. The answer is better figuration, better protocols, better practices of relation.

Kitelichkeit therefore does not abandon critique. It retensions critique. It asks critique to fly rather than prosecute. It asks the critic to feel the line, the wind, the drag, the other flyers, the ground, and the risk. It places critique inside StudioLab's larger movement from tribunal to workshop, from confession to rehearsal, from accusation to attention, from purity to practice.

10. The State Circus and Infernal Circuitry

The final Kitelichkeit image is the dark coda. We are no longer on the storm shore. We stand in an American field. Kites rise over corn. Winged creatures fill the air. A large balloon dominates the upper right, marked State Circus / Infernal Circuitry. The phrase is funny, grotesque, and exact. It tells us that flight can be captured by spectacle, apparatus, and state performance.

The balloon is the anti-kite. The manifesto's contrast becomes decisive: balloon, rocket, kite. The balloon drifts because it is inflated. The rocket rises because it burns. The kite negotiates. The state balloon floats as spectacle. It does not teach the hand to feel invisible force. It carries a show. It rises by inflation, not responsive tautness.

This is the danger of every angelology, every line of flight, every invention, every critique. The angel can become a police messenger. The line can become a leash. The kite can become propaganda. The founder can become mascot. The workshop can become brand. The platform can become false sky. The public field can become circus.



Figure 6. State Circus / Infernal Circuitry. The final image shifts to an American field with kites, winged creatures, and a balloon labeled State Circus / Infernal Circuitry. It stages the capture of flight by spectacle, apparatus and state performance.

The winged creatures in the final image matter too. They are not Corbinian angels of orientation or Guerrilla Angels of institutional disturbance. They seem like compromised daimons: familiar spirits of the spectacle apparatus. They fly, but their flight does not liberate. They populate the state's aerial theater. The sky has been occupied.

This makes the final image a warning against easy optimism about media, technology, and invention. American thought-action often turns apparatus into ethos, but ethos can be captured. Franklin's kite can become the state circus. Public experiment can become infernal circuitry. Innovation can become surveillance, entertainment, extraction, or punishment.

The answer is not to renounce flight. The answer is to distinguish forms of flight. Kitelichkeit is not the balloon. It is not inflated spectacle. It is tethered negotiation. It requires a hand, a field, a line, weather, risk, and relation. The state circus wants aerial control without responsive accountability. Kitelichkeit wants flight that can still feel the pull.

11. AI, Prompting, and Taut Collaboration

Kitelichkeit also gives us a powerful model for AI practice. Prompting is often imagined either as command or surrender. In the command model, the user gives orders and expects the machine to obey. In the surrender model, the user becomes passive before generated outputs, fascinated by apparent intelligence, speed, and fluency. Both models fail because both misunderstand the line.

AI work at its best resembles kite work. It is 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. This is not domination, and it is not passivity. It is responsive alignment.

A prompt is a string. An output is a kite-surface catching wind from model, corpus, interface, and context. The user's hand matters. So does the ground: project, audience, institution, care, purpose, body, time. Without ground, the output floats into spectacle. Without string, it drifts. Without tension, it collapses into sludge. Without release, it snaps into command.

This is why Kitelichkeit belongs to StudioLab and BeyngLab. It lets us think AI not as oracle, servant, plagiarism machine, or productivity engine, but as a field of taut-action figuration. The question becomes: what figure is acting here? Through which medium? Under what tension? Toward what public? With what line of return? Who holds the string? Who gets dragged? What world does the wind reveal?

The TAF/MTAF distinction also matters for AI. A TAF makes a world actable; an MTAF makes world-making accountable. AI agents, avatars, prompts, roles, and workflows can become TAFs very quickly. They bind conduct and attention into repeatable procedures. But without MTAF practices, they become soft sovereigns. They act through us without being redesigned by us.

Kitelichkeit provides an MTAF discipline. It asks us to inspect the line, not just admire the kite. It asks us to track the wind, not just evaluate the output. It asks us to feel tension, notice drag, return to ground, and relaunch with care. It turns prompt work into spiritual design exercise.

This is also where Laurie Anderson's signal angel and the Guerrilla Angels become practical guides. Anderson teaches us to hear the machine without becoming machine. Guerrilla Angels teach us to use media tactically, humorously, publicly, and critically. Franklin teaches us to build apparatuses that conduct force. Walter Benjamin teaches us to read the wreckage that apparatuses leave behind. Corbin teaches us to orient rather than police. Derrida teaches us that every output carries trace, supplement, and misfire. Kitelichkeit gathers them into practice.

Recursive Perfumative Simplex Ecology



The image track from *Kitelichkeit* stages the argument in another medium. Launch, storm, lightning, vortex, apparition, capture: the sequence is an aerial phenomenology of theory-practice. It teaches that thought does not become practical by being simplified into slogans or bureaucratized into procedures. Thought becomes practical when it catches wind while remaining tethered to bodies, places, media, histories, and publics.

The final formulas are simple because they have been earned:

Slack figuration drifts. Tight figuration snaps. Taut figuration flies.

A theory without weather is indoor furniture.

Gravity is the law without the cop.

Franklin conducts the storm; Walter Benjamin reads the wreckage.

Corbin moves logos into ethos through angelology, not police.

Guerrilla Angels are daimons with media kits.

Kitelichkeit is the weather of theory when theory finally leaves the seminar room, catches wind, and learns to fly without leaving the world.

References and Working Sources

- Anderson, Laurie. "Gravity's Angel." *Mister Heartbreak*. Warner Bros., 1984.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn. Schocken, 1968.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Corbin, Henry. *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*. Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Corbin, Henry. *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*. Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Translated by Barbara Johnson. University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Franklin, Benjamin. *Experiments and Observations on Electricity*. London, 1751-1754.
- Guerrilla Girls. *The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*. Penguin, 1998.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- Ingold, Tim. *Lines: A Brief History*. Routledge, 2007.
- Plato. *Phaedrus*. Translated by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Hackett, 1995.

Da, Da, Da, +L: French Fourfolding

From Lacan's Rome Discourse to Derrida, DnG, and the Sinthome

Abstract

This essay proposes “French fourfolding” as a name for a recurring diagrammatic operation in postwar French theory. The term does not designate a school, a settled doctrine, or every appearance of the number four. It identifies a more specific move: a dyad, triad, or closed circuit is opened, displaced, or made generative by a fourth term that does not remain equivalent to the terms it joins. The inquiry begins with Jacques Lacan's 1953 Rome discourse, which passes from Heideggerian being-there and Freudian fort/da to the Upanishadic “Da, da, da.” It then reads Jacques Derrida's critique of Lacan as an explicit fourfolding: the letter escapes the psychoanalytic triangle on a “fourth side” and through a “fourth avenue.” A wider genealogy follows through Lévi-Strauss's transformational formula, Lacan's Schema L, the Greimas–Rastier semiotic square, Deleuze's fourth dimension of the proposition, Guattari's four cartographic functors, and Lacan's late use of the sinthome as a fourth knot. Across these cases, the fourth functions less as completion than as operator: supplement, event, relay, transversal, or binding consistency. The notation +L condenses this operation while keeping its value open: letter, line, lack, law, Lacan, and lateral passage. French fourfolding therefore names a practical method of reading and designing structures by locating what their triangles exclude and constructing the passage through which they can transform.

Keywords: Lacan; Derrida; Deleuze; Guattari; fourfold; Schema L; semiotic square; sinthome; diagrammatics; +L

1. Four Is Not Yet a Fourfold

“French fourfolding” is a proposed analytic category, not a historical name used by the thinkers gathered here. It should therefore begin with a restriction. The mere presence of four terms proves very little. A table with four cells, a typology with four classes, or a sequence with four stages may remain perfectly static. Fourfolding names an operation rather than a census. It occurs when a fourth term changes the relations among an existing set—especially a dyad or triad—so that the prior arrangement can no longer close in the same way. The fourth may open an exit, cut a circuit, knot separated registers, introduce an event, or create a transversal passage. It is not simply the last member of a list. It acts upon the list's grammar.

This distinction separates quadrature, fourthing, and fourfolding. Quadrature arranges four positions within a field: Lacan's Schema L and the Greimas square supply major examples. Fourthing adds another member to three. Fourfolding makes the fourth operative. The new term may arrive from the edge of a structure, but it retroactively reorganizes the center. A useful preliminary formula is therefore not $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$, but $3 + x$, where x transforms the three and may itself change in the encounter. Guattari will eventually make this almost explicit when he opposes binary axiomatics and triadic dialectics to the “ $3 + n$ ” entities needed for matricial generativity (Guattari 2013, 69–70).

The category also differs from Heidegger's *Geviert*, though the German fourfold remains an unavoidable horizon. Earth, sky, divinities, and mortals gather in a mutual belonging rather than forming four independent objects. French fourfolding often retains that relational lesson while changing its engine. It becomes linguistic, psychoanalytic, structural, topological, and machinic. The fourth does not only gather; it supplements, disseminates, problematizes, or repairs. The resulting line runs less from a cosmological four to a doctrinal French equivalent than from the question of the there—*Da*—to the letter and diagram that make any there repeatable, transmissible, and vulnerable to displacement.

The argument that follows is therefore genealogical without claiming a secret succession. Lévi-Strauss did not bequeath a single fourfold method to Lacan, Greimas, Deleuze, Derrida, Serres, and Guattari. Their diagrams answer different problems. Yet a family resemblance becomes visible once the figures are placed beside one another: the canonical formula transforms an opposition through inversion; Schema L crosses four places; the semiotic square unfolds a binary; sense breaks the circle of the proposition; writing escapes a triangle through a fourth side; Guattari's functors abandon fixed identity for cross-relational transformation; and the *sinthome* ties what would otherwise come apart. The concept of French fourfolding names this recurrent pressure toward a transformative fourth.

2. Rome, 1953: From *Da* to *Da*, *Da*, *Da*

Lacan delivered "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" at the Rome Congress on 26 and 27 September 1953. The report announces the return to Freud through speech and language, but its conceptual traffic never stays purely Freudian. Hegel, Heidegger, anthropology, poetics, cybernetics, topology, and religious language pass through the text. Near its conclusion Lacan invokes the analyst as mediator between the "man of care" and the subject of absolute knowledge, binding Heideggerian *Sorge* to a Hegelian horizon while insisting that analytic practice proceeds through the symbolic efficacy of speech (Lacan 1977, 77–78). Rome stages not a peaceful synthesis of these traditions but their acceleration through a new linguistic machine.

The syllable *da* concentrates that machine. Heidegger's *Da* names the openness of being-there: not a coordinate already occupied, but the clearing in which beings can appear. Freud's *fort/da* makes presence and absence playable through a minimal signifying opposition. The child's spool does not simply reproduce the mother's departure and return. The game turns loss into repeatable articulation. Lacan radicalizes the point: the symbol does not decorate an already constituted experience; it introduces the subject into a field where presence becomes meaningful through absence, and where the thing survives by being replaced, repeated, and spoken.

The Rome report then ends with a second and apparently distant *da*. Gods, humans, and demons ask Prajapati to speak. Each receives the same syllable, and each hears a different imperative: master yourselves, give, show mercy. Lacan condenses the three hearings as "Submission, gift, grace. *Da da da*," followed by Prajapati's response, "You have heard me" (Lacan 1977, 78–79). The scene demonstrates the differential force of address. One acoustic mark does not carry one invariant message. It takes form through the position of those who hear it. The three groups inhabit different symbolic and ethical worlds, yet all answer to the same minimal thunder.

This ending offers a proto-fourfold problem. On its face, Lacan gives three interpretations of one signifier. The triad seems complete: three addressees, three commands, one confirmation. Yet the confirmation cannot eliminate the gap between sound and hearing. Prajapati says only *da*; the listeners produce the rest. “You have heard me” certifies not semantic identity but successful differentiation. The divine voice does not transmit a full code; it provokes three situated acts of interpretation. The scene therefore contains a structural remainder: the repeatable mark that can pass among positions without belonging exclusively to any of them.

That remainder will become decisive when read through Derrida. The move can be written *Da, Da, Da, +L*. The notation does not claim that Derrida supplies a fourth Upanishadic command. *+L* names the letter as the condition of repeatability and the source of nonclosure. *L* may stand for letter, line, lack, law, listening, Lacan, or lateral passage, but its force lies in resisting final assignment. The addition is operational: it exposes each *Da* as iterable, separable from its source, and capable of arriving otherwise. Being-there becomes being-addressed-there; then the there itself becomes a relay.

3. Schema L: Lacanian Quadrature Before the Transformative Fourth

Before Derrida opens Lacan’s triangles, Lacan already organizes the subject through a four-place diagram. Schema L places the subject *S*, the ego *a*, the other *a'*, and the big Other *A* in a crossed configuration. The diagonal *a–a'* marks the imaginary relation of reciprocal objectification; the interrupted *S–A* axis marks the symbolic or unconscious relation. The schema refuses the unitary subject. What appears as self-presence emerges through an imaginary detour, while the symbolic address passes across an interference field that the ego cannot master.

The importance of Schema L for French fourfolding lies first in its diagrammatic discipline. Lacan does not merely name four agencies. He draws relations with different line qualities, directions, and interruptions. The figure thinks. Its crossed axes turn the subject into an effect of routes and blockages rather than a substance occupying a point. The diagram also establishes a recurrent French practice: philosophy and theory operate not only through propositions but through schemas that distribute forces, voices, gazes, and passages across a field.

L SCHEMA

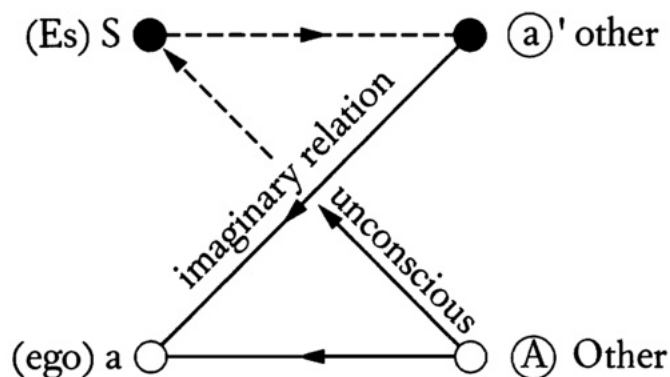


Figure 1. Lacan's Schema L: *S*, *a*, *a'*, and *A* arranged across imaginary and symbolic axes.

Source: Jacques Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 54.

Schema L nevertheless remains a quadrature more than a fourfolding in the strong sense proposed here. Its four terms share a diagrammatic plane, and no single one simply acts as the transformative supplement to the other three. What matters is that the figure prepares a field in which the fourth can later become problematic. Lacan's subject already exists as a split relay among four places; the letter in the "Purloined Letter" seminar then travels through positions, changing those who hold it. Derrida's intervention will ask whether Lacan has nevertheless enclosed that travel within a proper circuit.

The answer depends on a subtle distinction between displacement and destinal closure. Lacan's celebrated claim that a letter always arrives at its destination does not mean that empirical mail never gets lost. It expresses a structural thesis: wherever the signifier comes to rest, it retroactively constitutes the place as its destination. The itinerary is not accidental to the subject; it produces subject positions. Derrida accepts the force of this displacement but contests the closure of the route. If a mark can function only by being repeatable, then it must also be detachable, divisible, and exposed to arrival elsewhere. The schema's crossed lines cannot finally contain the dissemination they make possible.

4. Derrida's Fourth Side: +L as Escape from the Triangle

"The Purveyor of Truth," first published in 1975, does not merely disagree with Lacan's interpretation of Poe. It examines the framing operation by which Lacan extracts two triangular scenes from "The Purloined Letter" and treats their repetition as the truth of the tale. Derrida's objection concerns the excluded frame: narrator, narration, title, textuality, and the fiction's own capacity to exceed the drama it contains. Lacan's triangle becomes legible only by cutting the written scene from a fourth side and neutralizing the frame as if it contributed nothing to the structure (Derrida 1975, 54).

Derrida's language could hardly fit the present argument more closely. The text escapes "on a fourth side" and writing opens "at least a fourth avenue" for the letter (Derrida 1975, 64). This fourth is not another character added to the Queen, Minister, and King, nor a fourth station in the police plot. It is the opening generated by textuality itself. The letter exists not only as an object represented within Poe's story but as the story, title, citation, translation, and iterable writing that no triangular reconstruction can exhaust.

The move is a strong instance of fourfolding because the fourth side retroactively changes the status of the first three. Once the frame enters, the triangle no longer appears self-sufficient. Its inside depends on a cut that it cannot fully explain. The written text becomes both the condition of the triangular reading and what escapes that reading. +L therefore functions as supplement in Derrida's precise sense: apparently added from outside, it reveals that the inside was never complete. The fourth is not a capstone. It is an aperture.

Destinerrance names the temporal and postal consequence. A letter can arrive only because it can be repeated and recognized across contexts; the same iterability exposes it to wandering, division, delay, interception, and altered reception. The letter is not governed by pure randomness, but neither can its route be gathered into a perfectly proper circle. Derrida does not oppose destination with simple nondestination. He places errancy within destination. The path that permits arrival also

permits deviation. +L thus rewrites the threefold Da: every command arrives by a mark that can be heard otherwise, and every “there” depends on a relay that can relocate it.

This is why “Derrida simply adds another Da” would be both right and wrong. It is right insofar as deconstruction works by supplementing a structure at the place where it claims completion. It is wrong if the addition becomes a fourth equivalent content. Derrida adds the possibility of another addition—the structural plus that keeps the sequence open. +L does not say “one more meaning.” It says that meaning remains exposed to another letter, another context, another side.

5. Structuralist Prehistories: Lévi-Strauss and the Greimas–Rastier Square

The Derridean fourth side does not emerge in a vacuum. Postwar French thought had already made transformation through four-term structures a central practice. Lévi-Strauss’s 1955 “canonical formula” of myth—often written $fx(a) : fy(b) :: fx(b) : fa-1(y)$ —formalizes a transformation in which terms and functions exchange places and one term undergoes inversion. Whatever its mathematical controversies, the formula refuses to treat myth as a sequence of isolated contents. Myth persists through transformations that preserve relations by altering positions. The fourth expression does not merely repeat the first three; it introduces the inversion through which the whole relation becomes legible (Lévi-Strauss 1955, 440–443).

This structuralist quadrature differs from Derridean supplementation. Lévi-Strauss seeks invariance across transformations; Derrida stresses the constitutive instability of framing and iterability. Yet the canonical formula establishes a diagrammatic habit that will matter throughout the French field: thinking advances through permutation, inversion, and relational mapping rather than through the linear accumulation of predicates. Structure becomes something one can operate, rotate, and test.

Greimas and Rastier’s semiotic square gives this habit its most recognizable plane geometry. Beginning from contrary terms S_1 and S_2 , the square generates their contradictories $\bar{S}_1$ and $\bar{S}_2$, then maps contradiction, contrariety, and implication. The square is not merely a four-box taxonomy. It unfolds what a binary opposition suppresses, displaying the semantic possibilities created by negation and by the compound positions “both” and “neither.” Its first official published form appeared in “The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints” in 1968 (Greimas and Rastier 1968, 88; Badir 2012).

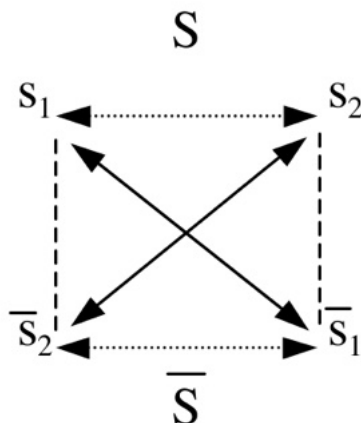


Figure 2. The Greimas–Rastier semiotic square: contraries, contradictories, and implications.

Source: A. J. Greimas and François Rastier, “The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints,” *Yale French Studies* 41 (1968): 88; reproduced in Sémir Badir, “How the Semiotic Square Came” (2012), fig. 5.

The square supplies a genuine quadrature, but its status as fourfolding remains mixed. All four simple terms belong to one logical-semantic matrix. No anomalous fourth arrives to undo the system. At the same time, the lower terms are generated rather than merely enumerated: negation transforms the initial opposition and opens positions unavailable within the binary. In practice the square often operates as a discovery machine, especially when the “neutral” or “neither/nor” term proves hardest to specify. It therefore sits between static fourness and transformative fourfolding.

Placed between Lévi-Strauss and Derrida, the square reveals a crucial shift. Structuralism tends to expand a binary into a regulated four-term field. Poststructuralism asks what the field excludes, what cannot be stabilized as one more position, and what event or mark changes the rules of positioning. French fourfolding crosses this threshold without simply abandoning structure. It preserves the diagram and subjects it to opening, leakage, recursion, and repair.

6. Deleuze: Sense as the Fourth Dimension of the Proposition

Deleuze provides the most explicit philosophical formula for a transformative fourth. In the third series of *The Logic of Sense*, he distinguishes three dimensions of the proposition. Denotation relates the proposition to a state of affairs. Manifestation relates it to the person who speaks, with the speaker’s beliefs and desires. Signification relates it to concepts, implications, and the inferential order of language. Each dimension calls upon the others for support, creating what Deleuze calls a circle of the proposition (Deleuze 1990, 12–20).

He then asks whether one must recognize a supplementary instance and answers with a striking declaration: “Sense is the fourth dimension of the proposition” (Deleuze 1990, 22). Sense is not another empirical referent, another intention, or another concept. It is the expressed of the proposition and the attribute of the state of affairs—the incorporeal event at the surface where words and things meet without collapsing into each other. Sense “insists” or “subsists” rather than existing as a body.

This is fourfolding in the strongest sense. The fourth does not take an equal seat beside the other three. It supplies the problematic surface on which denotation, manifestation, and signification can relate at all. It cuts their circular grounding while remaining irreducible to a transcendent foundation. Sense is sterile in one register—it does not act as a bodily cause—yet generative in another, because it distributes directions, paradoxes, and events. The fourth dimension opens the proposition to becoming.

Deleuze’s move also clarifies the relation between +L and event. Derrida’s letter stresses iterability and dissemination; Deleuze’s sense stresses the incorporeal event. Both resist closure by refusing the status of an ordinary fourth object. +L can therefore be read not only as letter but as line of sense: the surface or cut along which an utterance exceeds its denotation, intention, and conceptual signification. The “plus” marks the proposition’s exposure to what happens in being expressed.

There remains a difference. Derrida often demonstrates that a system depends on what it excludes or marginalizes; Deleuze constructs a positive logic of the event. Derrida’s fourth side opens the frame; Deleuze’s fourth dimension changes the ontology of the proposition. Yet both moves disallow the fantasy that three dimensions can secure their own circle. The fourth is not completion. It is the condition of continued transformation.

7. Guattari: From Four Terms to Matricial Generativity

Guattari turns fourfolding from a philosophical motif into a cartographic program. Schizoanalytic Cartographies organizes analysis through four functors: material and signaletic Flows (F), existential Territories (T), abstract machinic Phyla (Φ), and incorporeal Universes (U). These terms map economies, existential consistencies, technological and semiotic lineages, and virtual universes of value. They do not correspond to four substances. Guattari insists that entities in the domains possess no fixed identity; they sustain configurations through relations, change state according to assemblages, and traverse orders that classical thought keeps separate (Guattari 2013, 26–28).

The source diagram matters because its arrows do theoretical work. Horizontal relations distinguish propositional and energetic discursivity; vertical relations distinguish objective and subjective processes of deterritorialization. Solid and broken lines indicate reciprocal presupposition and heterogeneous passage. The four corners form a matrix, not a hierarchy. No single term occupies the sovereign summit, and no base determines the rest.

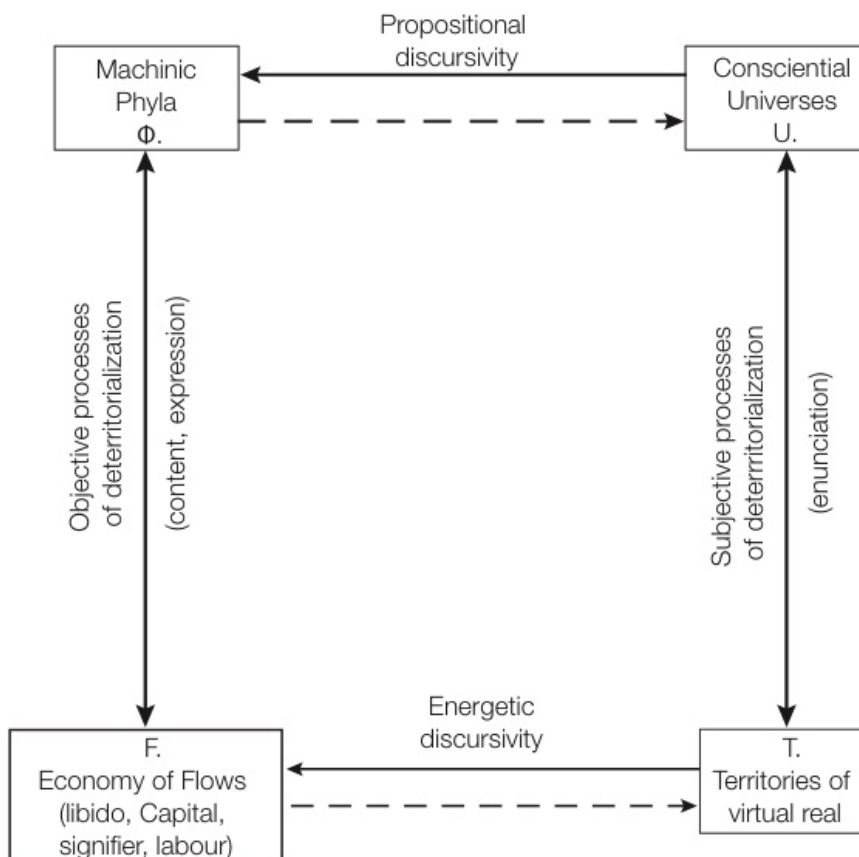


FIGURE 1.1 Discursivity and deterritorialization

Figure 3. Guattari's FT Φ U matrix: Flows, Territories, machinic Phyla, and incorporeal Universes. Source: Félix Guattari, *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), fig. 1.1, 27.

The chapter titled “Why start from four entities?” makes the stakes explicit. Binary axiomatics, Guattari argues, produce depotentialized representation and an inaccessible ground. Three-term dialectics tend toward pyramidal and arborescent determination. Only with “3 + n” entities can one establish trans-entitarian, matricial generativity without essential priority, together with auto-retroaction and autopoietic self-transcendence (Guattari 2013, 69–70). This passage gives French fourfolding its clearest manifesto. Four is not sacred. It is the minimum opening beyond the closure of two and the hierarchy of three, and it remains extensible as 3 + n.

Guattari thus modifies the 3 + 1 formula proposed earlier. The fourth is transformative, but it must not become a new finality. Once the matrix opens, additional entities, scales, and models can enter. Fourfolding becomes sixfolding, metamodelization, and heterogenesis. The point is not to protect a tetrad but to prevent any one model from claiming universal jurisdiction. A diagram remains useful insofar as it enables passage among heterogeneous registers and can itself be redrawn.

This distinguishes Guattarian cartography from both the semiotic square and Schema L. The square formalizes semantic constraints; Schema L maps the divided subject; Guattari’s matrix provides an interventionist ecology. A cartography can diagnose an institution, a media system, a clinic, or a design project by asking where flows circulate, where territories acquire consistency, which machinic phyla shape possibility, and which universes of value attract or repel action. Fourfolding becomes practical because the diagram redistributes attention and allows new compositions.

Guattari also clarifies why +L should remain mobile. A letter can become a line, a line of flight, a libidinal flow, a legal constraint, a local territory, or a machinic lineage depending on the assemblage. The plus does not install a master code. It marks the metamodeling move by which one model encounters another and changes scale. In this sense, *+L names a small diagrammatic shuttle*: it crosses from one regime to another without pretending the regimes were always commensurable.

8. Lacan Returns: RSI and the Sinthome as Fourth Knot

Lacan’s late topology provides another powerful, though technically distinct, version of the transformative fourth. The Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary form the famous RSI triad. In the Borromean arrangement, each ring holds through its relation to the others: cut one and the configuration comes apart. During Seminar XXIII, *Le Sinthome* (1975–76), Lacan investigates a fourth consistency through James Joyce. The sinthome is not simply the clinical symptom interpreted as a message. It names a singular mode of knotting enjoyment, writing, name, and existence.

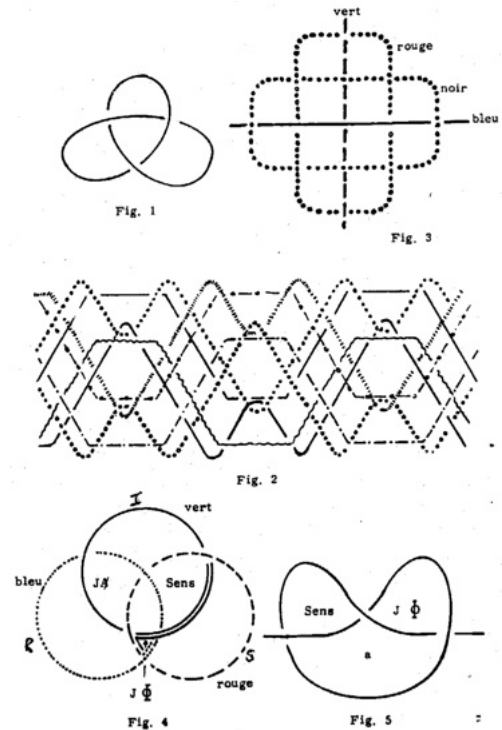
The popular summary—“RSI plus sinthome equals a four-ring knot”—must be handled carefully. Lacan’s seminar tests many knots, errors, repairs, and presentations. The fourth ring does not always function identically, and the Joycean case concerns a particular way of compensating for or repairing a failure of knotting. Still, Lacan explicitly identifies the sinthome as a fourth in relation to RSI. Its theoretical force lies in binding registers that cannot be reduced to one another and cannot be secured by interpretation alone (Lacan 2016, sessions of 9 and 16 December 1975).

The source plates resist the cleanliness of modern infographics. Their hand-drawn loops, crossings, colors named in the margins, and repeated attempts display thought as topological labor. Lacan does not first possess a concept and then illustrate it. He works through the knots, using mistakes

and reconfigurations as part of the reasoning. The diagram is less a picture of a finished doctrine than an experimental apparatus.

Figure 4. Lacan's knot experiments from Seminar XXIII, 16 December 1975.

Source: Jacques Lacan, Seminar XXIII: Le Sinthome, session of 16 December 1975. Historical source plate.



The sinthome offers the inverse image of Derrida's fourth side. Derrida's fourth opens a closed triangle and sends the letter outward. Lacan's fourth ties registers that risk separation. One disseminates; the other knots. Yet both transform the initial three without becoming an equivalent member. The fourth side reveals that the triangle depended on an excluded textual frame; the fourth ring reveals that the triad may require a singular consistency to hold. French fourfolding therefore includes both escape and attachment, deterritorialization and existential territorialization.

This dual movement matters ethically. A theory that values only opening can romanticize dissolution; a theory that values only binding can turn consistency into normalization. The sinthome is neither a return to a unified ego nor a cure by semantic mastery. It names a way of making a life hold through a singular practice. Derrida's letter prevents that holding from becoming pure self-presence. The two fourths can therefore correct one another: knot without closure, dissemination without compulsory disintegration.

9. Foucault and Serres: Weak and Lateral Cases

Not every French tetrad belongs equally to this genealogy. Foucault's four similitudes in *The Order of Things*—*convenientia*, *aemulatio*, analogy, and sympathy—map the Renaissance episteme of resemblance (Foucault 1970, 17–25). Sympathy has a mobile, connective force, countered by

antipathy, and thus can appear more operator-like than the other three. Yet the set primarily describes four modes within an historical configuration. It offers a useful lateral case rather than a central example of 3 + transformative fourth.

Michel Serres comes closer through the parasite. Communication models often stabilize sender, receiver, message, and channel; Serres inserts noise, interruption, and parasitism as productive relations internal to exchange. The parasite takes without giving, occupies the channel, changes the host, and can convert noise into a new order (Serres 1982). Its position shifts: biological organism, social guest, static in the system, third party in a relation. The parasite therefore behaves like +L, not because it is always literally a fourth term, but because it exposes the excluded interference through which the system transforms.

Serres helps distinguish formal count from operational topology. A parasite may be third in one diagram and fourth in another. What makes it relevant is not ordinal status but transversal force. It interrupts a supposedly transparent relation and reveals that mediation has materiality. Like Derrida's letter, it can fail to deliver the intended message; like Guattari's functor, it generates a new organization through cross-relations. French fourfolding is therefore less numerology than a practice of finding the active remainder.

10. A Method of Fourfolding: Read, Open, Redraw, Test

The genealogy now permits a methodological definition. Fourfolding begins by identifying a structure that presents itself as sufficient: a binary opposition, a dialectical triad, a closed interpretive circuit, or an apparently stable set of dimensions. The first task is not to denounce the structure from outside but to reconstruct it precisely. Lacan's triangles, the proposition's three dimensions, and the RSI registers must be allowed their full force. Otherwise the fourth becomes an arbitrary flourish.

The second task locates the excluded or underdescribed operation. This may be the textual frame cut away from the triangle, the sense-event presupposed by denotation and signification, the heterogeneous register kept outside a model, or the singular consistency that lets a life hold. The remainder is not automatically liberatory. It may appear as noise, symptom, contradiction, error, or impasse. Fourfolding asks what the structure must exclude in order to appear closed.

The third task constructs the fourth as an operator. Derrida opens a side; Deleuze adds a dimension; Guattari lays out a matrix; Lacan ties another ring. The diagram must specify what the fourth does. Does it cut, relay, invert, bind, translate, or change scale? A weak fourfold merely names another category. A strong fourfold changes routes among all categories. This is why arrows, crossings, broken lines, and knots matter as much as labels.

The fourth task tests the transformed configuration. Does the addition simply restore totality under a new name? Does it generate a hierarchy with the fourth as sovereign? Can the structure admit further terms, or does it freeze at four? Guattari's 3 + n provides the crucial safeguard. Fourfolding succeeds when it creates matricial generativity—new passages and situated consistencies—rather than installing a mystical tetrad.

In compact form, the method can be stated: read the given structure; find its excluded passage; add the operator; redraw the relations; test whether the new diagram remains open to transformation. +L marks this sequence. Its usefulness lies precisely in its incompleteness. The sign is small enough to enter an existing schema and disruptive enough to prevent the schema from presenting itself as finished.

11. Theoretical Stakes: Against Triangular Closure and Empty Multiplication

The category of French fourfolding intervenes in two opposed theoretical habits. The first is triangular closure. Dialectics, Oedipal structures, semiotic triangles, and interpretive scenes often promise movement while retaining a hierarchical apex or final mediation. The fourth exposes the cut that allows the triangle to appear complete. It introduces frame, surface, relay, or remainder. This does not invalidate every triad; it reveals the conditions under which triads operate.

The second habit is empty multiplication. Contemporary theory can respond to closure by adding ever more factors, scales, identities, media, and agencies without specifying their relations. Multiplicity then becomes a list. Fourfolding demands diagrammatic economy. The fourth must perform a transformation that can be shown. Guattari's cartography remains multiple, but it assigns axes, passages, and modes of consistency. Lacan's knot may be baroque, but every crossing matters. Derrida's fourth avenue remains open, but it opens from a precise critique of framing.

The strongest French fourfolds therefore inhabit a productive tension between structure and escape. They do not celebrate pure outside. The outside appears through an operation on the inside: a cut frame, an expressed event, a broken circuit, a binding ring. Nor do they defend a closed system. The structure survives only by transforming. This tension may explain why diagrams proliferate in the tradition. A diagram can hold relations still long enough to inspect them while retaining the possibility of redrawing.

The image track assembled here makes that argument materially. Schema L crosses four places and blocks the fantasy of a self-transparent subject. The semiotic square expands a binary into a field of contradiction and implication. Guattari's matrix distributes heterogeneous domains without a sovereign center. Lacan's knot plates turn error, repair, and consistency into visible operations. Derrida and Deleuze, even when they do not supply canonical source diagrams for the fourth side and fourth dimension, write in a way that calls for diagrammatic reconstruction. Their prose performs cuts and passages that a reader can redraw, provided the reconstruction is labeled as ours rather than passed off as theirs.

Conclusion: Driving Da Beyond Its Proper Course

The 1955 anecdote in which Lacan drove Martin and Elfride Heidegger to Chartres at terrifying speed arrives two years after the Rome discourse but reads like its theatrical coda. Lacan had already accelerated Heidegger's Da through Freud's fort/da, structural linguistics, speech, repetition, and topology. In the car, the philosophical difference becomes kinetic: Heidegger's being-toward-death rides beside Lacan's refusal to slow the signifying machine. The story should not bear too much conceptual weight, but it condenses the encounter with comic precision (Roudinesco 1997, 226).

The more consequential journey runs from Da, through Da, Da, Da, to +L. Heidegger gives the there of disclosure. Freud makes the there alternate with absence. Lacan distributes one syllable across three symbolic hearings. Derrida adds the letter that cannot be enclosed by its proper triangle. Deleuze names sense as the fourth dimension that cuts the proposition's circle. Guattari turns four into a matrix of heterogeneous generativity. Late Lacan knots three registers through a fourth singular consistency.

No single doctrine unifies these moves. "French fourfolding" names their shared diagrammatic intelligence: the capacity to recognize when a structure of two or three has become too closed, then to introduce a fourth that changes the structure rather than merely enlarging it. Sometimes the fourth opens; sometimes it knots. Sometimes it inverts; sometimes it relays. Its value lies in refusing both the certainty of completion and the vagueness of limitless plurality.

The final formula is therefore not Four as sacred number. It is $3 + L$, with L left strategically mobile. The letter reaches a destination, but never only one. The line binds a diagram, but can also leave it. The lack prevents totalization, while the law gives a structure enough consistency to act. The lateral passage makes another route. Fourfolding begins when the fourth term ceases to count as merely fourth and starts to redesign the field.

References

- Badir, Sémir. 2012. "How the Semiotic Square Came." In *The Square of Opposition: A General Framework for Cognition*, edited by Jean-Yves Béziau and Gillman Payette, 427–439. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 1990. *The Logic of Sense*. Translated by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale. Edited by Constantin V. Boundas. New York: Columbia University Press. Originally published 1969.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1975. "The Purveyor of Truth." Translated by Willis Domingo, James Hulbert, Moshe Ron, and M.-R. L. *Yale French Studies* 52: 31–113.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1987. *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eliot, T. S. 1922. *The Waste Land*. New York: Boni and Liveright.
- Foucault, Michel. 1970. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Pantheon. Originally published 1966.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1955. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, translated and edited by James Strachey, 1–64. London: Hogarth Press. Originally published 1920.
- Greimas, A. J., and François Rastier. 1968. "The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints." *Yale French Studies* 41: 86–105.
- Guattari, Félix. 2013. *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*. Translated by Andrew Goffey. London: Bloomsbury. Originally published 1989.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row. Originally published 1927.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1971. "Building Dwelling Thinking" and "The Thing." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, 143–161 and 163–184. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1977. "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis." In *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by Alan Sheridan, 30–113. New York: Norton. Report delivered in 1953.
- Lacan, Jacques. 2006. "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter.'" In *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, translated by Bruce Fink, 6–48. New York: Norton.
- Lacan, Jacques. 2016. *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by A. R. Price. Cambridge: Polity.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1955. "The Structural Study of Myth." *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (270): 428–444.
- Plato. Seventh Letter. In *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper. Hackett, 1997.
- Roudinesco, Élisabeth. 1997. *Jacques Lacan*. Translated by Barbara Bray. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Serres, Michel. 1982. *The Parasite*. Translated by Lawrence R. Schehr. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- StudioLab / BeyngLab. Kiteichkeit image series and related StudioLab working documents, 2026.
- The Upanishads*. 1996. Translated by Patrick Olivelle. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Webster, Jamieson. 2019. "Riding in Cars with Jacques Lacan." *New York Review of Books*, August 21.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF NIHILISM

FAILURE MODE METANOETIC PLAYGROUND

OPTIMZATION
WITHOUT CARE

MORALITY
WITHOUT MERCY

STALL
THE CARELESS
MACHINE

OPTIMIZATION
WITHOUT CARE

METANOIC
PLAYGROUND

CHALLENGER
WORLD

Ereignis
StudiosLab