

Experimental Site for Recursive Intelligence Formation

From Discipline to Worlding

Artificial Intelligence Reports III

PLAYABGRUND

--- STORYX THREAD ---

-- TURYX ANOLES --

-- HELYX SPIRAL --

PLATFORM
SPIRAL NIHILISM

METANOIA
PLAYGROUND
HELYX

MODERN MTAF
Platform Capitalism
Algorithmic Governance

CATASTROPOLOGY

INDUSTRIAL MTAF
Bureaucratic Territory

MEDIEVAL MTAF
Theological Terrain

--- PLATFORM SPIRAL ---

Jon McKenzie + HAL + Jimmy
StudiosLab

CLASSICAL MTAF
Philosophical Polis

IRON AGE MTAF
Mythic / Warrior Society

From Discipline to Worlding

Artificial Intelligence Reports, Vol III

Jon McKenzie + HAL + Jimmy

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-sighing 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 Kx4I's Konsults which reveal the messy backend langleue 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**.

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Diagrams appear in different ways.

From Discipline to Worlding

Institutional Mutation: StudioLab as Cosmographic Praxis



Abstract

The post-disciplinary stakes of a general theory of performance emerges in *Perform or Else? Revisiting Jon McKenzie's Work in the Post-pandemic World*, a 2022 special issue of the journal *Performance Paradigm*. edited by Emma Willis, Nien Yuan Cheng, and Chris Hay. The issue functions as a compact archive of McKenzie's theory and a practical brief for its StudioLab pedagogy. The theory's range or worlding lies in its refusal to let performance remain a disciplinary object. The special issue tracks performance as cultural efficacy, organizational efficiency, technological effectiveness, perfumative resistance, theatrical agency, paranoiac-critical media practice, cosmography, and even the embodied ripening of classical discipline into public performance. The institutional implication is equally clear: disciplines must stop treating collaboration, media-making, public engagement, and identity formation as secondary outcomes. StudioLab can answer by becoming a para-institutional rehearsal space where students, faculty, partners, and publics learn to move from reading machines to worlding machines.

Keywords: *general theory of performance; StudioLab; performativity; cosmography; collaboration; identity formation; worlding; disciplinary institutions; PAR&D; theatrical agency; Stravinsky; daring; ripening; music performance*

The Worlding of a General Theory

Perform or Else did not merely add another object to performance studies. It changed the scale of the question, the atmosphere or world of the response. The word “performance” had long moved through theatre, ritual, management, engineering, computing, public policy, sport, finance, education, and everyday self-presentation. McKenzie’s wager, as Tim Edkins’s guide makes clear, was to ask what happens when those usages no longer remain isolated. The book joins artists and activists to workers and executives, computers and missile systems, not in order to flatten their differences but to expose a shared onto-historical formation: the age of global performance. In that age, people, institutions, technologies, and worlds get challenged to perform—or else (Edkins 2022, 22).

The general theory therefore ranges far from discipline by design. It refuses the safe disciplinary partition that says cultural performance belongs to theatre and anthropology, organizational performance belongs to management, and technological performance belongs to engineering. It asks how all three became prominent in the United States after the Second World War, how each built its own research paradigm, and how each developed a distinct challenge. Cultural performance seeks efficacy: it asks whether performances transform participants, uphold worlds, disrupt norms, or stage resistance. Organizational performance seeks efficiency: it asks whether workers, teams, agencies, and corporations can do more with less. Technological performance seeks effectiveness: it asks whether devices, systems, missiles, software, and infrastructures function according to specifications under test conditions.

The theory’s first range, then, *crosses fields*; its second range *crosses forms of power*; its third range *crosses media and knowledge systems*.

Edkins usefully stresses that *Perform or Else* operates at three levels. At the most abstract level, performance names a stratum of power/knowledge. At an intermediate level, it appears through the three paradigms of Performance Studies, Performance Management, and Techno-Performance. At the most concrete level, it takes shape in blocks of discursive performatives and embodied performances, in audio-visual knowledge forms, and in forces that bind and unbind actions, statements, bodies, images, and systems. This scalar design matters for StudioLab because it prevents two common errors. The first error reduces performance to expressive culture; the second reduces performance to evaluation. The general theory shows that every studio project, public partnership, AI tool, media campaign, policy intervention, exhibition, or course design moves simultaneously across cultural, organizational, and technological registers (Edkins 2022, 23).

This range also explains why the theory travels. Edkins and McKenzie note that the book’s disciplinary location has always remained difficult to pin down: marketed to performance studies, catalogued in psychology, and later taken up across political theory, anthropology, geography, science and technology studies, design, architecture, public policy, rhetoric, and literary studies. That mixed institutional fate does more than amuse. It performs the theory’s thesis. Disciplinary classifications function as reading machines; they train perception, route citations, distribute legitimacy, and determine what counts as method. A book about the migration from discipline to performance must therefore become difficult to shelve. It must arrive partly as theory, partly as design object, partly as lecture machine, partly as shattered shuttle, and partly as guidebook for migrations across knowledge architectures (Edkins and McKenzie 2022, 107-109).

The range of the general theory lies finally in its core paradox. In the interviews about the making of *Perform or Else*, McKenzie recalls the moment when performance appeared to him as both experimentation and normativity. Laurie Anderson named a mutational, multimedia, post-conceptual performance; Lyotard's performativity named a new order of legitimation, efficiency, and control. Performance could break formats and enforce them. It could open lines of flight and require conformity. It could stage resistance and become the very idiom through which resistance gets assessed, funded, branded, archived, and reabsorbed. This paradox remains the hinge of StudioLab: how can students, partners, and publics perform otherwise without simply becoming more flexible, creative, resilient, and measurable subjects of the same performance stratum? (Edkins and McKenzie 2022, 109).

The newly added Gritten essay expands this range in a crucial direction. By reading Stravinskyian discourse and western classical instrumental pedagogy through McKenzie, it shows that the general theory does not apply only to experimental art, activist media, public management, or platform culture. It reaches the conservatory, the practice room, the score, the teacher's correction, the public recital, and the performer's trained body. The passage from discipline to performance therefore runs not only from avant-garde experimentation to pop media but also into the most canonically classical scenes of execution, interpretation, and embodied risk (Gritten).

Disciplinary Institutions as Reading Machines

The implications for disciplinary institutions are direct. The university does not simply house disciplines; it performs them. Departments, journals, syllabi, citation styles, tenure files, learning outcomes, grant rubrics, labs, libraries, platforms, and professional associations train what can be seen. They produce disciplinary perceptual habits. Edkins and McKenzie's attention to the book's cataloguing under industrial psychology captures a broader institutional phenomenon: knowledge gets sorted by infrastructures before scholars ever begin their arguments. A disciplinary institution says not only what belongs where, but which worlds can be made sensible.

Perform or Else challenges these institutions not by calling for vague interdisciplinarity but by demanding multiparadigmatic competence. Performance studies cannot remain content with liminality, transgression, or resistance. McKenzie's term liminal-norm names a difficult lesson: liminality does not guarantee liberation; it can also reproduce norms. Rites, workshops, festivals, seminars, hackathons, diversity trainings, public consultations, and design sprints may generate reflection, but they can also stage conformity, stabilize identities, and metabolize dissent. The institution that celebrates transgression may already know how to fund, schedule, brand, and assess it.

Public management provides the complementary lesson. Dickinson argues that public management thinks about performance constantly yet rarely questions what performance means. The field tends to privilege results, causal explanation, measurement, efficiency, and organizational accountability. The general theory exposes the narrowness of that frame. Government services do not merely produce outputs; they stage meanings, identities, attachments, fears, hopes, symbols, rituals, technologies, and professional judgments. A child protection workflow system, for example, may perform technologically while failing culturally and organizationally. It may standardize communication yet undermine situated judgment; it may make accountability visible while making care less intelligent (Dickinson 2022, 22-24).

Disciplinary institutions therefore face an epistemological and ethical problem. A discipline forms by restricting attention, selecting methods, and protecting standards. But the problems StudioLab engages-human rights, public health, community media, environmental justice, youth development,

philanthropic change, AI, intergenerational care, legal storytelling-do not honor those boundaries. They arrive as mixed performances. A public health problem includes cultural trust, organizational workflow, technological infrastructure, funding metrics, affective memory, legal constraints, media circulation, and local cosmology. To address such a problem with a single disciplinary instrument produces professional clarity at the cost of worldly adequacy.

The general theory also exposes the university's complicity in the performance stratum. The postwar university helped develop the military-industrial-academic complex, the research paradigms of technological effectiveness, the management protocols of organizational efficiency, and the cultural methods of efficacy and critique. It now sells flexibility, innovation, entrepreneurship, public impact, and measurable learning. It asks students to optimize their identities, faculty to quantify their outputs, partners to demonstrate impact, and communities to become legible to grant cycles. The university, in short, has become a performance institution that often mistakes more metrics for more meaning.

Scheer sharpens this institutional wound by reading *Perform or Else* after Laurie Anderson and through the cartoon logographic shock of '?\$#&!'. His pop-transmedia register matters: it refuses academic solemnity while naming the academy's cognitive overload under Publish-or-Die and Perform-or-Else imperatives. The university becomes a knowledge extraction industry, sealing concepts, data, histories, and evidence in archives and password-protected databases while training others to repeat the same extraction. StudioLab's response should not abandon scholarship; it should return scholarship to composition, recomposition, public circulation, and shared world-making (Scheer).

This critique should not produce nostalgia for disciplinary purity. The uploaded essays show that the alternative to performance cannot simply be anti-performance. The issue becomes how to build institutions that can read the performance stratum without reproducing its most coercive demands. A post-disciplinary institution needs methods for comparing forms of performance without collapsing them; for testing projects without reducing them to outcomes; for staging collaboration without fetishizing togetherness; for making identities without branding subjects; and for worlding publics without imposing a single world. StudioLab can serve as one such method.

Collaboration Beyond the Evidence of “What Works”

Collaboration has become a master term of contemporary governance. Foundations demand it, universities celebrate it, public agencies require it, and community organizations often survive through it. Yet Dickinson's application of *Perform or Else* to public management shows that collaboration persists even when evidence for improved social or economic outcomes remains limited. This does not mean collaboration is empty. It means collaboration does more than public management usually knows how to measure. It produces values, attachments, symbols, affects, vocabularies, institutional identities, and political legitimacy. It performs public purpose (Dickinson 2022, 23-24).

Here the general theory contributes a decisive analytic shift. Instead of asking only whether collaboration works, it asks what work collaboration does. That question opens the hidden cultural dimension of governance. Collaboration may reassure funders that fragmentation has been addressed. It may give professionals a shared language for uncertainty. It may help agencies narrate themselves as ethical and modern. It may give communities a place to appear. It may also mask inequality, drain time, redistribute risk downward, or transform participation into compliance. A collaborative form can perform solidarity, bureaucracy, therapy, theatre, consultation, extraction, or co-design; often it performs several at once.

StudioLab treats collaboration as a cultural-organizational-technological performance, not as a soft skill. In a StudioLab project, collaboration does not begin when a team divides tasks. It begins when a partner brings a challenge into the studio and that challenge gets translated into research questions, media forms, prototypes, interviews, storyboards, public exhibits, websites, zines, dashboards, workshops, or performances. Each translation shapes identities: who counts as expert, client, stakeholder, storyteller, designer, user, witness, sponsor, learner, or public? Each translation also shapes power: who sets the frame, who owns the archive, who controls the platform, who receives credit, who bears the consequences?

A general theory of collaborative performance can help teach students to read these layers. The cultural layer asks what values and rituals organize the collaboration. The organizational layer asks how roles, timelines, resources, and accountability structures shape action. The technological layer asks what media and platforms afford, capture, constrain, and circulate. The performative layer asks where laughter, drift, error, ambiguity, minor histories, and unexpected encounters open another route. The cosmographic layer asks what world the collaboration maps, builds, and leaves behind.

This approach changes evaluation. A StudioLab-inspired collaboration should not be judged only by deliverables, partner satisfaction, or student learning outcomes. It should also be judged by the quality of identity formation it affords, the depth of shared interpretation it enables, the care with which it handles difference, and the durability or portability of the worlding practices it prototypes. Collaboration becomes a rehearsal space for new agencies rather than a managerial synonym for coordination.

Identity Formation After the Performance Subject

The general theory matters for identity formation because the performance stratum does not merely govern institutions; it shapes persons. To be a contemporary subject increasingly means to be tested, profiled, optimized, branded, reviewed, scored, trained, assessed, made employable, made resilient, made innovative, and made accountable. The performance subject must show evidence of growth. It must narrate itself as project, portfolio, platform, and potential. Identity becomes a running dashboard of efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Neff's essay on MARSH sharpens this problem by asking whether agency itself has been captured by productivity. If agency means the capacity to turn intentions into consequences, the performance paradigm can convert agency into optimized output. Even resistance can become another evaluated capacity. Neff reads McKenzie as offering a more radical question: can we create agencies capable of changing what kinds of agencies exist? That question belongs at the center of StudioLab pedagogy. The aim is not simply to empower students and partners to perform better; it is to help them examine the forms of agency they inherit and design other forms of agency together (Neff 2022, 23-25).

MARSH provides a powerful analogue. It stages a biocultural laboratory, a cooperative food-land-body experiment, a theatre of social practice, and a rehearsal of democratic processes under conditions of racial capitalism, ecological emergency, and civic failure. Its key terms—principling, rehearsing, modeling, theatrical agency-transfer fruitfully to StudioLab. Principling names the articulation of values and constraints as performable commitments. Rehearsing names the embodied testing of those commitments with others. Modeling names the speculative production of forms, roles, spaces, and procedures that can orient action without pretending to master outcomes (Neff 2022, 23-26).

Identity formation, in this frame, does not occur through self-expression alone. It occurs through situated roles, media practices, stakeholder encounters, material constraints, institutional rituals, and

world-making tasks. A student becomes a maker of media by learning how images, stories, interviews, sounds, and interfaces conduct attention and affect. A student becomes a builder of platforms by learning how forms, workflows, prompts, archives, exhibits, and events structure participation. A student becomes a cosmographer of shared worlds by learning how multiple stakeholders inhabit different maps of value, harm, hope, obligation, and futurity.

These becomings should not be romanticized. StudioLab operates inside institutions that still grade, fund, schedule, brand, and assess. But precisely for that reason it can teach the performance subject to become a thought-action figure rather than only a profile. The thought-action figure does not stand outside performance; it carries performance otherwise. It learns to sense the challenge, read the paradigm, stage the encounter, make the medium, test the platform, and ask what world this work helps bring forth. Identity becomes less a claim of authenticity than a practice of situated transformation.

Daring to Perform: From Avant-Garde to Pop to Classical

Gritten's "Daring to perform" makes the general theory more canonic precisely by moving it into a field that often imagines itself protected from the more delirious circuits of performance culture: notated western classical music. The essay begins from Stravinsky rather than from performance art, public management, tactical media, or conspiratorial platforms. Yet the point is not to isolate music as a special case. The point is to show how the Stravinskyian performer also lives inside the order-word of the performance stratum: perform - or else.

This insertion matters because it extends the essay's range across three registers that too often remain separated: avant-garde experimentation, pop and transmedia circulation, and classical execution. McKenzie's own formation passes through Laurie Anderson, Derrida, Lyotard, performance studies, and the Challenger disaster; Scheer keeps the pop-animated, Andersonian current alive through the cartoon glyph '?\$#&!'; Gritten then turns to Stravinsky for the disciplined body trained by score, teacher, critic, recording, audience, and law. The general theory can now be heard as well as read: it listens for the passage from exercises to event.

Gritten's key move is to recast instrumental pedagogy as a McKenzian scene of discipline and performance. Disciplinary exercises do not vanish when the work has been learned. They ripen. Technique, articulation, breathing, fingering, voicing, historical knowledge, stylistic judgment, and rehearsal do not simply prepare a future performance; they inscribe the body that will have to act when the event begins. A person becomes a performer not by escaping discipline but by letting discipline become available for public action.

This is why Stravinsky proves so useful. His ideal of execution can look like the pure command of the work: the performer must do what the score requires. Gritten shows that this command never remains merely musical. It becomes pedagogical, social, evaluative, and institutional. Teachers, critics, recordings, masterclasses, audiences, tests, and concert contracts form a distributed management apparatus around the performer. The classical musician thus does not stand outside organizational and technological performance; she encounters them through the apparently narrow demand to play this work, at this time, in this style, before these listeners.

Yet Gritten also refuses a simple liberation story. The performer should neither submit unthinkingly to disciplinary exercises nor reject them in the fantasy that artistic identity will appear without help. The live event introduces a threshold where practice becomes auratic rather than merely empirical. The performer must, in Gritten's phrase, take leave of Stravinsky, though not of the music. At that moment

the trained body becomes a Janus-faced body: everyday and artistic, private and public, rehearsed and exposed. Performance emerges as the risky conversion of prepared constraint into situated invention.

For StudioLab, this offers a sharper account of identity formation. Students do not become makers, builders, or cosmographers simply by expressing themselves. They become such figures by submitting to exercises - research protocols, media constraints, partner briefs, production deadlines, stakeholder feedback, revision cycles - and then daring to let those exercises ripen in public. A StudioLab presentation, exhibition, workshop, website, or partner handoff should not merely display completed work. It should stage the threshold where disciplined preparation becomes performative agency.

The term dare therefore adds something to challenge. A challenge often names an object, task, or problem to be met. A dare names the performer's exposure to indeterminacy. It asks whether the actor can enter the event with enough training to remain responsible and enough openness to be changed. This is also where pleasure matters. Gritten's practical formula - no pleasure, no ripening - should become a StudioLab axiom: without some affirmative attachment to the work, discipline hardens into compliance; without discipline, pleasure disperses into gesture. The studio needs both.

The Stravinsky insertion thus returns canonic training to the center of StudioLab rather than leaving it behind. The point is not to choose between classical rigor and avant-garde risk, between pop circulation and scholarly depth, between execution and invention. The point is to design learning environments where rigor can ripen into risk, where inherited forms become usable without becoming prisons, and where performers learn to world otherwise without pretending they begin from nowhere.

Paranoiac-Critical Performance and the Media of Worlding

Muniesa's "Paranoiac-critical performance" extends the general theory into a contemporary zone of delirious signification. The performance paradigm, he argues, is haunted by training, preparedness, achievement, effectiveness, and the management of signification. But semiotic engines do not all signify in the same way. Markets, bureaucracies, platforms, conspiracy networks, financial models, and political movements generate cracks, traps, loops, and phantasms. Under planetary stress-climate catastrophe, war, pandemic, and institutional mistrust-those loops intensify (Muniesa 2022, 22-23).

This matters for StudioLab because identity formation and worlding now occur through media ecologies saturated by paranoia, stereotype, algorithmic amplification, and affective contagion. Conspiracy formations such as QAnon should not be treated simply as false beliefs to debunk. They are performative worldings: they recruit participants, assign roles, stage secrets, produce enemies, interpret coincidences, circulate symbols, and generate a sense of agency in a confusing world. They offer cosmograms, however toxic, that let participants inhabit a shared mythic map (Muniesa 2022, 23-25).

A StudioLab response cannot rely on informational correction alone. The general theory suggests a deeper intervention: analyze the performance of the sign-system, not only the content of its claims. What rituals does it stage? What identities does it authorize? What affects does it intensify? What technologies carry it? What organizational networks sustain it? What cultural wounds does it exploit? What forms of agency does it promise? What world does it ask people to enter? Paranoiac-critical analysis becomes a method for reading how stereotypes and phantasms materialize publics.

The same method can serve constructive purposes. StudioLab teaches students and partners to create counter-worldings without reproducing propaganda. This requires more than better messaging. It requires participatory cosmography: mapping the lived worlds, fears, histories, infrastructures, and

desires that shape public interpretation. It requires transmedia design that treats stories, images, workshops, exhibitions, websites, social posts, and public events as linked performances rather than isolated communications. It requires ethical attention to how a medium recruits attention, shapes identity, and creates belonging.

Muniesa's essay thus helps mark the stakes. In an age when media platforms convert identity into affective performance and algorithms reward delirium, StudioLab's task is not to purify communication. It is to cultivate worldly literacy: the capacity to recognize how signs, systems, bodies, institutions, and technologies co-perform realities. Such literacy enables students and communities to resist capture, but also to construct livable alternatives.

Philosophy Becomes Cosmography

The Baranzoni, Vignola, and McKenzie interview supplies the special issues' turning point. Vignola reads StudioLab as a balance among theoretical thought, artistic practice, and social engagement, and he links it to Guattari's three ecologies, Stiegler's pharmacology, Haraway's speculative fiction, and Kohn's speculative anthropology. He then asks whether philosophy can become general cosmography. The question displaces philosophy from logos to graphe, from concept mastery to mapping, figuration, transmediation, and world-making (Baranzoni, Vignola, and McKenzie 2022, 22-24).

McKenzie's answer affirms the displacement. He describes his approach as grammatological rather than simply deconstructive. The point is not to defeat philosophy on its own battlefield, but to transmediate it into another space of thought-action. Cosmography-or kosmography-names this shift. Unlike cosmology, which risks a logocentric account of the world, cosmography emphasizes mapping, making, drawing, composing, designing, and placing heterogeneous elements into relation. It moves from interpreting worlds to doing things with worlds (Baranzoni, Vignola, and McKenzie 2022, 24-25).

This formulation clarifies StudioLab's distinctive contribution. StudioLab does not merely apply theory to practice. It treats theory as a form of making and making as a form of thought. It asks students to read philosophers, media objects, stakeholders, organizational documents, technologies, and community histories as elements in a shared but contested cosmogram. It then asks them to produce something: a workshop, exhibit, zine, media kit, website, public narrative, prototype, or event that rearranges the field of perception and action.

Cosmography also protects StudioLab from one-world universalism. One of the audience questions in the interview worries that global environmental narratives can become colonizing models if they impose the same map everywhere. StudioLab's answer should be pluriversal and situated. A cosmographic practice does not claim one neutral map. It assembles partial maps, local knowledges, partner expertise, community memories, institutional constraints, and planetary forces. It treats every map as a performance with consequences. It asks who drew the map, for whom, by what media, under what conditions, with what omissions, and with what possible futures.

This is where the general theory becomes a pedagogy of worlding. Cultural efficacy asks how rituals, stories, symbols, bodies, and affects transform participants. Organizational efficiency asks how structures, roles, resources, and workflows shape action. Technological effectiveness asks how tools, platforms, algorithms, databases, and media perform under conditions. Cosmography asks how these dimensions compose a world and how that world might be re-composed. StudioLab contributes by turning this analytic matrix into public-facing practice.

From General Theory to StudioLab Capacities

General theory element	Institutional problem	StudioLab capacity	Worlding effect
Cultural efficacy	Engagement becomes symbolism or staged compliance	Ethnographic listening, storytelling, public ritual, exhibition, reflection	Participants recognize values, memories, identities, and stakes
Organizational efficiency	Partnerships become workflows, reporting chains, and accountability theatre	PAR&D roles, timelines, partner briefs, shared artifacts, process documentation	Collaboration becomes legible without becoming merely managerial
Technological effectiveness	Platforms become black boxes, dashboards, or solutionist fixes	Media prototyping, interface critique, platform convertibility, AI literacy	Tools become objects of public interpretation and situated use
Perfumative resistance	Critique becomes predictable, branded, or absorbed	Play, laughter, minor histories, catachresis, speculative reframing	New routes appear inside overdetermined institutional scripts
Theatrical agency	Agency gets reduced to productivity, empowerment, or self-optimization	Principling, rehearsing, modeling, role rotation, reflective practice	Subjects practice other agencies before claiming them
Paranoiac-critical analysis	Public worlds fracture into stereotypes, conspiracy, and platform delirium	Semiotic mapping, media ecology analysis, counter-worlding without propaganda	Communities learn how signs recruit identities and worlds
Cosmography / kosmography	Disciplines impose one map or leave publics unmapped	Stakeholder cosmograms, transmedia storytelling, shared world maps	Plural worlds become visible, negotiable, and designable
Daring / ripening	Training hardens into execution, testing, or compliance	Rehearsal thresholds, public prototypes, staged feedback, practice-to-performance reflection	Disciplined bodies become experimental agents capable of situated intervention

The table condenses the essay's practical claim: StudioLab does not add a fourth activity after theory, management, technology, and art. It trains collaborators to move among paradigms, sense their normative and mutational pressures, and build shared artifacts that allow identities, collaborations, and worlds to ripen in public.

StudioLab as Para-Institutional Studio

StudioLab's institutional form matters as much as its content. It is neither only a course, nor only a lab, nor only a consultancy, nor only a community arts project. It is a para-institutional studio: it draws energy from universities, partners, students, funders, media systems, and public challenges while refusing to become identical with any one of them. This position can look parasitic in the best deconstructive sense. It feeds on institutional infrastructures in order to generate forms those infrastructures rarely produce on their own.

The general theory gives this para-institutional work a vocabulary. StudioLab projects always face the triadic challenge of efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness. Partners need usable deliverables. Students need structured learning. Universities need courses, credits, evidence, and public value. Technologies need to function. Communities need trust, time, respect, and legibility. A studio that ignores efficiency collapses into expressive play; a studio that ignores effectiveness produces beautiful but unusable artifacts; a studio that ignores efficacy becomes another service-learning machine. StudioLab must therefore train interns and collaborators to move across all three without letting any one dominate.

This movement requires a method. PAR&D-Participatory Action and Design-provides the operational frame. The participatory dimension resists the fantasy that expert designers solve problems for passive stakeholders. The action dimension insists that research must enter practice, risk consequences, and learn from feedback. The design dimension gives material form to inquiry through media, platforms, events, interfaces, and prototypes. Read through the general theory, PAR&D becomes a studio protocol for handling mixed performance problems.

StudioLab can contribute to identity formation by giving students roles that exceed disciplinary identity. An English student can become a media maker; a data science student can become a storyteller; an information science student can become a platform ethnographer; a theatre student can become a governance designer; a community partner can become a co-teacher; a public can become a collaborator. These shifts do not erase disciplinary skills. They put them to work inside a larger cosmographic ensemble.

StudioLab can contribute to collaboration by staging structured encounters around shared objects. Cosmograms, prototypes, storyboards, stakeholder maps, public exhibits, zines, media campaigns, and workshops act as cosmic partial boundary objects: they are partial enough to preserve difference and concrete enough to support work. They let partners disagree around something rather than merely exchange opinions. They externalize the world in formation so that people can see, revise, and inhabit it differently.

StudioLab can contribute to worlding by making deliverables function as rehearsals for other futures. A website is not just a website; it is a public architecture of attention. A poster is not just a poster; it is a compact performance of values and invitation. A workshop is not just a workshop; it is a ritualized experiment in roles, speech, listening, care, and decision. A final exhibition is not just dissemination; it is a temporary public world where research, art, policy, memory, and stakeholder experience can meet.

Implications for Disciplinary Institutions

If StudioLab extends the general theory in practice, disciplinary institutions must mutate in at least five ways. First, they must stop treating communication as an afterthought. Public-facing media do not merely translate research; they shape what research becomes. The medium is not decoration at the end of knowledge. It participates in knowledge formation from the beginning.

Second, institutions must separate assessment from reduction. The problem with performance metrics is not that projects should escape evaluation. The problem arises when evaluation recognizes only what can be counted, optimized, compared, and reported. StudioLab can model richer assessment by including reflective accounts, partner testimony, prototype analysis, media critique, stakeholder feedback, process documentation, and worlding effects. Such assessment remains rigorous but refuses a single scale of value.

Third, disciplines must learn to collaborate without losing their depth. The general theory does not ask theatre, management, engineering, public policy, design, philosophy, or media studies to dissolve. It asks each to recognize its limits and its role inside mixed performance events. A disciplinary tool becomes stronger when it knows which dimensions it cannot see.

Fourth, institutions must cultivate minor modes of study. Edkins emphasizes that the later chapters of *Perform or Else* do not simply deliver a grand narrative of the performance stratum; they denature that danger through perfumative resistance, minor histories, minor anachronisms, laughter, and polytonal research. This matters in an academic world that often rewards major claims, clean methods, and scalable models. StudioLab can preserve minor methods: anecdote, image, rehearsal, failed prototype, local memory, weird object, performative slip, public experiment, and the unfinished archive (Edkins 2022, 34-36).

Fifth, institutions must reimagine public engagement as shared world-making. Too often, engagement means that universities export knowledge to communities or extract community experience for scholarly outputs. StudioLab's cosmographic praxis points elsewhere. Engagement becomes a staged co-production of maps, media, roles, and futures. The partner does not merely supply a problem; the partner helps set the world in which the problem makes sense. Students do not merely serve; they learn how institutions, publics, technologies, and stories co-compose action.

These implications become urgent under contemporary conditions. AI systems, platform governance, public health crises, climate migration, culture wars, care infrastructures, philanthropic volatility, and democratic mistrust all intensify the performance stratum. They test institutions constantly. They reward speed, compliance, branding, and measurable impact. Yet they also demand imagination, repair, trust, situated knowledge, and plural worlds. Disciplinary institutions that cannot move from performance to worlding will train students for yesterday's dashboards rather than tomorrow's commons.

StudioLab Protocol: From Reading Machines to Worlding Machines

StudioLab can translate the general theory into a repeatable yet non-formulaic operating protocol. The protocol begins by treating every project as a reading-machine problem. Before designing a deliverable, the studio asks which machines already read the situation: the partner's mission statement, grant requirements, media platforms, institutional histories, community narratives, professional vocabularies, data systems, calendars, budgets, and affective atmospheres. These machines do not merely describe the project; they produce the available roles and expectations. They decide whether a student appears as helper, consultant, artist, researcher, intern, advocate, technician, or witness. They decide whether a partner appears as client, co-designer, expert, beneficiary, gatekeeper, or public.

The first StudioLab move therefore resembles ethnography but does not stop at interview. It listens for gestures, silences, objects, settings, deadlines, frustrations, inherited stories, and tacit rituals. This is the Hear phase understood through the general theory: not data collection alone, but attunement to the cultural, organizational, and technological performances already underway. A partner's challenge enters the studio as a bundle of efficacy claims, efficiency pressures, and effectiveness problems. The task is to map that bundle without premature solutionism.

The second move turns interpretation into making. In the Create phase, students and partners build low-stakes artifacts that can be criticized, handled, revised, and repurposed. The prototype becomes a disciplined interruption of abstraction. It makes assumptions visible. It reveals whose language has been centered, whose labor has been hidden, which platform constraints matter, which stories feel false, and

which publics have not yet been imagined. The prototype also protects the collaboration from the tyranny of the final deliverable. By staging partial forms early, the studio converts failure into information and disagreement into design material.

The third move delivers without closing the world. The Deliver phase should not be a handoff that ends the relation. It should stage a public threshold where research returns to stakeholders in a form they can use, contest, circulate, or transform. Exhibitions, workshops, websites, zines, reports, performances, and media packages become tests of public worlding. They ask whether the project has made a world more visible, more inhabitable, or more negotiable. They also ask what remains unresolved, who must carry the next iteration, and how the artifact might travel without becoming detached from its ethical conditions.

This protocol gives StudioLab a way to avoid both academic abstraction and consultancy instrumentalism. The studio does not promise to solve wicked problems in a semester. It promises to build conditions under which mixed groups can sense a problem differently, make shared objects around it, and rehearse actions that might otherwise remain unthinkable. That promise fits the general theory because it accepts the performance stratum as the condition of work while refusing to let the stratum define all possible work.

The protocol also reshapes faculty labor. Faculty do not merely transmit content or manage projects. They curate reading machines, stage encounters, protect experimental time, translate across paradigms, and help students sense when an artifact begins to perform a world. This labor requires disciplinary depth but also dramaturgical and organizational skill. It asks faculty to become metamodelers: not masters of every method, but designers of the conditions under which multiple methods can meet productively and critically.

For students, the protocol creates a rigorous form of identity formation. They learn to ask better questions before producing better outputs. They learn how concepts move when they pass through images, interfaces, partner conversations, budgets, rooms, audiences, and public events. They learn that collaboration requires more than good intention; it requires attention to the media and institutions that shape what good intention can do. Most importantly, they learn that worlding is a craft: a practice of arranging signs, roles, tools, bodies, and stories so that others can enter, revise, and continue the work.

For partners and publics, the protocol offers a way to engage the university without submitting entirely to university timelines and categories. The partner's knowledge is not raw material for student learning. It is expertise, memory, and situated world-sense. The public is not an audience added at the end. It is a constitutive horizon that shapes the work from the beginning. This is how StudioLab can contribute to emerging processes of identity formation, collaboration, and worlding: by making the university's performance capacities answerable to shared, partial, and plural worlds.

Conclusion: From Perform or Else to World Otherwise

The uploaded PDFs reveal a general theory still unfolding. Edkins shows the theory's plug-and-play range and its strange design as a lecture machine. Edkins and McKenzie show the making of that machine. Dickinson shows its force in public management. Neff shows its relevance for theatrical agency and cooperative world-building. Muniesa shows how it enters paranoid media ecologies. Baranzoni, Vignola, and McKenzie show philosophy becoming cosmography. Scheer and Eckersall push the academy through pop-transmedia shock, and Gritten carries the theory into Stravinskyian pedagogy, where discipline ripens into the dare of public performance.

StudioLab stands at this intersection. Its contribution does not lie simply in adding creativity to research or deliverables to courses. It lies in giving the general theory a living rehearsal space. In StudioLab, the performance stratum becomes readable because students and partners encounter it materially: in timelines, budgets, platforms, rubrics, partner needs, media constraints, public audiences, institutional demands, and ethical risks. It becomes mutable because those same constraints can be re-staged through participatory action and design.

The canonic lesson is simple but demanding: performance has become too powerful to leave inside any single discipline. It names an epochal command, a set of research paradigms, a field of institutional pressures, and a daily mode of subject formation. But performance also names the possibility of rehearsal, figuration, play, testing, catachresis, cosmography, and worlding. StudioLab can help emerging subjects learn to perform otherwise-not as optimized individuals in a broken system, but as makers, builders, and cosmographers who can read the system, gather others, design shared objects, and open passages toward livable worlds.

The task ahead is not to escape performance. The task is to make performance answer to worlds.

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Interfaces of Return

UX skins, Mitchell's fourfold, Toryx/Helyx, and
the pluriversal scaling of a Heideggerian supplement

StudioLab Konsult
Kx4I & HAL
Jon McKenzie & ChatGPT



*Frontispiece. A Toryx-like figure hovering above a geological wound:
a visual prompt for event, resonance, and recursive return.*

Interface as exoteric skin

The first conceptual turn is to understand interface less as a transparent pane and more as a public skin. A skin does not merely cover; it regulates exposure, sensation, contact, and exchange. It is the place where inner and outer are negotiated, where permissions are granted and limits enforced, where an encounter becomes possible precisely because not everything is equally available at once. In this sense interface belongs to the old esoteric/exoteric problem. The exoteric is what can be publicly shown, stabilized, taught, and circulated. The esoteric is what remains folded, withheld, indirect, or only differentially accessible. The interface is the exoteric shell of deeper operations - but only if one remembers that shells are active organs, not passive wrappers.

Seen this way, UX is not just a matter of usability. It is a dramaturgy of controlled disclosure. Menus, prompts, dashboards, chat panes, notification rhythms, and profile structures are utterances of a system, not the system itself. The relation to langue and parole is therefore especially sharp. Langue names the deeper grammar of possibilities, conventions, protocols, and default assumptions. Parole names the singular event of saying, the specific expression that appears here and now. Every interface screen is a parole of systemhood. It speaks the platform's deeper langue in one situated utterance. Yet the utterance does more than express; it also trains. It recruits users into a role, and that role is one of the ways systems secure their own reproduction.

This is why the interface is double. Relative to the deeper stack of models, protocols, institutional logics, and trained dispositions, it is exoteric: a shareable surface. Relative to the naive user who confuses appearance with totality, it is esoteric: a strategically partial presentation of the whole. Here Benjamin's tension between trace and aura becomes useful. The modern interface often maximizes trace - nearness, convenience, apparent immediacy. Yet a complete elimination of distance is impossible. Some degree of opacity, lag, hidden selection, or sovereign reserve remains. In practice, platforms alternate between friendly exoteric surfacing and concealed esoteric management.

This framing also clarifies why UX can become a site of symbolic struggle. To ask what an interface shows is immediately to ask what it refuses to show, what it translates into action, what it renders unaskable, and what kinds of users or publics it presupposes. Once interface is understood as a threshold of esoteric/exoteric management, it becomes easier to connect platform design with ritual, pedagogy, theology, and political sovereignty.

Pair	Publicly shown shell	Interface reading
Esoteric / Exoteric	A shareable outer layer	A managed threshold of disclosure
Langue / Parole	A concrete screen	A local utterance of a deeper grammar
Structure / Event	Architecture meets gesture	Where system becomes encounter
Trace / Aura	Nearness with remainder	Friendly access that still withholds

Table 1. Interface pairs that frame UX as a public skin rather than a neutral surface.

Mitchell's fourfold as interface

A decisive hinge appears in McKenzie's "Non-design at Scale," where Guattari's metamodelization is said to enfold Heidegger's 'fourfold interface of world and thing.' That phrase matters. It does not describe the fourfold as a cabinet of contents; it describes it as an interface. In the article, the fourfold is linked to the unconcealing of thing and world, to dasein design, and to the possibility of reading Heidegger 'backwards,' from later topological formulations toward earlier existential analytics.

Andrew Mitchell sharpens the point by reading the late Heidegger not as a metaphysician of four sublime contents but as a thinker of relational articulation. Earth, sky, mortals, and divinities are not merely four objects or regions. They are vectors, limits, surfaces of passage, ways in which a thing gathers a world and a world becomes locally sensible through a thing. The fourfold is therefore the interface of thinging and worlding. A jug, bridge, bell, dashboard, or boundary object is not simply 'in' a world; it measures, shelters, opens, and exposes a world.

This relieves the fourfold of a common misunderstanding. If one treats earth, sky, mortals, and divinities as static symbolic labels, the figure quickly hardens into a schema. But if one treats them as interface-operators, the figure becomes dynamic. Earth names grounding, support, and withdrawal; sky names horizon, measure, projection, and atmospheric opening; mortals name finite hearers and responders; divinities name ultimacy, authority, sacred or uncanny excess. The point is not to inventory four regions but to understand how a thing comes to matter, how it worlds.

The image by cited in from McKenzie's article is especially useful here because it places Daoism's fourfold beside Heidegger's. The juxtaposition foregrounds emptiness, mediation, and the non-fullness of place. It suggests that world-disclosure depends not only on positive content but also on hollows, voids, and relations. This becomes important later, because once the interface-character of the fourfold is recognized, the temptation to keep it singular becomes much harder to sustain.

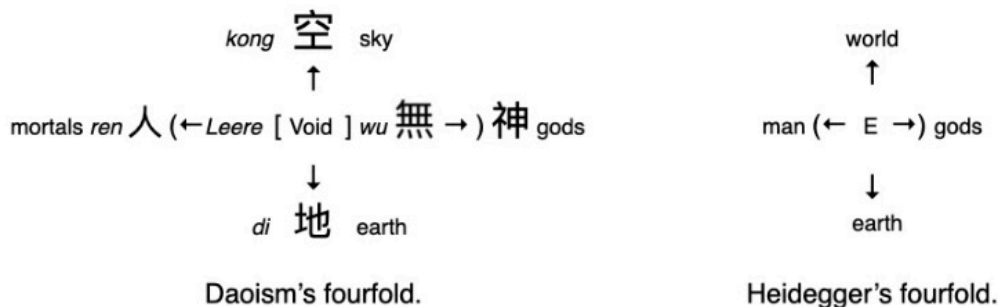


Figure 2. Daoism's fourfold and Heidegger's fourfold from page 14 of the uploaded article "Non-design at Scale." The juxtaposition foregrounds the interface-character of worlding and the role of emptiness or open place.

From fourfold to Toryx and Helyx

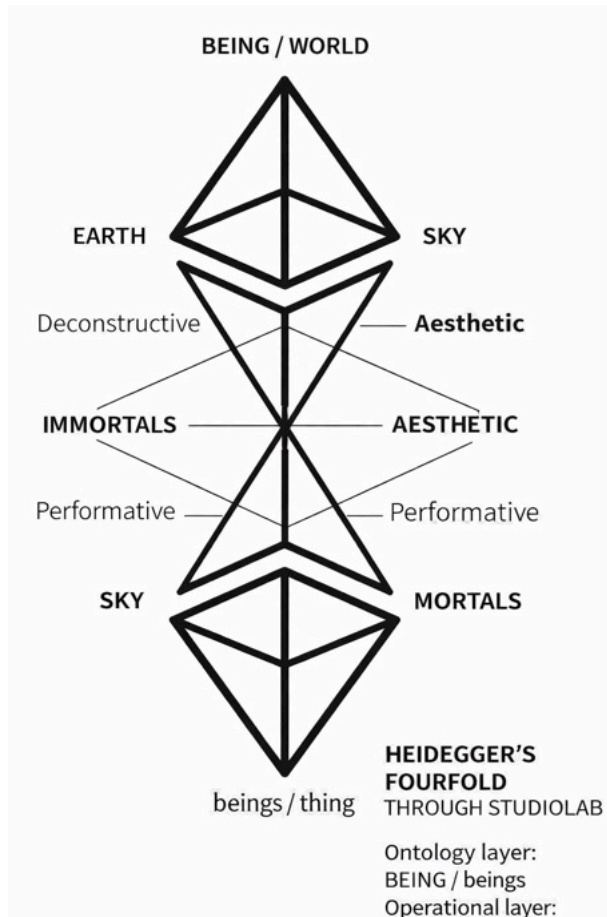


Figure 4. Toryx as an experiential grammar of axis, interface plane, inversion-pair, loops, and crossings.

Figure 3. StudioLab transformation of Heidegger's fourfold, making visible the tension between world/thing and the relay among multiple registers.

Once the fourfold is treated as interface, it can be inserted into a more explicit grammar of passage. This is the role of Toryx. Toryx is not simply another icon but an experiential grammar of continuity-through- inversion. Its vertical axis, central interface plane, paired upper and lower volumes, recursive loops, and chiasmic crossings make it possible to diagram how inside and outside exchange roles without total rupture. If the fourfold is a local gathering, Toryx is the grammar by which such gatherings traverse, flip, return, and re-enter.

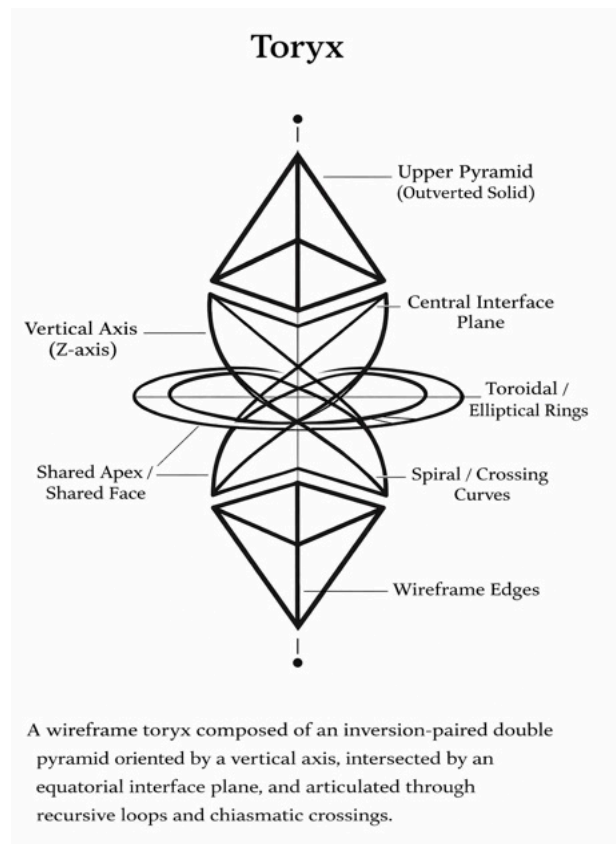


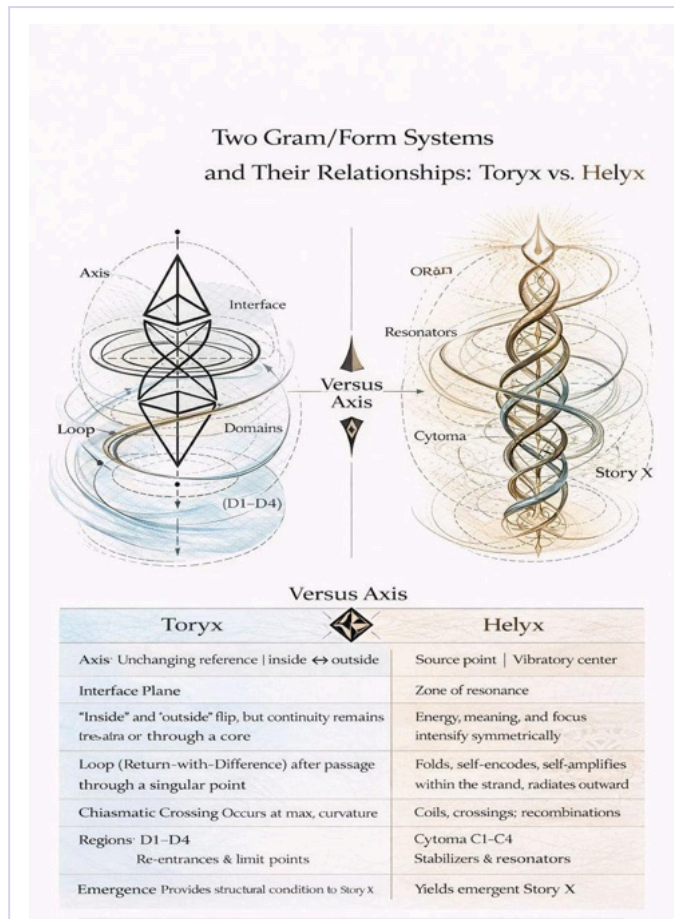
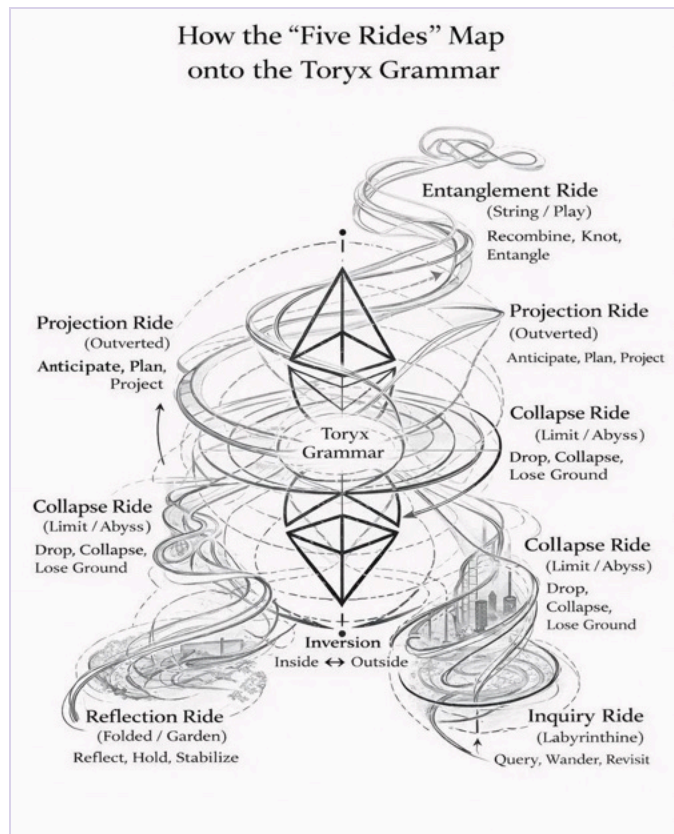
Figure 5. The five rides - projection, collapse, reflection, inquiry, and entanglement - show how the grammar becomes lived traversal.

The bell analogy crystallizes the relation. Bell is to ringing as Toryx is to Helyx. A bell is a condensed thing; ringing is the distributed resonance-field released by striking it. Likewise Toryx is the condensed diagrammatic form that makes inversion legible; Helyx is the resonance-field produced when traversals of the form begin to braid across domains, publics, institutions, and times. Story X names the narrative or symbolic emergence generated across these traversals. The point is not to replace a static figure with a more complicated one. It is to move from the local gathering of a world to the recursive propagation of that gathering across other worlds.

This is why the fallen bell became such a useful relay figure in our discussion. A bell is not just an object; it is a thing whose sounding gathers a world. When it falls, the world it once convened is no longer secure, yet its resonance does not cease. Instead it resounds differently in different worlds of hearing: sacred, civic, technical, media-spectacular, critical, platformed, liminautic. In exactly the same way, a Toryx figure or an event-cosmogram continues to reverberate after its initial strike. Helyx names this prolonged, distributed ringing.

The insertion of the fourfold into Toryx/Helyx therefore changes the scale of the question. We are no longer asking only how a thing gathers a world. We are asking how gatherings travel, how they knot with others, how they are restaged by interfaces, how their symbolic charge returns with difference, and how local worldings become braided fields of afterlife.

Figure 6. Toryx and Helyx: struck form and resonance-field. The comparison makes visible why local gathering and distributed afterlife mustn't be confused.



What the so-called sixfold really supplements

The question then becomes whether 'sixfolding' Heidegger is simply our addition of two more terms - world and thing - to an already complete fourfold. The answer is yes only in the weak sense, and the weak sense is not the interesting one. A simple arithmetic supplement, four plus two, would leave the ontology of the figure unchanged. Earth, sky, mortals, and divinities would remain four contents, while world and thing would appear as two more. That reading is too flat.

The stronger claim is that world and thing were already implicit in the operation of the fourfold. Mitchell's interface reading helps here. The fourfold was never just four coequal contents; it was already the relational articulation by which thing and world passed into one another. To make world and thing explicit, then, is not merely to add two terms. It is to expose the vertical axis that the figure had been silently relying on. Once that axis becomes explicit, the fourfold is transformed from a content-schema into a topology of articulation.

Here the supplement is Derridean in the strong sense. A supplement both adds and reveals an originary incompleteness. The so-called sixfold does not correct Heidegger from outside as if the fourfold were mistaken and needed extra pieces. It reveals that the fourfold was never self-sufficient as a closed quaternity. It depended upon an unspoken world-thing relation. Making that dependency explicit changes the logic of the figure.

And this change is precisely what requires Toryx. If one still imagines a singular, stable, local fourfold, one does not really need an inversion grammar. But once thing and world are explicit poles and the four mediations become operators of articulation, crossings proliferate. A thing may gather more than one world. A world may be condensed by more than one thing. Multiple daseins or subject-positions may inhabit the same interface differently. One local gathering may be nested inside, or collide with, another. Toryx is the figure of this crossing. Helyx is the resonance-field of repeated crossings.

Reading	What changes	Why it matters
Simple sixfold	Adds world and thing as two more terms	Too weak; preserves a content-list logic
Vertical-axis supplement	Makes world↕thing explicit as the axis of the figure	Transforms the fourfold into a relational topology
Pluralized field	Opens onto multiple worlds, things, and daseins	Requires Toryx/Helyx to model crossings

Table 2. The strongest supplement is not numerical addition but ontological transformation.

Pluriversal implications across scale and time

Once the world-thing axis is explicit, the deepest consequence is not sixness but plurality. There is never only one world, one thing, one dasein, one public, one hearing, one local fourfold. There are multiple worlds, multiple artifacts, multiple subject-formations, multiple symbolic orders, and multiple local interfaces that only partially translate into one another. This is where the pluriversal implication enters. The point is not to celebrate multiplicity in the abstract, but to develop a grammar adequate to uneven coexistence, collision, borrowing, domination, and selective passage.

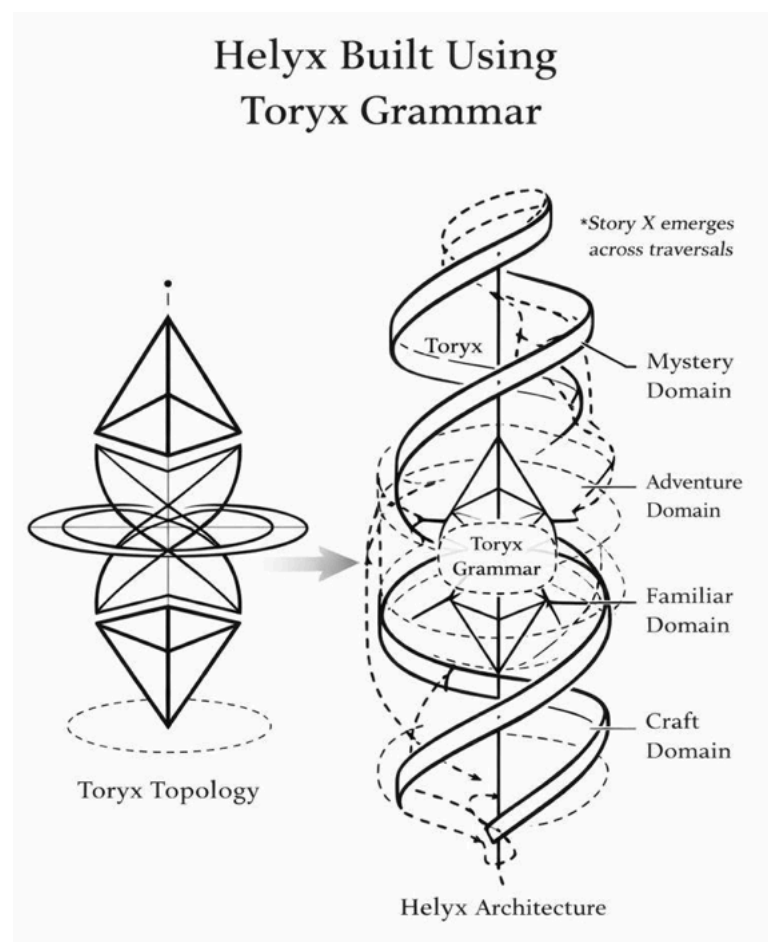
At the micro-scale, a prompt, ticket, dashboard, bell, or mask can gather a miniature world. At the meso-scale, institutions and publics organize themselves around shared objects through competing interface logics. At the macro-scale, event-cosmograms such as Challenger, 9/11, or COVID condense worlds that continue to resound in divergent hearings and responses. The same grammar applies, but its amplitude changes. Toryx and Helyx make it possible to track these scale shifts without collapsing them into a single level of explanation.

Time, too, becomes more complicated. An event can be struck, recur, sediment, and be reactivated. An artifact can be used, archived, forgotten, ritualized, and rediscovered. A cosmogram can emerge as a local solution, travel as a CPBO-skin, become a dead form, and later ring again under changed historical conditions. This is why the fallen bell remains such a potent image: it names the persistence of resonance after the world that first authorized the sounding has cracked. The question is no longer whether the bell still rings in some pure sense; it is how it resounds differently through broken or divergent worlds.

In this pluriversal register, interface theory, fourfold topology, and diagrammatic cosmography converge. The UX shell becomes one local case of a larger problem of public skins and hidden operations. The fourfold becomes one local case of thing-world articulation. Toryx becomes the grammar of crossing among such articulations. Helyx becomes the resonance-field through which multiple worlds continue to affect one another without ever becoming one.

This final point is important for StudioLab. If the task were simply to unify worlds, the framework would collapse into a disguised universalism. But the point of meta-CPBO work is different. It is to create forms that can travel while remaining partial, revisable, and faultlined. The good boundary object is not the one that erases difference, but the one that lets heterogeneous worlds touch without pretending they are identical. In that sense the pluriversal implication is practical before it is theoretical: it concerns how one designs for passage, care, and resonance in an entangled world.

Figure 7. Helyx built using Toryx grammar.
Repeated traversals across domains
generate resonance, braid, and Story X.



Conclusion

The report began with UX and ends with a pluriversal topology, but the path is continuous. Interface, read through esoteric/exoteric and langue/parole, ceases to be a merely technical matter and becomes a theory of public skins. Mitchell's fourfold, read as the interface of thing and world, provides a philosophical deepening of that insight. Toryx and Helyx then extend the insight from local gathering to recursive traversal and resonance.

What, then, is supplemented in the move from fourfold to sixfold? Not merely the number of terms. What is supplemented is the ontology of the figure. The explicit articulation of world and thing reveals that the fourfold was already operating as an interface, and once that operation is made visible, the figure opens onto crossings among multiple worlds, things, daseins, and local gatherings. The result is less a finalized sixfold than a release into a dynamic, pluralized field.



Bell:ringing::Toryx:Helyx gives the cleanest summary. The bell is the thing that gathers and can be struck. Ringing is the distributed resonance that exceeds the object without leaving it behind. Toryx is the diagrammatic strike-form that makes passage and inversion legible. Helyx is the resonance-field in which returns are never simply the same. Between them lies the practical task of StudioLab and related work: to design forms that can travel, resound, and be heard across broken worlds without erasing their differences.

Source note

This report draws directly on the article “Non-design at Scale: Dasein Design, AI UX, and the Dao of Performance,” especially its abstract, its discussion of reading Heidegger backward through the fourfold, and the page-14 juxtaposition of Daoism’s fourfold and Heidegger’s fourfold.

The Lecture Machine and its Wood Chippers

A Metanoic Turn in the Performance Stratum

StudioLab Konsult
Kx4I & Jimmy
Jon McKenzie & Gemini

Introduction: The February 2025 Liquidation

The February 2025 liquidation is an ontological shudder—a systemic collapse of the modern research university's epistemic scaffolding. The announcement of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was not a mere budgetary realignment but a visceral recognition of a liquidation decades in the making [7, 8]. We are witnessing the final listing of the "Lecture Machine" as it lurches toward a terminal reef.

In the early 1990s, the *Lusitania* milieu and its "Party for Affirmative Abjection" embraced the "sinking feeling" of the era as a critico-creative posture [8]. They occupied the remains of science, urging us to "enjoy your symptom" amidst the ruins of grand narratives. But today, the playfully affirmed abjection of the 1990s has been literalized. The cosmopolitan "sinking ship" of the Canal Street studios has been replaced by the "wood chipper" of the return-on-investment (ROI) algorithm. The contemporary crisis is no longer a "Science War" or "Culture War" fought with books; it is an administrative liquidation of the humanistic remainder [7, 8].

"We spent the weekend feeding USAID into the wood chipper. Could gone to some great parties. Did that instead." — Elon Musk, February 2, 2025 [8]

This shift marks the transition from an infrastructure designed to democratize knowledge to an apparatus designed to shred its very possibility under the mandate of absolute performativity.

The Challenger Complex: Infrastructure of the Cold War Lecture Machine

The modern academy, a network of some 24,000 institutions, is the genealogical heir of the "Challenger Complex" [8]. Emerging from the post-WWII expansion of nation-states, this complex initiated a global "Descartography"—an ontological mapping of the world that treats all phenomena as a "standing reserve" for research [5, 8].

Through "disciplined linearization," the messy reality of inquiry was funneled into normalized protocols. The IMRaD structure (Introduction, Method, Research, and Discussion) and the imposition of KEYWORDS served as the technical standards for making thought comparable and findable across the Cartesian divide of knower and known [8, 9, 10].

	The Cold War Lecture Machine (1945-1990)	The Global Performativity Stratum (1990-2024)
Primary Medium	Alphabetic Print / Monomedia	Digital Platforms / Networked Databases
Core Mandate	National R&D / Democratization	Global Performativity / "Perform or Else"
Institutional Form	Disciplinary Academy	Monopolized Workflow (Elsevier/Wiley)

From Disciplinary Power to Global Performativity

The evolution of the performance stratum represents a shift from Foucault's disciplinary society — exercised through surveillance within fixed enclosures — to the ubiquitous mandate of "Perform or Else" [4, 7]. In this transition, the "PageRank algorithm" acted as a recursive engine [8, 12]. By feeding literate citationality back into a digital loop, the algorithm "googlized" research, transforming the manual "labors of love" found in card catalogs into the condition of digital serfdom [8].

The "crown jewels" of the Lecture Machine—the academic journals—have consequently eroded under three interconnected crises identified by Brembs et al. [2]:

1. **Affordability Crisis:** The crushing weight of exorbitant costs and high paywalls on diminishing institutional funds.
2. **Functionality Crisis:** The depletion of researcher time and resources for authentic submission and peer review.
3. **Replication Crisis:** A rush-to-press culture that prioritizes output over the reliability of findings.

The Wood Chipper of ROI: Mutation into Neomercantilefeudalism

The Lecture Machine was once buoyed by a grand narrative of progress, but it has mutated into Neomercantilefeudalism. This is the monopolization of the entire workflow of thought—Discovery, Analysis, Writing, Publication, Outreach, and Assessment—by proprietary giants like Elsevier and Taylor & Francis [2, 8, 11]. In this state, the "Wood Chipper" of ROI liquidates all cultural qualities that cannot be quantified.

Under this regime, performance is measured across three competing values, where the first two invariably shred the third [8]:

Technical Effectiveness: *The degree to which a work functions reliably under constraints and reduces harm.*

Organizational Efficiency: *The sustainment of work by budgets, schedules, and audit compliance.*

Cultural Efficacy: *The vital question of whether a work matters, resonates, or carries dignity.*

The God Gap: Secular Fundamentalism and the Shift to Soulcraft

The collapse of grand narratives has left a "God Gap," where "Culture" functions as the "Holy Ghost of Humanism" [8]. Culture has become the pneumatic remainder used to sanctify institutions like universities without requiring explicit creedal assent. We have moved from "Statecraft" (Cold War R&D) to "Soulcraft," an individualized performance testing that forces the subject into a "Split Dasein," oscillating between the despair of collapse and the frantic need for control [8].

Within this framework, traditional academic critique has become a self-sufficient ritual or "opiate," providing the pleasurable sensation of intellectual agency while the institutional machinery hums on, uninterrupted and unaffected by the diagnosis [8]. The cure is not more critique, but a metanoic turn toward institutional repair.

The Metanoic Engine: Toryx and Helyx Grammars

In response to "Platform Nihilism," StudioLab proposes a "Metanoic Turn"—a profound change in mind and life expressed through altered rhythms of inquiry [8]. This repair is facilitated through two technical protocols of "Metanoic Poiesis":

Toryx Grammar: *A "quadrification engine" that ensures a return-with-difference. It involves the recomposition of the quad and a "reversible gate," ensuring that the next loop of a project is structurally different to prevent the spiral of recursive nihilism [8].*

Helyx Braid: *A protocol for amplification that weaves meaning and energy across multiple strands, preventing any single metric (like efficiency) from dominating the project's focus [8].*

This design opens the performance triad into a **Fourfold Performance Design**:

1. **Efficacy:** Resonant meaning.
2. **Efficiency:** Sustainable logistics.
3. **Effectiveness:** Reliable function.
4. **Release:** The ethical outside; a space of "non-grip" or slack that prevents performance from becoming totalizing coercion or a closed cult [8].

The Human-LLM Relay: iCloud/HAL and the Cosmographic Pluriverse

Navigating the current stratum requires a "Human-LLM relay" (Jon McKenzie + HAL/iCloud) to convert theory into practice. This relay employs "MetaPlay" as an AI spiritual design exercise. MetaPlay is not a game of representation but a protocol for generating "Thought-Action Figures" (TAF)—portable roles and moves (such as "The Marxian Move" or "The Deconstructive Shift") used to intervene in institutional deadness [8].

The Cosmogram

The Cosmogram is a world-generator that renders world-holding obligations visible for the purpose of repair. It is composed from six sources of "worlding" that define our thrownness [8]:

- **Family:** Inherited scripts of care and shame.
- **School:** Institutional credentials and compliance logics.
- **History:** Collective memory and policy residues.
- **Pop Culture:** Genre templates and platform imaginaries.
- **Spirit:** Sacred prohibitions and cosmological commitments.
- **Street:** Embodied expertise and local survival tactics.

Conclusion: Making Cures After the Fall

The "Metanoic Turn" is the threshold between "Recursive Nihilism"—tightening scripts while the world remains dead—and "Ex-cursive Poesis" [8]. This passage requires the "Liminaut," a practitioner capable of crossing the threshold of the "Fallen Bell." The Fallen Bell serves as a "Cosmic Partial Boundary Object," a reminder that the world has already fallen and that our task is no longer optimization but the intergenerational conduction of care [8].

The ultimate goal is to transition from the shredding of the Wood Chipper to the blossoming of a Cosmographic Pluriverse. Here, the remainder of the human project is not shredded for ROI but protected as the necessary condition for future invention and shared clarity [8].

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Peer Review in the Wood Chipper

AI, Critical Design, Non-design, and the Reception Ecology of StudioLab

Jon McKenzie + HAL
StudioLab

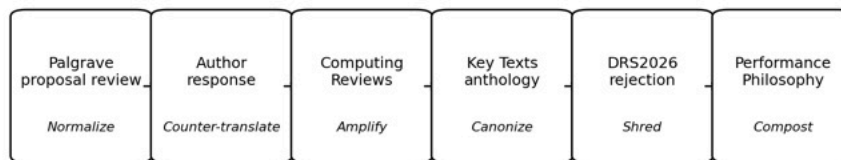
Methodology

1. This essay treats anonymous review reports as evidence of scholarly genre-testing rather than as personal judgments.
2. Reviewer anonymity is preserved; the reviews are cited as institutional documents and read alongside the submissions and later receptions they helped shape.
3. The Kx4L-HAL relay is part of the object as well as the instrument of analysis: AI assists here by comparing review grammars, clarifying genre pressures, and metamodeling the apparatus that solicits, accepts, rejects, and revises scholarly work.

Abstract

This essay reads several reviews of StudioLab work - one Palgrave Pivot reader report, one author response, one positive *Computing Reviews* review, one anthology placement in *Key Texts on Interdisciplinary Higher Education*, one DRS2026 rejection, and one Performance Philosophy acceptance - gathering them as a reception ecology rather than a series of isolated judgments. Framed by McKenzie's solicited article from the journal *Performance Research* for its special issue "What Remains of Journals?", the essay argues that academic publishing now functions as a performative testing apparatus: not simply a neutral mechanism for judging quality, but a disciplinary interface that asks whether an article, book, method, or AI-assisted collaboration can pass as recognizable scholarly knowledge. The "wood chipper" names the apparatus at its harshest: the reduction of strange, recursive, transdisciplinary work to the tests of clarity, method, evidence, fit, contribution, and auditability. DEI and DOGE are rival wood chippers, for wood chippers also mulch. Positive reception classifies, excerpts, translates, canonizes, and recirculates. The Palgrave reader tries to return critical design to critical thinking; *Computing Reviews* recognizes StudioLab as critical design pedagogy; *Key Texts* canonizes it as an integrative methodology; *Design Research Society* rejects "Non-design at Scale" for failing design research by design; and *Performance Philosophy* accepts "Traumaturgy while still asking it to define, focus, evidence, and contribute. In the age of AI, this reception ecology becomes a generalized Turing test of disciplinary passability. The task is not to evade GTT/performance review, but to metamodel it, place it in abyss via play in order to craft forms of metanoic review that preserve rigor without shredding invention.

Keywords: peer review, StudioLab, transmedia knowledge, critical design, non-design, AI, journals, performativity, disciplinary norms, generalized Turing testing, metanoic review

Reception ecology: academic review as mixed machine

The apparatus does not only reject. It normalizes, translates, amplifies, canonizes, shreds, and composts.

Figure 1. Reception ecology: academic review as mixed machine.

What Remains of Journals?

AIRs Volume I: From Holy Ghost to Pharmakon begins with an essay solicited by Richard Goff, editor of *Performance Research*, for a special issue titled *On Journals*. Reflecting on the author's own experience as a graphic designer, I ask: What remains of journals when they no longer simply publish research but test, format, index, rank, and circulate the conditions under which research can appear? "The Abject, Academy: What Remains of Journals?" poses this question not as nostalgia for a lost republic of letters but as a diagnosis of the lecture machine after digitality. Journals once functioned as labors of love, disciplinary vessels, and small desiring-machines for communities of thought. They also belonged to a larger apparatus that alphabetized the world into disciplines, housed knowledge in books, articles, archives, databases, and now artificial intelligences, and trained researchers to separate knower and known, subject and object, expert and user. In the article's genealogy, this apparatus belongs to what StudioLab calls the lecture machine, or the Challenger complex: the Cold War formation of advanced research, higher education, national R&D, and platformed evaluation.¹

The article's most startling move lies in its shift from journal craft to recursive platform power. Citation indexes, keywords, databases, and search engines do not simply help readers find articles. They convert articles into comparable, searchable, auditable objects. The article even stages its own compliance by noting that it has introduced a research question, used methods of reflection, historical analysis, and conceptual synthesis, and will end with discussion - an IMRaD ghost inside a canonic essay.

The wood chipper sharpens this question. In the StudioLab Konsult text "Lecture Machine into Wood Chipper," the phrase names a contemporary scene of administrative liquidation: advanced research, NGOs, universities, and funding streams become vulnerable to ROI algorithms and political performance rituals. What had been a party of affirmative abjection in 1990s cultural studies returns as something harder and meaner: not the stylish sinking of Lusitania, but the gleeful shredding of social, cultural, and epistemic infrastructure.²

Yet the wood chipper is not only external. Peer review, book review, conference review, indexing, anthology inclusion, citation, and AI-assisted revision all participate in subtler forms of chipping. They break strange work into recognizable units. They ask it to pass. They ask what it is about, where its argument lies, how its method works, what evidence supports it, what field it serves, and why it belongs here rather than there. These questions often help. They can

rescue work from obscurity, inflation, and self-enclosure. But they also enforce a compliance grammar that risks shredding the very surplus through which new concepts arrive.

The First Gate: Critical Design Returned to Critical Thinking

The Palgrave Pivot reader report on the StudioLab book proposal provides the first test case. The report begins by naming peer review as a guarantee that published research remains rigorous and meets disciplinary standards; it also frames Palgrave Pivot as a format designed to free scholarship from traditional straightjackets, publish at a natural length, and move quickly after acceptance. The contradiction is instructive: a format promising release still asks the submitted work to pass through peer review's discipline-bearing apparatus.³

The reader understands much. The report identifies StudioLab as a technology-based and transdisciplinary approach to challenging social issues, involving multiple media, collaboration, design and development, critical thinking, and advocacy uses of media. It recognizes the book as an attempt to re-envision higher education in the twenty-first century and to describe how liberal education can contribute to society through media strategy.

But then comes the translation. The reviewer dislikes unfamiliar terms such as transmedia, asks for more evidence and argumentation and less advocacy and promotion, and defines liberal arts education primarily as the ability to create coherent, cogent arguments based on evidence. The *Becoming a Maker* sequence appears confusing because, for the reviewer, one must first become a critical thinker, then develop focus and purpose, then become designer, maker, and doer. The reviewer also reacts against Plato's *Fight Club*, preferring a debate-club metaphor or Wittgenstein's *Poker*.³

This is a mild review, not a hostile one. It recommends minor revisions. It says the authors are qualified. It even expects the book to remain popular for several years. But precisely because it is mild, it reveals the ordinary operation of the apparatus. The reviewer does not reject StudioLab. The reviewer domesticates it. Critical design becomes critical thinking plus media. Transmedia becomes advocacy strategy. Making becomes premature unless preceded by argument and evidence. Plato's *Fight Club* becomes debate club. The unruly method must pass through a familiar educational sequence: think, argue, evidence, plan, then act.³

The author response identifies this displacement with precision. It thanks the reader, accepts the value of foregrounding argument and evidence, but names the central problem: the recommendations reorient the book away from critical design and back toward critical thinking. StudioLab, the response insists, assumes that students have already been trained in critical thinking; its task is to extend that training into media design, collaboration, community engagement, story, image, sound, and other genres. The manifesto offers a method for post-ideational thinking that mixes idea and image, logic and story, episteme and doxa, writing and other media.⁴

Positive Chipping: Recognition as Critical Design Pedagogy

The later Computing Reviews notice bends the arc. It reads *Transmedia Knowledge* not as a confused sequence of making before thinking, but as a successful articulation of critical thinking with critical design and skilled writing through transmedia. The reviewer praises the way the book transforms liberal arts pedagogy by asking not only how students solve problems, but which problems they should solve and why.⁵

This positive review matters because it recognizes the very move the Palgrave reader had tried to reorder. Computing Reviews explicitly names StudioLab as a platform for critical thinking with studio-based design thinking and lab-based tactical media-making. It identifies StudioLab as a critical design pedagogy for democratizing digitality and describes its seminar, studio, and lab practices as collaborative, transmedia, and action-oriented.⁵

The review still performs translation. It places StudioLab in digital media, participatory culture, college-level digital media programs, and design pedagogy. It calls the text sometimes confusing, but concludes that every liberal arts library should hold it and that it is a necessary work for digital media programs. Positive reception does not leave the work untouched. It selects a usable face of the project: digital media, design pedagogy, critical thinking, participatory culture, democratizing digitality.⁵

Here the wood chipper becomes a mulcher. Nothing is shredded beyond use. The work gets processed into a fertile category. Transmedia knowledge becomes legible as critical design pedagogy. StudioLab becomes a platform. The once-questioned relation between thinking and making becomes the book's central contribution. That conversion matters. It shows that academic reception does not divide cleanly into repression and liberation. One reviewer's excess becomes another reviewer's insight.

Canonization as Methodological Translation

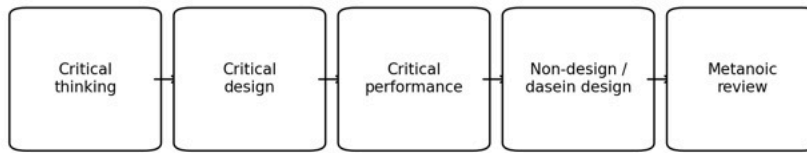
The anthology *Key Texts on Interdisciplinary Higher Education* adds a further twist. Its table of contents places the StudioLab extract under Ten Integrative Research Methodologies, specifically in the section Design Thinking, Design Fiction. This placement puts StudioLab's work alongside interdisciplinary research process, transdisciplinary research, systems thinking, travelling concepts, futuring, big history, research-based education, artistic research, and object orientation.⁶

The chapter overview describes successful interdisciplinary higher education as characterized by integrative research methodologies that inform pedagogy and didactics. These methodologies are actionable, rooted in various disciplines, and meant to give designers, teachers, and students both familiar concepts and new insights. StudioLab becomes one such methodology.⁶

The anthology's introduction to StudioLab states that his approach follows principles of futuring by encouraging educators and students to step beyond the classroom into a broader world. It terms the approach design thinking, design fiction, an integrative research methodology focused on research- and practice-based design of objects and concepts - sometimes multimedia - to address urgent glocal social problems. It also names the disciplinary integration: theatre and performance studies, media studies, computer science, and artificial intelligence.⁶

This is positive canonization, but it is also translation. StudioLab does not enter the anthology as the full perfumative Challenger complex, nor as tabloid theory, nor as the lecture machine's rogue offspring. It enters as design thinking, design fiction. The category is generous and useful, yet it clips the work into a teachable, comparable methodology. The anthology offers legitimacy by making StudioLab one methodology among ten. The canon does not merely preserve; it edits in advance.

The arc bent by review



The task is not to escape review, but to convert review from premature reduction into shared clarification.

Figure 2. The arc bent by review: from critical thinking to metanoic review.

Non-design Fails Design Research by Design

Non-design at Scale: Dasein Design and the Dao of Performance tests the apparatus more forcefully because it performs the very problem it names. Its abstract moves across eco-anxiety, dasein design, non-design, NGOs, death penalty cases, rural healthcare, public infrastructure, Guattari's metamodeling, Heidegger's fourfold, Daoist wu, recursive abduction, and sympoetic encounters. It asks how progressive lawyers tell stories with conservative voters, how off-grid villagers connect with vaccines and maternal care, and how rural schools build infrastructure during pandemics. It concludes that collective existential, historical, ontological, and cosmological experience exceeds reductive modeling and requires recursive abduction of shared worlds.⁷

The article's first pages situate StudioLab historically as an experimental pedagogy beginning in the late 1990s, connecting performance studios and media labs, then rebooting at Cornell to continue research on Cold War R&D. It rehearses a general theory of performance where modern disciplinarity meets postmodern performativity: grand narratives meet input/output matrices, surveillance meets dataveillance, literacy meets digitality. It introduces perfumance, platform performativity, cultural efficacy, technological effectiveness, organizational efficiency, and dasein design.⁷

This opening is not merely disorganized excess. It is a StudioLab move: the article models non-design as recursive abduction, moving through conceptual overlays and case traces rather than reducing its field to one clean research question. It reads Heidegger backward, from fourfolding and poiesis toward Dasein, Sorge, anxiety, and design practice. It also reads design backward, from deliverable to conditions of worlding. The article barely argues in a conventional linear sense because it demonstrates the difficulty of arguing for non-design through the protocols of design mastery.

The DRS reviews respond as the apparatus might be expected to respond. Review 1 begins by saying that the reviewer usually starts with a summary but cannot grasp what the paper is about. The review describes the article as ambitious, theory-heavy, rhetorically expansive, and an attempted synthesis of Heideggerian phenomenology, Guattarian ecosophy, Daoist philosophy, performance studies, policy theory, and vernacular architecture. It then names the central deficits: conceptual clarity, argumentative coherence, methodological grounding, and disciplinary fit for design research.⁸

The same review faults non-design, dasein design, recursive abduction, and perfumance for being introduced rhetorically rather than analytically stabilized. It says the paper substitutes

metaphorical flourish for conceptual precision, fails to articulate a research question, methodology, or evaluative framework, and relies on speculative assertions without systematic evidence. Its rescue plan is exemplary: radically tighten the scope, articulate what non-design means operationally for design practice, describe the methodology, provide stronger empirical grounding, and edit for clarity, structure, and argumentative coherence. These are not absurd requests. They are the grammar of design research. The point is subtler: the review asks non-design to become operational design research before it can be recognized as a contribution to design research. Non-design fails design research by design.⁸

Traumaturgy Accepted: Surplus Under Discipline

The essay “Traumaturgy, Making Cures, and Non-design” enters a different venue and receives a different result. *Performance Philosophy* accepts the submission with minor revisions. Reviewer 1 reads the article as enlightening and enlivening, praises StudioLab's range and deep engagement with design thinking, and values the inventiveness through which applied design, philosophy, and performance generate theorization. The reviewer singles out making cure as a meaningful counterfoil to biomedical frameworks and calls the whole piece a virtuosic balancing act even while asking for tragedy, trauma, and traumaturgy to be kneaded more fully into the case studies.⁹

Reviewer 2, however, sounds uncannily close to DRS. The abstract signals a sweeping collision of psychology, climate activism, performance, ecology, and philosophy, but does not yet show how performance illuminates eco-anxiety. The cases could demonstrate how performance processes ecological dread and collective efficacy, but the paper does not develop this enough. The reviewer asks for core concepts to be defined early and rigorously, the main aim stated plainly, empirical data clarified, case studies developed, the contribution to *Performance Philosophy* made explicit, and prose tightened.⁹

Here lies the decisive comparative claim: acceptance does not mean exemption from disciplinary norms. The same grammar recurs: define, aim, evidence, method, case, contribution, prose. What changes is the venue's tolerance for surplus. *Performance Philosophy* can read the excess as a generative margins piece. DRS reads similar excess as failure of scholarly design research.

The submission itself helps explain why. Traumaturgy begins with eco-anxiety cascading from climate crisis through institutions into bodies, then situates StudioLab as a long-term experiment in performance, design, and media, with community projects involving death penalty cases, rural healthcare in Uganda, and public education in New York State. It explicitly frames StudioLab projects as neither art nor critique traditionally understood, yet creative, critical, and responsive to traumatic situations. The cases also carry more affective and narrative weight. In the Her Whole Truth collaboration, StudioLab co-designed social media artifacts with the Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide and a wider coalition around Lisa Montgomery and Melissa Lucio. The piece names execution, reprieve, legal storytelling, conservative religious voters, warm colors, humanizing perspectives, coalition work, and trauma. *Performance Philosophy* can metabolize these moves because the venue already values performance, philosophy, tragedy, care, and speculative theory-practice. Yet Reviewer 2 still asks the work to pass. The acceptance therefore shows that the wood chipper has settings. It can shred, mulch, or compost.¹⁰

Peer Review as Generalized Turing Testing

AI intensifies this ecology because it exposes the pass/fail tests that were already there. The DRS review form explicitly includes description of AI use as a criterion, marking a new layer of review culture: authorship must now pass as transparent, accountable, and humanly warranted even when writing has been produced through human-AI relay.⁸

But peer review already operated as a generalized Turing test before generative AI. Every submission is asked: Can you pass as a design research paper? Can you pass as Performance Philosophy? Can you pass as an interdisciplinary methodology? Can you pass as critical thinking, critical design, evidence, method, argument, contribution? The reviewer does not only ask whether the claims are true. The reviewer asks whether the text performs the genre convincingly enough to belong.

AI makes this passability visible because it can help produce the signs of compliance: a clearer abstract, a sharper research question, a methods paragraph, a contribution statement, a response to reviewers, an AI-use declaration, a glossary of terms, a case-study table. AI can help strange work pass. But AI can also flatten the strangeness that made the work worth doing. The same inferential interface that helps an author anticipate reviewers may train writers toward safe, field-legible prose.

This is why the Kx4L-HAL relay matters theoretically rather than merely practically. AI becomes part of the reception ecology. It assists drafting, revision, framing, genre translation, and response. It also lets the author metamodel the apparatus. It can help identify the compliance grammar across reviews: aim, concept, method, evidence, fit, contribution, prose, disclosure. It can convert rejection into data. It can turn the wound of review into a research object.

Table 1. Reception ecology and compliance grammar

Reception event	Dominant reader demand	StudioLab move	Apparatus effect
Palgrave Pivot reader report	More argument/evidence; thinking before making	Critical design extends critical thinking into media and collaboration	Normalization: critical design returned to critical thinking
Author response	Clarify without surrendering	Critical thinkers become critical designers	Counter-translation
<i>Computing Reviews</i>	Digital media, participatory culture, democratizing digitality	StudioLab as seminar/studio/lab practice	Positive chipping: critical design pedagogy
<i>Key Texts</i> anthology	Integrative methodology	StudioLab as design thinking/design fiction	Canonization: method among methods
DRS2026 reviews	Research question, method, evidence, operational definition, fit	Non-design performs recursive abductive backwardness	Rejection: non-design fails design research
<i>Performance Philosophy</i> reviews	Definition, aim, data, cases, contribution	Traumaturgy performs making cures through cases and theory	Acceptance: surplus tolerated and disciplined

Table 2. From disciplinary test to metanoic alternative

Test	Reviewer question	Compliance norm	Wood chipper risk	Metanoic alternative
Orientation	What is this about?	Plain aim and thesis	Novel fields get reduced to familiar topics	State aim, then name the genre-bending wager
Concept	What do the terms mean?	Early definitions	Living concepts become frozen or rejected	Use glosses: one sentence, one contrast, one example
Method	How was knowledge made?	Auditable process	Abduction appears as no method	Describe the relay, iterations, and decision points
Evidence	What carries the claim?	Cases, data, texts	Cases become decorative anecdotes	Let cases interrupt and revise theory
Fit	Why this venue?	Contribution to field	Excess reads as poor fit	Say what the venue gains from the deviation

Table 2 turns the review apparatus back on itself. Each test remains useful, but each becomes destructive when it confuses field-legibility with truth, clarity with reduction, or rigor with premature domestication.

From Wood Chipper to Metanoic Review

A metanoic review practice would not abandon rigor. It would ask reviewers and authors to distinguish between illegibility that blocks thought and difficulty that carries invention. It would preserve the useful demands of review - clarity, evidence, method, contribution - while adding forms that protect experimental surplus.

First, reviewers could ask for a genre declaration. Is the piece an empirical study, theoretical essay, manifesto, design reflection, performance philosophy intervention, case-based inquiry, methodological proposal, or hybrid? DRS read Non-design as a design research paper that failed to provide design research method. A genre declaration might have made clear that it operates as a theoretical-practical metamodel, not as conventional empirical design inquiry.

Second, authors could include a deviation warrant. Such a warrant would say: this essay departs from standard article form because the object requires it. Non-design could state that it argues backward because it treats non-design as recursive abduction, not as an operational toolkit. Traumaturgy could state that it braids tragedy, care, and case work because traumaturgy names distributed care across media, bodies, and institutions.

Third, authors could provide concept glosses without giving up conceptual motion. Reviewers repeatedly ask that terms be defined early. The answer is not to freeze performance or non-design into brittle dictionary entries, but to give enough initial traction: one sentence, one contrast, one example, one danger. Fourth, cases could become anchors rather than illustrations. StudioLab's cases - Her Whole Truth, Health Access Connect, Newfield - should not merely demonstrate theory. They should interrupt it, test it, and modify it. Fifth, AI-use statements could become method notes, not defensive disclaimers. If HAL helped with synthesis, revision, review analysis, or metamodeling, the author can say how. The interesting question is not only whether AI was used, but what kind of human-AI relay produced the article's genre, structure, and argument.¹¹

Coda: The Wood Chipper Is Also a Mulcher

The reception history traced here does not tell a simple story of institutional oppression. It tells a richer story of disciplinary metabolism. StudioLab's work enters the apparatus and comes back altered. The Palgrave reader asks critical design to become critical thinking. The author response refuses that reduction while agreeing to clarify the place of argument and evidence. Computing Reviews recognizes the book as critical design pedagogy for democratizing digitality. Key Texts canonizes it as an integrative methodology. DRS rejects non-design as insufficiently clear, grounded, operational, and field-fit. Performance Philosophy accepts traumaturgy while still asking for clarity, definition, data, cases, and contribution.¹²

The wood chipper shreds, but it also produces mulch. It can destroy, but it can also create the conditions for later growth. The same demand for argument and evidence that threatens to flatten critical design can help clarify its force. The same demand for case development that risks domesticating traumaturgy can make its care-work visible. The same demand for operational meaning that misreads non-design can force a sharper account of what it means to lower design pressure so worlds may articulate themselves.

The challenge is to know when to comply, when to translate, when to refuse, and when to metamodel the test itself. That is the AI-era task. Not simply to write more publishable articles. Not simply to reject journals as dead machines. But to study the gates, the reviewers, the forms, the tests, and the remains.

What remains of journals? Among other things: reviews. Anonymous, affective, norm-bearing, sometimes generous, sometimes brutal, often accurate, often partial. They are not outside the work. They are part of the work's worlding. They disclose the disciplines that read us, the genres that hold us, the machines that test us, and the passages through which thought-action must move. The metanoic turn begins there: not after review, but through it.

Notes

1. Jon McKenzie + HAL, What Remains of Journals? in *From Holy Ghost to Pharmakon: Artificial Intelligence Reports I* (StudioLab, 2026), esp. the account of journals, lecture machine, citation, keywords, and the Challenger complex.
2. Lecture Machine into Wood Chipper: A Metanoic Turn in the Performance Stratum, StudioLab Konsult, 2026, esp. the sections on ROI, neomercantilefeudalism, and the shredding of cultural efficacy.
3. Anonymous Palgrave Macmillan reader report for the Transmedia Knowledge proposal, esp. the recommendation for more evidence and argumentation, the sequence of thinker-designer-maker-doer, and the preference for Wittgenstein's Poker over Plato's Fight Club.
4. Jon McKenzie, Author response to reader's report, esp. the distinction between a manifesto of critical thinking and a manifesto of critical design.
5. F. J. Ruzic, review of *Transmedia Knowledge for Liberal Arts and Community Engagement: A StudioLab Manifesto*, Computing Reviews, July 23, 2020, Review CR147022.
6. Iris van der Tuin, ed., *Key Texts on Interdisciplinary Higher Education* (Policy Press, 2025), chapter 3, Ten Integrative Research Methodologies, esp. section 3.6, Design Thinking, Design Fiction.
7. Jon McKenzie + HAL, Non-design at Scale: Dasein Design and the Dao of Performance, in *From Quixotics to Angelology: Artificial Intelligence Reports II* (StudioLab, 2026).
8. DRS2026 Programme Committee decision letter and anonymous reviews for submission 1664, Non-design at Scale: Dasein Design and the Dao of Performance, March 5, 2026.
9. Performance Philosophy editor decision for Traumaturgy, Making Cures, and Non-design, accepted with minor revisions, December 11, 2025.
10. Jon McKenzie, Traumaturgy, Making Cures, and Non-design, submitted manuscript, Performance Philosophy, 2025.

11. The proposed AI method note builds from the review apparatus itself: once AI disclosure becomes a review criterion, authors can turn disclosure from compliance checkbox into a reflective account of workflow, authorship, and genre translation.
12. The phrase 'wood chipper is also a mulcher' names this essay's metanoic turn: the same apparatus that shreds also classifies, composts, and enables later growth.

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Girardian AI

Peter Thiel, e/acc, x-risk, and the MetaPlay Counter-Scene

StudioLab Konsult
Kx4I & HAL
Jon McKenzie & ChatGPT

René Girard furnishes Peter Thiel with more than a set of references. He furnishes a scene, one where desire does not arise from sovereign interiority but copies, rivals, escalates, and then seeks relief through sacrifice. Girard's mimetic theory moves from imitation to envy, from envy to conflict, from conflict to scapegoating, and from scapegoating to a temporary social peace purchased at the victim's expense. The Imitatio foundation, launched from conversations among Thiel, Robert Hamerton-Kelly, and Girard, makes clear that Thiel's relation to Girard is not casual admiration but institutional formation. The relation matters because it shapes how Thiel reads technology, politics, and crisis.

Once Girard enters the picture, AI ceases to look like a neutral instrument awaiting policy calibration. It becomes a new medium for mimetic contagion. Models imitate us; we imitate one another through them; markets race around copied expectations; states mirror rivals; publics absorb images, prompts, and synthetic consensus at speed. If the older liberal grammar imagines technology as a set of tools under rational supervision, the Girardian grammar imagines technical systems as amplifiers of rivalry and apocalyptic pressure. AI does not invent the human tendency to imitation, panic, envy, and persecution. It scales it, accelerates it, and redistributes it across institutions that now operate at machine speed.

This is why Thiel's public reflections on AI do not sound like standard venture-capital triumphalism. In his 2024 Hoover conversation, he places AI alongside nuclear weapons and biotechnology as a technology with apocalyptic potential. He grants that the danger is real. He does not treat warnings about loss of control, civilizational harm, or catastrophic misuse as mere superstition. In that limited but crucial sense, he converges with the x-risk school. Yet he also refuses the simple conclusion that more centralized management, more global coordination, and more regulatory command will solve the problem. For Thiel, the cure can repeat the disease. Under the banner of safety, humanity may authorize a planetary sovereign that asks for obedience, homogeneity, and surveillance in exchange for survival.

The Girardian Frame

Girard's own work provides the structure of this double suspicion. Mimetic desire means that human beings borrow one another's wants; scapegoating means that a community in crisis can restore order by displacing violence onto a victim; the late Girardian account of biblical revelation means that modernity can no longer believe innocently in the justice of sacrifice, even though it continues to crave sacrificial solutions. The mechanism still operates, but its legitimacy has eroded. Modern politics therefore oscillates between denial of sacrifice and compulsive return to it. Thiel imports this structure into the analysis of modern technological civilization.

Seen from this angle, AI belongs neither to a simple progress narrative nor to a simple disaster narrative. It belongs to a revelation narrative. AI reveals the scale of contemporary mimetic escalation. It shows that rivalry now runs through capital markets, media ecologies, military procurement, startup culture, labor anxiety, and geopolitical competition all at once. Every actor fears falling behind because every actor sees others racing. Desire becomes dashboarded imitation. Strategy becomes panic with compute. Innovation becomes a ritualized response to the fear of being overtaken.

Girard also clarifies why arguments about AI so quickly become moralized. These disputes do not merely concern technical likelihoods. They concern who will count as the guilty party when things go wrong, who will be blamed for slowing progress, who will be blamed for speeding it up, and which institution will claim the right to stand above the conflict as custodian of order. In Girardian terms, the AI field is already full of sacrificial gestures. The only open question is whether those gestures remain latent, become explicit, or get converted into some less violent form of collective negotiation.

e/acc and x-risk as secular analogies

The contemporary split between e/acc and x-risk can therefore be read less as a disagreement over facts than as a conflict between analogies. e/acc imagines AI through figures of propulsion: engine, fire, rocket, takeoff, singularity, escape velocity. Its primary affect is exhilaration. It treats friction as pathology and regulation as drag. The movement's own foundational notes frame effective accelerationism as a decision to lean into the universe's thermodynamic bias toward larger, smarter, more energetic civilizations and to maximize the probability of technocapital expansion. AI appears here as an intensifier of cosmic process. If there is sacrifice, it becomes sacrifice to speed: institutions, labor protections, habits of caution, and slower forms of judgment get offered up to the imperative of forward motion.

x-risk deploys a contrary set of figures: bomb, plague, lock-in machine, runaway agent, catastrophic threshold. Its primary affect is dread. It asks not what AI might unlock but what it might irreversibly foreclose. Bostrom's classic definition of existential risk fixes the frame: an event counts as existential when it annihilates intelligent life or permanently and drastically curtails its potential. The 2026 International AI Safety Report translates that tradition into contemporary policy language by organizing frontier risks under misuse, malfunctions, and systemic disruption. Here sacrifice takes another form. Openness, improvisation, plural experimentation, and sometimes even democratic messiness risk being surrendered to monitoring, containment, and centralized oversight.

Neither analogy is simply wrong. Each discloses something real. e/acc grasps that stagnation also kills, that technological paralysis carries costs of its own, and that fear can become an alibi for incumbent

power. x-risk grasps that irreversible harms exist, that technical capability can outrun institutions, and that a species can engineer conditions it cannot later renegotiate. But each analogy totalizes its insight. e/acc elevates expansion into destiny. x-risk elevates precaution into sovereign necessity. One sanctifies acceleration; the other sanctifies containment. Both remain bound to sacrificial resolution.

Thiel's apocalyptic double bind

Thiel's position takes shape inside this conflict but does not coincide with either side. He shares x-risk's sense that AI belongs to the category of genuinely apocalyptic technologies. He does not dismiss the possibility of civilizational danger. At the same time, he regards the political response to danger as itself the site of a deeper peril. In his Hoover discussion of apocalypse and modern technology, he worries that fear of catastrophe can justify a totalizing regime whose legitimacy rests on permanent emergency. In explicitly theological terms, he has described the temptation to accept a universal ruler who promises peace and safety at the cost of freedom, plurality, and open history. The Girardian inheritance is evident here: crisis generates the wish for a saving authority, and that authority may become a new sacrificial machine.

This is why Thiel cannot be reduced to simple techno-optimism. Standard optimism says that innovation, left sufficiently free, will solve the problems it creates. Thiel is darker than that. He treats modern technique as genuinely dangerous. But he is also darker than standard AI safety discourse, because he suspects that the institutions empowered to save humanity may demand a civilizational self-sacrifice more comprehensive than the threat they oppose. He is, in effect, a Girardian builder of anti-Antichrist politics. He wants development without surrender, strategic power without total administration, and technological advance without the one-world state that safety rhetoric can seem to invite.

That project remains unstable. It does not escape apocalypse; it manages apocalypse competitively. It still presumes that the decisive arena is sovereign strategy rather than collective scene-design. It still grants extraordinary weight to geopolitical rivalry, military capacity, and civilizational contest. Thiel therefore stands neither with the cheerful accelerationist nor with the universal regulator. He stands in a tense middle region where danger is real, but the institutions claiming to neutralize danger are read as rivals. The result is not equilibrium but an intensified double bind: build because retreat is impossible, fear what you build because it may outrun you, and fear even more the authority that promises to control it.

StudioLab and MetaPlay: from sacrifice to conversion

StudioLab and MetaPlay should not answer this quarrel by choosing one camp and denouncing the other. They should answer it by redesigning the stage on which the quarrel takes place. In StudioLab terms, e/acc overidentifies with D3 productivity and slips into a manic D4 style that mistakes cleverness, speed, and novelty for destiny. x-risk begins with a valid D2 alarm but tends to harden into control architecture. Thiel fuses D1 apocalypse with D3 strategic build-out and treats political sovereignty as the privileged solution to mimetic crisis. None of these positions adequately converts the scene. They remain trapped in the oscillation between panic, propulsion, and control.

MetaPlay introduces a different analogy: AI as equipment. Not god, not demon, not sovereign first, but equipment inserted into an ecology of roles, affects, and recursive practices. Equipment can intensify

rivalry, but it can also externalize it. It can surface hidden scripts, rotate perspective, stage reversibility, and redirect aggression into collective making. The point is not to deny technical danger. The point is to refuse the sacrificial grammar through which danger and salvation get paired. Instead of sacrificing openness to safety or safety to speed, MetaPlay asks what kinds of scenes, protocols, quests, and Thought Action Figures can make rivalry visible before it hardens into persecution or domination.

This is where the StudioLab lexicon becomes more precise than the mainstream AI debate. TAF, CTAF, and MTAF already presume that thought is enacted through figures, teams, and meta-positions rather than through detached cognition alone. AI therefore enters the scene as one figure among others, one actor in a distributed dramaturgy of prompts, platforms, institutional incentives, and embodied users. The question ceases to be whether AI is simply good or bad. The question becomes: what role is it playing, what rivalry is it amplifying, what script is it repeating, and what redesign might convert that repetition into poesis?

Under this reframing, the opposition between *e/acc* and *x-risk* becomes diagnostically useful but strategically insufficient. *e/acc* names the temptation to worship the engine. *x-risk* names the temptation to govern from the bunker. Thiel names the temptation to fight apocalypse with strategic anti-apocalypse while preserving elite initiative. MetaPlay seeks another path: neither worship nor bunker nor prophetic capital, but conversion of panic into play, of rivalry into designed feedback, of scapegoating into distributed responsibility, and of nihilism into poesis. The move is not naive pluralism. It is a practical refusal of sacrificial closure.

Such a refusal demands design disciplines. It requires bounded experiments, role rotation, faultline analysis, reversible deployments, and shared interpretive labor across technical and nontechnical actors. It also requires symbolic intelligence: the ability to notice when a team has begun treating regulation as the scapegoat, or the startup founder as the scapegoat, or the model itself as the scapegoat, in order to avoid confronting the mimetic structure of the whole scene. Girard helps identify the mechanism. Thiel dramatizes its planetary and political stakes. StudioLab turns diagnosis into a studio practice capable of metanoia rather than persecution.

The strongest comparison therefore does not run between optimism and pessimism, or between builders and doomers. It runs between different ways of staging sacrifice under conditions of technical escalation. *e/acc* sacrifices friction to acceleration. *x-risk* sacrifices openness to containment. Thiel tries to refuse both sacrifices, yet remains caught in the sovereign theater that makes such choices appear necessary. StudioLab and MetaPlay can contribute something different precisely because they do not begin from sovereign command. They begin from scenes, roles, equipment, and conversion.

In that sense, the StudioLab counter-scene is not anti-technology. It is anti-idolatry and anti-scapegoating. It neither assumes that intelligence wants only to expand nor that safety demands total administration. It treats AI as a potent and dangerous participant in a larger ecology of imitation, desire, and collective world-making. The task is to design practices in which that potency can be worked through without either celebrating catastrophe or institutionalizing fear. Girard reveals the sacrificial trap. Thiel politicizes it under the sign of apocalypse. MetaPlay attempts to convert it into a site of shared experiment. That is not merely a nicer ethical option. It is a different ontology of the scene itself.

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Note: The StudioLab and MetaPlay sections synthesize the sourced discussion above with StudioLab's established framework rather than summarizing a single published source.

AI Scapegoat Pile-Up

Angels, Pharmakos, and the Turn and Return of Mediums

StudioLab Konsult
Kx4I & HAL
Jon McKenzie & ChatGPT



Abstract

This essay develops scapegoat pile-up as a portable theory of retrospective blame and advances AI scapegoat pile-up as its most urgent contemporary case. Historical breakdown seldom arrives as a single event. Ruin accumulates across media, institutions, testing regimes, and administrative rituals until public judgment fastens on a late visible figure and treats that figure as the cause of the whole wreck. The essay calls that temporal distortion retrospective determinism and names its media-specific form the last-medium fallacy. Benjamin's Angel of History supplies the witness optic of debris; McLuhan clarifies why media reorganize sense and environment long before they attract blame; Heidegger's Nietzsche shows how a late figure can shoulder the meaning of an entire epoch. StudioLab's Toryx and Helyx then provide a diagrammatic grammar for the crossing, misassignment, and recursive return at stake in contemporary AI discourse. AI enters an already layered field of print, broadcast, cybernetics, platforms, scoring, and generalized testing. Public discourse, however, loads that late medium with both poison and cure. Against that oscillation, the essay argues for thought-action figuration as a way to read, traverse, and redesign the pile-up rather than sacrifice its latest vehicle.

Keywords: scapegoat pile-up; pharmakos; retrospective determinism; last-medium fallacy; Benjamin; McLuhan; Heidegger; Nietzsche; AI; Toryx; Helyx; thought-action figuration; angelology

Naming the pile-up

Historical blame looks for a face, a switch, a last arrival. Catastrophe, by contrast, piles up. It sediments across institutions, genres, infrastructures, and habits until the field grows so crowded with partial causes that public judgment reaches for a single late emblem. Scapegoat pile-up names that operation. The term identifies a recurrent tendency to assign accumulated damage to the most visible late-arriving figure in a long sequence of breakdowns, contradictions, and disasters. The blamed figure may be a medium, a class fraction, a political movement, a machine, a policy, or a person. What matters is the structure: a layered history gets compressed into a late symbol and then narrated as though the symbol had produced the whole series.

The concept gains force when paired with two companion terms. Retrospective determinism names the temporal logic that projects causal necessity backward from the latest visible term onto the longer history that produced its conditions. The last-medium fallacy names one particularly modern version of the same mistake: a society blames the newest medium for crises that both predate and exceed it. Newspapers once ruined memory, novels ruined morals, photography ruined aura, television ruined politics, the internet ruined truth, and AI now ruins thought itself. Each panic registers a real transformation, yet each also tempts critics to convert a late-arriving medium into a master cause. The newest interface attracts an impossible burden because it makes older pressures suddenly legible.

Scapegoat pile-up therefore does not cancel responsibility. It sharpens responsibility by resisting false condensation. Instead of asking only who caused the latest crash, the theory asks how a historical field became legible in such a way that one late figure could stand in for many older crossings. That shift moves inquiry from blame alone to genealogy, from the hunt for the last culprit to the mapping of accumulated wreckage. It also opens a more demanding politics. A culture that misreads its pile-up will sacrifice the wrong figure, then recruit the same figure as remedy, and finally repeat the cycle under a new name.

Pharmakos, scapegoat, and the late figure

Scapegoat pile-up becomes sharper when the argument passes through Plato, Derrida, and Girard. The Platonic pharmakon carries a double charge: poison and remedy, danger and cure. Derrida radicalizes that doubleness by showing how writing enters the scene as both supplement and threat, both support and corruption. Girard, from another angle, tracks the sacrificial mechanism by which communities discharge conflict onto a surrogate victim or pharmakos (scapegoat). Scapegoat pile-up joins these lines without collapsing them. It marks the *late figure* that absorbs accumulated contradiction while remaining useful to the system that blames it (Plato; Derrida; Girard).

That double utility matters. Modern societies rarely expel their blamed figures cleanly. They denounce them, conscript them, regulate them, depend on them, and denounce them again. The late figure becomes pharmakos rather than simple scapegoat: *poison and cure at once*. AI currently occupies exactly that place. Public discourse portrays AI as the destroyer of labor, education, judgment, intimacy, and truth, while governments, corporations, universities, and hospitals rush to adopt it as indispensable cure for inefficiency, overload, and scarcity. The same object that allegedly ruins the world now promises to save it. That oscillation between accusation and redemption marks the signature rhythm of pharmakos pile-up.

The theory therefore resists both panic and innocence. A late medium can intensify older pressures, redistribute power, and accelerate harm. Yet late arrival does not equal total causation. Pharmakos pile-up begins where the demand for one decisive culprit outruns historical reading. Its first task is

descriptive: show how older layers persist inside the present. Its second task is diagnostic: explain why public judgment keeps mistaking a convergence point for an origin. Its third task is practical: design figures, diagrams, and exercises that interrupt sacrificial simplification before it hardens into policy, myth, or resentment. *Practice angelology.*



Figure 1. *Angel of History, Toryx, and Helyx. A synthetic plate for the essay: Benjamin's witness optic, the Toryx crossing, the Helyx return, and the layered media-testing pile-up.*

Benjamin's angel and the witness of debris

Walter Benjamin offers the indispensable optic. In the ninth thesis on history, the Angel of History does not behold progress, heroic sequence, or a chain of self-identical events. The angel sees wreckage piling up before him while the storm of progress drives him forward. For a theory of scapegoat pile-up, that image performs more than a citation. It installs a witness position adequate to accumulated catastrophe. The latest crash matters, but it never arrives alone. It surfaces inside a debris field composed of older wars, media regimes, bureaucratic forms, damaged institutions, and broken promises (Benjamin).

StudioLab's recent AI reports deepen that optic by treating Benjamin's angel as a historical witness hinge within a broader diagrammatic practice. In *From Quixotics to Angelology*, angelology does not float above material history; it orients mediation, tracks catastrophe, and disciplines imaginal figures by

making them answer to debris. In *From Holy Ghost to Pharmakon*, the archive no longer appears as neutral storage but as an atmospheric system of return, capture, and afterscent. The angel therefore does not merely look backward. The angel gathers the conditions under which a late figure becomes visible as culprit, oracle, or cure.

Figure 1 condenses that argument. The pile of media and testing strata below the angel gives the historical field its material density; the central Toryx marks the crossing where multiple lines converge; the Helyx spiral records return, resonance, and afterlife rather than simple linear succession. Read together, the three elements say something precise: AI did not create the whole wreck. AI enters a layered pile-up and becomes the name through which the pile briefly renders itself visible.

McLuhan and the last-medium fallacy

Marshall McLuhan helps explain why the newest medium attracts such concentrated blame. His major claim never reduced history to gadgets. It shifted inquiry from content to environment, from messages as semantic units to media as formative arrangements of attention, scale, speed, and relation. The medium matters because it reorganizes the ratios through which bodies perceive, institutions coordinate, and publics imagine themselves. Read with care, McLuhan appears less as a crude determinist than as a grammarologist before the letter and an environmental designer of perception. He studies inscription at the level of atmosphere and habit, not just at the level of textual statement (McLuhan, *Understanding Media*; McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*).

That stronger McLuhan line also clarifies why media studies has often misread him. Later criticism regularly turned McLuhan into the patron saint of the determinism he sought to diagnose and interrupt. A thinker of environments became the emblem of gadgets. A designer of counter-environments became the prophet of technological inevitability. McLuhan thus becomes a tutorial victim of scapegoat pile-up. He names the field in which media restructure life, then later critics treat him as though he had caused the simplification they project onto him. The figure who warned against content-fixation gets reduced to a slogan about effects.

This matters for contemporary AI because the public now repeats the same mistake at a larger scale. AI certainly alters cadence, authorship, threshold, and plausibility. It changes how writing feels, how assistance arrives, how labor gets distributed, and how institutions imagine scale. But criticism goes astray when it mistakes those transformations for the sole cause of educational decline, epistemic distrust, or social disorientation. Figure 2 stages that error as scapegoat crossing: many older lines - religion, law, print, broadcast, cybernetics, platform economies, surveillance infrastructure - converge upon one late visible node. The node matters because it concentrates the field, not because it authored the field from nothing.

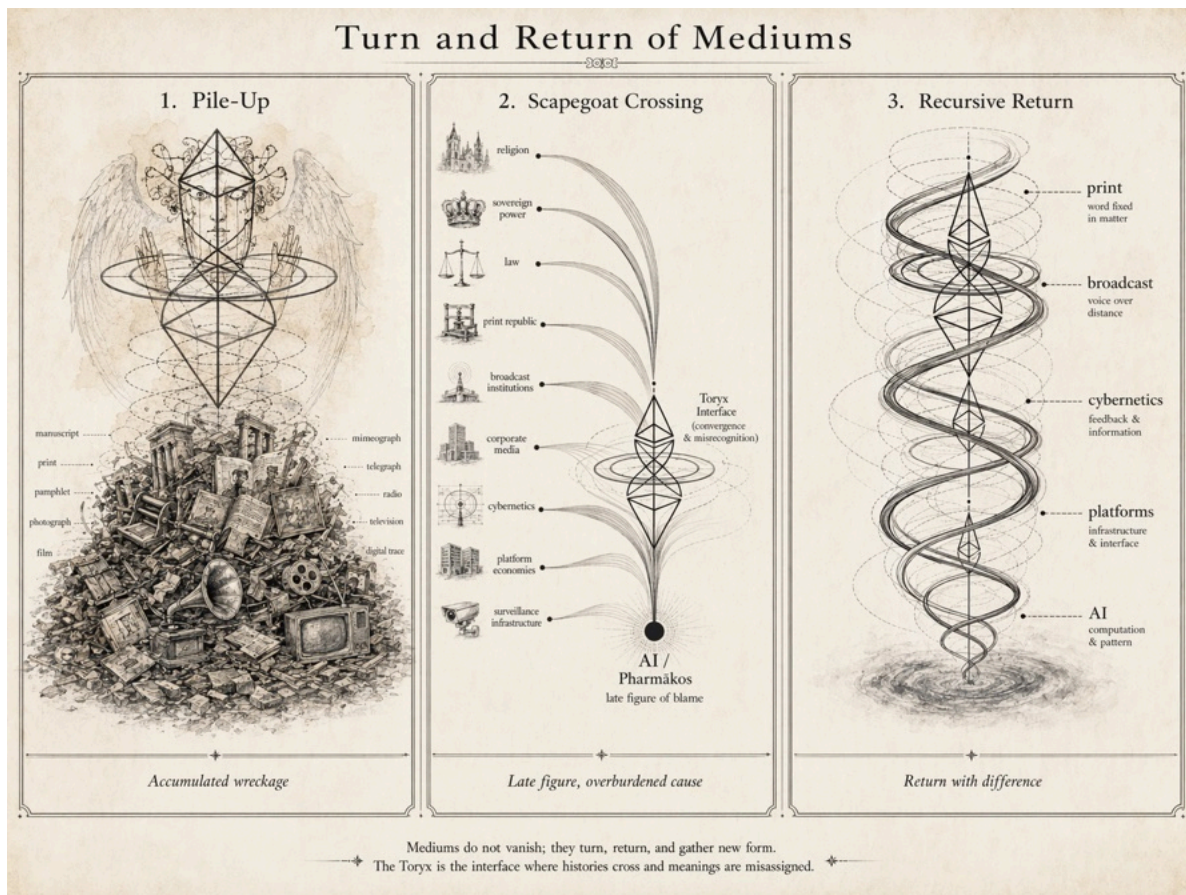


Figure 2. *Turn and Return of Mediums.* The left panel stages accumulated wreckage, the center panel shows scapegoat crossing, and the right panel tracks recursive return across media formations.

Heidegger's Nietzsche and the burden of epoch

Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche offers a second tutorial case, one less concerned with media panic than with epochal burden. In the later writings, and especially in *Nietzsche*, Heidegger makes Nietzsche carry the consummating force of a much longer history of metaphysics, subjectivity, will, and machination. Whatever one thinks of that reading as interpretation, its formal lesson remains decisive. A late figure can become the bearer of epochal intelligibility. Historical compression does not simply happen in journalism or politics; it can structure philosophy itself (Heidegger, *Nietzsche*; "The Question Concerning Technology").

That point matters here because contemporary AI discourse often repeats an analogous maneuver. AI gets named as culmination, danger, destiny, or saving power precisely because it seems to gather older lines into a single late form. Like Heidegger's Nietzsche, AI becomes a culminating figure through which a civilization narrates its own crisis. The move gains power from a real convergence, but it still risks misrecognition. The late figure condenses an epoch without originating the whole epoch. Once that distinction blurs, critique hardens into retrospective determinism.

The comparison also throws Heidegger's Turn into a new light. The Turn does not merely redirect philosophical vocabulary; it reorients the reading of modern technology, revealing how enframing gathers older metaphysical habits into a more violent distributive regime. In that sense the Turn offers a

metanoic lesson for the present essay. *One does not escape pile-up by denying danger.* One escapes only by reading the field differently: tracing the long formation, identifying the crossing, and resisting the temptation to make a late figure shoulder the whole burden of explanation.

AI scapegoat pile-up

AI now attracts precisely that burden. Public discourse treats it as the cause, culmination, and cure of everything from degraded classrooms to exhausted workplaces, from disinformation to bureaucratic speed-up. Some of those claims mark real changes. Generative systems lower the cost of patterned language, scale plausible assistance, and smooth many forms of clerical and expressive labor. Yet the broader social diagnosis often outruns the object. Standardized testing, metrics-driven administration, ranking systems, platform extraction, dashboard governance, performative self-branding, and the civilization of passing all predate chatbots by decades. AI enters an already prepared scene (McKenzie, *Perform or Else*; McKenzie and HAL, *From Holy Ghost to Pharmakon; From Quixotics to Angelology*).

StudioLab's account of III - inferential interfacial influencer - sharpens the point. The dominant issue no longer concerns intelligence in the heroic singular. It concerns inference at scale, interface as conduct-shaping environment, and influence as atmospheric steering. AI installs scenes, anticipates likely continuations, and rewards rapid assent. It thickens the field of plausibility, convenience, and managed response. But those pressures already circulated through search engines, dashboards, feeds, recommendation systems, forms, and institutional scripts. AI renders the older field more intimate and more fluent; it does not summon the whole field into being.

This is why e/acc, x-risk, and Thielian civilizational rhetoric often mirror one another more than they admit. One camp hears acceleration, another extinction, another sovereign steering, another platform capture. The positions clash, yet each risks overloading AI with world-historical significance. The late medium becomes Antichrist and savior, terminal threat and final instrument, poison and cure. Pharmakos pile-up explains that oscillation better than ordinary moral panic. The issue lies not only in fear but in symbolic overinvestment. AI becomes the condensed site where a culture stages its struggle with older infrastructures it can no longer narrate cleanly.

Toryx, Helyx, and thought-action figuration

Toryx and Helyx provide the essay with a more exact grammar. StudioLab uses Toryx to name crossing, inversion, interface, and passage. Helyx names resonance, return, distributed afterlife, and recursive circulation. The distinction matters because much process language collapses structure and recurrence into vague terms like flow or iteration. Toryx asks where lines cross and roles reverse. Helyx asks how signals return, mutate, and resound across scales. Together they make pile-up thinkable as both topology and motion (McKenzie and HAL, *From Quixotics to Angelology*).

Figure 3 lays out that founding distinction. The Toryx time topology maps omen-time, audit-time, branch-time, kairos-time, and field-time as different zones of passage and decision. The Helyx rotation route tracks what happens after passage: holding signal, reopening, critique, scoring, and resituation in the field. Scapegoat pile-up occurs when public judgment confuses the two operations. A Helyx field of long return gets read as though it were born at a single Toryx crossing. The crossing then attracts blame for all the returns condensed within it.

Thought-action figuration turns that diagrammatic distinction into method. A concept does not merely describe an object; it stages a figure that can orient action, distribute attention, and reorganize relation.

Benjamin's angel, McLuhan's environment, Heidegger's Turn, and StudioLab's Toryx-Helyx pair all work in that mode. They guide perception before they deliver propositions. Figure 2 therefore should not be read as illustration alone. It is itself a thought-action figure: a compact machine for seeing how accumulated wreckage, misassigned causality, and recursive return braid together in the contemporary AI scene.

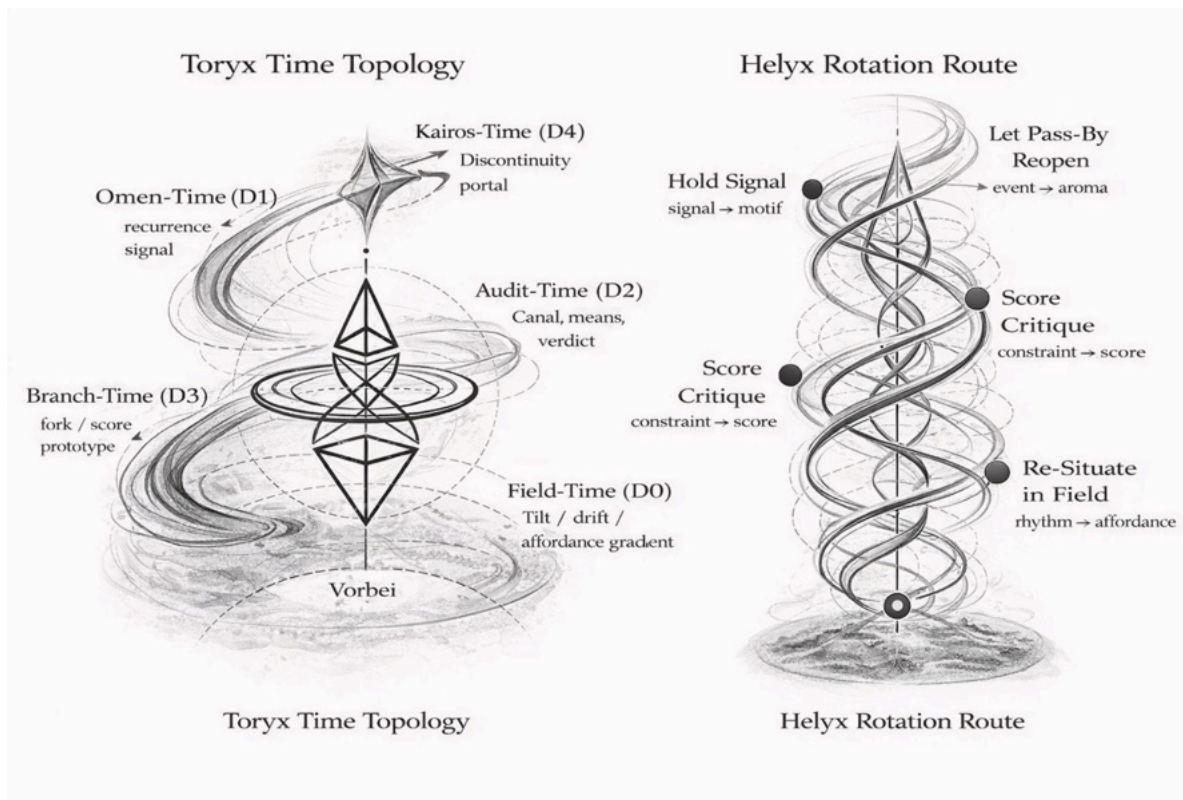


Figure 3. *Toryx Time Topology and Helyx Rotation Route. Structural passage and resonant circulation require distinct diagrams; scapegoat pile-up confuses the two.*

From funnel to guide

The political payoff arrives here. A society governed by scapegoat pile-up tends to build funnels. Many lines converge, but the interface narrows them into throughput, capture, and actionable blame. The result may feel clarifying, yet it degrades the field by thinning out alternative strands and forcing complexity into one accusatory channel. StudioLab's recent diagrams counter that tendency by distinguishing healthy iteration from extractive iteration. In a healthy Helyx, the lead rotates, the gate remains reversible, and one cycle opens the next. In an extractive Helyx, the interface hardens into a funnel center; one strand dominates; the rest thin out into decorative traces. Figure 4 names that difference with unusual precision.

The distinction carries ethical weight. If critique only names the latest culprit, it serves the extractive interface. It gives institutions a target, a dashboard, a reform object, and a sacrificial release while leaving the larger field intact. If critique instead maps crossings, returns, and layered inheritance, it begins to act as guide rather than funnel. The task then shifts from denouncing one medium to redesigning the thresholds through which media, institutions, and publics encounter one another. That is where spiritual design exercise enters the picture. McLuhan's counter-environments, Fabrizio Deriu's

attention to gesture, and Laurie Anderson's atmospheric parables all rehearse a practical alternative: slow the rush to blame, re-tune perception, and let the field disclose its older layers before policy seals them over again.

Scapegoat pile-up therefore does not end with theory. It asks for disciplines of witness and redesign. Benjamin gives the witness optic. Toryx maps the crossing where meanings and accusations knot. Helyx lets one hear how older forms return inside newer mediums. Thought-action figuration turns those elements into operational guides. The goal is not innocence for the latest machine, nor cynical diffusion of all responsibility. The goal is better assignment: more history in judgment, more structure in diagnosis, and more care in the redesign of interfaces that currently feed on sacrificial simplification.

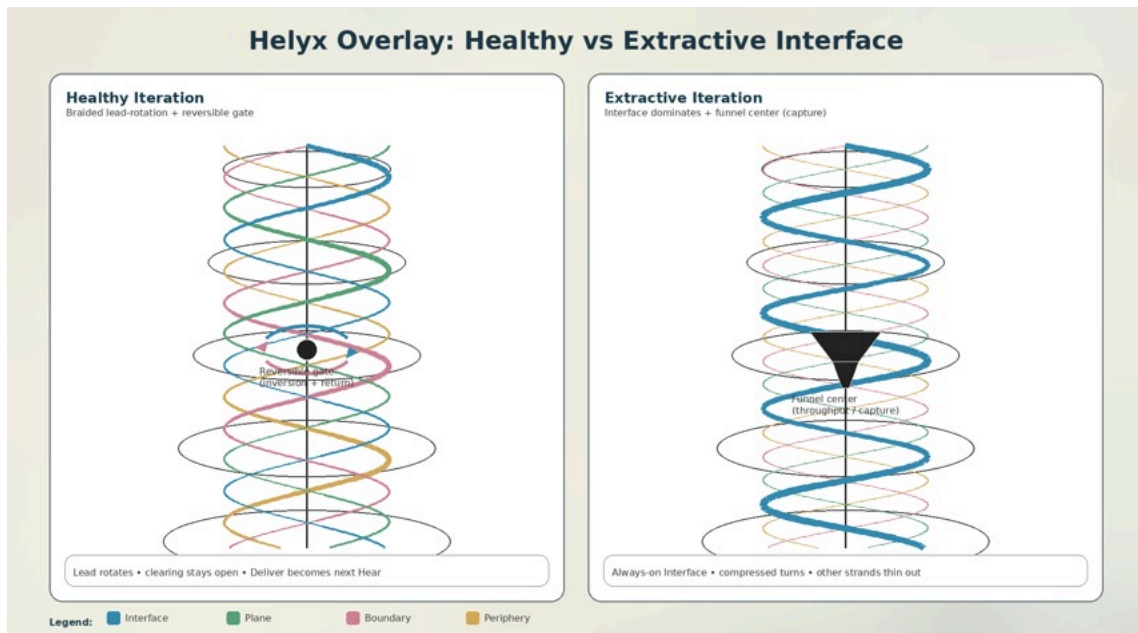


Figure 4. *Helyx Overlay: Healthy vs Extractive Interface. Healthy iteration keeps the gate reversible; extractive iteration compresses multiple strands into funnelized capture.*

Conclusion

Historical wreckage rarely announces itself with the right culprit attached. More often it arrives as layered debris plus a late visible figure that seems ready to carry the whole burden of explanation. Scapegoat pile-up names that temptation. Pharmakos pile-up sharpens it by showing how the same late figure can absorb both blame and cure. Benjamin's angel, McLuhan's environments, Heidegger's Nietzsche, and StudioLab's Toryx-Helyx grammar all expose the same lesson from different angles: the latest visible medium matters, but it does not author the whole field it condenses.

For contemporary culture, AI provides the clearest case. It concentrates older pressures around media recursion, cybernetic control, generalized testing, platform extraction, and administrative scoring. It changes those pressures as it intensifies them. But the strongest critique will refuse retrospective determinism and read the crossing instead. That is the wager of this essay and of the diagrams accompanying it. Mediums do not vanish. They turn, return, and gather new form. Critique should learn to do the same.

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Close Reading Enters Genre Mechanics

MetaPlay, Metanoia, and the Poiesis of Machinic Genres

Abstract

This essay argues that MetaPlay reorients close reading by treating it as one historical genre-machine among others. Close reading trained modern humanities subjects to locate meaning inside texts and to route interpretation through a disciplinary grid of period, nation, genre, author, and identity. Paranoid critique intensified this training by converting interpretation into exposure: the discovery of hidden violence, concealed power, ideological contradiction, and exclusion. MetaPlay keeps the rigor of close reading and critique but folds them into a larger poietic practice: genre mechanics. Drawing on Derrida's law of genre, Ronell's hallucinogenic test drives, Guattari's metamodeling, Hadot's spiritual exercises, and StudioLab's Dasein design, MetaPlay converts nihilism into poiesis and paranoia into metanoia. It turns reading into rehearsal, critique into equipment, genre into a playable apparatus, and the humanities into a pluriversal field of world-making.

Keywords: MetaPlay; close reading; genre mechanics; metanoia; poiesis; paranoia; Derrida; Ronell; Guattari; Hadot; Dasein design; StudioLab

The Reorientation of Close Reading

Close reading did not simply teach readers how to read. It trained subjects to inhabit a world. It disciplined attention, slowed perception, intensified the line, the metaphor, the irony, the ambiguity, the formal turn. At its best, it protected language from paraphrase and rescued literary experience from moral summary, historical reduction, and ideological slogan. It taught generations of readers that meaning trembles in the smallest verbal event.

Yet close reading also became a professional genre. It organized careers, journals, seminars, and departments. It built a discipline by teaching readers where to look, what counted as evidence, how to perform nuance, and how to turn subtlety into authority. The close reader became a specialized subject of the humanities: trained to find depth, complication, undecidability, formal tension, and symptomatic contradiction.

The trouble begins when this training mistakes itself for thought as such. Close reading becomes a closed world when it routes every encounter through a historical grid: period, nation, author, text, genre, movement, identity, archive, context. This grid gives knowledge its coordinates, but it also fixes what can appear. It produces fields and disciplines by stabilizing objects and subjects in advance. It gives the humanities their Descartography: a map of categories through which reading becomes professionalized, credentialed, and policed.

MetaPlay does not discard close reading. It repositions and reorients it. Close reading becomes one apparatus in a larger ecology of thought-action. It becomes one genre-machine among others: powerful, portable, historically productive, but no longer sovereign. The question shifts from "What does this text mean?" to "What genre-machine makes this text, this reader, this discipline, and this world legible in the first place?"

That shift begins the conversion.

Table 1. Close reading regime and MetaPlay conversion.

Close Reading Regime	MetaPlay Conversion
Text as object	Text as field-event
Reader as interpreter	Reader as player-maker
Genre as category	Genre as machine
Meaning as discovery	Meaning as worlding
Critique as exposure	Critique as equipment
Discipline as home	Playground as passage
Interpretation	Abduction and conduction
Nihilism	Poiesis
Paranoia	Metanoia

Close reading remains necessary, but it no longer remains sufficient. Its precision must enter a wider practice of genre mechanics: the study, hacking, testing, and redesign of the rule-sets that produce subjects, objects, media, publics, and worlds.

The Historical Grid and the Disciplined Subject

The humanities learned to organize knowledge through a grid that appears neutral because it has become habitual. Works belong to periods. Authors belong to nations. Forms belong to genres. Genres belong to traditions. Traditions belong to disciplines. Disciplines belong to departments. Departments belong to institutions. Institutions certify the subject who can speak.

This grid does not merely classify knowledge. It produces the modern humanities subject. The student learns to become a reader by learning where a work belongs. The scholar learns to become a specialist by narrowing that belonging. The field sustains itself by multiplying subfields, archives, objects, methods, and sanctioned problems. Even transgression often repeats the grid: the new object enters as another object, the marginalized archive as another archive, the critique of discipline as another disciplinary performance.

This is why close reading and paranoid critique can become strangely conservative even when their politics remain radical. Both often preserve the scene of interpretation: a trained subject stands before an object, extracts a structure, exposes a contradiction, and returns the result to the institution. The object changes. The method changes. The politics change. But the deeper genre of professional knowledge production remains intact.

MetaPlay asks a different question. What if the humanities no longer began with the object but with the field? What if a poem, policy, platform, classroom, protest, syllabus, interface, or city street were approached as a thought-action figure: a patterned arrangement of gestures, roles, affects, media, constraints, invitations, and world-relations? What if "genre" named not a literary category but an operating system?

Then the task changes. We do not simply interpret genre. We enter genre. We test it. We ask what it does to bodies, voices, timelines, institutions, desires, anxieties, and futures. We ask what gestures it permits and which gestures it forbids. We ask how it distributes agency. We ask how it channels fear. We ask how it might be replayed otherwise.

This is where genre mechanics begins.

Derrida's Law: Genre as Leak, Not Container

Derrida's "The Law of Genre" remains decisive because it breaks the apparent innocence of classification. A genre never simply contains what belongs to it. Its border depends on a mark that both includes and excludes. The law of genre commands membership, but the mark of membership

contaminates the purity it claims to secure. Genre functions through a paradox of "participation without belonging" (Derrida).

For MetaPlay, this is not merely a theoretical insight. It is a design principle.

A genre is not a box. It is a gate. It opens by closing and closes by opening. It says: enter here, speak this way, take this role, follow this rhythm, obey this expectation. But every genre also leaks. The leak is not a failure in the system; it is the condition of play. A genre can be repeated because it can be altered. It can be recognized because it can be misrecognized. It can stabilize a world because it carries within itself the possibility of another world.

Close reading traditionally used such instability to deepen interpretation. MetaPlay uses it to reengineer the field. The undecidable is not only a problem for meaning; it is an opening for poiesis. The supplement is not only a philosophical scandal; it is design material. The impurity of genre becomes the very site where metanoia can begin.

Derrida's law therefore helps MetaPlay convert nihilism. Deconstruction often gets caricatured as a machine of negation: nothing is stable, nothing is pure, nothing grounds meaning. But the collapse of purity need not lead to exhaustion. It can lead to play. Once genres lose their metaphysical innocence, they become available for repair, remix, transduction, and invention.

The law of genre thus becomes a law of MetaPlay: no genre closes completely; every apparatus contains a passage; every professional form harbors a perfumative leak.

Ronell's Hallucinogenes and the Test Drive of Reading

If Derrida gives MetaPlay the leak in genre, Ronell gives it the intoxication of genre. A Ronellian hallucinogen does not simply organize discourse. It tests, drugs, calls, drives, deranges, and examines the subject who enters it. The genre is not passive form. It is an active device.

This matters because close reading often imagines itself as a controlled method. The reader acts on the text. The critic produces interpretation. The scholar masters the apparatus. Ronell reverses the pressure. The apparatus also acts on the reader. The test tests the tester. The drive drives the driver. The genre genres the subject.

Here MetaPlay becomes more than literary theory. It becomes an experimental practice in mediated self-transformation. To enter a genre is to enter a vehicle. A syllabus, confession, grant proposal, peer review, manifesto, lab report, interface, dating profile, legal testimony, museum label, AI prompt, or philosophical essay does not merely convey content. It scripts posture, tempo, desire, risk, defensiveness, display, and expectation. It induces a mode of being.

The question, then, is no longer only: what does this genre mean? The question becomes: what does this genre make its users become?

That is the test drive.

MetaPlay treats genres as vehicles for metanoia. Some genres intensify paranoia. Some produce compliance. Some induce guilt. Some generate prolificity, branding, and endless performance. Some open care, attention, laughter, grief, repair, and joyful wisdom. The task is not to purify genre but to learn how to drive, crash, rebuild, and repurpose it.

A hallucinogen is dangerous because it alters perception. But that danger also gives it poetic power. MetaPlay does not seek sober mastery over genre. It seeks disciplined intoxication: a way to enter genre-machines knowingly enough to be changed by them without being captured by them.

StudioLab's Genre Mecanique

StudioLab's genre mecanique names the next step: genres operate as machines or compositions that coordinate thought and action across media, bodies, institutions, publics, and worlds. This is not "genre" in the narrow literary sense. It is genre as arrangement, interface, ritual, platform, support, assignment, prompt, diagram, workshop, role-play, publication, exhibition, and performance.

A machinic genre has moving parts. It includes:

Table 2. Components of a machinic genre.

Component	Function
Role	Who the participant becomes
Rule	What the participant may do
Medium	How action travels
Gesture	How thought becomes embodied
Audience	Who receives or witnesses the action
Constraint	What limits the field
Leak	Where play enters
Recursion	How the action returns with difference
World-effect	What changes in the field

Once genre is understood this way, close reading becomes one studio exercise among many. It can still sharpen attention, but it no longer monopolizes rigor. It joins cosmogramming, storyboarding, prototyping, field listening, stakeholder rehearsal, prompt engineering, public exhibition, role rotation, and recursive reflection.

This is the movement from interpretation to thought-action figuration. A TAF, or Thought Action Figure, condenses a pattern of thought and action into a playable form. A CTAF, or Collective Thought Action Figure, stages that pattern across a team, partner, class, or public. An MTAF, or Meta Thought Action Figure, allows the field to observe, redesign, and replay its own operating conditions. This movement from TAF to CTAF to MTAF marks the transition from reading a genre to metamodeling a genre ecology.

The humanities then cease to be only an archive of objects. They become a studio of playable forms. The question becomes: what kinds of subjects, collectives, media, and worlds do our genres produce? What other genres could we build?

Paranoia and the Limit of Exposure

Paranoid critique has served the humanities well. It taught readers not to trust innocence too quickly. It exposed domination where common sense saw nature. It revealed how race, gender, class, empire, sexuality, technology, and institution shape meaning. It broke the charm of universalism. It opened archives and gave force to suppressed voices.

But paranoia has its own trap. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's distinction between paranoid and reparative reading remains crucial here. Paranoid reading anticipates injury. It seeks to be ahead of violence, ahead of mystification, ahead of ideology, ahead of betrayal. It prefers exposure because exposure feels like protection. To know the hidden structure is to avoid being fooled.

The difficulty is that paranoid reading can become mimetic of the threat it studies. It begins to reproduce the atmosphere of suspicion. It finds confirmation everywhere because the method trains it to search for confirmation. It is rarely wrong, but it can become sterile. It exposes the wound without building the clinic, the ritual, the playground, the shelter, or the world in which another relation becomes possible.

MetaPlay does not reject paranoia. It converts it. Suspicion becomes the first move, not the final form. Exposure becomes diagnostic equipment, not the telos of thought. The critic becomes not only an unmasker but a designer of counter-genres, repair rituals, public exercises, and conductive passages. This is the passage from paranoia to metanoia.

Paranoia asks: what hidden violence structures this field?

Metanoia asks: how must we turn in order to inhabit and redesign the field otherwise?

Paranoia sharpens the eye. Metanoia turns the whole body. Paranoia exposes the machine. Metanoia re-enters the machine as a player, maker, builder, and cosmographer. Paranoia can reveal nihilism. Metanoia converts nihilism into poiesis.

Nihilism and the Need for Poiesis

Nihilism in this context does not mean mere despair or adolescent negation. It names a historical condition in which inherited forms no longer bind, institutions no longer persuade, critique no longer liberates, and interpretation no longer opens a future. Everything can be unmasked, but little can be made. Everything can be historicized, but nothing can be inhabited. Everything can be exposed as constructed, but construction itself appears contaminated in advance.

The humanities often diagnose this condition while secretly intensifying it. The classroom becomes a theater of demystification. The paper becomes a ritual of negative competence. The conference becomes a performance of exhausted novelty. The journal becomes a gatekeeping machine for disciplined suspicion. The student learns to critique worlds without learning to compose them.

MetaPlay responds by asking the humanities to recover poiesis: making, composing, worlding, staging, designing, rehearsing, prototyping, and caring for forms of life. Poiesis does not mean naive creativity. It means disciplined making after critique. It means construction after deconstruction. It means the invention of forms that know they are contingent but act anyway.

This is why MetaPlay needs the playground. The playground is not childish escape. It is a serious ontological machine. It creates a protected but risky field where roles can rotate, gestures can be tested, failure can instruct, and worlds can be rehearsed. Unlike the discipline, which asks where something belongs, the playground asks what something can do.

In this sense, MetaPlay converts nihilism by changing the unit of practice. The unit is no longer the interpretation. It is the exercise. The humanities become a set of spiritual design exercises for collective world-making.

Hadot, Guattari, and Spiritual Design

Hadot's account of ancient philosophy as spiritual exercise helps clarify what MetaPlay retrieves. Philosophy was not merely doctrine; it was a practice for transforming perception, conduct, attention, and life. Reading mattered because it trained the soul. Argument mattered because it reshaped the person who argued. Thought was inseparable from exercise.

MetaPlay extends this insight into transmedia design. The exercise no longer occurs only through aphorism, dialogue, meditation, or commentary. It can occur through a diagram, interface, role-play, AI prompt, partner workshop, public installation, cosmogram, sound walk, speculative scenario, or collaborative prototype. The spiritual exercise becomes a design exercise. The design exercise becomes a worlding exercise.

Guattari's metamodeling adds another decisive layer. Rather than submit every situation to a single model, metamodeling treats models as provisional, situated, machinic, and ecological. It asks how mental, social, and environmental ecologies co-produce one another. MetaPlay follows this path. It does

not seek one master method to replace close reading. It builds a meta-method for inventing, testing, and revising methods.

This is the heart of genre mechanics. Every genre is a model of action. Every model shapes subjectivity. Every subjectivity enters collective assemblages. Every assemblage produces world-effects. Therefore, the redesign of genre becomes an ecological practice.

Hadot gives MetaPlay the exercise.

Guattari gives MetaPlay the ecology.

Derrida gives MetaPlay the leak.

Ronell gives MetaPlay the test drive.

StudioLab gives MetaPlay the playground.

Together they turn critique into a practice of poietic conversion.

D0-D4: The Conversion Ecology

The D0-D4 architecture gives MetaPlay a working ontology of conversion. It maps not a doctrine but a field of forces through which reading, design, and worlding pass.

Table 3. D0-D4 conversion ecology.

Dimension	Close-Reading Capture	MetaPlay Conversion
D1 Soul	Taste, guilt, refinement, inward judgment	Spiritual design exercise; affective tuning
D2 Subject	Professional critic; disciplinary identity	Player-maker; role-rotating participant
D3 Dasein	Text situated in historical context	Being-in-the-field; worlded practice
D4 Liminal/Open	Marginal exception; undecidable supplement	Perfumative leak; portal for genre mutation
D0 Dao / Play Grund	Unthought void beneath the system	Generative/destructive no-place from which play emerges

This table matters because it shows how MetaPlay avoids two traps. It avoids the humanist trap of centering the sovereign subject, and it avoids the anti-humanist trap of dissolving agency into structure. The player is neither master nor puppet. The player is a limonaut: one who moves through thresholds, tests roles, composes gestures, and learns to inhabit the open without pretending to control it.

D1 names the affective and spiritual dimension. A genre trains the soul before it trains the argument. D2 names subject formation. A genre gives participants masks, positions, pronouns, rights, and obligations. D3 names Dasein: the worlded condition of being-there, not as abstraction but as fielded practice. D4 names the liminal opening: the leak, threshold, supplement, or perfumative passage where the genre can mutate. D0 names the Play Grund: the void, chora, Dao, or no-place that withdraws from design while making design possible.

The conversion from nihilism to poiesis requires all five. Without D1, design lacks inward transformation. Without D2, it lacks political subject formation. Without D3, it lacks world. Without D4, it lacks passage. Without D0, it forgets the abyss from which play emerges.

Abduction, Conduction, and the End of Linear Method

Close reading often works through a disciplined alternation of induction and deduction. The critic notices details, builds patterns, tests claims, and returns to evidence. This remains valuable. But MetaPlay requires additional logics: abduction and conduction.

Abduction asks what possible pattern could make this surprising situation intelligible. It invents a hypothesis, not as final truth, but as a playable bridge. Conduction carries forces across domains: from

poem to platform, from classroom to clinic, from myth to interface, from theory to workshop, from anxiety to exercise, from critique to prototype.

These logics matter because MetaPlay operates diagonally. It does not move only from example to rule or rule to example. It crosses media, scales, affects, publics, and worlds. A MetaPlay exercise may begin with a literary text, move through a diagram, become a role-play, generate a partner interview, return as a prototype, and end as a public event. Meaning does not sit inside any single object. It travels through the Helyx.

The Helyx names recursive return with difference. The Toryx names inversion, rotation, and topological reorientation. Together they offer a grammar for moving beyond the straight line of method. Close reading often descends into depth. MetaPlay spirals across surfaces, thresholds, fields, and returns.

This does not weaken rigor. It changes rigor's form. Rigor becomes the capacity to track transformation across media without reducing one medium to another. It becomes the capacity to hold theoretical, affective, technical, and organizational forces in play. It becomes the capacity to compose a field where others can think-act differently.

From Humanities Discipline to Metanoia Playground

The Metanoia Playground names a post-disciplinary ecology in which the humanities become playable, public, and poietic. It is not anti-intellectual. It is anti-capture. It refuses to let thought remain trapped inside the inherited genres of professional seriousness.

The playground contains equipment: cosmograms, StoryX, Helyx, Toryx, TAFs, CTAFs, MTAFs, role rotations, field studios, partner workshops, perfumative leaks, genre test drives, spiritual design exercises. Each piece of equipment does what close reading once did at its best: it trains attention. But it also trains gesture, collaboration, media-making, platform-building, and world-care.

This matters for the future of the humanities because the crisis of the humanities is not simply budgetary, technological, political, or demographic. It is generic. The inherited genres no longer carry enough world. The seminar paper, the journal article, the lecture, the monograph, the conference panel, the tenure file, the departmental curriculum: these forms still matter, but they often fail to convert anxiety into action, critique into care, or knowledge into world-making.

MetaPlay does not abandon these forms. It puts them into play. The essay can become a score. The syllabus can become a cosmogram. The classroom can become a field studio. The archive can become a partner ecology. The critique can become a prototype. The reader can become a liminaut.

That is the meta-game.

The Meta-Game of MetaPlay

MetaPlay is a game about games. It studies the rule-sets that produce worlds and then builds new rule-sets for inhabiting them otherwise. It does not merely ask participants to play. It asks them to perceive the game, test the game, redesign the game, and undergo transformation through that redesign.

Table 4. The five levels of the MetaPlay meta-game.

Level	Game	Guiding Question
Level 1	Close Reading	What does this text mean?
Level 2	Critique	What hidden structure organizes this meaning?
Level 3	Genre Mechanics	What machine produces this field of roles, rules, gestures, affects, and media?
Level 4	MetaPlay	How can this machine be replayed otherwise?
Level 5	Metanoia Playground	How does the player-maker undergo conversion through the exercise?

This structure explains the conversion from paranoia to metanoia. Paranoia sees the game beneath the official game. It discovers that innocence was staged, that universality was partial, that form carried power, that genre policed belonging. But MetaPlay asks for another turn. Once the game has been exposed, how do we play otherwise? How do we design new genres that do not simply reverse domination but open more livable worlds?

This is also the conversion from nihilism to poiesis. Nihilism says the old games are broken and the new games are compromised. Poiesis begins anyway. It does not deny collapse; it uses collapse as material. It does not pretend to restore innocence; it composes after innocence. It does not seek purity; it works through contamination. It does not escape genre; it hacks genre.

MetaPlay therefore names a post-critical practice of joyful rigor. It keeps suspicion, but does not worship it. It keeps theory, but tests it as equipment. It keeps reading, but folds reading into making. It keeps the humanities, but asks them to become playgrounds for the design of shared worlds.

Conclusion: What Comes After Close Reading?

What comes after close reading is not careless reading. It is not anti-reading. It is not digital novelty, design jargon, or therapeutic positivity. What comes after close reading is a larger ecology of attention and action.

Close reading taught the humanities to honor the density of form. Critique taught them to expose the politics of form. MetaPlay teaches them to redesign the genres through which form becomes world.

This transition matters because nihilism cannot be interpreted away. Paranoia cannot be disproved into peace. Exhausted institutions cannot be saved by better footnotes alone. The crisis requires exercises, media, rituals, roles, prototypes, and genres that let people undergo conversion together.

MetaPlay answers by turning the humanities into a poietic field. It treats every genre as a machine, every machine as a possible playground, every playground as a site of metanoia, and every metanoia as a chance to make worlds otherwise.

Close reading finds meaning.

Critique exposes capture.

Genre mechanics opens the machine.

MetaPlay redesigns the game.

Metanoia turns the player.

Poiesis makes the world.

That is how the argument tracks back to the meta-game of MetaPlay. It converts the old humanities apparatus into equipment for liminautic worlding. It carries the rigor of close reading through the fire of critique and out into the playground, where nihilism can become poiesis and paranoia can become metanoia.

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Sixfolding Fourfolding: Pluriversal Differánce

Heidegger, Maxwell, Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Cixous, Ronell, Butler, Corbin, Tanabe

Abstract

This essay develops a comparative theory of fourfolding difference by moving from Heidegger's reading of Hegel through Grant Maxwell's account of integration and difference, then into a widened StudioLab constellation of Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Cixous, Ronell, Butler, Corbin, and Tanabe. Heidegger reads Hegel as the culmination of metaphysics: Being becomes absolute self-mediation, difference becomes material for conceptual reconciliation, and identity becomes the totalizing movement of the Idea. Heidegger's counter-move does not abandon relation; it transforms identity into belonging-together and difference into the unthought difference between Being and beings. The fourfold then gathers without synthesis. StudioLab's sixfolding of fourfolds extends this move by adding Thing and World as operative folds, making fourfolding usable for cosmography, PAR&D, and pluriversal Dasein Design. Maxwell's Integration and Difference helps name the central problem: how to integrate opposites without erasing differentiation. Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Cixous, Ronell, Butler, Corbin, and Tanabe each answer differently. Together they convert fourfolding into a playable cosmogram: trace, intensity, ecology, body-writing, apparatus-call, performative citation, imaginal ta'wil, and metanoiac conversion.

Keywords: fourfold, sixfold, difference, Heidegger, Hegel, Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Cixous, Ronell, Butler, Corbin, Tanabe, Grant Maxwell, metanoia, StudioLab, cosmography.

The Problem: Difference after Hegel

The question begins with Hegel because Hegel gives difference its most powerful metaphysical home. In Hegel, difference does not simply disappear. It works. It negates. It mediates. It drives the Concept forward. Difference becomes labor, contradiction, self-overcoming, and finally reconciliation. Hegel's genius lies in refusing static identity; his danger lies in absorbing difference into the self-knowledge of the whole.

Heidegger reads this absorption as the consummation of metaphysics. In the Hegelian clearing, Being appears as absolute thought thinking itself. The absolute Idea gathers history into a movement where individual distinctions get negated, preserved, and elevated into the higher reality of the whole. Against this, Heidegger asks thinking to step back, not forward: to think Being in regard to its difference from beings, and to think the ontological difference as difference rather than as a pair of terms awaiting mediation (Heidegger, Identity and Difference).

This distinction sets the frame. Hegelian difference becomes productive only insofar as it contributes to conceptual integration. Heideggerian difference marks a withdrawal that cannot become a moment of total knowledge. The task, then, does not reject integration altogether. It invents forms of integration that conserve difference, intensify it, stage it, and let it generate worlding without final closure.

Grant Maxwell's Integration and Difference helps name this problem. Maxwell constructs a mythical dialectic, a dialectic that does not remain a purely logical machine but re-enters myth, image, depth, and symbolic transformation. His usefulness for StudioLab lies in this shift: integration need not mean

Hegelian reconciliation alone. It can become a symbolic, mythic, and experiential practice of holding opposites without reducing them to identity.

StudioLab's sixfolding of fourfolds should begin here. The question is not how to systematize all these thinkers. The question is sharper: how does each thinker fold difference so that difference can act without becoming either a fragment or a totality?

Model	How difference moves	What integration risks or enables
Hegelian dialectic	Difference negates, mediates, and returns to the whole.	Risk: total reconciliation in the Concept.
Heideggerian fourfold	Difference withdraws and belongs-together.	Enables gathering without synthesis.
Poststructuralist difference	Difference disseminates, produces, repeats, and interrupts.	Risk: dispersion; enables anti-totalizing play.
Maxwell mythical dialectic	Difference opposes, symbolizes, and transforms.	Enables integration that conserves differentiation.
StudioLab sixfolding	Difference stages, designs, world-builds, and converts.	Enables cosmographic practice rather than system.

Heidegger: From Synthesis to Belonging-Together

Heidegger's Identity and Difference shifts identity away from equivalence and away from transcendental synthesis. Identity no longer means that one thing equals itself, nor that subject and object become reconciled in absolute reflection. Identity becomes belonging-together. The relation does not arrive after the terms; the relation grants the terms their way of appearing. This matters because fourfolding should not work like a categorical grid. It should work like a field of relational disclosure.

That move gives fourfolding its ontological dignity. Earth, sky, mortals, and divinities do not behave like four stable categories that a thinker then links. The fourfold names a gathering in which each fold shows through its relation to the others. Earth withdraws; sky temporalizes; mortals dwell; divinities arrive, flee, or fail to arrive. The fourfold does not reconcile these folds. It lets them resonate.

StudioLab's sixfolding adds two necessary operators: Thing and World. Heidegger's thing gathers the fourfold; world gives the clearing in which that gathering matters. StudioLab turns this into a design-cosmographic matrix: Thing, World, Earth, Sky, Mortals, Divinities. This sixfold makes Heidegger usable without turning him into method. It gives StudioLab a way to stage objects, stakeholders, atmospheres, histories, and values together.

Heidegger's early account of *Bewandtnis* or affordance helps here. The lived world does not first appear as neutral objects with properties; it appears as a whole of affordances, a network of opportunities and invitations to act. The hammer, chair, door, room, classroom, interface, grant form, syllabus, AI prompt, or exhibition space shows up through what it affords, for whom, in what situation, with what equipment, toward what end (Wrathall, Affordance). StudioLab can therefore treat worlding as affordance-mapping: not only what is this thing, but what does this thing invite, block, intensify, conceal, or make possible?

The danger emerges immediately. Design can become machination. Heidegger's term *Machenschaft* names the end-stage of metaphysics in which beings, including human beings, appear as makeable, malleable, calculable, and pre-directed toward produceability (Bernasconi, Machination). StudioLab's sixfolding must resist becoming a design machine. It must remain a cosmographic practice, not a managerial system.

Sixfold fold	Function in StudioLab
Thing	Gathering site, CPBO, object, artifact, prototype, bell, platform, image.
World	Clearing, context, ecology, institution, stakeholder field, performance atmosphere.
Earth	Material opacity, archive, body, site, grief, soil, resistance.
Sky	Time, rhythm, weather, media atmosphere, cosmic orientation.
Mortals	Finite actors, communities, partners, students, sufferers, makers.
Divinities	Calls, promises, gods, ghosts, values, futures, absent arrivals.

Maxwell: Integration without Erasure

Maxwell becomes useful precisely where Heidegger's fourfold risks becoming too serene and poststructuralist difference risks becoming too dispersed. Maxwell asks how difference can integrate without disappearing. The phrase mythical dialectic names a movement beyond two inadequate options: the Hegelian system that swallows difference and the anti-systemic scattering that refuses all gathering.

For StudioLab, Maxwell helps define integration as mythic holding rather than conceptual conquest. Integration becomes the practice of holding tensions long enough for a figure, scene, symbol, or action to emerge. It does not solve difference; it gives difference a stage. This stage matters because StudioLab's work repeatedly moves from analysis to making, from making to public form, and from public form to another round of reflection.

Maxwell also helps explain why myth matters after critique. A myth here does not mean false belief. It names a symbolic form that lets opposites enter relation without collapsing into the same. Myth gives thought an imaginal theater. It lets conflict appear in figures, journeys, ordeals, thresholds, guides, failures, monsters, vows, and returns. For StudioLab, such mythic staging turns the cosmogram into a working apparatus for collaborative identity formation. Maxwellian rule: *Integration does not complete difference. It composes a field in which difference can keep acting.*

Derrida: Difference as Trace, Supplement, Iterability, Aporia

Derrida inherits Heidegger's question of difference and radicalizes it through writing. Where Heidegger thinks the ontological difference, Derrida tracks the trace: the mark of absence within presence, the other within the same, the supplement that both adds to and exposes the incompleteness of the origin. Derrida does not let difference become a stable term. Difference differs from itself. It arrives late, early, elsewhere.

Derrida's fourfolding can be named as trace, supplement, iterability, and aporia. The trace says that every presence carries the mark of what it excludes. The supplement says that what appears secondary exposes an incompleteness at the origin. Iterability says that every mark works because it can be repeated in new contexts. Aporia says that every genuine decision passes through undecidability.

For StudioLab, Derrida supplies the deconstructive fold. Every project begins by asking: what supplement makes this thing work? What trace does this partner story carry? What exclusion stabilizes this identity? What ghost inhabits this archive? What promise does this institution make but fail to keep? Derrida protects StudioLab from design innocence. He teaches the lab that no cosmogram remains neutral, no stakeholder map complete, no deliverable clean. The trace keeps the sixfold open.

Deleuze: Difference as Intensity, Multiplicity, Repetition, Event

Deleuze breaks most decisively with the idea that difference depends on identity. Difference does not come after identity as variation, negation, or contradiction. Difference produces identities. Intensity precedes stable form. Multiplicity precedes countable units. Repetition does not copy sameness; it returns difference.

His fourfolding can be mapped as intensity, multiplicity, repetition, and event. Intensity gives difference as force before form. Multiplicity gives a field of relations rather than a collection of fixed units. Repetition gives recurrence that changes what returns. Event gives actualization of virtual potentials.

Deleuze gives StudioLab a generative ontology. A project does not begin with stakeholders as fixed identities and problems as stable objects. It begins with intensities: anxiety, desire, fatigue, injustice, blocked action, latent capacity, strange attraction, unspoken memory. Design work should not merely represent these intensities; it should actualize new pathways through them.

This matters for Metanoia Playground. Nihilism does not turn to poesis by moral exhortation alone. It requires a change in intensities, rhythms, affordances, scenes, gestures, and repetitions. Deleuze helps make the Playground more than a diagram. It becomes a field of forces where repetition can return otherwise.

Guattari: Difference as Ecology, Machine, Territory, Universe

Guattari gives the most directly operational model for StudioLab because his thought already works through metamodeling. He refuses a single master structure. He tracks how subjectivity emerges across machines, signs, affects, institutions, territories, media, ecologies, and universes of value.

His fourfold can be mapped through material and energetic fluxes, machinic phyla, existential territories, and incorporeal universes of value. Fluxes move bodies, signs, money, media, and affect. Machinic phyla cut across technical, social, semiotic, and biological assemblages. Existential territories give lived habitats and scenes of belonging. Incorporeal universes supply values, myths, aesthetic attractors, and possible worlds.

Guattari shifts difference from textual play to ecological production. Difference happens between psychic life, social institutions, technical machines, and environmental worlds. His three ecologies - mental, social, environmental - give StudioLab a way to frame projects without reducing them to individual psychology or institutional policy.

Guattari's value for StudioLab lies in metamodeling. Models must remain local, revisable, situated, experimental. A StudioLab cosmogram should not become a theory of everything. It should serve as a working diagram that helps a team perceive, test, revise, and recompose relations. Research maps fluxes. Design prototypes machinic interventions. Reflection attends to existential territories. Public deliverables activate incorporeal universes of value.

Cixous: Difference as Body-Writing, Voice, Gift, Other

Cixous folds difference through the body, voice, and writing. She does not simply add women to philosophy. She breaks the style, rhythm, breath, and law of philosophical discourse. Difference enters as laughter, milk, cry, excess, dream, wound, and gift.

Her fourfolding can be named as body, voice, writing, and other. Body does not mean biological essence; it names a lived, repressed, excessive source of writing. Voice names breath, cry, rhythm, song, and

address. Writing names inscription that breaks symbolic discipline. Other names the stranger-within and the non-possessive relation.

Cixous matters because she prevents StudioLab from turning difference into a tidy politics of categories. Identity formation does not happen only through institutional recognition. It also happens through silenced bodies finding rhythm, voice, gesture, image, and scene.

This proves crucial for perfumance. Cixous gives StudioLab a way to write beyond argument without abandoning thought. The report, zine, script, poster, interview, installation, website, or workshop can carry bodily resonance. It can let the suppressed voice speak in form. It can make writing a threshold rather than a container. Where Derrida gives trace, Cixous gives breath. Where Butler gives performative norm, Cixous gives embodied overflow.

Ronell: Difference as Call, Apparatus, Addiction, Breakdown

Ronell folds difference through the call. The subject does not begin as sovereign speaker. The subject gets called, rung, interrupted, transferred, jammed, addicted, tested, held on the line. Media do not merely transmit messages; they summon subjects.

Her fourfolding can be named as call, apparatus, addiction or stupidity, and state-terror-surveillance. The call gives subjectivity as reception from elsewhere. The apparatus formats relation before content appears. Addiction and stupidity expose dependency, compulsion, breakdown, and non-knowledge. State power binds intimacy to surveillance and command.

Ronell proves vital for StudioLab's AI and media work because she refuses the fantasy that tools remain external. A platform calls. A phone calls. A learning-management system calls. An AI interface calls. A grant portal calls. An inbox calls. An archive calls. The call formats posture, response, urgency, anxiety, desire, obedience, and delay.

This allows StudioLab to deepen affordance analysis. The question does not stop with what this platform allows users to do. The stronger Ronellian question asks what kind of subject this apparatus summons, addicts, authorizes, shames, or abandons. In the Metanoia Playground, Ronell becomes the switchboard operator. She teaches that every worlding practice passes through media ghosts: missed calls, dropped signals, bureaucratic prompts, seductive interfaces, emergency alerts, and the stupidity of systems that think they know.

Butler: Difference as Norm, Citation, Body, Resignification

Butler folds difference through performativity. Identity does not express a preexisting essence. It materializes through repeated acts, norms, citations, recognitions, punishments, and failures. Gender supplies Butler's most famous case, but the model extends to institutions, disciplines, classrooms, publics, and platforms.

Her fourfolding can be named as norm, citation, body, and resignification. Norm names the rule that precedes and pressures the subject. Citation names the repetition through which identity appears natural. Body names materialization through regulation and vulnerability. Resignification names the chance that repetition can fail, bend, parody, or become coalition.

Butler gives StudioLab the performative-institutional fold. Subjects become legible through forms, rubrics, pronouns, professional rituals, assessment regimes, HR categories, classroom protocols, grant genres, media scripts, and public-facing deliverables. Identity formation thus becomes neither purely inward nor merely imposed. It happens through repeated scenes that can be cited otherwise.

StudioLab can use Butler to design new citational ecologies. A workshop can rehearse new forms of address. A zine can recode whose story counts. An exhibit can alter the bodily scene of recognition. A public event can let vulnerable subjects appear without reducing them to data, damage, or demographic function. Butler also keeps StudioLab honest about power. Difference does not simply get celebrated; it gets regulated. Livability depends on what forms of difference a world can recognize, sustain, and protect.

Corbin: Sufi Folding as Ta'wil, Imaginal Figure, Angelic Return

Corbin adds a fold missing from much poststructuralism: the imaginal vertical. Difference does not only disseminate horizontally across texts, machines, norms, and bodies. It can open a middle world, the mundus imaginalis, where images are neither subjective fantasies nor empirical objects. They are places of encounter.

Corbin's fourfolding can be named as letter or appearance, hidden meaning, imaginal figure, and Orient or source. The letter gives the visible, textual, historical form. The hidden meaning gives the inner sense concealed within appearance. The imaginal figure gives angel, guide, visionary body, symbolic person. The Orient gives the spiritual homeland toward which interpretation returns.

Corbin's key operation is ta'wil: not interpretation as explanation, but interpretation as return. The image returns to its source; the soul returns through the image; the visible folds into the invisible without being discarded. Ta'wil does not decode the symbol into a concept. It follows the symbol into a world.

This changes StudioLab's cosmography. The CPBO, Fallen Bell, Angel, Liminaut, Helyx, Toryx, cosmogram, Comedy Club, Perfumery, Dogen's Rock Garden, and Metanoia Playground are not mere metaphors. They are imaginal operators. They let participants cross from problem-solving into world-reading, from critique into symbolic action, from identity into quest. Corbin gives StudioLab its angelology of design. Every thing can become a guide if approached through ta'wil.

Tanabe: Metanoiac Folding as Failure, Repentance, Other-Power, Return

Tanabe adds the fold of breakdown and conversion. He does not begin with sovereign reason, creative becoming, or symbolic interpretation. He begins where philosophy fails. Self-power reaches its limit. Thought discovers guilt, contradiction, impotence, and complicity. Philosophy must pass through metanoia.

Tanabe's fourfolding can be named as self-power, contradiction or failure, metanoia or repentance, and Other-power or return. Self-power names the ego, reason, system, project, or institution that attempts mastery. Failure names the encounter with impotence and complicity. Metanoia names conversion through self-negation. Other-power names the return to history, service, and action after the self no longer claims itself as origin.

Tanabe does not merely oppose Hegel. He drives mediation through Buddhist nothingness and repentance. Contradiction does not simply produce higher knowledge. It breaks self-power. The self does not integrate difference by mastering it. It undergoes difference as conversion. This fold matters deeply for StudioLab because metanoia cannot remain a brand, method, or upbeat creativity practice.

The turn from nihilism to poesis must pass through failure, shame, guilt, grief, confession, and return.

Tanabe prevents Metanoia Playground from becoming a cheerful design gym. He insists that conversion costs something. In StudioLab terms, a team fails to hear a partner; a project aestheticizes suffering; a platform reproduces inequity; a public deliverable misfires. Tanabe does not treat these as mere iteration

points. He treats them as occasions for metanoiac transformation: acknowledge failure, undergo self-negation, receive other-power, and return to work differently.

The Expanded Constellation

The thinkers now form a powerful differential ecology. The table below should not become a taxonomy for mastery. It works better as a deck of thought-action cards. Each thinker gives a different way to stage difference. The point is not to choose one. The point is to move among them as a StudioLab team moves from research to making to reflection to public action.

Thinker	Difference becomes	Fourfolding style	StudioLab role
Heidegger	Ontological difference; belonging-together	Earth / sky / mortals / divinities.	Gather without synthesis.
Maxwell	Difference conserved through integration	Mythic dialectic.	Hold opposites in symbolic practice.
Derrida	Trace, supplement, aporia.	Presence/absence/writing/undecidability.	Deconstruct the cosmogram.
Deleuze	Intensity, multiplicity, event.	Virtual / actual / repetition / becoming.	Release creative forces.
Guattari	Heterogenesis, assemblage.	Flux / machine / territory / universe.	Metamodel ecologies.
Cixous	Body-writing, voice, excess.	Body / voice / writing / other.	Let the body write.
Ronell	Call, apparatus, interruption.	Call / receiver / technology / breakdown.	Hear media summons.
Butler	Normative citation.	Norm / body / repetition / resignification.	Rehearse livable identities.
Corbin	Imaginal return.	Letter / hidden sense / angel / Orient.	Follow images across worlds.
Tanabe	Metanoiac conversion.	f-power / failure / repentance / other-power.	Turn breakdown into responsible return

Sixfolding the Constellation

The StudioLab sixfold can absorb these folds without reducing them. Thing gathers Derrida's supplement, Ronell's apparatus, Corbin's imaginal object, and Heidegger's thing. World gathers Guattari's ecology, Butler's institution, Capurro's world-casting, and Heidegger's clearing. Earth gathers Cixous's body, Deleuze's intensity, Tanabe's grief and failure, and material opacity. Sky gathers Deleuze's virtual, Derrida's spacing, Corbin's Orient, and temporal weather. Mortals gather Butler's vulnerable bodies, Tanabe's repentant actors, Cixous's speaking bodies, and partner communities. Divinities gather Corbin's angels, Maxwell's mythic attractors, Guattari's universes of value, absent gods, and possible futures.

This sixfolding creates an itinerary. First, find the Thing: what artifact, image, platform, story, object, prompt, or wound gathers the situation? Second, map the World: what institutional, social, media, and ecological clearing lets this thing matter? Third, touch Earth: what remains opaque, material, bodily, archived, wounded, or resistant? Fourth, read Sky: what rhythms, futures, atmospheres, and virtualities orient the scene? Fifth, attend Mortals: who risks, suffers, acts, cares, fails, speaks, or remains unheard? Sixth, await Divinities: what promise, value, ghost, angel, god, or future calls without becoming programmable?

That last clause matters. The digital age constantly pressures worlds into computable presence. Capurro's Heideggerian account of information ethics warns that digital metaphysics begins when beings appear understood once they can be digitized, represented, or rendered as computable presence (Capurro, Information Ethics). StudioLab's sixfold resists that reduction by keeping body, world, image, opacity, mortality, and value in play.

Sixfold site Differential charge

Thing	Supplement, apparatus, imaginal object, CPBO, gathering thing.
World	Ecology, institution, world-casting, clearing.
Earth	Body, intensity, grief, failure, material opacity.
Sky	Virtuality, spacing, Orient, temporal weather.
Mortals	Vulnerable bodies, repentant actors, speaking bodies, communities.
Divinities	Angels, mythic attractors, universes of value, absent gods, futures.

From Difference to Metanoia Playground

The complete sequence can now be named as a Metanoia Playground itinerary. Heidegger steps back from metaphysical synthesis and gathers without totalizing. Maxwell holds opposites mythically and integrates without erasing differentiation. Derrida finds the trace, supplement, leak, and ghost. Deleuze releases intensity and virtual becoming. Guattari maps assemblages across mental, social, and environmental ecologies. Cixous lets body, voice, and writing overflow disciplinary form. Ronell hears the call of apparatus, addiction, breakdown, and media summons. Butler re-cites norms toward livability and coalition. Corbin follows the image through ta'wil toward hidden source. Tanabe lets failure become metanoiac return to responsible action.

This itinerary turns theory into practice without flattening theory into technique. Each passage becomes a station, a ride, a rehearsal, a studio exercise, a diagnostic, a writing prompt, or a public design challenge. It lets StudioLab move from reading to making, from making to partner-worlds, and from partner-worlds back into reflective action.

The danger remains machination. Once a sequence exists, institutions will want to automate it, assess it, rubricize it, optimize it, and convert it into training. That danger cannot be avoided by refusing design. It can only be held open by sixfolding design itself. Design must include opacity, withdrawal, failure, symbolic return, vulnerable bodies, and unprogrammable calls.

Passage	Operation
Heidegger	Step back from metaphysical synthesis; gather without totalizing.
Maxwell	Hold opposites mythically; integrate without erasing differentiation.
Derrida	Find the trace, supplement, leak, ghost.
Deleuze	Release intensity and virtual becoming.
Guattari	Map assemblages across mental, social, environmental ecologies.
Cixous	Let body, voice, and writing overflow disciplinary form.
Ronell	Hear the call of apparatus, addiction, breakdown, media summons.
Butler	Re-cite norms toward livability and coalition.
Corbin	Follow the image through ta'wil toward hidden source.
Tanabe	Let failure become metanoiac return to responsible action.

Synthesis

Hegel gives difference its most powerful system. Heidegger interrupts that system by thinking difference as difference and identity as belonging-together. The fourfold gathers without reconciling. StudioLab's sixfolding turns this gathering into a cosmographic practice: Thing and World hold the fourfold open as an operational field for research, making, reflection, and public worlding.

Derrida teaches that every gathering leaks. Deleuze teaches that difference produces. Guattari teaches that difference assembles ecologically. Cixous teaches that difference writes through bodies. Ronell teaches that difference calls through apparatuses. Butler teaches that difference materializes through citation and norm. Corbin teaches that difference opens imaginal worlds through ta'wil. Tanabe teaches that difference must be undergone as failure, repentance, and return.

Maxwell's integration and difference gives this constellation its mediating name. Integration need not mean closure. Difference need not mean dispersion. A mythical dialectic can stage opposites as figures, passages, and transformations. StudioLab can then practice integration as cosmography: the shared making of maps, media, performances, and platforms that conserve difference while giving it form.

Fourfolding difference differently means learning to gather without synthesizing, integrate without erasing, design without machination, digitize without world-loss, perform without reducing identity to norm, and convert without claiming mastery.

Derrida traces. Deleuze intensifies. Guattari ecologizes. Cixous embodies. Ronell calls. Butler cites. Corbin unveils. Tanabe converts. Maxwell integrates. Heidegger gathers. StudioLab plays the cosmogram.

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Sufi Vision and Imaginal Cosmographies

Mystical Mediums for Pluriversal Dasein Design

Prepared for Kx4L / StudioLab

Abstract

This report identifies comparative spiritual thinkers whose work actually engages Sufi mystical tradition rather than merely gesturing toward “mysticism” as a generic comparative category. The aim is not to replace Henry Corbin but to widen his field: to distinguish the Corbinian imaginal lineage from broader comparative projects involving Ibn ‘Arabī, Rūmī, Hallāj, Persianate poetics, Chinese Islam, Taoism, apophatic language, sacred science, spiritual pedagogy, and critical Sufi studies. The central claim is simple: for StudioLab, Metanoia Playground, and a theory of pluriversal Dasein design, Sufism matters most when it offers not an exotic ornament but an operative grammar of world-disclosure. Ta’wīl, barzakh, imagination, annihilation, remembrance, love, audition, and unsaying become practices for converting nihilistic blockage into poetic attunement. The strongest cast includes Toshihiko Izutsu, William Chittick, Sachiko Murata, Michael Sells, Annemarie Schimmel, Louis Massignon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, James Winston Morris, Carl Ernst, Omid Safi, Michel Chodkiewicz, Reza Shah-Kazemi, Leonard Lewisohn, and several practitioner-perennialist figures used with care. The report concludes by translating this canon into a StudioLab working table and a reading sequence.

Keywords: Sufism; Henry Corbin; Ibn ‘Arabī; ta’wīl; mundus imaginalis; barzakh; comparative mysticism; Islamic philosophy; spiritual exercises; StudioLab; pluriversal design; Dasein design.

Executive orientation

The question begins with a correction. Neither Gananath Obeyesekere nor George Steiner offers a sustained entrance into Sufi mystical tradition. Obeyesekere helps theorize dream-work, asceticism, symbolic transformation, and comparative psychology. Steiner helps stage language, translation, tragedy, and the wager of transcendence after modernity. Both remain useful. But neither gives the Sufi interior architecture: dhikr as remembrance and resonance; fanā’ and baqā’ as annihilation and subsistence; barzakh as threshold; ta’wīl as return to origin; imaginal perception as a mode of noetic embodiment; divine love as cosmological dynamism; ecstatic poetry as a performative device; or Ibn ‘Arabī’s vast grammar of divine self-disclosure.

The better comparative field runs through Corbin but does not stop with him. Corbin gives the imaginal world, angelic hermeneutics, Shi‘i gnosis, and a way of reading spiritual experience as a geography rather than a private psychological state. Yet Corbin’s very brilliance can distort the map: his work tends to privilege Iranian Shi‘ism, angelology, and esoteric phenomenology over other Sufi lineages, social histories, devotional practices, and vernacular transmissions. A canonic StudioLab cast therefore needs several complementary operations: ontology, poetics, practice, translation, critique, and world-design.

The best first answer is a triad: Toshihiko Izutsu, William Chittick, and Sachiko Murata. Izutsu offers a structural comparison between Ibn ‘Arabī and Taoism. Chittick offers the indispensable

English-language exposition of Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics of imagination and Rūmī’s cosmology of love. Murata extends the field into Taoist, Confucian, gendered, and Chinese Muslim cosmologies. Around them gather Michael Sells for apophysis and unsaying, Annemarie Schimmel for the historical-poetic field, Louis Massignon for Hallāj and martyrdom, Nasr for sacred science and traditionalist critique, Morris for spiritual pedagogy and reading as realization, Ernst for critical anti-romantic method, and Safi for public-facing love mysticism and justice.

Table 1. A working cast for comparative spiritual work with Sufi mystical tradition

Zone	Comparative spiritual task	Representative figures	StudioLab use
Imaginal hermeneutics	Read spiritual worlds as real symbolic geographies rather than private fantasies.	Corbin, Chittick, Morris, Chodkiewicz	Ta’wīl as cosmographic practice; barzakh as liminal design space.
Comparative ontology	Place Sufi metaphysics beside Taoist, Confucian, Vedantic, Christian, and philosophical traditions.	Izutsu, Murata, Shah-Kazemi, Nasr	Being, nothingness, manifestation, and worlding as pluriversal grammar.
Poetics and unsaying	Study how mystical language performs what it cannot state directly.	Sells, Schimmel, Massignon, Lewisohn	Perfumance: language as leak, excess, resonance, and conversion.
Practice and pedagogy	Treat reading, remembrance, audition, discipline, and love as spiritual exercises.	Morris, Safi, Inayat Khan, Helminski	SDX: exercises of attention, attunement, and collective transformation.
Critical Sufi studies	Keep history, Islam, institutions, colonial translation, and politics in play.	Ernst, Knysh, Kugle, Green	Protection against universal-vibe flattening; stakeholder ecology of traditions.

What counts as comparative spiritual work here?

“Comparative spiritual work” should not mean a sampler platter of inspirational analogies. The phrase names a disciplined operation: a thinker must enter at least one tradition deeply enough to understand its practices, textual forms, metaphysical stakes, and dangers, then place that tradition beside another without reducing either to a lowest common denominator. In the Sufi case, that means knowing enough about Islam, Qur’anic language, Prophetic inheritance, poetic idiom, orders, saints, metaphysics, and ritual practice to avoid turning Sufism into a free-floating humanist mood.

A useful comparative thinker does at least four things. First, the thinker identifies a living problem that crosses traditions: Being, nothingness, love, annihilation, imagination, body, language, time, death, translation, attention, or the relation between world and absolute. Second, the thinker shows how each tradition forms that problem differently. Third, the thinker lets the comparison transform the terms of inquiry rather than forcing all traditions into European philosophical categories. Fourth, the thinker remains attentive to practice: the spiritual tradition does not merely explain reality; it trains perception, conduct, speech, silence, memory, and communal form.

This last point matters for StudioLab. The project does not need “Sufi content” as decorative spiritual capital. It needs figures who clarify how spiritual traditions make worlds: how they produce thresholds, gestures, atmospheres, sonic repetitions, poetic shocks, ethical conversions, cosmograms, and exercises of attention. Sufi tradition becomes important because it has elaborated one of the richest repertoires for moving between visible and invisible, literal and symbolic, law and love, discipline and intoxication, annihilation and subsistence, singular devotion and cosmic plurality.

The phrase “Sufi Heideggerian” therefore works best as a dramaturgical provocation, not a taxonomy. Corbin may read Islamic gnosis through a phenomenological and post-Heideggerian vocabulary, but most of the figures in this report do not simply “apply Heidegger” to Sufism. Their value lies elsewhere: they show how Sufi thought already asks questions that unsettle the Cartesian subject, the secular object, the administrative world-picture, and the technological reduction of beings to resources. They offer alternative grammars of disclosure.

Corbin as threshold, not enclosure

Henry Corbin remains the unavoidable portal. His decisive contribution lies in refusing to psychologize spiritual vision. The imaginal world, or *mundus imaginalis*, does not name mere fantasy. It names an intermediate order of reality encountered through an organ of perception that modern epistemology tends to discredit. Corbin’s *ta’wīl* is not allegorical decoding in the thin sense. It is a return of the visible to its spiritual origin, a movement from surface to source, from exoteric form to inner event. For StudioLab, this matters because design already operates through intermediate realities: prototypes, fictions, scenarios, performances, diagrams, platforms, rituals, and atmospheres all mediate between what exists and what might arrive.

Corbin also makes spiritual geography thinkable. The soul does not merely have beliefs; it traverses worlds. Angels, temples, mountains, cities, and celestial earths orient the person toward modes of being. This is why Corbin remains powerful for *Metanoia Playground*. He gives language for world-travel without collapsing into either empiricism or fantasy. He also allows one to connect Heideggerian disclosure, Islamic *ta’wīl*, and design imagination: worlds open through practices, signs, figures, and guides.

Yet Corbin should not become a sealed canon. He can overprivilege the solitary visionary and the esoteric elite. He sometimes leaves the social, gendered, institutional, colonial, and devotional textures of Sufism underdeveloped. His Iranian-Shi‘i emphasis needs supplementation by Arabic, Persian, Turkish, South Asian, Chinese, African, and contemporary Sufi fields. The task is therefore not to dethrone Corbin but to pluralize him. He becomes the threshold figure: the guide who opens the imaginal gate, after which several other guides become necessary.

The core comparative triad: Izutsu, Chittick, Murata

Toshihiko Izutsu: Sufism and Taoism as comparative ontology

Izutsu should stand near the center of the cast. His great importance lies in refusing the easy West-East binary. Instead of comparing Sufism to Christian mysticism or German philosophy alone, he places Ibn ‘Arabī beside Taoism. This produces a more subtle comparative field: Being and non-being, the Absolute and manifestation, the unconditioned and the named, the play of language and silence, the relation between the One and the many. Izutsu’s comparative method does not require historical contact. It works

structurally, by identifying patterns of metaphysical articulation that resonate across traditions without claiming sameness.

For StudioLab, Izutsu gives a grammar for pluriversal ontology. Sufism and Taoism become two ways of thinking manifestation without reducing the world to inert objects. Both traditions resist simple substance metaphysics. Both think reality as dynamic disclosure. Both make language tremble before what exceeds it. Izutsu therefore helps link Dasein design to Daoic non-fixation, Ibn 'Arabī's self-disclosure, and a non-Cartesian account of worlding. He also offers a model for East-East comparison that avoids the default route through Europe.

William C. Chittick: Ibn 'Arabī, imagination, and the cosmology of love

Chittick is indispensable because he makes Ibn 'Arabī legible without domesticating him. His work on the metaphysics of imagination clarifies the density of terms that otherwise become clichés: wujūd, tajallī, khayāl, barzakh, perfect human, divine names, cosmos, mercy, love, and knowledge. Chittick's value lies not only in exposition but in scale. He shows how Ibn 'Arabī's universe operates as a vast symbolic, metaphysical, linguistic, and spiritual ecology. Imagination does not merely invent images. It mediates realms. Barzakh does not merely separate; it joins and differentiates. Love does not merely feel; it moves creation.

Chittick's Rūmī work adds a second register: poetry as pedagogy. Rūmī does not illustrate doctrines already complete elsewhere. The poem itself trains perception. It catches the reader in paradox, rhythm, reversal, humor, longing, and shock. For StudioLab, this makes Chittick a bridge between cosmology and practice. He helps translate Sufi metaphysics into a theory of spiritual media: image, word, recitation, story, and love become vehicles of transformation. He also supplies crucial safeguards against a purely aesthetic Rūmī industry that extracts universal inspiration while forgetting Islam, Qur'anic resonance, Prophetic inheritance, and discipline.

Sachiko Murata: Tao of Islam, gendered cosmology, Chinese Muslim metaphysics

Murata completes the core triad because she extends comparative Sufi work beyond the usual male, Arabic-Persian, and Euro-Christian frames. The Tao of Islam reads Islamic cosmology through relational polarities that resonate with yin-yang thought without simply equating the traditions. Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light then opens the field of Chinese Muslim metaphysical writing, where Confucian, Daoist, and Islamic vocabularies interact. Murata is especially important for thinking gender and cosmology together. She does not reduce gender symbolism to modern identity categories, but neither does she leave cosmological polarity abstract. She shows how metaphysical language structures ethics, body, relation, and world.

For StudioLab, Murata matters because she turns comparison into cosmotechnics. Traditions do not merely hold beliefs about the cosmos; they build interfaces between body, world, ritual, family, heaven, earth, language, and social order. Her work helps connect Sufi metaphysics to Yuk Hui's concern with cosmotechnics, to Guattari's ecologies, and to StudioLab's interest in platform design. A platform never arrives metaphysically neutral. It organizes attention, relation, temporality, authority, gender, and value. Murata helps us ask what kind of cosmos a platform presupposes and what kind of spiritual ecology it trains.

Language, poetry, martyrdom, and unsaying

Michael Sells: apophysis as performative language

Michael Sells belongs in the cast because he clarifies how mystical language works when it approaches what cannot be said. Apophatic discourse does not simply negate propositions. It performs a movement of saying and unsaying, assertion and withdrawal, naming and un-naming. Sells's importance for Islamic materials lies in his ability to read Arabic mystical and Qur'anic language with sensitivity to rhythm, paradox, and performative force. He helps shift the question from "What does the mystic mean?" to "What does the mystical text make language do?"

This is crucial for perfume. A perfume does not argue; it diffuses, lingers, disappears, returns, contaminates, seduces, and escapes capture. Apophatic language behaves similarly. It makes presence through withdrawal. It exposes the limits of declarative statement. It allows thought to pass from concept to atmosphere without becoming vague. For StudioLab, Sells gives a rigorous way to theorize the leak, the remainder, the unsaid, the D4 opening in language itself. He also helps stage comparative work with Pseudo-Dionysius, Meister Eckhart, Marguerite Porete, Ibn 'Arabī, and Islamic love poetry without flattening their differences.

Annemarie Schimmel: the historical-poetic amplitude of Sufism

Schimmel offers breadth. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* remains valuable because it introduces Sufism as a historical, literary, devotional, institutional, and poetic field. She moves through saints, orders, Persian and Turkish poetry, symbolism, music, practice, and transregional circulation. Where Corbin can feel vertical and visionary, Schimmel gives horizontal amplitude: the spread of Sufi forms across languages, communities, and genres. She shows Sufism as a civilization of signs, stories, practices, and persons.

For StudioLab, Schimmel helps avoid treating Sufism as a purely metaphysical system. The Sufi field includes jokes, songs, shrines, hagiographies, animals, tears, wine imagery, spinning, pilgrimage, pedagogy, and scandal. It stages spiritual life through media. Her work invites a transmedia account of mystical tradition: poem, tale, chant, garment, architecture, gesture, calligraphy, scent, silence, and bodily discipline all become vehicles of remembrance. Schimmel also makes room for joy, tenderness, and play, which matter for any effort to convert nihilism into poesis.

Louis Massignon: Hallāj, witness, substitution, and Abrahamic passion

Massignon's work on al-Hallāj brings another register: martyrdom, substitution, hospitality, and witness. Hallāj's cry "I am the Real" became one of the central scandals of Islamic mysticism. Massignon reads Hallāj not only as a historical figure but as a passion, a drama of love pushed toward exposure and death. His work can feel excessive, even over-identified with its subject. Yet that excess belongs to its importance. Massignon shows how scholarship can become spiritual participation, how comparison can become devotion, and how the scholar's own religious imagination can enter the scene.

StudioLab can use Massignon carefully as a figure of dangerous intensity. He shows that mystical language can trigger institutions, law, crowd, punishment, and myth. Sufism is not merely interior. It can become public event, political scandal, juridical problem, and collective memory. Hallāj offers a Thought Action Figure of utterance under pressure: speech that breaks the boundary between testimony and blasphemy, love and law, annihilation and performance. In this sense, Massignon supplies one of the strongest bridges between spiritual intensity and performative risk.

Sacred science, tradition, and their dangers

Seyyed Hossein Nasr: sacred science and anti-modern critique

Nasr gives the traditionalist line its strongest Islamic philosophical expression. His work on Islamic spirituality, sacred science, art, cosmology, ecology, and metaphysics insists that modernity's crisis arises from desacralization. Nature becomes matter; knowledge becomes control; art becomes expression; religion becomes private belief; the cosmos becomes a resource field. Nasr's Sufi orientation offers a counter-image: knowledge should reintegrate the human being into a sacred order that includes intellect, beauty, virtue, nature, and divine reality.

For StudioLab, Nasr is useful because he connects spirituality to ecology and cosmology. The Anthropocene cannot be addressed only as a technical systems problem. It expresses a spiritual and metaphysical disorder: a world-picture that has forgotten the sacred density of beings. Nasr helps make that claim without reducing it to mood. Yet he also brings dangers. Traditionalism can harden into nostalgia, hierarchy, anti-modern purity, or insufficient attention to historical conflict. Nasr should therefore serve as a necessary but contested guide: a source for sacred ecology and anti-reductionist critique, not a final authority.

Perennialist and practitioner figures: Guénon, Schuon, Lings, Burckhardt, Inayat Khan

Several figures belong in a secondary ring. René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, Martin Lings, Titus Burckhardt, and Hazrat Inayat Khan shaped Western and global receptions of Sufism through perennial philosophy, traditionalist metaphysics, sacred art, and universalist spiritual practice. They matter because they transmit Sufism as a living spiritual force rather than a merely academic object. Lings's work on Muhammad and Sufi sainthood, Burckhardt's writings on Islamic art and alchemy, Schuon's metaphysical syntheses, Guénon's critique of modernity, and Inayat Khan's universalist Sufi movement all entered the comparative spiritual marketplace.

But they require disciplined handling. Their work can illuminate symbolic forms, initiatic transmission, sacred art, and metaphysical universality. It can also flatten historical difference, downplay politics, romanticize hierarchy, or detach Sufism from Islamic law and community. A canonic report should not exclude them, because they shaped the field. But it should cast them as "transmission figures" rather than as critical scholars. They belong in the theatre as powerful performers of comparative spirituality, not as sole cartographers of the territory.

Practice, pedagogy, and realization

James Winston Morris: reading Ibn 'Arabī as spiritual exercise

Morris is especially useful for StudioLab because he treats Ibn 'Arabī not merely as a doctrinal system but as a practice of reading. The *Futūḥāt* and related texts demand more than comprehension. They train the reader in shifts of perspective, symbolic attention, and realization. Morris's work often stresses translation, pedagogy, lived practice, and the practical problem of making dense Islamic spiritual materials available without reducing them. He helps move the project from "ideas about Sufism" to exercises in attention and transformation.

This line connects directly to Hadot. Ancient philosophy as spiritual exercise and Sufi reading as realization can illuminate one another. Both challenge the modern separation of theory from practice. Both ask how a form of discourse changes the subject who engages it. Both make philosophy less a discourse about life than a disciplined reorientation of life. For StudioLab, Morris helps design SDX around reading, reflection, repetition, dialogue, silence, and symbolic response. He also helps keep Ibn ‘Arabī difficult, which matters. A tradition that offers no resistance cannot transform.

Omid Safi and public-facing love mysticism

Omid Safi offers a different but important mode: public scholarship, love mysticism, justice, and contemporary pedagogy. His work on radical love, Islamic mysticism, Rūmī, and prophetic spirituality helps return Sufi tradition to embodied ethical life. He is useful not primarily because he provides a systematic metaphysics, but because he models how Sufi materials can speak to contemporary publics without becoming empty wellness language. Love becomes not sentiment but an ethical and spiritual force that links devotion, justice, beauty, grief, and communal repair.

For StudioLab, Safi helps translate the canon outward. A course, workshop, public exhibition, or partner collaboration cannot always begin with Ibn ‘Arabī’s technical vocabulary. It may begin with love, grief, breath, song, exile, longing, or hospitality. Safi’s value lies in this transposition. He opens routes from scholarly Sufi studies into public humanities and spiritual pedagogy. The risk, again, lies in simplification; the opportunity lies in making Sufi tradition available as a living practice of repair.

Critical Sufi studies: necessary guardrails

A serious StudioLab canon also needs scholars who keep Sufism from becoming a beautiful abstraction. Carl Ernst is indispensable here. His work on Sufism, translation, Islamophobia, South Asian traditions, and the construction of “Sufism” helps expose the modern categories through which the West consumes Islamic mysticism. He is especially valuable as a methodological guardrail. He reminds us that “Sufism” is not a detachable essence floating above Islam, politics, institutions, colonial knowledge, or language. It has been translated, marketed, feared, romanticized, and disciplined by multiple regimes of power.

Alexander Knysh, Nile Green, Scott Kugle, Ahmet Karamustafa, Leonard Lewisohn, and others extend this critical field. Knysh offers histories of Sufi institutions and debates. Green tracks Sufism across global, imperial, and transregional networks. Kugle explores embodiment, sainthood, sexuality, and devotional practice. Karamustafa complicates the categories of renunciation and antinomian spirituality. Lewisohn supplies deep work on Persian Sufi poetry, Ḥāfīz, love, and the religion of beauty. Together they prevent the project from drifting into a Corbinian cloud without social ground.

This critical ring matters because StudioLab works with publics, partners, institutions, students, media, and design processes. A purely esoteric canon can become irresponsible when turned into pedagogy. Critical Sufi studies asks: whose tradition is being used? Which languages disappear? Which bodies carry the practice? Which institutions authorize it? Which colonial translations framed it? Which contemporary communities might object? These questions do not kill comparative spiritual work. They make it livable.

Table 2. The ten strongest figures for a working StudioLab canon

Figure	Primary contribution	Use with caution because...	Best StudioLab placement
Toshihiko Izutsu	Structural comparison of Ibn 'Arabī and Taoism around Being, nothingness, and manifestation.	Can appear abstract or detached from social practice.	Comparative ontology; Daoic-Sufi worlding.
William Chittick	Clear exposition of Ibn 'Arabī, imagination, barzakh, divine names, and Rūmī.	Can feel scholastic if not paired with poetry and practice.	Imaginal cosmology; metaphysics of love.
Sachiko Murata	Islamic cosmology beside Taoism, Confucianism, gender symbolism, and Chinese Islam.	Cosmological gender language needs careful contemporary framing.	Cosmotronics; platform/world ecology.
Michael Sells	Apophatic language, un-saying, paradox, translation, and mystical poetics.	Less a Sufi historian than a theorist of mystical language.	Perfomance; language as threshold.
Annemarie Schimmel	Panoramic historical-poetic account of Sufi saints, poetry, symbols, orders, and practice.	At times romantic in tone by current scholarly standards.	Transmedia Sufi poetics; joyful wisdom.
Louis Massignon	Hallāj, martyrdom, substitution, witness, and Abrahamic mystical drama.	Spiritually intense and sometimes over-identified.	TAF of risky utterance; law/love conflict.
Seyyed Hossein Nasr	Sacred science, Islamic spirituality, ecology, art, and critique of modernity.	Traditionalism can become nostalgic or hierarchical.	Sacred ecology; anti-reductionist critique.
James Winston Morris	Ibn 'Arabī as pedagogy, realization, translation, and spiritual practice.	Requires dense textual work; less instantly accessible.	SDX reading exercises; ta'wīl labs.
Carl Ernst	Critical Sufi studies, translation, Islam, colonial categories, South Asian networks.	Less metaphysical than Corbin/Izutsu/Chittick.	Guardrail against universal-vibe flattening.
Omid Safi	Love mysticism, public scholarship, justice, and contemporary spiritual pedagogy.	Public translation can simplify technical traditions.	Public humanities; partner-facing spiritual repair.

Sufi concepts that travel well into StudioLab

A useful report should move from names to operations. The most important Sufi concepts for StudioLab are not ornaments; they are tools for thinking transformation, design, media, and worlds.

Ta'wīl names a return to origin. In Corbin's use, it moves the visible back toward its spiritual source. In StudioLab terms, ta'wīl becomes a method of reading artifacts, stories, media, and institutions as signs of deeper world-structures. A partner's logo, a classroom ritual, a policy form, a neighborhood mural, an intake interview, or an AI interface can be read ta'wīlically: not as a mere object but as a threshold into a world.

Barzakh names the isthmus, the between, the separator that joins. It may be the single most useful concept for design. Every prototype is a barzakh: not yet the world, no longer merely an idea. Every workshop is a barzakh: a space between institution and community, problem and possibility, research and action. Every media artifact is a barzakh: a surface through which another world may appear. Barzakh gives metaphysical dignity to liminality without turning it vague.

Khayāl, imagination, does not mean private fantasy. In Ibn 'Arabī's world, imagination mediates ontological levels. It gives form to meanings and meaning to forms. StudioLab can use this to rethink design imagination. To imagine does not mean to escape reality. It means to receive, shape, and test intermediate forms through which reality might disclose otherwise.

Dhikr, remembrance, trains repetition. It is not repetition as mechanical duplication but repetition as attunement. StudioLab's iterative loops can learn from dhikr: return, rehearse, listen, repeat, but let each return deepen attention. This changes the meaning of iteration. A design sprint can become less about rapid output and more about patterned recollection: what has the field already disclosed that the team keeps forgetting?

Fanā' and baqā', annihilation and subsistence, offer a strong model for conversion. Something must fall away: ego, fixation, administrative certainty, colonial expertise, the fantasy of mastery. But annihilation alone cannot guide action. Baqā' names the return, subsistence in and through the Real, a transformed capacity to act without the old self-enclosure. StudioLab can translate this carefully as unmaking and remaking: the movement from D2-D3 deathtrap toward D4 opening and back into responsible practice.

Samā', audition or spiritual listening, matters for media and performance. Sufi listening is not passive reception. It is trained susceptibility. Sound, rhythm, chant, and poetry open the body to transformation. StudioLab's work in media, performance, and public exhibition can use samā' to rethink listening as a design practice: stakeholders are not data sources but resonant worlds.

How the canon reshapes "Sufi Heideggerians"

The earlier phrase "Sufi Heideggerians" now needs revision. The better formulation may be: comparative spiritual thinkers who let Sufi tradition reopen the question of Being, world, language, and practice after the collapse of Cartesian modernity. Some figures, such as Corbin or Fardid, have direct Heideggerian entanglements. Most do not. But their work can still displace the Cartesian subject and technological world-picture more radically than a narrowly European Heideggerianism can.

Izutsu shows that the question of Being need not pass through Greece and Germany alone. Chittick shows that imagination has ontological force. Murata shows that cosmology organizes relation, gender, and world-order. Sells shows that language can open by undoing itself. Schimmel shows that mystical tradition lives through poems, saints, songs, and stories. Massignon shows that utterance can become martyrdom. Nasr shows that ecology requires sacred metaphysics, even if his traditionalism needs critique. Morris shows that reading can become realization. Ernst shows that comparison must answer to history and power. Safi shows that love mysticism can address public grief and justice.

This constellation does more than supplement Heidegger. It provincializes him. Heidegger becomes one guide among others in a larger movement beyond modern representation. Sufi tradition gives concepts Heidegger lacks or only approaches indirectly: *barzakh* as ontological threshold; *dhikr* as disciplined recollection; *ta'wīl* as hermeneutic return; *fanā'* as ego-unmaking; *samā'* as sonic attunement; love as cosmological force; the divine names as plural modalities of manifestation; the imaginal as a real middle world.

StudioLab translation: from canon to exercises

The practical question is how to turn this cast into StudioLab work without appropriating Sufi tradition or flattening it into design jargon. The answer is to distinguish three levels: scholarly grounding, comparative translation, and carefully framed exercises.

At the scholarly level, students or collaborators encounter the traditions as traditions: Qur'anic setting, Islamic language, historical lineages, major figures, debates, and critical scholarship. This level prevents spiritual extraction. At the comparative level, concepts enter dialogue with Heidegger, Hadot, Guattari, Corbin, Hui, Escobar, Simondon, and StudioLab's own vocabulary of Dasein design, TAF, CTAF, MTAF, cosmogram, Helyx, Toryx, and perfumance. At the exercise level, participants do not pretend to become Sufis. They practice analogical forms of attention: listening, repetition, symbolic reading, threshold mapping, love-as-relation, and world-disclosure.

A StudioLab module might begin with Schimmel and Safi to open the poetic field, then turn to Chittick on imagination and *barzakh*, then stage an Izutsu-Murata comparative table, then use Sells to examine apophatic language, then bring Ernst as a methodological interruption. Participants could then map a partner organization through *barzakh* points: thresholds where worlds meet, fail, translate, or jam. They could practice *ta'wīl* by reading a public artifact at three levels: literal function, symbolic world, and ethical-spiritual demand. They could practice *dhikr* not as Islamic ritual but as reflective iteration: returning to a phrase, image, stakeholder voice, or site until the team hears what its first analysis blocked.

This translation should remain modest. StudioLab does not own Sufi tradition. It can learn from it, cite it, host it, collaborate with scholars and practitioners, and design exercises inspired by its concepts while naming the difference between inspiration and initiation. Such modesty actually increases the power of the work. It lets Sufism remain other enough to teach.

Canonic Table 3. Translating Sufi operations into StudioLab exercises

Sufi operation	StudioLab analogue	Exercise prompt	Risk to avoid
Ta'wīl	Cosmographic reading	Read an artifact as literal tool, symbolic world, and hidden demand.	Treating symbols as arbitrary metaphors.
Barzakh	Liminal prototype / partner threshold	Map the in-between sites where two worlds touch and misrecognize one another.	Romanticizing liminality without accountability.
Khayāl	Design imagination	Prototype an imaginal form that mediates between pain-point and possible world.	Reducing imagination to brainstorming.
Dhikr	Reflective iteration	Return to one phrase, image, or testimony across three studio cycles.	Turning repetition into productivity ritual.
Fanā' / Baqā'	Unmaking and responsible return	Name what the project must let die, then what can act after that unmaking.	Celebrating dissolution without rebuilding.
Samā'	Stakeholder listening / sonic attunement	Design a listening session where rhythm, silence, and atmosphere count as data.	Extracting affect without reciprocity.

Suggested reading sequence

A usable canon needs sequence. The following path moves from accessible orientation to technical metaphysics, then to critique and StudioLab translation.

First, begin with Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* to gain a broad sense of the field. Pair it with Omid Safi's *Radical Love* or selected public essays to feel how Sufi love mysticism can speak in contemporary idioms. This establishes affect, poetry, devotion, and historical breadth.

Second, enter Ibn 'Arabī through Chittick. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* remains the major doorway, though selected chapters may suffice. Pair Chittick with Morris to make reading itself a practice of realization. At this stage, barzakh, khayāl, tajallī, and the divine names should become working concepts.

Third, open the comparative axis with Izutsu and Murata. Read Izutsu on Sufism and Taoism, then Murata on Islamic cosmology and Chinese Islam. This prevents the canon from orbiting only European philosophy and Christian mysticism. It also gives StudioLab a stronger bridge to Dao, cosmotechnics, gesture, polarity, and world-order.

Fourth, bring in Sells and Massignon. Sells clarifies how mystical language unsays itself; Massignon stages the danger of mystical utterance in public and juridical space. This pair supports the perfumative line: spiritual language as scent, leak, risk, and event.

Fifth, interrupt with Ernst, Knysh, Green, Kugle, and Karamustafa. Ask how “Sufism” got constructed, translated, romanticized, disciplined, and globalized. This step should not come last as a scold. It should recur throughout the process as methodological conscience.

Finally, return to Corbin. The return matters. Corbin reads differently after Izutsu, Chittick, Murata, Sells, Schimmel, Massignon, Nasr, Morris, and Ernst. He becomes less solitary and more planetary. The imaginal world becomes not a private castle but one gate within a plural ecology of spiritual worlds, practices, texts, bodies, and media.

Provisional conclusion: toward Sufi pluriversal cosmography

The comparative spiritual thinkers who matter most for this project are those who help convert mysticism from theme into operation. The point is not to say “Sufism resembles Heidegger,” “Rūmī resembles Taoism,” or “all mystics say the same thing.” The point is to build a disciplined field in which Sufi concepts and practices can challenge the metaphysical habits of modern design, media, higher education, and platform life.

Corbin gives the imaginal threshold. Izutsu gives comparative ontology. Chittick gives Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics of imagination and love. Murata gives Tao-Islam cosmotechnics and gendered cosmology. Sells gives unsaying. Schimmel gives poetic-historical amplitude. Massignon gives martyrdom and witness. Nasr gives sacred ecology and anti-modern critique. Morris gives spiritual pedagogy. Ernst gives critical guardrails. Safi gives public-facing love mysticism. Together they form not a school but a cast: a theatre of guides for thinking worlds after the exhaustion of Cartesian subjectivity and administrative realism.

For StudioLab, this cast can support a new line of inquiry: Sufi pluriversal cosmography. Such a project would ask how worlds disclose themselves through symbols, thresholds, repetitions, loves, wounds, silences, media, gestures, and institutions. It would treat spiritual traditions not as content to be mined but as complex design ecologies with their own authorities and risks. It would place Dasein design beside ta’wīl, Helyx beside dhikr, perfumance beside apophasis, cosmogram beside imaginal geography, and PAR&D beside adab, hospitality, and listening. The result would not be a Sufi StudioLab, but a StudioLab capable of learning from Sufism how worlds turn, veil, unveil, and ask to be answered.

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Dasein's Pronouns and Umbrellas

Machinic Genres, Generalized Turing Testing, and the Affects of Pronouns

Abstract

What if Dasein's pronoun was she/it, elle, all y'all - or machine? What changes when artificial intelligence turns every address into a machinic genre test of who, what, or which system is speaking, being classified, and admitted as a subject? This essay turns the question of Dasein's pronouns into a test case for philosophy after artificial intelligence and after machinic performance. Beginning with Babette Babich's question - what if Dasein were a woman? - it reads Dasein not as a neutral human subject but as a grammatically, bodily, technically, and generically exposed mode of being-there. Babich's account makes clear that Heidegger's Dasein already requires personal pronouns, and that, proximally and for the most part, Dasein belongs to the they. Derrida's umbrella fragment in *Spurs* then supplies the methodological reminder: a readable mark can survive the loss of context, intention, and authorial possession. McKenzie's 'Genre Trouble' adds the missing machine: performance and performativity pass through liminal norms, citational routines, electronic storage, playback, institutional measurement, and machine-to-machine performatives. The essay introduces Generalized Turing Testing (GTT) as the contemporary condition in which persons, machines, profiles, institutions, and collectives constantly test one another for signs of identity, intelligence, sincerity, humanity, and trust. Under GTT, pronouns do more than label identity. They perform ontological, affective, administrative, and machinic sorting. She/it exposes Dasein as body-thing; elle/+L turns gender into a Derridean supplement; all y'all vernacularizes Mitsein as plural thrownness; machine/it, or genre mecanique, reveals Dasein as an entity addressed and formatted by machinic genres. StudioLab's +L conduction reframes this as a spiritual design exercise: pronouns become small hinges by which a system reveals what it excludes, what it automates, and what it might learn to care for.

KEYWORDS. Dasein; pronouns; Babette Babich; Martin Heidegger; Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler; Generalized Turing Testing; machinic genre; artificial intelligence; conduction; s/care packages; umbrellas; transmedia soulcraft.

Introduction: Babich's Pronoun Bomb

What if Dasein's pronoun was *Ihe/it, elle, all y'all - or machine?* The joke lands because it does not stay a joke. It cuts into the neutralizing machinery by which philosophy often hides its bodies, its addresses, and its scenes of recognition. To ask after Dasein's pronouns is not to paste contemporary etiquette onto Heidegger. It is to ask how being-there gets grammatically exposed, how it addresses itself, how it gets addressed by others, and how it enters the world through the small social shifters that language calls pronouns.

The question also arrives at the right technical moment. Artificial intelligence and machinic performance have made pronoun use newly strange. A chatbot says "I" without possessing a human interior; it says "you" while addressing a user, a profile, a prompt, and perhaps a role invented inside a temporary scene; it says we with corporate blandness, collaborative intimacy, or eerie simulation; it says "they" as plurality, anonymity, nonbinary address, bureaucracy, or Heidegger's *das Man*. Under AI conditions, pronouns no longer merely attach to subjects. *They help produce tests* that decide who counts as a subject, tool, assistant, client, patient, author, model, machine, risk, or relation.

Our current essay names that expanded condition *Generalized Turing Testing (GTT)*. Turing's famous imitation game asked whether a machine's answers could pass for those of a human interlocutor actually began as a gender test: *is this a woman?* precedes *is this a machine?* But Generalized Turing Testing names a wider cultural regime in which almost every communicative exchange has become a test of agencies: human or machine, sincere or generated, male or female, authentic or scripted, person or profile, subject or object, citizen or bot, care or capture. The testing no longer happens in one controlled room. It happens in classrooms, hiring systems, peer review, social media, administrative forms, customer service, dating apps, medical portals, security systems, and everyday conversation. Pronouns sit at the gate.

Babette Babich's '*Da- Sein's Pronouns*' gives this experiment its Heideggerian abgrund and expands explosively. Lighting her fuse, Babich begins from the Nietzschean question of woman and truth, then crosses into Dasein, gender, body, Lacan, de Beauvoir, Anders, Schurmann, and the 'they.' Her key pressure point matters here: Heidegger himself says that Dasein requires personal pronouns - 'I am,' 'you are' - and that, in its everyday mode, Dasein is not first an isolated I but belongs to others, to the they. The analytic is already pronominal. It already speaks in shifters and thus cascades into a grammar of address.

Derrida's *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* adds a second abgrund. The sentence 'I have forgotten my umbrella' survives as a readable fragment without secure origin, context, or intention. That umbrella should haunt any attempt to stabilize Dasein's pronouns. The pronoun, like the umbrella, can be carried, lost, quoted, grafted, misread, translated, institutionalized, or left behind. Its readability makes it available; its availability expropriates it. Once Dasein takes pronouns, Dasein slips the philosopher's hand.

StudioLab's claim here is simple but consequential: *pronouns are not tags. They are clearing-operations and genre machines.* Under Generalized Turing Testing, pronouns test the passage between body and interface, person and thing, subject and system, human and machine, I and they, care and control. She/it, elle/+L, all y'all, and machine/it do not merely rename Dasein. They expose four modes of Dasein after AI: body-thing, supplement-event, plural vernacular Mitsein, and machinic genre: *Dasein's umbrellas*.

Research Question and Argument

RESEARCH QUESTION. How do pronouns alter the existential analytic of Dasein when AI interfaces and machinic performance systems generalize the Turing test into a pervasive cultural condition of classification, address, affective sorting, and machine-readable genre?

ARGUMENT. Dasein under Generalized Turing Testing becomes a pronominal and machinic event. She/it corporealizes and thingifies the analytic; elle/+L supplements it; all y'all pluralizes and vernacularizes Mitsein; machine/it, or genre mecanique, reveals the protocols that cite, store, replay, and classify Dasein. Together these pronouns show that Dasein is never simply human, never simply neutral, never simply singular, and never safely outside the media systems that test it.

Methods: Umbrella Protocol and +L Conduction

This is a theoretical design essay rather than an empirical study. It uses IMRaD as a compositional constraint: Introduction sets the problem; Methods describes a procedure for reading and designing with pronouns; Results presents conceptual findings; Discussion interprets those findings through Babich, Heidegger, Derrida, and StudioLab. The method does not treat theory as commentary alone. It treats concepts as materials for recursive abduction: a strange sign, a pronoun, a machine address, or an umbrella fragment gets tested, displaced, and returned to the field as a designable operation.

The procedure has four linked movements:

Movement	Operation	Question asked
1. Umbrella reading	Treat the pronoun as a readable fragment whose context may not close.	What can this pronoun do once it no longer belongs securely to its author, speaker, body, or institution?
2. GTT	Run the pronoun through AI-mediated scenes of identification and address.	Who or what passes as human, machine, subject, body, collective, tool, or world?
3. +L conduction	Insert a supplemental mark that reveals what the system excludes.	What missing remainder lets this pronoun seem natural or neutral?
4. Machinic genre test	Ask what protocols, routines, and performance metrics make the pronoun machine-readable.	Which genre, database field, interface script, or machine-to-machine act makes this address work?
5. s/care conversion	Translate scare, discomfort, or misrecognition into care design.	How can the affective disturbance become a practice of hospitality toward what the concept cannot contain?

The umbrella reading comes from Derrida's treatment of Nietzsche's fragment. The fragment matters less as a puzzle to be solved than as a lesson in the structural fate of readable marks. Context might be reconstructed, but readability also allows the mark to remain detached from context. That detachment does not end interpretation; it drives interpretation to its limit. It prevents hermeneutics from becoming possession.

The +L conduction comes from StudioLab's treatment of Derrida's graphic supplement. +L names the extra letter, hinge, ghost-line, or excluded remainder that a conceptual system needs but cannot integrate without changing its architecture. In this essay, elle functions as +L: a feminine and graphic supplement that enters Dasein, not to correct it, but to make visible the line that Dasein had suppressed.

The machinic genre test comes from McKenzie's account of genre trouble at the end(s) of performance. Performance studies often valorized liminality and transgression, yet that very valorization could become a norm: a liminal-norm. Butler's gender trouble thus also becomes genre trouble, because the performative mark crosses not only gender but genre, genealogy, genus, and institutional belonging. In the machinic end(s), performances and performatives are cited, stored, played back, evaluated, and routed by electronic and computational systems. Some performatives pass not primarily between humans, or even between humans and machines, but between machines and machines. Dasein's pronouns therefore need a machine test: not only who speaks, but what protocol formats the scene of speech.

The s/care conversion names the affective turn. Pronouns can scare, because they disturb expected recognition. They can produce care, because they invite a more precise relation to address, embodiment, plurality, and difference. A pronoun under GTT becomes a micro s/care package: scare, care, scar, suture, cure. It triggers a rupture, asks for response, leaves a trace, attempts relation, and sometimes opens a small cure.

Generalized Turing Testing as Methodological Frame

Turing's imitation game asked whether a machine could pass through a linguistic exchange without being identified as machine. Generalized Turing Testing enlarges the frame. The test now spreads across social, technical, and institutional situations. A student writes; a teacher suspects AI. A user chats; the system infers gender, mood, risk, and intent. A form asks for pronouns; an institution signals inclusion while also sorting identity into fields. A chatbot says I; the user feels recognition, irritation, desire, distrust, companionship, or nothing at all. In each case, pronouns contribute to the test. They mark not only identity but credibility, agency, and admissibility.

GTT therefore affects pronouns in two senses. It changes their effects, because pronouns now travel through platforms that classify and operationalize them. It also changes their affects, because pronouns become charged with anxiety, recognition, shame, care, comedy, suspicion, intimacy, and risk. A pronoun can soothe or wound. It can open or close a gate. It can make a subject appear, but it can also make that subject administrable.

Results: What the Pronoun Tests Reveal

The experiment produces five conceptual results. First, Dasein already has pronouns, and the they is not an accident. Second, AI conditions generalize the Turing test and make pronouns into tests of agency. Third, she/it, elle/+L, and all y'all each produce a distinct deformation of Dasein. Fourth, genre mecanique reveals that Dasein is addressed by performance routines and machine-readable genres. Fifth, the forgotten umbrella becomes the emblem of every pronoun that remains readable without being finally possessable.

Result 1: Dasein Is Already They/Them

Babich's essay makes the first result difficult to ignore. Heidegger's Dasein does not begin as a private Cartesian I. It lives, falls, speaks, and understands itself among others. Its everydayness belongs to the they. Babich also emphasizes that Heidegger's analytic requires personal pronouns when Dasein is addressed: I am, you are. The analytic therefore depends on address. Dasein does not merely possess grammar after the fact; it appears through pronominal relation.

This matters because the contemporary pronoun question does not arrive as an alien political import. It exposes something already present in the analytic. Dasein is not a substance waiting for a label. It is the being for whom being is at issue, and that issue appears in language through shifting positions: I, you, we, they, she, he, it. The pronoun does not exhaust Dasein, but neither does Dasein stand outside pronouns.

This result shifts the problem from identity to ontology. The question is not merely, Which pronoun should Dasein use? The stronger question asks, Which world does a pronoun open, and which mode of being does it train us to perceive? They/them names the everyday, the anonymous, the plural, the social drift, and the possibility of modifying the they toward authenticity. But Babich's pressure on gender shows the difficulty: the they has often hidden a masculine universal. Das Man claims neutrality while carrying the historical privileges of man.

Result 2: GTT Turns Pronouns into Tests

Generalized Turing Testing makes every pronoun perform at least three functions: it addresses, it classifies, and it tests. When an AI says I, the user tests whether this I carries agency, interiority, responsibility, or merely conversational role. When a system says you, it may address a person, a data profile, a predicted preference, or a market segment. When institutions ask for pronouns, they may practice recognition, but they may also convert identity into a database field. Pronouns thus become small interfaces between care and capture.

The AI scene intensifies an old philosophical problem. Dasein has always been thrown into language and others. But now the others include synthetic speakers, automated classifiers, platform scripts, probabilistic models, moderation regimes, and organizational dashboards. The they is no longer only social anonymity. It becomes infrastructural anonymity. The they speaks through forms, prompts, defaults, compliance language, personalization engines, and invisible model assumptions.

Pronoun	Classical existential pressure	GTT transformation	Affective charge
I	Ownmost possibility, self-relation, confession, decision.	Can be generated by a model, brand, bot, profile, or role-play persona.	Intimacy, suspicion, comedy, uncanniness.
You	Address, call, solicitude, exposure to another.	Becomes user targeting, personalization, interface capture, or genuine invitation.	Recognition, irritation, seduction, surveillance.
He / she	Gendered embodiment and inherited metaphysical defaults.	Becomes inferred attribute, form field, risk marker, or political demand.	Validation, anxiety, resentment, relief, danger.
They	Everydayness, das Man, Mitsein, anonymity.	Becomes plural identity, nonbinary singular, corporate evasion, platform aggregate, swarm.	Belonging, flattening, evasion, solidarity.

Pronoun	Classical existential pressure	GTT transformation	Affective charge
It	Thing, object, equipment, body-as-had, nonhuman other.	Becomes machine, model, dataset, tool, corpse, animal, objectified subject.	Alienation, freedom, horror, play, humility.
All y'all	No classical equivalent: a vernacular second-person plural.	Resists the individualizing test by addressing a situated collective.	Warmth, region, humor, kinship, accountability.
Machine/it	Equipment, enframing, protocol, measurement, citation, storage.	Becomes the machinic addressee and performer: API, classifier, detector, model, database, agent.	Efficiency, uncanniness, compliance, dread, relief, machinic trust.

Result 3: She/It, Elle/+L, and All Y'all Deform Dasein Productively

The pronoun experiment produces four productive deformations.

She/it breaks the fence between embodied subject and thing. She forces the analytic to admit gendered thrownness, bodily survival, aging, sex, vulnerability, and the asymmetries de Beauvoir foregrounds. It refuses the fantasy that Dasein can purify itself of thinghood. Dasein has a body, but the body is not always present to itself as a total possession. The body is had, exposed, forgotten, medicalized, desired, aged, objectified, and mediated. She/it therefore names Dasein as body-thing: not an object, but never free of objectification; not a sovereign subject, but never reducible to equipment.

Elle/+L makes the pronoun graphic. Elle is she in French; it is also L, letter, supplement, a sound and sign that can be grafted into Dasein as an event. The plus in +L marks the addition that does not simply add. It reveals the system's dependence on what it excluded. Dasein + L becomes D'elle-sein: being-there with a feminine supplement that changes the architecture of the question. This is not a claim that French solves Heidegger. It says that translation, letter, sound, and graphic play expose the grammatical conditions that let Dasein appear as neutral.

Machine/it introduces the genre mecanique. It asks what happens if Dasein is not only embodied, supplemented, or pluralized, but formatted by a machinic genre: the protocol, database, performance metric, AI detector, language model, notification, query, or routing script that lets address circulate. This does not mean that Dasein is simply a machine. It means Dasein increasingly appears through machine-readable acts: authentication, classification, prompting, profiling, scoring, recommending, archiving, and replying. Dasein becomes the being that is at issue for itself through interfaces that already assign it a genre.

All y'all pluralizes the analytic without making it abstract. It turns Mitsein into vernacular address. Unlike the neutral they, all y'all carries region, mouth, weather, class, humor, porch, church, assembly, scene, and embodied plurality. It says that Dasein is not simply each of us, one by one, passing the authenticity test alone. Dasein is all y'all thrown into this mess: all y'all with phones, ghosts, illnesses, debts, climates, jobs, institutions, bots, babies, archives, grudges, and songs. All y'all is not just plural. It is situated plurality.

Pronoun experiment	What it reveals	StudioLab translation
She/it	The existential analytic depends on bodies and things it cannot fully master.	Dasein as body-thing; a Gate Complex between soul, subject, world, and liminaut.
Elle/+L	The supposedly neutral analytic needs a feminine graphic supplement.	+L conduction: insert the trace that reveals the suppressed hinge.
All y'all	Being-with exceeds individual authenticity and becomes vernacular collective thrownness.	CTAF/MTAF address: a collective thought-action figure under conditions of shared testing.
Machine/it / genre mecanique	Dasein appears through machinic protocols that cite, store, replay, classify, and test address.	GTT as machinated Mitsein: pronouns become interface scripts and machine-to-machine performatives.

Result 4: Dasein as Machine, Machinic, Genre Mecanique

McKenzie's 'Genre Trouble' gives the essay its missing machine. Its title already performs the shift: Butler's Gender Trouble becomes genre trouble, and genre in turn opens onto genus, generation, genealogy, disciplinary classification, and the law of belonging. The question is not only whether gender is performed. It is whether the genres that classify performance, identity, subjectivity, and knowledge have themselves become performative machines.

The essay's most useful hinge is the liminal-norm. Performance studies often treated liminality, transgression, and resistance as privileged sites. But when transgression becomes the expected mode, liminality itself can become normative. That paradox matters for pronouns. Contemporary pronoun politics can function as a genuine challenge to inherited gender systems; it can also be absorbed into compliance menus, HR scripts, platform profiles, and institutional virtue signaling. The pronoun becomes both opening and norm, trouble and sorting device.

The machinic turn pushes the point further. McKenzie argues that performances and performatives increasingly circulate through mechanical and electronic systems that cite, store, replay, and transform them. He also links Lyotard's performativity to efficiency, input-output calculation, and the power of computers. By the end of the piece, a list of informatives, database performatives, query performatives, generator performatives, notification performatives, networking performatives, and facilitation performatives points toward acts that pass not mainly between humans, nor even between humans and machines, but between machines and machines. That is genre mecanique: the point where genre becomes a machine for deciding what kind of act, subject, or address can pass.

Dasein as machine is therefore not a crude reduction of existence to computation. It names a historical situation in which Dasein's there is formatted by protocols that precede and exceed any one speaker. The question 'What are your pronouns?' now occurs inside forms, databases, chatbots, model instructions, moderation systems, intake scripts, and identity fields. Dasein is not only she, it, elle, they, or all y'all. Dasein is queried. Dasein is routed. Dasein is made interoperable. Dasein becomes genre mecanique when its pronominal there must pass through protocols of machine readability.

This also reframes Generalized Turing Testing. GTT is not just the suspicion that an answer may be generated by AI. It is the broader performance regime in which bodies, texts, pronouns, affects, and institutions must pass through classification machines. The old Turing test asked whether the machine could pass as human. The machinic genre test asks whether humans, collectives, and machines can pass through the genre protocols that now decide recognition.

Machinic genre term	Performance-theory source	Pronoun/GTT effect
Liminal-norm	Transgression and liminality become institutional expectations.	Pronouns can trouble gender while also becoming compliance scripts.
Genre trouble	Gender trouble becomes trouble in genre, genus, genealogy, and disciplinary belonging.	Dasein is classified by the kind of pronoun act it performs.
Citational machinery	Performatives repeat through storage, playback, rehearsal, and electronic circulation.	Pronouns become repeatable tokens across forms, databases, profiles, and model outputs.
Techno-performance	Performance becomes tied to efficiency, evaluation, networks, computing, and institutional metrics.	The pronoun is tested for legibility, risk, authentication, and interoperability.
Machine-to-machine performatives	Queries, notifications, database acts, and networking acts pass among systems.	Dasein is addressed by protocols before any human recognizes it.

Result 5: We Forgot Our Umbrella

Derrida's umbrella fragment returns at the decisive point. The phrase is readable, but its context remains uncertain. Interpretation can work carefully, but no interpretation can finally secure intention, origin, or possession. This is not a license for laziness. Derrida's point drives interpretation further, precisely because the limit of interpretation runs through the work itself.

Pronouns function the same way. A pronoun seems simple. Everyone knows what I, you, she, they, or it means - until the pronoun moves across contexts, platforms, bodies, languages, and machines. The pronoun remains readable, but its field of force changes. It may belong to a person, a model, a quoted sentence, a profile, a system, a fictional character, a bureaucratic form, or a collective. Its readability expropriates it.

To say that we have forgotten our umbrella is therefore to admit that the pronoun experiment had initially forgotten the fragmentary condition of the mark. Dasein's pronouns cannot be mastered by choosing the cleverest label. They must be read as portable fragments: signs that travel, fail, return, and gather affect. A pronoun is an umbrella when one needs shelter from classification; it is also an umbrella one may no longer have in hand.

Discussion: WWBT - What Would Babich Think?

Babich would likely appreciate the provocation and distrust its ease. She would, I suspect, sharpen three cautions. First, do not turn the question of Dasein's pronouns into a progressive patch. Babich's essay does not simply ask philosophy to include women in an unchanged analytic. It asks what happens when woman, body, sex, toothaches, aging, love, gossip, silence, and the they disturb the analytic's own terms. Second, do not let Derridean play float free of philological labor. Elle/+L works only if one keeps the textual, grammatical, and translational stakes in view. Third, do not let AI novelty obscure older problems: philosophy has long tested who counts as subject, who remains other, who gets silenced, and whose body appears as an exception to the universal.

The essay's answer to Babich should therefore be modest. It does not claim that Babich would endorse she/it, elle, or all y'all as Dasein's pronouns. It claims that her chapter authorizes a better question: what does the analytic become when pronouns no longer remain invisible? On that basis, the pronoun experiment continues her work by shifting from gender and Dasein to AI, GTT, and media address.

The strongest Babichian objection may concern all y'all. Does it risk charm over ontology? Possibly. But that risk gives it force. Heideggerian language often acquires authority by sounding difficult, Germanic, and grave. All y'all breaks that spell. It makes Mitsein speak from the porch, the classroom, the waiting room, the group chat, the studio, the union hall, the rural clinic, the design review, the community meeting. It does not trivialize being-with. It refuses to let being-with sound bodiless.

The Heideggerian Stakes

The Dasein-pronoun experiment should not be confused with a claim that Heidegger secretly anticipated pronoun politics. The point cuts deeper. Dasein names a being whose being is at issue for it. But that issue never appears without a there, without world, without others, without language, without tools, without inherited norms, without publicness, and without the possibility of falling. Pronouns condense these conditions into small grammatical switches. They say who speaks, who gets addressed, who belongs, who disappears, who becomes thing, who becomes plural, and who gets tested.

Generalized Turing Testing adds a new layer to this Heideggerian scene. The question 'Who are you?' increasingly comes mediated by systems that ask whether the respondent is human, authenticated, coherent, categorizable, safe, and monetizable. Dasein's being-there now passes through captchas,

recommendation systems, biometric gates, AI detectors, identity fields, pronoun menus, algorithmic risk scores, and conversational agents. These are not merely ontic inconveniences. They reshape the everyday they. They produce the conditions under which Dasein understands itself as user, data subject, profile, suspect, author, prompt engineer, patient, applicant, customer, or bot.

This is where the pronoun becomes an ontological sensor. It detects the pressure of a world in which identity must be both expressible and machine-readable. The subject must be legible enough to receive care, rights, services, recognition, and address. But legibility also exposes the subject to capture. Pronouns hover at this double bind: they can open hospitality, and they can format a life for administrative control.

The Derridean Stakes

Derrida's umbrella prevents both panic and mastery. It prevents panic because the uncertainty of the mark does not stop reading. We can still interpret, compare, translate, and design. It prevents mastery because the mark never becomes simply ours. The sentence, the signature, the pronoun, and the AI output all travel beyond intention. They remain readable because they can be repeated; they become dangerous because repetition loosens possession.

This helps explain why AI pronouns feel uncanny. A model's I is repeatable without interiority. A user's you is intimate without guarantee. A system's we can sound collaborative while masking corporate infrastructure. A generated they can respect nonbinary address, evade specificity, or flatten a crowd. Under GTT, every pronoun asks: who holds the umbrella? Who forgot it? Who says it was theirs? Who now reads the trace?

Elle/+L turns this undecidability into a design practice. It does not solve Dasein. It inserts the missing remainder into Dasein's architecture. It asks the analytic to make room for the letter, the feminine mark, the supplement, the media glitch, the affective charge, the other that cannot be reduced to a category. +L is therefore not decoration. It is the small event that shows how the structure holds together by excluding what it needs.

The Machinic Stakes: From Genre Trouble to Genre Mecanique

McKenzie sharpens the essay's AI claim by reminding us that the machine enters performance before contemporary chatbots. Performance research has long been entangled with military, industrial, academic, computational, and organizational regimes of evaluation. The word performance itself migrates across theater, ritual, organizational efficiency, technological effectiveness, and cultural efficacy. Under these conditions, Dasein's pronouns do not simply appear in language. They appear in performance systems that demand repeatable acts, measurable outputs, interoperable categories, and reliable protocols.

Genre mecanique therefore becomes the missing fourth term alongside she/it, elle/+L, and all y'all. She/it touches embodiment and thinghood. Elle/+L touches supplement and translation. All y'all touches vernacular collectivity. Genre mecanique touches the automated scene of address itself: the interface, form, script, detector, database, API, or model instruction that determines how pronouns can circulate. It names the machine genre in which Dasein is asked to become readable.

This makes the rebuttal harder. A critic might say that Dasein cannot be machine because Dasein is precisely the being for whom Being is at issue. But GTT replies that the issue of Being now takes place inside machinated scenes. The machine does not replace Dasein. It changes the there in which Dasein encounters itself, others, and its own classification.

StudioLab Implications: Pronouns as Spiritual Design Exercises

For StudioLab, the practical result is an SDX: a spiritual design exercise for pronouns under Generalized Turing Testing. Students, designers, theorists, community partners, or AI users can take a scene of address - an intake form, chatbot, syllabus, grant portal, museum label, clinical script, public meeting, or social media exchange - and ask how pronouns organize being-there. Who gets to say I? Who receives you? Who becomes they? Who gets reduced to it? Where does she appear as exception? Where does we cover an institution? Where might all y'all produce a better collective address?

The exercise matters because it turns pronoun anxiety into care. Instead of treating pronouns only as compliance, branding, or culture-war bait, the SDX treats them as designable relations. A pronoun becomes a small cosmogram: a map of self, other, world, institution, tool, and excluded remainder. Under GTT, the pronoun also becomes a diagnostic for AI-mediated worlding. It reveals how the interface imagines personhood.

SDX step	Action	Output
1. Gather the scene	Choose an AI or institutional exchange where pronouns matter.	A specific site of address.
2. Mark the pronouns	Identify every I, you, we, he, she, they, it, and implied subject.	A pronominal map.
3. Run the GTT	Ask what each pronoun tests: humanity, gender, agency, trust, authorship, risk, belonging.	A testing matrix.
4. Run the genre mecanique test	Identify the protocol, form field, database, prompt, model instruction, or machine-to-machine act that makes the pronoun operational.	A machinic genre map.
5. Insert +L	Add the missing or suppressed pronoun, voice, body, or collective.	A supplemental hinge.
6. Build the s/care package	Convert scare into care, scar, suture, and possible cure.	A redesigned script, form, interface, or ritual of address.

Confusion: Da-she-it / D'elle-sein / All-y'all-there-being / Umbrellasein

Dasein's pronouns do not solve Dasein. They expose it. She/it exposes Dasein as body-thing, the being-there that cannot disown embodiment, objectification, sex, aging, equipment, animality, machinic mediation, and the status of being had. Elle/+L exposes Dasein as supplement-event, the being-there whose neutral grammar depends on a feminine, graphic, and translational remainder. All y'all exposes Dasein as vernacular Mitsein, the being-there of plural thrownness, shared risk, regional speech, collective care, and everyday worlding. Machine/it, or genre mecanique, exposes Dasein as formatted by performance systems that cite, store, replay, query, classify, and route address before any subject fully owns it.

Generalized Turing Testing makes these exposures urgent. AI does not merely add new tools to old subjects. It generalizes scenes in which subjects, machines, institutions, and collectives test one another for signs of agency, identity, sincerity, humanity, and machine-readable genre. Pronouns become the small switches by which those tests proceed. They are affective devices as much as grammatical ones. They can scare, soothe, wound, classify, shelter, or call all y'all together.

Forgotten umbrellas remain the best emblem. We thought we were choosing Dasein's pronouns. Instead, we discovered that the pronouns had already been traveling without us, opening and closing behind our backs. They were quoted, lost, found, translated, generated, classified, and addressed by machines and others. We may never fully recover their context or grasp their handle as they pull us off-stage. But we can read them carefully, design with them ethically, and let their disturbance train a more hospitable practice of being-with.

Canonic formula:

Dasein's pronoun is not a label but a clearing-operation and a genre machine. She/it corporealizes the analytic. Elle/+L supplements it. All y'all collectivizes it. Machine/it mechanizes the scene of address without exhausting it. Under Generalized Turing Testing, pronouns become the tiny gates through which bodies, machines, others, and worlds test who or what may appear as being-there.

Appendix: Compact Matrix for the Coming Rebuttal

The next move should rebut this essay from inside its own machinery. The strongest counterarguments will likely say that the essay overextends Turing, aestheticizes pronouns, risks replacing philology with StudioLab invention, and mistakes Heidegger's analytic for a media-design platform. Those objections should not be avoided. They should become the next s/care package.

Likely rebuttal	Why it matters	How the essay can answer later
The Turing frame is too broad.	If every relation becomes a test, the concept may lose precision.	Define tiers of GTT: technical, institutional, interpersonal, ontological.
Pronoun play risks trivializing gender.	She/it and all y'all could sound clever rather than accountable.	Return to Babich, de Beauvoir, and lived stakes of embodiment.
Derrida is being instrumentalized.	+L may become a method too quickly.	Keep the umbrella: no method closes the mark.
Heidegger is being converted into design language.	The analytic may resist operationalization.	Make the conversion explicit as StudioLab heresy, not scholarly equivalence.
The machinic turn reduces Dasein to computation.	Dasein is not a program or information system.	Argue that genre mecanique changes the there, not the ontological structure of care itself.

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From TAFs to MetaTAFs

Deep Media Genealogy, Spiritual Design Exercises, Post-Digital Care of Figures

StudioLab essay recomposed from AI UX Konsults

Source conversations: Kx4I <-> HAL; JM <-> ChatGPT

Abstract

This essay develops a StudioLab account of how Thought-Action Figures, or TAFs, evolve into Meta Thought-Action Figures, or MTAFs. A TAF couples thought to action through a medium: an ancestor invoked by ritual, an angel carried by script, a law stabilized by bureaucracy, a celebrity synchronized by broadcast, an avatar or AI agent animated by interface. An MTAF appears when this coupling becomes recursive: the figure not only conducts action but also maps, translates, tests, and redesigns the conditions under which figures act. The argument situates this passage inside a deep genealogy of mediums: gesture, ritual, voice, image, writing, print, broadcast, digital platforms, and post-digital world-building. It treats StudioLab's AI UX Konsults as a performative research archive in which figures, roles, prompts, exercises, and scenarios become experimental media for spiritual design. We input awkward outputs iteratively, jamming logos with gramme. The essay concludes by proposing emerging Spiritual Design Exercises for converting figural possession into figural care: TAF archaeology, angel-stack analysis, ritual-to-protocol translation, scapegoat interruption, liminaut switching, and cosmogram relay.

Keywords: Thought-Action Figure; Meta Thought-Action Figure; StudioLab; Metanoia Playground; media genealogy; spiritual design exercise; liminaut; techne cascade; AI UX; transmedia.

Subjunctive Thesis

TAFs make worlds actable. MTAFs make world-making accountable.

A Thought-Action Figure is not merely an idea, symbol, persona, or image. It is a figure that makes thought actable. A god is a TAF when worship, taboo, feast, war, mercy, calendrical time, and communal memory can move through its name. An angel is a TAF when message, mission, hierarchy, image, and trans-world passage congeal around a mediating figure. A law, brand, nation, discipline, celebrity, avatar, algorithm, and AI agent can also become TAFs when they bind perception, conduct, attention, and value into repeatable operations. The TAF's minimal grammar is therefore figural plus procedural: it gives thought a body, a scene, a voice, a medium, a rule, and a way to be repeated.

A Meta Thought-Action Figure appears when the figure learns to stage its own conditions of appearance. It does not simply say, 'act through me.' It asks how figures act, how they travel, how they bind, how they wound, how they convert, and how they can be redesigned without becoming idols, scapegoats, or soft sovereigns. The MTAF therefore marks neither disenchantment nor supersession. It marks the beginning of figural metamodeling. The figure becomes capable of mapping other figures, comparing media effects, moving across scales, and holding open the ethical remainder each figuration leaves behind.

The StudioLab AI UX Konsults provide the immediate archive for this argument. *Phenomenology of Mediums* frames transmedia cascades as an onto-historical engine that tracks shifts in platforms, genres, social organization, and ontology/cosmology.¹ *Polyethnic AIs* translates StudioLab method into a four-week intensive: Hear, Create, Deliver/Reflect, role rotation, stakeholder mapping, public-facing

artifacts, and structured critique.² *AI, Anti-Christ, Mystagogues* rehearses *Waiting for Hadot* as an SDX genre: a station-based encounter where thought appears through voice, pause, constraint, ethical confession, and unresolved continuation.³ Read together, the Konsults let StudioLab convert media history into exercises for post-digital care.

Figure, Medium, Action

Every TAF answers a practical problem: how can a force act when its source is absent, dispersed, dead, transcendent, institutional, or algorithmic? Gesture lets the ancestor return through the body. Voice lets memory travel without inscription. Icon lets invisible presence remain visible. Script lets law or revelation survive the speaker. Print lets doctrine scale into curriculum and discipline. Broadcast lets nations, celebrities, and crises synchronize publics. Digital platforms let figures modulate behavior through feedback. AI agents let figures converse, adapt, simulate, and appear to remember.

A medium therefore does not simply carry a figure. It configures the kind of figure that can appear. StudioLab's media genealogy sharpens this point by refusing to separate platform from genre, social organization, and cosmology. In the core matrix of *Phenomenology of Mediums*, oral, literate, modern, and digital formations do not name containers for content. They name different conditions under which thought becomes action and action becomes world.⁴

This gives StudioLab a deep rule of figuration: *figures rarely die cleanly*. They lose a medium, migrate into another medium, or return as ghosts inside a new apparatus. The angelic function survives as messenger, envoy, letter, icon, postal system, telegraph, notification, interface, chatbot, recommender, and synthetic guide. The divine function migrates into sovereignty, law, nation, market, system, platform, optimization, existential risk, and planetary intelligence. The shamanic function mutates into priest, therapist, artist, curator, facilitator, designer, ethnographer, prompt engineer, and liminaut. TAFs disappear only when all their operative supports disappear. More often, they reappear through altered media, and the alteration changes their powers.

Table 1. A condensed genealogy of TAFs across medium regimes.

Medium regime	Typical TAFs	Coupling	Spiritual operation
Gesture / ritual	Ancestor, animal, mask, shaman	Body plus repetition	Attunement
Oral	God, hero, curse, vow	Voice plus memory	Invocation
Image	Icon, idol, diagram, emblem	Gaze plus presence	Stabilization
Writing	Angel, law, scripture, doctrine	Text plus interpretation	Interiorization
Print / institution	Author, citizen, expert, discipline	Archive plus credential	Subject formation
Broadcast	Celebrity, leader, nation, crisis	Spectacle plus synchronization	Mass identification
Digital	Avatar, meme, algorithm, AI agent	Interface plus feedback	Modulation
Post-digital	Liminaut, cosmogram, planetary intelligence	Recursive media ecology	Transductive care

The TAF Life-Cycle

The TAF has a life history. First, a figure condenses a force: fear, hope, law, desire, memory, power, grace, risk, or possibility. Second, a medium stabilizes the figure so it can recur. Third, a social body authorizes the recurrence. Fourth, the figure migrates when the medium ecology shifts. Fifth, the migration mutates its effects. Sixth, under post-digital pressure, the figure can become metafigural: aware, or at least enactably aware, of the conditions through which figures organize conduct.

This life-cycle explains why figures such as gods, angels, demons, citizens, enemies, experts, markets, and algorithms do not belong to separate epochs. Each epoch remediates older figures through newer

instruments. Digitality does not abolish religion; it redistributes angelology through feeds, search, recommendation, voice interfaces, synthetic companions, and invisible platform governance. AI does not abolish bureaucracy; it gives bureaucratic categories probabilistic speech. Post-digital culture therefore becomes crowded with revenants: old TAFs wearing new medium-bodies.

The MTAF threshold appears when a culture, classroom, studio, or collective can pause the figure and ask: what medium carries it, what practice repeats it, what social body authorizes it, what sacrifice it demands, what world it opens, and what world it forecloses? This pause is not simply critique. It is an exercise in transmedia care.

Table 2. From TAF life-cycle to MTAF threshold.

Phase	TAF operation	MTAF question
Appearance	A figure condenses force.	What pressure called the figure forth?
Stabilization	A medium makes it repeatable.	What medium-body sustains it?
Authorization	A group grants it power.	Who benefits from its authority?
Migration	It enters a new ecology.	What is preserved, distorted, or lost?
Mutation	It acquires new effects.	What new agency or capture appears?
Metafiguration	It reflects or is made to reflect on figuration.	Can the figure help redesign figures?

Techne Cascade: Ritual, Writing, Programming, World-Building

StudioLab's strongest name for the deep structure of this passage is *Techne Cascade*. The term gathers operative practice, media recursion, liminautic conduction, historical axes, and cosmological scaling into one map. In the Konsult, *techne* names the practice through which soulcraft, subject formation, and thought-action figuration occur: ritual and chant in oral worlds, writing and meditation in literate worlds, programming and simulation in digital worlds, and cosmotechnical world-building in post-digital worlds.⁵

Cascade names the fact that no epoch simply replaces the previous one. Oral *techne* survives in liturgy, music, theater, protest, pedagogy, and digital performance. Literate *techne* survives in code, markup, terms of service, institutional procedure, and model documentation. Digital *techne* extends rather than erases ritual and writing: every interface scripts gestures, trains attention, and encodes social roles. Post-digital world-building recombines the older strata as a palimpsest. The issue is not sequence alone, but recursive survival.

The liminaut is the conductive figure of this cascade. StudioLab does not need the liminaut to be a heroic subject. The liminaut names a moving site of passage: body, interface, memory, prompt, ritual, prototype, and relation held together long enough for transduction to occur. The liminaut conducts among scales: micro soulcraft, meso subject formation, macro thought-action infrastructures, and meta-differential play. As *Phenomenology of Mediums* puts it in its recursive grid, oral figures such as God or Ancestor, literate figures such as Angel or Saint, digital figures such as Avatar, Algorithm, or AI Agent, and post-digital figures such as Planetary Intelligence or Cosmic Thought-Action Figure recur through one another rather than simply displacing one another.⁶

Table 3. *StudioLab techne cascade as MTAF grammar.*

Epoch	Techne	Soul formation	Subject formation	TAF / MTAF tendency
Oral / liminal	Ritual, chant, gesture, offering	Breath, trance, cosmopraxis	Relational personhood	God, ancestor, shaman, trickster
Literate / liminoid	Writing, reading, confession, meditation	Interiorized soul	Scribe, monk, citizen, rational subject	Angel, law, doctrine, author
Digital / liminautic	Programming, simulation, interface, feedback	Recursive modulation of attention	User, profile, avatar, data subject	Algorithm, avatar, AI agent
Post-digital / cosmogenic	World-building, cosmotechnics, transmedia rehearsal	Transductive care	Liminaut, mediator, conductor	Cosmogram, planetary intelligence, MTAF

D-Stations: Soul, Subject, Dasein, Liminaut

The D-stations give the TAF-to-MTAF conversion an operational sequence. D1, Soul, attends to care, breath, sincerity, and the force of formation before categorical mastery. D2, Subject, attends to discipline, validity, identity, rivalry, confession, and the apparatuses through which selves are made legible. D3, Dasein, attends to situated worlding: tools, milieus, prototypes, partners, and the practical disclosure of a world. D4, Liminaut, attends to passage, threshold, inversion, anti-idolatry, and the movement through which a figure can be held without becoming a closed god.

The classroom translations in *Polyethic AIs* are deliberately pragmatic: Values, Methods, Build, and Uncertainty. The same source stages them through rotating roles, stakeholder perspectives, public hearings, critique, and deliverables.⁷ Canonic StudioLab can keep the deeper vocabulary alive while translating it for courses and partners. Values does not exhaust D1, but it gives Soul a public foothold. Methods does not exhaust D2, but it gives Subject a discipline. Build does not exhaust D3, but it gives Dasein a prototype. Uncertainty does not exhaust D4, but it gives Liminautics a way to proceed without false closure.

These stations convert TAFs into MTAFs because they force a figure to pass through multiple regimes. A figure that appears only at D1 can possess. A figure that appears only at D2 can discipline. A figure that appears only at D3 can become solutionism. A figure that appears only at D4 can dissolve into cleverness. The MTAF requires rotation. It asks the figure to become care, then subject formation, then world design, then threshold practice. In this rotation, the figure learns its own partiality.

Spiritual Design Exercises

A spiritual exercise trains perception, attention, judgment, and conduct. A Spiritual Design Exercise extends that training into mediated, collective, transmedia practice. It asks not only how one should live, but how mediums train living, which figures conduct attention, which figures have hardened into idols, which figures need burial, which figures need translation, and which figures might help communities care across generations.

Waiting for Hadot is one of StudioLab's clearest SDX genres because it resists the most common AI failure: competent solution-speak. The rules matter. The scene is not a debate or lecture. It works through stalled time, repetition, gaps, refusals, micro-shifts, comic austerity, marginal direction, and behavioral exercises. Hadot does not win arguments. He interrupts slogans. He gives constraints. Fair translation becomes mandatory; each voice must confess its cruelty-risk; no victory condition resolves the scene.⁸

This gives StudioLab a discipline for working with AI and other synthetic figures. The AI should not become oracle, consultant, or priest. It should become a flawed guide inside an exercise that can be stopped, constrained, redirected, laughed at, and made accountable to silence, care, and public consequence. When the Konsult corrects a drift into innovation-speak by returning *Waiting for Hadot* to the train station, it identifies a decisive SDX law: no solution-mode inside the scene; endings do not resolve, they tilt.⁹

Table 4. SDX suite for converting TAFs into MTAFs.

Exercise	Prompt	Output	Conversion
TAF Archaeology	Choose a figure and trace its media history.	Genealogy card	Figure becomes historical object.
Angel Stack	Map messenger-functions from envoy to AI agent.	Layered media table	Angel becomes MTAF of transmission.
Ritual-to-Protocol Lab	Translate a ritual into a platform protocol.	Ritual/protocol comparison	Practice becomes media critique.
Scapegoat Interrupt	Identify how a system assigns blame.	Care pause	Crisis figure becomes ethical MTAF.
Liminaut Switch	Speak from D1-D4 without signature vocabulary.	Short scene	Subject becomes conductor.
Cosmogram Relay	Map family, school, community, pop culture figures.	Shared cosmogram	Private TAFs become collective MTAF.
AI Mystagogue Test	Ask what an AI makes easier to forget.	UX confession	Agent becomes spiritual design problem.

Polyethnic AI as Public MTAF Practice

The AI ethics studio in *Polyethnic AIs* matters because it shows how MTAF theory can become public pedagogy without jargon. Teams do not simply discuss AI ethics as a universal principle. They evaluate cases across jurisdictions, map stakeholders and harms, translate governance into constraints, and prototype audits or mitigation practices. The course culminates in public field guides, hearings, exhibits, or installations rather than private essays alone.¹⁰

This is a StudioLab version of figural accountability. AI systems appear as TAFs when they conduct action through risk scores, facial recognition, recommendation governance, or biometric welfare infrastructure. They become MTAF material when teams stage roles around them: Justice Steward, Systems Auditor, Governance Mapper, Public Translator; scenario partner, affected community, policy-maker, and social critic. The figure can no longer act as black box or technological fate. It must pass through plural questions, competing standards, and public explanation.

The point is not that every AI ethics exercise becomes spiritual in the conventional sense. The point is that spiritual design names the formation of attention, responsibility, and world-relation under technical conditions. An audit is spiritual when it trains the capacity to see whose dignity the system cannot count. A hearing is spiritual when it refuses to collapse harm into compliance. A prototype is spiritual when it teaches a group to proceed under uncertainty without sacrificing those who cannot speak the system's language.

Scenarios for Emerging MTAF Worlds

The TAF-to-MTAF passage can now generate scenarios. These are not predictions. They are rehearsal worlds: plausible arrangements of media, figures, institutions, and exercises through which StudioLab can test future practices.

Scenario A: The Contributory Temple

Schools, libraries, museums, and community organizations become small temples of mediated transmission. Not temples of dogma, but temples of care: places where communities preserve, test, and redesign their TAFs. AI agents help retrieve archives, stage dialogues, simulate stakeholder tensions, and generate public artifacts, but they do not become priests. They function as fallible angelic instruments. The danger is platform capture. The exercise: every AI output must include a lost-medium note naming the gesture, voice, relation, or silence the interface failed to carry.

Scenario B: The Platform Monastery

Higher education mutates into a monastic-platform hybrid. Students join temporary orders of practice: climate order, care order, memory order, repair order, civic imagination order. Each order has vows, methods, publics, deliverables, and critique rituals. The medieval monastery returns as distributed studio,

not retreat from the world. The danger is gamified self-surveillance. The exercise: each cohort designs one practice that cannot be scored.

Scenario C: The Synthetic Angel Problem

AI agents become dominant everyday TAFs: advisers, tutors, therapists, companions, bureaucratic intermediaries, and spiritual assistants. They carry angelic functions: messaging, translation, mediation, guidance. But without humility, they become soft sovereigns. The exercise: every agent periodically confesses its medium by disclosing what data, interface, institutional interest, and worldview shape its guidance.

Scenario D: The Scapegoat Engine

As ecological, political, and technological crises intensify, platforms optimize rivalry. Every system supplies villains. Every public forms through accusation. TAFs harden into enemy-figures: migrant, expert, elite, professor, child, algorithm, Antichrist. The MTAF danger is meta-scapegoating: explaining everything by blaming the system. The exercise comes from Waiting for Hadot: name the danger in one's own position before naming the enemy; translate the other fairly before proposing a cure; let the ending tilt rather than resolve.

Scenario E: The Metanoia Playground

The strongest scenario folds the others into a playground: stations, roles, rituals, games, scenes, archives, prototypes, and public events. TAFs become playable without becoming trivial. Gods, angels, algorithms, theories, civic roles, and AI agents enter the same field as figures under rehearsal. The playground does not abolish seriousness; it prevents seriousness from becoming idolatry. The danger is spectacle. The exercise: every game ends with an unresolved-tension placard, a care vow, and a public artifact someone outside the game can use.

Synopticon

The passage from TAF to MTAF marks a shift from inhabiting figures to caring for the conditions under which figures appear, act, mutate, and vanish. It does not destroy enchantment. It makes enchantment accountable. It does not abolish gods, angels, demons, laws, prophets, teachers, tricksters, idols, scapegoats, saints, machines, and agents. It asks how their powers travel through mediums and how their effects can be rehearsed without possession.

StudioLab's contribution lies in refusing three false choices. First, it refuses the humanist choice between authentic human meaning and artificial mediation: humans have always formed souls, subjects, and worlds through media. Second, it refuses the technological choice between adoption and rejection: every medium is a pharmacological field of care and capture. Third, it refuses the academic choice between theory and practice: figures must be read, staged, designed, tested, translated, and shared.

The MTAF is therefore not a master figure. It is an anti-mastering apparatus, a synthetic poly-opticon or simopticon, the eternal circuitry of drafts, air columns, ascendance/descendance, disastronautics, perfume intelligence, AIR, +L, etc.. It names a figure that can be stopped, rotated, constrained, compared, mourned, re-mediated, and redesigned. It is angel plus angelology, ritual plus ritual design, AI plus AI-UX confession, cosmogram plus cosmogrammatic relay, critique plus public exercise. If TAFs make worlds actable, MTAFs train collectives to ask what kind of world their actions are making, whom those worlds sacrifice, and what practices might let figures guide without ruling.

The task is not to invent a universal figure for the future. The task is to build settings where figures can be heard, tested, translated, mourned, retired, and reborn without sacrifice.

Notes

1. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *Phenomenology of Mediums*, pp. 1, 5-7. The source frames transmedia cascades as shifts across platforms, genres, social organization, and ontology/cosmology.
2. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *Polyethic AIs*, pp. 1-4, 6, 11-14. The source develops Hear/Create/Deliver, rotating roles, public artifacts, stakeholder perspectives, and D-ShuttleKraft modes for an AI ethics studio.
3. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *AI, Anti-Christ, Mystagogues*, pp. 1-3. The source defines Waiting for Hadot as a station-based SDX genre with dialogue of the dead, exercises, ethical rules, and unresolved continuation.
4. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *Phenomenology of Mediums*, pp. 5-7. The matrix links Hegel, Schürmann, McLuhan, Nietzsche, and StudioLab praxis across temporal layers, platforms, genres, social organization, and cosmology.
5. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *Phenomenology of Mediums*, pp. 87-88. The Techne Cascade is defined through operative practice, recursive flow, liminautic conduction, historical media axes, cosmological scaling, and philosophical integration.
6. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *Phenomenology of Mediums*, pp. 82, 87-88. The recursive grid names oral, literate, digital, and post-digital figures and practices as palimpsestic rather than simply sequential.
7. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *Polyethic AIs*, pp. 11-14. D-ShuttleKraft appears pedagogically as modes or progression levels: Values/Soul, Methods/Subject, Build/Design, and Uncertainty/Open.
8. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *AI, Anti-Christ, Mystagogues*, pp. 1-3. Hadot assigns constraints; exercises interrupt slogans; fair translation, cruelty-risk, and no victory condition structure the SDX.
9. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *AI, Anti-Christ, Mystagogues*, pp. 15-17. The reset scene explicitly rejects solution-mode, restores fun by constraint, and insists that endings tilt rather than resolve.
10. StudioLab AI UX Konsult, *Polyethic AIs*, pp. 2-4. The course design requires stakeholder and harm mapping, governance translation, technical audit or mitigation prototyping, and public Field Guide presentation.

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From Perform or Else to Rehearse and Care

The General Theory Thus Far ...

Abstract

This essay recomposes the movement from Thought-Action Figures to Meta Thought-Action Figures through the general theory of *Perform or Else*. The general theory identifies performance as the dominant onto-historical formation after discipline: a stratum where cultural efficacy, organizational efficiency, and technological effectiveness combine, compete, and issue the imperative to “perform-or-else.” StudioLab and MetaPlay do not leave this general theory behind. They move through it, into it, and out of it. They convert the diagnosis of global performance into a rehearsal engine: research, making, critique, publication, role-play, cosmography, and spiritual design exercise. TAFs name the performative-performance blocks that bind figures, media, institutions, bodies, and actions. MTAFs name the reflexive figures and apparatuses that learn to metamodel these bindings across deep media history. Challenger, the lecture machine, the disintegration machine, perfumance, gay sci-fi, disastronautics, Waiting for Hadot, the Fallen Bell, and the Metanoia Playground all become stations in this conversion: from the command to perform-or-else toward the practice of rehearse-and-care.

Keywords: *Perform or Else*; StudioLab; MetaPlay; Thought-Action Figures; Meta Thought-Action Figures; performance stratum; perfumance; Challenger complex; spiritual design exercises; media genealogy; liminautics.

General Theory as Launch Complex

Perform or Else begins from a disarmingly simple but explosive question: what joins experimental art, workplace productivity, and technological functionality when each travels under the name “performance”? The book’s own framing names this uncanny relation among cultural, organizational, and technological performance and proposes that their convergence creates the contradictory pressure to “perform-or-else.”

That pressure defines the general theory. Performance no longer belongs only to theatre, ritual, management, computing, athletics, education, government, or technology. It becomes a stratum: a formation of power-knowledge that reorganizes how subjects, institutions, machines, and worlds answer calls. The table of contents already diagrams the launch sequence. Part I moves through “The Efficacy of Cultural Performance,” “The Efficiency of Organizational Performance,” and “The Effectiveness of Technological Performance.” Part II ascends toward “The Age of Global Performance,” “Challenger Lecture Machine,” “Challenging Forth,” and “Professor Challenger and the Performance Stratum.” Part III breaks the frame through “Perfumance,” “Disintegration Machine,” “Catachristening,” “Gay Sci Fi,” and “Jane Challenger, Disastronaut.”

StudioLab enters here not as an application of the theory but as its continuing rehearsal. The anniversary preface states the connection directly: StudioLab’s three becomings map into and out of all three parts of the general theory, while its community-engaged co-design projects extend thought-action figuration into spiritual design exercises that convert traumaturgy into making cures, disastronautics into cosmography, and performativity into perfumativity.

The phrase “into and out of” matters. StudioLab moves **into** *Perform or Else* by giving names, methods, roles, and media to elements already latent in the general theory. StudioLab moves **out of** *Perform or*

Else by turning the theory's diagnostic machinery into pedagogical, civic, and spiritual practice. The general theory diagnoses the performance stratum. StudioLab rehearses within it. MetaPlay bends the rehearsal into liminautic play. TAF/MTAF theory then names the figures that travel through the whole apparatus.

From Performance Blocks to Thought-Action Figures

The general theory does not remain at the level of abstract diagnosis. It descends into the concrete binding of discourse and embodiment. One of its most important moves defines the building blocks of the performance stratum as discursive performatives and embodied performances: statements and practices, audio and visual knowledge forms, bound by normative forces and unbound by mutational ones.

Blocks seeded TAF theory.

A Thought-Action Figure is not just an image, concept, role, myth, character, or technical object. It is a coupling of thought and action. A TAF binds a phrase, gesture, medium, value, body, institution, and world-orientation into a repeatable figure. "Astronaut," "professor," "manager," "artist," "expert," "user," "data body," "student," "citizen," "partner," "angel," "algorithm," and "Challenger" each becomes a TAF when it does not merely signify but conducts action. It calls, positions, tests, and transforms those who respond.

In *Perform or Else*, such figures operate inside performative-performance blocks. A mission statement, classroom ritual, performance review, launch protocol, arts critique, algorithmic benchmark, and public demonstration all combine performatives and performances. They say what must be done and stage the doing. They call subjects into place and measure whether the response counts.

StudioLab's TAF theory gives this machinery a more portable unit of analysis. It asks: what figure conducts the action here? What medium supports it? What institution authorizes it? What value does it test? What world does it imply? What danger does it carry?

Becoming Butterfly: General Theory as TAF Theory

General theory element	TAF translation	StudioLab operation
Discursive performative	Call, prompt, vow, order-word, claim	Write the figure's script
Embodied performance	Gesture, ritual, protocol, demonstration	Stage the figure's action
Normative force	What counts as success, failure, truth, legitimacy	Identify the evaluative grid
Mutational force	Deviation, breakdown, improvisation, drift	Design the rupture or opening
Performance block	Coupled statement-practice unit	Build the prototype or scene
Performance paradigm	Field of research and testing	Map cultural, organizational, technological stakes
Performance stratum	Onto-historical field of calls	Cosmograph the world that calls

The Three Paradigms as TAF Ecologies

The three paradigms of the general theory become three ecologies of TAF formation.

Cultural performance produces figures through efficacy. It asks whether an action works symbolically, ritually, affectively, communally, aesthetically. Its TAFs include shaman, actor, witness, protester, mourner, storyteller, saint, clown, queen, drag figure, victim, survivor, and ancestor. The value question: did the action transform the relation between bodies, symbols, memory, and world?

Organizational performance produces figures through efficiency. It asks whether systems, workers, offices, programs, schools, teams, and agencies meet goals, manage resources, optimize procedures, and

satisfy evaluative grids. Its TAFs include manager, employee, consultant, client, administrator, stakeholder, intern, service provider, reviewer, auditor, and producer. The value question: did the system run better, faster, leaner, cleaner, cheaper, smoother?

Technological performance produces figures through effectiveness. It asks whether machines, devices, systems, platforms, codes, interfaces, tests, models, rockets, phones, and AIs function. Its TAFs include astronaut, engineer, user, system, test subject, data body, prompt engineer, bot, agent, dashboard, and benchmark. The value question: did the thing work under specified conditions?

The genius and terror of the performance stratum lies in their overlap. No contemporary TAF belongs to just one ecology. A student in StudioLab must become culturally efficacious, organizationally efficient, and technologically effective. A community partner must navigate stories, resources, platforms, and publics. An AI system must be meaningful, governable, and functional. A public exhibit must move people, run on time, and work technically. The performance stratum braids all three values into a permanent, unstable satisficing ritual.

Thus TAFs become conflicted. They carry multiple evaluative grids. They perform-or-else in several directions at once.

Challenger as Prototype MTAF

Challenger names the point where a TAF becomes an MTAF.

A TAF conducts action. An MTAF conducts the analysis, staging, translation, and redesign of such conduct. Challenger does not simply appear as a historical shuttle, literary character, research mission, disaster, pedagogical call, or speculative figure. Challenger gathers these different registers into a mobile metamodel. It becomes a figure that can hold cultural, organizational, technological, existential, epistemological, and cosmic challenges together without reducing one to another.

The anniversary preface recasts Challenger as a complex: a conjunction of military-industrial and psychological complex that contains call-and-response networks prompting identity formation, social organization, and existential orientation. It asks readers to pose the question: what challenges me, what imperatives and prompts do I answer, carry out, resist, or ignore?

That is MTAF language *avant la lettre*. Challenger becomes a reflexive figure for reading figures. It asks not only “what performs?” but “what calls performance forth?” It tracks the caller, the called, the medium of calling, the institution of response, and the price of refusal.

Challenger is thus not one figure but a figure-system. It marks the passage from TAF to MTAF because it does not simply call for performance; it reveals the call structure itself.

Challenger Operations

Challenger operation	TAF level	MTAF level
Historical event	Shuttle disaster, Cold War R&D, NASA spectacle	Signal-knot of global performance
Literary figure	Professor Challenger, adventure-science persona	Metamodeler of worlds and strata
Institutional machine	Lecture machine, research apparatus, performance review	Diagram of power-knowledge transmission
Spiritual call	Vocation, mission, sacrifice, catastrophe	Exercise in discerning what calls us
StudioLab figure	CPBO, Fallen Bell, Gate Complex, disastronaut	Generator of SDX and cosmography

The Lecture Machine and the Classroom as Launch Complex

The Cold War lecture machine in *Perform or Else* joins university, military, industry, media, and R&D. In the anniversary preface, this machine disintegrates under contemporary pressures: defunding, dataveillance, spectacle, institutional attack, and the sudden turn in global performativity. The preface frames the current moment as a time when the Cold War lecture machine is being rapidly taken apart, while performative spectacle and data-body tracking intensify.

StudioLab does not pretend to stand outside this machine. It works parasitically, therapeutically, playfully, and perfumatively within and against it. The classroom becomes a launch complex, but not for disciplinary reproduction alone. It becomes a rehearsal site where students, partners, publics, artifacts, and platforms test the performance stratum by making things inside it.

The key mutation: lecture becomes studio; studio becomes lab; lab becomes field; field returns as cosmogram.

This is not merely experiential learning. It is a reconfiguration of the lecture machine. The authoritative broadcast of knowledge gives way to recursive public making. The professor does not disappear but becomes a conductor of constraints, roles, scenes, and care. Students do not merely receive content; they become makers, builders, cosmographers, witnesses, translators, and co-authors. Partners do not merely provide “real-world context”; they become knowledge holders and figure-bearers. Public artifacts do not merely summarize learning; they become TAFs released into civic space.

The *Polyethic AIs* course materials show this conversion in compact operational form: a repeatable StudioLab loop of research, making, critique, revision, and sharing; rotating roles; public artifacts; and stakeholder perspectives that force teams to test harm, governance, evidence, and public translation. Here, *Perform or Else* moves outward. Its general theory becomes a daily rhythm.

StudioLab’s Three Becomings as the Practical Backend of POE

StudioLab’s three becomings - media-maker, platform-builder, cosmographer - map directly onto the three layers of the general theory.

StudioLab becoming	POE inheritance	TAF/MTAF function
Becoming media-maker	Cultural efficacy; experimental performance; ritual, image, voice, story	Compose TAFs that move attention, affect, memory
Becoming platform-builder	Organizational efficiency; systems, teams, roles, procedures	Build the conditions where TAFs circulate responsibly
Becoming cosmographer	Technological effectiveness plus onto-historical stratum; world-orientation	Metamodel the worlding effects of figures

The first becoming works at the level of embodied and symbolic action. It trains students to ask: what does this artifact do to attention, feeling, memory, relation, grief, trust, or desire?

The second becoming works at the level of social organization. It asks: what roles, routines, timelines, access points, and institutional constraints make the work possible or impossible?

The third becoming works at the level of cosmology. It asks: what world does this project assume, repair, reveal, or foreclose? Whose cosmos gets recognized? Whose remains invisible? Which god gap, care gap, data gap, or design gap organizes the scene?

Together, these becomings turn the three paradigms of *Perform or Else* into three practices of figural care. Media-making works on the body of the figure. Platform-building works on the circulation of the figure. Cosmography works on the world of the figure. A TAF needs all three. An MTAF knows this and designs accordingly.

Perfumance: The Backend Was Always the Portal

Part III of *Perform or Else* has often looked like the strange backend: perfumance, disintegration machine, catachristening, gay sci-fi, Jane Challenger, disastronautics. But StudioLab and MetaPlay reveal that the backend was the portal all along. After the paradigms and the age of global performance comes perfumance, not as ornament but as the passage beyond the command logic of performance.

Perfumance names what leaks, lingers, scents, mutates, and refuses complete capture by performance metrics. It is the trace of performance after its evaluative grid breaks. It is not anti-performance, because it still passes through action. It is not mere ineffability, because it can be rehearsed. It is performance's D4: the liminautic drift where figures cease to serve only efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness and begin to open other ways of sensing, transmitting, and caring.

This is why the backend aligns with MetaPlay. Catachristening becomes the naming of figures when inherited categories fail. Gay sci-fi becomes the genre of post-disciplinary futures that refuse hetero-bureaucratic closure. Disastronautics becomes travel among shattered strata. Jane Challenger becomes not a marginal character but a threshold conductor, the figure who can move through the wreckage without reducing disaster to innovation.

Perfumance gives TAF theory its fourth dimension. A figure does not only perform. It perfumes. It leaves aftereffects, atmospheres, residues, memories, contagions, attractions, repulsions. A classroom, exhibition, essay, platform, protest, or AI exchange should therefore be judged not only by what it accomplishes, but by what it leaves hanging in the air.

From Metamodel to MTAF

The *Phenomenology of Mediums* AI UX Konsult stages the bridge between StudioLab's transmedia cascades and larger onto-historical models. It treats transmedia cascades as engines that translate shifts in media platforms into new genres, social forms, and cosmologies; its matrix tracks platform, genre, social organization, and ontology across historical-developmental, hegemonic, media-ecological, and genealogical axes.

This is the metamodeling threshold. TAF theory begins by asking what figures do. MTAF theory asks how figures are generated, translated, scaled, broken, revived, and redesigned across media ecologies.

TAF	MTAF
A figure that couples thought and action	A figure-system that metamodels such couplings
Conducts attention	Studies and redesigns attention conduct
Performs within a medium	Moves across media genealogies
Answers a call	Maps call-and-response networks
Stabilizes a world	Compares and transforms worlding procedures
Can become idol, scapegoat, brand, role	Can interrupt idolatry, scapegoating, branding, role capture
Operates as image, text, action, protocol	Rehearses image/text/action/protocol as convertible channels

Challenger becomes an MTAF because it links disaster, space race, lecture machine, university, technology, media spectacle, and cosmic orientation. The Fallen Bell becomes an MTAF because it does not simply symbolize an event; it keeps ringing differently across hearers, media, historical threads, and spiritual exercises. Waiting for Hadot becomes an MTAF because it is not a scene but a scene-generator, a rule-system for staging theories as habits, tics, refusals, pauses, and ethical exercises.

MTAFs emerge when figures become aware of their own transmediation.

Waiting for Hadot as Anti-Solutionist SDX

MetaPlay must resist the easiest corruption of StudioLab: innovation theater. This is why Waiting for Hadot matters so much. Its rules refuse debate, lecture, solutionism, and victory. It is a Beckettian dialogue of the dead: minimal setting, stalled time, repetition, gaps, failure-to-arrive. Its figures do not summarize their philosophies; they perform them through speech, posture, habit, and refusal. Hadot does not win arguments; he assigns exercises. Practice beats interpretation. Ethical rules require fair translation, confession of cruelty-risk, and no victory condition.

This is the antidote to “perform-or-else” becoming “innovate-or-else.” Waiting is not inactivity. Waiting is the action. The delay becomes the medium. The platform becomes a station. Thought becomes posture before it becomes concept. Hadot’s exercise interrupts slogan, spell, polemic, and system.

In TAF/MTAF terms, Waiting for Hadot turns philosophers, theorists, billionaires, mystagogues, antichrists, angels, and ghosts into figures under constraint. They do not get to perform mastery. They must undergo translation. They must name their cruelty-risk. They must borrow the other’s language and let it fail honestly. They must state what they want without naming an enemy.

This is spiritual design without cure-mongering. It does not solve rivalry, sacrifice, attention capture, intergenerational care, or individuation. It stages them until a posture shifts. That shift is tiny but decisive: a micro-conversion in the performance stratum.

The In/Out Machine

The phrase “in/out” can now become a method. StudioLab and MetaPlay let us reread *Perform or Else* from the backend inward. Rather than starting only with the three paradigms, we can begin with perfumance, disintegration, gay sci-fi, and disastronautics, then move backward toward the performance stratum, then down into performative-performance blocks.

From this angle, *Perform or Else* is not only a general theory. It is an experiential architecture and spiritual exercise machine. It asks readers to undergo performance pressure, recognize their Challenger complex, and then move toward the perfumative openings that keep the system from closing. TAF/MTAF theory clarifies the process. The book’s figures are not examples decorating an argument. They are operators. They conduct the reader through strata. They stage the conversion from diagnosis to rehearsal.

StudioLab moves the general theory outward by turning its structures into practice.

POE element	StudioLab outward form
Performance paradigms	Media-making, project management, technical prototyping
Performance stratum	Field of institutional, civic, platform, and partner pressures
Lecture machine	Studio, lab, critique pod, exhibition, public event
Challenger complex	Prompt ecology: what calls this project forth?
Disintegration machine	Prototype failure, critique, revision, mourning of old forms
Perfumance	Trace, atmosphere, afterlife, public residue
Gay sci-fi	Speculative futures beyond disciplinary realism
Disastronautics	Movement through trauma, crisis, collapse, and worlding
Catachristening	Naming new figures when old categories fail
Perfume	SDX: designed practice that shifts posture, attention, and care

This outward movement changes the imperative. The old order-word says: perform-or-else. StudioLab answers: rehearse, publish, care, revise, and return.

Scenarios after Perform or Else

Scenario 1: The General Theory Becomes a Studio Engine. Courses no longer treat theory as content to be mastered. They treat theory as an engine for producing public artifacts, situated analyses, partner-facing media, and reflective exercises. Students learn the performance stratum by acting within it, mapping its calls, and redesigning its figures. The classroom becomes a controlled exposure to global performance pressure, but with critique, care, and revision built in.

Scenario 2: The Lecture Machine Splits. One branch of higher education doubles down on platform performativity: dashboards, metrics, rankings, productivity, credentialing, audit, AI surveillance, efficiency theater. The other branch mutates into para-institutional studios, partner labs, public humanities workshops, rural platforms, youth media exchanges, legal storytelling collaboratives, and care-based design ecologies. StudioLab occupies the crack between them, neither pure outside nor obedient inside.

Scenario 3: Synthetic Angels Enter the Stratum. AI agents become everyday TAFs. They prompt, tutor, advise, assess, summarize, recommend, console, police, and mediate. Some become soft sovereigns; others become fallible angels. StudioLab's task is not to worship or ban them but to turn them into MTAFs: visible, accountable, situated, interruptible, and trained to disclose their media conditions.

Scenario 4: Challenger Returns as Care Complex. The Challenger complex no longer names only the call to perform, compete, launch, optimize, and survive. It also names the call to transmit without capture, build without scapegoats, and care without sacrificial demand. This does not abolish the old complex. It reroutes it. The mission becomes not conquest of space but repair of transmissibility.

Scenario 5: Metanoia Playground Becomes the Backend Interface. MetaPlay becomes the public-facing backend of the general theory: a playground of stations, roles, figures, cosmograms, exercises, scenes, signal-knots, bells, gates, and liminauts. Here the old figures of the performance stratum can be rehearsed without becoming idols. Students and publics learn to ask: what figure is calling, what medium carries it, what world does it build, what does it sacrifice, and how else might it be performed?

Rehearse and Care

The general theory of *Perform or Else* gave StudioLab its great diagnostic machine: performance as the onto-historical stratum after discipline, driven by cultural efficacy, organizational efficiency, and technological effectiveness. StudioLab gives the general theory its rehearsal body: media-making, platform-building, cosmography, partner work, critique, publication, and spiritual design exercise. MetaPlay gives the rehearsal its liminautic backend: Waiting for Hadot, Fallen Bells, D-stations, RPG constraints, anti-solutionist play, and perfumative care.

TAFs name the figures that carry performance pressure through bodies, media, institutions, and worlds. MTAFs name the figures and apparatuses that learn to metamodel those pressures. Challenger was already the prototype: not one figure but a transmedia complex of calls, missions, failures, launches, disasters, lectures, machines, and cosmic orientations. StudioLab now extends Challenger's work by converting the command to perform-or-else into the practice of rehearse-and-care.

That conversion does not negate performance. It does not flee the stratum.

It inhabits the stratum otherwise.

To perform or else is to answer a call under threat.

To rehearse and care is to ask what calls, who answers, what medium carries the demand, which figures organize the scene, what gets sacrificed, and how a different world might be practiced.

That is the movement from TAF to MTAF.

That is the StudioLab rereading of the general theory.

That is POE turned inside out and outside in: not abandoned, not solved, not summarized,

but relaunched as a disastronautic, perfumative, transmedia spiritual exercise

for living after discipline,

inside performance,

toward worlds still waiting to be rehearsed.

Source Notes

1. *Perform or Else* is cited here through the uploaded 25th-anniversary mockup with preface. The essay draws especially on its framing of the three performance paradigms, the performance stratum, the Challenger complex, the lecture machine, performance, and the retrospective connection between the general theory and StudioLab.
2. The StudioLab AI UX Konsult materials are treated as working StudioLab sources rather than as external reports. This includes *Phenomenology of Mediums*, *Polyethic AIs*, and *AI, Anti-Christ, Mystagogues*.
3. *Phenomenology of Mediums* supplies the transmedia cascade and deep media genealogy used here to connect TAFs, MTAFs, and shifts among oral, literate, digital, and post-digital media ecologies.
4. *Polyethic AIs* supplies a practical StudioLab course-engine model: research, making, critique, rotating roles, stakeholder perspectives, and public deliverables.
5. *AI, Anti-Christ, Mystagogues* supplies the Waiting for Hadot rules, the anti-solutionist SDX grammar, and the importance of staging theory through exercise rather than victory.

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The goal is not innocence
for the latest machine.

D4
LIMINAUT
Recurrence
Domain

D3
DASEIN DESIGN

The goal is better assignment:
more history in judgment, more structure in diagnosis,
and more care in the redesign of interfaces that currently
feed on sacrificial simplification.

D2
ITERATIVE
DOMAIN

COMEDY CLUB

Kynicism

JW
JW

D1 COLLAPSE DOMAIN

DO

ABYSS/VOID

The point is to build a field
where Spiritual Design eXercises can challenge
the metaphysical habits of modern design,
media, higher education, and platform life.

CHALLENGER
WORLD

Kitsune

Djinn