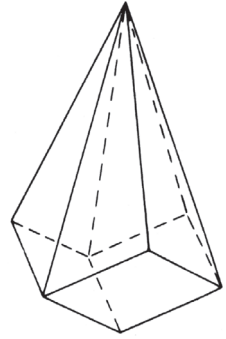


## The Mental Stage

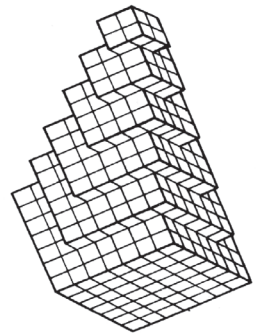
Thomas stayed in his room to read. He was sitting with his hands joined over his brow, his thumbs pressing against his hairline, so deep in concentration that he did not make a move when anyone opened the door. Those who came in thought he was pretending to read, seeing that the book was always open to the same page. He was reading. He was reading with unsurpassable meticulousness and attention. In relation to every symbol, he was in the position of the male praying mantis about to be devoured by the female. They looked at each other. The words, coming forth from the book which was taking on the power of life and death, exercised a gentle and peaceful attraction over the glance which played over them. Each of them, like a half-closed eye, admitted the excessively keen glance which in other circumstances it would not have tolerated. And so Thomas slipped toward these corridors, approaching them defencelessly until the moment he was perceived by the very quick of the word. Even this was not fearful, but rather an almost pleasant moment he would have wished to prolong. The reader contemplated this little spark of life joyfully, not doubting that he had awakened it. It was with pleasure that he saw himself in this eye looking at him. The pleasure in fact became very great. It became so great, so pitiless that he bore in with a sort of terror, and in the intolerable moment when he had stood forward without receiving from his interlocutor any sign of complicity, he perceived all the strangeness there was in being observed by a word as if by a living being, and not simply by one word, but by all the words that were in that word, by all those that went with it and in turn contained other words, like a procession of angels opening out into the infinite to the very eye of the absolute. Rather than withdraw from a text whose defences were so strong, he pitted all his strength in the will to seize it, obstinately refusing to withdraw his glance and still thinking himself a profound reader, even

Towards a Crystal Language:

From turbid veins of molten rock or murky pools of solution, crystals silently form in the dark of time into something with seemingly unimpeachable definition and clarity.

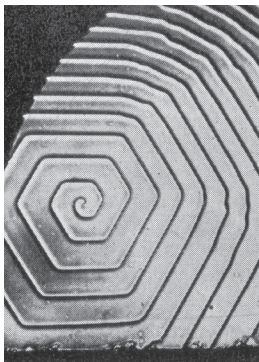
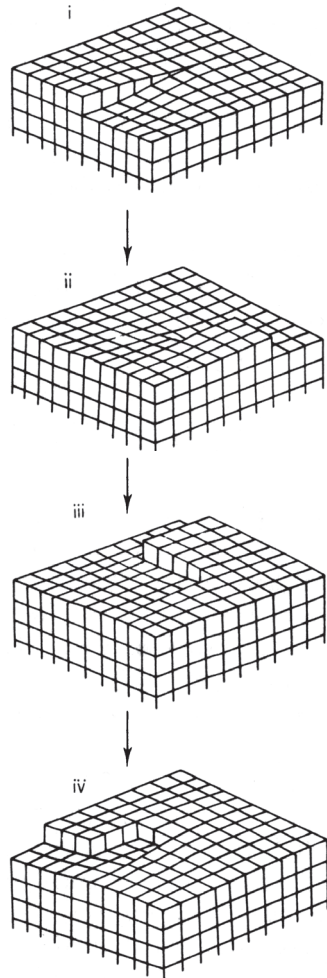


The immutable rigidity of their outer shape – the straight lines and sharp corners, the planar surfaces that obey the laws of rational indices, the symmetries that are mirrored through axes and centrepieces – arises from internal structures built upon point systems and space lattices: particles stacked and arranged in precise ways to form solid intramural patterns that repeat over and over in all directions in space.



Despite their apparent formal perfection, crystals are riddled with faults – splits, rents, ruptures – and it is these

imperfections that allow for their growth: a breach in the surface of a crystal nucleus forms an edge on to which molecules can readily add.

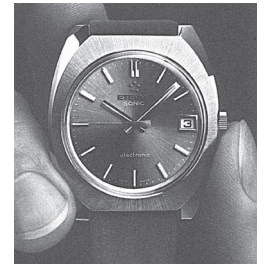


when the words were already taking hold of him and beginning to read him. He was seized, kneaded by intelligible hands, bitten by a vital tooth; he entered with his living body into the anonymous shapes of words, giving his substance to them, establishing their relationships, offering his being to the word 'be.' For hours he remained motionless, with, from time to time, the word 'eyes' in place of his eyes: he was inert, captivated and unveiled. And even later when, having abandoned himself and, contemplating his book, he recognised himself with disgust in the form of the text he was reading, he retained the thought that (while, perched upon his shoulders, the word *He* and the word *I* were beginning their carnage) there remained within his person which was already deprived of its senses obscure words, disembodied souls and angels of words, which were exploring him deeply.

The first time he perceived this presence, it was night. By a light which came down through the shutters and divided the bed in two he saw that the room was totally empty, so incapable of containing a single object that it was painful to the eye. The book was rotting on the table. There was no one walking in the room. His solitude was complete. And yet, sure as he was that there was no one in the room and even in the world, he was just as sure that someone was there, occupying his slumber, approaching him intimately, all around him and within him. On a naïve impulse he sat up and sought to penetrate the night, trying with his hand to make light. But he was like a blind man who, hearing a noise, might run to light his lamp: nothing could make it possible for him to seize this presence in any shape or form. He was locked in combat with something inaccessible, foreign, something of which he could say: that doesn't exist ... and which nevertheless filled him with terror as he sensed it wandering about in the region of his solitude. Having stayed up all night and all day with this being, as he tried to rest he was suddenly made aware that a second had replaced the first, just as

inaccessible and just as obscure, and yet different. It was a modulation of that which did not exist, a different mode of being absent, another void in which he was coming to life. Now it was definitely true, someone was coming near him, standing not nowhere and everywhere, but a few feet away, invisible and certain. By an impulse which nothing might stop, and which nothing might quicken, a power with which he could not accept contact was coming to meet him. He wanted to flee. He threw himself into the corridor. Gasping and almost beside himself, he had taken only a few steps when he recognised the inevitable progress of the being coming toward him. He went back into the room. He barricaded the door. He waited, his back to the wall. But neither minutes nor hours put an end to his waiting. He felt ever closer to an ever more monstrous absence which took an infinite time to meet. He felt it closer to him every instant and kept ahead of it by an infinitely small but irreducible splinter of duration. He saw it, a horrifying being which was already pressing against him in space and, existing outside time, remained infinitely distant. Such unbearable waiting and anguish that they separated him from himself. A sort of Thomas left his body and went before the lurking threat. His eyes tried to look not in space but in duration, and in a point in time which did not yet exist. His hands sought to touch an impalpable and unreal body. It was such a painful effort that this thing which was moving away from him and trying to draw him along as it went seemed the same to him as that which was approaching unspeakably. He fell to the ground. He felt he was covered in impurities. Each part of his body endured an agony. His head was forced to touch the evil, his lungs to breathe it in. There he was on the floor, writhing, reentering himself and then leaving again. He crawled sluggishly, hardly different from the serpent he would have wished to become in order to believe in the venom he felt in his mouth. He stuck his head under the bed, in a corner full of dust, resting among the rejectamenta as if in a refreshing

At the 'centre' of a crystal, then, is a chasm, an abysmal zero. Growth advances indefinitely around this dislocation like hands of a clock metering out the geological ages.



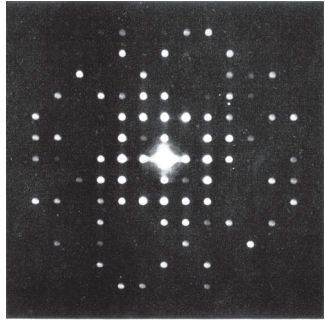
As with the fracturing monoliths of Stonehenge or the Pyramids of Egypt we are in a world of crude and primitive structures, whose enigmatic and uncertain impressions open out onto the unstable terrains of the unknown.



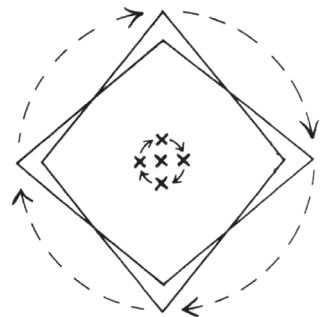
Light rushes up the magnifying lens of an electron microscope and through the 'crystalline lens' of the eye where it is swallowed by the pupil (old French *pupille* or Latin *pupilla*, diminutive of *pupa* – 'doll'; so named from the tiny reflected images visible in the eye).

And in so observing a crystal's structure, we descend beyond our everyday scale of being. The familiar language of centimetres and millimetres dissolves into that of

nanometres and ångströms, and, as we pass through the helical corridors described by the screw dislocation, fractures still further into incalculables, until at its basis we find the void, the vacancy, around which it has formed.



Light that reaches us through a crystal has been refracted and polarised. If we mark a cross on a sheet of paper and place on it a calcite crystal, a second cross will appear, equally sharp and clear. If the crystal is rotated, one of the images rotates with it, apparently orbiting the other: one quite ordinary, the other quite extraordinary. The extraordinary image appears above its counterpart; closer to us, yet more remote from the 'actual' mark it is a representation of. Light, an agent of matter, here displaces matter, proffering an hallucinogenic alternative.



place where he felt he belonged more properly than in himself. It was in this state that he felt himself bitten or struck, he could not tell which, by what seemed to him to be a word, but resembled rather a giant rat, an all-powerful beast with piercing eyes and pure teeth. Seeing it a few inches from his face, he could not escape the desire to devour it, to bring it into the deepest possible intimacy with himself. He threw himself on it and digging his fingernails into its entrails, sought to make it his own. The end of the night came. The light which shone through the shutters went out. But the struggle with the horrible beast, which had ultimately shown itself possessed of incomparable dignity and splendour, continued for an immeasurable time. This struggle was terrible for the being lying on the ground grinding his teeth, twisting his face, tearing out his eyes to force the beast inside; he would have seemed a madman, had he resembled a man at all. It was almost beautiful for this dark angel covered with red hair, whose eyes sparkled. One moment, the one thought he had triumphed and, with uncontrollable nausea, saw the word



which soiled him, slipping down inside him. The next moment, the other was devouring him in turn, dragging him out of the hole he had come from, then tossing him back, a hard, emptied body. Each time, Thomas was thrust back into the depths of his being by the very words which had haunted him and which he was pursuing as his nightmare and the explanation of his nightmare. He found that he was ever more empty, ever heavier; he no longer moved without infinite fatigue. His body, after so many struggles, became entirely opaque, and to those who looked at it, it gave the peaceful impression of sleep, though it had not ceased to be awake.

## One-Dimensional Two-Sided Infinite Bands

The four cardinal points of our paradox – theatre, event, language, thought – build a basic crystalline form. The possible relations between these points form thirty-six crystals that correspond to the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and the numbers from zero to nine. This growth advances through the symmetrical operations of inversion, reflection, and clockwise rotation around axes. Every crystal thus stands for a 'logical figure' of affirmation or negation:

A



*Theatre is event, event is language, language is thought, thought is theatre.*

Z

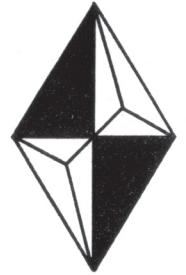


*Theatre is not event, event is not language, language is not thought, thought is not theatre.*

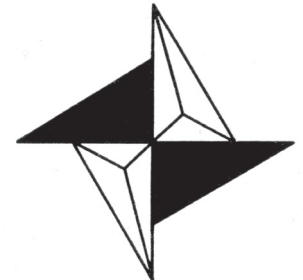
The logical figure endlessly expands in an infinite contraction. A fall in which each letter becomes active in a perpetual multiplication of logical relations that empty out the semantic frame. This crystal proposition opens a void that exposes language to the infinite.

The fall into language happened so long ago. A place where 'night' is evoked by turning on a light and illuminating everything, as if beyond the space of this illumination everything else was to be lost in darkness. I know the night is not endless, but when it's as cold as this it's hard to remember. Except this isn't a real night. It's like I'm looking with somebody else's eyes, the eyes of someone whose vision has started to fail, has been failing for a long time. Silence here is full of language, like a tale told by the dead, or like the living languages leaning towards each other.

Another enigmatic aspect of crystals is their symmetry of shape. Each facet has, through various folds and reflections, an opposing facet elsewhere – a polar negation extended and defined through the space-in-between.



Reflected, inverted, rotated; folding through and around axes and centrepoinths – two-, three-, four-, sixfold. Crystals are constructed through a limited number of symmetrical procedures, most crystals containing a combination of these fundamental operations. A cubic crystal not only has planes and fourfold axes, but also twofold axes through all edges, a set of threefold axes through the corners, and a centre of symmetry in the middle.

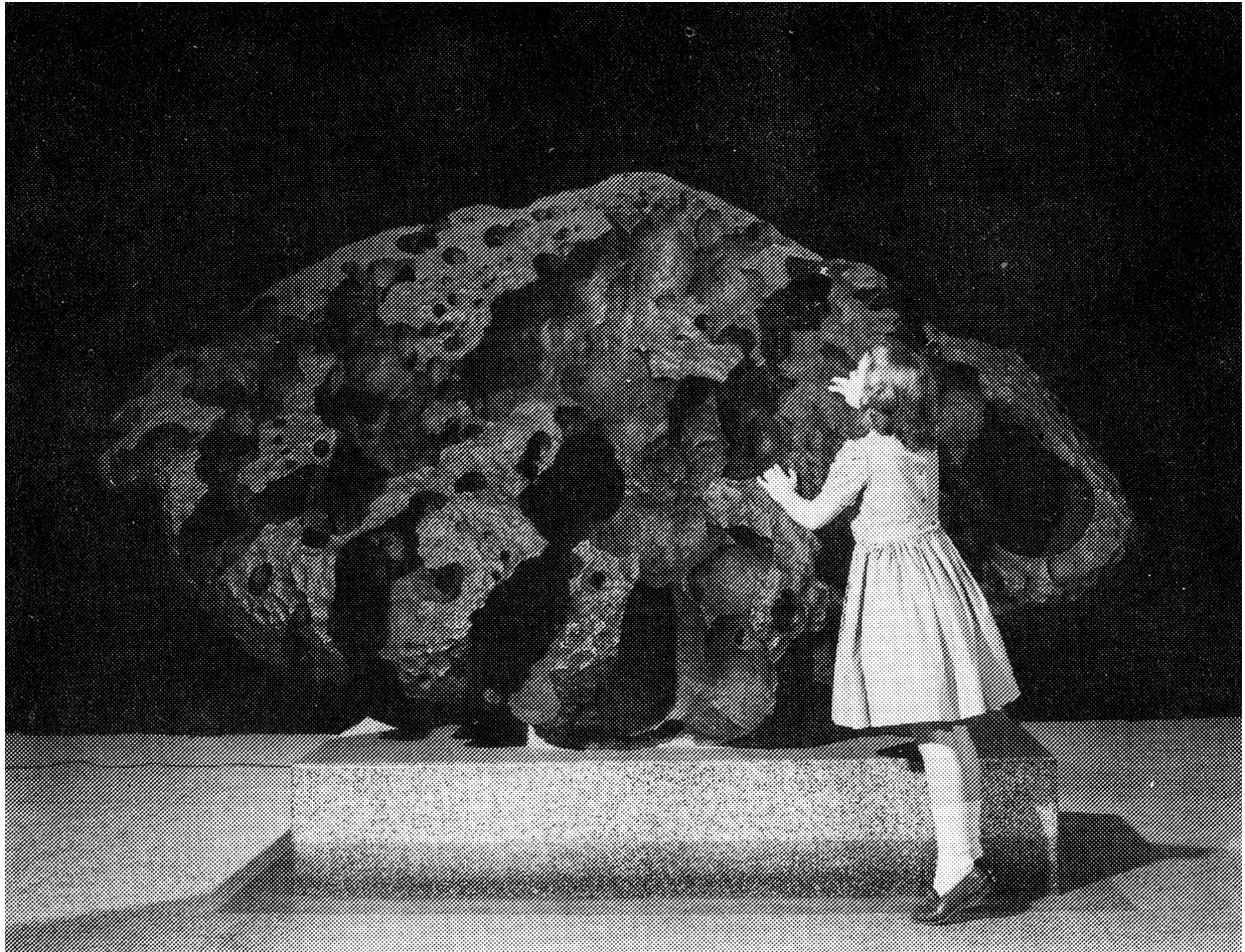


From these basic elements there are thirty-two possible symmetry combinations, and proceeding from this limited set, an infinity of possible shapes.











## Theatre of Thought: Editorial

'For a mountain to play the role of Mount Analogue, I concluded, its summit must be inaccessible but its base accessible to human beings as nature has made them. It must be unique and it must exist geographically. The door to the invisible must be visible.

That is what I had written. Taken literally, my article did indeed imply that I believed in the existence, somewhere on the surface of the globe, of a mountain far higher than Mount Everest – a belief which was, to many so called sensible person, absurd. And here was someone taking me at my word! and talking about "attempting an expedition"! A lunatic? A practical joker? But what about myself? I thought suddenly; didn't my readers have the right to ask the same questions of me, who had written the article? All right, am I a lunatic or a practical joker? Or just a man of letters? – Well, I can admit to it now, while asking myself these disagreeable questions, I felt that in spite of everything some part of me deep down firmly believed in the existence of Mount Analogue.'

René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*, Vincent Stuart, 1959. This translation by Roger Shattuck, from the French *Mont Analogue* (Editions Gallimard, 1952). To be continued in the next issue.

The point of departure for this new voyage towards Mont Analogue is the Theatre of Thought. We have been experiencing the terrible attraction of the unthinkable, which rather than securing a safe ground for theoretical reflection has opened onto a series of contradictions and collapses. The most difficult to get over perhaps is the relationship between theatre and event, two terms that seem inseparable but which, in their reciprocal attraction and repulsion, lead into an abyss, into the vortex that swirls between language and thought. In a constellation with four cardinal points – theatre, event, language, thought – every movement directs us towards the infinite, where what is at stake is a question of reality and its relation to representation.

Theatre of Thought, an index in three phases. The first phase – that which you are holding in your hands – is our attempt to think the unthinkable by bringing certain evidence to light, which as always we offer to artists, curators and theoreticians so as to provoke a response. The second phase, Black Holes, is the performative stage in the itinerary, where reactions conceived in response to the first phase will be brought into encounter with one another. This encounter will take place at Xing in Bologna, Italy on 19th of November 2009. Black Holes is envisaged as an event-flux that will attempt to come to terms with the 'trans-' states of creation (translations, transcriptions, transliterations, transfigurations), and with the paradox of representation as a language in-between. The events (performances, dialogues, screenings, dinner) are expressions of a thought orbiting an absent thing, and are constructed on more than one level. Each is a configuration emerging from various layers like the remnants of script still to be deciphered. All of this material will be the basis for a third phase, Theatre of Thought: Deviation and Contradiction, re-lapsing into the space of the printed page where, in time, we will reflect on the

theoretical consequences of the paradigm shift proposed in this second voyage. We will land in *Cannon Magazine* sometime next year, laying bare the fractures and splits inevitable after having traversed such uncertain terrain.

We don't know more than this, everything is to become.

Bon Voyage!

Inner Vector: Views From No-where  
Now-here

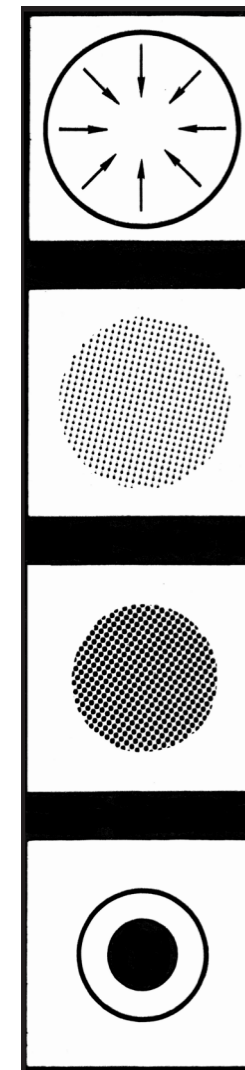
The theatre of thought poses a challenge. Can the stage address the event that takes place in absence of an event: the event of thought? Can the theatre's by-now familiar aspect, which makes of its chrono-topical devices – as processes of spatialization and temporalization of its signs – a material-creation-of-concepts, also include the possibility that this creation is conceptualised against the event?

If philosophy is the praxis of thought, theatre is no different insofar as it is capable of activating both a sensibility and a sensuality of senses. Attending a performance means entering in-touch, having an experience of the 'sense' of the performance that is inseparable from its tactile, sensual verification. Theatre of Thought places itself in open challenge with this modality of thought in action, activating a torsion that displaces the comprehension of reality and the imaginary off-stage.

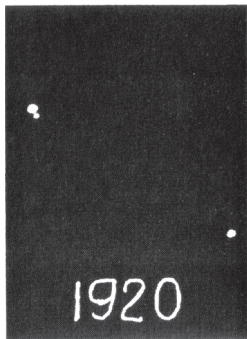
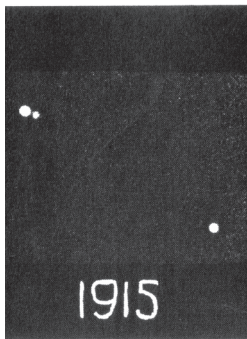
Roman Jakobson has many times pointed out that philosophers and linguists can never understand the nature of language without observing cases in which we are deprived of the latter (or cases in which there is an alteration); and, at the same time, that physicians cannot work with linguistic pathologies until they have a clear notion of the nature and essence of language. This is a crucial point: an *epoché* on the whole system of beliefs that guarantee us certainty about what theatre is, and

Towards the Event Horizon:

Overwhelmed by gravity, time and matter collapse into black holes, all surfaces folding inward and contracting to an abysmal point.



There have been reliable indications observed that double stars, eclipsing one another in a continual present/absent exchange, form their binary configurations through an orbit about a common absence – a void intersection of attraction and repulsion.



Ancient Chinese chronicles speak of the mysterious arrival of a 'guest star' – a star appearing where none had been observed before. 'In the first year of the Shin-Huo period, in the fifth moon, on the day of Ch'ih Ch'iu (4 July 1054), a guest star appeared several inches southeast of T'ieng Kuang.' What the Chinese court recorded was the appearance of the most spectacular event of stellar evolution, a supernova.

'Eventually it faded and became invisible.'

which posits a crisis in language. A crisis, though, that may be an effective instrument.

We propose this possibility: the text as a mental stage.

Can this internal vector be understood as a catastrophic strategy connected to a presence-absence alteration that indicates a linguistic erosion or the creation of new languages? Or even as a reservoir of language as residue? What is the fate of unsaid (or almost said) words, and of the scriptural bodies (the transcriptions) that stand in for them? And what are the remainders? Or rather, is it necessary to come to terms with the notion of an (un)translatable text?

We are not dealing with questions that precipitate language into the territory of nonsense, but which raise if anything a radical issue: what is representation? What does what we see (or what we don't see) refer to?

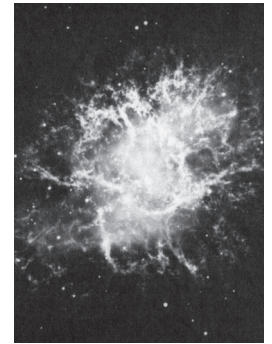
### Gaze Turned Inwards: the Blind Spot Scopic Functions

During a boat trip, Jacques Lacan recounts that his gaze was suddenly attracted by something shiny. Drawing closer he understands that the source of his curiosity is a sardine tin. This banal experience throws him into total anxiety. For two reasons. The first has to do with the gaze of the Other. This light-point in the sea is essentially a gaze, something that looks at him, that frames him: 'in the scopic field the gaze is external, I am looked at, i.e., I am framed.' The subject does not coincide any longer with the 'geometric point' which allows perspective on things. Instead the subject lives the disorienting experience of being in some way 'objectified' by another gaze, reduced to an object that makes a mark in the field of the visible. Lacan feels literally out of place. The second reason for that sense of inadequacy is that the gaze exercised by the sardine tin is a blind gaze, a gaze that does not see anything. The gaze-point that attracts and by

which one feels observed does not see anything, does not see us. It is an absent ghostly gaze. A black hole. Total mass. The problem is not whose gaze it might be but the fact that the gaze does not belong to anyone. Here we have the question of the schism between eye and gaze: an eye that looks does not always correspond to a gaze. Let's think of butterflies that present the phenomenon of 'eyes,' of marks that simulate a threatening eye present on the back of the wings on the feathers of some birds, a phenomenon investigated by Roger Callois in various analyses of his. Are we not perhaps dealing with a gaze without an eye? This example encountered in nature confronts us with what Lacan defines: marking function. That is it signals to us the pre-existence to sight of that-which-is-to-be-seen. The gaze does not belong either to the subject who sees or to the subject (either flesh and blood, or a transcendental eye like that of God) by which one is seen. We are dealing with a *marking function* that, automated by the eye, is identified with the gaze. The gaze is a sort of indefinable object. Desire is fixed on this 'hole' absent-from-the-beginning, elusive: the *Real*. It is specifically the absence of sense, the missing, which puts in motion all the possible attributions of sense that we apply to reality itself. What is, then, this display that lives in the field of appearances and assumes fascinating forms? What is therefore this object?

### Nobody Ever Saw the Language: the Birth of the Spectator

Who is nobody? The same blind spot that traverses vision? Language? Is it possible to have a representation of language? Nobody, an intended absence that concerns us. We are in the field that Lacan defines as the *seeing function*, which is to say a function of organisation and bordering of the Real, rather than an encounter with the Real. The gaze as an inert object devoid of meaning, an object



When we look at stars, we are seeing old light: photons transmitted across millenia and reaching us here today as a stream of memories that continually recreate past moments in our present actuality.

According to George Kubler, 'the nature of a signal is that its message is neither here nor how, but there and then. If it is a signal it is a past action, no longer embraced by the "now" of present being [...] The present instant is the plane upon which the signals of all are projected. No other plane of duration gathers us up universally into the same instant of becoming.'

We can perceive the light from a star because it radiates toward us, its past-future relations concordant with our own. A system that evolved in the opposite direction and attracted radiation, would instigate a lapse – a blind spot – in the surface of our perception.

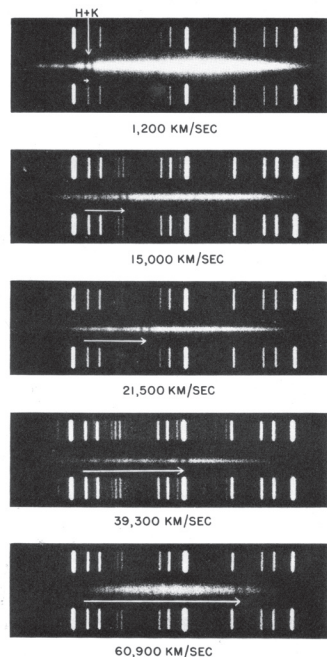


Norbert Wiener imagines a being whose time runs in the opposite direction to our own: 'To such a being, all communication with us would be impossible. Any signal he might send would reach us with a



logical stream of consequents from his point of view, antecedents from ours. These antecedents would already be in our experience, and would have served to us as the natural explanation of his signal, without presupposing an intelligent being to have sent it. If he drew us a square, we should see the remains of his figure as its precursors, and it would seem to be the curious crystallisation – always perfectly explainable – of these remains. Its meaning would seem to be as fortuitous as the faces we read into mountains and cliffs. The drawing of a square would appear to us as a catastrophe – sudden indeed, but explainable by natural laws – by which that square would cease to exist. Our counterpart would have exactly similar ideas concerning us. Within any world with which we can communicate, the direction of time is uniform.'

#### RED-SHIFTS



out of place: not an eye attributable to some kind of subject. The question to put to ourselves is then: what frames the scenic space by means of the composition of objects, materials, colours, figures, presences when it attracts us?

The object observed by our eyes is an empty container that undergoes an act and returns an image, analogously to what happens with a person that I fix in my eyes: the other that returns the action makes itself a border that I can't be sure to understand, meaning it becomes a centre of interest hidden to consciousness 'un-subjectable and un-objectified.' It is actually the apparition as stupendous as it is monstrous of the sublime, of an uninterpretable void that becomes for a moment visible in its invisibility. The gaze holds contemporaneously the maximum of subjectivity, the desire of a subject that marks the real, and the maximum of de-subjectification, my gaze in a certain way does not belong to me, it dispossesses me of my own desire, I can find it in reality in the shape of the Other.

The *framing function* or the nobody of language concerns the relationship with the problem of the visual representability of the subject. In the sense that the framing function does not provide a representation of the subject so much as a representation of the limits of its possible representation. Here the state of being in the frame unveils its more radical character. The marking function shows the subject (the spectator) as consigned to the gaze of the Other, to a gaze that comes from outside and subverts the classic idea of subject as artifice of representation. The space beyond representation has as its premise the fact that the perspective point of the gaze is located outside the subject. It is not the subject that looks but the Other that looks at the subject. The Real not as centre excluded from the world of representation – das Ding as 'reality outside of meaning' – but as encounter. It is no longer the perception of the user that apprehends the image, but the scene, its objective consistency, that in going beyond the

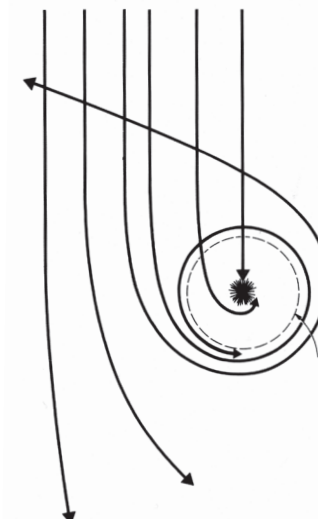
limit of the frame is catapulted to the external. The internal overturns itself in a material torsion towards the open.

#### In Trans: the Paradox of Representation in the Language-in-Between

- × Theatre of Thought is measured by the possibility of a theatre based not on representation but on encounter. It brings to light the possible gradations of the absence of the word, the principles of breaching that-which-is-to-happen.
- × Theatre as transcription: the alterations of the relationships of transitivity, the relation absence / presence as emergence (a coming into presence), the relation absence / presence as disappearance (the dissolving of perception), putting forward the possibility of a performance-in-form-of-a-book or of a-book-in-form-of-a-performance. It configures a space of the trans, trans implying in-between (a translation of the Greek word *metaxú*, composed of *metá* – in the middle, between, and *sún* – with, together with, unitedly). It denotes the space of relations, a between-space which designates neither one thing nor the other, but indicates the state of being in the middle, of the 'dash' that makes divisions, that puts logically antithetical concepts in relation. Theatre as a space that indicates a line of demarcation, but also a place of contradiction: visible and invisible, inside and outside, presence and absence.
- × The paradox of the four cardinal points: theatre, event, language, thought.

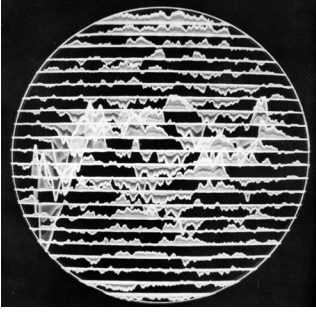
So that there be something like the theatre it is necessary that there be something like an event understood as an occurrence in a physical-temporal space in the presence of spectators. If theatre is language, and thought is representation, the event is an intentional act that occurs in the consciousness of the subject. This is by nature irreducible, incapable of being exhausted in a form, unsayable.

We can observe a black hole from two planes – the inside and the outside, the latter being the only one that is experimentally verifiable. From here, we see (or don't see) an event horizon where time and matter cease to exist. A horizon we are continually crossing but never meet. No light reaches us, nothing happens. The closer we observe, the less we perceive, time eventually falling away into a speculative arena known as the interior vector. Objects are caught and pulled inexorably toward this central singularity and take off toward the infinite nowhere.



Scientists tell us that at the centre of every galaxy is a black hole of a mass equivalent to millions or even billions of times the solar mass, (precisely half of the mass of the whole galaxy). Such a phenomenon would indicate that black holes are not just a terrifying expression of the catastrophic event, but that they exercise a precise function for the gravitational equilibrium of the Universe.





'If a black hole has trapped stars, clouds or galaxies, does it keep a memory of its formation?' It was once believed that the light emitted at the fringes of an event horizon does not contain any characteristic that might reveal that which has been swallowed by the black hole. In July 2004, Hawking disproved this hypothesis. The information contained in a black hole is not lost forever, but will be restored to the universe in a 'complex form' not transmitted through the typical channels of communication and thus evading the prism of our usual language. It is as if the horizon of black holes were 'a fluctuating mosaic similar to a fabric from whose pitted weave quantities of light find ways out. The black hole seems therefore to possess transparencies on its surface that allow the information enclosed within to continue to exist.'

Can we say that the event is a materialisation of an intentional act?

And if so, in what way then do we place the event in relation to representation if it is already in itself an act of representation?

The darkness opens wide. I am called to witness the degrees of that void. The stage is there like every other abyss. Abyss against abyss: the pupil-circle-infinite encounters the surface. That magnetic field of interchangeable poles generates attraction and repulsion, the affirmation and negation which is the origin of a space. A space not as physical breadth but in the figure of the gaze from which the single elements take life from a reflection, the reflection of the I. Or better still, the object-image sustained by the mental light that the gaze, this time, will return to look at as an I spectator. To look is to cause to disappear into the gravity of the pupil, which like a vortex now swallows the object-world so as to generate the phenomenon.