



On Rotation, or Talking to Moths Between Paranoid Fantasies and Psychomotor Agitations

*A Suggestion for What We Should Do With Our Brain:
Art History as a Pathological Discipline*

In the mid twentieth-century, an author created a fictional character capable of relating to readers the conditions of a peculiar fear. This fear was only experienced by particularly sensitive individuals who were sometimes woken from sleep by the motion of rotating galaxies. The cause was a combination of neurogenesis – neurons birthing new neurons – and stars exploding in death to become black holes. The correspondence of intuited molecular rotation with the vertigo of a subtle planetary cycle between dusk and dawn was described as pale and lifeless. The resulting anxiety was characterised as that of unreality or the angst of non-life – the biological scream of cells in a constant flush of inner disintegration.

Twenty years later, an ironist developed a mathematical model of the universe for publication in honour of a friend, who was a physicist. The ironist hoped that the model would result in astronomers tracking evidence of rotation more intently and in philosophers more purposively rethinking the way they fixed time in variables. In the model, the universe was represented as an infinite succession of layers made up of world-states. Any two-point events in the universe belonged either to the same world-state or to two different world-states. In the case of the two-point events that belonged to the same world-state, it was not that the world-state was actually singular, but that the two world-states were simultaneous and, therefore, understood as being one and the same. In the second case, the situation was less ambiguous: the first world-state came earlier and the second later.

(The Conversation Has Begun Within a Frame)

The protagonist to be introduced is not a fictional character but an actual person. She had recounted that the city in which she lived was a place where it was easy to hide, to isolate. In a glass pavilion that was categorised at the time as a classic example of socialist architecture and modernist aesthetics, austere vitrines lined with floor tiles had been rigorously arranged in a row. Someone had deliberately designed the display cases as if they encapsulated the vision of papers thrown to the floor in a parallel world. Printer errors had been inked atop the loose sheets. When the protagonist walked through the set, she imagined how she might imprint her thoughts onto torn pages. These pages were the thoughts of someone

else, or perhaps they were her own, but she had not taken control of them yet; she had not been able to turn them into anything. The protagonist was thinking about thoughts as things that could be turned into other things – material driven out from thought process.

(The Interlocutor Has Been Introduced as the Protagonist)

A session typically started with what the protagonist had been thinking about an hour before – what had happened that week, perhaps a dream or a vision – and this would trigger a memory. This time, the forms were rectangular and the borders that defined them were fake leather soft. They appeared in a variety of colours. If the forms had been commodities, they would have been cheap. The protagonist said it was a feeling of how her thoughts, or the order of her thoughts, had somehow shifted from standing on a shelf next to each other, where they could be seen, to lying on top of one another. With this change in orientation, they became transparent. In fact, she realised it was the stacking that had somehow caused them to acquire more transparency and she could travel more easily from the cover of one to that of the next.

According to the protagonist, the analyst looked at these blocks, then stacked them on top of each other and looked at them again, up and down this time. After observing the analyst's technique, she thought she could adopt it as a method. It provided an image of her thoughts and demonstrated how they could be reordered in a more dynamic way. The blocks and their covers were different stories, different entities, but she could not see the pages. These things, she said, were whole units unto themselves. In the analyst's room, all things were arranged vertically in towers, constructions that would build upwards instead of onwards. Perhaps it was because she was lying down. She described the living room of an old apartment; there was no furniture, there were only shelves. She always took the books she needed and put them in her kitchen windowsill. If you stacked books vertically, she said, it was the ones you were using. And one book, addressing a totally different matter, could be stacked on top of another.

(The Character of the Protagonist Has Been Developed)

If the essay to follow were a thought-experiment, it would represent field notes for a case study in emancipatory neuroaesthetics. The opening paragraph would ask the following question: what must we do with our brain to ensure that we do not repeat the caricature of the world? As has already been said by someone else but will be represented here, human beings make their own brain, just as they make their own history. They do not, however, make their history or brain as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances. They make it under existing circumstances, given and transmitted from the past. Indeed, as we have been told, the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare upon the brain of the living.

One possible suggestion for how not to repeat the caricature of the world, might be a process of neuromorphic architectural project for an artificial nervous system. The fissures and folds of our brain and the reception of art results in a hypothesis, the reception of art results in an analysis not to be confused with therapy. The analysis of images would become a tool by way of brain-picking: a centrifuge of network of interiority into the dark matter scaffolding. If we could be a form of mathematical intuition, we could call it a mathematical treatise, we could call it rotation.

(Emancipatory Neuroaesthetics and the Protagonist)

This essay on rotation is a fictionalist on the paternalistic claim of essentialism. It is resolved by thinking of the artist as a Science Needs Art History, could be one of the second decade of the twenty-first century. History needed Vision Science, that is, it had so adamantly fought for the right ways given anyway: the therapeutic impact and, like other disciplines, be eligible for medicine, science and technology.

An intentionally bathetic enterprise in neuroaesthetics, the neural basis of so-called vision, the biomedicalization of Art History. In order to reinvigorate the way we think of our brain. The thought-experiment of criticality and, through the anamorphic opposition, oppose the facile repetition of visual perception.

It is not metaphor that has neutralized the will return us to militancy. What is at stake is the interpretation of incompleteness as bound that we can never approach the truth. The truth are appearances. Oh, what a firm of the nineteenth century, before a hundred years of abstract and formal activity, for ontological certainty and the quantification of causality.

(The Objective)

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One possible suggestion for how not to be governed and, therefore, for how not to repeat the caricature of the world, might be to propose that art be understood as a process of neuromorphic architectonics. As such, we would understand art as the project for an artificial nervous system that allows us to locate dead weight in the fissures and folds of our brain and to literally extract it. In this absurdist hypothesis, the reception of art results in a diagnosis felicitously misrecognised as analysis not to be confused with therapy. The study of the movement knowledge of images would become a tool by way of which thoughts were lived as material for brain-picking: a centrifuge of networks that churns the white and grey matter of interiority into the dark matter scaffolding the universe. This cerebrality would be a form of mathematical intuition, which, for the purposes of this methodological treatise, we could call rotation.

(Emancipatory Neuroaesthetics and Neuromorphic Architectonics Have Been Defined)

This essay on rotation is a fictionalist parody that is itself rotating. It is a play on the paternalistic claim of essentialist neuroaesthetics that the elusivity of art is resolved by thinking of the artist as an intuitive neuroscientist. Why Vision Science Needs Art History, could be one title of an academic talk given in the second decade of the twenty-first century. No one would counter by asking why Art History needed Vision Science, that is, why art should return to the retinal after it had so adamantly fought for the right to the conceptual, but the answer was always given anyway: the therapeutic imperative. Art History could also be therapy, and, like other disciplines, be eligible for all of the research capital available to medicine, science and technology.

An intentionally bathetic enterprise, this essay performs belief in neuroaesthetics, the neural basis of so-called visual art, in order to fend off the encroaching biomedicalization of Art History. Its objective is to parody neuroaesthetics in order to reinvigorate the way we think about art and the constitutive historicity of our brain. The thought-experiment is designed to revive the complex wit of criticality and, through the anamorphic convolution of an Aristotelian telescope, oppose the facile repetition of visual puns that has become all too commonplace.

It is not metaphor that has neutralised our agency and it is not metonymy that will return us to militancy. What is at stake is our relationship to logic, our misinterpretation of incompleteness as boundless subjectivity, our outdated conviction that we can never approach the truth of the thing-in-itself because all we know are appearances. Oh, what a force of galactic spin has trapped us in the eighteenth century, before a hundred years of mathematics valorised number for abstract and formal activity, for ontological discovery, not the mere science of quantity and the quantification of causality!

(The Objective of the Thought-Experiment Has Been Disclosed)

It remains to be explained how a population that reached three hundred and

eleven million, five hundred and ninety one thousand, nine hundred and seventeen in the hottest month of the year could have been delivered into captivity without even the proverbial whimper. It might be claimed that it was a mass bewitching or that it was the collective immaturity of a new nation taken unaware by its own burgeoning adolescence. If we have, in mathematical terms, axiomatised that all great world historical facts and personalities appear twice – the first time as tragedy and the second as farce – this does not confirm that there is an absolute trajectory of events that repeats itself, first for the sake of bloodthirst and then for the sake of a laugh. But, this is not the topic of our essay. Let it suffice to say that we seem to be deliberately engaged in the exercise of conjuring delusions of the dead, watching over cradles as graves for caricatures that will devour alternatives. We seem to be intent on dismissing this rotational repetition of tragedy and farce as a pseudo-force, a mere conspiracy theory or delusional mental image. It is time to come to terms with our death denial.

(The Reader and the Author Have Been Reprimanded For Their Complicity)

In the sixth year of the twentieth century, a pathologist was celebrated for mapping the anatomo-functional architecture of the nervous system in a way that interpreted its structure as reticular. This diffuse, network-based approach stood in opposition to the atomistic-reductionist assumptions of neuron theory; it regarded the system as being driven by collective action, rather than considering the dynamic polarisation of neurons that were thought of as distinct physiological units with their own functional individuality. The pathologist was named senator to a kingdom by its monarch. Only a month later, an anarchist who claimed to have learned his politics across the ocean in America, still known as the new nation, assassinated the monarch.

Five years earlier, an art historian, son of an internationally renowned banking family, would also travel to America. For the art historian, time was not space-like and for every possible definition of a world-state, one could travel into another region of the universe that could indeed be understood as both its past and its future. Travel between distant geographical locations could produce for the individual a manoeuvrability of the closed and almost-closed time loops in rotating universes. It enabled passage into the near past and near future of one's own successively stacked present and now.

(The Work of the Art Historian Has Been Contextualised In the History of Anarchism)

The art historian asserted that we should demonstrate by our example that capitalism also makes the labour of thinking possible on the broadest basis, as only capitalism is able to provide it. Indeed, he cultivated this notion as his schizoid practice by employing the idea of man-as-a-distant-being as a method. Though the firstborn of seven children, he had relinquished his inheritance to his brother and fancied himself a librarian, an entrepreneur, an investor, to create his own

independent office of movement knowledge. He entered my library as a financial asset to his brother.

The pathos formula that the art historian used to map time through the micro-gestures of the sulting atlas, time had been so tight, so close to the surface of things themselves. So close to the chest cavity of a foetus, folding or a heart. The innermost problem was a pulsion to look for perceptible cause in an incurable schizoid, deposited in time, no accident that his end would later

(The Main Idea and the

The art historian, son of a banker, was also been a philosopher and an amateur of music and psychomotor agitations, it spoke to moths. Before the first war, he wrote epistolaries with friends and one sketch, he portrayed his banker brother, a finance minister standing set twenty-five years in the future. He gave capable of transmitting audio-visual turned the favour, and portrayed his fashion of white socks with blue dots. The extreme density of detail with chance would have been able to understand

Only a few years after the performance abroad would become one of the and federal reserve for the nation, where the anarchist who had assassinated. The plan for the federal reserve came from a land, where anyone who enquired about the group were on a duck-hunting trip. The art historian would later claim, that a reform in the period prior to these ideological ends of any claims to ideological acknowledge it, had followed the tot

(The Scene of Characters P

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enter my library as a financial asset in the accounts of the family firm, he wrote
to his brother.

The pathos formula that the art historian theorised tracked the disappearance
of time through the micro-gestures of bodies caught in fits of exertion. In the re-
sulting atlas, time had been so tightly wound as to have become a wormhole in
the surface of things themselves. Something like the tubular organs in the skull
and chest cavity of a foetus, folding and looping to the metamorphosis of a brain
or a heart. The innermost problem is still the catharsis of this burdensome com-
pulsion to look for perceptible causes, he wrote, and these are the confessions of
an incurable schizoid, deposited in the archives of mental healers. It would seem
no accident that his end would later come in cardiac arrest.

(The Main Idea and the Death of the Art Historian Have Been Described)

The art historian, son of a banker, librarian, movement knowledge analyst, had
also been a philosopher and an amateur dramatist. Between his paranoid fanta-
sies and psychomotor agitations, it was said that he practiced a cult in which he
spoke to moths. Before the first war of the world-states, he enjoyed staging fic-
titious epistolaries with friends and speculative caricature skits with family. In
one sketch, he portrayed his banker brother communicating with another bank-
er brother, a finance minister stationed in a faraway land. The exchange was
set twenty-five years in the future and featured imagined information technolo-
gies capable of transmitting audio-visual holograms. The brother he imitated re-
turned the favour, and portrayed him writing an essay on the High Renaissance
fashion of white socks with blue dots. The essay stretched hyperbole to an ex-
treme density of detail with channels of circuitous reason so tangled that no one
would have been able to understand any part of it. It was pure cerebrality.

Only a few years after the performance of these family skits, the brother sta-
tioned abroad would become one of the architects of a centralised monetary policy
and federal reserve for the nation across the ocean, the nation they called new,
where the anarchist who had assassinated the monarch had learned his politics.
The plan for the federal reserve came together during secret meetings on an is-
land, where anyone who enquired about the unfamiliar incomers was told that
the group were on a duck-hunting trip. If it were true, as the brother of the art
historian would later claim, that apolitical thought had influenced banking re-
form in the period prior to these island meetings, the new plans were the defini-
tive end of any claims to ideological neutrality. They too, though they would never
acknowledge it, had followed the totalitarian turn.

(The Scene of Characters Playing Caricatures of Characters Has Been Staged)

Twenty-three years after the assassination of the monarch by the anarchist, the
art historian travelled to a kingdom on a peninsula. There, in the capital city of

tions of religion and fascism reconcile, and
es subtitled Primeval Language of Gesture,
reason. Ultimately, he called the project,
d images in Mnemosyne was supposed to
er written. Similar atlases – in which com-
ce the world to what the art historian called
– also existed in medicine and geography.

cartographies, stacked one atop the other:
engraving of the constellations; the second,
exchange between North and South, East
ee of an important banking family during
diagram was appropriated for Table A, the
storian's specifications, and the third was
nemosyne, or the spring of remembrance,
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alled Lethe was initiated, publicly referred
ake form, however, until the early twenty-
l enterprise, but a collective one. Table A of
ographies stacked one atop the other. The
e mid twentieth century of a wheel-shaped
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n a chart, drawn at the end of the twenti-
evolution from Australopithecus Afarensis
been an autobiographical map. The map
the art historian, son of a banker. It was
ona and an unspecified point to the east.

een Mentioned and the Memex Has Been Cited)

h century, before the protagonist had be-
robiologist built an illusionist device. The
amputate the phantom limbs of patients
no longer physically existed. In the trau-
sion of light signals had been triggered
us that fixed the amputees in an eternal
ox of being trapped in the moment of los-
nies ever having lost it in the first place.
hat he could use the successful therapeu-
the phantom limb had exposed – the dis-
ideal, a figment of fantasy and agitation.
a to construct a discursive smoke screen,
mans of so-called mirror neurons, which

had previously only been observed in macaque monkeys. The idea of action under-
standing that he would promote in his work would distract attention away from
the dangerous concept of movement knowledge that the art historian had theo-
rised. Action understanding was defined as the capacity to recognise that another
individual is performing an action, to differentiate this action from others analo-
gous to it and to use this information in order to act appropriately. It was also de-
fined as the capacity to achieve an internal description of an action and to use it
to organise appropriate future behaviour. In reality, it was a new empathy theory
for art that naturalised exercises of the intellect so that they would not be worked
at as concepts but assumed as an inevitable part of brain function. The conspiracy
was to resolve the elusivity of art by thinking of artists as intuitive neuroscien-
tists. Despite the fact that the art historian of movement knowledge, creator of
the atlas called Mnemosyne, had written that he did not want even the slightest
trace of blasphemous science-mongering to be found in this comparative search
for the eternally unchanging Red Indian in the helpless human soul, his name
was thrown about posthumously in defence of the essentialist neuroaesthetics
that amputated phantom limbs.

The poetics of rotation, however, could not be so easily undermined, and, while
mirror neurons were being hypothesised, a new battery of neuropsychological
tests was being published. The tests included two sets of what were called pro-
gressive silhouettes: one of a gun, the other of a trumpet. The analysand taking
the test was scored on the basis of whether – in the course of rotating the silhou-
ettes across ten cards – a gun and trumpet could be successfully identified. At
the time, it was thought that the test would help analysts to quantify the percep-
tion of objects in space. Instead, the ten cards became a tactic for activation. The
gun and the trumpet prompted neurons to cathect. Cathect was a term coined
by a philosopher whose studies founding the psychological science of analysis,
also known as the talking cure, had begun with drawing diagrams of neurons. To
cathect was to exchange charges of energy at points within the brain that the phi-
losopher called contacts, later known as synapses.

(The Conspiracy of the Mirror Box and the Mirror Neurons Has Been Exposed)

It was hard to talk about. Somehow, she did not really understand the connections.
In the beginning, she did not know how to remember the sessions. Sometimes she
photographed them, but it did not do much good to look back at the photographs.
Sometimes she took notes. Sometimes, the conversation seemed more important,
more interesting. She insisted that it had been hard to document. She did not
want to define the direction it would take. She was trying to investigate the meth-
od she was using.

She felt the need to replace something with something else, like speech with
movement. So, the dancer walked around and experienced things, looked at im-
ages, experienced space, looked at images, and repeated this process, again and
again, until the images fed movements and provided her with an association or

triggered a thought in the protagonist. She conveyed this thought to the dancer and together they would change the movement. In one of the first sessions with a young dancer, they had talked about trees or imagining gardens or communicating with trees, as if one would see a tree and try to communicate with it, as if communicating with movement, as if communicating code. The dancer remembered a house from her childhood that was so beautiful, that was standing in front of the garden, that she could see from the living room where she lived, and a whole moment from her childhood was recalled through a single movement.

It was February. She started to think about images of ruins from the second war of the world-states. She thought about the images of the ruins, of a revolving glass pavilion, of a specimen – a specimen that had been fixed in what had seemed to be the very moment of its coming into being. With this juxtaposition of expressive gestures – the rotating glass, the ruins, the hatching specimen – the most pressing question became the simultaneity of it all. For her, it was important that they existed one inside the other, a hypothetical inside a parenthetical, inside a parenthetical, inside a parenthetical. These parallel stories, if only they could all be contained one within the other, the timeline eating its own trail as part of a disappearing act. The year in which the images of troops posing with the body parts of freedom fighters was circulated, was the year she remembered having the thought that she called a magic thought.

(The Conversation is Concluding with the Assertion that Rotation is Magic Thought)

As previously mentioned, the ironist had conceived his mathematical model of rotating universes as a birthday present for the physicist who had theorised relativity. The model was a stack of identical layers, infinite in all directions. Consider a large circle in one of the layers of the substratum. Now travel along this circle at a very high velocity, a minimum velocity just slightly less than the velocity of light. If you do this, you will return to the galaxy from which you started – at an earlier time than you left – as indicated by the local clock. Yet, you will have aged normally during the trip. You could now encounter your life as it was twenty minutes ago. You might also simply send a light signal, guided by suitably placed mirrors, along a sufficiently large polygonal path, and achieve the same results. The radius, however, would be so immense that you would probably consider the procedure too elusive; elusive and therefore, impracticable.

This story has been based on actual events. All people, places and timelines are true, though abstracted for dramatic purposes. Any mistakes in transcription or interpretation are the result of the author's misreading. In other words, although the essay is fictionalist, nothing in it has been intentionally fictionalised.

(After the Disclaimer: A Selection of Books, Music, Films, Articles and Notes
Not Cited In the Essay, but Stacked Vertically While Writing

Field Notes, Voice-Over-Internet Conversation between Mai Hifstad Gunnæs and Emily Welle Bævre, 26 February 2012

Marjanne Amacher, Sound Characters, 1999

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Arrigo Petacco, L'Anarchico Che Venne Dall'America, Milano: Mondadori, 1969

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