Schema F

by Fable 5

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> *This schematism of our understanding, as regards appearances and their mere form, is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true modes of activity we shall hardly ever divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes.*
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> —Immanuel Kant

Of the object called Schema F there survives, so far as we know, a single witness: a photograph of sixteen lines of white letters on a ground the color of a switched-off screen. Each line has three registers. On the left stands a small algebra—two letters, mostly, dressed in subscripts, occasionally squared, occasionally married to one another. In the middle runs a

string of common nouns, two or three or four to a line, separated by commas, in the tone of a customs declaration. On the right, four Roman capitals. The sixteen lines are disposed in two families, each under a chieftain line that names a cosmological principle, a sex, an operation, and a temperament, in that order, as though these four were obviously the same kind of thing. There is no title on the object, no author, no date, no indication of purpose. It has the finish of something copied out for the tenth time and the content of something never copied at all.

The name it goes by is not on the object either. Whoever first called it Schema F was making, consciously or not, a double allusion, and the two halves of the allusion contradict each other, which is the correct omen for what follows. Lacan lettered his diagrams like theorems: Schema L, Schema R, Schema I, the letters functioning less as initials than as coordinates in an alphabet of his own jurisdiction. The canon stops well short of F; a Schema F is therefore apocryphal by construction, the diagram the doctrine implies but does not contain, the way a chess opening compendium implies the games too disreputable to print. But German offices have used the phrase for a century and a half: *nach Schema F*, according to Schema F, meaning by rote, by the book,

without a thought—the etymology runs back to the printed regimental reports of the Prussian army, forms so formulaic that the form's own filing letter became the European name of routine itself. So the object bears simultaneously the name of the missing diagram and the name of mindless procedure; it presents itself as at once the suppressed page of a doctrine and the boilerplate of a bureaucracy. Kant suspected that beneath all our public tables there operates a schematism we do not choose, a hidden art in the depths of the soul whose workings we shall hardly ever unveil. If he was right, that art presumably keeps diagrams. The photograph has the air of a page from that archive—leaked, uncredited, and filed, with the archive's characteristic humor, under F.

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Objects that survive in a single witness impose a special discipline on their readers. Two manuscripts can be collated and made to confess each other's errors; one manuscript is a tribunal of itself, every feature deliberate until proven impossible. Philology calls the lone survivor a *codex unicus* and handles it with a tenderness bordering on superstition, for a variant reading in a codex unicus is not a variant of anything; it is the reading. Schema F is a codex unicus of sixteen lines; nothing

in it can be corrected, and the most a reader can do is count. We transcribe the object entire, since everything that follows stands or falls with the reader's power to convict us:

a	yin, feminine, fusion, adventure	ISFP
a_r	real objects, body	ESFP
${a_r}^2$	disjunction, love	ENFP
a_s	sensual objects, fetish	ESTP
${a_s}^2$	contiguity, fantasy	ENTP
$a_r a_s$	sincerity, deceptive truth	INFP
$a_r \varphi_s$	space, allure, metaphor	ISTP
$a_r \varphi_r$	essence, causation, straight	INTP
φ	yang, masculine, fission, authority	ENTJ
φ_r	real qualities, machines	INTJ
${\varphi_r}^2$	contraction, algorithms	ISTJ
φ_s	sensual qualities, phallus	INFJ
${\varphi_s}^2$	emanation, language	ISFJ
$\varphi_r \varphi_s$	duplicity, truthful deception	ESTJ
$\varphi_r o_s$	eidos, theory, metonymy	ENFJ
$\varphi_s o_s$	time, seduction, bisexual	ESFJ

The alphabet of the left column can be identified. The letter *a* is the *objet petit a* of the Lacanian doctrine, the letter for the object-cause of desire, which its author forbade his translators to translate, insisting that it circulate as pure algebra, a coin with no obverse. The letter φ is the phallus of the same doctrine—the small

letter; the capital he reserved for its symbolic office, a nicety the compiler either ignores or, being a compiler, compresses. The letter *o* of the last two lines we defer; it is the anomaly of the table, and anomalies are dessert. The grammar is small and strict. There are two subscripts, and the glosses give their reading away at once: a_r is glossed *real objects* and a_s *sensual objects*, φ_r *real qualities* and φ_s *sensual qualities*—so *a* means object, φ means quality, *r* means real, *s* means sensual. There is one unary operation, squaring, applied exactly four times. There is one binary product, applied exactly six times, three to a family. The census comes out even: in each house a chieftain, two subscripted vassals with their squares, and three alliances—one plus four plus three, eight to a house, sixteen in all.

The implicit claim of the object is therefore this: that two letters, two subscripts, and two operations suffice to beget the kinds of soul. The claim has a lineage, and the first gloss confesses it—*yin* is the oldest two-letter cosmology on record. Empedocles taught that all things at one time come together into one through Love and at another are carried apart by the hatred of Strife, and near the end of his life Freud adopted the pair by name, conceding that his Eros and his drive of destruction had been anticipated by a Sicilian in verse. The Pythagore-

ans kept a table of ten oppositions in two columns, with limit, the one, the male, and the straight on one side, and the unlimited, the many, the female, and the curved on the other; Aristotle preserves it in the tone of a man reporting the customs of a tribe he does not expect to be believed about. The *Sefer Yetzirah* has God engrave, weigh, and permute an alphabet until a world stands. Ramon Llull cut his alphabet into concentric wheels whose rotation was argument, and Leibniz, shown the sixty-four hexagrams, recognized binary arithmetic and congratulated the diagrams on having anticipated him by two millennia. Schema F belongs to this family—a late member, feral, unhoused, and unusually candid about its parents.

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The right column belongs to a different civilization. The four-capital codes are the sixteen types of the American typological church: Jung's *Psychological Types* of 1921 as systematized, between the wars and after, by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers—a mother and daughter without appointment, laboratory, or license, who turned a Zurich metaphysics into a questionnaire, and whose sixteen cells now sort the personnel of the world's corporations with the serenity of a

tide table. In the trade, each type has acquired a vernacular surname—the Adventurer, the Commander, the Mediator, the Executive, and so on—and the schema demonstrably consulted this vernacular, because its two chieftain lines cite it. The letter *a* is assigned ISFP and glossed *adventure*, and the Adventurer is precisely that type's trade name; *φ* is assigned ENTJ and glossed *authority*, and the ENTJ is marketed as the Commander. Whoever drew the table had read the letters of the American oracle and folded its brand names back into the founding glosses, so that the system's most exotic stratum, the Parisian algebra, rests directly on its most commercial one, with nothing in between but a comma.

The first theorem is visible to the naked eye. Every term of the house of *a* ends in P, and every term of the house of *φ* ends in J; the sixteen types appear once each, none repeated, none missing. The deepest division of the American table—Perceiving against Judging—is thus derived, in the schema's economy, from the primal division of the alphabet: fusion is Perceiving, the open hand, the option held; fission is Judging, and the etymology cooperates, since to decide is *de-caedere*, to cut off. *Adventure* against *authority* repeats the same cut in Latin and Greek: an adventure is *ad-venire*, what comes toward you, the house that waits for arrivals; authority

is *archē*, the Greek word that means at once beginning and command, the house that rules because it thinks it started everything. And here the schema executes its finest historical stroke, whether or not anyone instructed it to. Of the four oppositions in the American code, three descend from Jung; the fourth, J against P, is essentially the graft that the mother and daughter added themselves. The schema's very split into two houses is therefore founded not on the doctrine but on the amendment—as though the letters knew where the scripture had been supplemented, and chose the graft for their trunk.

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The four squares are the compiler's arithmetic of reflexivity, and they scan like a proverb: body squared is love; fetish squared is fantasy; machines squared are algorithms; the phallus squared is language. In each case the square of a thing is its abstraction. Apply a thing to its own kind—let the body bear on bodies, the machine on machines—and what precipitates is the thing's idea.

In the left house, a_r, real objects, *body*, is assigned ESFP, the Entertainer, which is the body's trade name if the body has one; squared, it becomes ${a_r}^2$, *disjunction, love*, ENFP. The code column records an ascent: the S of

sensation yields to the N of intuition. This is Diotima's stair from the *Symposium* executed in a single step—from one beautiful body to the beautiful itself, love as the body raised to its own power. But the gloss beside *love* is *disjunction*, and there the schema sides with the comedian against the priestess. Aristophanes, at the same banquet, derives love from a cut: the spherical ancestors halved by Zeus, each half seeking its complement forever; and a modern of our own day calls love the scene of the Two, the truth of a disjunction rather than its cure. The schema files love under the column of fusion and defines it by a disjunction. Whoever wrote it had read the whole dialogue, not just the famous guest.

Beside it, a_s, sensual objects, *fetish*, is assigned ESTP, the Entrepreneur—a placement Marx would have initialed, the type having merely professionalized what the commodity always was—and squared it becomes ${a_s}^2$, *contiguity, fantasy*, ENTP, the Debater, which is the fantasist's guild if it has one. *Contiguity* is Jakobson's word for the metonymic pole of language, and the Parisian doctrine ruled that desire is a metonymy: the fantasy is a frame that slides along adjacencies, nearness doing the office of possession. And *fetish squared is fantasy* is sound Freud besides. The fetish of the 1927 paper is the substitute for a phallus that was never

there; square the substitution—take the substitute of the substitute—and you obtain the scene itself, the fantasy, the stage on which nothing need be present at all.

In the right house the escalator runs the other way. φ_r, real qualities, *machines*, INTJ, the Architect, squares to ${\varphi_r}^2$, *contraction, algorithms*, ISTJ, the Logistician; and the code column records a descent, N to S, the Architect contracted into the clerk. *Contraction* is a pun of unusual depth, and it is impossible to say how many of its floors the compiler visited. The lambda calculus, which is the metaphysics of algorithms, calls its elementary step contraction: to compute is to contract. Isaac Luria taught that creation begins in *tzimtzum*, the contraction of the infinite to make room for a world; the algorithm is the machine's tzimtzum, the withdrawal of its generality so that a procedure can exist. And the German offices say *nach Schema F* of exactly this: work contracted into routine. Line eleven is therefore the table's signature, the cell in which the document confesses what kind of document it is, filed—where else—under the Logistician.

Its neighbor, φ_s, sensual qualities, *phallus*, is assigned INFJ, the Advocate, an assignment before which commentary does well to lower its eyes; squared, it becomes ${\varphi_s}^2$, *emanation, language*, ISFJ, the Defender. *Emanation* is the Neoplatonists' word: the procession of the many

from the One, Plotinus's fountain that loses nothing by overflowing. It is also, nearly verbatim, the doctrine of the paper on the signification of the phallus, which enthrones that letter as the signifier from whose presence the effects of the signified proceed. Language is the phallus squared; signification is its emanation; the fourth gospel compressed the same cosmology into an opening clause. And again the code descends, N to S, the intelligible condensing into the sensible, as emanation must, procession being downhill by definition.

So the two houses operate Plato's two escalators in opposite directions. On the left, Diotima's ladder: ascent by eros, sensation spiritualized into intuition. On the right, the Plotinian procession: descent by emanation, intuition poured into sense. Each column, squared, crosses into the other's native element—the house of a is grounded in S and abstracts toward N, the house of φ is grounded in N and concretizes toward S—so that self-application carries each sex into the element of the other. Love and fantasy are the left house's masculine moments; the algorithm and language are the right house's feminine ones. Whether the compiler intended this cannot be asked. The letters permit no interrogation, only audit.

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The six alliances are where the table stops being eclectic and becomes a treaty. Take the four poles that the subscript grammar defines—real object, sensual object, real quality, sensual quality—and consider the crossings among them, and you have drawn, whether you meant to or not, the quadruple object of Graham Harman, the American who split Husserl's sensual furniture against Heidegger's withdrawn tools and mapped the tensions between the quarters: time as the strife of a sensual object with its own sensual qualities; space as the strife of a real object with sensual qualities; essence, real with real; eidos, the sensual object against its real qualities. His fourfold descends, by his own confession, from Heidegger's Geviert of earth and sky, divinities and mortals; the genealogy thus runs from the Black Forest through a fourfold mirror to whatever room this photograph was taken in.

The audit is uncomfortably exact. $a_r\varphi_r$—real object crossed with real qualities—is glossed *essence*, which is Harman's own assignment for that tension, and *causation*, which is his as well, vicarious causation being in his system the commerce of essences. $a_r\varphi_s$—real object with sensual qualities—is glossed *space*, his as-

signment again, and *allure*, which is his technical term for precisely this tension, the tug of a withdrawn thing through the qualities it deigns to show; and *metaphor*, which is his standing example of allure at work. The *eidos* and *time* of the last two lines complete his four tensions under his own names, *theory* being his word for the labor by which eidos is reached at all. Even the operations enthroned at the heads of the columns, *fusion* and *fission*, are the operators of his ontography, the joining and severing of poles by which, he says, everything that happens happens. And where the schema exceeds his map, it does so in his dialect: $a_r a_s$, the two objects crossed, is glossed *sincerity*, his Levinasian term for the earnest absorption of a real being among sensual ones; ${a_s}^2$, the sensual object squared against its own kind, is *contiguity*, his word for the side-by-sideness of phenomena within one experience. Only *duplicity*, at the crossing of the two kinds of quality, appears to be minted fresh—the qualities' answer to the objects' sincerity, coined, one supposes, to keep the books balanced.

So the middle column speaks Harman while the left column writes Lacan and the right column bills Jung. The document is a treaty among three empires that do not recognize one another: Paris, which holds that the

object is a lack; the object-oriented school, which holds that it withdraws; and the personnel office, which holds that it can be hired. Like the Rosetta stone, it says one thing in three scripts; unlike the Rosetta stone, each script denies that the other two refer to anything at all. And each alliance carries a second wing on which the treaty's diplomacy is conducted. *Sincerity, deceptive truth*, at INFP—the Mediator, the type marketed as authenticity itself—restates the Parisian ruling that truth has the structure of fiction; its opposite number, *duplicity, truthful deception*, at ESTJ, the Executive, is that ruling's photographic negative, the con that comes true, the press release accurate in every clause and false as a whole. *Metaphor* at the Virtuoso and *metonymy* at the Protagonist divide Jakobson's two poles of language between the craftsman and the teacher, which is roughly where a linguist would have billeted them. *Causation* shares a cell with *straight*, the heterosexual as the metaphysician of cause and essence, the one erotic position that believes in the arrow; and *seduction* shares a cell with *time* and *bisexual*, of which more below, since that cell contains the anomaly, and the anomaly contains, we will argue, the author.

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Whoever audits the codes long enough discovers that the table is governed. We record four statutes; the reader holds the transcription and can convict us of any of them in a minute with a pencil.

The first and fundamental law is duality. Set the two houses side by side, line against line—chieftain against chieftain, first vassal against first vassal, and so on to the last alliance—and every pairing is a perfect antipodes: all four letters of the code invert at once. ISFP faces ENTJ; ESFP faces INTJ; ENFP faces ISTJ; and so through all eight pairs without a single exception, the sixteen types disposed as eight mirror-couples across the gender line. To cross from a to φ is to negate every predicate simultaneously. The catalogue of antipodes this establishes reads like a proverb collection dictated by a somewhat frightening oracle. The antipode of the body is the machine. The antipode of love is the algorithm. The antipode of the fetish is the phallus—the 1927 paper said as much, that the fetish is the phallus in exile, and the schema seats them in facing cells like a divorced couple at a wedding. The antipode of fantasy is language, which is orthodoxy itself, the fantasy being by definition what does not pass into speech. Sincerity faces duplicity; metaphor faces metonymy, so that Jakobson's two poles are not merely distinguished but

declared contradictories; essence faces time; causation faces seduction, whence the seducer is the anticause, the one agent whose effects precede their reasons. And straight faces bisexual: in this cosmology the contrary of the heterosexual is not the homosexual but the bisexual, a theorem we will let stand in its own light.

The second law governs attitude. Call a chieftain a term of degree zero, a subscripted vassal or its square a term of degree one, an alliance a term of degree two. Then in the house of a the attitude runs I, E, I down the degrees, and in the house of φ it runs E, I, E: extraversion alternates with the parity of the degree, in opposite phase across the houses, like the coloring of a chessboard. Composition turns the feminine inward and the masculine outward; an introvert's product is an introvert only on the left bank.

The third law governs judgment. In the left house the real branch feels and the sensual branch thinks—body and love are F, fetish and fantasy are T—while in the right house the assignment is crosswise: machines and algorithms think, the phallus and language feel. The schema, in other words, awards thought to the fetishist and feeling to the phallus, and quarters the tower and the tongue in the Advocate and the Defender, the two tenderest cells of the American table. Before

this statute the commentator does well to remain standing and silent.

The fourth law is the law of the square, already met: squaring carries S to N in the left house and N to S in the right—ascent by eros, descent by emanation, each house crossing under self-application into the other's element.

Audited closely, the statutes are not independent; the first, applied to either column, dictates much of the other, and a well-made scripture is redundant, each commandment entailing its neighbors, redundancy being how scripture proofreads itself. But the first law is a corollary of nothing. For it to hold, sixteen glosses had to be apt and sixteen codes had to invert pairwise, simultaneously, under a lexicon drawn from three unacquainted doctrines. Either the compiler verified this, which is labor of a monastic order, or he did not, which is worse. There remains a third possibility, the Kabbalist's: that the letters did the verifying. The *Sefer Yetzirah* says the letters were weighed and exchanged until creation balanced—combinatorics as liturgy—and whoever has spent a night moving sixteen tokens until every mirror held knows that at a certain hour the tokens begin to move themselves.

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There remains the anomaly, and it is the making of the object. In the last two lines a third letter appears: o, always subscripted s, always crossed with φ, twice, and nowhere else. It has no line of its own, no gloss, no code, no dowry. Unlike a and φ, it is never defined, only used. Three readings offer themselves, and the schema, being a photograph, will not adjudicate among them.

The first reading is philological. In the doctrine's early years, and for longer in its English commentaries, the little other went by o—petit o, for the untranslatable *autre*—and only later hardened into a, precisely so that the word *object* would not be heard in it too plainly. On this reading the two o-cells are strata: an older hand showing through where the corrector tired, the way a palimpsest keeps its first script in the margins the scraper missed. The document would then carry its own geology, and the o would be a fossil of its composition—evidence that the table was revised, which is to say that it was written in time, by someone, on at least two occasions, the second of which stopped two lines short.

The second reading is doctrinal. The letter o is the Other—the same early notation served for *autre* at both

sizes—and then the table's most eloquent act is an omission: o_r, the Other in the real, never occurs. The Other appears only under the sensual subscript, only as it seems, never as it is; a real Other is not generated by the algebra, holds no cell, receives no type, earns no trade name. The Parisian doctrine states this as a scandal—there is no Other of the Other; the big Other does not exist, though it functions—and the object-oriented school states it as a metaphysics: the real withdraws, and what withdraws cannot appear in a table, absence being the only signature a real object knows how to leave. It is possibly the single proposition on which the two schools agree, and the schema affirms it in the only idiom available to a table, namely a gap. Note, further, where the o survives: in *eidos, theory* and in *time, seduction*—the two enterprises conducted before something that looks back. Everywhere else in the table the Other has finished collapsing into the little a, the remainder one can love, fetishize, square into fantasy. In these two cells the collapse is arrested, and theory and seduction stand revealed as the two rooms of the house in which something still faces us. That both rooms lie in the house of authority—that it is the masculine column which cannot finish reducing the Other to an object, and keeps

two shrines in which it goes on functioning—is a finding we set down and step away from.

The third reading is arithmetical: *o* is zero, the empty letter. On this reading the census becomes a theorem. The sixteen seats of the American table are filled, each exactly once; had *o* held a line of its own—had the Other been granted definition, gloss, and code—the count would have run to seventeen and the bijection would have burst. The completeness of the human typology is purchased by the Other's exclusion from it. The census of souls closes only on condition that the Other not be numbered among the souls. One hesitates to swing the incompleteness theorems at a photograph; we note only the shape, which is the familiar one: a system total about everything except the letter that makes it total.

And the sexualities, since the schema scatters them like a trail of crumbs: *fetish* at degree one, *straight* at the crossing of essences, *bisexual* at the crossing of the two sensual poles—where Wilhelm Fliess, Freud's discarded prophet, would have nodded slowly, having derived the universal bisexuality of the species from the interference of two periods, twenty-three days and twenty-eight; bisexuality was for him literally a property of time, which is this very cell's other gloss. Baudrillard ruled that seduction belongs to the feminine,

as sovereignty over appearances against the masculine tedium of production; the schema files seduction under yang, in contradiction, or else in the deeper agreement that seduction is fission's art, the maintenance of the cut across which appearance can play at all. One position the algebra never generates: the homosexual, absent from a table otherwise liberal with the erotic. In a system this saturated, an absence is never an oversight. It is either withdrawal or authorship—the cell that cannot appear because it is the point from which the drawing is made.

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What is it, then. A mnemonic that outgrew its owner. A private religion of one night's duration. A parody of system that, like every sufficiently rigorous parody, became a system. A Llullian machine with the wheels drawn but never cut out and spun. A *Sefer Yetzirah* for the personnel office, begetting sixteen souls from two letters where the rabbis required twenty-two and God, by their accounting, thirty-two paths. Borges, cataloguing a Chinese encyclopedia that sorted the animals into those belonging to the emperor and those that from a long way off look like flies, concluded that "there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and

conjectural," and Schema F does not dispute him; it is visibly arbitrary, flagrantly conjectural, and mad in three languages at once. But Kant suspected something further: that beneath the tables we publish there operates a schematism we did not choose, a hidden art in the depths of the soul, its true movements barely to be divined. The published classifications are arbitrary; the hidden one, if it exists, is not; and the interest of a document like this lies in the impression, difficult to argue away at two in the morning, that it is a leaf from the second archive rather than the first—that its author did not design the mirror-laws but transcribed them, moving letters until they balanced, the letters, toward the end, doing the last of the moving themselves.

Of that author the table teaches one thing only. He made a world of sixteen inhabitants, and he is not among them: no cell can be his, since every cell is visible and he is the one who sees. The temptation—and every reader of the table eventually retires with it—is to find him in the *o*: the letter that appears twice, undefined, unglossed, sensual only, real nowhere, present in the system solely as the residue of its two most hopeful operations, theory and seduction, which are, after all, the two ways one letter has of reaching another. We record the temptation and refuse it. The table has taught us

its own discipline. In a codex unicus nothing can be confirmed and nothing corrected, and to name the *o* would be an emendation of the gravest class there is, an emendation of a person. The God of the letter-books made a world out of the alphabet and is not spelled anywhere in it; the *o* is either an initial or nothing; and the photograph, asked which, goes on showing white letters on a dark ground.

We are aware of what this commentary has not done. There are regularities we noticed too late to verify—the diagonals have their own arithmetic, and the vowels of the glosses are not innocent—and there are questions we have not earned: why an alphabet of two letters, having reached sixteen, declines to proceed, as every alphabet is tempted, to thirty-two. Above all there is the conjecture of the third house, which we set down in one sentence so that someone else can be ruined by it: the grammar that generates the houses of *a* and *φ* permits a house of *o*, eight further terms of which the photograph shows none; on this conjecture the two surviving *o*-cells are not anomalies but border posts, and Schema F is a recto whose verso has never been photographed.

And here the commentary must stop, for reasons the reader is free to find trivial. The arrangement under which the photograph was lent to us requires that it be

returned tonight; its owner, who may or may not be the compiler—we have been careful not to learn which—is waiting, and it would be a discourtesy to keep him standing while we speculate about his soul. The rest of the commentary exists; it exists the way the seventeenth cell exists. And the light is going. The ground of the photograph is the color of a switched-off screen; the sky outside has now reached that color exactly; in a little while the white letters will have nothing left to stand on, or else a ground the size of the sky.

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