

Terry Gilliam: *12 Monkeys*

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Literature
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Tomorrow and tomorrow

- Dystopian Fiction
 - Negative projection based on current fears.
 - Gattaca: fears about human genome project.
 - Massive dehumanization, widespread urban violence, totalitarian governments, rampant disease, cyber-genetic technologies, societal chaos, etc.
- Apocalyptic dystopia: threat of massive destruction.
 - Failure of infrastructures: nuclear war, plagues, computer / android revolutions, apes take control, acts of God & natural disasters...
- Post-apocalyptic: What happens after the end?
 - Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome
 - post-apocalyptic terrains, social chaos, violence, warring power groups.

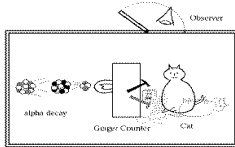
12 Monkeys Philosophy

- **Ontological: Does *not* ask the nature of the real, but what, if anything, *is* real?**
 - Personal memory, experience, & perspective get privileged.
- **Virus & Undecidables**
- **René Girard: Plague metaphor**
- **Freud: Civilizations are started to provide safety (Lacan's Law of the Father), but civilizations deprive us of sex and violence (Lacan's Real).**
 - Too much civilization might not be worth it.
 - Society should provide safety but should also meet human desire for passion.

Perspective

- Positionality: situated knowledge, your "map"
 - basic stumbling block: to be fixed or locked into something, to be "framed" into someone else's "grid," "cell," "territory," or "category."
- Plessner: Changing "maps" requires "sharing realities."
 - The moment we agree on a map or design we can relate positions, see how they are different and how we can change our views by standing somewhere else.
- Paradox : Gödel's Undecidability Theorem
 - within a formal system questions exist that are neither provable nor disprovable on the basis of the axioms of that system.
 - Ex: in Language: Socrates' word, *pharmakon*, "can mean both 'remedy' and 'poison'" (Johnson, "Introduction" xxiv).
 - Ex: the paradox of Schroedinger's Cat.

Schrodinger's Cat



Before Opening the Box

$$|\text{Whisk}\rangle |\text{Alive}\rangle + |\text{Decayed}\rangle |\text{Dead}\rangle$$

After Opening the Box

$$|\text{Whisk}\rangle |\text{Alive}\rangle + |\text{Whisk}\rangle |\text{Dead}\rangle + |\text{Decayed}\rangle |\text{Dead}\rangle$$

???

- A cat is placed in a box, together with a radioactive atom. If the atom decays, and the geiger-counter detects an alpha particle, the hammer hits a flask of prussic acid (HCN), killing the cat.
- The paradox lies in the clever coupling of quantum and classical domains.
- Before the observer opens the box, the cat's fate is tied to the wave function of the atom, which is itself in a superposition of decayed and undecayed states.
- Thus, said Schrodinger, the cat must itself be in a superposition of dead and alive states before the observer opens the box, "observes" the cat, and "collapses" its wave function.

René Girard, "The Plague in Literature and Myth."

- The plague, as a metaphor, is "universally presented as a process of undifferentiation, a destruction of specificities."
- "Plague," can be "viewed as a generic label for a variety of ills that affect the community as a whole..."
 - The pollution cycle
 - Scape-goat
- Ritualized plague produces an "overwhelming impression of disintegration."
- "all the death and suffering from the plague is not in vain, ... the ordeal is necessary to purify and rejuvenate society."

René Girard: Collective Transfer

- "all the death and suffering from the plague is not in vain, ... the ordeal is necessary to purify and rejuvenate society."
- "Collective transfer": no need to kill everyone.
- "The beginnings of human society are based on the religious transformation of mimetic violence into the collective sacrifice of a scape-goat."

Viruses and Zombies

- Derrida's Virus: Indeterminacy
 - introduces disorder into communication
 - Viruses belong to a different order of things
 - Is neither living nor non-living, alive nor dead
- "Undecidables": cinematic inscriptions of the failure of the "life/death" opposition.
 - They show where classificatory order breaks down: they mark the limits of order.



Zombies, for example