

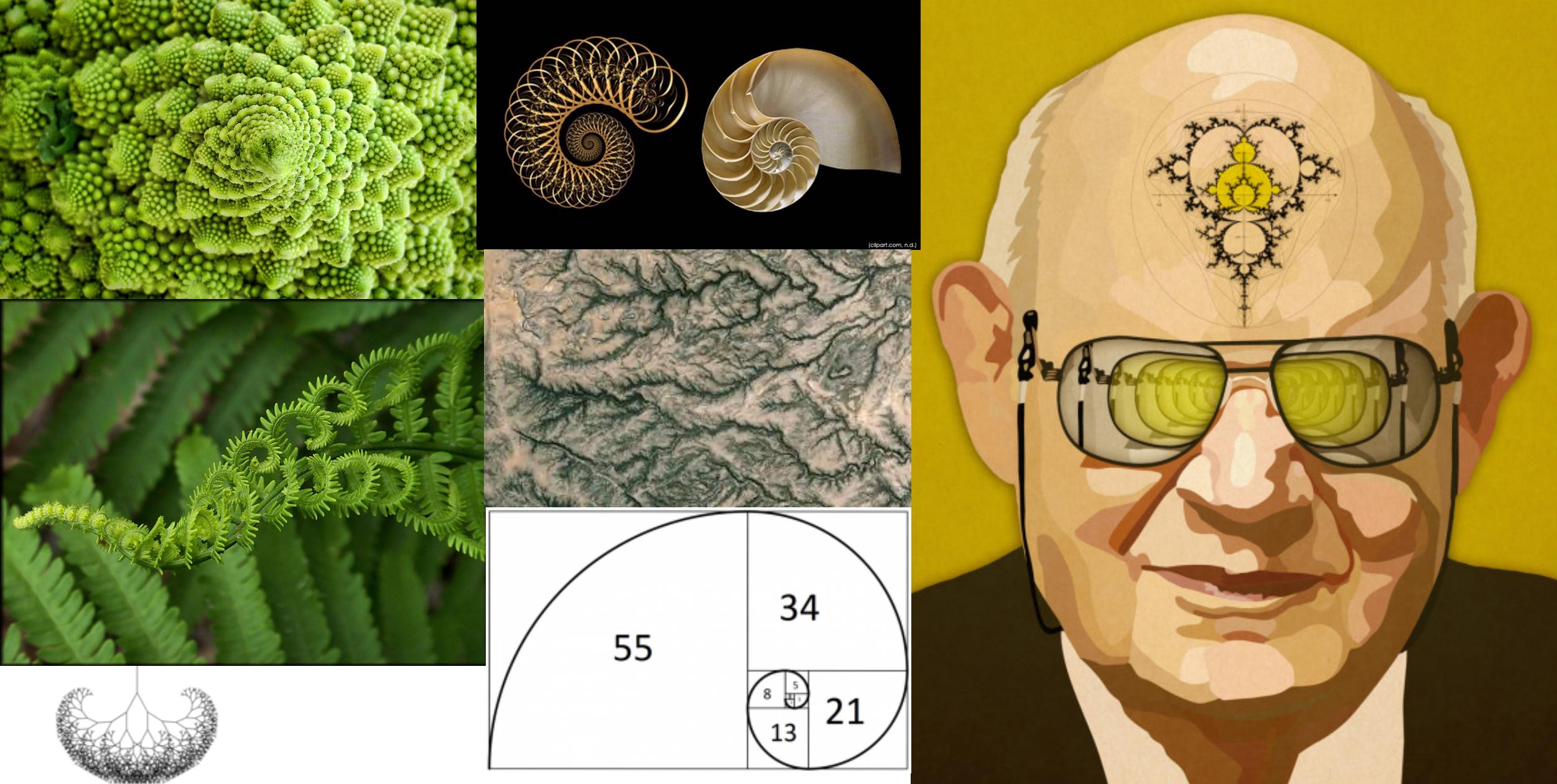
THE ALEPH

1 June 2020



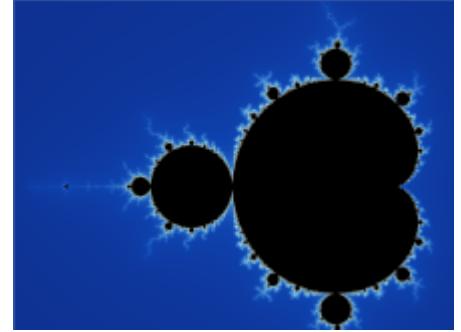
Droste Effect
Mise en abîme
Infinity Rooms (Yayoi Kusama)





Fractal Geometry

Exploring fractal infinity



- Recursive and bounded infinities
- The term ‘fractal’ was first used by Benoit Mandelbrot in 1975 in his *Les objets fractals: forme, hasard et dimension* [Fractals: Form, Chance & Dimension] to define an abstract object that can be used by mathematicians to describe and simulate naturally occurring objects, both of which exhibit similar patterns at increasingly small scales.
- The Mandelbrot set is the set of complex numbers for which the sequence remains bounded in absolute value. Images of the Mandelbrot set exhibit an elaborate and infinitely complicated boundary that reveals progressively ever-finer recursive detail at increasing magnifications. The set's boundary also incorporates smaller versions of the main shape, so the fractal property of self-similarity applies to the entire set, and not just to its parts.

Borges' Vision and Expression of Infinity

- We read in Thiem that Borges said “the chief problem in writing the story was in setting down of a *limited* catalog of *endless* things” (107).
 - Thiem calls Borges’ expression of the infinite “self-consciously limited.” (114)
- What strikes you (in general, or having to do with fractality) about Borges’ sequential list, which attempts to convey a simultaneous experience of infinite time and space?

Borges' Aleph

- Rereading the catalogue:
 - What single object or description would you say best represents infinity in this list?

Borges' False Aleph

- Rereading the Postscript:
 - What do you make of Borges-narrator's claim that the Aleph was a False Aleph?
 - What do you make of Borges-author's claim that the Aleph was a False Aleph?

Poetics of Vision

- “A method of *significant* omission is essential to a modern poetics of vision.” (Thiem 108)
- Thiem states earlier that this omission, in Borges, is “apophasic omission.” (105-6)

ANONYMOUS COURSE EVALUATIONS

- You have two options:
- Fill out the evaluation as a word document and save it as a PDF to send to Yining. In this case:
 - You can use the BLUE CIRCLE I have included in the top left corner of the evaluation to answer the questions that ask you to rate an aspect of the course from 1 to 5. Simply continue to copy the circle and move its duplicate to the appropriate place.
 - You can type in the document and in the document's outlined text boxes. Please make sure to maintain the page spacing as much as possible. So, when you write something, delete extra space below.
 - You can then save the document as a PDF so that it is not writable when it arrives to Yining.
- Fill out the evaluation as a PDF and export it as a PDF to send to Yining. In this case:
 - You can delete the circle in the top left corner before saving it as a PDF.
 - You can then use shapes and text boxes to complete the evaluation in your PDF reader.
 - You can then make sure to export it as a PDF and save it again so that it is not writable when it arrives to Yining.
- **DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME IN EITHER THE EVALUATION OR IN THE FILE NAME OF THE DOCUMENT YOU SEND TO YINING.**

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Rabinowitz's Implied Audience

- “Truth in Fiction: A reexamination of Audiences” (1977)
 - Authorial Audience experiences the story as a fiction
 - Narrative Audience takes the narrator at his word and experiences the story as a truthful account
- Thiem suggests a sort of Arch-Authorial audience who sees the authorial voice as spurious and begins to treat the author himself as “a pseudo-author or crypto-narrator, as another unreliable persona of the still elusive author” (105).
 - Do we take the author seriously or not?
- “In this way the Dante problem forces the reader to reinterpret the story, to redefine both author and authorial audience, a process through which the reader becomes increasingly conscious of the poetic structure of the story [...] and begins to see that the tale itself focusses on poetics. [...] Finally, the reader realizes that somewhere there is an author who has created this ironic structure and that the reader’s task is to become part of that author’s audience” (105).
 - Why?

Interpretative Levels in “The Aleph”

- Is Borges telling a literal story?
- Is Borges telling an allegorical story?
- Is Borges concerned with theology?
- Is Borges concerned with ethics/morality?
- Is Borges concerned with a theory of love?
- Is Borges concerned with the shape of the cosmos?
- Is Borges concerned with conceptions and expressions of infinity?
- Is Borges concerned with the limits/capacity of poetry/literature?
- What else may he be concerned with?

Interpretative Levels in “The Aleph”

- How does Borges' expression *have* to change in order to still be meaningful and convincing in the 20th century?
 - How does a ‘literal story’ have to change?
 - An allegorical story?
 - A theological story?
 - An ethical story?
 - A love story?
 - A story about the shape of the cosmos?
 - A story about conceiving of an expressing infinity?
 - A story about the power and limits of expression/literature?

Questions? Concerns?

The end.