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Session 07. Shigemi INAGA (paper for discussion, not yet ready for quotation or publication)

Cultural Gap, Mental Crevice, and Creative Imagination

--Vision, Analogy and Memory in Cross-Cultural Chiasm:

A Challenge to Occidental Epistemology and Revisions of some Basic Prerequisites

0. Preliminary Background: beyond East-West Dichotomy

0-1 Dialogue of Civilizations in impasse

Sep.11, 2001 marked the end of the dialogue between civilizations. Only one month before the incident, headquarters of the United Nations University in Shibuya, downtown Tokyo, organized an international symposium on the issue. The Iranian government and academics took active initiatives in the meeting. Yet, the international political situations after the Sep. 11th prevented the international organizations from further pursuing similar projects of dialogue. The stagnation of the world economy is sure to be partly responsible for the deadlock. However, the most crucial factors in the wind shift should be detected in the very concept of ‘dialogue among civilizations’ itself.

The limit is triple. Firstly dia-loga in presupposes two entities of equal footing. However such an equality is hardly a prerequisite in diplomatic negotiations. Suffice to think about the case between the ex-colonizer and the ex-colonized. Albert Memmi has meticulously anatomized such “inégalité.” Secondly, each of the agents has to represent the interest of a group, be it ethnic, cultural or national. However the politics of representation has become a crucial point at issue in the post-nation-state. In the multi-ethnic post-colonial world, D/diaspora has become a common intellectual destiny. Identity is no longer what one naturally obtains but what one politically acquires. The unit of nation-state is no longer a relevant etiquette for an individual to stand for.

Thirdly, dialog by nature tends to exacerbate the difference rather than searching for possible compromise. Each of the participants tends to claim one’s own originality or even the

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superiority of that which he/she is expected to represent, and for which he/she is politically or financially sponsored. The dialogue among civilizations is reduced to an arena of international speech contest, where the representatives compete with each other so as to boast of one’s own excellence in eloquence. Like an athlete in the Olympic game, each of the intellectual has to search for one’s own victory in academic diplomacy. Dialogue is no longer the purpose but a pretext.

I strongly feel a danger in the globalization of the Olympic game model. Participants, regardless of their cultural background, are obliged to respect the rule imposed upon them by the ‘universal’ value judgment of the Western modernity. Incompatible value systems are precluded as invalid or irrelevant. The debate on Orientalism in the 1980s and 90s may be regarded as a by-product of this tendency. The representatives of the oppressed or the repressed claim their own right to speech, and the requirement of political correctness finds out benevolent sympathizers and tactful agencies that gain profit from giving voices to the heretofore voiceless. The subaltern studies have revealed this paradox. Those who have been given voices are no longer voiceless, as they are fatally deprived of their voiceless-ness. One is to represent what one is deprived of. Cultural identity reveals itself only a loss, as your identity resides in what you are no longer able to represent.

0-2 Spaltung, Verdichtung oder Verschiebung?

In other words, identity crisis has become the essential identity of the contemporary global world. Identity cannot be publicly found out without facing to its own crisis. In a nation-state like Japan, in which more than 98% of the whole generation believe in their ethnical identity and educated by a supposedly unique national language, cultural identity is rarely questioned if not by the oppressed minorities (like Korean residents, or politically awoken Ainu or Okinawan people).

However, even in such an excessively homogenized nation-state as Japan, Westernization in the last 150 years had left a deep trace of mental Spaltung. National integration has caused mental disintegration which has caused especially conspicuous wound in the “national” language. Let us briefly examine three layers: (1) on the level of vocabulary, (2) of syntax and (3) of the field which Julia Kristeva once called semiotic.

On the level of vocabulary, most of the legal, economic and academic terminologies are composed of terms translated from the Western original. Underneath the combined Chinese characters, somehow based on classical terminology, somehow neologism, one can look through the alphabetical terms, as if looking through a filigree (en filigrane). And yet the chosen Chinese characters inevitably interfere into understanding and interpretation, as the network of Chinese charts composes a fundamentally different semantic field, both in etymology and in paradigmatic

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associations, from the Western one in which the original terminology was articulated\(^8\). From time to
time, youngsters and beginners have difficulty in finding out the Western originals which are
“hidden” as it were, beneath the terminologies in Chinese characters\(^9\), i.e. ideograms which the
Japanese language combines in its own manner and willingly integrates in its grammatical syntax.

The same is true to Chinese students. More often than not not the Chinese translation of the
French philosophical text gives different renderings for basic terminologies whether it has been
translated via American or Japanese translation. In such a way that contemporary students of Jacques
Derrida have to establish a thesaurus or a glossary between Western original, Chinese and Japanese
translated terms, so as to communicate with each other. Just one more example, Heidegger’s Sein
und Zeit cannot be translated in Chinese in the same way as in Japanese; to render the key-notion of
“Sein,”有 is given for Chinese, 存在 for Japanese\(^10\).

Not only vocabulary but also syntax has been deeply affected in the last one hundred and
fifty years. Chinese classics have been the basic culture of the literati class in the Eastern Asia
cultural sphere up until the Westernization. Western scholarship has been digested through the filter
of Chinese Confucian terminology, with inevitable and necessary modifications. Roughly speaking,
the classical Chinese definitively gave way to Western science and technology from the beginning of
the 20\(^{th}\) Century\(^11\). Yet the Japanese manner of deciphering Chinese text was applied mutatis
mutandis for the reading of Western languages in the class room. Because of the huge difference in
syntax, word order has to be modified almost in a topsy-turvy Dom (as remarked by Percival Rowell
or B.H. Chamberlain\(^12\)) so as to make the Chinese and Western original understandable in Japanese.
In the process, stylistic modifications and alternations in syntax have gradually taken place
consciously and unconsciously. Chinese logics and rhetoric have been replaced by the Western
counterparts. Two major voluntary factors must be singled out. One is the invention of the so-called
faithful-to-oral style expression (“genbun icchi-tai”), in the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) Century among
the writers and journalists, and the second is the forced “rationalization” of the writing system and
the concomitant abolition of the “historical syllabics” imposed by the American occupation army in

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\(^8\) Like the Borgesien notion of the Chinese Encyclopedia.

\(^9\) Among innumerable examples, “lutte de classement” (classification struggle) coined by Pierre Bourdieu is a
parody of “lutte de class” (class struggle). In Japanese, however, the later 分類闘争 cannot give the idea that it stems
from the former 階級闘争. The etymological network is automatically dissociated and disappears in many cases.

\(^10\) S.I. “Philosophy, Ethics and Aesthetics in the Far-Eastern Cultural Sphere: Receptions of the Western Ideas and
Reactions to the Western Cultural Hegemony,” Shigemi Inaga ed., The 38th International Research Symposium:
Questioning Oriental Aesthetics and Thinking: Conflicting Visions of “Asia” under the Colonial Empires,

\(^11\) Kojin Karatani, Origins of Modern Japanese Literature, translation edited by Brett de Bary, Duke University Press,
1993. Despite many domestic criticism in Japan, the book remains a landmark in English speaking academia.

\(^12\) S.I. “Fracturing the translation or translating the fracture? Questions in the Western Reception of Non-Linear
Narratives in Japanese Arts and Poetics,” Fractured, Transformed Travelling Narratives in Writing, Performance and
the Arts Colloquium, The Pinter Centre, Department of Drama, Department of English & Comparative Literature at
Goldsmiths, the BCLA and the AILC/ICLA, Goldsmiths, University of London, September 16-17, 2011 (to be
published).
The traces of such Verdichtung or Verschiebung can be observed easily on the texture of the printed matters. A kind of visual double-reading was a common practice of the pre-war Japanese. While the main line of the text gives technical terms in Chinese characters (usually pronounced in a Japanized Chinese), beside the main line was associated either a Japanese syllabic pronunciation (yomigana) or a Japanese translated exegesis (yomitoki) so as to facilitate the understanding. In the margin of a page or by way of bracket, the Western original alphabet may be given if necessary.

I call the practice Verdichtung as two or three different layers of signs are juxtaposed in compression so as to visually “prägen” the impression of the term to the reader’s eye. This is also a kind of Verschiebung, or displacement, as the semantic land slide and fault lines are indicated by juxtaposed heterogeneous letters. Effort of forced identification is requested between visually heterogeneous signs, alphabet phonograms on the one side, and Chinese ideograms, on the other. They are put together into somewhat artificial syntax, which looks like Japanese but quite painful to “read” –as a matter of fact, visual reading and audio reading remained basically incompatible.

Generations of Japanese readership have undergone this process of domestication, so as to come to terms with Western vocabulary and Westernized syntax. But the vocabulary was disguised into replaced terminologies composed of Chinese characters. And the syntax more or less respected the grammatical word order of the Japanese language. Since the mid 19th Century, this unstable “cohabitation” has continued for almost one century. As a rational compensation, the Japanese readership after the end of the American occupation in 1953, tend to gradually lose direct access to the Western original while they have been fully accustomed with modern Westernized Japanese.

In recent years, especially from 1990s, young people dispense with Chinese characters, particularly for the terminology of electronic devices. They satisfy themselves with kana-syllabic (often abbreviated) replacement of the alphabetical pronunciation of the English/American original; “wa-puro” for word processor, which is already old-fashioned and almost out of usage, “pasokon” for personal computer, “tereka” for telephone card, “sumaho” for smart phones, etc. which they manipulate in a modern Japanese syntactic structure. The metaphor of “compression” is pertinent.

0-3 Interiorized or Incorporated East-West Dichotomy

These basic examples will suffice to indicate the way how the impact of Westernization has been interiorized and incorporated in Japan on their mental as well as somatic level. Compared with other non-Occidental nation-states, it turns out that the Japanese solution is drastically different from the case of bi- or multi-lingualism through which most of the ex-colonized non-Western countries have achieved “Westernization,” at least for the upper-class citizens. In contrast, Japan as a
nation state, either failed in performing bilingualism or willingly rejected this superimposition of Western culture and language upon the vernacular layer of indigenous cultures and languages\textsuperscript{14}.

However, it is an open question whether or not the Japanese successfully avoided the danger of “divided self” (R.D. Laing) which most of the non-Western intellectuals have experienced in the course of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century\textsuperscript{15}. It may be true that Japan as a nation-state could relatively well preserved its cultural specificities and identity, avoiding direct “Western linguistic contamination” by superimposing the layer of English upon vernacular practice of local language(s). But as an inevitable compensation, most of the Japanese, worthy of the name, are suffering from inability of communicating at ease in foreign languages. (by definition, any Japanese fluent in foreign tongue, is no longer typically Japanese... a sort of Cretan lying.). At the same time Japanese dictionary in the last 150 years had to include several thousands of new vocabulary translating and replacing Western terminologies. How can this affect the creativity in the context of modernization?

It is true that difficulty in oral transmission is more or less shared within the cultural sphere under the influence of Chinese literati culture. However, the Chinese written text assured visual communication by way of “writing conversation.” Between Korean and Vietnamese diplomats in Beijing in the second half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} Century, or between Chinese embassy in Japan and Japanese citizen in the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, written communications by way of exchanging Chinese poems were a common practice, although they could not speak directly to each other.

And yet, in contrast to the relatively high literacy in written texts, oral transmission of sophisticated literati ideas remained disproportionately difficult and the technique for that purpose was not seriously developed among the Japanese intellectual. The main difficulty –which has remained unnoticed-- consisted in frequent homonyms in complicated Chinese terminologies pronounced in Japanese. To begin with, both “creation” and “imagination” are pronounced ‘souzou” (double vowel) or “sôzô” (long vowel, they are not clearly distinguished with each other) in Japanese and impossible to distinguish with each other in oral communication, if not in written text.

Particularly responsible for this inconvenience was the limited range of vowels and consonants in the Japanese language. Nihongo has only 5 vowels and 8 consonants, which is particularly narrow if compared with other neighboring languages. Korean has much richer sound resister (with 10 vowels and 14 consonants), Chinese (with 4 tones and 18 consonants in Pinyin system) can make subtle differentiation in pronunciation among homonyms impossible to distinguish in Japanese (though huge regional difference in pronunciation prevented oral communication in the Chinese Continent). Vietnamese or Thai languages are rich in sophisticated

\textsuperscript{14} This part includes rectification to the following: S.I. “How one feel «Je est un autre» ? –concluding remarks,” Devenir l’autre: Expérience et récit du changement de culture entre Orient et Occident, IRCJS, les 2-3, juin, 2009.

tones (with 6 to 8 tones) while the tonal intonations which remain in Kansai dialect/local language(s) has been eliminated in standardized Japanese. International comparison among Asian languages would be useful to elucidate mental as well as semiotic struggles which took place in the course of Asian “modernization” under Western impact.

Scholars often talk about hybridization (Homi Bhabha, in particular). And yet the hybridization is not a new trend and the naming is not much helpful. Already in the 1920s, many intellectuals in the period between the two world wars, have noticed that it was no longer possible to find out any pure “Oriental” or “native” “Naturfolken” on Earth. Indeed, those Orientals or Africans who serve as useful informants for the Western colonizers or cultural anthropologists, have been already “irradiated” so to speak by Western enlightenment and put into Western mold of education; and those Westerners who have some knowledge of the Oriental Civilizations are no longer pure Westerners, as they have been already “polluted” by the so-called Oriental wisdom, or fancy, as you like....

This was what Henri Massis, corroborator of L’Action française, ironically remarked as early as in 1925 in his sarcastic diatribe against the cultural dialogue between the East and the West. According to him, those Orientals like K. Okakura, R. Tagore, A.K. Coomaraswamy or M.Gandhi, one the one hand, are pseudo-Orientals, as they are all products of the Western education; and those Westerners like Roman Roland, Herman Hesse or H. von Keysering, or Waldemar Bonsels (1880-1952), on the other hand, are treacherous Westerners, according to Henri Massis, as they are protagonists of the fake Orientalism. Cosmopolitism could not do without hybridity in the 1920s.

We know already well what happened three quarter century later, in the aftermath of Sep. 11: The “essential” promoters of “Oriental culture,” be it among religious “fanatics” or in cultural or pedagogical sectors, are mostly people highly educated in the Western or Westernized academic system, whose “ill-fated” influences are only secondarily spreading on the poor-class inhabitants of their non-Western home lands. Many agree to admit that not only modern nationalism but also recent religious ‘fanaticism’ or cultural essentialism are (by-) products of Western colonialism of the 20th Century. How to avoid this temptation of cultural essentialism in discussing the creativity and

18 This does by no means exonerate Japan from the list of aggressors; it incarnated one of its worst cases of “Western” contamination and maniac-depressive reactions to the Western impacts. See S.I. “Crossing Axes: Occidentalism and Orientalism in Modern Visual Representations of the Manchuguo (1931-1945),” International Conference, “Orientalism /Occidentalism: Languages of Cultures vs. Languages of Description,” Russian Academy of State Service under the President of the Russian Federation, September 23-25, 2010, Moscow. The proceedings are published as Orientalism/Occidentalism: Languages of Culture vs. Languages of Description, Russian Academy of State Service, 2012, pp.93-113. The author is also proposing the idea of “Pirates’ View” as opposed to the hegemony.
imagination?

1. Translation and creativity: chiasm in cross-cultural migration

My question here is to ask whether or not this cross-cultural chiasm can be meaningfully connected with the discussion on creativity and imagination. So as to examine cross-cultural creativity and imagination, several working hypotheses must be examined accordingly.

1-1 Gap in terminology

To begin with, such terms as “creativity” or “imagination” have their own lexicological roots in Western philosophical tradition, and cannot be used in cross-cultural perspective without taking that framework into account. It is indeed an open question whether or not the translated terms for “creativity” 創造性 or “imagination” 想像力 in cultural sphere under Chinese ideogram are comprehended with the same acceptations and semantic limitations. In other words, there is naturally a gap which separates these imported Western ideas (and their literally translated terms) from the indigenous Chinese (supposedly corresponding) notions. And whether to recognize or not to recognize the equivalence between the two categories is more a political question than a purely epistemological problem of definition. To say the least, the notion of “creation” in the West has been for long time attributed to the God all-mighty alone in the Christian theology and it was only through the 18th Century that Creation with capital C. was little by little redefined as a capability with small c. attributed to human individuals. The West is far from monolithic. The English term “creativity” exists already in the mid 19th Century, but “créativité” in French dates only from around 1965.

The status of “imagination” as an aesthetic category was also discussed in relation to the re-positioning of human “creativity.” We know that in Immanuel Kant’s Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Einbildungskraft as Kategorie of human Erkentniss was located between Sinnlichkeit and Verstand so as to connect the two, but it was not as highly appreciated as it was the case with J.W. von Goethe. This definition by Kant is of course highly problematical if compared with Islamic, Indian or Chinese traditions. However, by calling them simply as “Oriental traditions,” we should be careful to ask: what are we exactly referring to without specifying either period, school of thought or authors? And, how about the epistemological ground for such an easy-going and baseless comparison?

Without raising insoluble questions of the cross-cultural translatability of specific

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21 This is like the paradox od Menon: If there is equivalence between the terms, no need to make comparison; and if equivalent cannot be established between them, it would be useless to make comparison, from the outset, etc.
semiopheme$^{22}$, let us satisfy ourselves by stating that such a trans-linguistic comparison of terminology is at best operational in a specific circumstance and in terms of a particular interest and purpose we share in a determined aim of the philological survey$^{23}$.

1-2 Gap in articulation

Beneath the gap in terminology lies the gap in articulating the semantic field. On the one hand it has to do with vertical classificatory categories (encompassing upper-categories and subdividing lower categories). On the other hand it has to do with neighboring terminologies with which it shares and subdivides one horizontal surface of the semantic field. Semantic overlapping or lacunae as well as category mistakes in grouping constantly and inevitably happen in inter-disciplinary translations of these terminologies. Such (horizontal) semantic fractures and (vertical) crashing in categories are usually not welcome, especially in academic discussions$^{24}$.

However, when it comes to “creativity” and “imagination,” defining and determining supposedly “universally valid terminology” in a solid and unshakable categorical framework of a particular language (ex. English) would result in losing sight of cultural diversity of the issue. It is my working hypothesis that the gap in categories or fractures in terminologies in trans-cultural transactions will serve as a key to search for new and not yet explored dimensions of the human creativity and imagination$^{25}$. Simply we cannot do without taking the gaps in Weltanschauung into account, so as to cope with the cultural diversity in terms of creativity and imagination. Freudian model of unconsciousness and Saussurian model of language must be reexamined in trans-cultural context. For this purpose, I would like to propose meteorological as well as earth-tectonic models.

1-3 Gap in Weltanschauung

As an illustration, the German intellectual Diaspora under the Nazi Regime and its aftermath must be examined from this perspective. In the field of art historical research, one of the most typical and problematical cases would be the methodological shift which occurred around Aby Warburg. German Jewish, Aby Warburg (1866-1929), is known as the founder of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg established in Hamburg, in 1926. Eminent scholars like Ernst Cassirer, Flitz Saxl, or Erwin Panofsky are greatly indebted to this collection with...

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23 Umberto Eco once made an intentional exercise of analyzing the Indian notion of Raja through almost innumerable Western studies on the subject to come to an absurd conclusion that no agreement can be found in the diversity of Western interpretations. See S.I. “Critical Assessment of the Activities of Transcultura, “International Symposium, Cultures of Knowledge, International House, Goa, India, Oct. 18, 2005.


25 S.I. “Distance Reading-Migration of Meaning and Metempsychosis through Translation,” *Old Margins and New Centers/Anciennes frontières et nouveaux centres: The Legacy of European Literatures in a Global Age/L’héritage littéraire européen dans une ère de globalisation*, Université Libre de Bruxelles August 26, 2009.
idiosyncratic classification. After the founder’s death the library was transferred to London, for fear of being confiscated or destroyed by the Nazi regime.

Warburg’s ambition consisted of grasping (“ergreifen”) the dynamics of the images. How the image creates itself, how it propagates and resurrects itself and survives (“überleben”)? In brief, the ecology of image was his obsession. Through his studies in esoteric and mystical images in the Italian Renaissance, he observed there the “Nachleben” (life after death) of the imagery of the Antiquity, its archetypal resurrection as “Pathosformel” which he interpreted as “symptoms” of the primordial human emotions; images carry the traces and imprints of the memory deeply imbedded in the layers of psyché from the immemorial past. The forms and figures of the Antiquity recurred as phantoms (like the “retour des mort” or apparition of “des revenants”) in the Renaissance by taking determined shapes as container of particular pathos (which he called “Pathosformel”).

However, such phantoms and monsters (“Gespenster”), that Aby Warburg successfully resuscitated, have been cast off and intentionally neglected by his successors as if undertaking the ritual of exorcism. This repression was systematically practiced, ironically enough, by nobody else than his most reliable supporters and faithful colleagues: Erwin Panofsky, founder of Iconology, Ernest Cassirer, author of Philosophie der Symbolishen Formen, and Ernst H. Gombrich, Director of the Warburg Institute in London and future biographer of Aby Warburg. Such were intellectual giants and memorable Jewish exiles who were among the executors of Warburg’s academic testament.

Firstly, the notion of “Nachleben” – survivance-- of the Antiquity was modified into Re-naisance of the Greco-Roman Heritage by E. Panofsky. Panofsky’s iconology minimized the initiator’s program into serene philological exercise of explaining images by words. Secondly, “Pathosformel” was reshaped into “Symbolishe Formen” by E. Cassirer. The Dionysian dark connotation in Aby Warburg was thus erased by the Apollonian light and replaced by Cassirere’s clearly defined Platonic ideas. Cassirer’s “symbol” will be further “rationalized” by Susanne K. Langer. Thirdly the “Pathologie” of the creative “Geistes” was substituted to an experimental psychology of perception by the author of Art and Illusion, namely E. H. Gombrich. The mental deficiencies that the founding father suffered because of his methodological eccentricities had to be omitted as scientific deficiencies which his successors had to avoid for their own survival. Pathological elements or seemingly demoniac aspects in the Founding Father’s practice in German language have been removed and distilled into standardized, innocuous and benign methodology in Anglo-Saxon English speaking academies.

In short, it turned out half century later that Jewish scholars in exile were largely responsible for the cleansing operation, oedipal “mise à mort symbolique,” so to speak, of the name of the Father. Each of them reduced their predecessor’s “Wissenschaft ohne Name” into a

conventional tool for academic research.

Georges Didi-Huberman, in his Images survivantes, Histoire de l’art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg (2002) accuses successors of Aby Warburg of parricide and intellectual treachery\(^\text{28}\), but one should also recognize the deep shadow of the Nazi trauma which resulted in an excessive cleansing operation of the German scholarship in the postwar English speaking countries. Only the supernatant liquid, so to speak, of Aby Warburg’s Saturnian endeavor could survive, for better or worse, in the Trans-Atlantic emigration of the European academic discipline to the New Continent\(^\text{29}\).

Like the recipe of Kentucky Fried Chicken or MacDonald Hamburger, the Old European pre-War academic methodologies have been recast into North-American style prêt-à-porter theories. The travelling theories (E.W. Said)\(^\text{30}\) were to be applied world-wide in the second half of the 20\(^{th}\) Century Americanized international monde savant.

A similar case can be also detected in the field of psychotherapy. The Swiss invented Sandspiel Therapie was renamed as World Test in the U.S.A. The original consisted in tracing lines on the sand field and putting objects according to the will of the client. However, the sand was removed by the American renovators, as sand grains were judged irrelevant and meaningless for the practice. By doing so, however, one of the most essential therapeutic factors was eliminated from the American renewed model. Tracing regularly the lines on the miniature sand garden by way of toy-rake (kumade) in the early morning (like in Zen Buddhist monasteries) is an important psycho-somatic ritual just like combing the hair for the sake of mental care and spiritual stirring-up.

As Sudir Kakar said, in his excellent paper on Rabindranath Tagore’s creativity, it is not meaningless that lotus flower opens in the mud pond. However such essential tactile sensation and indispensable physical investment were not taken seriously and depreciated in the USA\(^\text{31}\). This depreciation typically shows one aspect of the North American Weltanschauung in terms of mental creativity and imagination.

2. Gap/crevasse and creation: climatology\(^\text{32}\) or tectonics in art and technology

The excessive tendency in search of efficiency is predominant in modern technology and it erodes the arena of human engineering. One correlative and crucial factor must be the digitalization


\(^{29}\) How the German Saturn und Melancholie could not survive but had to be resurrected in the Post-war America is explained in the preface of Raymond Klubansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, Saturn and Melancholy, Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd 1964.


\(^{31}\) S.I.”Examining Modern and Contemporary Art History from Kegon/Huayan View Point,”The Second International Huayan Symposium, Paris-Bereba, France, août 7-10, 2008. (The English text remains unpublished.)

\(^{32}\) The idea of Climatology cannot be fully developed here. See Hisao Nakai, Sign, Memory, Traum, 2002, p.282, note 4, as well as Hisashi Muroi, Technology as a Philosophical Problem, Labyrinth of Didalos and Wing (in Japanese), Kodansha, 2000, which should be titled as “Toward Climatology of Culture” as I have suggest in a book review to this work. see S.I. in Studia Semiotica, No.21, 2001, pp.211-214.
in computer technology. The dichotomy of digital vs. analog is frequently argued, especially in Japan. Analogical thinking is often taxed as outdated and old fashioned in contemporary digitalized society: if digital designates the generation of the 21st Century, the “analogous human” belongs to the old 20th Century. This generation gap, epitomized by the contrast between analogous vs. digital, seems to indicate the crucial watershed in the history of humanities in terms of creativity and imagination.

2-1 digital vs. analogue: counterfeited dichotomy of the information technology

In my opinion, however, here is a confusion which cannot be overlooked. Etymologically speaking, digital and analog cannot constitute in any sense a dichotomy. Suffice to recall that digital stems from digitus, a Latin word for ten fingers. The decimal notation can be arithmetically modified into binary system which has been used already by the Maya calendar. Thanks to the progress in computer technology, numerical treatment has advanced since the 1960s in the last half a century with a “geometrical progression.” And yet it does not mean at all that digital or numerical thinking has annihilated analogical thinking. Numerical treatment needs proper scales and previously established axes of coordinates. However the chosen axes are inevitably limited in number and scales should be adjusted in advance so that the calculation can be achieved in an efficient velocity.

The classical question of frame problem comes back to our mind, and the joke of the fire pump robot illustrates the case. If the robot is designed to extinguish every fire detected, it will be overrun by outnumbered tasks. And we will not be able to smoke safely even in a restricted smoking area. But if the robot is designed in such a way to judge properly whether or not it should act, the potential coefficients are too numerous (theoretically they are infinite in number) for the machine to finish its calculation before extinguishing on time the fire it has detected. It is of course possible to set up a pragmatic program to design a robot extinguisher to be operational in a limited environment (as is the case of an automatic water sprinkler). But the analogical thinking which the programming requires is neither numerical nor digital by nature, but axiological. And axiology cannot be automatically reduced in numerical scale within the prefabricated axes of coordinates.

2-2 Intelligibility and Sacrifice: the Reduction of Dimensions

Modeling consists of dimensional reductions. If the reducing of reality into static two-dimensional table corresponds to flat image manipulation (picture plane), the phrasing by letters—linear discursive ordering—is an act of editing the reality into one-dimensionality. The reality is too complicated and too difficult to manipulate; so as to manipulate it, it should be reduced either in two or one-dimensionality. Three-dimensional movie screen can be certainly entertaining and thrilling,

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but it is already too redundant for a usual human being to have a perfect and spontaneous command on it (air plane pilots or air traffic controllers cannot do almost anything in emergency). As is the case with the robot extinguisher, it would take too long before human being could make any relevant decision in front of the three-dimensional panoramic moving screen. It is simply too real to deal with. (The sensation of thrill comes from the fact that it is out of control).

The ultimate form of this reduction in dimensions must be the belief in natural sciences that nature is ruled by a limited number of physical and other laws of nature. This conviction leads to an attempt of comprehending the whole universe by way of, and within, the most efficient axes of coordinates in limited numbers. But we should recognize that such a putatively rational and reasonable reduction cannot be achieved without rude cutting off of other coordinates which have been hastily (mis-)judged irrelevant or superfluous (like the sand cast off from the World Text).

Without this violent ruling-out, without this sacrifice, the illusion of manipulability cannot be substantiated. It turns out that intelligence does not consist in fertility and multiplication; rather it resides in forced impoverishment and slicing down of the real fecundity into excessively simplified models. Can such reduction in dimensionality exclusively be regarded as criteria for creativity? It seems that the margin for imagination to develop itself tends to be restricted in this regime.

The limit of human intelligence is revealed here. In a limited time span, it cannot cope with innumerable raw data unless they were regulated in a linear letter phrasing or reduced in two-dimensional static chart. At the same time, digitalization also reveals its limit. It is true that all the human genome is already deciphered. And yet the linear disposition of the human genome alone cannot account for the difference between homo sapience and, say chimpanzee. The three-dimensional configuration and temporal displacement of the genome should be calculated to elucidate the whole molecular operation, but even the world largest super-computer takes too much time to do the calculation within the affordable time limit. The numerical/digital data are certainly accurate and serve as reliable record. And yet, the deciphering process is disproportionately time consuming. “Un-freezing” of the data inevitably takes too long to confront the living reality.

To put it another way, it is already evident that huge dimension of the universe remains left

34 Susanne K. Langer’s discussion in Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art, Mentor Books, 1952, must be helpful here. Simultaneous multitudinous presentation characterizes “image” (which she calls “representational”) in contrast to linear argument in accordance with the logic of causality which is typical in language (which she calls “discursive”). Clearly, E. Cassirer’s idea of “Symbol” is here combined with the philosophy of organism developed by Alfred North Whitehead. See Hisao Nakai, Sign, Memory, Traum, 2002, p.306. At the end of his monumental, Le Geste et la parole, André Leroi-Gourhan advances a similar idea. “La pensée scientifique est plutôt gênée par la nécessité de s’étirer dans la filière typographique et il est certain que si quelque procédé permettait de présenter les livres de telle sorte que la matière des différents chapitres s’offre simultanément sous toutes ses incidences, les auteurs et leurs usagers y trouveraient un avantage considérable. Il est certain toutefois que si le raisonnement scientifique n’a rien à perdre avec la disparition de l’écriture, la philosophie, la littérature verront sans doute leurs formes évoluer.” (1964, Vol.2, p.262). We shall return to this book later.

35 In recent years, simulation of the three-dimensionality with chronological axe has been realized on the two-dimensional screen. Holographic projection of the three-dimensionality is also technically possible But it is not clear if the human is capable of manipulating the date projected on the screen.
almost untouched and unexplored by human intelligence. Human brain is not capable of speculating about what remains lying beyond the limit of linear phrasing, and we are still lacking in ability to cope with the complexity which cannot be reduced to the two-dimensional screen scanning. We still do not know how to deal with visions and imaginations which lie beyond descriptions and images.36

2-3 Limits or Safety-net of human intelligence

Why is the human intelligence so limited? One speculative answer—which may be wrong—could be that the limit is a safety device for the world’s order. On the one hand, experience is made to directly input three dimensional motion picture images in the brain by sending electric pulse to the visual cortex by inserting electrodes in the skull. On the other hand, how about realizing devices to output dream images directly on the screen located outside the brain? In both cases, mentally conceived images and the outer visual reality are expected to be placed in a short-cut with each other and put in an interchangeable mutual relation37. The distinction between material world and mental world would disappear on the level of consciousness. But if the mental intent was to be directly reflected on the outer reality, the whole world would be instantaneously disrupted. It would be enough to imagine the war in mind so that the real war takes place. This nightmare is what Oshii Mamoru visualized in his animation film, *Ghost in the Shell*38.

Already people have successfully commercialized domestic robots which obey voice command of their masters. If the brain impulse can be detected and correctly read by the electronic devices, one can invent domestic machines which obey the will of the human master and execute it. Putting such a device in practice for restricted purposes would be technically not that difficult (like “Open the window!” “Turn off the air-conditioning!” etc.). But having a full command of such machines of artificial intelligence in an unconditional environment will not be easy, or rather it will be simply impossible: Unless strict safety regulations and detailed legal instruction “manual” were respected, a simple intention of killing in mind could be directly put into practice and transformed into sensational reality. With that capacity at hand, the social order might be easily destroyed at will.

2-4 Paradox of Brain-Wave Drawing

Curiously enough, however, experiences of outputting mental image on the outer screen by scanning the brain waves have shown a basic methodological limit. The brain-wave drawing cannot

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36 It is true that top ranking mathematicians and scholars in astrophysics deal with highly multi-dimensional reality, but that dimension lies beyond ordinary understanding. It is simply impossible to “visualize” them.

37 In reality, however, most of the experiments in neuroscience remain extremely limited in paradigmatic reach. In the case of reconstructing visual image by measuring the electron activities on the visual cortex, the result simply retraces vaguely the visions on the retina. It is self evident that visual cortex reflects stimuli on retinal receptors.

be successful so long as an examinee tries to conceive concrete images by concentrating his/her consciousness. On the contrary, one has to concentrate one’s consciousness in such a way NOT to concentrate. Lack of conscious concentration is the key for a successful output. You have to make effort of not making effort so that mental image can appear.

Of course the technology is still under development. And the neutrality of the interfaces for the electronic output is still to be debated. Experiments still contain numerous speculative confusions. And yet, the experiences show that it is indispensable to obtain a stable alpha wave in the brain so that the image output becomes available. To obtain stable alpha wave, it is necessary to restrain neuron activities of the language cortex so as to give priority to a mental state similar to that of the REM sleep. Experience has also shown that the brain wave takes the shape of REM sleep when an examinee makes meditations or chanting mantras (as in Buddhist monasteries). Buddhist monks or Yoga practitioners are known to be able to easily create similar mental state by a simple breath control. One may hypothetically suppose that in order to make brain drawing by putting emphasis on the work of imagination, analytical intelligibility has to give way to meditative serenity.

Logical articulation therefore obstructs creativity of mental visual images. Top athletes and practitioners of martial arts know it very well through their experiences. One cannot make any spontaneous movement without mental serenity; and the mental serenity lays beyond noisy circuit of conflicting messages running thorough the analytical paths of the brain cortex in confusion. Ambition, or fighting spirit or strategic calculations, are of course necessary prerequisites, but they do more harm than good at this stage of spontaneous position-taking. It is often said that one cannot logically explain the choice of a successful handling (it is only later that the handling turns out to have been successful); one can analytically explain only the failed handlings and it is only après-coup that the explanation is provided. Analytical handling comes only with a fatal delay. And the reason of this delay seems to have been hypothetically elucidated so far in the present paper.

It is fortunate that human intelligence cannot directly exercise its power on physical world on time; on the one hand, it must be mediated by materiality, human finger, hand or voice, and even the brain impulse must be transmitted to some outer devises so as to exercise real effects. On
the other hand, it is within the limit of linear thinking and mainly in two dimensional imaging that human being is bestowed upon the freedom of thinking. Thinking itself is physically powerless, but intellectual speculation is allowed to human being precisely because it is safe enough not to directly affect the physical world without appropriate mediation. Yet a question easily comes to our mind. How about the tree-dimensionality with physical experience in time and space? As a matter of fact, computer technology is orienting itself to this direction, rapidly enlarging the notion of virtual reality. But is it the ultimate goal of the virtual reality to substitute itself for the three-dimensional reality in chronological scale? Is it intended to establish a virtual parallel world beside the real planet Earth? What would be the merit of a tennis game soft in which the real body exercise is transferred onto the virtual screen to simulate the game? This question leads us to the physical dimension of the body, which is often overlooked in the discussion on creativity and imagination.

3 Manuel Digitalized and Tactility in Danger

3-1 American style manual-culture and the decline of the manual training

In his *Le Geste et la parole* (1964-5), André Leroi-Gourhan persuasively speculated that in the evolution of human species the erect bipedalism liberated human hands from carrying its own body; and that the liberated hands for their turn liberated the mouth from carrying the food and taking the meal, and that the process finally allowed to homo sapience the acquisition of speaking ability. At the same time, the articulated language could not have been invented without human manipulation of tools by the hands, in which picking-up function by the thumb and index (hence calculation) is combined with the grasping and scooping ability of the three other fingers.

The French anthropologist also observes that the progressive diminution of digital thinking (hand and fingers are less frequently used) in contemporary urban social life may be interpreted as a symptom of the degeneracy of human beings. By digital thinking, he means the close relationship between hand manipulation and brain function. The development of typing machine and the frequent key board operation have certainly intensified the use of fingers but it also (over-)simplified the mode of output (compared with the manipulating of brush and pen, and other utensils and tools). Generally speaking, the replacement of handiwork by machines has reduced potential ability which human hands had been bestowed upon, with its ten fingers. The decline of “thinking with hands and

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41 Needless to say “mediation” is the negation of immediacy. What is mediated has already lost immediacy.

42 In the case of some computer game soft, like chess or shōgi, it is true that the easy access to a high quality performance helped create numerous semi-professional level players in a relatively short term. Yet this “highway” is causing new traffic jam at the exit gate way. See Mochio Umeda, *Web Shinaron (Web-Evolution theory, in Japanese)*, Chikumashinsho, 2007. *Web jidai wo yuku (Living in the Web-age, in Japanese)* Chikuma Shinsho, 2010.

43 André Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la parole*, in 2 vols. Paris, Albin Michel, 1964-5; Ch. 2 « Le Cerveau et la main » Vol.1, p.40 sq. Whether the displacement of the vocal code was related with the erect bipedalism or not seems to be still in controversy...
“fingers” represents an organic atrophy at least on the level of an individual ontogenesis, if not yet necessarily on the level of the phylogeny of human species in general. How does this tendency affect the human creativity and imagination? The questions remain open.

Curiously enough, with the diminution in importance of manual labor, book form manuals prevails (available on internet with voice instruction). It has replaced direct manual apprenticeship from one generation to another. No less paradoxically, “digital” (“dejitaru”) has become a key-term of the computer technology along (and in proportion) with the decline of human digital ability. The reminiscence of manual and digital craftsmanship seems to be transferred into the realm of computer literacy and engineering technology. One generation earlier, at the last decade of the 20th Century, many small size machine factories have suffered from the lack of communication between the two generations of workers. How to bridge the veteran craftsmen who did not know how to verbally communicate to their posterity the technical skill they possessed, and newly recruited young workers who had become capable of manipulating computers without knowing how to make use of old hand tools? Mutual emulation between the two seems to have ended up without remarkable coupling.

Recent education reform seems to exacerbate, rather than repair, this gap between computer literacy and skill in handcraft. Without finding out any efficient strategy for the survival of the manual techniques in decline, digital database simply continues to stock the historical records of the “métier perdu” or “lost skills” (Claude Lévi-Strauss), for want of better substitute. (As already mentioned, un-freezing of the stocked skill from the digital data takes too long to be efficient.) Youngsters’ tendency of retreating into virtual world of computer games and their prevailing inclination of self-mutilation must be a proof of their gradually losing grips of the physical reality. The internet fosters the illusion that one can have direct access to the whole world by a simple key-board manipulation on the P.C. screen. But the youngsters are already disillusioned by the limit of virtual reality. What is at stake here is the increasing loss of tactile experience.

3-2 Design or Residue of Platonic Dichotomy

And underneath the loss of tactility, we should detect the remains of the dichotomy which the modern design thinking has inherited –without keenly noticing it-- from the Platonic thinking based on the binary distinction between eidos and hyre.

Platon’s basic idea of human techne is that material (hyre) is summoned to fill the empty

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45 Limitless access is nothing but an illusion. Simply the limit of life expectancy of less than 30,000 days in the average does not suffice for an individual to try all the WWW. available net surfing. Whatever the illusion of the unlimited freedom may be, the reality remains that people are simply connected with, and enclosed within, the pre-existing, pre-determined programs. The round-trip in the prison (“le tour de la prison”) is doomed to end before accomplishment.
46 I-pad partly tries to recuperate the loss of tactility, but the present state remains still in a transitive state.
form (*eidos*) or ideas. The primary conception concocted in the human brain should be put into material by a secondary manual labor by a carpenter’s hand. This basic scheme is kept intact even in the modernism and in the post-modern information technology. As Vílem Flusser emphasizes, the information etymologically means to press (“aufdrücken”) a mold onto the material. The modern design basically shares the same Neo-Platonic idea of filling the material in an immaterial form. In other words, design as a technology of materialization has its foundation in its immateriality. Moreover, the proliferation of electronic information allowed un-thing-like thing (“Undingliche Ding”) to prosper, strengthening orientation toward that which is ungraspable (“unbegreiflich”), ghost of things, so to speak, which tends to escape the command by concepts (Begriffen).48

In brief, the prosperity of design thinking can be understood as the correlative of the current predilection of the Digital Age: the brain’s uncontrollable desire to control the whole world can easily come true thanks to the unexpected expansion of the virtual realities in the cyber space. The brain can easily project its own desire onto the cyber space to realize its dream at least in the form of virtual reality.49 The fictional space in the game-soft looks more real and exciting for the players than the tedious and cumbersome everyday life. And yet people are possessed by the vague feeling of uneasiness in front of the ground-breaking computer technology. As the term “Undingliche Ding” suggests, people has begun to feel that they are losing the full grasp of the materiality of things.

3-3 In Praise of Hands

In his “In Praise of Hands” (1943) Henri Focillon, French art historian, tried to present an antithesis to such a tendency toward immateriality and has prophetically shown what was wrong with current virtual reality.

I separate hands neither from the body nor from the mind. But the relationships between mind and hand are not, however, so simple as those between a chief accustomed to obedience and a docile slave. The mind rules over the hand; hand rules over mind. The gesture that makes nothing, the gesture with no tomorrow, provokes and defines only the state of consciousness. The creative gesture exercises a continuous influence over the inner life. The hand wrenches the sense of touch away from its merely receptive passivity and organizes it for experiment and action. It teaches man to conquer space, weight, density and quantity. Because it fashions a new world, it leaves its imprint.


49 In engineering, it is already possible to out-put three-dimensional physical model out of the virtual computer generated bleu-print, with necessary calculation of the strength and weight of the scale model, if it is constructed in real material.
everywhere upon it. It struggles with the very substance it metamorphoses and with the very form it transfigures. Trainer of man, the hand multiplies him in space and in time.50

Contrary to the Platon’s dichotomy between form and material, between theory and practive, Focillon insists upon the importance of the mutual operation of the two factors. “The mind rules over the hand; hand rules over mind.” This phrasing in English translation is a little bit misleading. The French original simply formulates: “L’esprit fait la main, la main fait l’esprit,” i.e. the spirit makes the hand as it is, and the hand makes the sprit as it is known to us51. Both of them cannot be as such without their counterpart. Without tactility and manual labor the brain cannot foster the human spirit. And this is why hands cannot be separated either from the body or from the mind. Spirit and body enter in dialogue through the body. At this juncture, the vocal code produces verbal expression, while the hands produce non-verbal form. Focillon’s formulation must therefore be modified as follows: it is spirit or mind (kokoro) that fosters forms (katachi), and forms foster the human spirit and mind52. Here is a new definition of creativity in connection with imagination.

This reformulation implies many basic problems. Just limit ourselves to one: How can we bridge verbal language with non-verbal form. Whenever we try to grasp (“ergreifen”) non verbal forms by words, we feel challenged by the distance which separates them. It is true that words can catch some aspects of non-verbal forms by explicating one semantic layer of them, but materialized form always escapes from the verbal net which tries to cover it. Aby Warburg, already mentioned, has constantly suffered from this gap or crevice between words and non-verbal form.

Ludwig Binswanger, who served as psychiatric doctor in charge of Aby Warburg at Kreutzlingen, found in his client an exemplary case of “Ideenflucht” (fuite des idées).53 Indeed the form continues to escape the grasp by the words and by escaping the semantic net of “ideas,” images achieve its own (semiotic-)metamorphosis. L. Binswanger named it “Leidengeschichte” of the “Demonische Form des Existenz,” which occurs in its “Spannung zwischen Formschöpfung und Formzerstörung.” in search of its own survival in its “Bilderwanderung.”54

4. Visuality and Imagination : au-delà du Sprach-model

4-1 Mnemosyne: Document vs. Memory

51 In the translation between Geist, esprit or mind, it is already evident that even within European modern languages, the equivalence of basic terms is difficult to establish. A fortiori, between, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic or Hebrew...
Semiotics has demonstrated that it is theoretically impossible to give exhaustive verbal description of a given visual form. Image cannot be reduced into verbal list. Aby Warburg’s suffering of “Ideenflucht” is a natural consequence of this gap between words and images. Words always fail to grasp the images in life (“saisi sur le vif”). If arrested, the image is already dead and exposed as cadaver. In other words, visual image constantly escapes any attempts of archival documentation. To classify and fix visual image in the tomb of a given index is against the nature of visual materials. Is “visuality” not docile enough if confronted with “indexicality” *to use the term by C.S. Piarrs)?

If recording of the written document is indexical and compatible with digital operation, visual image is more suitable to analogical operation, as it tends to transform itself as a living memory. Words are for record 記録 (composing a horizontal surface) just images are for memory 記憶 (making s vertical sedimentation) 55. Visual materials are rebellious and infidel by nature and not at all obedient to indexical classification. Visual documentation (sere oxymoron, as “visual literacy”) cannot avoid this basic methodological difficulty.

Strongly conscious of this methodological limitation, Aby Warburg conceived in his final years a huge project of Mnemosyne Atlas. The Atlas is composed of 63 panels, each of which contains dozens of images belonging at first sight to different and heterogeneous categories, but they communicate with each other by a hidden network of affinities or repulsions.

4-2 Hua-yen View of the Inter-connected-ness

It is in this field of inter-connected-ness of floating images that imagination begins its work. In my opinion, one of the most sharp and lucid explanations of the mechanism of inter-connected-ness has been given by Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-1993), Japanese philosopher in Islamic studies. 56 In his exegesis and elucidation of the basic idea of the Buddhist Hua-yen Sutra (Kegon-kyô, in Japanese), Izutsu clarifies the issue as follows. In his “Nexus of Ontological Events: A Buddhist Views of Reality” (1981), Izutsu makes it clear that the Hua-Yen 華厳 diagram does not “purport to account for the coming-into-being of a thing, anything whatsoever, in terms of cause-effect relationship.” His exegesis helps us better understand the difficulty Aby Warburg faced.

The causal thinking is basically linear, no matter how meandering the line in effect may be. This type of thinking tries to account for the coming-into-being of a thing (that is C/creation), say X, by tracing the chain of its cause (E.D.C.B...) back to the first (A).


56 Freudian idea of “free floating attention” suggests the methodological difficulty G. Frey was facing in handling the free floating associations of ideas and visions which his patients were showing in the sessions of analysis.
The yuān ch’i (縁起 pratītya-samutpāda) type of thinking, on the contrary, accounts for the existence of a thing, X, in terms of all other things (A.B.C.D...) which are related to it and which collaborate together in bringing the X into being and keep it in being. Some of these things stand very close to the X, some remote, and some others still farther away, until our view reaches the ultimate limit of the universe, so that all things in the universe are seen to be related to the X closely or remotely in all degree of closeness and remoteness.

But the picture is still far from being complete for reproducing diagrammatically the exact ontological situation of the things from the Hua Yen point of view. For each of those things (A.B.C.D...) which, in this particular case, are viewed as playing the role of the formative factors of X, and which, thus, all center around and converge into the central point, X, is in its turn (K, for instance) to be represented as another center around which turn all the rest, including X. itself, as its own formative factors. Only a diagram of this nature, consisting of an infinite number of multitudinous and multidimensional systems of ontological relations would do justice to the true structure of things as they are seen from the viewpoint of yuān ch’i. And only such a diagram would be accepted by the Hua Yen philosophers as a correct visualization of the central idea of their ontology, namely, that the universe in its entirety is an infinitely vast multilayer structure of manifoldly interrelated things.57

This is only the beginning. Yet it would suffice to explain the manifold and infinite transfiguration of images. In relation to other entities, images endlessly oscillate. In this countless interrelatedness Aby Warburg saw the visual form eternally escaping from the capturing operation, attempted by the nets of articulated semantic concepts (begreifen, Begriff). In other words, image network reveals inevitable shortcomings which remain unsolved or unrepaired in the current academic researches: So long as we try to rely uniquely upon conceptual understanding of the universe by way of “begreifen” and with the help of articulated “Begriffen,” the ecology of the image continues to slip away... One of the keys to the mystery of creativity and imagination resides here.

4-3 Vision between dynamis and energeia: around Atmen-pneuma-qi

So as to develop one step further the notion of interrelatedness, let us finally have a glance at the Oriental notion of creativity and imagination in terms of epiphany. Let me quote from a famous passage of the Book of Tea, written by Kakuzo Okakura, alias Tenshin (1862-1913), in 1906.

Once in the horary ages in the Ravine of Lung men stood a Kiri-Paulownia tree, a veritable kind of the forest. It reared its head to talk to the stars; its roots struck deep into the earth, mingling their bronzed coils with those of the silver dragon that slept beneath. And it came to pass that a mightily wizard made of this tree a wondrous harp, whose stubborn spirit should be tames but by the greatest

of musicians. For long the instrument was treasured by the Emperor of China, but all in vain were
the efforts of those who in turn tried to draw melody from its strings. In response to their utmost
strivings there came from the harp but harsh notes of disdain, ill-according with the songs they fain
would sing. The harp refused to recognise a master.

At last came Pai Ya, the prince of harpist. With tender hand he caressed the harp as one
might seek to soothe an unruly horse, and softly touched the chords. He sang of nature and the
seasons, of high mountains and flowing waters, and all the memories of the tree awoke! (...) In
ecstasy the Celestial monarch asked Pai Ya wherein lay the secret of his victory. “Sire,” he replied,
“Others have failed because they sang but of themselves. I left the harp to choose its theme, and
knew not truly whether the harp had been Pai Ya or Pai Ya were the harp.” 58

The last phrase clearly shows the loss of the self in ecstasy. Ecstasy etymologically means
 ekstasis, standing outside of oneself. By the self-emptying, one is reduced to a “passage” through
which the divine reveals itself in the guise of “sign” (symbol, symptom, if you prefer) of which one
becomes a passive recipient. The divine sign is the music coming from the harp. At that moment not
only musician and its instrument but also the audience experience ecstasy as they are in enthusiasm.
Enthusiasm means by definition “possessed by God” or theos. Filled with divine inspiration, the
hermit becomes the vehicle of the divine Will, thereby takes place the artistic creation.

Here the notion of analogia takes a new signification. Analogia does not mean a simple
resemblance. On the contrary, it designates dynamic transmission of a homogeneous divine energy
from Sein to a Seiend, to use Heideggerien terminology. In other words enthusiasm takes place
when and where the eternal and a-temporal Essence reveals itself in a consciousness in a given
historical moment and in a specific geographical place by way of analogia. Some mystics used the
term of emanacio to account for this transmission –trans-substantiation by definition- of something
which, otherwise, cannot be transmitted.

Okakura explains the same mechanism with a common language. “Engrossed in his
technique, the modern rarely rises above himself. Like the musicians who vainly invoked the Lung
Men harp, he sings only of himself. His work may be nearer to science, but are further from
humanity.” According to him, fullness rejects the revelation of emanatio as there is no way
(“passage” or “crevice”) for things metaphysical to make entrance into phenomenal world.
Suggestion, which is open and incomplete by nature, and not self-sufficient expression, is the key for
the imagination to work. “The great master both of the East and the West never forget the value of
suggestion as a means for taking the spectator into their confidence.” And Okakura quotes from a
certain “Japanese saying” which remains unknown and mysterious to us: “We have an old saying in
Japan that a woman cannot love a man who is truly vain, for there is no crevice in his heart for love

to enter and fill up. In art vanity is equally fatal to sympathetic feeling, whether on the part of the artist or the public.59" (By “equally” Okakura equates love and art in terms of creative imagination.)

The word “crevice” is important as Okakura sees in this crevice the mystical passage for inspiration. The opposite of “vanity” must be humility, and in Christian theology the notion of kenosis, or a self-emptying of one’s own will” would be analogically understood. Indeed, Kenosis (from the Greek word for emptiness κένωσις (kénōsis)) is the ‘self-emptying’ of one’s own will and becoming entirely receptive to God’s divine will. In the body of Christ the crevice was necessary to show this self-emptying sacrifice. And Christ did not fail to show the wound on his side and let Thomas incredulous to touch it. We are not sure if Okakura was implicitly referring to the Bible in this passage, but the notion of “love” he invokes here bares a mystical connotation. “At the moment of meeting, the art lover transcends himself. At once he is and is not. He catches a glimpse of Infinity, but words cannot voice his delight, for the eye has no tongue. Free from the fetters of matter, his spirit moves in the rhythm of things.60”

“He is and he is not,” means that he is in between Presence and Absence, staying in a “Zwischenraum” between “Licht” and “Dunkel,” to use again Aby Warburg’s terminology61 which Shûzô Kuki paraphrases in a different context as “the moment where I am and at the same time I am not, the moment of revelation in the mystical light”62. It is not by chance that Kuki analyzes here the moment of ecstasy, which he named “hors soi” (“Außsichsein”) to make a contrast with Heidegger’s terms like “für sich” or “an-sich.” Useless to say Kuki, who had frequent Okakura in his childhood, was also a close friend of Heidegger. Jen-Paul Sartre was Kuki’s “répétiteur” when the Japanese philosopher, Baron Kuki, was staying in Paris in 1920s.

By the expression “his spirit moves in the rhythm of thing,” Okakura also suggests the Chinese classical aesthetic notion of 氣韻生動 qiyun shengdong or “spiritual resonance of vital movement.” This notion will be exploited in the 1920s to be elaborated into a key notion of the so-called Oriental aesthetics. Qi of course is a controversial notion especially in recent Western scientific discussions.63. But one can recall the Greek notion of pneuma, which was to be translated

59 Ibid. p.45.
62 Eisuke Wakamatsu, Izutsu Toshihiko, Philosophy of intelligibility (in Japanese), University of Keiô Press, p.196. quotes from Shûzô Kuki, La notion du temps et la reprise sur le temps en Orient.” It is possible that Kuki, close to Okakura, paraphrased this passage directly from Okakura’s Book of Tea. The « ex-staze » which Sartre describes in La Nausée stems from this philological connection. Wakamatsu, Ibid., p.369. Taking part in the conversation in Pontiny in 1928, Kuki delivered another lecture on « L’Expression de l’infini dans l’art japonais ». The two textes were revised and published together under the title of Propos sur le Temps, Paris, Philippe Renouard, 1928.
63 S.I. «La Naissance de la Médiance à l’état Embryonnaire ou l’origine de l’écoumène entre utérus et fœtus:À la marge d’un ouvrage de Miki Shigeo», Ebisu Études japonais, No.40-41, Maison franco-japonaise, Autonne
into *spiritus* in Latin, similar to *Geist* in German. The breath is *Atmen* in German and it shares etymology with *Atman* (ego, self) in Sanskrit. The vitality of the “self” as a *Lebenswesen* is closely related with respiration, without which the life cannot be maintained. *Aura* or gentle breeze or breath in Greek also means supposed invisible emanation surrounding the body of a living creature. In this context, one may quote from Friedrich W. Nietzsche a famous passage near the end of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Here the “Atman” as Self is fusing with the wind and their breath (“Atmen”) becomes one with the huge bellow like whistle of the Universal Spirit. In this cosmic tornados, primordial sound and image fill up the *mundus imaginalius* (Henri Corbin): “Dem Wind tut mir gleich, wenn er aus seinen Berghölen stürzt; nach seiner eignen Pfeife will er tanzen, die Meere zittern und hüpfen unter seinen Fußtapfen.”

**Survival: In stead of Concluding—**

In the disguise of conclusion, let me quote from my own text, which has no pretention of a poem, *Dichtung* (connoting the sedimentation of meaning) but which came to me all of a sudden, independently of my own will, through the crevice that has been created in my mind by the Great West Pacific Ocean Earthquake of the March 11, 2011. My paper, which once again, has no pretention of being a paper as is recognized in the Western academic definition, touched upon such topics as surviving images, which underwent tectonic metamorphose in the crush of civilizations.

**Survival**

-At the end of the year 2011-

To the memory of the lost lives at the 3.11 Earthquake

All of us

Who live on Earth are no other than the latest survivors.

In our shadow are hidden all that could not survive.

The enormous amount of the Dead sustains our Life.

Life is nothing but a peak of an immense iceberg;

Under the sea level lies the vast domain of the Dead.

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Thanks to the invisible dark shadow of our dead companions,  
We are allowed to live; entitled to a moment of survival. 
Let us express our innermost thanks of being kept alive now,  
For, it is the only way to praise those who could not survive. 
The Dead are accompanying us so long as we live.

Let’s stop worrying about the probability of our own survival rate.  
For the last one who can happily survive is not the “I” who am alive. 
It is only where the not-survived have given the place to the survivors, 
That the sunlight reaches, and the darkness is wiped away to nurture new lives. 
Just like the stump of a cut-down tree which put forth the new crimson buds, 
Just like the carbonized stubbles nourishing the green sprouts on the burnt field.

Death is not the enemy of Life; it is a seedbed, a cradle for Life,  
The dead provide us with the vigor, blessing us with the chance to live.  
The mindful thought of the non-survivors is bestowed upon our lives.  
It is our duty to accomplish this entrusted life, a gift sent from the dead. 
And let us share our suffering of Life, in token of our respect to the Dead.

Facing the calamities beyond description, words fail us, we are kept voiceless. 
Yet the voiceless silence gives birth to voices; words are spun again into yarn of stories. 
Yet the reanimated words will one day fall on the ground again, like the dead leaves;  
And the leaf mold heaps up slowly and silently at the bottom of an unknown lake.  
The soil accumulates annual sediment, while the trunk of a tree ages year by year.  
The layers preserve the traces of climate mutations & earth-tectonics of the millennium.  
Like the archival documents, the sediment of soil composes the chronicle of the planet.  
The patterns of Lives are woven in the layers of fossilized terrain to record  
The irreplaceable Chain of Being for eternity,  
Crossing the animated and the in-animated.

The dignity of a soul lies in its transmigration, beyond individual Life & Death.  

The geological metaphor inevitably haunts the cataclysm. *Spaltung, Verdichtung or*

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67 Inspired in Hongkong on Dec. 12, Second English draft, Dec. 27; third and forth draft, Dec. 28, 2011. I owe Dennitza Gabrakova, of City University of Honkong and Cheung Ching-yuen, of Chinese University of Hongkong for the inspiration which came to me thanks to their invitation to the gathering, Japanese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline, Dec. 11-12, 2011.
Verschiebung are no less psychoanalytical than geological, eloquently evoking the Erdliche Verwandlungen. Creative imagination must be closely combined with earthly tectonics of the millenium. Such topics as “Conversation with the Dead,” “Chain of being crossing the animated and the in-animated,” “Sedimentation and rejuvenation,” “Metempsychoses as a metaphor of Trans-migration of the soul/ame/Geist” must be further pursued in search of “Creativity” and “imagination.” Indeed, the dignity of a soul lies in its creative and imaginative transmigration to eternity. The dialogue with the dead ancestors –descent to the subconscious– should be a crucial moment for the imagination to take a new flight into the realm of creativity.  

68 My deepest thanks go to Sudir Karkar and Ryōsuke Ōhashi without whose encouragement and invitation to the Breuninger Foundation gathering at the Wasan Island, the present text, though fragmentary and incoherent, would have never been written.