

A Culture of the 'Inter'

Intercultural explorations on Japanese thought

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Kant's universalistic claims concerning aesthetic judgments and political-historical teleology are no longer philosophically defensible. The rejection of the metaphysically overcharged presuppositions of transcendentalism is situated against the background of an increasing mediatization of socio-economic and socio-political processes and cultural exchanges that penetrate all dimensions of society. In order to formulate the conceptual presuppositions of a *sensus communis* tailored to this world, and to legitimate the presupposed coherence of this *communis*, Kant's philosophical project has to be transformed from a twofold perspective: from an affective perspective – *sensus* – and from a dynamic global-local perspective – *communis*. Partly, I aim at cutting the Kantian regulative back to micrological proportions: not only more corporeal and materialistic, but also, due to an increasing globalization, more intercultural. The question at stake is: can we still make sense of a *sensus communis* on a 'sens'able' scale against a local-global – or to use a neologism of Paul Virilio: against a 'glocal' – perspective?

For a deconstructive exploration I refer to the conceptual frameworks of a group of mainly French philosophers: Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I will refer to their ambiguous attitude towards the 'Seinsdenken' of Martin Heidegger in order to make a transition to Japanese philosophy possible. Over a period of thirty years they have criticized Kant's transcendental apperception as well as Husserl's phenomenological intentionality by focusing on the body: on its libidinal intensities (Lyotard, Deleuze/Guattari), power-relations (Foucault) and affects (Lyotard, Deleuze/Guattari) that form a paradoxical 'foundation' as an operating force or *différance* (Derrida). From this corporeal perspective a *sensus communis* can be actualized by unearthing its 'immaterial materialist' (Lyotard) constituents. In this deconstruction crucial notions as difference, the Other and the in-between come to the fore.

These thinkers of differences have a common interest and fascination with Japanese culture: partly due to the semiotic and ceremonial character of Japanese culture, partly due to the 'lifestyling' dimension of zenbuddhist practices in which the Cartesian body-mind problem is countered. I connect their 'materialistic' interpretation of *sensus communis* to Kitaro Nishida's 'basho' or 'logic of place' and to the notion of 'ma' as a dynamic spatiotemporal interval used in architecture and martial art philosophy. The corporeal and yet immaterial quality of these phenomena enable me to compare them with different configurations within philosophies of differences, such as Derrida's 'différance', Lyotard's 'passibility' and Deleuze/Guattari's 'plan of immanence'.

From this intercultural exploration I will return to the glocal perspective in order to reformulate *sensus communis* in terms of a literally 'inter'activity within the tensional domains of the virtual-actual and the global-local. As a result of this twofold reformulation an intercultural 'site' of differences and differends as a being (of the) in-between will come to the fore that can be acknowledged as an intercultural, post-Kantian Inter-esse. The core activity of interculturality appears to be cultivating the inter.

1 Cartesianism and mediatization: body, mind and medium

One of the main topics of the philosophical debate within philosophy and the humanities concerns the relationship between mind and body. Although the Cartesian dualism has been heavily criticized in postwar period, this dualism still implicitly overdetermines critical cultural debates, for example on the specific role and influence of digitalized communication-circuits like *Internet* and the hypertextual World Wide Web and the quality of this *interactivity*. For instance within the new media art, an Australian performance artist Stelarc, who in the early seventies was hanging on hooks from the ceilings of Japanese museums like a fakir, is now into transforming his body by means of computerized devices. As the American Extropians and scientists Hans Moravic and Frank Tipler, he perceives the body as solely a material container of consciousness, as an intermediary that one day can be cast away after being uploaded into another 'medium'.¹

According to euphorical interpretations of new media recently this utopian – or dystopian - idea has been rebaptized as a function of Information Communication Technology: the Internet and World Wide Web are redefined as virtual communities.² What fascinates me in all those technological speculations, is the philosophical character of this 'inter' and its relations with Kant's *sensus communis*.

One of the pioneering thinkers in the field of mediaresearch, Marshall McLuhan, has criticized most inventively the Cartesian dualism. To him media - especially massmedia and the new media - are extensions of our body: our limbs, eyes, ears, hands and finally our nervous-system are expanded and objectified in a diversity of media. As a result of the integrative forces of television, McLuhan argues, it became possible to *remember* the organic unity of the senses, that was fragmented or *dismembered* by earlier mediatizations. Mankind can be enlightened in a material sense and reunited in a new community of human beings: The Global Village. Kant's *sensus communis* gets a late modern expression in McLuhan's televisional paradigm. But in spite of his slogan "the medium is the message" McLuhan remains a modernist utopian who keeps focusing on the central role of human consciousness and subjectivity.

2 Sense and *communis*: sensibility and the Great Narrative

Of course, Kant too denies the 'cogito' or transcendental apperception to be a substance in Cartesian sense. As a coherent activity that accompanies the act of judgment he conceives consciousness or mind as a time continuum. And the body as matter is also expanded spatiality. Philosophically Kant has a preference for time to space. Subjectivity is experienced within and as a linear-progressive accumulation of learning processes. Nevertheless Kant acknowledges that the affects form a bodily awareness of the Ding-an-sich and – once certain affects are cleansed from their heterogeneous origin – as such connect fellow human beings. He accepts two 'non-pathological' affects as constituents of different 'senses' *communes*: in his *Critique of Practical Reason* this is the individual affect of 'respect' and in *Critique of Judgment* the collective affect of 'enthusiasm'.

¹ Stelarc and Moravic extend the thought experiment Lyotard performs in *The Inhuman*, speculating on a post-solar time and the possibility of thought without a body, in an affirmative sense. See: J.-F. Lyotard, *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time*. Oxford 1991, p. 8-23.

² B. Woolley: *Virtual Worlds. A Journey in Hype and Hyperreality*. London 1992.

Sensus communis presupposes the transformation of pathological affects on a transcendental level - as concepts of Understanding or ideas of Reason – in order to reintegrate those into the autonomous sphere of rational subjectivity. Precisely these notions are deconstructed by Jean-François Lyotard. He criticizes Kant's 'transcendental illusion': in the final instance the Grand Narrative of emancipation can no longer be legitimized because the collective experience that 'grounded' it, has fallen apart. But although *sensus communis* as a regulative Idea loses its realization, it 'somewhere' persists: 'It's a question of a community which is unintelligent still. (...) This *sensus* and this *communis* appear to be ungraspable at their exposition. It is the concept's other'.³ The subject becomes a 'displaced' person. *Sensus communis* is no longer tracable by systematically analysing judgments within the coherence and continuity of consciousness. Lyotard, referring to the Kantian 'enthusiasm' from the *Critique of Judgment*, finally conceptualizes '*sensus*' on corporeal level. Although 'it has to be said clearly: the *sensus* doesn't give rise to an experiencing, in the Kantian sense'⁴

After the delegitimization of the Grand Narratives of Kant, Hegel and Marx *consensus* can no longer be attained because this violates the heterogeneity of the different language games postmodern individuals are involved in. Lyotard 'grounds' *sensus communis* in an affective receptiveness and a tensional space-time, embedded in language wherein mind and matter coincide: 'Our "intentions" are tensions (...) exerted by genres upon the addressors and addressees of phrases, upon their referents, and upon their senses'⁵. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) this receptiveness is still called 'sensitivity'. The crucial feature of the postmodern condition is a *dissensus* that cultivates this sensitivity for differences and 'our capacity to endure the incommensurable'⁶. Art practices and (new) media trigger experiences that nurture this postmodern sensitivity.

In 1985 Lyotard co-curates the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* in Centre Pompidou in Paris. The creative and affirmative aspects of postmodern technologies are subtly explored in a post-avantgarde setting. Works of (post) avantgarde artists are installed in a hi-tech environment, framed in a labyrinth of sixty sites or 'zones'. Cruising these hardly defined sites equipped with headphones visitors are affected by irreducible differential tensions and non-identifiable 'singularities'. They 'sense' the differences or differends between artistic and technological media and between a diversity of disciplines. They are as it were exposed to immaterial and material forces: of 'maternité' (origin of the message), 'matériau' (medium of support), 'matrice' (inscribing code), 'matière' (referent) and 'matériel' (destination of the message). The determining features of what later in *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time* (1988) will be qualified as an 'immaterial materialism'⁷ are prefigured and performed in *Les Immatériaux*. But because sensitivity must always be embodied and effectuated within material practices, as an operative force it is also material: 'The matter I'm talking about is "immaterial", unobjectable, because it can only "take place" or find its occasion at the price of suspending the active powers of the mind.' Experiencing the event as such – the quod – demands 'a mindless state of mind'⁸.

³ Lyotard: 'Sensus communis', in: A. Benjamin (ed), *Judging Lyotard*.. London 1992, p. 1

⁴ Idem, p. 3.

⁵ Lyotard: *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*. Manchester 1988, § 182.

⁶ Lyotard: *The Postmodern Condition.: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester 1984, p. xxv.

⁷ *The Inhuman*, loc. cit. (note 1), p. 45.

⁸ Idem, p. 140.

3 Passibility: quasi-transcendental sensibility

Sensibility turns out to be more than a psychological category. It is attributed constitutive powers for subjectivation and as such regains a quasi-transcendental, immaterial quality. Stressing this quasi-transcendental quality,⁹ Lyotard coins sensibility in *The Differend* (1983) – following Levinas – as ‘passibilité’. One can say that it is the result of a deconstruction of the sentiment of the Sublime. Passibility must not, therefore, be confused with passivity: ‘passivity is opposed to activity, but not passibility. Even further, this active/passive opposition presupposes passibility ...’¹⁰. To my opinion Lyotard revalues Kant’s effort to transform the moral ‘non-pathological’ affect ‘respect’ (Achtung) as a postmodern condition of possibility. In passibility Lyotard configures the three Kantian critical projects: epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. In passibility the differends and interactions between the former ‘faculties’ of understanding, reason and imagination or knowing, acting and feeling are taking (a) place. The (a) might be an indication for a different *sensus communis*.

As a result knowing gets a ‘pathic’ quality. The tension between being affected and knowing becomes selfreflective. Referring to Schelling Lyotard qualifies this informed sensation as ‘tautegorical’: ‘a term by which I designate the remarkable fact that pleasure and displeasure are at once both a “state” of the soul and the “information” collected by the soul relative to its state’¹¹. The cognitive aspect of the First Critique is connected to the Third Critique.

In being affected one knows and feels: ‘for thought, to be informed of its state is to feel this state – to be affected’ and ‘pure reflection is first and foremost the ability of thought to be immediately informed of its state by this state and without other means of measure than feeling itself’¹². Obviously Lyotard uses the notion ‘passibility’ as a double-edged knife to dissect the Kantian autonomous subjectivity while preserving a pathic, affective foundation from which subjectivation still can arise.

As for the ‘*communis*’, due to Lyotard’s critique of the Grand Narratives, as an emancipatory project this no longer presupposes universality. At most it results from a retrospective projection that becomes a transcendental illusion once an unlegitimized and uncritical bridging of the descriptive to the prescriptive takes place. *Sensus communis* is neither a regulative idea nor a distant political goal. The *communis* has ‘sunken’ into matter, i.e. the body. Lyotard now conceives *sensus* as a go-between: ‘A go-between in the process of coming and going, transmitting no message. Being the message. A pure movement which compares, which afterwards we put under house arrest in a seat called *sensus*. (...) The *sensus* must be protected from anthropologization. It is a capacity of the mind’.¹³ But, I would add, a mind that matters.

This go-between is a movement that animates a ‘subject’ that is – beyond the categories of humanism - both mind and body: it is ‘la pensée-corps’, a thinking body or bodily thinking or ‘body/thought’¹⁴. And ‘this *sensus* isn’t indeed situated in that space and time which the concept uses to know objects, in the space-time of

⁹ This quasi-transcendentality is also found in Derrida’s *différance*. The uncritical investment of transcendentalism in the notion of the subject is scorned by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1966): ‘Man’ is labelled as ‘an empirico-transcendental doublet’ (322), unaware of its aporetic grounding.

¹⁰ *The Inhuman*, loc. cit. (note 1), p. 116.

¹¹ Lyotard: *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*. Stanford 1994, p. 4.

¹² *Idem*, p. 11.

¹³ *Judging Lyotard*, loc. cit. (note 3), p. 9.

¹⁴ Lyotard: *Postmodern Fables*. Minneapolis/London 1997, p. 248.

knowledge...'¹⁵. *Sensus*, to state it paradoxically, 'precedes' temporality and spatiality in a Kantian sense, explored in the 'Transcendental Aesthetics' of the *First Critique*. It 'situates' the uncritical presuppositions of the act of understanding: its receptiveness and spontaneity. As an event 'it happens' (il arrive). And as such it is 'non-chronically' taking (a) place. In *Heidegger and 'the Jews'* (1988) Lyotard explains that the moment of the event of the phrase is consciously only known afterwards, in retrospect.

But this 'Result' is already 'a diachronizing (...) of what occurs in a non-diachronic' or 'non-chronic time'¹⁶. The intentional subject is always too late for the event. As with 'subject', indications as 'before' and 'between' are no longer adequate. The retrospective act of splitting, one can say, constituted both, philosophical dualisms and (pseudo)scientific dichotomies like consciousness/unconscious, wrapped in a Great Narrative. I will come back to this act of splitting in my elaboration of Derrida's *différance* and the Japanese notion of *kire*.

4 Event beyond time and space

To understand the specificity of the Lyotardian turn we have to realise that it is no longer consciousness but language that is crucial. Subjectivity and language cannot be separated. This also applies to his own medium: *écriture* or philosophical writing and thinking. Lyotard directs our attention to words as matter that we cannot think. Words are 'present' *before* thought can express itself. They are 'the "un-will", the "non-sense" of thought, its mass'¹⁷. By using oxymorons, paradoxes, double binds, dilemma's, antinomies and performative contradictions, Lyotard's readers are sensitized to the 'experience' of thinking. In this manner affectivity is integrated in a phraseology. This implies a passibility as an ever moving and moved pathos that is integrated in phrasing: every phrase has a 'quasi-phrase', a 'phrase-matière' or a 'phrase-affect'¹⁸. Matter and mind interact in this 'phrase-affect', wherein ontology and epistemology are entwined.

So in 'rephrasing' Kant's *Third Critique* – the experience of the Sublime and *sensus communis* – Lyotard thematizes an aporetical configuration on an epistemological level, that further is transformed into an embodied sensibility on an ontological level. Methodologically Lyotard has gradually shifted his attention from an extra-phraseological Kantian differend – phrasing opposed to the unspeakable, the in-fans as an affirmative inhuman dimension – via an inter-phraseological differend – the unsolvable conflict *between* phrases and *between* genres – to an intra-phraseological differend: a *between within* the phrase between the meaning in relation to one of the other phrase-instances (addressor, addressee, referent, sense) and the phrase as something that happens. From an intra-phraseological point of view, passibility is the tension between feeling oneself incapable to phrase the overwhelming power of a moral appeal by the other that resists our understanding on the one hand, and the pleasure of finding new words, phrases and idioms to communicate this experience on the other hand.

Sublimity has become an 'eventuality': a border experience of the now and here of phrasing: *what* the phrase says and *that* it is saying is separated by a differend. I conceive this as a Heideggerian turn in Lyotard's development. The all-encompassing necessity of the *Ereignis* however is changed into a less stringent 'Arrive-t-il?' and

¹⁵ *Judging Lyotard*, loc. cit. (note 3), p. 2.

¹⁶ Lyotard: *Heidegger and 'the jews'*, Minneapolis 1990, p. 16.

¹⁷ *The Inhuman*, loc. cit. (note 1), p. 143.

¹⁸ Lyotard: *The Differend*, loc. cit. (note 5), 'Kant 1', p. 62.

‘Y-a-t-il?’: Does it happen and does it take (a) place? Can we say that the sublime quality of the phrase is a paradoxical being of the for mentioned go-between: a literal ‘inter-esse’ of its quid and its quod as an ‘experience’ with an aporetical quality? Like the Kantian sublime sentiment it is a quality of an experienced relation with an unidentifiable ‘Thing’, as Lyotard sometimes characterizes matter, that ‘exists’ beyond our comprehension and as such ‘is unintelligent still’, as he stated in ‘*Sensus communis*’.

Hence, *sensus communis* is not a rational relationship between subjects – intersubjectivity – but a differing and differentiating operation that cannot be fixed, because it works ‘in between’ subjectivations. Its immaterial expressions are comparable with timbre and nuance, i.e. medium specific intensities within music and visual arts: ‘nuance and timbre are what *differ* and *defer*...’¹⁹. But matter is not a sender, nor is the mind an addressee. Those intensities are what matters as long as we do not mind.

5 Différance: space-time interval

‘*Differ* and *defer*’ suggests at least an affinity with another thinker of differences: Jacques Derrida. He also focuses on language and writing: on grammatology. Deconstructing subjectivity and rational experience, Derrida too emphasizes the aporetical dimension of Reason, expressed by Kant in the antinomies. In *Aporias* (1993) this constitutive aporia is qualified by Derrida as an experiential *factum* that is met by a receptive counterpart: by ‘non-passive endurance’²⁰. Derrida’s notion of aporia parallels Lyotard’s deconstruction of Kant’s *sensus communis*. Aporia ‘had to be a matter of the nonpassage, or rather of the experience of the nonpassage, the experience of what happens (*se passe*) and is fascinating (*passionne*) in this nonpassage, paralysing us in the separation in a way that is not necessarily negative ...’²¹.

Derrida relates this experience to the methodological notion he has developed in the sixties, when he qualifies this aporia as ‘a *différance* in being-with-itself of the present’²². In *De la grammatologie* (1968) Derrida introduces the notion of ‘supplementarity’. He subscribes Rousseau’s statement that everything starts with the ‘*intermédiaire*’ as ‘uncomprehensible to reason’: ‘The intermediary is milieu and mediation, the middle term between total absence and the absolute plenitude of presence’.²³ Foucault will assign ‘intermediary’ in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) to the corporeal forces, i.e. the body, that are disciplined and normalized.²⁴

More Lyotardian overtones are heard: his ‘go-between’ resonates in Derrida’s circumscription of *différance* as a quasi-transcendental operative force: the present participle ‘ance’ expressing the operative quality ‘undecided *between* the active and the passive’. It is an active disharmony, always in motion, of different forces and the differences of forces that Nietzsche opposes to the whole system of the metaphysical grammar. Western philosophy has tried to neutralize this differential tension: it has – with an act of splitting, as Lyotard states – prefigured ‘Reality’ as consisting of oppositions and dichotomies, articulated in terms of antinomies or contradictions: ‘For the middle voice, a certain nontransitivity, may be what philosophy, at its outsets, distributed into an active and a passive voice, thereby constituting itself by

¹⁹ *The Inhuman*, loc. cit. (note 1), p. 140.

²⁰ J. Derrida: *Aporias*. Stanford 1993, p. 16.

²¹ Idem, p. 12.

²² Idem, p. 17.

²³ Derrida: *De la grammatologie*, Paris 1967, p. 226.

²⁴ M. Foucault: *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. New York 1977, p. 11.

means of this repression'. Dichotomies and dualities as passion-action, subject-object or the categories as agent and patient are inadequate to describe this operation. Différance 'is' an operation that *differs* and *defers*, temporizes and spatializes. As with *sensus*, différance is 'neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like the middle voice'²⁵.

Like Lyotard, Derrida too criticizes Heidegger, but he returns to his writings time and again, because Heidegger conceptualized an in-between as a supplementary tension in *Sein und Zeit* (1927): 'In-Sein' related to Dasein as the being of the 'Zwischen'. Heidegger explicitly warns his readers not to make the mistake in understanding this once again as 'the result of the convenientia of two beings that are given'.²⁶ He also connects the pathos or affectivity – in his words: mood or attunement (*Stimmung*) as an 'Existenziale' – with this in-between: Mood enables *Dasein* to be moved or affected. The Heideggerian 'in-between', in other words, constitutes the pathos. But the still metaphysical overtones of the differential tension between the ontic and the ontological, between the *Existentielle* and *Existenziale* and between the authentic and the inauthentic nihilates the ontological 'primacy' of the medium that thinkers of differences are aiming at.²⁷

5 The middle and the inbetween

Both, Lyotard and Derrida, favour language and writing in the deconstruction of Kantian categories. In order to more sharply focus on the ontological perspective I would like to introduce the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Notions analogous to 'différance' and 'differend', 'middle voice' and 'go-between' are now articulated from an extra-linguistic perspective. Again Heidegger is referred to. In *Difference and Repetition* (1968) Deleuze already stated: 'This difference is not between in the ordinary sense of the word, it is the Fold, *Zwiefalt*. It is constitutive of Being and of the manner of which Being constitutes being, in the double movement of "clearing" and "veiling". Being truly differentiator of difference – whence the expression "ontological difference"²⁸. According to Deleuze Heidegger eventually does not 'effectuate the conversion after which univocal Being belongs only to difference and in this sense revolves around being'²⁹.

The 'differentiator of difference' doubtlessly refers to Derrida's *La différance*, written in the same year as *Difference and Repetition*. But instead of situating this operation against the background of a philosophy of language, Deleuze and Guattari develop a philosophy of forces. In the introduction 'Rhizome' to *Mille Plateaux* (1980) they characterize it as the middle: 'The middle (*milieu*) is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between (*entre*) things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away ...'³⁰

²⁵ Derrida: *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago 1982, p. 9.

²⁶ M. Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen 1927, p. 132.

²⁷ For an actual interpretation of Heidegger's 'Zwischen' it is more useful to read Peter Sloterdijk, who qualified postmodern individuals as 'Zwischen-menschen', beings of the in-between. See P. Sloterdijk: *Eurotaoismus. Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik*. Frankfurt a/M 1989, Chapter VI.2.

²⁸ G. Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition*. London/New York 1994, p. 65.

²⁹ Idem, p. 66.

³⁰ G. Deleuze/F. Guattari: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia. A thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis/London 1987, p. 25.

The middle or *inter* is not a passage or passing through. It is 'mi-lieu' as an 'entre'. This *inter* 'exists' 'before' any position, although we can only describe it 'afterwards'. Once more the quotationmarks indicate that in order to circumscribe this in-between, a discursive explanation focused on presence, representation and linear time grossly fails. Frequently Deleuze calls this *inter* also a 'becoming'. Varying on the Heideggerian theme of presence and absence – and resonating Derrida's deconstructive enterprise – his in-between furthermore is conceptualized as an ever present – now/here – but 'at the same time' absent – no/where – tensional field.

Deleuze and Guattari develop a cluster of philosophical perspectives wherein terms like 'rhizome', 'sensation as a block of percepts and affects' and 'plane of immanence of consistence' are used to connote this *inter*. For instance a rhizome is made out of plateaus, and a plateau 'is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end'. If, in ontological terms, the *inter* 'exists' 'before' the articulated antipodes of an opposition – as it were: crosses (out) the opposition and tenses the differend – it still presupposes something 'invisible' and 'un(re)presentable'. To my opinion the notion of 'plane of immanence' indicates an 'immaterial' tensional field that synthesizes (de)territorializing processes, characteristic for subjectivation. With this notion Deleuze and Guattari try to circumscribe the philosophical project through history regarding the coherence of our identity: 'Beginning with Descartes, and then with Kant and Husserl, the cogito makes it possible to treat the plane of immanence as a field of consciousness'.³¹

In this way Kant's transcendental field and the 'inter' are connected. In 1995 Deleuze writes a very densed text titled 'L'immanence: une vie...'. In a nutshell he connects the crucial notions of his philosophical enterprise and comes to the conclusion that 'the transcendental field is defined by a plane of immanence, and the plane of immanence by a life'. A life, not life in general. A singularity, but in its uniqueness absolute: singular universal. The resonance of the philosophical treatment by Lyotard and Derrida cannot be neglected: 'immanent life that carries the events and the singularities that can only actualize themselves in subject and objects. This indefinite life itself does not have moments, how close they might be to each other, they only have inter-times (*entre-temps*), inter-moments (*entre-moments*) (...) The singularities or constitutive events of a life coexist with the accidents of the corresponding life, but they do not group nor are divided in the same fashion. They communicate with each other completely different than individuals do'.³²

How do they 'communicate'? Is Deleuze's sensation as informative as Lyotard's tautegorical passibility? And is the movement of the 'inter - a Derridean *mouvance*'³³ - as a regulative *fiction* a double-crossing: the traversing and crossing out of the metaphysical dualities? Lyotard explicitly subscribes both Derrida's grammatology and Deleuze's notion of difference as repetition and even opts for an 'ontology of differing/deferring'³⁴, which implies that, on an ontological level, negativity has been replaced by difference and affirmation. As in Deleuze's philosophy of immanence', Nietzschean nihilism is acknowledged, endured and finally disregarded.

6 Thinking differences and Zen

This 'post-nihilism' resonates in discussions on Nietzschean nihilism in Japan. Keiji Nishitani is one of the main participants in this debate.³⁵ But in his writings one will

³¹ Deleuze/Guattari: *What is Philosophy?* London/New York 1994, p. 46.

³² Deleuze: 'L'immanence: une vie ...', in: *Philosophie*, 47, Paris 1995, p. 3-7.

³³ Derrida: *Margins*, loc. cit. (note 25), p. 9.

³⁴ Lyotard: *The Inhuman*, loc. cit. (note 1), p. 147.

³⁵ K. Nishitani: *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*. New York 1990.

search in vain for the ideas of neo-Nietzschean thinkers of difference. The indecidable differend Lyotard still refers to in his analysis of Western culture is solved in Japanese philosophy, given its Shintoist presuppositions and the importance of the Confucian notion of harmony (*wa*) in Japanese culture: 'In short, the "opposition", in traditional Japanese thought, is already integrated in a system of cooperation and harmony, as a result of the shinto-buddhistic syncretism'³⁶. Japanese thought is focused on synthetic, operative, corporeal forces of an 'aesthetic' awareness that accompanies this attitude towards life. To my opinion Foucault's 'aesthetics of existence' also points in this direction.

The last paragraph of Nishitani's book on nihilism deals with this problem, though still in terms of atheism. He critically poses the question whether an existential position of 'remaining firmly grounded in one's actual socio-historical situation, or more fundamentally, in actual "time" and "space" (...) really engage actual being to the full?'³⁷ In order to elucidate this problem Nishitani as Masao Abe points towards 'the locus of Buddhist "emptiness"'. The affirmation of nothingness into an affirmative fullness as an ethico-aesthetic perspective underlying the writings of thinkers of differences, is phrased by Abe as follows: 'So I think that "everything is empty" may be more adequately rendered in this way: "everything is just as it is" (...) Everything is different from everything else. And yet while everything and everyone retained their uniqueness and particularity they are free from conflict because they have no self-nature'.³⁸

Lyotard has always been fascinated by the affirmative way of thinking and acting in the different expressions of Zen arts. From his early semiotic analyses of the Japanese Noh-theater in *Des dispositifs pulsionnels* (1973) to the remarks on a mindless state of mind (*mu shin*), referring to Dôgen's *Shobôgenzô* - especially the *Zenki* - in *The Inhuman* and his remarks on the Japanese concepts of people (*minzoku*) and nation (*kokumin*) in relation to the subject (*shutai*) in Japanese texts during the Second World War in *Postmodern Fables* (1993)³⁹ he envisages an affirmative elaboration of appearance.

In the texts of Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and their predecessors Barthes – *L'empire des signes* (1970) – and Bataille – 'La "tasse de thé" de "Zen" et l'être aimé' in *Sur Nietzsche* (1945) – uncountable references to zen-texts, Japanese culture and art practices are available. These vary from casual remarks to more systematic elaborations.⁴⁰ Philosophical topics as indifferentism, immediacy, immanence and affirmation can be revalued against this Japanese background. In tune with Zen radicalism, Lyotard not only took a stand against the Grand Narrative of speculative thought, transcendental illusion and conclusive presentation in Hegel's systematic philosophy, he also rejects negativity as the driving force of life. Negativity cannot be the core of a philosophy of differences and the in-between, nor can this specific awareness be communicated by means of logical arguments: 'Le Zen tout entier mène la guerre contre la prévarication du sens. On sait que le bouddhisme déjoue la voie fatale de toute assertion (ou de toute négation) en recommandant de n'être jamais pris

³⁶ H. Oshima: *Le développement d'une pensée mythique..Pour comprendre la pensée japonaise*. Paris 1994, p. 103.

³⁷ Nishitani, op. cit. (note 35), p. 190.

³⁸ M. Abe: *Zen and Western Thought*. Honolulu 1985, p. 233; see also Nishitani: *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*. New York 1990, p. 180; T. Deshimaru: *Zen and Arts Martiaux*. Paris 1977, p. 31/145.

³⁹ Lyotard: *Postmodern Fables.*, loc. cit. (note 14), p. 103-104.

⁴⁰ I cannot go into details here. For a more detailed exploration: H. Oosterling: 'Scheinheiligkeit oder Heiligkeit der Schein. Subjektkritische Beschäftigungen mit Japan', in: *Das Multiversum der Kulturen*. Ed. Heinz Kimmerle. Amsterdam/Atlanta 1996, p. 103-122.

dans les quatre propositions suivantes: *cela est A - cela n'est pas A - c'est à la fois A et non-A - ce n'est ni A ni non-A.*⁴¹

The Cartesian duality of body and mind is completely neglected in the analyses of Japanese philosophers like Keiji Nishitani, Masao Abe and Kitaro Nishida. Japanese zen-buddhism acknowledges, in spite of the primacy of appearances, an experiential truth one can grasp in a radical affirmation of appearances, wherein the intentional subject and his will dissolves. The empty mind or no-mind (*mu shin*) Lyotard refers to, is one articulation, the many references of all these French philosophers another. The aesthetic rituality involved in this experiential practice testifies of an actuality, thinkers of differences aim at in their deconstruction of western metaphysics. But when empty is full, as Hegel would formulate it in a speculative proposition (Satz), what does this mean in terms of time and space and how does it still envisage a *sensus communis*?

7 Ma: 'the way to sense the moment of movement'

Not only in Noh theatre and puppet theatre, in tea ceremony (*cha no yu*) and arranging flowers (*ikebana*), but also in martial arts (*budo*) – known as 'the Way (dô) of the Warrior (bu)' – the 'thinking body', as Lyotard has qualified it, has its ways. The France based Zen master and master of martial arts Taisen Deshimura begins *Zen and the martial arts* (1977) with a chapter entitled 'Ici et maintenant' reminding us of Deleuze's short text: 'You and I are different. If one wants to find the solution to his own life, one starts out of an impasse. Here and now, how to create your life?'⁴² The chapter ends as follows: 'In the martial arts there is no time to wait. (...) One has to live in an instant. It is exactly there that the decision of life and death falls.'⁴³ In this 'actuality' matter instantaneously does mind.

In budo philosophy the notion of the center is crucial. One has to keep – though not to defend – one's center, both physical and mental. The energy (*ki*) that traverses body and mind is centered in the abdomen (*hara* or *tanden*). To explain this in a tactical sense Michael Random, a French master in martial arts, refers to the notion of *ma*: 'In a word, *ma* is perceived behind everything as an undefinable musical chord, a sense of the precise interval eliciting the fullest and finest resonance'.⁴⁴ *Ma ai* technically means the correct distance between two opponents. Correct again in a Confucian sense: in harmony (*ai*). Unlike Kant's position towards the beautiful, however, this harmony is sensed non-rationally. *Ma* implies an ontology of the present as pre-sent. No fighter can bridge the distance between him and his opponent without abandoning his defense first. Losing the centre, breaking the middle means being defeated, while taking the center of the opponent by energizing one's own body and mind technically (*ki ken tai itchi*) means victory.⁴⁵ The distance between two opponents can relatively be shorter (*chika maai*) or longer (*to maai*), but depending upon speed, skill and mental state of the opponent and the physical environment, this distance always has to be harmonious.

When Westerners think and talk about space, 'they mean the distance between objects. In the West, we are taught to perceive and react to the arrangements of objects and to think of space as "empty"'.⁴⁶ In *ma* space and time are both involved:

⁴¹ Roland Barthes: *L'Empire des signes*. Genève 1970, p. 75.

⁴² Deshimaru, op. cit. (note 38), p. 31.

⁴³ Idem, p. 34

⁴⁴ Michael Random, *Japon. La stratégie de l'invisible*. Paris 1985, pp. 150/5.

⁴⁵ See: H. Oosterling/L. Vitalis: *Kendo, techniek, tactiek en didactiek*. Rotterdam 1985, p. 131 ff.

⁴⁶ E. T. Hall: *The Hidden Dimension*. New York 1966, p. 153.

ma is a dynamic space-time interval wherein activity and passivity, agens and patiens are one and the same, yet different. As long as *maai* is maintained, apparently nothing happens. But perhaps this is the deferring tension that Lyotard in a reception-aesthetic sense refers to when he, as Burke did, thematizes the disturbing aspect of the sublime: 'does it happen?' 'Apparently': precisely in this 'actuality' - at that very 'moment' within this specific distance - everything is completely and totally connected in its difference. There is no anticipation in this total presence.

Ma penetrates all arts - from preparing, serving and drinking tea to doing business, from folding paper (*origami*) to martial arts, from painting and cinema to architecture. Architects like Arata Isozaki acknowledge that this space-time interval is their primary medium. In 1979 the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris had an exhibition on *ma*. The exhibition, initiated by Isozaki, consisted of nine spatial, visual and sculptural installations in which different dimensions of *ma* were brought into experience. The qualifications of *ma* in the catalogue are most clarifying: 'Ma is the place in which a life is lived'; 'Ma organizes the process of movement from one place to another. The breathing and movement of people divide the space in which people live'; 'Ma is maintained by absolute darkness'; 'Ma is the sign of the ephemeral'; 'Ma is the alignment of signs. Ma is an empty place where all kinds of phenomena appear, pass and disappear...'. And finally, the most lucid description, seen in the light of my presentation: 'Ma is the way to sense the moment of movement'⁴⁷. Factually, one can say, the visitor of the exhibition is himself installed by *ma*.

Etymologically *ma* is rooted in Shinto religion. It has a ritual background. According to the Japanese, nature embodies a multitude of gods (*kami*). Their presence can be invoked by performing strictly prescribed acts and sentences in enclosed sites wherein gods can 'descend'. This sacred space-time is marked by poles, gates or knotted ropes. Of course these ritual spatio-temporal sites are not solely confined to Japanese religious culture. But the specific Japanese characteristic is found in how the 'descent' of gods is enacted in order to 'install' a relationship between nature, men and gods. As with the creation of God, the process of descending itself, is not a temporal activity in a particular space, but it is the time/space-continuum itself that adheres these events.

So *ma* is neither Descartes' mathematical notion of extension, nor Kant's transcendental time-space. *Ma* is a spatio-temporal interval in which a dynamic in-between is systematically prior, though retrospectively simultaneous to the installed entities. The sacred time-space is not seen as an 'empty' container of things, but as a continuum animated by spiritual power (*ki*): empty is full.

Ryosuke hashi ends *Ekstase und Gelassenheit* (1975) referring to both Dôgen and Heidegger and their respective 'Orte' - places, or more adequate: sites - of truth with the following question: 'Can we nowadays really experience these sites (*Orte*) and be in the abyss 'between' both? What kind of 'site' is this 'in-between' (*Zwischen*)?'⁴⁸ Is *ma* a candidate for this 'inter'? In his book of 1994 on beauty in Japanese culture he compares the notion of *ma* as the in-between with the notion of *kire*. *Kire*'s specific feature is the activity of cutting within a continuum. According to Ohashi all Japanese arts are characterized by this rupture, which is always performed within a ritualized - or nowadays: in an aesthetized - time-space: the way *Noh*-actors position their feet, the arrangement of flowers in *ikebana*, the position and spatial rhythm in the stone gardens, including the walls that surround them, even the laughter of the Zen monk

⁴⁷ See: 'Ma: Japanese Time-Space', in: *The Japanese Architect: International Edition of Shinkenchiku*, nr. 262, Febr. 1979, p. 69-80.

⁴⁸ R. Ohashi: *Ekstase und Gelassenheit. Zu Schelling und Heidegger*. München 1975, p. 178.

that bursts out, every aspect of traditional Japanese art and culture offers *kire* as the rupture.

Speaking about the low wall that closes the Ryoanji-stone garden off from the natural world, Ohashi remarks: The wall's 'decisive function does not aim at creating a perspectival effect for the garden, but to separate the natural world outside and the aesthetically shaped inside. It constitutes the "in-between" (*ma*) of the two worlds. It is also the "in-between" of "life and death" (*shoji*). The wall, that in a spatial sense is just peripheric, gets in a structural sense a central meaning for the stonegarden, even better: it constitutes the real centre'⁴⁹.

Outside is inside. Extrapolating this remark, one is tempted to say that *kire* and *ma* share structural similarities. In *kire* – like in the cutting of a sword – the dynamics of creation of reality in dichotomies, dualities, opposition – or less strict: of differences is stressed. Does *kire* have similar qualities as Deshimaru's instantaneousness or Nishitani's actuality? Is it comparable to Derrida's 'différance' and Lyotard's 'act of splitting' as an operation within the *sensus communis*? In *ma* the creative tension that holds the differences together is put forward. Is *ma* instructive to understand Deleuze's 'plane of immanence'? In all these configurations rational, discursive reality is a function of non-rational *sensus communis*. In *ma*, in other words, *communis* is both sensed and embedded, while in *kire* the operative, deferring and differentiating forces that 'work' 'within' this continuum are stressed. The 'reality' of this *sensus* is problematic as long as we disconnect it from the body and interpret it solely from the transcendental perspective of reason.

8 Basho as the logic of place: body and *sensus communis*

In order to further elaborate the dimensions of *ma* and *kire* from an experiential, quasi-transcendental perspective I will extend them and connect them with the ideas of two influential Japanese philosophers: Tetsuro Watsuji and Kitaro Nishida. To my opinion, Lyotard's immaterialist materialism finds a Japanese pendant in Nishida's philosophy of place. Lyotard's 'thinking body' is a specific subject in Japanese philosophy. 'Subject' can be translated in two ways: *shukan* (subject-seeing) and *shutai* (subject-body), the first meaning being more psychological, the latter more corporeal. Lyotard without any doubt will recognize himself in the latter, given his former mentioned remarks in *The Inhuman*.

Watsuji focuses on a unity of mind and body (*shinjin ichinyo*), though not in a Hegelian sense. In Japanese the word for 'person' is *ningen*. The first character (*nin*) means 'man', the second (*gen*) space or in-between (*aida*)⁵⁰. *Ningen* does not refer to a substantial core of an actual person (*hito*) - *cogito* - but to a dynamic sphere wherein people are interconnected. Reflecting upon Watsuji's philosophy, Yasuo Yuasa states that Western philosophy is founded on the primacy of time as the inner sense of the subject. Watsuji came to that conclusion after having studied Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, from which he adopted and rephrased the notion of *Dasein*. I agree that it is much more complicated, but the primacy of time within Western thought cannot be refuted.

In evaluating Watsuji's critique on the Western mind-body problem, we must avoid, however, the Cartesian ambush: the Japanese emphasis on spatiality and corporality is not in opposition with temporality and mind: 'Does this mean then that the

⁴⁹ Ohashi: *Kire. Das 'Schöne' in Japan. Philosophisch-ästhetische Reflexionen zu Geschichte und Moderne*. Köln 1994, p. 75.

⁵⁰ The pronunciation of the Japanese *kanji* or character differs depending upon whether it is used separately or in connection with other *kanji*. *Aida* (*gara*) is the same character as (*nin*)*gen*.

physiological functions of the body are the most essential determinant of being human? No'.⁵¹ The materialism that follows from the negation of consciousness as a determining factor is too typical a Western enterprise. 'Watsuji's concept of betweenness, the subjective interconnection of meanings, must be grasped as a carnal interconnection. Moreover, this interconnection must not be thought of as either a psychological or physical relatedness, nor even their conjunction'.⁵² We also must be keen on the Hegelian ambush: we are not searching for a higher rational synthesis of mind and body. These relations 'between' both rather have a supplementary than a dialectical quality.

For a further clarification Watsuji introduces a new notion: *basho*. 'To exist in betweenness (*aida gara*) is to exist within the life-space. Furthermore, to exist in a spatial *basho* means nothing other than to exist as a human-being by virtue of one's body; I exist in my body, occupying the spatial *basho* of here and now...'.⁵³

We must neglect the Cartesian suggestion of the 'in'. But what then does Watsuji mean by *basho*? Watsuji refers to Kitaro Nishida for a more philosophical meaning. It has a common meaning as a physical place, but '*basho* (der Ort-Gedanke, HO) is developed by Nishida as a countermove to the Cartesian dualism'.⁵⁴ Nishida in a typical Japanese turn of phrase, circumscribes it as the relation between the one who knows, that what is known and the act of knowing. He also refers to Plato's *chora*, reason enough for Elberfeld to relate it to Heidegger and Derrida. To Nishida the Self is not the unity of consciousness, but rather the 'autonomy' of the field of consciousness.⁵⁵

Basho as 'the logic of place' or 'spatial logic'⁵⁶ also has an experiential dimension. It is connected with the notion of 'pure experience' (*junsui keiken*): a synthesis of phenomenological (Heideggerian) en zen notions, in which thinking is considered to be an active part of a corporeal 'experience' or 'Erlebnis'.⁵⁷ The 'body' is the key notion.

On an epistemological level Nishida's critique culminates in a redefinition of the relation between the general rule or law and particular cases. As Lyotard did in criticizing Kant, Nishida reformulates Kant's – or better: German idealism's – position towards both the determining and the reflective judgment. Lyotard's countering of the 'transcendental illusion' with the tension of different differends gets an experiential, affirmative pendant in Nishida's thought of pure experience: this is conceptualized as an empty 'site' (Ort) inbetween the general and the particular. Emptiness again is the crucial notion: the in-between is 'a true designation or *mu*, an 'emptiness' that is neither particular nor general. Thinking *mu* has its own spatial logic (*basho*).

⁵¹ Y. Yuasa: *The Body. Towards an Eastern Mind-Body theory*. New York 1987, p. 46.

⁵² Idem, p. 47.

⁵³ Idem, p. 39.

⁵⁴ R. Elberfeld, *Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945). Das Verstehen der Kulturen. Moderne japanische Philosophie und die Frage nach der Interkulturalität*. Amsterdam/Atlanta 1999, p. 105.

⁵⁵ Idem, p. 107-109.

⁵⁶ Nishida is probably one of the first Japanese philosophers who succeeded in connecting traditional Japanese concepts with Western philosophical ideas - ranging from Kant, Fichte and Hegel up to the neo-Kantianism of Rickert - but as Piovesane states in *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought 1862-1996. A Survey* (1997) 'this system, though including the method of western philosophy, is still thoroughly oriental in its theme and fundamental approach'(88).

⁵⁷ In Japanese two words are used for 'experience': *keiken* and *taiken*, respectively 'Erfahrung' and 'Erlebnis'. Of course, the second meaning is more appropriate within this context. See Yuasa, op. cit. (note 51), p. 49.

‘The characteristic of the logic of “place” with Nishida is that for him, even if “difference” is understood as “opposition”, she never gives in to “negation”. For him, even when “the one” and “the many” oppose each other they do not negate each other’.⁵⁸

For Nishida the axiological implication is an ‘acting intuition’ in which the existence of others is presupposed. He explicitly refers to Heidegger’s ontic ‘mood’ or ‘attunement’ (Stimmung) and ontological ‘disposition’ (Befindlichkeit). As in Heidegger’s ‘Gelassenheit’ activity and passivity are both involved and the ambiguity of absence and presence also resonates. ‘Acting intuition’ moreover is an expression of the ambiguity of the body as a subject and an object.⁵⁹ Foucault’s critical analysis in *The Order of Things* of ‘Man’ as an empirico-transcendental doublet and the reformulation by Derrida of this aporetic tension on an experiential level as a non-passive endurance and by Lyotard on a quasi-transcendental level as passibility to my opinion can be compared with Nishida’s notion of ‘acting intuition’. When we extend Hitoshi Oshima’s remark on the similarities between Nishida’s logic of place and de Saussure’s notion of difference⁶⁰ and take notice of the influence of Saussurean structuralism in the writings of former post-structuralists like Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and Deleuze, then a similarity between them and Nishida is not too far fetched a hypothesis.

9 Ma and Western public space

With *basho* I pretend to have made an intercultural clarification of Lyotard’s ‘thinking body’ and the connotated notions Derrida and Deleuze/Guattari employ. *Basho* circumscribes a *sensus communis* on an affective, ‘localized’ tensional field. But Kant’s *sensus communis* also implies a universalism with cosmopolitical implications. Of course, it is possible to transform, as Nishida did, the I-you relation based *basho* into a ‘universal’ ethics. However, I prefer to explore a ‘universal’ perspective from a more empirical point of view. Although I am aware that from now on I will be talking about the production of *sensus communis* and not of the quasi-transcendental ‘foundation’ of it, my focus is to ‘locate’ the *inter* on a global scale.

Western theoreticians have indeed used the concept *ma* in a critical sense to redefine public space. Within a postmodern frame of mind it is not hard to acknowledge Isozaki’s idea of a building or even a city as a dynamical space-time machine, that produces intersubjectivity and – given Foucault’s thesis on the ‘panoptic dispositive’ exemplified by the Benthamian prison – even as a micropolitical *sensus communis*. In *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) Edward T. Hall, a contemporary of McLuhan, refers to *ma* in order to elaborate the idea of sensory connectedness: how do on a subconscious level perceptions communicate a public experience? He uses *ma* to criticize the Western opposition between private and public, produced within a conception of space as ‘empty’: ‘The meaning of this becomes clear only when it is contrasted with the Japanese, who are trained to give meaning to spaces to perceive the shape and arrangements of spaces; for this they have a word: *ma*’.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Oshima, op. cit. (note 36), p. 103.

⁵⁹ Yuasa, op.cit. (note 51), p. 50.

⁶⁰ He points out that Nishida’s magnum opus *Zen no kenkyu* (Study of the Good, 1911) was published in a period when western philosophy was passing through a series of radical changes: Einstein’s theory of relativity, James’s pragmatism, Bergson’s vitalism, de Saussure’s general linguistics, to mention just a few.

⁶¹ Hall, op. cit. (note 46), p. 153.

Instead of mathematical perspectivism that has structured our western gaze since the Renaissance, Japanese art focuses on multi-perspectivism: ‘In contrast to the single point perspective of Renaissance and Baroque painters, the Japanese garden is designed to be enjoyed from many points of view’.⁶² Christine Buci-Glucksmann in rephrasing this Baroque gaze in terms of the postmodern condition also speaks about the films of Yasujiro Ozu in terms of *ma*: ‘While the instability – the Japanese *mu-jo* (not-stable) – is the pure flow of time, the interval between things, *ma*, is at the same time emptiness and “the in-between”’.⁶³

The most daring ‘application’ of *ma* as the quasi-transcendental of global space, however, comes to the fore in *The Skin of Culture* (1998), a book published by the present-day director of the McLuhan-Institute, Derrick De Kerckhove. Inspired by McLuhan's vision of the Global Village and exploring the influence and creative possibilities of digitalized worldwide communication, he applies *ma* to the dynamic network-structure of the Internet and other kinds of computerized communication-systems, in short: to cyberspace. De Kerckhove sketches the growing awareness of Westerners that public space outside our skins is no longer empty, but exponentially filled with networks of different qualities. He understands *ma* as ‘a continuous flow, alive with interactions and ruled by a precise sense of timing and pacing’.⁶⁴ People are now connected, i.e. logged in or on line as a result of the operative forces of a ‘psychotechnological *ma*’. But conforming McLuhans thoughts on medial extension, according to De Kerckhove our minds will externalize themselves as this ‘psychotechnological *ma*, a world of electronic intervals in constant activity and reverberations’. De Kerckhove goes as far as to proclaim that ‘*ma* is the quintessence of a certain aspect of the global human civilisation’.⁶⁵ Japanese designers have understood the creativity that is enclosed in this concept more than their Western colleagues.

Ma becomes an interface between mind and technology. I am not going to discuss De Kerckhove's uncritical presuppositions here – his cartesianism and Hegelian notion of progress, notwithstanding his explicit refusal of the myth of progress. Neither will I discuss his technological reductionism of the *sensus communis*. De Kerckhove's suggestion that we can manipulate and reproduce *ma* is of course non-sens. The most we can say is that we are installed by what we retrospectively can explain as a time-space interval that is technically produced. What Kant rightly noticed in relation to the *sensus communis* also counts for the ‘inter’ of the Internet: this cannot be managed – that is: mapped, extrapolated and calculated. It cannot exhaustively be understood by referring to globalization and rule guided hard and software.

10 The ‘inter’ of glocalization: global/local, virtual/actual

Nevertheless it is worth while to elaborate De Kerckhove's intuition. I just mention his line of thought in order to connect it to Virilio's notion of the ‘glocal’. Unlike the project of cosmopolitic universalization, globalization no longer concern the implementation of general principles to particular situations. The tension between the universal and the singular is not the same as that between the general and the

⁶² Idem, p. 154.

⁶³ Ch. Buci-Glucksmann: *Der kartographische Blick der Kunst*. Berlin 1997, p. 166. We could enhance this perspective by referring to Luce Irigaray, when she speaks about ‘the economy of the interval’ and to Kristeva's notion of the semiotic.

⁶⁴ D. de Kerckhove: ‘The Skin of Culture’, in: *Investigating the new electronic reality*. Ed. Ch. Dewdney. London 1998, p. 165.

⁶⁵ Idem, p. 167.

particular and perhaps Nishida's 'pure experience' is the immediate perception of the 'inter', we nowadays can perceive in the cyber generation that is familiar with computers.

The point I want to make is directed to the tension between the global and the local and between the virtual and the actual. Philosophically 'reality' takes place within this tensional fields. As a result of an increasing knowledge on the specificity of the other, the modern orientation is characterized by integration and normalization of the once exotic Other. Seen in a historical context: in a colonial or imperial world, the Other is still the exotic Other whose material existence asks for being subjected to an universal force of Enlightenment in order to realize unused potentialities. Paradoxically the Other escapes, because his singularity dissolves immediately by first glance and touch. Postmodern strategies however are haunted by the absolute negativity of an Other who can never be integrated.⁶⁶ This 'sublime' Other resists every information and formation: this Other(ness) is by definition formless, 'in-forme'.⁶⁷

In a globalized world Otherness in this sublime articulation is no longer applicable. The relation towards the Other no longer tolerates a hierarchical negativity. Due to the acceleration and intensification of systems of information, transportation and communication, the Other is actualized every moment, be it as a wellstructured tourist attraction, our Turkish neighbours or refugees requesting for political asylum. Even more, the Other has become self-reflective. As Stranger he has become an integral part of our identity, as Julia Kristeva proclaims.⁶⁸

The global/local tension no longer has an utopian quality. The good place (eu-topia) lies no longer beyond the horizon. But neither is it mere fiction (*ou-topia*). Locally utopia still can take (a) place: not as an universal projection, but as a collective trajectory orientated on the global. 'We' are only by ourselves through the others. Not dialectically but differentially: we do not have to be the Other to become ourselves, and neither have we to become the Other to be ourselves. We share this world living in the in-betweenness of the global and the local. We sense our 'we-ness' enduring and (in)forming this tension.

The same goes for time. As with space we no longer know in what time we are living after 'the end of history'. In our daily experience mediamatic feedback goes that fast – is even instantaneous – that every individual lives in past, present and future at the same time. Both 'actuality' and 'real time' are notions that came into existence through the accelerated mediatization of events. Actuality in a radical historical sense is an 'in actu' of events that have to be informed in medial reflections to become a collective experience. Massmedia – radio, cinema news, television and World Wide Web – transform local events into global networks. These events, however, are connected in such a complex way that they lose their meaning on an experiential and corporeal level. The layered complexity of reality does not allow an unambiguous meaning. Every new attempt to unravel this complexity generates a more complex meaning.

Like we are strangers to ourselves, our present is actual/virtual. Linear progression is out of date. So is the Aristotelian dualism of potentiality and reality, articulated in an Aristotelian-thomistic-hegelian tradition. In this tradition the present is the realization of potentialities which were hidden in history. But like 'autonomy' the notion of

⁶⁶ We can think of the writings of Blanchot, Levinas.

⁶⁷ I refer to the 1997 exhibition in Centre Pompidou, curated by Rosalind Kraus, titled 'L'Informe' in which the aesthetics of Georges Bataille are used to redefine avant-garde art(practices). See Y.-A. Bois/R. E. Kraus: *Formless. A User's Guide*. New York 1997.

⁶⁸ J. Kristeva: *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*. Paris 1988.

‘progression’ can still be experienced on a local scale and in limited contexts. However, this self-reflective experience can not be totalized as an encompassing worldhistory.

Because past and future are no longer connected by the symmetry of origin and end, this is yet another reason why the present can no longer be reflected upon in an unambiguous way. After the deconstruction of Worldhistory by massmedia and transformation of public space by the new media into networks of local histories, the present has to take (a) place time and again. Are all these critical notions as ‘unzeitgemäß’ or ‘untimely’ or these phrases as ‘time is “out of joint”’ articulated to (in)form the present as a supplementary tension between the actual and the virtual?

The point of intersection of actual realities is the event. Retrospectively an event can be conceptualized as a degree zero of reality. As such the event is not an actual reality: it is a virtual reality. It is no longer a potentiality, laying in wait to be realized. Virtualities are produced together with actualities. Y2K as a virtual reality is a very real actuality. That is why ‘virtual reality’ is more than a simulation, an idea, a dream, a vision, an intuition. Given the supplementarity of absence and presence it is not mere appearance. As with the global and the local ‘reality’ is the tensional difference between the actual and the virtual. The inter ‘is’ a quasi-transcendental that must be postulated in order to sense common ground for a post-historical world.

11 Ontology of the ‘inter’: *inter-esse* as *sensus communis*

Mind/body, subject/object, active/passive, message/medium, global/local and virtual/actual are rephrased as tensional differences. To my opinion only a radical analysis of the ‘inter’ will throw some light on our actual ‘*condition humaine*’. The prefix ‘post’ or ‘trans’ to ‘human’ is just a matter of definition. The question remains as to the ‘what’ of this in-between. Does the inbetween travers the opposition between presence and absence and does this imply a collective aesthetic practice that articulates and endures the tension of the in-between? Does it ‘help’ to be informed by other cultures like the Japanese that developed aesthetic practices in which the medium is radically affirmed as a result of which the *ego* is made transparent?

Or is the question ‘What is the “inter”?’ badly formulated? Then the ‘inter’ is not, it operates. But how it operates is to a great extent dependent upon the individuals that are sensibilized to its movements. *Sensus communis* is not a potentiality to be realized in the twofold Hegelian sense of the word: it is an actuality to be virtualized. According to Sloterdijk, we live in the age of the in-between. But did we not always live in the in-between? Is the in-between, precisely because of our shared ability to reflect upon our material conditions, is this mediumlike existence, is this ‘mediocrity’ perhaps our *condition humaine*? And is, instead of negating ‘mediocrity’ as modernity legitimized by the Grand Narrative of emancipation and Bildung, a radicalization of mediocrity the path we have to take nowadays?

Against the background of the recent digitalization I prefer to understand ‘inter’activity as an operative cluster of tensional fields as a ‘foundation’ for the affective and reflective human relations. What we use to qualify as ‘soul’ (*anima*), ‘mind’ (*spiritus*), ‘*cogito*’, ‘selfconsciousness’ or ‘intersubjectivity’ to me are totalizations of these tensional fields. The human mind/body tension appears as such as the *modus operandi* – as foundation and operation – of the in-between.

Interactivity is activity of the ‘inter’. It cannot be represented as such and is therefore the most recent articulation of Kant’s transcendental apperception as the ‘footage’ of *inter-esse* and *sensus communis*. Interactivity is, in Kantian terms, a condition of possibility in itself uninformed and formless: *informe*. The growing awareness that

individual life, after the downfall of the meta-narratives, more than ever is in need of a shared project, is accompanied by a growing sense for aestheticization. After Kant's transcendental project of the *sensus communis* many aesthetic projects have entered the stage, varying from the late 19th century Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Baudelairian dandyism via *Bauhaus* and Surrealism up to postmodern lifestyling. Foucault's 'aesthetics of existence' is as local and 'virtual communities' a global expression of this awareness.

In political perspective the core of multiculturalism and fundamentalism is still a modern expression of Kant's *sensus communis*.⁶⁹ Perhaps for a more up to date articulation of a sensibility of the 'inter' it is more instructive to look at art-practices. Indirectly the imaginative and synthesizing powers of art reaffirm the project of the in-between that Kant in spite of all critique inaugurated in his *Critique of Judgment*. The burning question into what this plea for a radicalized interactivity will culminate, cannot be answered yet. But one thing we can be sure of: for thinking to have a future we can no longer turn our back to the body as Descartes did and cyber euphorics nowadays do. Nishida's reflections on body/mind and the applications of *ma* can be very instructive to rethink *sensus communis* in local/global terms.

⁶⁹ S. Zizek, 'Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism', in: *New Left Review*, Sept./Oct. 1997.

Postface: *Interculturality*: towards a culture of the *inter*?

My last reflection concerns the importance of the 'in-between' for the intercultural endeavour. How do we understand the 'inter' of *intercultural*? Of course 'intercultural' differs from 'multicultural'. The latter expresses the idea that different cultures can exist more or less autonomously within one unity, i.e. the state or the nation. Multiculturality nowadays is defined as a multitude of identities, assembled within a political identity: multitude in unity. The finalizing unity synthesizes the incompatible on higher level. But this unity, always sufficient in itself, will accept other identities only in case of deficiency. In other words, multiculturalism is an ideological notion of a desintegrating unity.

'Intercultural' operates on another level. It is not a political category in the strict sense of the word. Rather than focussing on an illusionary political unity 'intercultural' is a qualification of an intermediate zone. In contrast with 'multiculturalism' it cannot perform an integrating function as for instance art-practices can do. In this sense, a subject can never 'be' intercultural, since this someone would posit himself between two identities. Ohashi's question on the abyss between two sites can not lead to a new identity or subject. In a more positive sense, an intercultural 'experience' is not an experience that surpasses cultures, but one that dissolves their metaphysical foundations and installs its 'sense' within a local/global tension. To put it in Deleuzian terms: One can only 'become' intercultural. If one is not prepared to put the thought of a final identity aside, if one still feels the urge to decide between two fundamental positions, then intercultural means being split, perhaps even in a pathological sense. Contextually this split can be resolved in a cultural identity - but only temporarily, never permanently. On the long run 'inter' expresses a continuous coming and going. 'Intercultural' seems therefore intrinsically connected with the experience of differences.

Enduring 'impasses' – as Deshimaru indicated – or – as I would prefer to call it - 'aporia' on a local level can sometimes result in a disoriented and disorientated experience. It is difficult to interpret this notion from a psychological point of view. Perhaps it requires another kind of 'psychology', as the subject no longer acts as a final point of reference. Philosophically it is more clear. Answering the question 'What is intercultural philosophy?' in an identifying context is a *contradictio in terminis*. It is not the character of a certain philosophy that comes into question, but it is the character of a certain activity that presses forward. A more adequate question would be: 'How can one philosophize (in) an intercultural sense?' Or if one needs a strict definition: 'What "is" the sense of intercultural philosophizing?' The provisional answer probably is to reside conceptually in a mediate area that cannot be totalized. Thinking against the perspective of an everchanging no man's land, of an empty 'nowhere' that for a thinking body at the same time is a full 'now-here'.