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# Cultural Gap, Mental Crevice, and Creative Imagination: Vision, Analogy, and Memory in Cross-Cultural Chiasms

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper aims at investigating how the cross-cultural chasm can be meaningfully connected with the discussion on creativity and imagination. In order to examine cross-cultural creativity and imagination, several basic assumptions in the Western tradition must be reexamined and put into question. To begin with, the translatability and equivalence of the notions of "creation" and "imagination" are examined in the cross-cultural context in terms of the "gaps" in terminology itself. Following on from this, the paper proposes several working hypotheses with regard to these themes. The paper takes up two topics that provide essential metaphors: first, climatology or meteorology, and, second, tectonics or geological imagination. The paper then examines the dichotomy between digital and analogical devices and questions the status quo of information technology and its theoretical foundation. The rehabilitation of the virtual capacity in manual operation comes into focus in order to reveal the limits of verbal information. The importance of the chiasm or void in networking is also put forward. One purpose of the present paper is to address the question of how the gap between Eastern terminology and Western thinking in the realm of creative imagination can be bridged, despite the semantic chiasm and lack of equivalence that divides them.

#### KEYWORDS

Cultural gap; mental crevice; creative imagination; digital vs. analogue; meteorology & geology; manual vs. *digitus*; Toshihiko Izutsu; Tenshin Kakuzô Okakura

# 1. Translation and creativity: chasms in cross-cultural migration

This paper aims at investigating how the cross-cultural chasm can be meaningfully connected with the discussion on creativity and imagination. To examine cross-cultural creativity and imagination, several working hypotheses must be examined and some of the basic prerequisites must be reexamined.

# 1.1. Gap in terminology

Such terms as "creativity" and "imagination" have their own lexicological roots in Western philosophical tradition and cannot be used in a 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 and "imagination" 想像力in the cultural

sphere of the Chinese ideogram are comprehended with the same acceptance and semantic limitations. In other words, there is naturally a gap separating these imported Western ideas (and their literally translated terms) from the indigenous Chinese (supposedly corresponding) notions. And whether or not to recognize the equivalence between the two categories is more a political question than a purely epistemological problem of definition.<sup>1</sup> To say the least, the notion of "creation" in the West has been for a long time attributed solely to God in Christian theology, and it was only during the eighteenth century that Creation with a capital "C" was little by little redefined as a capability with a small "c" attributable to human individuals. The West is far from monolithic. The English term "creativity" existed already in the mid-nineteenth century, but "créativité" in French dates only from around 1965.<sup>2</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the status of "imagination" as an aesthetic category was also discussed in relation to the repositioning of human "creativity." In Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Critique of Pure Reason), Einbildungskraft* (imagination) as a *Kategorie* of human *Erkentniss* (knowledge) was located between *Sinnlichkeit* (sensibility) and *Verstand* (understanding) so as to connect the two, but it was not as highly appreciated as it was in the case of Goethe. This definition by Kant is of course highly problematical if compared with Islamic, Indian, or Chinese traditions. However, in calling them simply "Oriental traditions," we should be careful to ask: what exactly are we referring to if we do not specify the period, school of thought, or author? And what is the epistemological ground for such a casual and baseless comparison?<sup>3</sup> Without raising unanswerable questions about the cross-cultural translatability of specific semiophemes,<sup>4</sup> let us satisfy ourselves by stating that such a translinguistic comparison of terminology is at best operational in a specific circumstance and in terms of a particular interest and purpose shared in a determined aim of the philological survey.<sup>5</sup>

# 1.2. Gap in articulation

Beneath the gap in terminology lies the gap in articulating the semantic field. It has to do with both vertical classificatory categories (encompassing upper categories and subdividing lower categories) and neighboring terminologies with which a term 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 interdisciplinary translations. Such (horizontal) semantic fractures and (vertical) crashing in categories are usually not welcome, especially in academic discussions.<sup>6</sup>

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 (e.g. English) would result in losing sight of the cultural diversity of the issue. It is my working hypothesis that the gaps in categories or fractures in terminologies in transcultural transactions will serve as a key to search for new and not yet explored dimensions of human creativity and imagination.<sup>7</sup> We must take the gaps in *Weltanschauung* into account, so as to cope with cultural diversity in terms of creativity and imagination. A Freudian model of unconsciousness and a Saussurian model of language must be reexamined in transcultural context. For this purpose, I would like to propose meteorological as well as earth-tectonic models in the final part of this paper.<sup>8</sup>

#### 1.3. Gap in Weltanschauung

An illustration of a gap in *Weltanschauung* is provided by the German intellectual diaspora under the Nazi regime and its aftermath. In the field of art historical research, one of the most typical and problematical cases is the methodological shift that occurred around the German Jew, Aby Warburg (1866–1929), the founder of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, established in Hamburg in 1926. Eminent scholars like Ernst Cassirer, Fritz Saxl, and Erwin Panofsky are greatly indebted to this collection with its idiosyncratic classification system. After the founder's death, the library was transferred to London, to prevent its being confiscated or destroyed by the Nazi regime.<sup>9</sup>

Warburg's ambition was to grasp (*ergreifen*) the dynamics of images. How does the image create itself? How does it propagate and resurrect itself and survive (*überleben*)? Through his studies of esoteric and mystical images from the Italian Renaissance, he observed the *Nachleben* (life after death) of the imagery of antiquity, its archetypal resurrection, which he interpreted as "symptoms" of primordial human emotions. Images carry the traces and imprints of memories deeply imbedded in the layers of *psyché* from the immemorial past. The forms and figures of antiquity recurred as phantoms (like the "retour des morts" or "des revenants") in the Renaissance by taking determined shapes as containers of a particular pathos (which he called *Pathosformel*).<sup>10</sup>

However, such phantoms and monsters (*Gespenster*), which Aby Warburg successfully resuscitated, have been cast off and intentionally neglected by his successors as if by exorcism. This repression was systematically practiced, ironically enough, by 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 biographer of Aby Warburg. Such intellectual giants and memorable Jewish exiles were among the executors of Warburg's academic testament.

First, the notion of *Nachleben—survivance*—of antiquity was modified into the renaissance of the Greco-Roman heritage by Panofsky. Panofsky's iconology minimized Warburg's program into a serene philological exercise of explaining images by words. Second, *Pathosformel* was reshaped into *Symbolishe Formen* by Cassirer. The Dionysian dark connotation in Warburg was thus erased by the Apollonian light and replaced by Cassirer's clearly defined Platonic ideas. (Cassirer's "symbol" would be further "rationalized" by Susanne K. Langer.) Third, the *Pathologie* of the creative *Geistes* (spirit) was substituted for an experimental psychology of perception by the author of *Art and Illusion*, E. H. Gombrich. The conceptual deficiencies that the founding father suffered from because of his methodological eccentricities were redefined as scientific deficiencies that his successors had to avoid for their own survival. Pathological elements or seemingly demoniac aspects in Warburg's German language were removed and distilled into a standardized, innocuous, and benign methodology in English-speaking academies.

In short, it turned out a half-century later that Jewish scholars in exile were largely responsible for the cleansing operation, an Oedipal *mise à mort symbolique*, so to speak, of the name of the father. Each of them reduced their predecessor's *Wissenschaft ohne Name* (science without name) to a conventional tool for academic research.

Georges Didi-Huberman, in his *Images survivantes*, *l'Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (2002), accuses Warburg's successors of parricide and intellectual treachery,<sup>11</sup> but one should also recognize the deep shadow of the Nazi trauma, which resulted in an excessive postwar cleansing of German scholarship in English-speaking countries. Only the supernatant liquid, so to speak, of Aby Warburg's Saturnian endeavor could survive, for better or worse, in the transatlantic emigration of the European academic discipline to the New Continent.<sup>12</sup> The old European prewar academic methodologies were recast into North American-style prêt-à-porter theories. The traveling theories (Edward Said)<sup>13</sup> were applied worldwide in the second half of the twentieth century by an Americanized international *monde savant*.

# 2. Gap/crevasse and creation: climatology<sup>14</sup> or tectonics in art and technology

The search for efficiency is predominant in modern technology and erodes the field of human engineering. One correlative and crucial factor must be digitization in computer technology. The dichotomy of digital vs. analog is frequently discussed, especially in Japan. Analogical thinking is often taxed as outdated and old-fashioned: if "digital" designates the spirit of the twenty-first century, "analogue humans" belong to the old twentieth century. This generation gap seems to indicate a crucial watershed in the history of humanities in terms of creativity and imagination.

# 2.1. Digital vs. analog: the counterfeit dichotomy of information technology

In my opinion, however, here is a confusion that cannot be overlooked. Etymologically speaking, "digital" and "analog" cannot constitute in any sense a dichotomy. Suffice it to recall that "digital" stems from *digitus*, a Latin word for 10 fingers. Decimal notation can be arithmetically modified into a binary system, as was used in the Mayan calendar. Thanks to progress in computer technology, numerical treatment has made "exponential advances" since the 1960s. And yet this does not mean that digital or numerical thinking has annihilated analogical thinking.<sup>15</sup> 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 at an efficient rate.

The classical question of the frame problem comes up, and the joke of the fire pump robot illustrates the case. If the robot is designed to extinguish every fire detected, it will be overwhelmed by countless 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 as 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 in the case of an automatic water sprinkler). But the analogical thinking that the programming requires is neither numerical nor digital by nature, but axiological. And axiology cannot be automatically reduced to a numerical scale within the prefabricated axes of coordinates.

#### 2.2. Intelligibility and sacrifice: the reduction of dimensions

Modeling consists of dimensional reductions, making complicated and difficult reality easier to manipulate. If reducing reality to a static two-dimensional table corresponds to flat image manipulation (picture plane), the linear form of sentence-phrasing (by means of characters) and its recording by letters—linear discursive ordering—is an act of editing reality into one-dimensionality. The three-dimensional movie screen can be entertaining and thrilling, but it is already too redundant for the average human being to have a perfect and spontaneous command over it. As with the robot extinguisher, it would take too long for a human being to make any relevant decision in front of a three-dimensional panoramic moving screen. It is simply too real to deal with. (Part of the sense of thrill comes from the fact that it is out of control.)

The ultimate form of this reduction in dimensions must be the belief that nature is ruled by a limited number of physical and other laws. This conviction leads to an attempt to comprehend the whole universe by way of, and within, the most efficient axes of coordinates in limited numbers. But such a putatively rational and reasonable reduction cannot be achieved without cutting off other coordinates that 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 poverty (in Christianism) or austerity and paring down a real fecundity into excessively simplified models.<sup>16</sup> Can such a reduction in dimensionality be regarded as a criterion for creativity? It seems that the margin for the imagination to develop would be restricted.

The limit of human intelligence is revealed here. In a limited time span, the brain cannot cope with innumerable raw data unless they are regulated in a linear onedimensional form of letter phrasing (destined either for the listening of for the visual reading) or reduced to a two-dimensional static chart. At the same time, digitization reveals its limit. The human genome has already been identified, yet the linear disposition of the human genome alone cannot account for the differences between *Homo sapiens* and, say, chimpanzees. The three-dimensional configuration and temporal displacement of the genome should be calculated to elucidate the whole molecular operation, but even the world's largest supercomputer would be unable to do this within an affordable time limit. The numerical/digital data are certainly accurate and serve as a reliable record, but "unfreezing" data inevitably takes too long to confront the living reality.<sup>17</sup>

To put it another way, it is already evident that a huge region of the universe remains almost untouched and unexplored by human intelligence. The human brain is not capable of speculating about what lies beyond the limit of linear phrasing, and we still lack the ability to cope with complexity that cannot be reduced to the two-dimensional screen. We still do not know how to deal with visions and imaginings that lie beyond descriptions and images.<sup>18</sup>

#### 2.3. The limits or the safety net of human intelligence

Why is human intelligence so limited? One speculative answer could be that the limit is a safety device for the world's order. Experiments have been done to directly input three-

dimensional motion picture images into the brain, sending electric pulses to the visual cortex by inserting electrodes into the skull. But we do not have devices to output dream images directly onto a screen located outside the brain. In both cases, mentally conceived images and the outer visual reality would be placed in a closed circuit, in an interchange-able and mutual relationship.<sup>19</sup> The distinction between the material world and the mental world would disappear on the level of consciousness. But if mental intent were to be directly reflected in outer reality, the whole world would be instantaneously disrupted. It would be enough to imagine a war to ensure that a real war takes place. This nightmare is what Oshii Mamoru visualized in his animated film *Ghost in the Shell.*<sup>20</sup>

Already people have successfully commercialized domestic robots that obey the voice commands of their masters. If brain impulses can be detected and correctly read by electronic devices, one can invent domestic machines that obey and execute the will of the human master. 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.).<sup>21</sup> But having a full command of such artificial intelligence in an unconditional environment will be simply impossible: unless strict safety regulations and a detailed legal instruction "manual" were established, a simple intention to kill could be directly put into practice and transformed into sensational reality. With that capacity at hand, the social order might be easily destroyed.

# 2.4. The paradox of brain wave drawing

Experiments in projecting a mental image onto a screen by scanning brain waves have shown a basic methodological limit. The brain wave drawing cannot be successful so long as the subject tries to conceive of concrete images by concentrating his/her consciousness. On the contrary, one has to concentrate in such a way as *not* to concentrate—to make the effort of not making effort—so that a 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, experiences show that it is necessary to obtain a stable alpha wave in the brain for the image output to become available. To do so, it is necessary to restrain neuron activities in the language cortex so as to give priority to a mental state similar to that of REM sleep. Experience has also shown that brain waves take the shape of REM sleep when an examinee practices meditation or chants mantras (as in Buddhist monasteries). Buddhist monks and yoga practitioners are known to be able to easily create similar mental states by simple breath control. One may hypothetically suppose that to make a brain wave drawing by emphasizing the imagination, analytical intelligence has to give way to meditative serenity.

Logical articulation, therefore, obstructs the creation of mental visual images. Top athletes and practitioners of martial arts know this very well. One cannot make any spontaneous movement without mental serenity, which lies beyond the noisy circuit of conflicting messages running thorough the analytical paths of the brain cortex. Ambition, a fighting spirit, and making 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 successful handling (it is only later that the handling turns out to have been successful) but can analytically explain failed handlings, though only *après-coup*.<sup>22</sup>

It is fortunate that human intelligence cannot yet directly exercise its power on the physical world; it must be mediated by materiality: a human finger, hand, or voice, and even the brain impulse must be transmitted to some external device to create real effects.<sup>23</sup> However, within the limits of linear thinking and mainly in two-dimensional imaging, humans have freedom of thinking. Thinking itself is physically powerless, but intellectual speculation is safe enough not to directly affect the physical world without appropriate mediation.<sup>24</sup>

What about the three-dimensionality of physical experience in time and space? Computer technology is moving in this direction, rapidly enlarging the notion of virtual reality. But is it the ultimate goal to substitute virtual reality for three-dimensional reality on a chronological scale, to establish a virtual parallel world besides the real planet Earth? What would be the merit of tennis game software in which real physical exercise was transferred onto a virtual screen to simulate the game?<sup>25</sup> This question leads to the physical dimension of the body, often overlooked in discussions on creativity and imagination.

# 3. Manual digitalization and tactility in danger

# 3.1. American-style manual culture and the decline of manual training

In his *Le Geste et la parole* (1964–65), André Leroi-Gourhan persuasively speculated that in the evolution of the human species, erect bipedalism liberated human hands from carrying the body; the liberated hands, in turn, liberated the mouth from carrying food and taking meals, and the process finally allowed *Homo sapiens* to acquire speaking ability.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, articulate language could not have been invented without human manipulation of tools by the hands, in which the picking-up function by the thumb and index (hence calculation) is combined with the grasping and scooping ability of the other three fingers.

The French anthropologist also observed that the progressive diminution of digital thinking (the close relationship between hand manipulation and brain function) in contemporary urban social life may be interpreted as a symptom of the degeneracy of human beings. The development of typewriters and computers and frequent keyboard operations have certainly intensified the use of fingers but also (over-)simplified the mode of output (compared with the manipulating of brush and pen, and other tools). Generally speaking, the replacement of handwork by machines has reduced the potential ability that human hands possess. The decline of "thinking with hands and 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 the human species in general.<sup>27</sup> How will this tendency affect human creativity and imagination? The question remains open.

Curiously enough, with the diminution in importance of manual labor, book-form manuals prevail (available on the internet with voice instruction) and have largely replaced direct manual apprenticeship from one generation to another. No less paradoxically, "digital" (*dejitaru*) has become a key term of computer technology along (and in proportion) with the decline of human digital ability. The reminiscence

(or the remaining fragments of memory) of manual and digital craftsmanship seems to have been transferred into the realm of computer literacy and engineering technology. One generation earlier, in the last decade of the twentieth century, many small machine factories suffered from lack of communication between 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 without a significant connection.

Recent education reform seems to exacerbate, rather than repair, this gap. Without any efficient strategy for the survival of the manual techniques in decline, the digital database simply continues to stock the historical records of *métiers perdus* or "lost skills" (Claude Lévi-Strauss), for want of a better substitute. Youngsters' tendency to retreat into the virtual world of computer games, as well as their frequent self-mutilation syndrome, is proof of their gradually losing their grip on physical reality. The internet fosters the illusion that one can have direct access to the whole world by a simple keyboard manipulation of the computer screen.<sup>28</sup> But young people are already disillusioned by the limits of virtual reality. At stake here is the increasing loss of tactile experience.<sup>29</sup>

# 3.2. The design or residue of platonic dichotomy

Underneath the loss of tactility are the remains of the dichotomy that modern design thinking has inherited—without much noticing it—from Platonic thinking based on the binary distinction between *eidos* and *hyre*.<sup>30</sup>

Plato's basic idea of human *techne* is that material (*hyre*) is summoned to fill the empty forms (*eidos*) or ideas. The primary conception concocted in the human brain should be put into material form by secondary manual labor. This basic scheme is kept intact even in modernism and in postmodern information technology. As Viłem Flusser emphasizes, the word "information" etymologically means to press (*auf-drucken*) a mold onto the material. Modern design basically shares the same Neo-Platonic idea of filling 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 unthinglike things (*Undingliche Dinge*) to prosper, strengthening an orientation toward that which is ungraspable (*unbegreiflich*), the ghosts of things, so to speak, which tends to escape the command of concepts (*Begriffe*).<sup>31</sup>

In brief, the flourishing 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 virtual reality in cyberspace. The brain can easily project its own desire onto cyberspace to realize its dream at least in virtual form.<sup>32</sup> The fictional space in game software looks more real and exciting to players than tedious and cumbersome everyday life. And yet people feel a vague uneasiness about groundbreaking computer technology. As the term *Undingliche Dinge* suggests, people have begun to feel that they are losing full grasp of the materiality of things.

## 3.3. In praise of hands

In his "In Praise of Hands" (1943), Henri Focillon, a French art historian, tried to present an antithesis to such a tendency toward immateriality and prophetically showed what is 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 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.<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to Plato's dichotomy between form and material, between theory and practice, 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 misleading. The French original simply states: "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 spirit as it is known to us.<sup>34</sup> 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 into dialogue; the vocal cords produce verbal expression, while the hands produce nonverbal forms. 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 mind.<sup>35</sup> Here is a new definition of creativity in connection with imagination.

This reformulation implies many basic problems. For one: how can we connect verbal language with nonverbal form? Whenever we try to grasp (*ergreifen*) nonverbal forms by words, we feel challenged by the distance separating them. Words can capture some aspects of nonverbal forms by explicating one semantic layer of them, but materialized form always escapes the verbal net that tries to cover it. Aby Warburg, already mentioned, constantly suffered from this gap or crevice between words and nonverbal forms.

Ludwig Binswanger, the psychiatric doctor in charge of Aby Warburg at Kreutzlingen, found in his client an exemplary case of *Ideenflucht (fuite des idées*).<sup>36</sup> The form continues to escape the grasp of words, and by escaping the semantic net of "ideas," images achieve their own (semiotic) metamorphosis. Binswanger named it *Leidensgeschichte* of the *Demonische Form der Existenz* (demonic form of existence) which occurs in its *Spannung zwischen Formschöpfung und Formzerstörung* (split between form creation and form destruction) in search of its own survival in *Bilderwanderung* (visual transformation).<sup>37</sup>

## 4. Visuality and imagination: au-delà du Sprachmodell

#### 4.1. Mnemosyne: document vs. memory

Semiotics has demonstrated that it is theoretically impossible to give an exhaustive verbal description of a given visual form. An image cannot be reduced to verbal list. Aby

Warburg's suffering from *Ideenflucht* (escaping of ideas) is a natural consequence of this gap. Words always fail to grasp the images in life (*saisi sur le vif*). If arrested, the image is already dead and exposed as a cadaver. In other words, the visual image constantly escapes any attempts at archival documentation. To classify and fix a visual image in the tomb of a given index is against the nature of visual materials.

If recording of the written document is indexical and compatible with digital operation, the 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 as images are for memory 記憶 (making a vertical sedimentation).<sup>38</sup> Visual materials are rebellious and unfaithful by nature and not at all obedient to indexical classification. Visual documentation (a sheer oxymoron, like "visual literacy") cannot avoid this basic methodological difficulty.

Strongly conscious of this, Aby Warburg conceived in his final years the huge project of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. It 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. The Hua-Yen view of interconnectedness

It is in this field of interconnectedness of floating images that imagination begins its work. In my opinion, one of the most sharp and lucid explanations of the mechanism of interconnectedness has been given by Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–1993), a Japanese philosopher in Islamic studies.<sup>39</sup> In his exegesis and elucidation of the basic idea of the Buddhist *Hua-Yen* Sutra (Kegon-kyô, in Japanese), "Nexus of Ontological Events: A Buddhist Views of Reality" (1981), Izutsu makes clear that the *Hua-Yen*  $\pm$  diagram does not "purport to account for the coming-into-being of a thing, anything whatsoever, in terms of a cause–effect relationship." His exegesis helps us to better understand the difficulty Aby Warburg faced.

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).

The *yuän ch'i* (縁起 *pratîtya-samutpâda*) style of thinking, on the contrary, accounts for the existence of a thing, X, in terms of all other things (A, B, C, D ...) that are related to it and collaborate in bringing the X into being and keeping it in being. Some of these things stand very close to X, some are remote, and some others are 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 X closely or remotely in all degrees of closeness and remoteness.

But the picture is still far from being complete for reproducing diagrammatically the exact ontological situation of things from the *Hua Yen* point of view. For each of those things (A, B, C, D...) that, in this particular case, are viewed as playing the role of the formative factors of X and thus all center on 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 *yüan 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 manifold interrelated things.<sup>40</sup>

This is only the beginning, but it would suffice to explain the manifold and infinite transfiguration of images. In this infinite 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, an image network reveals inevitable shortcomings that remain unsolved or unrepaired in current academic research. So long as we try to rely uniquely upon conceptual understanding of the universe by way of *begreifen* and with the help of articulated *Begriffe*, 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

To further develop the notion of interrelatedness, let us finally look at the Oriental notion of creativity and imagination in terms of epiphany. I quote from a famous passage of the *Book of Tea*, written by Kakuzo Okakura, alias Tenshin (1862–1913), in 1906.

Once in the hoary ages in the Ravine of Lungmen stood a Kiri-Paulownia tree, a veritable king 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 mighty wizard made of this tree a wondrous harp, whose stubborn spirit should be tamed 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 harpists. 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."<sup>41</sup>

The last phrase clearly shows the loss of the self in ecstasy. "Ecstasy" etymologically means *ekstasis*, standing outside of oneself. By this self-emptying, one is reduced to a "passage" through which the divine reveals itself in the guise of "sign" (or symbol or symptom), of which one becomes a passive recipient. The divine sign is the music coming from the harp. At that moment not only musician and instrument but also the audience experience ecstasy 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 artistic creation takes place.

Here the notion of *analogia* takes on a new signification. *Analogia* does not mean a simple resemblance but the dynamic transmission of a homogeneous divine energy from *Sein* to a *Seiend*, to use Heideggerian terminology. In other words, *enthusiasmos* takes place when and where the eternal and atemporal 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 *emanacio* to account for this transmission—transubstantiation by definition—of something that 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 Lungmen harp, he sings only of himself. His works 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 the metaphysical entity to enter into the phenomenal world. Suggestion, which is open and incomplete by nature, not self-sufficient expression, is the key for the imagination to work. "The great masters, 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" that remains unknown and mysterious: "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."<sup>42</sup> (With "equally" Okakura equates love and art in terms of creative imagination.)

The word "crevice" is important, as Okakura sees in this 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,  $\kappa \acute{e} w \omega \sigma i c [k\acute{e}n \bar{o}sis]$ ) 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 Doubting Thomas touch it. Whether or not Okakura was implicitly referring to the Bible in this passage, the notion of "love" he invokes bears 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."<sup>43</sup>

"He is and he is not" means that he is in between Presence and Absence, staying in a *Zwischenraum* between *Licht* and *Dunkel* (space in between light and darkness), to use again Aby Warburg's terminology,<sup>44</sup> 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."<sup>45</sup> It is not by chance that Kuki analyzes here the moment of ecstasy, which he named *hors soi* (*Außersichsein*) (out of oneself), to make a contrast with such terms like *für sich* or *an sich*. Kuki, who had known Okakura well since his childhood, was also a close friend of Heidegger. Jean-Paul Sartre was Kuki's *répétiteur* when the Japanese philosopher "Baron Kuki" (as Shûzô was called in Europe) was in Paris in the 1920s.

By the expression "his spirit moves in the rhythm of things," Okakura also suggests the Chinese classical aesthetic notion of 気韻生動 *qiyun shengdong* or "spiritual resonance of vital movement." This notion was exploited in the 1920s, elaborated into a key piece of the so-called Oriental aesthetics. *Qi*, of course, is a controversial idea especially in recent Western scientific discussions.<sup>46</sup> But it is similar to the Greek notion of *pneuma*, which was translated into *spiritus* in Latin, similar to *Geist* in German. The breath is *Atmen* in German, which shares etymology with *Atman* (ego, self) in Sanskrit. The vitality of the "self" as a *Lebenswesen* is closely related to respiration, without which life cannot be

maintained. *Aura*, or gentle breeze or breath, in Greek also means a supposed invisible emanation surrounding the body of a living creature.<sup>47</sup> In Friedrich Nietzsche's famous passage near the end of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the *Atman* as self fuses with the wind and their breath (*Atmen*) becomes one with the huge bellow-like whistle of the Universal Spirit. In this cosmic tornado, primordial sound and image fill the *mundus imaginarius* (imaginary world) (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.*<sup>48</sup>

# 5. Survival: instead of a conclusion

In the guise of a conclusion, let me *quote* from my own text, which has no pretention to being a poem but 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 March 11, 2011. This final part, which also has no pretention to being a paper as is recognized in the Western academic definition, has touched upon surviving images, which underwent a tectonic metamorphosis in the crush of civilizations.

Survival-At the end of the year 2011- To the memory of the lives lost in the 3.11 earthquake  $^{49}$ 

All of us

Who live on Earth are none other than the latest survivors. In our shadow are hidden all who could not survive. The enormous number of the Dead sustains our Life. Life is nothing but a peak of an immense iceberg; Under the sea lies the vast domain of the Dead.

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 for being kept alive now, For it is the only way to praise those who could not survive. The Dead accompany us so long as we live.

Let's stop worrying about the probability of our own survival. For the last one who can happily survive is not the "I" who is alive. It is only where the lost have given 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 that puts forth new crimson buds, Just like the carbonized stubble nourishing the green sprouts in the burnt field.

Death is not the enemy of Life; it is a seedbed, a cradle for Life. The dead provide us with vigor, blessing us with the chance to live. The mindful thought of those lost 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 calamities beyond description, words fail us, we are kept voiceless. Yet the voiceless silence gives birth to voice; words are spun again into a yarn of stories. Yet the reanimated words will one day fall on the ground again, like dead leaves; 14 👄 S. INAGA

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 and earth tectonics for a millennium. Like archival documents, the sediment of soil composes a 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 inanimate.

The dignity of a soul lies in its transmigration, beyond individual life and death.

# Notes

- 1. Inaga, "Is Art History Globalizable?"
- 2. Wiener, ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. The Japanese translation with a newly composed index is available from Heibonsha Co. Ltd, 1990.
- 3. This is like the paradox of *Menon*: If there is equivalence between the terms, there is no need to make comparison; and if equivalence cannot be established between them, it would be useless to make comparison from the outset, etc.
- 4. We do not return to the classical discussion on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. See Izutsu, "Principles of Semantic Analysis."
- 5. 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 Inaga, "Critical Assessment of the Activities of *Transcultura*."
- 6. Cf. Steiner, After Babel; and Inaga, "Translation".
- 7. Inaga, "Distance Reading."
- 8. For the full development of the issue with more details, see my book in Japanese, *Sesshoku Zôkeiron* with an English subtitle: *In Search of Haptic Plasticity-Souls touching each other, forms interwoven*, Nagoya, University of Nagoya Press, 2016.
- 9. Gombrich, Aby Warburg.
- Wind, "On a Recent Biography of Warburg." This book review targeting the biography by E. H. Gombrich gives the most virulent and insightful view.
- 11. Didi-Huberman, Images Survivantes.
- 12. Explained in the preface to Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, Saturn and Melancholy.
- 13. Said, The World, the Text and the Critique.
- 14. The idea of climatology cannot be fully developed here. See Nakai, *Sign, Memory, Trauma*, 282, note 4, as well as Muroi, *Technology as a Philosophical Problem*, The reviewers is the opinion that Muroi's book should have been titled "Toward a Climatology of Culture," as I have suggested in my book review. See Inaga, Muroi, "*Technology as a Philosophical Problem*."
- 15. Inaga and Fister, eds., *Traditional Japanese Arts.* The symposium is reviewed in Hiroko Ihara, "Protecting the Fabric of a Culture: Kyoto's Traditional Crafts Create Stunning Art and Continue Centuries-Old Traditions," *The Daily Yomiuri*, Thursday, May 8, 2008.
- 16. Langer's discussion in *Philosophy in a New Key*, is helpful here. Simultaneous multitudinous presentation characterizes "image" (which she calls "representational") in contrast to linear argument in accordance with the logic of causality typical in language (which she calls "discursive"). Clearly, E. Cassirer's idea of "Symbol" is here combined with the philosophy of organisms developed by Alfred North Whitehead. See Nakai, *Sign, Memory, Trauma*, 306. At the end of his monumental *Le Geste et la parole*, 2 vols. (Paris: Albin Michel, 1964–65), André Leroi-Gourhan advances a similar idea (2: 262).
- 17. In recent years, simulation of three-dimensionality with chronological axes has been realized on the two-dimensional screen. Holographic projection of three-dimensionality is

also technically possible. But it is not clear if the human mind is capable of manipulating the date projected on the screen.

- 18. Top-ranking mathematicians and scholars in astrophysics deal with highly multidimensional reality, but that dimension lies beyond ordinary understanding. It is simply impossible to "visualize."
- 19. In reality, however, most of the experiments in neuroscience remain extremely limited in paradigmatic reach. In the case of reconstructing visual images by measuring the electron activity on the visual cortex, the result simply retraces vaguely the visions on the retina. It is self-evident that the visual cortex reflects stimuli on retinal receptors.
- 20. Inaga, "Toward a Redefinition of Human Intelligence."
- 21. In fact, ATR (Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute International) in Kyoto has created just such an environment, supposedly for people with physical disabilities. Their brains connected through electrodes to a computer, they are able to turn on gas, water, and electricity just by thinking it. The phenomenon is called BMI (brain-machine interface).
- 22. The notion of "Nachträglichkeit" in hermeneutics is useful. Cf. Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*; and *Personal Knowledge*. The book is recently re-edited with a preface by Amartya Sen. Revealingly, Polanyi also wrote about "The Creative Imagination," *Chemical Engineering News* 44, no. 17 (1966).
- 23. Paradoxically, somatic reactions even precede brain judgment, according to the experiments by Libet, *Mind Time*. The so-called "free will" turns out to be an intellectual illusion concocted by philosophers in ethics. See Nørretranders, *The User Illusion*, esp. Chapter 11, reviewed by Chô Kyô, *Journal Mainichi*, October 6, 2002. Hisao Nakai, *Sign, Memory, Trauma*, Tokyo: Misuzu Shobô (in Japanese), 2004, pp.324–6; p.328. The brain becomes aware of its own intention only ca. 0.5 second after the beginning of its own conduct, and consciousness can deal with only 40 bits of the sense data input, which amount to 11 million bits per second. The conscious "self" therefore occupies only an extremely limited portion of the subconscious "ego." The argument must be connected with the philosophical problem of responsibility, itself a neologism in Western tradition. See Kosakai, *Moral Responsibility and Social*, although the author does not make any explicit reference to Benjamin Libet. Yet Kôichirô Kokubun judiciously points out a crucial epistemological misconception inherent in Libet's experiment. Kukubun, *The World of Middle Voice-archaeology*.
- 24. Needless to say, "mediation" is the negation of immediacy.
- 25. In the case of some computer game software, like chess or *shôgi*, easy access to high-quality performance helped create numerous semiprofessional level players in a relatively short time. Yet this "highway" is causing a new traffic jam at the exit. See Umeda, *Web Shinkaron*; *Web jidai wo yuku*.
- 26. Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la parole*, 1: ch. 2, « Le Cerveau et la main », p. 40 sq. Whether the displacement of the vocal code was related to erect bipedalism or not seems to be still debated.
- 27. Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la parole*, 2: 62: « ne pas avoir à penser avec ses dix doigts équivaut à manquer d'une partie de sa pensée normalement, philogénétiquement humaine». See also 2: 262–270.
- 28. Limitless access is an illusion. The limit of life expectancy of less than 30,000 days on average does not suffice for an individual to surf the entire World Wide Web. Whatever the illusion of unlimited freedom may be, the reality remains that people are simply connected with, and enclosed within, preexisting, predetermined programs. The round trip in prison ("le tour de la prison") is doomed to end before accomplishment.
- 29. The iPad tries to recuperate the loss of tactility, but the present state remains still transitive.
- 30. Inaga, "Spirits (Keshiki) Emanating from Objecthood (Mono)."
- 31. Flusser, Dinge und Undinge; Japanese translation, 2009, p.167ff. Warner, Phantasmagoria.
- 32. In engineering, it is already possible to produce a three-dimensional physical model from the virtual computer-generated blueprint, with necessary calculations of the strength and weight of the scale model, if it is constructed in real material.
- 33. Focillon, "Éloge de la main", 184.

- 34. In the translation between *Geist, esprit*, and "mind," it is already evident that even within European modern languages, the equivalence of basic terms is difficult to establish. A fortiori, among Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Hebrew ...
- 35. Inaga, "Japanese Aesthetics", (to be translated into English).
- Didi-Huberman, *Images survivantes*, 385, note 302; 386, note 305, 469, note 566; Japanese translation, *Zanzon suru Imeji*, 2005 by Takeuchi Takahiro & Mizuno Chiyori, Tokyo, Jinbun-Shoin, 409, 502.
- 37. Didi-Huberman, Images survivantes, 385, 471, note 577; Japanese translation, 408, 505.
- 38. If a record is linear, discursive, stable, and horizontally extending and floating on the surface (as in a chronological table), a memory is audio-visual, unstable, constantly changing, and vertically diluting and making the sedimentation into the realm of subconscious. See Charles Péguy, « Clio, dialogue de l'histoire et de l'âme païenne », *Œuvre*, Tome III (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 1205–6. Françoise Gerbod, « Péguy, philosophe de l'histoire », *Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 1, n° 20 (2002): 9–34.
- 39. The Freudian idea of "free-floating attention (*gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*)" suggests the methodological difficulty G. Freud was facing in handling the free-floating associations of ideas and visions his patients were showing in sessions of analysis.
- 40. Izutsu, *The Structure of Oriental Philosophy*, 2: 179–80. The punctuation of the English original by Izutsu is slightly modified here, according to the current style sheet.
- 41. Okakura, The Book of Tea, 42-3.
- 42. Ibid., 45.
- 43. Ibid. On *kenosis*, see Gianni Vattio and Pier Aldfo Rovatti, eds., *Il Pensiero Debole* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1983).
- 44. Didi-Huberman, Images survivantes, 495; Japanese translation, 531.
- 45. Wakamatsu, *Izutsu Toshihiko*, 196. Quotes from Shûzô Kuki, « La notion du temps et la reprise sur le temps en Orient." It is possible that Kuki paraphrased this passage directly from Okakura's *Book of Tea*. The "ex-stase" that Sartre describes in *La Nausée* stems from this philological connection. Wakamatsu, *Izutsu Toshihiko*, 369. Taking part in the conversation in Pontiny in 1928, Kuki delivered another lecture, « L'Expression de l'infini dans l'art japonais ». The two texts were revised and published together under the title of *Propos sur le Temps* (Paris: Philippe Renouard, 1928).
- 46. Inaga, «La Naissance de la Médiance à l'état Embryonnaire ou l'origine de l'écoumène entre utérus et fœtus».
- 47. Inaga, "Fracturing the Translation."; and Cf. Wakamatsu, Izutsu Toshihiko, 225a.
- 48. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathstra*, Teil 4.20. See also Ôhashi, "Die Kultur des 'Windes'". For this passage, what counts is the German sound; English translations are easily available.
- 49. Inspired in Hong Kong on Dec. 12; second English draft, Dec. 27; third and fourth draft, December 28, 2011. I must thank Dennitza Gabrakova of City University of Hong Kong and Cheung Ching-yuen of Chinese University of Hong Kong for the inspiration, which came to me thanks to their invitation to the gathering Japanese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline, Dec. 11–12, 2011.

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