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TRANSCULTURAL AESTHETICS
AND CONTEMPORARY ART:
PURSUING UNITY TRADITIONS
AND THE INTENTIONS OF
ART PRACTITIONERS

BY

PAUL ALBERT TANCHIO

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Sydney College of the Arts
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

2014
The Flower of Life

This transcultural icon represents unified creation: a microcosm of the macrocosm.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

‘Transcultural aesthetics’, in Proceedings of the Pacific Rim Conference in Transcultural Aesthetics (1998), is a generic term used by comparative philosophers and aestheticians to denote a theoretical assessment of distinctive applied aesthetic concepts and experience of cultures. This thesis is concerned with transcultural art and transcultural aesthetics, and it uses the argument put forward by comparative philosopher and aesthetician Eliot Deutsch, in his On Truth: An Ontological Theory (1979), that its practitioners’ distinctive art forms, especially Anselm Kiefer, Imants Tillers, John Young, Gao Xingjian, Helmut Federle and Lee Ufan, all bear a consistent singular presentation of intentionality – crossing boundaries that are philosophical, material and aesthetic – one that draws its relationship of unity-in-diversity (an expression of unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation) to pure human experience. I will analyse these art forms creation with reference to key transcultural concepts such as ‘catharsis’ (cleansing), ‘kenosis’ (emptying) and ‘homeostasis’ (harmonising into equilibrium), as drawn from the Chinese, Indian and European aesthetics traditions (commonly known as unity traditions by Philosopher Karl Jaspers) and argue that transcultural aesthetics calls for critical theoretical reflexion on the hermeneutics of discourse and action, as well as on the ‘selves-as-agents’ hermeneutic: a cultivation of insight into one’s own approach to the one regulative ideal of inter-dialogue among multiple cultures. These three key concepts of transcultural aesthetics allow practitioners to regard a form of transcultural unity as the site of their final purpose and meaning in their art and practices. Finally, the actions of practitioners in their practices are not performed in a moment of impulse, but rather they stemmed from a concerted, unified motivation. Part One thus examines transcultural aesthetics’ use of mediation practices and unity traditions, Part Two discusses theoretical elements of transcultural art, and Part Three addresses the actions toward transcultural presentation in art practices, and specifically the motif of the action in their art forms.
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INTRODUCTION

Transcultural Aesthetics and Contemporary Art
INTRODUCTION

Transcultural aesthetics is a generic term used by comparative philosophers and aestheticians to denote a theoretical assessment of distinctive applied aesthetic concepts and experiences of cultures apart from one’s own. It has ideological implications since it opens up the prospect of understanding a work of art and the forms of art in the fullness of its own being but also in our experience of it.¹ In 1975 Eliot Deutsch wrote in his Studies in Comparative Aesthetics that ‘comparative aesthetics’ (now called ‘transcultural aesthetics’ and interchangeably ‘intercultural aesthetics’)² should be achieved not with the intention of relocating unusual ideas or the expectation (or even desire) that these reconstructions of other cultural ideas, ideals and preferences will have a comparable usage in one’s own culture, but through a possible philosophical understanding of the nature of art and aesthetic experience.³ He stresses the notion of unity and defines unity as primitive, in the Kantian sense, ‘a transcendentental condition for the possibility of identifying an object as a particular entity or process’.⁴ Now, in the twentieth-first century, the significant and growing body of literature on transcultural aesthetics reflects well the canonical place of this work and its relevance to contemporary art. It is therefore my intention to re-examine the intentionality behind aspects of contemporary art by pursuing it through transcultural

aesthetic judgement. As Deutsch puts it, ‘a work of art is true when and only when it attains authenticity through the presentation of its own intentionality’.  

This thesis considers transcultural aesthetics, specifically on the comparative study of aesthetics in contemporary art practice research, as its object of (1) practitioner’s aesthetic experience and (2) their motivation for actions. It is important because the gap of knowledge addressed by this thesis calls for critical response and interpretation, one that is left by art writers who have overlooked these two aspects of art practitioners’ considerations. A critical interpretation of transcultural aesthetics, I believe, seeks to contribute and sharpen our awareness of the interconnection between transcultural art forms and contemporary aesthetics context. The problems that I see in the recent writing on transcultural aesthetics and on the contemporary art tradition hence came from the critical limitations of certain current forms of postmodernism and transculturality that centred on the marginalisation of art making and its profound connections with aesthetic experience. During the 1980s, one of the major shifts from ethno-objects to socio-discourses in critical theoretical and art historical literatures has been to gesture the demise of the modernist enterprise and the exhaustion of modern aesthetics. Indeed, this move to repudiate and invalidate the legacy of contemporary art is better known as the ‘anti-aesthetic’ postmodernism championed by Hal Foster and Donald Kuspit. They seek to recover an aesthetic of universal human experience in the artists in which they select as ‘new Old Masters’ who maintain the authenticity of an older idea of the artists and their

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practices. Similarly, transcultural aesthetics is identifiable within the rhetoric of anti-aesthetics forms of postmodernism. It operates on the assumption that the transcultural aspect of contemporary art is at stalemate, and has now become passé – contemporary art and aesthetics are simply viewed as indicative of a more social and political determinations. Furthermore in recent decades, especially under the impact of positivism, which led philosophers to make a sharp division between cognitive meaning (empirically verifiable propositions) and emotive meaning (forms of imperatives that bear expressive value), ‘transcultural truth’ has become narrowly restricted to logical truth-value application, with art forms and usages of truth taken to be metaphorical of its meaning, thus ‘robbing the concept of some of its richest possible meaning’. These two aspects are therefore to be welcomed. In this thesis, I delineate an interpretation of these aesthetics and also examine their relationship to the concerns of contemporary art through the work of Anselm Kiefer, Imants Tillers, John Young, Gao Xingjian, Helmut Federle and Lee Ufan.

Transcultural intentionality in the artwork of Kiefer, Tillers, Young, Gao, Federle and Lee is readily allied to the demand for unity as ‘purity’ or ‘nonduality’ in contemporary aesthetics – the force of that art form that lights up the artworld in twentieth-first century art. Interestingly, nonduality (Advaita in Sanskrit) means ‘not two’ or ‘not-dual’, and it also denotes unity, oneness and a whole. The concept of nonduality refers to the idea that things appear distinct, while not being separate. There are many traditional discourses that put forward unity. Philosopher Karl Jaspers summarizes how this unity traditions advocates is a ‘unity of self-knowledge’ and in spirit are committed to the ‘production of historical unity’. It is also this commitment to unity of knowledge and historical unity that, I believe, explains why transcultural aesthetics has it been taken seriously in contemporary western critical discussions of art. These artists were also chosen because

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12 Ibid: 20 and 22.
their work and their stated intentions support the claim of this thesis that contemporary art practitioners practice-in-unity are within the areas of their emotional cleansing and emptying (katharsis and kenotic) processes. These artists demonstrate unity-in-diversity. In fact, it is through the philosophers of the Rig Veda, the Tao-Te Ching or the Poetics who are instrumental in formalising unity or purity as a decisive theme in transcultural aesthetics, and it is these philosophers who are decisive in developing a theorisation of transcultural aesthetics that is crucial to contemporary aesthetics and the accounts it provides of human experience. The development of transcultural aesthetics after Eliot Deutsch thus provides the key framework for my account of the aesthetic concerns of transcultural art forms in this thesis. In order to explicate these concerns I draw especially on the reframing of aesthetics after Deutsch undertaken in the works of Grazia Marchianò, Wilfried van Damme and Robert Wilkinson. These sources are important to me especially for the manner in which they develop the framework of Deutsch’s approach of transcultural aesthetics in response to the conditions of our current, challenging relation to contemporary art forms and postmodernity. They are particularly significant for their sustained attention to certain relevant aspects of contemporary aesthetics that I take to be vital to an understanding of ‘the transculturality of contemporary aesthetics’ and ‘the intentions of contemporary art practitioners’, and the demands that contemporary art practitioners also deal with in their art forms. It is these aspects of their work that I considerably draw on in my analysis of transcultural art forms and I hope that my application of these sources aids the interpretation of transcultural art forms that I develop in the following chapters in ‘Part II’, where my interaction with the literature on these elements focuses essentially on more recent writings, especially in the context of contemporary art practitioners.

1. The enquires posed

The first enquiry

In order to ascertain the overall transcultural intentions of contemporary art practitioners, the emphasis has to be confined with the attendant problem of how to avoid any misrepresentations issued by the necessity of a much tighter focus. Hence working on the premise that it is reasonable to suppose that contemporary practitioners’ transcultural intentions in their most recent art forms are in continuity with their transcultural intentions in their practices prior to final presentation, I propose to study the former set of intentions.

‘Conventional pictorial representation is iterable’, wrote Paul Crowther in his The Language of Twentieth-Century Art (1997) that ‘one can recognise what basic kind of item or set of relations is being depicted, without recourse to iconographic or empirical evidence’. Hence, according to Crowther, how a scholar is to present transcultural art practices depends very much on one’s own understandings of why practitioners considered their artwork completed, meaningful, or why some made their recent installations at the art spaces. The first enquiry thus posed in my study is:

‘What transcultural intentions did contemporary art practitioners have when they made their art forms as the site of creation, negotiation and interaction?’

As John Dewey in Art as Experience (1934) noted, an art form is ‘object in esthetic experience’, and not simply the provocation to such an experience. It may be that they had no actual or hypothetical intentions whatsoever and that they were merely overtaken by events. However, in order to verify if this is the case, it has to be examined. If they had intentions, the results of such a theoretical enquiry would be significant for transcultural aesthetics and historical contemporary art practitioner research. Hence in this relation, the significant actions of art practitioners during this period would be of importance in the

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discovery of these possible transcultural intentions.\textsuperscript{16} This presentation of intentionality that I take to be the recurrent feature of transcultural art forms could be seen to prefigure the adoption of intentionality as the leitmotif of postmodernist discourse on art. I argue, however, that transcultural intentionality remains contemporaneous. This intentionality remains connected to the comparative unity traditions because they do not strictly refer to anything outside the work itself; it remains strictly associated with art and aesthetic of art forms. It is the very ‘purity’ of these transcultural intentions, the very unity of the art form that they represent, which indicates their starting point. It is in these aspects that we might contemplate of statements made by Lee Ufan in 1999:

Rather than a completed, autonomous text, I prefer a mediator, which stimulates the encounter between the internal and external worlds and ensures a good circulation between them. A work of art can neither become an idea as such nor reality as such. It exists in the interval between idea and reality, an ambivalent thing that is penetrated by and influences both.

I have chosen the second path, the path of encounter between inner and outer. What is important in this kind of art is to limit the parts of the work I make, accept the parts I do not make, and create a dynamic relationship in which these aspects both interpenetrate or repel each other. I hope that this relationship will lead to the opening up of a poetic, critical, and transcendent space.\textsuperscript{17}

Not only does this mediation practice (mediator-praxis) art form seem to refer to nothing in particular other than its very art form, but also, because it does no more than this, it becomes a gestural marking – the encounter of the singular and the purity of aesthetic experience in broad stroke. The ‘purity’ or unity of the art form, in this sense, is its starting point. This point could be made about any one of the unity traditions art forms for which


contemporary art practitioners have become known. It is a point that is central to their transcultural aesthetics. A detailed study that then explores an explanatory hypothesis of contemporary practitioners’ transcultural intentions in their artworks is by taking into account the significant actions performed in their art forms, which has yet to be undertaken. Nor has there been a quest for expressing a unifying hypothesis to explicate these actions. This study will attempt to penetrate and address these concerns.

The second enquiry

The term ‘art form’ (“basho” or “topos”) recalls the rich stream of consciousness traditions that developed in the premodern through the postmodern periods, which is often attributed to analogous hermeneutics in intercultural scholarship for the unity traditions. These traditions have ingrained in the minds of the art practitioners the concept that unity is the transcultural manifest art form or the modus operandi that ‘goodness’ (“jen”) will embody and enrich. Hence, over the centuries in the political, religious and cultural ferment, the expressive art forms inevitably became involved and implicated. Unity traditions are thus communities who use unity and aesthetic-universals in their practices, where unique art forms are applied as a focus and symbol of their transcultural thought. What then is the relationship between contemporary practitioners’ conception of their transcultural aesthetics and these important traditions (the significance of which I hope to demonstrate in chapter three)? Did the latter influence the former? This key theoretical enquiry has yet to be

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18 Hereafter, the phrase ‘contemporary art practitioners’ intentions in art form’ (and other similar phrases) will be a shorthand way of referring to their transcultural intentions during their most recent times in their artwork. It does not presuppose that the transcultural art practitioners only present their latest works in their whole public practice, nor does it suppose that the meta-narrative presence of their aesthetic practices are chronologically arranged and accurate.

19 I shall give a proper definition of what I understand by the term ‘unity traditions’ in chapter 3. However, for an instance of how religio-philosophical or intercultural scholars define the unity traditions see R.A. Mall, Intercultural Philosophy, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (2000): 28 (see chapter 3 and chapter 5). For a recent and succinct exposition of these traditions, see also C.J. Thornhill, ‘Jaspers’ Philosophy: the basic terms’ in Karl Jaspers: Politics and Metaphysics (2002): 16-30.

examined even with the resurgence of interest in the transculturality of the twentieth first century art practitioners. Hence the second enquiry posed is:

‘Did contemporary art practitioners appropriate the unity traditions for their transcultural art forms and aesthetics?’

The two enquiries posed are interrelated, for it is legitimate to ask whether or not the intentions of contemporary art practitioners of twentieth-first century (and their significant actions) in their transcultural art forms were informed by the unity traditions. The conjoining of these two enquiries thus implies my prior commitment to investigate their relatedness. And this relatedness forms the unifying hypothesis that I hope to verify in the course of my study.

2. Method and contours of study

Overview of approach

My study will therefore apply a broad based approach. First, I shall develop the conception of transcultural aesthetics by sketching a brief survey of comparative aesthetics scholarship and its hermeneutical implications, and then demonstrate the importance of the unity traditions to the contemporary art practitioners in the remainder of Part I (Chapters 1 to 3) of the thesis. The next two parts (II and III) are committed to a study of contemporary art practitioners’ discourses that may shed light on their transcultural intentions in art forms and their aesthetic attitude towards the unity traditions, including their actions in the art forms respectively.

In Eugenio Benitez’s essay ‘Kant, Pessoa, Plato: Three Approaches to Transculturality’, he urges one should not reconstruct the transcultural intentions of contemporary art practitioners strictly out of their discourse’s tradition.\(^\text{21}\) It has been indicated by Lester

\[^{21}\text{E. Benitez, ‘Kant, Pessoa, Plato: Three Approaches to Transculturality’ in Frontiers (2001): 35.}\]
Embree, in *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics* (2010), that the methodological uncertainty over ascertaining the philosophical dictums makes them too flimsy a foundation on which to build.\(^2\) Hence, there is a need to broaden the study with an exploratory investigation into the actions and the phenomenological expressions of contemporary art practitioners. But it has also been observed that exploring the meaning of actions without recourse to dictums may lead to fanciful speculations, as actions by themselves are often not explicitly transparent.\(^3\) However, it is admitted that, in principle, the authenticity of an action may be easier to ascertain than is that of an artist's statement. Nevertheless, both actions and discourses are to be given due weight so that my reconstruction of the transcultural aims of art practitioners may be founded relatively secure.

One theoretical insight derived from philosophical critique is that the passages of the discourse and statements may not always have been structured in representational or chronological order and that even their descriptive, analytic, reflective, intuitive or chronological frameworks may have been overlooked or edited over time by either philosophical historians or aestheticians.\(^4\) In order to circumvent this problem, I propose to examine the text relevant to the study without any attempt to situate them chronologically or geographically. Given the constraint on space, I shall focus on only a few key discourses and not attempt to analyse every discourse that might be relevant (Chapters 4 to 6). I hope to draw these dictums from diverse streams of consciousness traditions (of the Indian, Chinese, Japanese, European, African, and other ethno-aesthetics). As for the actions and expressions, they could be much more easily situated chronologically and geographically by virtue of their very nature.

The approach adopted for Part III (Chapters 7 to 9) of my study is thus relatively straightforward. I shall try to show that the actions selected for investigation (the processional gesture, transitory actions and recessional act) did occur during art practices

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\(^3\) Ibid: 217-8.
\(^4\) Ibid: 216. To Embree, the descriptive expressions are ‘individual actualities or facts’.
and in their manifest art forms. Whenever a discourse is purportedly attached to a certain action or events, I shall ascertain whether the two were originally interrelated.

Criterion of reciprocity

Human experience is based on reciprocal relations, and it is in art or art forms that best express this organisational function in the fullest sense. The criterion of reciprocity considers that the world is mind-neutral as long as it consists of a spatio-temporal sphere of casually related finite objects. It also considers that this site is organised on the premise of the body’s sensory and motor functions operating reciprocity as a unified field.

Arguably, intrinsic to research on transcultural aesthetics is the important matter of establishing the principle for ascertaining whether or not a certain discourse or action is reciprocal. With this principle, critical scholars consider a field of reciprocating traditions of art practitioners on which to work and apply them as a basis for ascertaining other traditions, and for understanding the key moments of twentieth-first century that may be reciprocal. This approach thus bears all transcultural thinking-processes that implicate historically specific acts of interpretation, where universal elements are demonstrated through the reciprocity of the body and the world.25

Hence I am not committed to any particular criterion but shall apply those as appropriate and recognise, concurrently, their limitations. The particular material under consideration will prompt the appropriate tool. As the enquiry of reciprocity is a very critical issue in historical contemporary art practitioner research, much attention will be devoted to it in the study.

With these points in mind, I turn to Part I of my study.

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PART I

Historical explications
Aesthetics is not simply something to be known and perceived; aesthetics is something lived and experienced by a particular culture and society. Contrary to some models of comparative aesthetics that focus primarily on the intercultural and phenomenological (cognitive and rational) aspects of aesthetical knowledge, my study sees it in terms of the whole person knowledge. Human beings are participants and observers, appreciators as well as practitioners, and all of these aspects are critical artistic considerations for aesthetical knowledge and consciousness. Kitarō Nishida, in his 1970 essay ‘Towards a Philosophy of Religions with the Concept of Pre-established Harmony as Guide’, observed that the self (consciousness) is born in an act where the self affirms itself either as an expressive activity or in a counter-activity, which poses itself externally. A simple action by a single thing does not exist; the self becomes the other by negating itself. Indeed, I too regard critical, analytical thinking process as essential, particularly for the sort of thinking that is not pure, non-subjective, and solidly of human consciousness. Karl Jaspers, in his The Great
Philosopher (1962), also pointed out that the knowledge of being remains essential in the knowledge of man: the two are distinct but interconnected.\(^4\)

Transcultural aesthetics demands a very specific understanding of the nature of consciousness. It demands that the theoreticians hold the art practitioners accountable to the ultimate reality in history and, in turn, the art practitioners also hold the theoreticians accountable to the ultimate reality in humanity. Edmund Husserl reminds us that the contemporary reality experienced through our intentionality and presence in consciousness is what makes aesthetics a living synthesis.\(^5\) As the presence in space and time, reality presents ‘being-in-itself’ to our intuition as its living dynamic object. This has the effect of transcendence within a genuinely immanent ‘reelle Immanente’ transcultural aesthetic, a way of thinking that is at once a way of practice or living. It cannot be abstracted purely from the essence of art in the inner recesses of human experience and must therefore affect humanity transculturally in their everyday life and activity.\(^6\)

The task of practical transcultural aesthetics is thus not simply to reiterate dislocated transcultural aesthetics realities or quests but to explore aesthetical understandings in the context of contemporary aesthetic experience, so that the practitioners’ or observers’ meaning and expression within their artistic moment and movement can be assessed and developed.\(^7\) Aesthetic reality is often seen to be both emergent and dialectical, having to be shaped out from within the continuing dialogue between the unity traditions and the historical existence of the contemporary transcultural artworld.\(^8\) The following discussion in this chapter will trace, in broad strokes, the development of comparative aesthetics with


\(^{7}\) In the tradition of Noël Carroll’s ‘Beauty and the Genealogy of Art Theory’ [1991] in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2001), the practical or commonsensical conception of aesthetic experience with its hermeneutical implication is considered the most crucial element in the identification of art forms.

respect to an interpretive study of its transcultural intentionality (§1) before examining Eliot Deutsch’s studies in transcultural aesthetics (§2). Upon exploring the ‘four strata’ comparative studies further, I then take up once again the notion of analogous nature of transcultural aesthetics and its application, which has been repeatedly discussed in some transcultural conferences (§3 and §4). Finally, I offer some remarks by way of conclusion.

1. Transcultural aesthetics and defining its movement

History of world art discourse and comparative aesthetics

In comparative aesthetics (now commonly known as transcultural aesthetics) or world art studies, it was Max Dessoir (1867–1947) who first developed the practical field of transcultural aesthetics. Being instrumental in the formation of a ground-breaking journal, Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft (Journal for Aesthetics and General Theory of Art, in 1906 and 1908), Dessoir also founded the Society for the Study of Aesthetics which held its first world congress of aesthetics in Berlin. In this period between 1890 and 1933, comparative aesthetics first took the form of a ‘theory of art’ on a global scale, which in a recent survey conducted by Halbertsma and Pfister, observed that since then has been an increased openness to world art both past and present. The first comparative aesthetics theoretician in an empirical-methodical sense was Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), who was also the first Indian exegetical scholar. Coomaraswamy, in his The Aims of Indian Art (1908), defined the comparative study of Eastern and Western aesthetics as the theory of the art practitioner with ‘a deeper national life, a wider culture, and a profounder

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love’. This developed into a shift toward the social sciences and onto the second major emphasis in practical comparative aesthetics as a theory of a ‘particular convention’ and a ‘product of particular conditions’ in which an art practitioner functions.

Following Dessoir and Coomaraswamy, August Schmarsow (1853–1936) embarked on studies in systematising the meaning of Völkerpsychologie (folk-psychology) and anthropology as a unity of knowledge and action for a new Kunstwissenschaft in 1907. Amid the development of Darwinian evolutionist theory, Schmarsow made a distinction between theoretical comparative ethnological method, which develops from the perspective of the possibility of a matrix between the overarching ethno-historical and socio-anthropological hypotheses of Ernst Grosse (1862–1927), and the collective action. It is a comparative aesthetics based on the reality of relationships. Consequently, the theory-praxis relational method became the object of aesthetic reflexion, where comparative aesthetics first received its own independent status in 1933. The focus for such innovation however had to be practised in the local context. Herta Haselberger identifies this third development of the new anthropologist-psychological art research as a form of ethnology.

Drawing on an emphasis in the progress of internationalism in aesthetics, a practical model of comparative aesthetics was developed in the early twentieth century, along the

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11 A.K. Commaraswamy, ‘The Aims of Indian Art’ in Studies in Comparative Religion, Vol. 9 (1), (Winter, 1975): [5*] not paginated; this essay, in a limited edition, was first published in 1908 by the Essex House Press. See also Commaraswamy's The Transformation of Nature of Art, Boston: Boston University Press (1934), where he further developed counterpoints between eastern and western perspectives for a general theory of art.


15 H. Haselberger noted in his Kunstethnologie: Grundbegriffe, Methoden, Darstellung (1969) that there is a subset of ‘anthropology of art’ established within the discipline of anthropology in Germany shortly after the second World War in the 1930s, and ‘Method of Studying Ethnological Art’ in Current Anthropology Vol. 2 (4), (Oct, 1961): 341-84. Cf. Alfred Vierkandt’s 1924 assessment of competing theories and problems in the new art research at the second Kongress für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft held in Berlin, and E. Vatter’s 1926 analysis for the hope and intentions for Kunstwissenschaft in Religioesse Plastik der Naturvoelker.
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16 Emil Utitz addresses, at the third Venice Congress in 1956, how art and aesthetic experience are all aspects of a culture, and that it cannot not be studied apart from culture, for ‘Aesthetics pursued solely as the adjunct of a philosophical system is an etiolated ghost’; see ‘The Problems of Congresses on Aesthetics’ in Atti del III Congresso Internazionale di Estetica, Turin, Rome: Edizione della Rivista di Estetica (1957): 11-12.


20 Among the key conferences in the eighties onwards, the following should be mentioned: the 9th International Congress (1980); the Congress at Montreal (1984); LoRo, Il loto e la rosa at Pisa, Rome (1993); Pacific Rim Conference in Transcultural Aesthetics at Sydney (1997); Intercontinental Conference at Bologna (2000); 15th International Congress of Aesthetics at Tôkyô (2001); 2nd Pacific Rim Conference at Sydney (2004); Conference in Self and Subject: African and Asian Perspectives at Edinburgh (2005); the Art Seminar Roundtable in Chicago (2006); and the World Art Studies in Leiden and East Anglia (2006).
structuralism and post-structuralism, focusing on political ideologies, commodification, sexuality and post-colonialism.\textsuperscript{21} Eliot Deutsch says in his \textit{Studies in Comparative Aesthetics} (1975) that comparative aesthetics is ‘the analysis, interpretation, reconstruction, and evaluation of the distinctive aesthetic concepts and experience of cultures, other than one’s own’.\textsuperscript{22} More specifically, he defines transcultural aesthetics as a comparative theory of action that is a freedom to probe more deeply into the potential universality of art and aesthetics, and at once an appreciation that exemplify their plurality.

Furthermore, Deutsch also differentiates between the praxis of transcultural mediation of the art practitioner (praxis A; that is the sphere where the elements of the artwork reveal pure aesthetic value) and the praxis of impersonality (sādhāranikarana) or trans-personality of aesthetic content and contemporary society (praxis B; the sphere where the hermeneutical insight is interacted).\textsuperscript{23} Deutsch describes ‘impersonality’ as “a universal, inter-personal transcendent quality” that is shared through aesthetic experience, because of its aesthetic interest.\textsuperscript{24} The praxis of mediation or interpreting artworks has therefore to do with the objective aesthetic content: the essence of the art practitioner’s aesthetics. This form of praxis has to do with how human expression communicates its unique content of aesthetic intention and actions as a manifest art form. This artistic tradition is one distinctive form of expression (where the essential element of the art form and the essential structures of meaning in the art form cohere). Comparative aesthetics, in this sense, is thus a theoretical enquiry sub-discipline – having its place within contemporary aesthetics as a whole.

\textbf{Dialogical action in ‘impersonality’ of the art practitioner}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid: ix-xi and 5.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid: 5.
\end{itemize}
The praxis of impersonality (praxis B) has to do with the *topos* of action where people, motivated by their personal ideals and driven by varying concerns, make specific intentions and pursue specific aesthetics experiences. This occurs, according to Deutsch, in people’s everyday life – their mutual relationships and in their associations with different groups, and including the sites where people interact and negotiate.\(^\text{25}\) Praxis A and praxis B, while differentiated in theory, can never be completely separated, for ‘the practice of transcultural aesthetics does not have the self, but rather the collective impersonality, as its horizon’.\(^\text{26}\)

As a comparative theory of action in the perspective of Deutsch, comparative aesthetics draws heavily on the paradigm of the social sciences rather than the humanities for its method. From Hans-Georg Gadamer, Deutsch applies the paradigm of dialogic action with its own present that directs the critical perspective.\(^\text{27}\) In the thought of Paul Ricœur, Deutsch’s approach also finds a model of interpretation that connects the hermeneutical perspective of the human science with the empirical perspective of the social sciences.\(^\text{28}\) In his way, Deutsch successfully demonstrates how comparative aesthetics can mediate the liminal time and space between understanding and explication. Comparative/transcultural aesthetics, therefore, is more than stark practice; it is a gathering of strategic perspective that connects the hermeneutical with the empirical phenomena so as to achieve an integrative, intercultural model that underlies the theoretical enquiry as a whole.\(^\text{29}\)


\(^{26}\) Ibid.


\(^{28}\) Human science (also moral science and human sciences) is a term applied to the study of human life and activities by a rational, systematic and verifiable methodology which acknowledges the validity of both data derived by impartial observation of sensory experience and data derived by means of impartial observation of psychological experience; it includes fields of study within the social sciences and humanities (history, sociology, anthropology and economics). See P. Ricœur, ‘Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics’ on Metaphor in *New Literary History*, Vol. 6 (1), (Autum, 1974): 95-110. Ricœur noted that there is no absolute alienation and that there is always a possibility of translation, in which one can understand without repeating, imagine without experiencing, and transform oneself into ‘the other’ and yet remain ‘the self’ one is. Cf. *Geschichte und Wahrheit* (1974), 290-91. Indeed, Jürgen Habermas is intercultural and rightly critical of Gadamer’s hermeneutics and its universalistic claim for Ricœur’s model of interpretation.

Transcultural aesthetics, as Wilfried van Damme says, ‘deals solely with questions, however important, on the appreciation and interpretation of artistic or aesthetic phenomena across cultural boundaries in time and space. [It] encompasses the – comparative – study of the various cultures’ ways of thinking about the arts and their qualities. I therefore suggested that, by analogy with the emerging sister disciplines of world philosophy and world art studies, we refer to the idea of transcultural aesthetics as world aesthetics. [The term] communicates the idea of panhuman and pancultural perspective on the study of aesthetic phenomena’.  

Marchianò adopts a similar understanding of the nature of practical transcultural aesthetics but adds an important dimension. For Marchianò, transcultural aesthetics is ‘to be in love with the understanding and knowing … the embrace of nature [that] is not just a momentary oxygenating event but an occasion for the philosophic mind to grasp … the “fullness of nature”, and to realise to what extent aesthetic experience is involved in that powerful intuition’.

At its core, transcultural aesthetics is a critical reflexion on the actions of the art practitioners in the context of the expression of art forms and their respective traditions. It is mediator-praxis in nature. Deutsch simply defines aesthetics as a ‘theoretical effort to comprehend the nature of the creative process, the art-object and our experience of it’.

2. Deutsch’s studies in transcultural aesthetics

In what has become a significant method in the field of transcultural aesthetics, Deutsch offers a compelling and critical approach that is developed from what he calls the ‘four strata of meaning’ in his Studies in Comparative Aesthetics. Deutsch applies ‘this classification

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32 Ibid. Deutsch’s definition of ‘aesthetics’ cited in Marchianò’s essay.
to one’s experience of works of art from traditions very different from one’s own, with the understanding … that it works in both directions – West to East, and East to West, or to whatever geographical directions would be appropriate’.\footnote{E. Deutsch, ‘Interpreting Artworks’ in Frontiers (2001): 167.} His approach is worth exploring as an attempt to integrate aesthetics (theory and practice) in an ongoing process of action and reflexion. The concept of the ‘four strata of meaning’, for Deutsch, locates the theoretical task at the core of the social context, where theoretical aestheticians stand alongside the art practitioners mediating the art form from its centre. This mediation sets in motion action-reflexion, prompted by critical incidents that probe how the art form of an art practitioner responds to enquiries such as: ‘what (element) shall we express?’ and ‘how should we interpret and embody it?’ Transcultural aesthetics thus manoeuvres from this centre toward the outer sphere to include interpretative concepts, experimental investigations, historical consciousness, and communities of sense and memory. In **FIGURE 1**, I illustrate diagrammatically the components of the ‘four strata of meaning’.

![Diagram of the four strata of meaning](image)

**FIGURE 1** should be read from the middle centrifugally, toward the ‘four strata of meaning’. At the centre lies the *inner sphere*, where experience raises the questions ‘what (element) shall we express?’ and ‘how then should we embody and interpret?’ which is more than a

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Eliot DEUTSCH:
*Four strata of meaning:
Studies in Comparative Aesthetics 1975*

Deutsch’s approach of transcultural aesthetics

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The inner sphere: experience
matter of applying political sphere, but this opens up a profoundly intercultural issue: what is the relationship between the work of art practitioners and catharsis within the discourse of mediation in the unity discourses?

Reflecting on these theoretical enquiries I was impelled to move centrifugally to what Deutsch considers the *outer sphere* where hermeneutical insight is interacted. I anticipated help through the larger context of historical consciousness, the communities of sense and memory, as well as the experimental probes. Deutsch describes the outer sphere in this way: ‘a mode of attention that is throughout interpretative in character’.\(^3^4\) This is what systematic aesthetics failed to engage and resolve because it had become imbedded in the politics of the dominant culture and practice, so much so that its rules and regulations imposed themselves on the situation. Here, both the artist’s vision and his work that are created and presented as one in the cultural-authorial worldview had also become identical with interpretative paradigms and the historical consciousness of the unity tradition.

The epitaph of Yu in Gao Xingjian’s *Soul Mountain* (1990)\(^3^5\) reminded us that in our closed theoretical enquiry tradition, dominant history was considered to be authorial history (where such as one being the ‘innocent recipient’ of the pronouncement, such is an interpretative paradigm). However, if we considered the dominant history to be somewhat similar to the authorial history, then we might consider that the art practitioner not only created the dominant history as one that had authority but that the art practitioner was also a creator of authorial history. This process is what Deutsch called the ‘beholder’s appropriation’.\(^3^6\) Deutsch puts it this way: ‘By its very nature, art calls out to be understood for what – in the language of hermeneutics – it is “saying”. “The work of art that says something”, Gadamer notes, “confronts us itself. That is, it expresses something in such a way that what is said is like a discovery, a disclosure of something previously concealed”.

\(^{3^4}\) Ibid: 166.


Following Martin Heidegger, philosophical hermeneutics finds the meaning of an artwork to be located in the “world” that it opens-up for the beholder’s appropriation.³⁷

The outer sphere: hermeneutical insight

The term philosophical hermeneutics may be applied to the method Deutsch uses in his *Studies in Comparative Aesthetics* for interpreting the Indian theory of *rasa* in order to show their central importance within a major aesthetic tradition. Similar to the traditional Japanese theory of *yūgen* that operates less explicitly within classical Chinese landscape painting, it addresses the context of issues such as the problem of achieving a fully aesthetic experience of art (as opposed to historical or iconographic aesthetic) from another culture. There is a critical context in each situation that demands action as well as aesthetical reflexion; hence, this can be considered as the inner sphere in Deutsch’s approach.

Deutsch says, ‘the creative act as such takes place when the physical-mental śakti of the artist becomes concentrated, integrated and fused with that which is to be represented and expressed; when, that is to say, the artist’s śakti reaches that spiritual intensity form which it naturally seeks expression. The creative act is to be understood, then, in the Indian context, as a natural extension of a spiritual process and not as a fortuitous happening. … Śakti is thus brought to a creative intensification through the artist’s meditation and concentration (*dhyāna*) on the image’.³⁸

For Deutsch, transcultural aesthetics must be connected with this inner sphere of human experience. Any theoretical enquiry that cannot respond to the questions ‘what element should we express?’ and ‘how then should we embody and interpret?’ operates only within the boundaries of the outer sphere. Deutsch affirms this intentionality as:

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³⁷ Ibid.
³⁸ Ibid: 165.
The intentionality of a thing gives rise to the conditions under which its own authenticity is discerned. We grasp intentionality, not by any mysterious peering into the inside of a thing, but rather by our noticing its ‘direction,’ by our recognising its possible fulfilment as the thing it presents itself as being. The intentionality of an artwork is discerned in terms of our noticing, with whatever content is available to us, that the artwork is an artwork and is the artwork that it has sought to become. The intentionality of an utterance is determined in terms of our perceiving way within its own mode of functioning. … The truth of a thing calls for realising its own rightness through the articulation of its intentionality.\(^3^9\)

Simultaneously, it is precisely when transcultural aesthetics engages the outer sphere in its action-reflexion process that it becomes a living and vital synthesis of the art practitioners and their intentions in the art forms. Deutsch presents five aspects where transformation can occur through transcultural aesthetics ‘face to face’: (1) by way of vision: we look in the mirror and we see ourselves, (2) by way of obligation: we look outwardly in public spaces and we see others, (3) by way of tendency-need: we see ourselves and others as a worker, a teacher, a doctor, a husband, a wife, male and female, (4) by way of environmental-social status: we see ourselves by way of family, place of birth, social standing, and (5) by way of rules and roles: we see in ourselves what we really want ourselves to be, or ought to be.\(^4^0\)

Objections and reservations have been expressed concerning Deutsch’s proposal. While some feel that Deutsch tends to subsume transcultural aesthetics under ethics, others argue that transcultural aesthetics greatest concern is for the discovery of essence, virtues and aesthetic qualities, with ethics being but one aspect of the tasks at its centre and radiate out. Deutsch’s approach does sufficiently and implicitly include a communion to be established with others in all artmaking and aesthetic experiences: it is a community with appropriately ‘subversive’ elements that is involved in face-to-face engagements with moral concerns.\(^4^1\)


\(^{41}\) Ibid: 11.
3. The analogous nature of transcultural aesthetics

While affirming Deutsch’s approach as one that enable transcultural aesthetics to be assessed and appreciated within the framework of postmodern thought, I suggest that the inner sphere’s phenomenological aesthetics of experience should include the intercultural unity elements at its foundation. This indicates that the aesthetic truth of the tradition and the aesthetic truth in the tradition are two different things altogether. This analogous hermeneutics is a way of knowing the overarching structures among cultures, philosophies, and religions with mutual moral commitment. Its perspective also demonstrates elemental similarities and illuminating differences in the sensus communis perspective, which releases us from our tendency to define truth as concomitant with one particular tradition. For Deutsch, hermeneutical insights belong to the outer sphere as part of the community of sense and memory, with its historical consciousness expressed as creed and dialectics.

As a discipline, transcultural aesthetics has a dual focus: art practitioner and impersonality, set forth in that order. Impersonality precedes and creates the artworld. Impersonality is the praxis of art through the intentional power and presence of artistic intuition. As a result of this impersonality, the transcultural artworld also forms as one of the ensigns of the unity message in the world.

The impersonality focus of transcultural aesthetics

Like Deutsch, Marchianò emphasises the vital reflexion and constructive dimensions of transcultural aesthetics from a centripetal orientation, but she also makes the important observation that the practice of art practitioners or art communities relationship to

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43 Here Deutsch avoids the mistakes of the traditional, definitional model of the essentialists and the Wittgensteinian family resemblance model, which embrace the identity thesis by making no room for diversities (i.e. reject radical relativism that heavily depends on a radical difference) among cultures. Cf. R. Harré and M. Krausz, Varieties of Relativism, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1996).
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wholeness ‘cannot be affected by disparities intrinsic in human perspectives, contrastive judgements and multiple beliefs’, and by implication the task of transcultural aesthetics, occurs within the overall context of the art practitioner's participation in the recurring impersonality of art to the world. In this sense, transcultural aesthetics is inextricably connected with the outer sphere of impersonality. Gérard Genette, in *The Aesthetic Relation* (1999), is particularly helpful on this point:

> [The] fact that the meaning or value of an object varies with the source to which it is ascribed – is by no means confined to works of art alone: the meaning of the least little thing we do or say depends, to some extent, on who does or says it and the situation (historical, social, sexual, legal, etc.) he finds himself in. What is uniquely characteristic of works of art is their intentional aesthetic function, that is, their artistic function. To put it in more subjective terms, what endows an object with the status of an artwork in the eyes of its receiver is the impression, warranted or not, that it proceeds from an intention that was at least in part aesthetic.

This outer sphere is crucial for transcultural aesthetics. It is the ongoing centrifugal interaction of art in the world and to the world that provides the aims and the goals, tests the methods, and adds the energy and vision that guides the task of transcultural aesthetics. While focusing on the praxis of the art practitioner, Marchianò, in highlighting the centripetal aspects of transcultural aesthetics, emphasises the significance of balancing this with an understanding of the praxis of the art practitioner as purposeful praxis in the world, fundamentally aimed at serving art’s continuing affective quality to the world. As Ben-Ami Scharfstein puts it, ‘[The] effect of a work of art depends on the culture, place, and time to which the works belongs. Inevitably, the work draws on and enriches the collective memory and mode of life of the people among whom it is created’.

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Thus transcultural aesthetics, while remaining an art practitioner’s discipline in the sense that its essential focus is on the praxis of the art practitioner, is also a discipline fundamentally for the world and that the subject of art’s expressive quality is to inspire. To examine and reflect on the praxis of the art practitioner, it must be understood as a task that occurs both in the world and for the larger world. As Lee Ufan observes:

My approach is to form this kind of open relationship, which becomes a proposal for a new starting point of painting and sculpture that transcends an age of deconstruction and reinterpretation. … It is human nature to live by dreams of transcendence. Therefore, it should be hoped that artistic expression would lead to reflection and leaps of imagination. Just as humans are physical beings, points of contact between internal and external worlds, works of art must be living intermediaries that mediate between and exalt the self and the other. 47

The focus of transcultural aesthetics is not simply the internal workings of the art practitioners or artworld (although it includes them), but the praxis of the art practitioner of unity traditions interacting with the praxis of the world. As such, there is a critical and peripatetic aspect to transcultural aesthetics’ reflexive activity, the limits of which are demarcated by the frontiers of art’s continuing affective quality and relation.

The art practitioner focus of transcultural aesthetics

This approach of transcultural aesthetics calls the practice, the practitioners, and the artworld back to its origins as a fundamental impersonality-community, with a particular vision and a specific task to perform in the artworld. One of the essential tasks of the transcultural theoretician is to ensure that the practitioner or artworld is challenged and equipped to achieve this task competently.

Marchianò suggests that transcultural aesthetics:

[BUILD] up a unified theory of aesthetic feeling, a feeling which in so far as it is aesthetic is trans-ethnic, trans-religious and trans-cultural: just human, in the same way as the heart is just human. … on the question of identity: whether apart from cultural distances and conditionings there is something that renders each one of us into a being linked to the origins, that is an aboriginal being, and if this something that we all share may not be our possessing a heart. Ancient Taoist sages said: the earth is man’s home, the cosmos is the earth’s home and the human heart is the crucible where the energies of heaven and earth meet and ferment as if in a veritable alchemic crucible. We may all agree that artistic alchemies have no other birthplace than the inner crucible where heaven and earth meet. 48

Transcultural aesthetics, for Marchianò, revolves around her concept of practitioner-praxis, which she describes as the specific ways in which the art practitioner attempts to work in tandem with art and to remain engaged in art and art’s quantity to inspire. Marchianò sees transcultural aesthetics as existing at the critical interface between the art practitioner or comparativist and the world:

[The] comparativist is faced with a number of hermeneutic or interpretative problems … and the comparativist is faced with the task of appropriating what one learns from another culture and tradition in such a way as to allow it at once to deepen one’s understanding of human aesthetic experience and extend the ways in which that experience can be enriched and made intelligible. 49

In Marchianò approach, theory and practice are both drawn together in her understanding of transcultural aesthetics as a type of practical wisdom, a sort of knowing that guides being and doing. It is:


A trans-disciplinary and cross-cultural approach to aesthetics seen as a sort of theoretically empty space ready to receive and elaborate issues where the ‘how’ – rather than the ‘what’ – of aesthetic experience is critically explored … This process of emptying aesthetic theory of its Western-rooted, rigidly structured dialectical paradigms is equivalent to a retrieval of perennial human values such as memory, beauty, gentleness and respect, which it is the job of a re-shaped philosophy of beauty-and-goodness combined to instil, or rather re-instil in the new generations of a world community.\textsuperscript{50}

Thus theory and practice are interconnected and united within this form of practical knowledge that plays out within the praxis of the art practitioners.

4. The four strata interpretation of transcultural intentionality

In the history of scholarship on both transcultural aesthetics and contemporary art practitioners, different answers have been given to my first enquiry ‘what transcultural intentions did contemporary art practitioner have when they made their expressive art forms as the site of creation, negotiation and interaction?’ but often only in a brief manner.\textsuperscript{51} A connection between the three significant actions of contemporary art practitioners in their art forms (the processional gesture, the transitory actions, and the recessional act) has also rarely been sought. The second enquiry posed (that is, ‘did the art practitioner appropriate the unity tradition for their aesthetics?’) is thus largely ignored. It is the concern of this section, then, to furnish a brief account of such scholarship. There are basically four lines of interpretation (after Deutsch’s four strata of meaning) for assessing the transcultural intentions of art practitioners in their art forms: (1) Art practitioner intended to express cultural-authorial \textit{weltanschauung} (worldview) in their artwork; (2) Art practitioner intended to inform cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences; (3) Art practitioner intended to bear formal content (the resolution of contrasts and tensions found in the aesthetic value) of their


\textsuperscript{51} See N. Carroll, ‘Four Concepts of Aesthetic Experience’ in \textit{Beyond Aesthetics} (2001): 43. Carroll noted that ‘exegesis has flourished as many new strategies for interpreting art in the modern context have been developed, but little effort [my emphasis] has been spent in evolving vocabularies for discussing and conceptualising aesthetic experience’.
art form through bringing about their enlightened resolution; (4) Art practitioner intended to simply embody symbolic values through challenging the institution with their message and manifesto.\(^5\)

(1) The cultural-authorial worldview

Why art practitioners express art forms is a theoretical enquiry of paramount importance to Eliot Deutsch, who is the initiator of the *Interpreting Artworks: Prolegomenon to a Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* (2001).\(^5\) According to Deutsch, it is an art practitioner’s intention to express or embody a cultural-authorial worldview as ‘the artist’s vision and their art form which are created and presented as one’.\(^4\) Hence, art practitioners went to their art forms in order to connect with the natural world, and with what was beyond it, so that this metaphysically multi-levelled and philosophically anthropological insight is intimately connected to his or her culture. The art form invites the observer to know oneself to the point of ‘attaining a state of concentrated consciousness that is the very essence of human freedom or spiritual liberation’.\(^5\) The art practitioner intends to incite the observer to experience the work *in its own terms* as a prerequisite for a meaningful transcultural engagement with the arts that are thoroughly informed by it.\(^6\) Thus, in Deutsch’s cultural-authorial worldview, it is clearly the intention of the art practitioner not to simply emancipate or dissolve but to organically entwine with their respective cultural sensibility.

There are intrinsic strengths in Deutsch’s account of the cultural-authorial worldview intention of the contemporary art practitioner. For instance, Deutsch is sensitive to three important matters. First, he took seriously into account the political circumstances to which the art practitioners’ aspire in their art forms and the possible political circumstances

\(^{5}\) Ibid. 41-62. For consideration, Carroll also offers broad critical lines of conceptual intentionality in assessing art practitioner’s art form.


\(^{5}\) Ibid: 168.

\(^{6}\) Ibid.
in which the transcultural contemporaries of art practitioners found themselves. Secondly, Deutsch’s interpretation involves a broad sweep of major events in the art practitioner’s aesthetic life and thus lends a certain amount of coherence and conviction to it. And finally, Deutsch recognises that, for twentieth-first century contemporary art practitioners, art forms were both politically and aesthetically important (art forms being the locus, the *basho*, the site where the essence of art will be transculturally revealed). 57

(2) The cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences

The strengths of the cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences ensure that the cultural sensibility will not simple fuse into generality, which we are witnessing in the twentieth-first century. This theoretical aesthetic preferences reading, in a notable idea whose history is somewhat piecemeal, has been espoused by thinkers such as Yoshida Kenkō and Motoori Norinaga, but found fresh expression in Donald Keene’s work. 58

Deutsch’s account can easily be dismissed as being based on a very uncritical reading of the art forms. The same cannot be said for Keene’s work, where aesthetic preferences in Japanese aesthetics differ from that of Indian aesthetics. Like Deutsch’s cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences, Keene recognised the Japanese fondness for ‘suggestion’, ‘irregularity’, ‘simplicity’, and ‘perishability’, and for highly explicit, energy-embodied, symbol-laden complexity in an art form. 59 The processional gesture in their art form is intended to be such a challenge, and was also meant to signify their mediatory role for the participant to orientate his or her aesthetic perception. Transculturally, for one from another culture, this will work to change, suspend, or otherwise transform the aesthetic presuppositions that profoundly constitute one’s expectation of meaning when one approaches the art form. Deutsch notes that the aesthetic preference of a culture belongs to

57 Ibid.
the artist and to the art-object as ‘the criteria basis of aesthetic expectations and needs’.\textsuperscript{60} Deutsch’s aesthetic preferences in Keene’s work came about precisely because of the strengths noted above to produce certain affects.

Keene’s approach has been insightful, and the cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences thrive on. Michael Sullivan’s book, \textit{The Arts of China} (1984) adopts a similar line of interpretation but derives its findings on his research on the artist’s ability to express the vital spirit of the natural object.\textsuperscript{61} Sullivan comes to the conclusion that contemporary art practitioners are committed to the principles of Hsieh-Ho (which he believes to be central to the aesthetics of the Chinese).\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{(3) Formal Content: art practitioners intended to embody their art forms}

Another line of Deutsch’s approach is to interpret the art practitioner’s formal intention in their art form\textsuperscript{63} as the intention to emancipate or dissolve in order to activate certain affects: ‘the realised composition or design, the resolution of contrasts and tensions, the inner vitality that is the art-work’.\textsuperscript{64}

\textit{(i) Roger Fry on Chinese aesthetics}

Roger Fry’s book, \textit{Chinese Art} (1988), is acclaimed as having brought the aesthetic values of traditional Chinese art forms to a fresh awareness by demonstrating that the historical art

practitioners is relevant to the contemporary artworld.\textsuperscript{65} For practitioners of Chinese aesthetics, the necessity of their aspiration is founded in doctrine, not external historical circumstances.\textsuperscript{66} It is critical to note that Fry’s notion of principles of Chinese design includes the nature of their rhythm – the \textit{Doctrine of the Mean}. The art practitioners are to resolve contrasts and tensions in their realised compositions in order to achieve aesthetic rightness or validity.

What is of interest in Fry’s construction of the historical art practitioner is that he set out to find an inner connection between the intentions of art practitioners and their problem solving. Their approach to their art form is treated as climactic and no relevant statement about their intentions could be more succinct than Fry’s: art practitioners of Chinese aesthetics went to their art forms in order to produce harmonious conditions. Therefore, a certain sense of coherence between the art practitioner’s aesthetics, their aims and their actions in their art forms is realised.

This theoretical enquiry into interpreting art forms transculturally through their formal content may not be as pedantic as it seems. It will be seen, following Deutsch, that ‘it makes no sense to assume that any one criteria of appropriateness for formal content is normative for humankind’.\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{(ii) Ch’an (Zen) aesthetics}

While Fry insists that art practitioners embody their art forms in order to pursue resolution, most modern scholars today believe that Ch’an art practitioners at least expected to dissolve ego, although they did not intend to simply dissipate. Peter Lamarque argues that Zen


\textsuperscript{66} Ibid: 1.

practitioners’ overall formal content intention in their practice concerned the dissolution of the personality of the character being portrayed in the Japanese Noh theatre.\(^{68}\)

Mention should also be made of Kathleen Higgins’ essay ‘Comparative Aesthetics’ (2003).\(^ {69}\) While it is not her intention to discuss primarily Chán art practitioners’ aims, some statements on formal content she made in the course of her critique merit attention. Higgins views that, in the face of enlightenment, the Chán art practitioners held the intensity of sudden illumination as their validity of the unity traditions. The art practitioners saw themselves, then, as moving from the subject matter to ‘the unbounded environment and its emptiness’; these transitory actions came about from the picture subject matter that seems to ‘dissolve into the background, as if disintegrating into what is no longer articulated’.\(^ {70}\) Thus, in Higgins’ view, Chán art practitioners’ dissolution was an essential part of their intentions in their art forms. Her essay attempts to align the art practitioners’ intentions in their art forms with the unity traditions. The result Higgins arrives at is that art practitioners did not reject the traditions \textit{per se}. In fact, unity remained for them the central \textit{basho} of enlightenment in spite of any transitory actions in their art forms.

A scholarly discussion on art practitioners’ intentions towards the formal content of their art forms and how that connects with their intentions to dissolve ego is well discussed by Philip Rawson and Keiji Nishitani.\(^ {71}\) Higgins’ short article has simply pointed to the direction we should consider; it can be a substitute for more intensive scholarly work in this field.


\(^{70}\) Ibid: 682.

Symbolic Values: art practitioners intended to embody their art forms with their messages

Scholars in this ‘strata of meaning’ believe that enlightenment came to art practitioners as result of kenosis and not just pure intention. The art practitioners, therefore, specifically call for the interpretation of various levels of symbolic meaning in their embodied art forms. What are of paramount importance to Deutsch’s *Symbolic Values* are not so much who the art practitioners thought they were or what their intentions were, but their transcultural message. That stands utterly ultimate.

According to Deutsch, the central thrust of art practitioners’ transcultural message is to make the ultimate reality present. The decisive moment or recessional act in their practice came when they made that resolution to embody their art form to articulate to the participants or observers their transcultural message of symbolic values, because, in the art practitioners’ eyes, the art form is connected with the potentiality of the artworld. How then does Deutsch explain the actions of the art practitioners in their symbolic valued art forms? For Deutsch, the art practitioners’ overall approach is both accessible and practical, where the art form is intended by art practitioners to be the locus for the climax of their practise. The processional gesture and the transitory actions, while being symbolic, are also simultaneously indicative of their mediation and act as a reconstitution of the artworld. Art practitioners to have a very broad significance read the transitory actions: as allusions, demonstrations, associations, allegories, fulfilment metaphors, imminent and transcendent aesthetic judgements and reconstitution. All these unite to direct the re-making of the living synthesis on a re-created unity-in-diversity. In Deutsch’s account, the symbolic values of unity or transcultural art forms are readily acknowledged and utilised by art practitioners, although he or she does not explore it fully. Indeed, Deutsch is aware of the centrality of the unity symbol in the art practitioners’ practise.

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What about the art practitioners’ emancipation or dissolution? Deutsch concludes that it was not fully the art practitioners’ intention *per se* to be embraced and encouraged, nor to be rejected and dissipated. However, as they did expect an outcome that produced symbolic value, their intention was actually to infuse them with meaning and liberation. The art practitioners interpreted their foreseeable outcome as mediator for the artworld as they combine the creative potentiality of the sovereignty of art (a ‘fusion of horizons’)[73] with the prospect of their own purposes.[74]

**Art Practitioners’ Praxis: the intentions of transcultural knowledge**

The discussions surveyed in this subsection on transcultural intention, although different paradigms (practical, political or otherwise) are used to interpret the contemporary art practitioners’ practice, all agree in stating that the art practitioner did not simply aim to dissolve or emancipate. Dissolution or emancipation might have been expected, but the art practitioner’s transcultural intentions were something other than that. The theoretical enquiry this line of explication faces is “If the art practitioners expected to dissolve or emancipate, how ‘did they relate the aspiration to their transcultural intentions in embodying their art forms?’ Did they simply set the aspiration of dissolution or emancipation aside in the considerations of those intentions?”

I shall now offer some remarks to conclude my brief survey of Deutsch’s ‘four strata of meaning’:

(i) As can be seen from the above survey, a scholarly consensus on the art practitioners’ transcultural intentions in their art form has yet to be fully realised. Some approaches still have currency in the postmodern period. However, it is significant to note that several recent works agree in attempting to understand the art

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practitioners’ intentions vis-à-vis the potentialities of the artworld (whether political or practical accessible models).

(ii) In some approaches surveyed, it can also be seen that there are difficulties relating to the dissolution or emancipation of art practitioners in relation to their actions in their art forms. To a certain extent, then, Fry’s dictum still applies: ‘the contour is always the most important feature of the form. Next we note that rhythm is almost always of a flowing, continuous character. […] A painting [a reflection of the lives of art practitioners] was always conceived as the visual record of a rhythmic gesture’. 75

(iii) No full-scale attempt has been committed to the two enquires posed earlier. Higgins’ essay is one of those works that tries to connect these two theoretical enquiries together. Her treatment encourages me to explore these issues thoroughly.

In this chapter I have discussed the discipline of transcultural aesthetics from both a historical and contemporary perspective. Deutsch’s approach of philosophical hermeneutics (the four strata of meaning) has been offered as an approach of transcultural aesthetics that fits well within the framework of a postmodern view of reality but at the same breathe preserves the criterion of a cultural-authorial worldview, aesthetic preferences and the relevance of tradition and historical consciousness exemplified through its formal content and symbolic values.

Marchianò, however, led us to consider both the outer impersonality and inner art practitioner’s aspects of transcultural aesthetics as a form of practical wisdom. In the next chapter, I will look more closely at what is meant by transcultural aesthetics as a discipline study for the dynamic interplay between theory and practice.

CHAPTER 2

BEYOND TRANSCULTURALITY:

CREATIVE ART FORM OF RECURRENT DESIRE

Transcultural aesthetics, as Eliot Deutsch reminded us, begins with the inner sphere of art practice, asking: ‘what should we express?’ and ‘how then should we interpret?’ From chapter 1, we see the core of the nature of transcultural aesthetics is the issue of the relationship of theory to praxis. This chapter continues to enquire: If art theory precedes and determines art practice, then art practice tends to be concerned primarily with methods, techniques and strategies for aesthetics, lacking theoretical aesthetic substance. However if art practice takes precedence over art theory, aesthetics tends to be based on pragmatic findings rather than visionary insights. Some will then say: all good art practice includes art theory. While some will claim: art theory without good art practice is invalid theory.

Behind the conceptual art of Joseph Kosuth lies the dynamic interconnection between theory and praxis. The task of aesthetics, as Kosuth construed it, is to clarify the presuppositions of an art practitioner’s praxis. Praxis comes foremost because art is essentially an objective study into all aspects of the concept of ‘art’, from its social context, its logical form and its relational expression to wider culture. Michael Corris observes that


Kosuth’s theory of conceptual art is ‘claimed to be an overarching, transparent and objective intellectual tool – not simply a critical response to existing practice, but a meta-theory of artistic practice in general. The work of the artist is framed as an investigative activity that is advanced by whatever intellectual resources are deemed necessary to demystify conventional art practices and reveal the signifying function of art’. ³

Kosuth, from the beginning, resisted all attempts to present theory and praxis in opposition to one another, rejecting even the value of poetic expression. In his Conceptual art, one of the most controversial claims of Kosuth is the distinction between ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ as a ‘special kind of tautology’ where the art form-idea and the concept of art are identical and self-validating (see FIGURE 2). Kosuth’s creative art form is thus a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist’s intention, where a particular art form is art or a definition of art.⁴

The understanding of practitioner-mediation as an insight of life can thus be understood as a theory of recurrent desire that has its origin and aim in praxis.

To understand what lies behind this debate, I will look at the libidinal dynamics of contemporary art aesthetics, primed with notions of reality in art, hyped with aspiration,

dazzling in the allure of aesthetic pleasures (§1 and §2). These are elements in the transcultural artworld, and I will meditate more about these ideas in Part II. For in this chapter I need to explicate the nature of contemporary art practices, between theory and practice for transcultural aesthetics, which have helped to bring about these new transcultural attitudes and landscapes – the art form of recurrent desire (§3). In doing so I will also present a study of mediator-praxis in contemporary relational aesthetics (§4).

1. **The thorny relationship of theory to practice: on reality**

The premodern worldview

At the dawn of premodern time prior to the European Enlightenment, a philosophical and theoretical perception of reality was mediated through mediæval concepts of myth and sacrament. The mediaeval world viewed reality as metaphysical, where the physical world, particularly the world of sensorial experience and human behaviour, was largely regulated by abstract but well-defined concepts that transcended the ambiguous (sense of allegory), the uncertain temporal (senses of topology and anagogy), and the historical order (sense of history). This worldview gave precision and universal status to what was considered to be good and true in reality. Moral character could be cultivated by simply acquiring the virtues of honesty, truthfulness and goodness through contemplation, devotion and discipline to these ideals. Moral values were based on this concept of reality and moral character formed as one of the aims of a cultured and educated person.

From the human perspective, reality continued to be somewhat concealed, only comprehensible through signs, symbols and natural phenomena. That is, the physical world directed away from itself to some other ultimate reality; a religious worldview was then

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7 Ibid: 23-4.
employed to make sense of its manifestation. Cultural authority tended to be invested in tradition, institutions and tribal hierarchy. During this pre-critical era in European intellectual history it was fairly common to adopt a relatively ‘uncritical’ outlook of reality based on metaphysical conventions of the ultimate reality, rather than based on historical authenticity. With the pre-eminence of metaphysical thought it only remained for the intellectual to claim autonomy and for the pre-modern adolescent to come into flower, ensuing in what has come to be known as contemporary modernity.

The modern worldview

In many places and in many ways, western historians have marked the origin of the modern mind to the eighteenth century European Enlightenment. Its establishment was in fact laid two centuries before in the Renaissance, which raised humanity to the centre of reality and existence. The exact genealogy of the term ‘modern’, however, is often disputed. When it first emerged in the thirties and was applied by social historians, such as Arnold Toynbee in his *A Study of History* (1947), the modern period was considered to have ended in 1914 and the new era that emerged from the ruins of the First World War should be described as ‘postmodern’.

In the development of critical thought and autonomous reason, the physical world as well as artworld in the European Enlightenment came to be considered as self-existent and self-explanatory. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) interrogated the ‘theory’ of objective reality as an object beyond experience – an object that is not subject to the determination that

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8 See also E. Leach, *Culture and Communication: The Logic by Which Symbols Are Connected – An Introduction to the Use of Structuralist Analysis in Social Anthropology*, Themes in the Social Sciences, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1976). Leach offers advice about dealing with native information when reading about the nature of the texts. He further advised ‘observer must distinguish between what people actually do and what people say that they do; that is between normal custom as individually interpreted on the one hand and normative rule on the other ... [He] must distinguish behaviour from ideology’ in *Social Anthropology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1982): 130.

knowledge presupposes – and where a ‘posited object or event’ (noumenal) cannot be known as ‘thing-in-itself’ (ding an sich). His real world is a ‘theory’ lodged in the structures of consciousness and conventions of human ideas conditioned by experience, rather than in pure metaphysical concepts. In practise, Kant acknowledged in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) that in those who critically judge the metaphysical approach to reality as ‘a science not by its nature but by its accidental effects, we shall always return to metaphysics’.  

In modern times, art theory continued to dominate art practice, with epistemological and hermeneutical models laying the foundation for comparative aesthetics. Truth and interpretation form the hermeneutical key to inform art theory, and art theory determines art practice. While art theory precedes and determines art practice, the way art theory leads to be practise is then a matter of debate within the existing contemporary art forms of world art or comparative aesthetics. Wilfried van Damme favours the multi-perspectival approach that stresses the fact that ‘beauty’, ‘happiness’ or ‘consciousness’ as truth is found in the community of shared meaning and these factors have been appropriated by ‘world aesthetics’. The inherent strength in his approach is the fact that this practice now has access to both truth through history, and to the various cultural traditions it has developed. What holds this construct in place is the modern view that truth stands above reality as objective, universal and with fixed principles toward which all subjective interpretations must eventually lead.

In this sense, van Damme’s approach in *Beauty in Context* (1996) has become significant within the domain of transcultural aesthetics. Seeking to overcome the individualism of Descartes through his socio-anthropology, while accepting the Kantian critique of pure metaphysics tradition, van Damme laid the groundwork for a praxis-oriented comparative

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aesthetics through an universalism in aesthetics,\textsuperscript{13} where theory develops only through engagement with truth as an aesthetic preference and socio-cultural ideal in the form of mediation through art forms.\textsuperscript{14} In this sense van Damme can also be considered to be a proponent of what has come to be known as postmodernism.

The postmodern worldview

In the post-Enlightenment period of European intellectual history, the structure of a metaphysical perception of reality sustained a series of setbacks. In the advent of scientific empiricism following Francis Bacon and his *Valerius Terminus of the Interpretation of Nature* (1603), which was surmised to be a revelation of the reality of things. Reality was seen as comprehensible and most demonstrable through the stubborn refusal to compromise of scientific investigation. With reality now considered accessible to human self-understanding, the theory became dominant in regard to verifiable practice. Mediated through interpretative structures and paradigms, aesthetic truth was now largely consigned to the application of methods and skills based on theory in order to inform a practice.

In art education, the practice of art and the field of comparative aesthetics, this development also led to the classification of the scientific study of aesthetic data from its application through practical methods and approaches of art making. Theoretical art enquiry now explored art concepts from a purely theoretical perspective, leaving aside practical studio theory to devise methods and strategies of art practice based on the principles of efficiency and effectiveness. This classification, even in the larger artworld, between theory and practice was re-established as the former *epistemological dualism* where


‘aesthetic truth’ could be defined as theoretical, with an ‘objective reality’ that was constituted more and above ‘practice’ as both instrumental and methodological.\textsuperscript{15}

The advent of phenomenological existentialism, following the rejection of Hegelian philosophy by Søren Kierkegaard, shifted the metaphysical quest for reality decisively. The metaphysical construct of reality hypothesised essence as being both manifest before and determinative of existence. As an object of phenomenological existentialism, the essence of art could be deliberated as the objective reality that gave meaning, significance and order to the subjective and fluidity of personal existence. Kierkegaard, in \textit{The Concept of Dread} (1844), held Hegel’s concept of ‘absolute Spirit’ idealism to be pure abstraction, lacking a compelling human passion and convincing bodily presence.\textsuperscript{16} His \textit{Elements of the Philosophy of Right} (1821) contends that an existing human person defines and determines the essence of what is real. Hegel’s dialectics, leading to ultimate synthesis, was replaced by the paradox between time and eternity, which solely the existing individual could resolve through an authentic decision on the dialectic of creative intuition and reason.\textsuperscript{17}

When Kierkegaard introduces his ‘angst’ as the innermost being of the human self in his \textit{The Concept of Anxiety} (1844) he seemed to undermine the confidence of progressive humanity. Intuition, according to Kierkegaard, is not only suspicious of rational certainty, but it is only progressively authentic when it ‘leaps over’ the line of irrational absurdity. The awakening of human consciousness therefore, as the decisive act of the human subject, liberated truth from its assigned category of the universal truth as pure concept. The

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introduction of concepts of irony, playfulness and scepticism by Kierkegaard was indeed amenable to the mood of the postmodern mind.\textsuperscript{18}

Countering this brand of pluralistic relativism that challenges \textit{even} the existence of an objective reality to be identified, the modern mind continues to search for a form of ‘totality’ and ‘unity’ in the field of knowledge that valued objective certainty: believing that all rational minds operating independently would come to similar conclusions about what is considered universally true and good. In contrast and in general, postmodernism seems to value diversity with ‘truth’ being relative to each community’s perspective and situation.\textsuperscript{19} Even if there are no overarching grand narratives that explain reality, the ‘meta-narratives’ schemas according to Michel Foucault are deemed to be nothing more than mere propaganda aimed at imposing particular preferences on others: ‘we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth’.\textsuperscript{20} All in all, this ploy inaugurates the ‘death’ of objective truth in art forms of utopian modernism: a form of Foucauldian suspicion of every ‘present order’, a reason by reason of Derridean interrogation, or perhaps a Rortyan thoroughgoing pragmatism in the flux of our aesthetic experience.\textsuperscript{21}

2. The postmodern condition in transcultural aesthetics

If the central hallmark of postmodern cultural expression is pluralism, then one defining characteristics of postmodernity is the universal idea of protest against any exclusively imperialistic or absolutist worldview. Postmodernity (along with intercultural aesthetics) simply rejects any misappropriation of unity as uniformity and implores us to be suspicious

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and self-effacing in our application of any monolithic appropriation. The postmodern condition therefore assumes that all grand statements of totality offered by reason are illusions, creations of one’s own language and a function of our own desire for power.\textsuperscript{22} Where aesthetic truth is no longer discovered but ‘created’ in our own perception, we no longer dwell outside the flux of our aesthetic experience, as there is no ‘Archimedes’ transcendent point from which to view the world. Such themes have thus become axiomatic among the postmodern: ‘the world exists so that we can pleasantly live in it and only that gives it some sense’.\textsuperscript{23}

The development of postmodernism

Several implications for transcultural aesthetics emerge from this shift from a modern to a postmodern worldview of reality:

(i) Firstly, postmodernism is felt in the celebration of diversity. In reaction to the summation of modernism that ‘unity’ is out and diversity is in, this celebration of diversity is often reflected in a moral relativism of unrestrained consensualism. Postmodernity thus assumes the idea of total primacy of reason above passion and the concept of reason-directed history as biased and reductive in character. What is morally right is now considered as ‘what I feel comfortable with’ or ‘what is beneficial for me.’ As Friedrich Nietzsche perceptively observed, ‘if God is dead, anything is possible’.\textsuperscript{24}

(ii) Secondly, a celebration of diversity opens up for a greater demand for tolerance. Such universal claims have a hidden double-edged sword function. A compulsive


desire for uniformity and universality may delude us into considering an exclusively local, culture-bound concept of beliefs to be absolute and thus thwart us to recognising a stark assimilation and appropriation of the other. Ironically, the remedy to such terror and threat for the postmodernist is tolerance. In short, postmodernity is suspicious of the concept of universal rationality that claims to rule unchallenged in all walks of life, including reason and passion which are co-heirs in and of our life.

(iii) Thirdly, the social implications of modernism involved an expanding pluralism in secularism and ecumenism, for to instil the freedom of human reason, the binding force of moral authority had to be compromised. As increased social planning reflected a confidence in the human reason to correct its social ills, postmodernity continues to reject the thesis of a transcultural, trans-ethnic universal subject of knowledge that includes all forms of methodological monism.

In response, there are some positive effects of the shift from a modern to a postmodern worldview of reality that augur well with a new paradigm of transcultural aesthetics:

(i) Postmodernism rightly rejects the myth that all knowledge is objective, for knowledge is indeed not starkly objective *per se* and we as personal and moral agents are implicated in all that we express and know: presence and reason. As Hans-Georg Gadamer aptly pointed out, this dialogical ‘in between’ a text and a reader with questions and possibilities ‘is where hermeneutics has the more important place’. 25

(ii) Postmodernism also accurately reflects the importance of communities in perceiving reality. Art practitioners can agree with the postmodern in

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acknowledging the importance of impersonality in our knowing. No one is a completely autonomous individual who is severed from the influences of social traditions. We belong to communities and consciousness traditions that help shape our perception of reality. We offer a living synthesis and microcosm – within the artworld. The distrust of reason means that aesthetic truth must be experienced in order for it to be embraced and believed, and it is in the artworld that the aesthetic truth of an art form is to be expressed.26

(iii) Postmodernism rightly emphasises the significance of narrative and story. Although there is scepticism or even hostility toward metanarratives in the postmodern ethos, its condition cannot last. Human beings cannot live without the meaning and liberty that such stories offer. In deconstructing the mythic tales of modernism, postmodernism indeed can play a useful aesthetic function of unmasking the face of arrogance of an assumed ‘naturalism’ or status quo; however, it offers no clear resolutions of its own for the future.

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The value of transculturality in interactive postmodernity

Despite the problems with the polyphony of the postmodern mind – its tendency toward relativism, objective pluralism and continued traces of modernism – the postmodern vision of reality approaches more closely the axial worldview than the vision of modernist times.\(^{27}\)

Doing transcultural aesthetics in the present culture, where modern and postmodern thought vie for competence and commitment, calls for critical and cautious theoretical reflexion on the hermeneutics of discourse and action, and on the ‘selves-as-agents’ hermeneutic: a cultivation of insight into one’s own approach to the regulative ideal of inter-dialogue among multiple cultures. Hence, to subsume discourse and action under the banner of modern thought with its claim to universal aesthetic truth is pure arrogance from a theoretical standpoint. On the other hand, to simply allow culture and convention to determine what is normative apart from the compelling and convicting reality of art’s unfolding nature is only a sparsely hidden form of modernism. Indeed, the recurrent desire to understand the other and to be understood by the other is the hallmark of the hermeneutics of transcultural aesthetics. Imants Tillers in his 1985 *One Painting, Cleaving: Triangle of Doubt* (see **FIGURE 3**) would probably call both attempts forms of Cartesian thought, where the human subject continues to function as the principle for meaning and truth. Tillers elaborates:

\[\text{The desired unambiguous ‘point’ expands into an ‘area’ of concern – the triangle of doubt. […] the work […] while attempting to be one painting becomes instead one painting, cleaving. The triangle of doubt expresses the failure of desire (or overt intent) but at the same time represents an expansion of possibility and knowledge.}\]^{28}\n

In the postmodern hypothesis the relation of theory to practice is thus non-linear, but interactive. Theory is viewed as a set of mental constructs that exist independently of their embodiment in every aspect, from the physical and psychological to the social structure of life. Theory and practice thus inform and influence each other in such a manner that all practice includes theory, where theory can only be authenticated through practice. This interactive dynamic between theory and practice can be found in contemporary physics as well as in the efforts to understand the interactive relation between the human spirit and the creative intuition as a social-psychological experience through dialogical communication.29

Helmut Federle suggests that between theory and practice, with transcultural aesthetics kept to reflexion on practice, praxis needs to be reframed as the relation of vegetative reality and orientation points of being:

In my view this applies to every significant cultural object, this correspondence of the stored energy to the cultural function it fulfils in its own age. … I have always felt works of art to be orientation points of being, and not least as stages along the path of life with death in view. … I believe that inventiveness is the very opposite of art. Art does not invent – it is all there already. What I can do is to translate vegetative or social reality into a pictorial parallel using the means of pure painting.30

What Federle calls ‘orientation points of being’ I would identify as understanding or awareness, and what he calls ‘translate vegetative reality’ I would regard as interpretation.

While an interactive approach to art-making demonstrates the dynamic interplay between theory and practice, it does not yet depict the relationship between this dynamic and truth as an objective reality from which both understanding and interpretation can be validated. This lack will be taken up in my discussion of mediator-praxis.

3. The hermeneutics of transcultural aesthetics: mediator-praxis as art form

In order to grasp hermeneutics and a model of transcultural aesthetics that focuses on artistic praxis in the world, it is imperative for us to firstly tease out exactly what is meant by the term praxis. The word 'praxis' essentially means 'action'. It is however a particular form of action that should not be directly associated to the word practice. While practice implies the simple non-reflexive performance of a task in a dispassionate, value-free manner, praxis entails a form of common sense aesthetic action that is profoundly impregnated with meanings and nuances. It is a form of action that is both value-directed and theory-laden.

Praxis is seen as reflexive because of its artistic action seeks not only to achieve particular ends (that is, the means and the ends of such action in order to assess its validity in the context of its guiding principle), but it is also appreciated as theory-laden, for theory is a vital constituent of not just reflexive action but of actions that are charged with beliefs and worldviews. Consequently, when we speak of praxis, we are referring to a practical form of knowledge that generates actions through the artworld living out its beliefs (holistic, yet theory-laden action).

Within the context of this practice the act of collaboration is a form of praxis; that is, it is the embodiment of particular theoretical understandings. At first glance, what may appear to be a simple relational practice on reflexion in the context of the art form proves to contain deep levels of theoretical meaning and interpretation. In fact in a very real sense, belief is within the act itself. The act is found to be expressive of particular beliefs and traditions, and as such it is an appropriate subject for critical aesthetic theoretical enquiry. Thus praxis finds its textual foundation in the actualisation of purposiveness, in the formulation of the Golden Criterion, or even in the ‘revolution of turmoil, migration and conquest’.31

Praxis as a pathway of truth in action

Robert Armstrong claims that due to ‘affecting presences’ or the ‘universality for the phenomenon in the culture as a system of feelings’, all humanly produced artefacts and events have ‘powers’ to affect human beings experientially; this ‘presence’ is comparable to that of a human being. An art practitioner’s praxis, similarly, reveals his or her aesthetic theory in a very tangible form, where their actions are themselves theoretical and open to theoretical reflexion and critique. The praxis of the art practitioner is at once the embodiment of their artistic theorising – a performative discipline where the principle of authenticity is closely asserted for their action rather than mere discourse.

In the *Nichomachean Ethics 9.6.5*, Aristotle compares ‘praxis’ to an act of remaking that includes the *telos* (something in its final purpose, meaning, and character of truth) to effect the creative process within the action itself: i.e. from *telos* to *praxis*. While in the movement from *poiesis* to *telos*, ‘*poiesis*’ refers to an affective act of making something where the *telos* exist outside the action (see FIGURE 4). For an art practitioner, David Whitehead draws critical attention to the movement of ‘world to work’ or ‘work to world’ actualisation:

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The artist makes a work and is in turn made by it. Something takes place in the exchange between artist and work, for artist and work are instruments one to one another. What takes its place originates in the work, and what is discovered of the work happens through others’ responses to it. Importantly, both artist and work concede of another to the world from within the world of their being.  

Praxis is seen not as mere guidance in one’s actions by the affective intention of realising telos (or purposiveness), but by the very effective discovering and grasping of the being in telos through the action itself. This means the final art form is accountable to the liminal telos or poïesis in which the kind of action required produces the intended effect. A theory of installation therefore emerges from within the context of the installed art form and not in abstraction; these aesthetic truths contained within the discourse that are being discovered and uncovered through the praxis of installation art.

Eliot Deutsch includes praxis as one of his models for doing transcultural aesthetics in On Truth: An Ontological Theory (1979). Thomas Kasulis points out that Deutsch’s practice in a communicative context (within the religious language) reflects the formation of consciousness. This ‘dynamic of the intentionality of a proposition’ informs the enabling of creativity and of reciprocal understanding. This is what is meant by praxis: the art form in our midst discloses to us the teleological essence of art, even as the poïetic art form reveals its truth in producing further art forms. A poïetical art form of aesthetic truth therefore reaches its telos in creating art’s affective purpose – this is the praxis of art’s essence as aesthetic truth.

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35 Cf. P. Crowther, ‘Postmodernism in the Visual Arts’ in Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism Oxford: Clarendon Press (1993b): 180f. Crowther rightly pointed out that ‘the essence of art does not consist in some perceptible property or set of properties, but rather in art’s institutional setting. … the artwork is what the artist designates as such, on the basis of some theory about art.’
Theoretical hermeneutics: (i) The texts of discourse and action

Transcultural aesthetics is essentially a form of theoretical hermeneutics. That is to say, theoretical aesthetic reflexion begins in the context and in the challenge of art practice that seeks to interpret ‘the texts of discourses’ within ‘the texts of dialogues’, which appear within the art of contemporary art practitioners through their creative intuition as to the aesthetic truth and sovereignty of art.36 Present interpretation of discourse must be as engaged with the reality and cultural-authorial of art practitioners as to discourse reality and cultural-authority. This is why the hermeneutics of transcultural aesthetics is a theoretical hermeneutic not simply a spiritual hermeneutic.

Paul Ricœur (1913–2005) suggests that a ‘hermeneutics of action’ which grounds theory in text, must understand that text is grounded in action via a mediatory practitioner, not only historically but also teleologically.37 His analogies between discourse and action are that all action is in principle interaction, just as all discourse is in principle dialogical.38 The hermeneutics of transcultural aesthetics finds what is normative in the unity traditions as the inspired source of written discourse and the objective reality of practitioners’ mediation as the praxis of the creative intuition in practice.

The criterion for the praxis of the creative intuition in practice is not determined by purely cultural relevance or pragmatic expediency. It is an art form of the living art practitioner that becomes the criterion in the praxis of the creative intuition. It is this contemporary praxis of an art practitioner’s mediation through creative intuition that

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becomes normative and calls the artworld to aesthetic attention, where it has imposed its own normative and binding principles.

The claim that the praxis of the creative intuition reveals the aesthetic truth or the reality of a practitioner’s mediation is, for whatever ethno-aesthetics, the basis for their aesthetics of impersonality. For an art practitioner of Indian aesthetics, aesthetic experience means a dynamics of subjective consciousness that does not identify itself with the source of pleasure when creative intuition is activated, which becomes an utterly absorbing experience. Hence the art practitioner is absorbed to the point of transcending one’s own limited subjectivity. Through the transcendence of pleasure this climax reached, and is described as sahrdyata, ‘selfless sympathy’ (this Indian concept of ‘selfless sympathy’ oscillates around two poles: firstly hrid, ‘heart’, deriving from the root source of emotion, and secondly ‘selflessness’ the field where subjectivity and pleasure are being transcended). Aesthetic experience is thus viewed as a liberation process ‘from selfish attachment to the source of pleasure to an un-afflicted mental state’.

(ii) The ‘Selves-as-agents’ hermeneutic

Having the creative mediatory intuition is to have the substance of mediation, Ricœur would argue. In such way theoretical aesthetic reflection on the texts of discourses become a ‘selves-as-agents’ hermeneutic. The discourse was now interpreted through the mediation, so that those who have the creative mediatory intuition cannot be aesthetically judged by anyone – for the lived assurance or confidence that each person has of existing in both an ‘idem-identity’ (identity understood as external possibility of identifying the self as self despite loss or mutability of the attributions of that self in time) and an ‘ipse-identity’

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40 Ibid.
(identity understood as inner core that marks us out as what we really are) order of causality are the evidential validity of attestation.\textsuperscript{41}

Ricœur viewed the practice of the creative mediatory intuition as \textit{attestation} in the practice of \textit{aletheia} or ‘living truth’ mediation. It was the presence of desire in the lives of art practitioners that led Ricœur to positing one’s own cultural-authorial capability grounded in the creative ‘selves-as-agents’ hermeneutic, which encountered and taught art practitioners, and having followed the creative mediatory intuition in their impersonality engagement, the art practitioners had to argue the essential unity of the desire\textsuperscript{.42} The essence of art, if we are to apply that term, was not for the art practitioners a unity of being present in the transcultural activity of art in action.

The evidence of enablement is not always in the obvious outcomes but in the unswerving commitment and the inexplicable devotion to a practise. The enablement of the impulse did not simply diminish in the life and practice of art practitioners as they move relentlessly toward their art forms. It was only then that the true nature of enablement became evident, when their pathway and vision became clear and compelling.

4. The transcultural condition in contemporary relational aesthetics

Transcultural aesthetics is thus founded in mediator-praxis as the inner sphere of its encounter with the creative intuition in the expanding world. With this in mind, one can then adopt Deutsch’s model as explained in chapter one and as adapted above. The subsequent theoretical enquiries ‘how should we express?’ and ‘how then should we interpret or embody?’ are inherently philosophical enquiries when asked with respect to what art has revealed through its essence and as an example of what art is doing through


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid: 137.
our shared creative intuition and imagination. This is the ongoing hermeneutical task given to the artworld in the practice of transcultural aesthetics.

Mediator-praxis and art as the source for theoretical reflexion

Theoretical reflexion has the task of disarming both the skill of concealment behind culture, as well as of pedantic scholarship. But those of us involved with the responsibility of teaching and training humanities for life vocation must not mistake education for conversion. Mediator-praxis is a practise of kindness, empathy, and generosity. However, the particular competence demanded of a practitioner is that of a practitioner must identify themselves as being a practitioner rather than a theoretician.

Mediator-praxis, as I have discussed, is the normative and authoritative basis for all theoretical aesthetic reflexion in the unfolding of art in the living traditions of the humanities, and of creative intuition in the artworld (see here in §2 and §3). Transcultural aesthetics is a recurrent desire or pursuit of experience through critical theoretical aesthetic reflexion. This desire does not arise through a mere repetition and practice of methods. Instead it is gained through participation in the art forms in order to account for the aesthetic judgements made in art practice situations that are considered to be congruent with art’s affective purpose, to inspire the situation, and in turn to act through or with the art practitioners.

When it comes to the objective role of the unity traditions in revealing aesthetic truth to our subjective understanding of thoughts amidst the impermanence of human impulses, I am sanguine about finding art as the centre of reality and inspiration. The objectivity of the formless, mutable art is contingent on the being of art itself, as demonstrated to us

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through the living traditions and art forms. I do not hold that the objective reality of art is ever and completely objectified under the control of the mind of the art practitioner. Mediator-praxis is simply an energised liminal site for interacting, negotiating and creating art forms, where art practitioners reflect and integrate their actions of practice to apprehend the objective reality of art’s affective recurring inspiration, revelation and regeneration.

Mediator-praxis as theoretical validity in practise

Mediator-praxis is the continuation of art’s affective creativity within the artworld in the broadest sense. Transcultural art practitioners exist by virtue of this practice and are empirical evidence of this art practice that operates through its creative intuition within the discourses of the traditions. To have a mediator existence is to have a theoretical existence; it is also to have a presence and practice in the world that represents a form of mediation. There are forms of art practice that advocate consolation, inspiration and reconciliation, but if it does not manifest virtues, these practices may not necessarily be considered as art.

In mediator-praxis, the action of art making itself becomes the embodiment of a life of the artworld, and through a form of mediation, virtues and wholeness is derived from the source of art. Thus we know that reconciliation or revolution is more than making people or conditions better; it is inextricably involved with revealing the creative intuition and presence of art’s creative force. Theoretical reflexion is the activity of an art practitioner by which actions in art practice are critically and continually assessed in the context of discourses and actions of the practitioners. Aesthetic truth therefore cannot be abstracted from personal intuition and knowledge, nor can personal and intuition be detached from the objective aesthetic truth of the ontology of art and ideas. Theoretical reflexion leads to competence in art practise by virtue of the practitioner who demonstrates the intention and practice in the embodiment of mediator-praxis. It is not only reflection on the nature of art practice from the worldview of transcultural theoretical aesthetic truths but also on the
nature of art from the worldview of its affective and creative intention in the lives of people who enjoy art for art’s sakes.

In sum, theoretical reflexion itself does not lead to new insight *per se*, but it represents the presence of art that is revealed in its continuing affective nature to inspire, console and reconcile realities through creative intuition. Thus the traditional discourse continues to be the particular form of mediator-praxis that provides a normative and objective basis for the life of the artworld. But because this discourse in itself is a form of living mediator-praxis, its aesthetic truth is centred in the mediatory essence of the text, and the text is not simply a product of inspiration that could be somehow de-ontologised from art. The art practitioner is hence not only the ‘author’ of text through creative intuition, but he or she is an ‘interpreter’ of the text at every moment: to be a competent master or interpreter of text, one must allow the purpose of the text itself and the authority of the text to come to expression as mediator-praxis. This requires a particular kind of competence and commitment.

Theoretical competence in the practice of art

The particular competence and commitment resulting from theoretical reflexion is evidenced by the practitioner’s awareness, integration and credibility. Simply put, these qualities in a transcultural art practitioner produce an authentic intrinsic or spiritual authority and competence rather than an authoritarian stature.

**Awareness** or profound understanding is the first aspect of competence and commitment, which is the recognition of the congruence between the mediator-value of the text and the mediator in art practice. This awareness is at once exegetical and practical, and it surfaces when creative intuition is activated over the mind and the emotion. There is, of course, a preliminary understanding of the nature of mediation in the text that requires responsible attention to the textual exegesis and basic hermeneutical criteria. Awareness can thus only be authenticated in and through practice.
Integration produced by theoretical reflexion is the practical application of the awareness where the aesthetic truth is being articulated and practiced. An integrated art practice overcomes the ambivalence that results from two aspects of truth: the first, purely theoretical and the second, simply functional. Integration is a form of competence and commitment, and not a theoretical element of a programme. Within the structure of mediator-praxis the ‘presence-in-action’ or ‘presence-at-hand’ mode of insight often stands as a barrier to all attempts to understand the aesthetic truth in abstraction from the art form. ‘We will do and we will [then] hear’ wrote Emmanuel Levinas, and in similar manner Karol Wojtyla in The Acting Person (1979) suggested that ‘action reveals the person’. Wojtyla noted that the way people live, that particular kind of competence and commitment they make, the actions they take, the way they answer with their life, ‘gives us the best insight into the inherent essence of the person and allows us to understand the person most fully ... [Action] constitutes the specific moment whereby the person is revealed’. This action of being and mediation became a normative interpretation of the principle of art as a revelation of art itself. The principle of art of whatever traditions does not lose its authority as a rule because it is drawn into the art form, but rather its true authority as a principle of art comes to expression in the object reality of the art form.

Art practitioners demonstrate a particular kind of competence and commitment represented by integration when they ground their ontological reality in the objective praxis of textual mediation. It is the aesthetic truth that contains the structure of integration, and not the practice of mediation itself. Mediator-praxis thus bases the criteria for competence and commitment in the very being of the aesthetic truth as the ontology of art is revealed through the historical and contemporary affective nature and presence of art. This

46 Ibid.
47 G. Vattimo cited Pareyson’s ‘theory of formativity’ to include in his philosophical clarification of the meaning of the art forms and art’s ontological foundation, which lies within the idea of the law of the work that transcends the process of production – the conscious will of the artist and the work insofar as it was developed. ‘From Phenomenological Aesthetics to Ontology of Art’ in Art’s Claim to Truth [Poesia e ontologia], (Ed.) S. Zabala and (Trans.) L. D’isanto, New York: Columbia University Press (2008): 97 (and 90-07).
integration of competence and commitment is beginning to be made available in art education institutions, especially where the narrow scope of the programme with its focus on abstract knowledge is set within a broader programme of awareness and integration. Nonetheless, if there is to be such broad programmes through which competence and commitment can be produced, they will entail circumstances in which aesthetic judgements will have to be made as to the *poïesis* in practitioner’s mediator-praxis.

**Credibility** is the third aspect of competence and commitment. Credibility is reckoned as the transparency of method and lucidity of the thinking process that makes the presence of their mediation self-evident and worthy of belief and contemplation in every event or process of their art practice. The mediation is ultimately believable only in terms of their own unity of being in theory and practice. It is the task of theoretical reflexion to interrogate this criterion at the expense of art practitioners’ claim of self-justification for their art form. This mediator-praxis demands a particular kind of competence and commitment that manifests in being credible as a presentation of the form of mediation, not merely as an interpreter of the mediation. This is a subtle distinction that eludes analysis but that becomes apparent when observed from the perspective of the one who is truly seeking the aesthetic truth and essence of art in the mediator-praxis. For Hui-neng the Sixth Patriarch, the distinction of a true practitioner of art was clear. Hui-neng describes the truth and reality of credibility in what the monk Shen-hsiu wrote on the wall of the monastery:

**Shen-hsiu:**
Our body is the tree of Perfect Wisdom;
And our mind is a bright mirror,
At all times diligently wipe them,
So that they will be free from dust.
Hui-neng:
The mind is the tree of Perfect Wisdom:
The body is the clear mirror,
The clear mirror is originally clear and pure,
Where has it been affected by any dust? 48

Artworld Praxis: the politics of transcultural believing and becoming

Theoretical discourse, as in any other discourse, is often mired in a cultural politics of meaning. Transcultural aesthetics, as a critical and constructive reflexion on artworld praxis, is the process of the continual critical reflexion on the actions of art practitioners in the context of their art forms and in critical dialogue with sources of knowledge (with a view to the transformative praxis of the art practitioners in the world). Unity sources are drawn on not only to improve technique but also to clarify the nature of their artworld praxis, to uncover the meanings that are both behind and present within the praxis of the artworld and even to help clarify particular understandings of theoretical concepts. This ‘hermeneutic ontology’ (to use Vattimo’s term) is a reflexion on whether the work of artists is more believable, acceptable and adequate with respect to the situation we inhabit and practise. Contrary to the approach that suggests theory is done primarily within academia, a form of transcultural aesthetics that focuses on artworld praxis points toward the fact that artworld praxis is the site, the *topos* or the *basho* where art theory is also experimented.

Jacques Rancière astutely considers that a community of sense is ‘a frame of visibility and intelligibility that puts things or practices together under the same meaning, which

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shapes thereby a certain sense of community’. He adds that between these partitions of the sensible, with the senses of community built in their space and framed in spheres of experience, is a relationship between two communities of sense: vis-à-vis art and politics. So in order to be aware, integrated and credible into the transcultural hermeneutical ontology of the artworld, three presuppositions are essential for recognising the metaphysics of this politics:

1. **A belief in authority**: where believing requires accepting the solid reality of some forms of legitimisation in the artworld.

2. **A belief in elemental, demonstrable surety**: where believing involves presupposing the artworld is a certain shape that is also a stable reality.

3. **A belief in the transparency of representation**: where believing involves presupposing that we cannot only know the ‘what is’, but that we can communicate the ‘what is’.

A good communicator is not one who completely consumed in the message, but also *is* the communication itself. For this reason, Marshall McLuhan’s dictum in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) succinctly announces: ‘the medium is the message’. It accentuates the idea of knowledge possessed and communicated, and the possessed as communicated. The three presuppositions for postmodern belief concur that if the politics and the metaphysics cannot organise such a space, then that which is offered as something to be believed in *cannot* be believed in – for the transcultural space is *simply* non-existent.

Michel de Certeau thus characterises today’s recurrent reality and ethos as a ‘recited society’: “Our society has become a ‘recited society’, in three senses; it is defined by *stories*.

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50 Ibid: 32.

(récits, the fables constituted by our advertising and informational media), by citations of stories, and by the interminable recitation of stories. 52

Now with the emphasis on artworld praxis and the attainment of practical knowledge, this form of transcultural aesthetics goes a long way toward reconciling the rift between theory and practice. By focusing on a critical reflexion on artworld praxis, transcultural theoretician will desire to examine the meaningful actions of the artworld and to critically evaluate, challenge and seek the transformation of particular forms of praxis in the context of the aims of art and in critical dialogue with the artworld, unity traditions and the world. The transcultural world art philosopher and aesthetician therefore desires to interpret the discourses of unity, art forms and praxis so that the contemporary praxis of both art practitioners and the larger world can be transformed. An adequate understanding of the theoretical validity of mediator-praxis as a form of practical knowledge will not only allow transcultural aesthetics to unite in constructive tension between theory and practice, the artworld and the larger world, the normativity and the transformation, but enable a constructive and mutual dialogue to occur between all of these elements and other sources of knowledge available to contemporary aesthetics.

The next chapter will draw on the assumptions set forth thus far to develop a transcultural aesthetics that finds the unity traditions as foundational for practice of art in the artworld, both by the art practitioners and by members of the artworld in the larger world.

In previous chapter, we saw how contemporary art practitioners make transculturality a relational source of satisfaction and enjoyment, and how transcultural aesthetics dismisses the idea of the sole dependence of interculturality on postmodernity: its practice is, in fact, a mind-neutral phenomenon but supported by the spirit of postmodernity. In transcultural aesthetics, the basis of art practice moves beyond utilitarianism (the tendency to create practise out of needs) and pragmatism (practise transformed into marketing strategy). It also connects both the artworld and art institutions, in a mutual commitment, to living a full life and to a learning that is founded on unity in diversity. This unity, according to Eliot Deutsch, is not ‘primitive’ but ‘it is analysable in terms of the kind of relatedness of the elements that constitute what is taken as a unified thing’. For aesthetic force in reality then, it is at once revealing and reconciliatory with regard to the world. It is therefore, in this chapter, no exaggeration to consider the unity is of immense importance in the field of

transcultural thought, and we shall explicate whether or not these traditions informed the theoretical motivations behind the practitioners' actions in their art forms.

A study of the application of the terms ‘unity’ and ‘aesthetic-universal art forms’ will also reveal that comparative aesthetics is constantly referred to and has attracted to itself many art forms of transcultural aspirations. The purpose of this chapter is not merely to survey the application of these terms during the said period, but it will also attempt to underscore important motifs connected with them (§1), and to assess how they have influenced transcultural thought (§2, §3 and §4). I am thus interested in locating those notional elements that have been connected to unity and aesthetic-universal art forms, and in understanding how these notional elements are related to each other and how they point to more extensive ‘intellectual spheres’. Additionally, I hope to demonstrate unity and aesthetic-universal art forms retain focus through the vicissitudes of transcultural axial history as proposed by Karl Jaspers in his *The Origin and Goal of History* (1949), as drawn from the three birthplaces of aesthetics/philosophy: China, India, and Greece. However, the enquiry into the origin of the unity traditions and the social setting that gave rise to

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7 I owe the specific identification of the unity traditions among the many traditions emanating from the comparative aesthetics and the phenomenological aesthetics to and K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, and *Philosophie*, Vol. III:
them will not be rehearsed. Much work has been done on this topic, although a consensus has yet to be reached.  

A statement of what I mean by ‘unity traditions’ is in order: By unity traditions I mean the use of unity and aesthetic-universals in art forms as a focus and symbol of transcultural thought. By the twentieth first century, this application has developed elaborately and become the heritage of the transcultural practitioners of comparative aesthetics – expressing the value of its unique art form. The plural form of the term is used to indicate that there was no fixed understanding regarding unity and aesthetic-universal art forms.

An inherent danger in the process adopted is it may be insensitive to the course of the development of the unity traditions and link writings which may not be related in time or geography, thus giving a false impression of homogeneity. But such weaknesses can be mitigated as the purpose of this chapter is simply to show that particular aspects of thought about unity can be found enshrined in the canonical texts of the artworld (that is, comparative aesthetics) and that their influence can also be found in the transcultural life of the twentieth first artworld.

A further clarification concerning the connection of the terms ‘aesthetic-universal art forms’ and ‘unity’ is in order here: Both ‘aesthetic-universal art forms’ and ‘unity’ are used synonymously in the comparative aesthetics corpus (see especially the phenomenological

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aesthetics of China, India and Europe, among others). Ram Adher Mall has attempted to understand more precisely how the terms are used in intercultural aesthetics. He claims that unity is a term normally used when a non-reductive, open and normative hermeneutics on transcendence is on the writer’s horizon, although it is also used to describe present realities connected with the art forms of aesthetic-universals. However, ‘aesthetic-universals’ is applied ‘to reveal the most important underlying universal features of art’. There is therefore no basis for denying the synonymity of the two terms, although it could arguably be said that unity is more evocative of transcendence. How then do we begin to think about contemporary aesthetic-universal art forms theoretically?

1. *Unity in the comparative aesthetics corpus in the Axial Period*

It has often been observed that modern aesthetic-universal art forms are a relative latecomer to the transcultural artworld oasis. It may not be the most suitable established site for a political sanctuary in terms of physical geography, but nevertheless the art form did become a transcultural universe and transcendent sanctuary for many past civilisations, from the Harappan civilisation to the Mauryan empire, the Mycenaean kingdom to the Macedonian empire, the Zhou dynasty to the Qin states in the Axial Period. Even after their respective dissolution as entities, their transcultural centrality was not overtaken by another power. The fragility of their cities as art form only serves to accentuate the human transcendence to these cultures. These include the unifying factor and high view of cities as the art form of human achievement: the dualistic relation between man and machine; the conscious world of mastery and formation in relation to the unconscious; the characterisation of industrial labours for premodern technocrats and religious fraternities; a site of refuge and high density

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population with advanced premodern technologies and migration of population; and the city’s welfare are believed to be attainable with established reciprocal responsibilities.

Although one may not be certain about the origins of the unity traditions for art forms, it is indisputable that the introduction of the holy shrine within a city, both along the Silk route and the cradle of civilisations, (at for instance, Yin [modern Anyang], Hastinapura, Jerusalem, Mycenae, Memphis) gave the impetus, if not the origin, for its importance in transcultural transcendental and theoretical aesthetic thought. Art forms of unity indeed engender a sense of identity, and over time do begins to take on a mythic, utopian quality, but nonetheless it is counterpointed by transformative progress. It has been debated that the mythmaking of great art was part of a political ploy to ‘write up’ what was, in fact, insignificant and provincial.\(^1\) Art forms of unity thus became metaphors for rehearsing history, rather than being the site for a greater unfolding of art’s affective potentiality.

The rituals celebrated by the citizens in their sanctuaries further heightened the mystique of the city as art form. The architectonics and liturgics, possibly composed and developed for these auspicious occasions, allow one a creative window into an understanding of the artworld concerning the importance of unity (see Figure 5). Much study has been done on

this subject and what I shall attempt in this section instead is a brief overview of the application of ‘unity/purity’ in the premodern or Axial Period (900–200 BCE)\textsuperscript{15} by Karl Jaspers, and then I shall also put forward an organising concept behind the various motifs that are connected with it.

Analysis of motifs connected with unity

R.A. Mall refers unity to as ‘the precondition for the possibility of any intercultural understanding’ in the form of \textit{philosophia} or \textit{religio perennis}. Karen Armstrong’s delineation of the meanings of unity and the motifs connected with and generated by it will be my entry point in the discussion that follows. She lists eight transformative aspects in her \textit{The Great Transformation} (2006):\textsuperscript{16} (i) ritual; (ii) kenosis; (iii) knowledge; (iv) suffering; (v) empathy; (vi) concern for everyone; (vii) all is one; and (viii) empire. Armstrong analyses how these motifs became attached to the symbol of unity, what their relationship to each other is, and what their organising centre might be.

Mall argues that the most elemental feature of axial unity theory is the concept of tolerance: unity has been founded on cooperation and communication among cultures and religions.\textsuperscript{17} This forms the central characteristic of ‘three teachings, one family’ “三教，一庭” in China which enables three worldviews – Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism – to succeed in living together. Distinguishing the qualitative differentiation of \textit{nei} (within) and \textit{wai} (without) in the sphere of morality and political power respectively, Heiner Roetz observes Mencius’ dictum of ‘he who is humane will gain glory, and he who is inhumane will gain disgrace’ (\textit{Mencius} 7a.45) marks institutional punishment as ethically irrelevant.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} Unless otherwise specified, all dates are BCE.
\textsuperscript{17} R. Mall, \textit{Intercultural Philosophy} (2000): 8.
There are two important aspects of tolerance in unity theory, that is, ‘art embodies the art forms’ and ‘art is pre-eminent in the art form’, which essentially hold together the nexus of motifs and concepts connected with cathartic unity.

It is this fused concept that lends legitimacy to aesthetic-universal art forms as the political field of the artworld. Indeed, it may not be inaccurate to say that at least some groups in the artworld believed the tolerance of values or art forms to be prior to the tolerance of art practitioners.\(^{19}\) This would also suggest that art practitioners were tolerant so that art could manifest its affective impact through a mediator-praxis in the art forms. As is pointed out by Mall, ‘[an] intercultural society led by the regulative idea of an overlapping unity without uniformity is to be preferred over a merely multicultural one … this preference is because a multicultural society tends toward an illusionary purity of the different cultures believing in a static identity that does not exist. Those who overrate identity cannot avoid becoming formalistic, exclusivistic, or even fundamentalistic’.\(^{20}\) Hence, the priority of kenotic unity over art practitioners is clear, even though the two are in some sense interconnected. In this context, the tolerance of art practitioners (as in the artists themselves showed tolerant) is inseparable from the tolerance of unity as the site in and through which art would affectively impact its creativity through the mediator-praxis.

It is precisely because unity is the sites of art that many motifs connected with it cohere. In the first place, unity is conceived as inseparable precisely because it is art’s expressive locus or community of locus.\(^{21}\) Although some circles in the artworld did possibly conceive of unity’s independent inseparability (\textit{Tao-Te Ching} 16),\(^{22}\) the visionary perspective is


\(^{21}\) The phrase was used by A. Whitehead, \textit{Adventures of Ideas}, New York: Mentor (1960): 190. The Receptacle is ‘Plato’s doctrine of the medium of intercommunication’ (192), and ‘the community of the world, which is matrix for all begetting, and whose essence is process with retention of connectedness’ (154).


‘Not to know the normal is to be without basis.
To innovate without basis bodes ill.'
decisively against it (*Ta-Hsueh*).\(^{23}\) One other corollary of the idea that art is sovereign in a unity discourse is its creative influence on the artworld is also impacted in homeostatic unity.

‘Do to others as you would have them do to you’ represents a bold and brilliant criterion of reform and regeneration; it is a criterion resulting from reflexions on the conditions required for an enlightened society of unity (*Matthew 7.12; Mahabharata 5.1517*). This attitude regards knowing humanity as more vital than merely knowing nature. If people cannot know and regulate themselves, how can they hope to know and control all of nature? Indeed, Confucius did not look for the basis of human goodness and morality outside of human beings, but observed that the source and structure of human goodness and happiness is to be found within (*The Analects 12.2*). But there are significant uses of unity in the Axial corpus\(^{24}\) in regard to the role of transcendence in relation to *topos* or *basho*; the dissolution of art forms and its art spaces can be said to be a watershed in various histories of the artworld.\(^{25}\) The recurrent aspirations connected with art forms appeared to be dashed, but an unexpected phenomenon occurred. With the dissolution of one aesthetic-universal art form, the aesthetics did not diminish in importance and relevance. In fact, the significance increased after each rediscovery of their cultural roots and humanity. As Georges Didi-Hubermann has observed, “many historians and critics of twentieth-century art have drawn

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\(^{24}\) Axial corpus refers to texts used in the Chinese, Indian and European aesthetics, between 900 to 200 BCE.

a lesson from that ‘age of mechanical reproduction’, have drawn its consequences for the very production of artistic objects. But such reflections on reproducibility, on the ‘loss of originality’ and of ‘origin’, have proceeded as if foregrounding these notions must inevitably make the ‘archaic’ and out-dated question of the aura, linked as it was to the world of ‘cult image’, fall away and hence disappear”.

Today postmodern visionaries have looked beyond transculturality and the regeneration of their aesthetic-universal art forms for a deeper insight. Many traditional strands of unity theory re-appeared in different forms in the practice of contemporary art practitioners, including the concept of a transcendental unity that is found widely distributed amongst the visionary Axial corpus. It is therefore clear that the unity traditions were not discarded but underwent development. Indeed, instead of a repudiation of the unity traditions, contemporary transculturality had transcended them, and had found a way to take account of aesthetic judgement and to express its aspiration for a more meaningful and greater accomplished potentiality in which these traditions would be completed.

The regenerations of the artworld to its site, of the artworld’s connection to art, and of unity’s former accomplishments were one preoccupation of the many axial visionaries. They looked towards the moment when the people would be brought back to unity amidst great oneness. This could only come about when art had reunited the observers and regenerated unity. From this pivotal idea of regeneration, two key elements linked with transcendental unity proceeded. The first was that the artworld, which had been a source of constant angst and catharsis to the artworld, would now find resolution and peace and

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solace (see Herodotus 6.21). Indeed world peace was not merely outside its purview (Isaiah 2.2-4). The second was that the regeneration of unity would culminate in the transformation of nature. As Robert Wilkinson has observed, the transcendental regeneration of unity is like a magnet that has attracted other nirvanic themes to it, culminating in a traditional and yet fluid pattern, and this forms one of the most prominent and persistent elements of transcultural aesthetics corpus of transcendental aspirations. It is precisely this particular element (that is, the transcendental regeneration of unity) that was being transmitted from one generation to the next as a tradition that was later considered and expanded on in the twentieth first century and had control over much of transcultural transcendental thought. And it is possible to consider that it is precisely this tradition that helped shape much of the theory and praxis of many contemporary transcultural art practitioners. I hope to demonstrate this later.

Summary

The most important organising concept of unity traditions is art as transcendence. It embodies both aesthetic-universal art forms and demonstrates its affective creativity and sovereignty both in and through transcultural art practitioners. From this critical bi-polar concept many forms of these traditions (as evident in the Axial corpus) receive their impetus and origin: the sacredness of liturgical unity; unity as an awakening of the authentic self; unity of interiority and the sacred text; unity as the site of stability, security and salvation.


29 Burke describes the idea of nature and their goal of harmony, especially harmony with nature. In the Chinese aesthetics, it is best presented as the fruition of human nature (Confucian tradition), cosmic nature (Taoism tradition), and Buddha nature (Buddhism tradition). T. Burke, The Major Religions: The Introduction with Texts, Cambridge, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers (1996): 97.


31 Note that R. Wilkinson has asserted that the Rig Veda or Bhagavad-gītā has its relevance for the unity tradition, as developed in M. Hassain’s ‘The Indian Sense of Bliss: the Upanisadic Ananda’ in New Essays in Comparative Aesthetics (2007): 22f. The issue of where there was a dichotomising of the two entities (ananda and aesthetic experience) is too large for us to take up here. However, there might be tentative steps taken in this direction; see discussion in section 2 of this chapter.
(from suffering); unity as a site of self control and compassion; unity as the site of kindness and generosity; unity as the site of cosmic oneness or edios (essence); unity as the site of the universal sovereignty of art. With the impermanence of art forms, these ideas were not discarded but were charged with a transcendental garb. The one preoccupation of the postmodern visionaries was the reunion of the potentialities. This future regeneration is expected to occur in a renewed unity.

2. Unity in transcultural aesthetics literature: Chinese, Indian and European

The transcendental regeneration of unity and related ideas, enshrined in the comparative aesthetics corpus, were constant themes in numerous transcultural writings of the Axial Period, which emanated from different cultural domains. Indeed, at least one scholar has concluded that transcendental aspirations for a more brilliant art form was central to the transcultural aesthetics of that period although this subject has rarely been investigated. The centrality of aesthetic-universals art for transcultural aesthetics during this period serves to show the tenacity of the unity traditions. In addition, the traditions emanating from this period also demonstrate development and intensification.

Yet there was a sense that the greater artistic fulfilments given in specific discourses (for example, in China, after the collapse of the Zhou dynasty and the unification of the warring states by Qin) were not completed. The return had materialised, but was that the complete fulfilment of art’s potentiality? The art form was reformed but its aspiration and splendour may pale in comparison with that of the former or the future projection. Could this be the art form or vision as described in Mencius 2a.2? Such enquiries loomed large in the minds of scholars.

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33 ‘This is a ch’i (qi, energy) which is, in the highest degree, vast and hao jun (unyielding). Nourish it with integrity and place no obstacle in its path and it will fill the space between Heaven and Earth. It is a ch’i which unities rightness and the Way. Deprive it of these and it will collapse. It is born of accumulated rightness, and cannot be appropriated by anybody through a sporadic show of rightness’. Mencius 2a.2 in (Trans.) Y.-L. Fung, *Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, (Trans.) D. Bodde, 2 Vols., Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press (1952-53): 78. In Lau’s translation, he uses the old Wade-Giles system of transliteration of Chinese characters in this book.
of the regenerated observers and such thoughts were also found expressed in respective
cultural aesthetics texts. Almost invariably, yearnings for the transcendental art form, site
and regeneration were prominent. Indeed, during this period (between the Axial and the
Enlightenment) fraught with tumult, external forces on several occasions threatened the
annihilation of transcultural aesthetics, and internal tensions seemed ready to cause its
disintegration. It was, however, the unity ideal with its various texts, which provided the
recurrent ideology that enabled transculturality to survive. While it is to be expected that
new circumstances would develop to creative reinterpretation of the traditions (and this is
best observed in the Indian aesthetics), by and large the same themes found in the
comparative aesthetic corpus that were being utilised in the practices of the modern period.

The Chinese aesthetics

In the unity poem of *Tao-Te Ching* 1 (ca.600 BCE), the aesthetic-universal art forms’ tolerance
is affirmed:

There is a thing formless yet complete.
It existed before Heaven and Earth.
Motionless and fathomless,
It stands alone and never changes.
It pervades everywhere and never becomes exhausted.
It may be regarded as the Mother of all beneath Heaven.
We do not know its name, but we call it Tao.35

This element of thought is not limited to the *Tao-Te Ching* but can also be found in the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* and I-Hsuan’s *Sermon*.\(^{36}\) Tied closely to this idea, in Ch’uan-hsi’s the *Great Learning*, is the insistence that the art form is art’s affective locus: there is being; there is nonbeing.\(^ {37}\)

The reunion of artworld back to unity is also ardently desired for the Chinese aesthetics corpus. This, in turn, is closely tied up with the desire for unity’s regeneration (cf. The *Great Learning*; the *Tao-Te Ching*). Hence, in Confucius’ the *Doctrine of Mean*, there is a very moving entreaty for observers to be reunited (art is not mentioned specifically but the artisan and virtues are):

There are nine standards by which to administer the empire, its states, and the families. They are:

Cultivating the personal life, honouring the worthy, being affectionate to relatives, being respectful toward the great ministers, identifying oneself with the welfare of the whole body of officers, treating the common people as one’s own children, attracting the various artisans, showing tenderness to strangers from far countries, and extending kindly and awesome influence on the feudal lords’.\(^ {38}\)

However, in Mo Tzu, the reunion of the observers to unity and the cultivation of art forms are confidently asserted (in *Doctrine of Universal Love, Heaven and Social Welfare* II.15) without any note of entreaty. This is significant as it shows Mo Tzu’s confidence in the impacts of the essence of art concerning unity/purity. Political realities of these periods might have


caused such an ongoing aspiration, but such a phenomenon also indicates that transcultural intentions and aspirations for their aesthetic fulfilment have been expanded into the transcendental potentials (in the case of Mo Tzu and Tao-Te Ching). It is also interesting to note, in Chu’ang Tzu’s Commentaries, the author describes his dialectic ‘synthesis of opposites’ action as key feature: when there is life there is death, and when there is death there is life (the theory of mutual production), but what illuminates the matter is nature – this is the logic.³⁹ Chu’ang Tzu, approximately seven centuries later, is once again instrumental in illuminating the development of the Ch’ān School.

Other motifs connected to unity in the comparative aesthetics corpus are also found in Chinese aesthetics; although there are three worldview systems, art forms are usually personified in a multiple approach to things (see FIGURE 6).⁴⁰ More significantly, the Chinese aesthetics corpus is implicitly turned on its head in that it is not the aesthetic-universal art form that is being interrogated but the art form probing the art practitioners and the artworld. Conscience is thus levelled at the observers and practitioners, not the art


form. This may reflect a tendency to revere transcultural art forms in the modern time.\textsuperscript{41} In the spirit of the Chinese aesthetics:

Very hard have we striven
That the rites might be without mistake.
The skilful recitant conveys the message,
Goes and gives it to the pious son:
‘Fragrant were your pious offerings,
The Spirits enjoyed their drink and food.
They assign to you a hundred blessings.
According to their hopes, to their rules,
All was orderly and swift,
All was straight and sure.
For ever they will bestow upon you good store:
Myriads and tens of myriads’.\textsuperscript{42}

The Indian aesthetics

The nature of Indian aesthetics writings would inevitably lead to a more pronounced transcendental treatment of the traditions inherited from the comparative aesthetics corpus. Hence, unity is greatly associated with transcendence in Indian aesthetics writings and is often treated in conjunction with other transcendental motifs: the art practitioners and the new experience. It is in these writings that one finds a very pronounced development of unity traditions.

It is to be noted that, in the Indian aesthetics literature, traditions are retained as well as developed. There is nothing ‘new’ in such a procedure as this phenomenon of \textit{rasa-dhvani} \textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Poetry Sutra: Ode 209}.

was already present in the visionary aesthetics corpus (for instance, *The Vedanta Sūtra*).\(^{44}\)

Hence, art is affirmed to be tolerant of and in the ‘new’ art form, where art’s affective presence is said to be there in particular (described in the Upanishads as ‘interior sky in the space of consciousness’ or *antar-jrdaya akasa*).\(^{45}\) This is noteworthy as art can function as the site of art’s affective potentiality only if art embodies it.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (200BCE),\(^{46}\) the āśrama scheme is connected with unity. Clearly, the roots of this conception can be traced back to the āśrama system.\(^{47}\) It is therefore affirmed once again that Brahmical discourse offers liberation and rest through sequential mediation, in this instance, the āśrama system.\(^{48}\) In the Gītā solution, the mediation makes coherent the contradiction within the Vedic injunction to perform dharmic action and the claim for the renunciation of action. The connection of the mediation with unity in *Bhagavad-gītā* therefore cannot be overemphasised as it serves as a critical backcloth for the understanding of Indian aesthetic development and why they had art forms as their focal point.\(^{49}\)

The motif of the ‘all is one’ or *universism*\(^ {50}\) and the attendant impact on the ethos of class systems are also treated (the *Mahabharata, 800BCE*).\(^ {51}\) The connection between the two must be underscored even though the exact relationship between them may be somehow ambiguous: that the *Kshatriya* (warrior class) can only aspire to become monk in his next

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\(^{44}\) *The Vedanta Sūtra* is a collection of Indian philosophical tradition based on the *Upanishads*.


\(^{46}\) This was composed probably over eight hundred years, between 400BCE and 400CE. See D.S. and J.B. Noss, ‘Later Hinduism’ in *A History of the World’s Religions*, New York: Macmillan (1994): 129.


\(^{48}\) Ibid: 138.


life. But what is not clear is the status of the Kshatriya, given the nature of his daily karma; it seemed unlikely that he can achieve even this limited goal. Is there no aspiration and hope? In Bhagavad-gītā, the Kshatriya is said to have been shown empathy and compassion: this new path is the way of karma (selfless action), achieved through bhakti (devotion) to the Divine Person. Such an ambiguous state of affairs may not seem significant if one also bears in mind the fact that in the Axial corpus the same ambiguity is found (cf. Shatapatha Brahmana 11.2.6.3). Perhaps circumstantial factors have a large influence on the transcultural conception of the status of the Kshatriya in the new world.

Concerning the ‘new’ contemporary art form, some scholars have seen in Bhagavad-gītā and the Mahabharata this genesis of the idea of a transcendental empire. Thus Armstrong: ‘Bhagavad-gītā … marks a moment of religious transition … Krishna proposed karma-yoga … even a warrior who was fighting a deadly battle could achieve moksha. To achieve this, he had to dissociate himself from the effect of his action – in this case the battle, and the death of his kinsfolk. Like any yogin, the man of action (karma) must give up desire. He could not permit himself to lust after the fame, wealth, or power that would result from military campaign. It was not the actions themselves that bound human beings to the endless round of rebirth, but attachment to the fruits of these deeds. The warrior must

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perform his duty without hope of personal gain’.\(^{53}\) Scholars of this persuasion normally cite *Shatapatha Brahmana* 2.2.2 to support the fact that the ‘holy figure’ or ‘visible deity’ *brahmacarin* is said to be the embodiment of the new ‘self’ (*atman*) (that is, art form) in verse 6 (see **FIGURE 7**).\(^{54}\)

The above text also raises another interesting problem. It appears that the transcendental regeneration of the artworld is conceived in terms of a new self but without a new art form. Perhaps one can see the incipient stages of the displacement of one in favour of the other in transcendental thought.

To conclude my survey of the Indian aesthetics literature, mention must again be made of the fact that traditional elements connected with unity are consistently applied, though the transcendental thrust is pronounced. Although this does not constitute a new development, as already in the visionaries such a tendency was present, it does, however, show once again the impact that the unity traditions had on transcultural, transcendental and theoretical reflexions, and also the tenacity of those traditions. Transcendental aspirations are focused on unity/purity and the lack of mention of a new art form in *Shatapatha Brahmana* 2.2.2 may be significant.

**The European aesthetics**

A history of European art that explores antagonism towards rituals, knowledge, compassion, or unity, can easily mislead one into thinking that the status of both the art form and that of art spaces as *topos* imbued with transcendental aspirations had been rejected.\(^{55}\) Instead, a survey of the extant documents that have been published reveals that

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unity/aesthetic-universal art forms are not rejected.\textsuperscript{56} In fact the impact of unity traditions on the European artworld was so great that the eulogising of unity reached an apex in modern times. Moreover, the art form (albeit a regenerated one) is not obsolete in western philosophical thought.

(i) European aesthetics and unity

As the art forms are usually inseparable in transcultural thought,\textsuperscript{57} a separate treatment of western or European vis-à-vis unity without due regard to European attitudes towards the art form may lead to a misrepresentation. But as there may be some implicit separation between these two entities in some quarters, and as the European polemic against the art form is of a more intense nature, there is justification for a separate treatment.

Some texts may indicate an antagonism towards the art form. In Plato’s Republic Book 10 (509 BCE), serious charges are levelled against mimetic poetry as an unbridled art form that effects the human psyche.\textsuperscript{58} The art form of mimetic poetry is likened to an art form of corruption because of the defilement by illegitimate experience of catharsis or purification\textsuperscript{59} and the propagation of falsehood.\textsuperscript{60} Conversely, the community that distanced themselves into a positive evaluation of responses allow themselves to avoid it in real life.\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
In addition to the tendency just noted above, we find in Aristotle an interesting phenomenon where the community is likened to a biologist's observant mind: dissecting and observing the process of development and decay. There are therefore good grounds for viewing Aristotle's *Poetics* (335 BCE) as containing unity language:

> Tragedy is the mimesis of a serious and complete action of some magnitude; in language embellished in various ways in its different parts; in dramatic, not narrative form; achieving, through pity and fear, the catharsis of such passions.\(^{62}\)

The author finds refuge within his community, gaining a better understanding of human nature or spirituality, where the initiates who partook of ritual did not do so in order to

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learn facts and doctrine but to ‘experience certain emotions and to be put in a certain disposition’.

Aristotle believed tragedy helps to educate the emotions and enable people to experience appropriately. This art form of mimesis, by the purification of feelings stirred by the peculiar pleasure of tragedy, transforms one’s deepest fears into something pure and transcendent (see Figure 8). To use such an art form would therefore imply that the traditions and symbolism of mimetic art are still being applied by way of transference even though the artworld has distanced itself from that art form.

But the most interesting development in the conception of unity as the focus of transcendental aspirations is found in the Neoplatonic unity traditions, in the form of medieval aesthetics: vis-à-vis Augustinian and Thomistic aesthetics. One conception is De Divinis Nominibus (1268 CE), where Beauty is inseparably conjoined with Good. This connection to unity/purity marks the apex in the idealisation of unity or the Neoplatonic Absolute, for, in this writing, terms usually applied to an attribute of the Creator are applied to the ‘nature’ a fortiori of ‘art forms’. This writing evidently borrowed much of its language and imagery from the Neo-Platonist unity theme in Pseudo-Dionysius’ Corpus Dionysiarum. For instance in De Divinis Nominibus:

One should distinguish between beauty and beautifulness as the cause embracing at once all beauty. For, having made this distinction in all being between participation and things participating, we call beautiful the thing which participates in beautifulness, because from it is imparted to all reality the beauty appropriate to everything, and also because it is the cause of proportion and brilliance.

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67 Ibid.
It is noteworthy that an artworld that has been distanced from the unity aesthetics and art forms could produce what can be considered to be the apex of the idealisation of unity or the absolute. This alone speaks volumes for the importance of unity in the artworld’s understanding of transcendence. Hence, despite their dramatic experiences or developments, the European aesthetic and artworld did not reject the application of unity as the appropriate site or *topos* and symbol of the art’s affective transcendental impact.

(ii) European aesthetics and art forms

This matter will be treated briefly. While it is true that the artworld regarded the idea of ‘fine arts’ as a late development in western thought, the art form *per se* as the locus of art’s affective presence in consciousness and the mediator-praxis encounter was not rejected. This explains the presence of a poetic art form like Dante’s the *Divine Comedy* (1321 CE) and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1674 CE). Evidence from the *Divine Comedy* suggests that the art space would play a vital role in the transcendental struggle between ‘Paradise’ and ‘Inferno’. It is only through a serious reckoning with these texts that we can appreciate why the artworld understood themselves as the ‘interim’ or ‘purgatory’ art form and as making symbolic penitence for the iniquities of the world. It was precisely because the art form was understood as serving a vicarious function for the larger world. It can be seen that the

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68 Unlike the medieval modes of thought, the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum* in the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa is where in reality the absolute position and the absolute negation coincide. See E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, (Trans.) M. Domandi, New York: Harper Torchbooks (1964): 8-10.


European artworld did not repudiate the important role the art form had in European aesthetics and transculturality. Rather, they were against unbridled art forms. Until the regenerated and reflexive art form was realised, they acted in the locus of the art form. It seems best to imagine this substitution as being an interim or transitory measure until such time when the art form is once again revitalised and under the more discerning artistic direction.

3. Unity and transcultural avant-garde movements: from Renaissance to the Enlightenment

Up to this point I have been concentrating on aesthetics literary documents and art forms. However, I now turn to western movements that did not only leave behind manifestoes or literary documents, but actions as well. I have in mind particularly the many avant-garde movements from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment period that were so much part and parcel of the second western Axial Period (from industrial to technological art-form movements). A consideration of these, however, gives a broader picture of a second western Axial Period and prevents a skewed understanding of the influence of unity traditions on it.

On a side note in An Essay on Man (1946) (on Pascal’s Pénées 1858CE), Ernst Cassirer observes that the unity of human existence is indeed its own contradiction: humans are a ‘strange mixture of being and nonbeing’. Cassirer adds that, religion, reveals a double human – that is, humanity before and after the fall (destined for the highest goal, humanity forfeited their position), who as a result of the fall lost their power and reason, and whose will became perverted. This dictum confirms the mystery of the God of whom it speaks is a Deus absconditus ‘a hidden God’, and humanity made in God’s image is also a homo

Where religion is concerned, it is neither a theory of God and man nor about their relationship, but an understanding of the will of God concerning ‘his concealment.’ Thus Blaise Pascal concludes:

God being concealed, every religion that does not say that God is concealed is not true; and every religion that does not render a reason for this, is not instructive. Our religion does, all this: Vere tu es Desus absconditus.74

The Copernican-Reformation-Cartesian effect

In the reaction to the form of virtuous life or the ‘sacraments’ offered by the Holy Roman Empire, the Europeanisation programme of the fifteenth century Copernican system (from Galileo to Newton) and the sixteenth century Protestant reformation (from Luther to Cranmer) precipitated the European regenerative movements. These factors explain not only the cause of the reform but also the rationale of the various actions taken by the social reformers with the support of European princes. Thus attention was centred on the political sanctuaries in dispute. Once reformers managed to wrest control from the Holy Roman Empire, they immediately set about purifying the nation of art form and re-establishing it.75 Jean le Rond d'Alembert in his Elements of Philosophy (1759) also describes these turning points, and refers to the seventeenth century Cartesian system – the transition from the philosophy of nature to the mathematical science of nature – as:

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73 Ibid.
A very remarkable change in our ideas [...] whose rapidity seems to promise an even greater transformation to come [...] Thus, from the principles of the secular sciences to the foundations of religious revelation, from metaphysics to matters of taste, from music to morals, from the scholastic disputes of theologians to matters of trade, from the laws of princes to those of peoples, from natural law to the arbitrary laws of nations ... everything has been discussed and analysed, or at least mentioned. The fruit or sequel of this general effervescence of minds has been to cast new light on some matters and new shadows on others, just as the effect of the ebb and flow of the tides is to leave some things on the shore and to wash others away.\textsuperscript{76}

It must not be forgotten that the nature of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment is predominantly intellectual and religious in character – a ‘belief in the unity and immutability of reason’.\textsuperscript{77} This can be seen in three ways. First, the reformers actions revealed their zeal for stabilisation of the political civic law.\textsuperscript{78} Secondly, open education on masses (that is, socio-psychological experience and of the judgement of taste) conducted by reformers that point unambiguously to the nature of the movement they fathered.\textsuperscript{79} Finally, as observed by Cassirer in his \textit{Philosophy of the Enlightenment} (1932), the European Enlightenment project consciously engaged reason as an acquisition through ‘the original intellectual force that guides the discovery and determination of truth’ (agency and effects) rather than as mere heritage.\textsuperscript{80} The symbolic (and not simply political or religious) character

of the European Enlightenment project must be sufficiently appreciated before one analyzes the avant-garde movements around the time of contemporary art practitioners.

Kant the Philosopher

Cassirer comments that anyone who fails to recognise the symbolic character of the Enlightenment project against the past colonisation of metaphysical superstitions – all of which has a transcendental and utopian aspect will not be able to aesthetically judge the events in the enlightened Europe of the nineteenth to twentieth century in accordance with the facts. Therefore, even though political and social factors have an important role to play in the intellectual and transcendental revolutions against past colonisation, it is religious tradition and political theory that were the main causes.

There are socio-anthropological debates linked with Immanuel Kant and the Enlightenment project from the late 1780s, called the ‘third branch of philosophy’ by Donald Crawford, which join theoretical philosophy (metaphysics) and practical philosophy (ethics) in being based on a priori principles. Constraint of space dictates that such enquiries be bypassed. Although I am inclined towards the view of Cassirer on these issues, similar results would still be obtained if one were to grant that Kant’s enquiry is that there are a priori conditions for making objective, universally valid moral judgements based on pleasure – a type of aesthetic judgement that something is beautiful. As Ernst Cassirer observes:

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The transcendental unity of apperception is by no means exclusively related to the logic of scientific thinking, or restricted to it. It is not only the condition for this thinking and for the postulation and determination of its object; it is also the condition of ‘of every possible perception’. … Now an uninterrupted path leads from the mere ‘affection’ of the senses, with which the critique of reason begins, to the forms of pure intuition – and from these in turn to the productive imagination and the unity of action expressed in the judgement of the pure understanding. Sensibility, intuition, understanding are not mere successive phases of knowledge to be apprehended in their simple succession, but are necessarily intertwined as its constitutive factors.84

Hence, there is warrant to speak of similar tendencies85 even if these Enlightenment project movements originated differently.

According to Cassirer in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: the Phenomenology of Knowledge* (1965), certain conceptual formulations of Kant’s insight are to be taken together into a ‘unity’ wherever a ‘multiplicity’ is to be broken down and articulated in determinate forms. There are three aspects that motivated Kant’s ‘poly-dimensional’ insight into the cultural world.86 First, Kant believed unequivocally that a ‘modality’ depends essentially on the specific structural principle which is operative and dominant in each particular sphere.87 Secondly, freedom for scientific objectivisation, the theoretical concept of the unity of nature, is perceived and intuited from the start as the one aim of Kant’s concern.88 Thirdly, synergism: Kant’s concept of how in the continuous mobility of the spirit, all sight passes into contemplation and speculation combined.89 It must be emphasised that Cassirer described Kant as a philosopher.90 This observation is absolutely crucial in the assessment of the nature of the ‘third branch of philosophy’ Kant engaged in, for it demonstrates that

87 Ibid: §36.
88 Ibid: §35.
Kant’s critique was not just motivated by socio-anthropological factors *per se* but was imbued with a pronounced transcendental character.

Although there is no explicit mention of unity, Kant’s reasons for the Enlightenment project can fall comfortably into the ambit of the unity traditions. Indeed, when one bears in mind the impact of unity on transcultural creativity and transcendental thought in the second European axial period, one may safely presume that the symbol may not be far from the thought horizon of Kant, or even Mozart. This can be seen in a number of ways. First, the idea that the essence of *a priori* is the transcendental reality, which is articulated explicitly in the unity traditions. Secondly, the concept of ‘freedom’ that Kant had was probably not primarily modal independence but transcendental regeneration by the essence of truth from the contemplation or speculation combined that the observer. As such, renewal and regeneration of European aesthetics were to be centred on unity.91 Indeed, if one is allowed to identify Kant with Hegel, one can legitimately state that Hegel made transcendental ‘absolute’ claims.92 Regeneration of the nation, the role of art and the transcendental claim are all motifs related to the unity traditions. And if one could further identify the project or movement started by Hegel will be even more firmly established. This will be seen later.

### The aesthetics reformers and the Idealist

It must be emphasised at the start that the main reasons for the reform against the colonisation of the Holy Roman Empire in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries were religious in nature. This can also be seen in a number of ways in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Michael Inwood insists correctly that such a reform in societies, which in the humanities’ terms would be considered as ‘Hegel’s end of art thesis,’ could occur

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91 Ibid: 16.
because of religious motivation. This appears even more clearly when one observes that the protection and occupation of the social sanctuary took priority over the occupation of strategic aesthetic spaces. Moreover, it is also possible to see the attack on the modern civilisation as arising not from mere military considerations but from aesthetic and religious concerns: the purification of the society and mind or spirit (Geist) as art form. Through the ‘life of sensory cognition’ (vita cognitionis sensitivae) and the reminder of Friedrich Schiller’s *Letters on Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), Alexander Baumgarten’s aesthetics (1735) once again overcomes the antagonism between ‘sensationalism’ and ‘rationalism’ and affirms the productive synthesis of ‘reason’ and ‘sensibility’ in the Idealist Enlightenment project. In Cassirer’s *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1932), we have evidence that it was the art form in the religious context that suggested the belief of ‘transcendental’ justification and foundation as a real unity – ‘a movement whose point of departure lies in a fixed intellectual centre and which strives toward a definite ideal goal’.

In summary, it should be noted that unity’s regenerative programme took paramount importance as it depended on the regeneration of a nation or culture. Unity needed to be liberated because it was occupied by undiscerning colonisers and this occupation led to a continuous violation of the aesthetic sanctuary in unity. The belief in the tolerance of unity and its art forms, an important aspect of the unity traditions, therefore led the reforming forces to conduct recurrent transcultural dialogue with the respective colonising empires.

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Other avant-garde and transcendental aesthetics movements\textsuperscript{97}

For want for a better term, I propose to follow Paul Crowther in referring to those who led these phenomenological aesthetics movements as sign-visionaries, and derives from a loose reading of Slavoj Žižek on some ideas in Lacan’s later work.\textsuperscript{98} They were mainly concerned with a self-conscious capacity to signify, but with an emphasis on the postmodern urban wilderness as the \textit{topos} or \textit{basho} where such regeneration was to be witnessed.\textsuperscript{99} Two incidents deserve our attention.

The first is narrated in \textit{Negative Dialectics} (1966). Following two World Wars, we are told by Adorno that:

\begin{quote}
Culture abhors stench because it itself stinks: because its palace, as Brecht put it in a magnificent line, is built of dogshit. Years after that line was written, Auschwitz has irrefutably demonstrated culture’s failure. That it could happen in the midst of all the traditions of philosophy, art and enlightening sciences says more than merely that these traditions – spirit – were unable to take hold of people and change them. In these lines of business [‘Sparten’] themselves, in their emphatic claim to autarky, untruth is squatting [‘haust’]. After Auschwitz all culture, and urgent critique along with it, is garbage. In restoring itself after what took place without resistance in its own landscape, culture has become entirely the ideology it was potentially since the time when, opposing material existence, it presumed to inspire that existence with light – the same light refused to existence by the division of spirit from manual labour. (…) Whoever pleads for the preservation of this radically guilty and shabby culture makes himself its accomplice; while whoever refuses culture directly promotes the barbarism that culture reveal itself to be. Not
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{97} For a good discussion of these movements in the twentieth century from a sociological point of view, see R. Sheppard, \textit{Modernity-Dada-Postmodernity}, (Eds.) M. Perloff, and R. Rumold, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press (1999).


\textsuperscript{99} See J. Emerling, \textit{Theory for Art History}, New York and London: Routledge (2005): xi-xiii. This may be due to the influences of four critical theoretical predecessors: Freud, Marx, Nietzsche and Saussure, whose texts are much used in European aesthetics.
even silence leads out of this circle; silence only rationalises particular subjective incapacity by granting it the status of objective truth, thereby once more degrading truth into a lie.\textsuperscript{100}

The second comes from the incident connected with the 9/11 psychological siege of western world by modern day terrorists who presumably led their followers into the twin-tower art form that is reverently spoken of as the new ‘ground zero’, ‘mirroring evil’ that found itself in unexpected proximity to extreme violence.\textsuperscript{101} The express purpose was to make the boundaries of the artworld disintegrate in order to gain access into the symbolic art forms of the societal psyche in order to control it.\textsuperscript{102}

Apart from these two incidents, the evidence at hand forbids one absolute certainty on whether these postmodern aesthetic movements had the unity traditions as one of their chief tenets.

The evidence from the European aesthetics

In the postmodern narratives of twentieth first century, European aesthetics articulates the recurrent aspiration among certain transcultural art practitioners of the regenerative art


form. While one may find any purportedly historical incident in the postmodern narratives to be suspect, it must at least be conceded that such a view could not be an invention of European aesthetics but represented the transcultural aspirations and pieties of those times. Another text, The Universal Exception (2006), gives evidence that such a view was also found among European contemporary art practitioners and observers, whether or not it is a true historical reminiscence. The interesting point to note is that in this text, contemporary art practitioners’ went to their art forms were connected with transcultural aspiration of the enlightenment from the artistic potentiality. And by the participants in such events, it is something that, at the western aesthetics level, the contemporary art practitioner sought to correct. The western or European aesthetics evidence shows once again the presence of the recurrent aspiration of the regenerative art form during the second western ‘Axial’ Period.

4. Unity and aesthetic-universal art forms in the twentieth first century

With the post-war era in the fifties, one would have expected art practitioners to have forsaken the use of unity/purity or aesthetic-universal art forms as a symbol and focus of their transnational and transcendental aspirations for another (for instance, the postmodern media). But this did not occur. In fact, the process of idealisation of aesthetic-universal art forms continued apace culminating in a transcendentalisation of it.

In the Indian aesthetics literature that emanated from the period just after the postcolonial era, recourse is made to a spiritual rasa-dhvani art form to ameliorate the challenges that have come about because of its dissolution. In Katha Upanishad (500 BCE), we have an extended allegory of a dialogue between Nachikerta and Yama, the King of

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Death, discussing whether there is a life after death. Before Nachiketa can obtain an answer to his enquiry, Yama puts him to a spiritual test by refusing to answer his enquiry – as if it were simply a matter of grasping a factual truth. Nachiketa is unmoved and insists on an answer. Yama then tries to distract him with temptations: wealth, political power, and sexual delights. But Nachiketa stands firm demonstrating a certain degree of detachment, thus he passes the test and Yama begins to teach him. Yama’s teaching is that the question about a life after death is the idea of a misguided presupposition: we firstly exist as distinct individuals in what we are pleased to call this life, and secondly the prolongation of this existence will be a good thing. In essence, a being can only continue to exist if it already existed previously. We possess two ‘selves’: one is our True Self and the other is a mere illusion. There is but one Atman, the eternal and infinite Brahman, always in existence and undying. The illusory ‘self’ or the apparent ‘ego self’ is thought to be the source of all misery. Life or reality thus represents the time in which aesthetic-universal art forms are in unity. Immortality is simply an allegory of unity passing through stages: from an earthly unity to a spiritual one.

In Chinese aesthetics literature, a clear harmonious distinction is made between the physical art form and spiritual art form. The necessity for the dissolution or emancipation of the physical art form is however posited in the Tao-Te Ching (ca. 400 BCE) and Platform Sūtra (780 CE). This arises from the idea that it is solely through such dissolution or emancipation that a new unity could be established.

Finally, in the European aesthetics literature, one is able to witness the continued idealisation of aesthetic-universal art. This takes place in many forms, from the Transcendental Absolute myth to the incredible idealisation found in Kant’s Kritik der reinen Vernunft (1781) where the idea that nothing untoward ever happened in art was put

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106 An excellent investigation of this inner unity has been attributed to the works of Archibald Allan Bowman, Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, (Ed.) N.K. Smith, 2 Volumes, London: Macmillan (1938). Bowman considered such a myth-making as already present in the Axial corpus.
forward. As Friedrich Schlegel pointed out in the sense that the historian is a prophet turned backward, similarly the visionary art form is to be the living mesh of time and historical consciousness to be remembered:

The true intuition of time cannot be gained in mere recollective memory, but is at the same time knowledge and act: the process in which life itself takes on form, life in the spiritual not merely the biological sense, and that process in which life comes to conceive and know itself – these two must eventually constitute a unity, and hence this conceiving is not the merely external apprehension of a finished and ready form into which life has been squeezed but is the very way life gives itself form in order that in this act of form giving, this formative activity, it may understand itself.

This remembrance and veneration of unity/purity would continue to be ingrained on the conscious and subconscious minds of subsequent generations. Hence, unity cannot be forgotten. For the very symbol in itself is evocative of art’s affective potentiality and the trans-nationhood of the artworld and the world at large. After the dissolution of the art form in the modern post-war era, the aesthetic-universals art-formlessness transculturality continued with the expectancy of a regenerated unity. Alongside this recurrent imagination is found the presence of the concept of a spiritual art form. The transcendentalising of unity did not become a distancing of the symbol of unity from its global geographical site. In fact, it is barely surprising that the ideology that propelled the postmodern artworld to seek a sanctuary in the physical, global art space is also called universalism (in the west) or universism (in the east).

107 See I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 2nd edition, Riga: J.F. Hartknoch [1781]: 181f [ET: *Critique of Pure Reason*, (Trans.) N.K. Smith, London: Macmillan (1961): 191 and 121]. Kant attempts to define the basic difference between schema and image as the ‘image is a product of the empirical faculty of the productive imagination – the schema of sensuous conceptions (of figures in space) is a product and, as it were, a monogram of the pure imagination a priori, whereby and according to which images first become possible’.

Art Praxis: the reconstitution of transcultural value

In closing, we have firstly seen that unity was a tenacious and living transcultural and transcendental symbol right from its inception (whenever this is to be dated) to the modern time and even beyond it. It survived in spite of the fact that the aesthetic-universal art form was dissipated or emancipated. I can thus determine the importance unity traditions had for art practitioners both in the Axial Period and the modern era, and even beyond that. The influence of these traditions would explain the eidos (forms) that the different avant-garde movements and independent groups took during the modern period. At the same time, it also creates the hypothesis that art practitioners in their mediator-praxis art practices had to interact with these traditions, and were, in turn, influenced by them.

The second finding that arises from this study is that these traditions were not fixed and static. Traditional elements were certainly retained, but there was also an ongoing development in the veneration of unity. The apex of such developments can perhaps be considered and to be represented by De Divinis Nominibus (Pseudo-Dionysius). There is also an implicit displacement of the art form in favour of unity and the latter continued to attract to itself the transcultural aspirations, both transhistorical and transcendental, of the art practitioners. Hence, in the development of transcultural thought concerning unity, unity can be seen to have absorbed recurrent aspirations that were not originally connected with it in the premodern or Axial Period. It is in this context that one has to ask the overarching important theoretical enquiry: ‘why did the contemporary art practitioner go to their aesthetic-universals art form?’ If there was an expressed transcultural intention, what was it, and to what extent was it influenced by the unity traditions?

The third finding to be noted is that it is in the realm of the transcendental that unity played a very important role and received the most creative reinterpretation and innovation. The interest in art forms during the modern period was slight when compared to interest in the transcendental unity. This is unlike the aspect of thought connected with unity found in
the *Rig Veda*, *Tao-Te Ching* or the Hebrew corpus *the Psalter*. Perhaps, this may be due to the fact that transcendence loomed very large in the hermeneutical horizon of the modern times. As noted before, the eminence of unity surpassed the eminence of aesthetic-universal art forms when it came to transcendence. And if one were to take into account the transcendental character of contemporary art practitioners’ art practices, the study of contemporary transcultural art practitioners, *vis-à-vis* aesthetic-universal art forms or unity is of utmost importance. Once again, the enquiry ‘why did the contemporary art practitioners go to their art form as site of interaction, negotiation and creation?’ begs a response.
CONCLUSIONS TO PART I:

In Part I, my intention has been to use mediator-praxis and the motif of aesthetic unity traditions in transcultural aesthetics, which has been framed by a consideration of different ways in which the motif of unity/purity has been understood in transcultural aesthetics, and a consideration of discourses on aesthetics and art that I take to be characteristic of the challenges that we face in reflecting on the legacy of contemporary art forms. I began by pointing to the challenges found in recent approaches to unity/purity. I argued that in comparative aesthetics, various world aesthetics seek to validate the contemporary demand for transcultural aesthetics unity/purity. I attempted to bring out this challenge by looking at the relation between the pure encounter and the aesthetic in Eliot Deutsch’s critical writings, and by considering the importance of this relation in the comparative tradition after Deutsch. In particular, I argued that the motif of unity/purity gestures towards a certain autonomy and openness to transcultural intentionality that is equivalent to the ‘milieu’ of contemporary transcultural art and aesthetics in Deutsch’s four strata. In chapter three, I have tried to show that we face the challenge of the aesthetically ‘unity’ or ‘purity’ when we consider the use of the concept as a symbol and focus their transhistorical and transcendental aspirations in transcultural aesthetics art forms. As I have argued, these art forms could be said to consist solely in the shading of its expression, in a gesturing of

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different complexions of aesthetics intentionality. Insofar as this shading is also a tracing of ‘unity’, and of ‘unity’ art forms – a tracing that may be said to approach an art form as a communication of ‘unified/pure’ aesthetic experience – the intentionality it renders can be viewed as at once a ‘unity/purity’ of expression and a ‘unity/purity’ aesthetic. Yet with this shading, transcultural aesthetic art forms also replay the crossing of the unity in Deutsch’s treatment of aesthetic experience; at the same time, they present us with an intentionality to which a complacently postmodernism, for all its devotion to intentionality, remains true.

From chapter three, I have also shown that it is through transcultural aesthetics’ tracing of unity and unity intentionality that the element of transcultural aesthetics is articulated. As we have seen, it is this shading in transcultural aesthetic art forms that gestures towards the singular complexion of their ‘unity’ expressions as well as their aesthetics – and that makes their figuration inseparable from their rendering of aesthetics. This shading is perhaps what first strikes us before these art forms; we could also say that it is a characteristic that enables us to recognise a transcultural art form. Yet in saying this, we have evidently only begun to examine what makes this element the element that it is. To this point, we have been primarily interested in the character of unity in transcultural art forms. While I have argued that this shading also gestures toward itself as a kind of imprint or figuration, it is also possible to examine the theoretical aspects of transcultural art forms somewhat apart from their use of unity/purity – that is, as primary rather than secondary aspects of these art forms. Indeed, in the next few chapters, we will look at the possibility that these aspects may be more decisive to the element of transcultural art forms than the characteristic of shading that we have been concerned with here – even if they are also finally inseparable from this shading. In chapter four, an analysis of transcultural art form discourses will lead me to examine some key elements of interpretation that arise in the writing about them – and to attempt an interpretation of these art forms that would be responsive to such challenges. For this it will be necessary to think further about theoretical enquiries already broached in the last chapter – enquiries of aesthetic feeling and judgement.
In short, by focusing on the critical features of a phenomenological aesthetics perspective, in contrast to a typical cultural perspective, the unity traditions successfully locate the transcultural self in practice, from pre-modern through postmodern periods, imploring practitioners to enquire: what is the value of expressing art forms. Unity-in-diversity is an important symbol and site for contemporary intercultural and theoretical aspirations of the twentieth-first century. In fact it is a magnet that has progressively drawn to its own self, of various presences-in-consciousness themes that are not originally conjoined with. In fact, it became the focus of transcultural aesthetics aspirations. Strivings for the reconstitution of unity (also widely called the ‘experience of perceptual unity’ in neuroscience literature, and humanities and the arts scholarships) are widely expressed by writings and movements of the postmodern period. Given such a context, the theoretical enquiry on whether the contemporary art practitioners are indeed affected by these traditions is a reasonable and significant one.
PART II

Discourses meditation
INTRODUCTION TO PART II

Part I articulates an exploration of world and contemporary art in answer to the enquiry ‘What is transcultural aesthetics?’ I show that transcultural aesthetics can be seen to have as its intentionality the striving to be trans-aesthetically forceful, meaningful, and beautiful, the manner of its coming into being, and the experience of it constituting an integral whole. The chapters in Part II address several aspects of the art forms in such a way as to deepen an understanding of the more abstract concepts and ideas put forward in the first part. These chapters do not in any way attempt to constitute a thorough systematic aesthetics of the art forms as such. It however ventures into the meeting of reality and consciousness that beckons for a more interactive and reciprocal dialogue involving cultures, ideas and beliefs. The recent interest over the utilitarian origin of transcultural aesthetics continues to be a concern if theories within transcultural art movement have yielded completely to the prevailing trends of praxis or if the conceptual basis for their manifestoes has intended to justify as much as to compel. In other words, does transcultural aesthetics provide illuminating insight to a concrete situation in such a way that the immediate context becomes the relevant discourse text? Or has theory then become mere hermeneutics, where self-understanding applies the insight data into the art practitioner’s aesthetics: vis-à-vis experience and action? At the core of these theoretical enquires is perhaps a concern that

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the focus has shifted from *insight* as ‘determinative of aesthetic truth in action’ to *action* as ‘determinative of aesthetic truth in awareness’. I shall engage in this enquiry in Part III. However a deeper concern arises when an art practitioner is proceeding through experience; a ‘suspended’ aesthetics emerges which owes as much to the pragmatic methodological concerns as to the dialectic. The task of working out transcultural aesthetics in the art practices of Kiefer, Tillers, Young, Gao, Federle and Lee in Part II will begin with the task of identifying the nature and place of art practice itself.

One fundamental thesis will direct this discussion: that art practice precedes and produces art theory, not the reverse. However the art practice is determined by art’s own affective impact and inspiration in the world. All art practice is art’s affective art form. Mediator-praxis is developed to introduce art’s affective creative act, and every subsequent act of insight, is also an art practice of reflexion and reconciliation – a linkage that reconnects to nature and aesthetic qualities. Out of this transcultural art practice emerges theoretical activity, which explores and expounds the aims of art. Art theory thus serves as the collaborator of art practice, demonstrating it as art’s affective impact and making evident the imagination of recurrent aspiration. This knowledge of being, as Karl Jaspers reminds us in his *The Great Philosophers* (1962, 1966), leads us to the knowledge of ourselves. We cannot simply contemplate the aims of art in its variations without contemplating first our own nature and intention.

Art practice within transcultural aesthetics therefore cannot be construed exclusively as the practical application (or technique) that makes a theoretical hypothesis relevant and effective. Transcultural theoretical reflexion must emerge out of art practice for art’s sake and the sake of art practice if it is to be taken in tandem with the creativity methodology. The contemporary practice of art is not only the appropriate context for doing transcultural theoretical thinking and meditation, but it is also in itself intrinsically a theoretical activity within a mediator-praxis that is often the source of all innovation and creativity in art practice. This dialectic does not necessary stifle one’s process but stimulates creativity as well. To illustrate this point, Kitarō Nishida, in his 1970s essay ‘Towards a Philosophy of
Religions with the Concept of Pre-established Harmony as Guide’ quotes both the Zen thinker Daito Kokushi: ‘Buddha and I, separate through a billion kalpas, yet not separate for an instant; encountering each other the whole day through, yet not encountering each other for an instant’, and Latin Church Father St. Augustine of Hippo: ‘Our hearts will never rest, O LORD, until they rest in Thee’.\(^2\) This theoretical enquiry of self-understanding, as Nishida underscores, is not to be understood in the Cartesian sense but in the unity/nondual sense that ‘to learn the way of the Buddha “enlightenment” is to learn the self which includes forgetting the ‘self’ and becoming enlightened by the Dharmas, and ‘in self-determination of the self-identity of contradiction’.\(^3\)

Part II will then examine the discourses of transcultural art practitioners to see whether there is data that sheds light on the two questions posed at the start of this study. There are some preliminary matters to be dealt with before we study the relevant texts.

Creative mediator-praxis art forms (II): Intentionality, Art form, and Site

*The issue of intentionality*

Eliot Deutsch’s theory of intentionality, from his *On Truth: An Ontological Theory* (1979), concerns the way the work of art presents itself on its own terms as a unique expression, where it aims to fulfil itself as the thing it presents itself as being.\(^4\) This is then subject to various different valid interpretations. The general application of intentionality in contemporary aesthetics has to do with whatever a thing qua the individual thing that it is aims to be by its own nature. Deutsch stated that the ‘intentionality of a thing gives rise to


\(^3\) Ibid: 40 and 42.

the conditions under which its own authenticity is discerned’. Further, he adds that the ‘intentionality of an utterance is determined in terms of our perceiving what language as language is doing or trying to do in its particular way within its mode of functioning’. In sum, Deutsch’s understanding of intentionality is that it is the expression of the ontological truth of a thing, which reveals itself by its own rightness.

The words ‘unity’ and ‘aesthetic-universals art’ use in transcultural aesthetics

The paucity of direct references to ‘unity’ within contemporary Chinese, Indian and European aesthetics literatures is in stark contrast to the Axial corpus. Indeed, the one occurrence of unity in the contemporary aesthetics is found in universalism (of the western concept) and univerism (of the eastern) as an application-formula statement. The word ‘unity’ is never put onto the lips of contemporary art practitioners by any contemporary art theoreticians, unless it is inferred from their artistic statements.

Of the references to ‘aesthetic-universals art’ found in the Chinese, Indian and European aesthetics, they are attributed to art practitioners in either their respective contexts or the artworld which they affiliate themselves (Tao-Te Ching 1 and 10, Rig Veda 1.164.4, Genesis 1; Platform Sūtra 6; Bhagavad-gītā 10, Natya-Sastra 6, Poetics 4.12; Tao-Te Ching 42, Rig Veda 10.192.2; Doctrine of Mean, Mencius, Mo-Tzu; Republic; Timaeus 52e; Poetics 1453b; Physics 124-28; Ecclesiastes 7). The interest of comparative western aesthetics in art accounts for the higher number of references. The western discourse on the sublime can be taken out of consideration, as it is irrelevant to the present discussion. Of the few instances, seven are from the Chinese aesthetics tradition, three peculiar to the Indian tradition, and seven from the European tradition. Not all of these references will be discussed in detail, only the

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6 Ibid.
significant texts and those that are promising in terms of authenticity, along with more modern texts.

Contemporary practitioner and spatial-time site, topos or basho art form

A prominent idea associated with unity or aesthetic-universal art forms in the transcultural psyche of the twentieth-first century is the spatial site, *topos* or *basho* of art.\(^7\) Aesthetic-universals art is often considered as the ‘evocative resonance’ and the quintessence of the art form and its site.\(^8\) Hence, any discourse of unity has to include the site. What are then the contemporary art practitioners’ attitude towards the art forms and its art spaces?

After detailed study, Ernst Cassirer concluded that contemporary art practitioners, as far as one could gather, paid little attention to the relationship between art and the spatial site.\(^9\) The clearest possible reference that gives evidence of contemporary art practitioners’ awareness of the art form is Eliot Deutsch’s ‘Summary definition of a Work of Art’ (1996):

A work of art, even though culturally embedded, thus has its own intentionality, which is precisely its aiming to be aesthetically forceful, meaningful, and beautiful.

A work of art is aesthetically forceful to the degree to which it manifests an immanent spiritual power, which power or rhythm of being is everywhere present in the work and is discerned as a unique vitality.

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A work of art is inherently significant, is meaningful, to the degree to which it realises the possibilities that it itself gives rise to; realisation being a bringing of the work to a right conclusion and an exhibiting of the process by which the right conclusion is reached.

A work of art is beautiful to the degree to which it presents as its own presence a formal achievement, a radiance and splendour of form, which is appropriate to it.

A work of art is an object for consciousness and is experienced by assimilation (of its aesthetic force), recognition (of its inherent meaning), and discernment (of its beauty); the three together forming a single process of experience that culminates in a self-appropriation or realisation of the self’s own spirituality.

A work of art is thus that created object which, when realising its own intentionality, is at once imitative and expressive and performs, for consciousness, its own aesthetic content. 10

The virtual neglect of contemporary art practitioners of the transcultural studies of both the art form and its art spaces is glaring, especially in the light of transcultural recurrent aspirations for the art form and its site or basho in the twentieth first century. 11 We shall attempt to account for this phenomenon in chapter 9.

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CHAPTER 4

THE ATTRACTION OF KIEFER, TILLERS AND YOUNG’S ART FORMS:

CATHARSIS OF BEING

Friedrich Schleiermacher once noted that ‘every child arrives at the meaning of a word only through hermeneutics’.

The responsible interpretation of a text or an artwork is a task that demands both a rigor of mind and the wonder of a child. Hence in interpreting artwork, it is to stand on site in the presence of the artwork, where the first meaningful act is to articulate and acknowledge its otherness. This chapter examines the hypothesis that in order for the transcultural art practitioners to be the living cathartic transhistorical witness of the artworld, he or she must constitute a continuing hermeneutical principle for the contemporary artworld’s understanding of itself as under the cultural-authorial worldview or cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences of art forms in Eliot Deutsch’s four strata. This chapter also considers the expression ‘catharsis of transcultural practitioner’ to mean ‘the cathartic practitioner’.


First, we will explore the way in which the aesthetic catharsis of transcultural practitioner represented as a hermeneutical principle for cultural-authorship and the experience of aesthetic release (§1 and §2).³ I will argue that the catharsis as hermeneutical principle was not completely replaced by other principle, following the authenticity of the cathartic unity traditions documents and the reception of the canon by the transcultural artworld (§3). Rather, the aesthetic catharsis of transcultural practitioners like Anselm Kiefer, Imants Tillers and John Young continues to function as a principle within the process of interpreting text and/or art form. I will then conclude by suggesting several areas where the cathartic art practitioner as hermeneutical principle may be helpful (§4).

1. The catharsis of Kiefer, Tillers and Young as hermeneutical principle

Catharsis as a principle for cultural-authorship

The critical issue centred on historical continuity with regard to cultural-authorship is coupled with the experience of catharsis. From the outset it appeared straightforward. The principle for selecting a cultural-authorship included the necessity of having shared in the cathartic witness to their respective traditions and cultures. Their articulation of the catharsis as an interpretation of the human experience is both providential and releases.⁴

For Kiefer, Tillers and Young, who probe into Germanic history, European settlers’ history and Nanjing resistance history respectively (see FIGURE 9), each has grounds to be part of the cultural-authorial witnesses for the cathartic mediator-praxis, a transhistorical
precedent to be their determining principle.\(^5\) They did not simply reinterpret cultural-authorship in terms of their own experience, but it was the cathartic mediator-praxis that became the principle for Kiefer, Tillers and Young. Thus they did not argue that their claims to cultural-authorship were the only valid claim but that their cultural-authorship was constituted by the only paradigm of truth for cultural-authorship – that which is based on an encounter with the living cultural-authorial worldview, or that has the cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences as its standard.

It is in fact this living mediator-praxis at work in Kiefer’s *Deutschlands Geisteshelden*, Tillers’ *Diaspora* (1992), or Young’s *Safety Zone* (2010) through the affective influence of art that constitutes the standard: this is mediator-praxis. It was this force in the aesthetic catharsis that seized transcultural art practitioners and constituted for them the standard for interpreting the human experience as the ‘worldview’ and the ‘aesthetic preferences’ art form.

**Catharsis as a principle for aesthetics release**

A second crucial aspect for the transcultural community was that of the legitimacy for their aesthetic release in relation to art. Amongst the Germanic, Aboriginal or Chinese people, mystical connection had often been established as a symbol of the relationship between themselves and nature.\(^6\) This was meant to indicate a decisive and normative ‘hermeneutic principle’. Transcultural observers and practitioners argued, to the consternation of their communities, that their respective symbolism was necessitated by the truth of their witness

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as part of the cultural-authorship. Kiefer, Tillers and Young (or their statements) thus do not necessarily constitute the standard per se, but instead the cathartic mediator-praxis is the measure for their transcultural art practices.

As in the case of cultural-authorial connection, continuity with a historical standard might appear to be threatened. But when Kiefer’s, Tillers’ or Young’s work came to view, cathartic mediator-praxis was considered to be the unique psychological effect or cleansing that works of art have on their observers. In European aesthetics, Aristotle used the discourse of empathic katharsis in his Poetics (ca. 335 BCE) to refer to the transmogrifying moment of catastrophe in Attic tragedy where the sublime experience of pity and terror purges and purifies the soul of the observers in an act of communal reaffirmation (Poetics 1131, 1453a.10-3b.11 and 1458). In the nineteenth and twentieth-century’s late-romantic aesthetics, the philosophical crux of the difference between Arthur Schopenhauer’s view and the early-Nietzschean view on tragedy opened up the notion that affective art can be purging and therapeutic. German twentieth-century playwright Bertold Brecht considered catharsis as an ‘absence of consistent action’ and the apparatus for a greater social change – the action provokes a feeling of emptiness, builds tension, and leads the observer to catharsis that would challenge the observer to undertake social and political action in order to overcome that feeling of emotional emptiness within.

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The term *rasa* (relishing) and *visuddhi* (purification) in the Indian aesthetics, have a close connection with *vijnana*, or ‘consciousness’ – the ‘representation of the emotions “bhava”, of which a special category is called *sattvika bhava*, denoting those emotions and their symptoms which are normally involuntary, but which the actor must learn to control and
use to indicate inner feelings'. The practice of sattva (the constitutional quality of lightness, goodness, brightness and purity; in the Natya-Sastra 24) is considered to be essential for transcultural practitioners in harmonising of the cooperated representation (samanya abhinaya) as the form of the physical and emotional expressions that are the means to fulfil the spiritual aims of human experience (NS 7.93, 24.146, 239 and 291). Yet, like Kiefer’s Every Human Being Stands Beneath His Own Dome of Heaven (1970), Tillers’ Heart of the Wood (1990) and Young’s Naïve and Sentimental Paintings (2006) (see FIGURE 10), their sattva did not completely release them. The sattva experience (originated in the mind) merely leads the practitioner to the next level of vasantas (latent impression) by detaching their mind from personal attachments so as to achieve the pure forms of mind. This affirms the validity of rasa as a continuing principle and symbol, where transcultural practitioners are regenerated in their aesthetics. It is in this sense that one can say that the mediat-praxis is the ‘mind of rasa’ as a principle. This development of the logical subtlety and hermeneutical profundity of poetry, according to Grazia Marchianò, is the key concept of selfless sympathy recognised in India as being the basis of poetic catharsis.

If this can be said about the attempt to consider identity markers as a necessary standard for aesthetic release, would not the same apply to every attempt to circumvent transcultural human experience by imposing a standard lodged in a natural or even a spiritual aspect? If transcultural Germanic, Aboriginal or Chinese catharsis is experienced, does it not follow that transcultural cathartic aesthetic experience is a principle for role of generating status and authorship in regard to the transcultural standard, and that the cathartic mediator-praxis, in which there is release and liberation, therefore exist not only in an intellectual

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sense but must be experienced in practical life?\textsuperscript{15} Or in other words, can the work of the cathartic mediator-praxis in the artworld, by the affective influence of art, be considered another principle that has not also been transcended? Almost not, transcultural observers and practitioners’ hermeneutical principle at this critical point seems evident. Eliot Deutsch considers such revelations and insights to be the knowledge that was ‘as much as a recovery as a discovery of truth; that it was an appropriation of meaning, a special kind of self-knowledge or removal of ignorance which was thought to be liberating’.\textsuperscript{16}

Catharsis as a principle for approach to practicing art form

If there was a third critical aspect in the contemporary artworld, indeed it was the theoretical enquiry of what constituted a valid interpretation of the transcultural artworld. What then constitutes appropriate attitudes, values and the transcultural art practice in a personal and collective life? If mediator-praxis is self-revealing, can there be any measure left by which to determine a ‘point of aesthetic imagination’?

Again the principle for Kiefer, Tillers and Young was cathartic mediator-praxis as an experienced presence. As the new principle the cathartic mediator-praxis neither nullifies the past readings nor usurps the cultural-authorship witnesses as principle, but they simply establish the hermeneutical principle for these transcultural witnesses.


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Anselm KIEFER:
(Left) Besetzungen
1969 (1975)
Oil, acrylic and charcoal on burlap-mounted on canvas,
319x475cm
(Right) Resurrexit
Oil, acrylic and charcoal on burlap-mounted on canvas,
290x180cm
Collection of Sanders, Amsterdam

Imants TILLERS:
Izkliede
1994
Oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer paint on 292 canvasboards,
Nos. 39840-40805, 304.8x914.4cm
Collection of Gene & Brian Sherman Collection, Sydney
Paradiso,
1994
Oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer paint on 299 canvasboards, Nos. 41087-820, 304.8x914.4cm
Collection of The Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki

John YOUNG:
(Left) Flower Market (Nanjing 1936), No. 1, 2010
Digital print, oil on Belgian linen, 240x331cm
(Right) Flower Market (Nanjing 1936), No. 3, 2010
Digital print, oil on Belgian linen, 480x479cm
Collection of the artist
Here too, however, this principle of cathartic mediator-praxis as an experienced presence represents both a discontinuity as well as continuity with respect to the ethical demands of transcultural aesthetics (see FIGURE 11).\(^{17}\)

Kiefer in *Besetzungen* (1969) demonstrates this connection in the ‘form of books or water colours, photo and collages, on the language of art, the prohibited and repressed territory for a German artist’.\(^{18}\) He feels that if art is ‘to be really effective and truthful, [it] must have the strength to face up to all dramas and tragedies, to face them and to transcend them’.\(^{19}\) Thus, Kiefer’s *Deutschlands Geisteshelden* (‘Germany Spiritual Heroes’) (1973) is a transcultural attempt to re-connect earth and heaven, the harmonising of spirit and matter, a mediator-praxis to re-balance the loss of principles that plagues the human condition. In *Resurrexit* (1973), we also find Kiefer re-introducing the force from beneath so that its dangerous nature can be turned into a form of cathartic mediator-praxis: a form of self-reflexion to which his art form is subjected between physical and spiritual powers.\(^{20}\)

Whereas for Tillers’ *Diaspora Trilogy* (comprising *Diaspora* (1990), *Izkliede* (1994) and *Paradiso* (1994)), he interweaves the web of intra- and intertextuality – ‘the kinds of commonplace signs, minor objects and subtle phenomena that are all around me in my local precinct but that normally pass unnoticed’ – as encoded information from the everyday (quotidian) sources to articulate his displaced family history.\(^{21}\)


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid: 16.

In Young’s act of resistance in Safety Zone (2009), he provides an intimate understanding of humanity that lies beneath the Nanjing Massacres, as evidenced through individuals’ self-sacrifice to protect others against atrocities perpetrated by autocratic regimes.\textsuperscript{22} These remind us, via the transcultural practitioners’ aesthetics, that it was not what simply rendered a person that constituted authentic, but what developed out of a person. As Anthony Marsella observes:

One can speculate that ‘self as object’ and ‘self as process’ are, respectively, differentiated portions of the organismic-environmental unit which are labelled as I, me, or mine, and the epistemological processes (including our models of time, space, causality) by which we label and extract meaning and knowledge from the world. It is not culture alone which influences self as an object or process, but rather, culture in union with the previously discussed forces of the physical environment, biology, and psychology.\textsuperscript{23}

Incidentally, it is worth noting that this transcultural practice of Kiefer, Tillers and Young seemed to have no ‘real’ effect as a standard until after their cathartic personal encounter where practitioners experienced mediator-praxis. Also it is important to understand the fact that they were still negotiating as to what the encounter or consciousness meant as they physically connected the art form with the observers in order to empathise with them.

This is a fine authentication of mediator-praxis as a hermeneutical principle. There is the memorable narrative or demonstration of transcultural practitioners, and there is the insight or mystical vision in which the affective art acts on the observers; but the valid interpretation actually came when viewers or practitioners went to the site of the art form and expressed the cathartic message of practitioners. Only then, when the affective


influence of art impacts on observers with convincing power to effect, did Kiefer, Tillers and Young grasp the full implications of the object, and they achieved transcendence in or through their art. This cathartic event was a possible way to liberate marginalised people, an incredibly radical and difficult hermeneutical decision – but this is how mediator-praxis becomes a hermeneutical principle.

One cannot prevent the operations of cathartic mediator-praxis in transcultural artwork for the aim of a transcultural principle that itself points to this artwork. The interpretation of the transcultural principle comes through its realisation; but mediator-praxis itself is the realisation of the principle. The principle was meant to direct towards grace as the principle of aesthetics release. It was the application of the transcultural principle as a standard for aesthetic release. Thus the transcultural principle, even though it was enshrined through the texts of the unity traditions as the discourses of transculturality, develops the standard of the discourse through which reality is presented authentically.

In these situations and social structures, there is a principle of mediator-praxis. The principle is often expressed that the practitioner who interacts with it is expected to embody an existing order amid traditions and cultures. Thus Michel Foucault can say as a direct consequence of the principle, ‘the history of thought, of knowledge, of philosophy, of literature seems to be seeking, and discovering, more and more discontinuities, whereas history itself appears to be abandoning the irruption of events in favour of stable structures’.24 The standard in each of these cases is not simply a ‘string of pronouncement’ that functions as a legalistic principle but rather the ‘pronouncement of cathartic practitioners’ that functions as a transcultural spirit of empathy, meaning and freedom.

There is, then, a ‘transcultural aesthetic hermeneutics’ that Kiefer, Tillers and Young have applied in dealing with the practical matters of determining the principle of praxis. In deciding issues for their artwork contexts, they based their praxes on the claim that they

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have the pronouncement of mediator-praxis. As Kiefer noted, 'the divine is not the work of the beyond, but signifies a reality transformed into the human being, among men and in relation to nature. It is a life open to the world, empowered, adventurous, intense, alert, both individually and in general. It is the jubilee of being-in-the-world’.

Tillers, on the other hand, commenting on his Cooma (‘textbook’ appropriation) artworks, explained that the range of images that he used is not neutral or largely self-reflexive but a praxis that has collected through one’s focus. As a transcultural art practitioner, Tillers appears to distinguish between having a direct authentic catharsis of mediator-praxis to impart and having an idea or a word that he himself expresses, which is meant to have the same effect. His canvasboard system, itself a form of mediator-praxis, in fact ‘has increasingly expanded into a panorama that allows many other things to be included’. Tillers thus ends up embracing both what he feels has been a direct impact on his mediator-praxis (concerning Latvian history in general) and a cathartic mediator-praxis communicated through his appropriation (concerning religious advertising, modern Aboriginal art and his eco-political stance) through the insertion of images that ‘function in a more complex manner as yet another layer of resonance within the multiplicity of “voices” constituting his multi-dimensional, appropriational matrix’. For Young, he expresses the Double Ground Paintings in a sustained effort to develop a transcultural aesthetic of ‘a visual grammatical and syntactical investigation of representational imagery, of experimental mindscapes that draw heavily on pre-modern Chinese and Western archaic sentiments’. Young’s self-reflexion of cultural obligation and contemporary reality is the space for ‘disruption and an

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historical consciousness that allows more ground in-between’. In all these cases we have the dynamic situations of discourse by transcultural mediator-praxes in catharsis placed alongside a discourse of transcultural mediator-praxes that comes through its presence in the lives of Kiefer, Tillers and Young.

This reveals to us two aspects: first, there is continuity with the transhistorical dimension in determining the principle of praxis for the contemporary artworld; secondly, there is also equal authority claimed for the contemporary art practitioners’ art forms made by Kiefer, Tillers and Young via cathartic mediator-praxis. The fact that the principle of Kiefer, Tillers and Young has influenced the cultural-authorial worldview or cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences itself informs us that the presence and authority of the cathartic mediator-praxis has served as a hermeneutical principle for the contemporary artworld. That is, mediator-praxis continues to engage transcultural practitioners as to the intentionality in practical aspects of the aesthetic intuition. Mediator-praxis has not simply left us a set of approaches. It has done that, but in addition it continues to reveal and demonstrate. Discerning this generative insight is itself a hermeneutical task, not simply an exercise in historical memory.

Through considered principles of literary and historical criticism, one can derive and examine catharsis and empathy more accurately through examining the syntactical or structural relation and meaning of words in the unity traditions texts. But if there is also a reference between the texts and the cathartic mediator-praxis, is this connection not a proper aspect of hermeneutical concern? And if so, is it not the cathartic and present mediator-praxis that upholds that connection? If this is so, then mediator-praxis will then continue to lead us into investigating text and visual expression, one that endures ‘irreducible

differences’ says Young, ‘[and] elucidate some sort of emotional certainty which is paradoxical or contradictory at the same time’.  

2. The transcendental cathartic nature of the hermeneutical principle

Because aesthetic intuition as experience of a cathartic mediator-praxis is not the principle but the cathartic mediator-praxis itself, there is a transcendental tension in the transcultural hermeneutic of Kiefer, Tillers and Young. Mediator-praxis as a hermeneutical principle never abandons the inherent authenticity and authority of the living essence in regard to human experience, aesthetics, principle or tradition. Kiefer, Tillers and Young are quite explicit about the aesthetic feeling brought about by pure form that is elicited by form-imbued-with-meaning concerning their own aesthetics. Wilfried van Damme, in Beauty in Context (1996), explains it as an emotive non-cognitive experience of formalism in the West, which fails to recognise that aesthetic experience has a cognitive dimension that is articulated at the level of verbal discourse, and where assumptions have further hampered aesthetic research by ‘viewing this experience as being elicited by pure form’. He concludes that this aesthetic experience has both emotive and cognitive elements when dualism is presented with the important addition that the aesthetic appreciation of the two components is ‘mediated of its interiorised cultural knowledge’. Here under the label of ‘ethno-aesthetics’ van Damme concurs to Harold Osborne’s description of aesthetic experience as:

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Aesthetic percipience [that] is, like all perception, a form of cognition; but it is direct apprehension of the object upon which it is directed, not knowledge about its object.\(^{36}\)

In accordance with van Damme’s idea that aesthetic *stimulus* that generates response,\(^{37}\) there is a hermeneutic principle anchored in the transcendental event of the final installation of transcultural art practitioners. This does not evacuate the text and context of its cultural-authorial worldview or aesthetic preferences. However, Kiefer, Tillers and Young associate their texts with the cathartic mediator-praxis. Yet even as the inspired texts of the unity traditions (such as *Poetics* 1453-4) are interpreted via the hermeneutical principle of transcultural aesthetics, (and even as the artworld and art practitioners are interpreted by the hermeneutical standard of the cathartic mediator-praxis) the texts are understood and inspired by the transculturality of the texts that will be ultimately authenticated by the hermeneutical standard of the cathartic mediator-praxis. Does this compromise the authority of the cultural authorship and the authenticity of the texts? Kiefer, Tillers and Young do not think so.

Nonetheless it does indicate that catharsis as a hermeneutical principle simply points to the art form as well as towards the mediator-praxis. Meanwhile, at the present time, there is a tension between the ever-present demands of the former standard and the current standard of cathartic mediator-praxis. The text came through cultural, social and aesthetic art forms that persisted in spite of the radical new measure of the cathartic mediator-praxis of human experience.

Where these art forms were not a direct threat to the existence of the freedom of the mediator-praxis to engage or to form a fresh human experience, they were permitted to exist by the transcultural hermeneutic of the authorship. ‘If it [art] is to be really effective and


truthful’ said Kiefer ‘art must have the strength to face up to all dramas and tragedies, [in order] to face them and to transcend them’. Thus the art practitioner is directed to unity traditions and history not only as a negotiating practitioner but also as an empathising human being. Kiefer (the visionary alchemist), Tillers (the producer of data) and Young (the bridge) leave it to both the reader and the artworld to apply the hermeneutical principle of catharsis. From this we can infer that the art of Kiefer, Tillers and Young exhibits authority not merely by virtue of what it demonstrates but in its effect to produce a modification or response of the behaviour and life of the interpreter. Kiefer, Tillers and Young did not simply ‘liberate’ the marginalised by mere statement. Rather, they sought the liberation of the marginalised from the old ways of reading and thinking as a human being, so they could be free to release and receive liberation as a transcultural partner and fellow human being. Likewise, the art of the cultural-authorial worldview or aesthetic preferences is evidenced by its effect in producing the intention and aim of art mediator-praxis in the liberation of humanity in the transcultural artworld.

There ought to be a general understanding as to the essential force of the argument thus far. The catharsis of mediator-praxis is the hermeneutical principle for determining the content of the cultural authorial message, for establishing the basis for release as relative to the reality of art and for giving artistic direction to the contemporary artworld in experiencing the aesthetic life of a mediator-praxis. The cathartic mediator-praxis has usually been viewed as the decisive measure marking the emergence of the contemporary transcultural artworld as a distinct art community in which people found unity in mediator-praxis. Hence our aim has not been to develop a new criterion but to demonstrate the catharsis of art practitioners as the criterion (based on Poetics 1453-4). Before we continue, it

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might be helpful to review some steps we have considered in demonstrating this criterion as a basis on which we can establish our case:

1. To consider that transcultural practitioners experienced the catharsis of art is to consider that principle, tradition, nature, culture and history must open up to the new criterion of the presence of unity in the world.

2. To consider that transcultural practitioners are in unity is to enlarge the scope of the reconciliation and liberating power of aesthetic force.

3. To consider that ‘unity motifs’ are present within the context of a transcultural aesthetic hermeneutics on contemporary aesthetic intuition and practice is to engage in the discourse of mediator-praxis with the presence of mediator-praxis for the sole purpose of modifying the artistic direction of their contemporary practitioner’s response toward homeostasis in mediator-praxis.

4. To consider that the practitioner or observer is engaging transculturality and engaging with homeostasis in mediator-praxis is to interpret mediator-praxis’s discourse, and does so through aesthetic intuition and practice that looks toward experiencing catharsis and illumination.

5. To consider that the responsibility of the contemporary artworld is to engage this transcultural aesthetics hermeneutic is to recognise mediator-praxis as the hallmark of encountering art in every aspect of domestic, social, aesthetic and political life.

3. Cathartic unity in the mediator-praxes of Kiefer, Tillers and Young

We have now come to the important task in the development of the thesis: the cathartic transcultural practitioner as the cathartic unity is a continuing hermeneutical principle for interpreting aesthetic text/image.
A contemporary hermeneutical principle

Can we affirm that cathartic mediator-praxis is the cathartic unity that directs its purpose to creative ends? Can we also affirm that the discourses of the unity traditions continue to speak to us through the processes of the catharsis? Can we then dare to say with Paul Ricoeur that ‘I believe that being can still speak to us’?\(^{41}\) I think we are able and we should, for if we are not we will find ourselves as the ‘inquisitor’ of Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Brother Karamazov* (1950) who refused to allow Ivan to contribute to what had been written: ‘the old man has told him He hasn’t the right to add anything to what He has said of old’.\(^{42}\)

It is critical to be able to distinguish interpretation that depends on that inspiration for its source and custom. That is to say, the boundaries of the unity traditions text-image and the contemporary text-image are neither resolved into a single contemporary meaning, nor into a criterion of abstract reasoning. As the hermeneutical principle for both the original and contemporary meaning of the text-image, transcultural unity sustains these two elements in a creative and positive tension. Thus, the boundaries of the original context of the text-image and the boundaries of the contemporary interpreter are not fused but stay distinct. Kiefer, Tillers and Young are then permitted to articulate what they regard as the cathartic unity in their transcultural aesthetics hermeneutic, without coercing the text-image to be read in a way unfamiliar to the original context.

As we consider the cathartic unity of the mediator-praxes of Kiefer, Tillers and Young to be the continuing principle for our hermeneutical task, we do not simply fuse the contemporary horizon of our aesthetic experience to the text-image as an abstract principle, nor do we integrate the text-image to our contemporary horizon as a relativisation of truth or insight to culture. Rather, we accept that our contemporary horizon of aesthetic

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experience and the horizon of the text-image to be the site of transcultural unity, where our discourses and actions must be aesthetically judged.43

For those who oppose that the reality of the cathartic unity cannot be objectively discerned and known in the context of our subjective aesthetic experience, we must reply that this is a sheer denial of the objective reality of the cathartic unity within the being that presents itself to us as an object of knowledge, as well as an aesthetic experience, through the transcultural encounter (Poetics 1448b13). This objective reality of mediator-praxis does not simply dissolve into our experience as the principle of truth, for mediator-praxis is tied up to both the text-image and to its propositional form of truth or insight.44 Similarly, neither is the cathartic unity dissolved into the impersonal abstraction of truth or insight as the objectification of truth, with our own logic as the hermeneutical principle.

Since the principle of the cathartic unity is not a different principle from the same unity that inspired the discourses of Kiefer, Tillers and Young, this hermeneutical principle does not stand in contradiction or opposition to the unity tradition discourses. There is a tension, but it is this creative and regenerative tension between the liminal space and time. It is the tension between the new transcultural practitioners/community and the new approach that is present in transculturality, where the past approach must give way to the new.

Wherever a postmodern contemporary discourse appears unanimous and consistent in every artistic situation, it is possible that the presence of the cathartic unity in the artworld can be understood in such a way that this ‘one voice’ can be silenced or coerced. Perhaps, where the cultural-authorial worldview discourse and practice is clearly governed by the readiness or openness of the situation to experience full freedom in mediator-praxis, the hermeneutical principle of the cathartic mediator-praxis as a continuing presence in contemporary artworld is, I believe, indispensible. For it is here that the tension between the liminal time and space is most evident. This is also possible that we may have a

connection, as explications of a text-image must be accountable to the cathartic unity that is present in the mediator-praxis. For the purpose of this discussion, we are focusing on those areas most clearly involved in this transcendental tension and that require unusual sensitivity to the hermeneutical principle we are advocating.

Case for the marginalised in transcultural aesthetic-universals art

There are however unresolved differences between certain texts or images relating to the marginalised and silenced ‘voices’ in the community. Some will argue that these are only ‘apparent’ differences and that the text/image speaks with ‘one voice’ in all matters because that is the nature of the text/image in the unity traditions. It is true that some texts/images testify to an intrinsic unity. But if this unity becomes a ‘principle of harmony’ of texts/images, this imposes a principle of consistency on the exegetical and hermeneutical task that serves more as a prior principle than a theoretical insight. After all, the phenomena of texts/images in their own cultural, historical and literary context constitute the primary source for our perspective of a text/image, not the reverse. One aspect of the phenomena of the text/image is the freedom it has, in its specific and concrete mix of expression and application, to communicate authoritatively the aesthetic truth to us.

For this reason, we do not feel that the freedom of Kiefer, Tillers and Young, as the authors of a text/image, to express the transformative essence of art in any way contradicts the essential transcultural unity and consistency of the text/image that it represents. In my aesthetic judgement, what does contradict the text/image is in fact to force it into a logical rule of conformity and into a principle of consistency. In this case, the principle has shifted from the text/image to a hermeneutical principle that controls the exegetical task. In our case, we argue that it is the cathartic mediator-praxis that is the standard of continuity and consistency in the freedom of one’s self-witness to the truth of what art reveals.
If one takes Kiefer’s statements on the history of Germanic people in a way that abstracts them from the historical context in which they are uttered, a kind of ‘textual-imagery standoff’ will occur, as stated above. This then compels the interpreter to perform a kind of Hegelian synthesis through an exegetical explication where thesis and antithesis are resolved through a ‘higher criterion.’ However, this approach tends to dissipate particular texts/images of their full weight for the sake of a theoretical principle that becomes the standard.

This can go two ways: one could relate to the position articulated in Kiefer’s ‘L’Art actuel Made in Germany: Anselm Kiefer, un bout de chemin … avec la démence’ (1980) concerning the status of Germanic history and cosmography, in which mediator-praxis has a theoretical priority over his autobiographical discourse, as demonstrated by the key words ‘Heaven-hell’ and ‘border’.45 The theoretical aesthetics criterion of ‘empathy in mediator-praxis’ thus becomes the principle by which one text/image is read against another for the sake of resolving tension or contradiction. This approach makes the cultural-authorial discourse in Kiefer’s autobiography of ambiguous quality with regard to its being the aesthetic word/image vision. Ultimately, one will consider if Kiefer’s autobiography should have applied the theoretical aesthetic criterion of empathy as he considered in his Germanic history and cosmography.46

One can also see this similar propensity to synthesise contrasting texts/images in the attempt to harmonise the discourse on Germanic history and cosmography with his autobiography by interpreting the L’Art actuel Made in Germany passage as referring only to transcultural unity and empathy in mediator-praxis, and not as an attempt to eliminate the distinctive aspects of identity and locality from society. This approach succeeds in resolving the impasse in interpreting Kiefer’s texts/images regarding the marginalised through exegetical analysis, where the emotional or spiritual benefits of being in catharsis mediator-

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praxis are eliminated from the status of Germanic history and cosmography. Transcultural identity and locality that are coupled with both the historical and cultural differentiation becomes the principle for aesthetic reflexion. Marginalised history and cosmography thus continue to operate as criterion beyond the benefits of mediator-praxis. Nature also determines the extent to which virtue can be influential in providing the benefits of mediator-praxis to the historical and current temporal order. In this case, the synthesis has been at the expense of the full weight of the Germanic history and cosmography discourse as a mediatory-practical source for the ordering of the transcultural practitioners’ aesthetics.

Let us suppose that what Kiefer, Tillers or Young meant for their readers to understand in the above discourses was exactly what they read in the context of their own time and place. Rather than attempting to blend the horizon of their texts/images with a contemporary horizon and so interpret them in a manner that renders their meaning more congenial to our modern/postmodern views of impartiality, assume we let them stand as the discourse of the transformative essence of art in the contemporary artworld to which they are addressed. What do we then have?

The contemporary artworld has their cultural authorial worldview that is comparable to the discourse of the transformative essence of art. Transcultural practitioners have similar cultural authorial worldviews or cultural-authorial aesthetic preferences that are also equal to the texts/images. But what must be mindful of is that the worldview or preference of the cathartic mediator-praxis of practitioners, expressed in the form of a transcultural focus, does not mechanically become a principle that can be applied independently of the cultural authorial of art’s essence.\footnote{E. Deutsch, ‘Mallarme and Valery and the Essence of Poetry’ in Essays on the Nature of Art, Albany: State University of New York Press (1996): 45.} The essence of art is the deciding factor, the principle by which the contemporary artworld through mediator-praxis defines its existence and seeks its authentic aesthetic direction. The discourse of the transformative essence of art presents as a specific articulation in the particular situation in which the artworld exists and is meant to
convey to the artworld how to both identify and transform its present form/s of catharsis. This unity, Paul Crowther suggests, is a ‘process of growth involving bodily co-ordination and the acquisition of language on the basis of complex and continuing social interchange’.  

This recurring relationship between a specific focus and the transformative essence of art was also made quite evident in our earlier investigation of the approach in which the cathartic mediator-praxis served as a hermeneutical principle to interpret the discourse concerning the cultural-authorial discourse and action. In the same manner, I am suggesting that those who feel it necessary to deny the very possibility that mediator-praxis offers the potentiality of transcultural unity to the disfranchised as well as to Germanic history and cosmography, aboriginal cosmography or the Chinese resistance history should consider the discourse of cathartic empathy – an absolute principle which often denies the disfranchised from transcultural unity. This will have the effect of forcing other text/image perspectives that provide full equivalence for the disfranchised to be concealed and suppressed. Thus, in this sense, this connects the horizon of the contemporary artworld to the horizon of the postmodern observers and results in a hermeneutical principle that connects primacy to the ‘letter’ rather than the ‘spirit’, and to the ‘past’ rather than to the ‘future’.

I can understand, I think, why some would want to consider this. However, I do not hope to deny the authorial authenticity of the inspired text/image through mere cultural-authorial relativism or by the unbridled trend of egoism. I believe that those who deeply feel it necessary to sacrifice the possibility of granting mediator-praxis' contemporary virtue of transcultural unity to the marginalised do so because they see it as the only alternative to an

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49 Ibid.
approach that appears to relativize the text/image in line with contemporary cultural values or preferential convictions.51

It is the aim of this chapter therefore to suggest that these are not the only two alternatives. Kiefer, Tillers and Young do not have to interpret their texts/images via a universal approach of aesthetic-universals art that deprives observers from full impartiality in their aims of transcultural unity. Nor do they have to apply as a hermeneutical principle of unbridled impulses, or other conventions of currents ‘aesthetic quality’, for the sake of transforming their texts/images to be meaningful or acceptable within the contemporary context.52

When we allow the cathartic unity of the practitioner to be the hermeneutical principle, the text/image art form can be interpreted freely along with the affective influential nature of art that the text/image exemplifies. It is, I believe, the task of aesthetic exegesis to assist in determining as closely as possible what the text/image can articulate for itself and have its own aesthetic ‘distance’ from the interpreter and observers. In meditating these texts/images, Kiefer, Tillers and Young can demonstrate that texts/images say what they were intended to say. However, if principles are abstracted from these texts/images and applied to the contemporary artworld and to the everyday life of aesthetic imagination today, catharsis no longer serves as a hermeneutical principle. This separates the essence of art from the art form, an aesthetics against which the transcultural practitioners cautioned in their manifestoes.53

Reinterpreting text/image artwork as a cathartic art form

In meditating on the texts/images of Kiefer, Tillers and Young, there is a transcultural hermeneutic that must be connected to text/image exegesis in order for mediator-praxis to be cathartic art form. This is what Paul Crowther seemingly means when he considers the ‘spatiotemporal continuum,’ and goes on to say, ‘The elements in [Panofsky’s general categorical] framework emerge under different historical conditions and are dialectically related to one another, but once they have emerged, they become autonomous structures – capable of sustaining iconographical and iconological meanings other than those involved or implicated in their original emergence’.\(^{54}\)

It must be made absolutely clear that what I am suggesting here – that what I am suggesting here – that the artworld acknowledge, recognise and affirm full impartiality for the disfranchised in transcultural unity – does not indicate an elision of the normative function of text/image in favour of some contemporary measure. This is for several reasons:

1. The text/image is subjected to the hermeneutical principle of the cathartic mediator-praxis. This connects the text/image to the essence of artistic inspiration as a construct of truth and reality.

2. Transculturality of catharsis is not just another contemporary liberation but is the attitude of the embodied inspiration, where its authenticity is endowed in the cultural-authorial witness and communicated through the cathartic manifestation.

3. There is a transcendentental tension between the liminal thresholds where the text/image represents the artistic inspiration. In certain cases, of which the site of the disfranchised in the transcultural unity of the contemporary artworld is one, we then can locate the cathartic mediator-praxis as a critical and resourceful hermeneutical principle. Apart from that principle, there will be a tendency to

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impose on text/image a hermeneutic principle that steers the exegetical task into agreement with *a priori* principles.

This transcendental tension in catharsis does not simply allow yeast into the dough, so that text/image loses its uniting authority in the contemporary artworld. Indeed Crowther does not mean to open the possibility to any and all claims to transhistorical freedom from the text/image by simply suggesting that interpretation is not only the application of what we learn from the text/image but is but one ‘spatiotemporal continuum’ event.

The issue of the position of the disfranchised in transcultural unity is not an issue that strikes at the core of a moral order. Nor does this issue violate an elemental natural order of creation, as Ernst Cassirer suggests in his book *An Essay of Man* (1946): ‘even nature assumes a new shape, for it is seen exclusively in the mirror of ethical life’.

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Anselm KIEFER:
*Bilderstreit, (Iconoclastic Controversy)*
1980
Oil, emulsion, shellac and sand on photographs, mounted on canvas with woodcut, 290x400cm
Museum Boymans-van Beunigen, Rotterdam

Imants TILLERS:
*Suppressed Imagery*
1981
Pencil on 49 canvasboards, Nos. 1-49, 178x267cm
Private Collection, Melbourne

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Nor does the Kiefer’s *Iconoclastic Controversy* (1980) or Tillers’ installation of the Book of Power’s *Suppressed Imagery* (1981), or Young’s Double Ground Paintings *Liberty 1, 2 and 3* (1995), in recognition of the work of mediator-praxis in their contemporary artworld today, set up a new principle of ‘human rights’ as a measure that seeks to reinterpret the text/image in line with contemporary cultural-authorial worldviews and cultural-authorial aesthetics preferences.\(^{56}\)

For Kiefer, Tillers and Young, a cathartic hermeneutical principle that allows for a reinterpretation of the text/image to make it more congenial to ‘contemporary’ concerns will thus find no basis in what has been articulated above – it is in fact the very opposite. The cathartic mediator-praxis is simply the criterion; it is the transculturality that gives them this freedom. Kiefer, Tillers and Young are emphatic about that, but they are equally emphatic that where transculturality is present and manifest in their artworks, one must recognise and confess the aesthetic truth and authority of that transculturality. It is the transculturality of the cathartic mediator-praxis, negotiating in the contemporary artworld, which is the basis of their work.

The cathartic mediator-praxis is the unity of the text/image and the contemporary artworld. Cathartic in the work of Kiefer, Tillers or Young are not a criterion of new insight that replaces text/image; rather it is the hermeneutical principle for reinterpreting text/image in such a way that their artworks personify the potentiality of the inspired text/image. As such, Kiefer, Tillers and Young believe that mediator-praxis embodies both the disfranchised and non-disfranchised into the ‘spatiotemporal continuum’ – or the contemporary artworld – through transcultural unity.

4. **Reframing transcultural aesthetics’ cathartic paradigm**

Theoretical aesthetics must be as contextual as it is philosophical and metaphysical; it must be both visual and cerebral. In short, aesthetic reflection must be examined in the context of the transcultural working in the world or in a ‘way of seeing and thinking’.

When Kiefer, Tillers and Young were practising art in their respective settings, they invested their work with vision, insight and significance. One might account for such vision, data or metaphor by the fact that they were probing truth/reality and that this stimulated their vision, data or metaphor. As they began to articulate their artworks under transculturality, through their kenosis and catharsis, the illumination of transcultural aesthetics is thus aesthetically experienced.

It is difficult for us to grasp the significance of this ‘paradigm shift’ in the aesthetics of Kiefer, Tillers and Young without understanding both the context and the visual perspective. The aesthetic force of their vision, insight and metaphors are what I might consider a ‘visual parable’. In much the same manner as Hui-neng’s bright mirror for the Bodhi tree (*Platform Sūtra* 8b) or Jesus’ placing a child in the midst of his listeners (*Matthew* 18.1-5), the transculturality engaged in by Kiefer, Tillers and Young in their visual object shifted their aesthetic focus from the principle itself to the embodiment of the principle.
Context was a critical factor in this theoretical shift. Despite their earlier theoretical understanding they were receptive to these visions, insights and metaphors and put themselves in the context of transculturality in the contemporary artworld. When Kiefer, Tillers and Young encountered the evidence of the transcultural presence in their artworks, they made a fundamental shift in their way of thinking and the way in which they engaged with the contemporary artworld.

Similarly Ernst Cassirer, in *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms* (1996), cites how Georg Simmel attains the concept of the absoluteness of life by means of a completely analogous double step formulation. Particularly, he addresses the logical difficulty posed by the criterion of identity\(^57\) (that is, life is at once itself and not itself because it is supposed to be more than it is), which to him is solely a matter of expression. Thus Cassirer pointed out that:

> In truth, this contradiction does not apply to Being, nor to the reality of life itself, but only to our thought about this reality, which must necessarily make distinctions and separations, whereas in reality all is contained with complete, seamless indifference.\(^58\)

In fact most scholars now accept that the transitory act is the art practitioners’ immediate context and that it is not to be taken literally or too lightly. Many would also agree that the meaning of their creative transitory actions or formulation is the short indefinite time-period that would be followed by a certain recessional act, climax or culmination. Indeed many art theoreticians are also enquiring into the creative transitory actions. The theoretical aesthetic freedom of Kiefer, Tillers and Young is however based in the praxis of transculturality, and not in historical processes and socio-political agendas. It is in this sense, according to Sylvia Volz in her *John Young: Bonhoeffer in Harlem* (2008), that transcultural practitioners like Bonhoeffer can be understood as co-authors or co-producers who generate texts/images


Cathartic unity: Kiefer, Tillers and Young and Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics} 1452-3

If what we have been discussing is correct, certain conclusions can be drawn about how Kiefer, Tillers and Young conceived their transcultural roles and their aesthetics vis-à-vis aesthetic-universal art forms. Such intentionality and conclusions also serve as important insights for the reconstruction of a very important phase of their aesthetics.\footnote{Cf. E. Husserl, \textit{Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis}, (Trans.) A.J. Steinbock, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London and New York: Klüwer, Springer ([1918-26], 2001): 83:126.}

\textit{The attraction of aesthetic-universals art}

Firstly, Kiefer, Tillers and Young expected their work would to express empathy, and they understood that their cathartic process was a transcendental necessity. That Kiefer, Tillers and Young have undergone catharsis should therefore not only be surprising, as the demonstration of a ‘producer of data’ or of an ‘alchemic visionary’ would have served as a recurrent aspiration. Moreover, it does not take profound illumination but only the ordinary insight of an intelligent person to discern that things are not working out as anticipated. In this context, the creative moments or the cathartic processes that have often been regarded as a form of \textit{vaticinia ex eventu} ought to be reassessed.\footnote{H. Fischel, ‘Martyr and Prophet’: A Study in Jewish Literature, \textit{Jewish Quarterly Review}, 37 ([1946-7], 2001): 265-80 and 363-86.} If Kiefer, Tillers and Young expected to empathise, how then did they respond to this conviction of theirs? This theoretical enquiry has immense implications for an understanding of the transcultural aesthetics and intentions of practitioners such as Kiefer, Tillers and Young. These
meditations thus reveal that Kiefer, Tillers and Young believed their catharsis fell under the ambit of transcendental necessity. To what extent did such a thought influence their actions in their art forms? Moreover, if Kiefer, Tillers and Young perceived their catharsis to fall under the ambit of transcendental necessity, how did they then interpret it? To what end was it? I hope to answer these issues in subsequent chapters.

Secondly, Kiefer, Tillers and Young understood that it was their assigned lot to complete their art forms. Note their hyperbole: the ‘physical materiality’ and ‘visual complexity of its surface’ as sources of interest for them, as are the ‘moments of inertia,’ the ‘antipodes as poetics of specularity,’ the ‘cleaving as poetics of invisibility,’ and the ‘conceptual abstraction as superficiality’. Could the hyperbole be an unattested proverb? No stark evidence has yet come to light to support this suggestion. However, David Hughes in ‘Playing It by the Book’ (2006) has commented that behind Kiefer’s hyperbole lies a traditional belief about the fate of an ‘urban embodiment of national identity and culture’ in the art forms. The references cited by Hughes not only indicate that a visionary expresses empathy in their cathartic art form effectively, but the encrustation that famously characterises the visionary’s cathartic artwork paved the way for an even more complex art form to come. Similarly, Wystan Curnow observes that Tillers’ juxtaposition of antipodean art with Euro-American avant-gardism and the appropriation of Aboriginal modernism provides the most substantive basis for an open collaborative art form.

Perhaps an explanation comes readily to hand as to why some art was not explicitly connected with the catharsis of the visionaries in the transcultural tradition. The grounds for this have been indicated in chapter 3. The upshot of all this is to make the intention of Kiefer, Tillers and Young even more significant and original: it is impossible for a visionary

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64 Ibid.

art practitioner to express empathy outside their art form. If Kiefer, Tillers or Young held such an idiosyncratic slant, what inferences are there for my appreciation of their transcultural intention for installing and their aesthetic actions in the aesthetic-universals art form?

Hence, these passages (in Aristotle’s *Poetics* 1453b.11 and *Natya-Sastra* 6) from the Axial corpus offers evidence about Kiefer, Tillers and Young’s possible affirmative and negative cathartic attitudes towards their art forms. And particularly this negativity is accentuated by the hyperbole that they used to describe their art form spatially. Would this therefore mean that Kiefer, Tillers and Young rejected the unity traditions and dissociated themselves from the use of unity or aesthetic-universals art forms as the symbol of aesthetic force and recurrent impact? This cathartic negativity must be assessed in the context of other significant discourses that offer illuminating evidence on Kiefer’s, Tillers’ or Young’s perspective. To this we will turn in chapter 5 via Gao’s and Federle’s art forms.

However, it should also be indicated that in spite of the cathartic negativity expressed by contemporary art practitioners such as Kiefer, Tillers and Young, their aesthetic-universals art was also a cathartic affirmation to them and their art practice. When aesthetic truth is read in conjunction with transcultural unity, art is then seen to be the locus of Kiefer’s, Tillers’ and Young’s *telos*. At the end, Kiefer, Tillers and Young would not only aspire to express empathy with the institution on their terms. However, they would eventually express empathy, not because of the persuasion of the institution, but because of the enigmatic pull from their art form and the site, which Kiefer, Tillers and Young attributed as deriving ultimately from the encounter with art and its phenomena. What then is the content of this *telos*? Transitory actions could be interpreted as the ‘completion of the art practise’ (without involving the *eidos* of aesthetic release) or ‘death of art form’ itself. I instead suggest that a *double entendre* is intended. In aesthetic-universals art, Kiefer, Tillers and Young aspire for their art practices to be brought to a climax, and this recessional act would involve their visionary success (*Poetics* 1460: ultimate aesthetic truth). This climax could only be sought in art. The specificity of the site or *topos* was emphasised. Their
catharsis was understood by themselves to be an essential part of their aesthetics. In context with the fact that aesthetic-universals art was a magnet for many transcultural movements and their transcendental aspirations, the fact that contemporary practitioners such as Kiefer, Tillers and Young appreciated the attraction is significant. The content of the climax that they aspired to will be further explored in later chapters. Hence, in spite of Kiefer’s, Tillers’ and Young’s either seemingly affirmative or negative cathartic aspects about their art forms on site (in Poetics 1460: ultimate aesthetic truth), its importance for their art practices was also admitted by them.66

Finally, Kiefer, Tillers and Young saw themselves either as a ‘visionary/alchemist’, ‘producer of data’, or ‘a bridge’ respectively that would eventually be embodied in their art. The empathy motif of their destiny as a ‘producer of data’, ‘visionary/alchemist’, or ‘bridge’ has been much utilised by the post avant-garde movements (for instance, neo-Dadaism) but what is novel here, and I reiterate, is that the realisation of the visionary is directly interrelated to their art forms (the vista of aesthetic truth is meant to be generic). If Kiefer, Tillers and Young knew that their aesthetic-universals art would embody a vision, should their actions in art forms then be understood as ‘visionary’ acts? I hope to answer some of these theoretical enquiries in Part III.

Corroboration from Tao-Te Ching 42

There is another element of tradition, the Tao-Te Ching (600 BCE), that of empathic aspiration (Tao-Te Ching 42) that partially supports my claims as to what Kiefer, Tillers and Young aspire to in their art forms.

That there is a kernel of truth or trans-historicity underlying the cathartic processes (Tao-Te Ching 42’s harmonic enlightenment parallels Rig Veda 10.129’s nirvanic moksha)\(^67\) is increasingly being recognised.\(^68\) It does not strain the imagination to conceive that Kiefer, Tillers and Young processed their own realisation. In view of the cathartic processes of political art and of the fact that the empathy motif of the destiny of visionaries was well recognised in twentieth century transcultural art, and as Kiefer, Tillers and Young’s discourses attest (through Aristotle’s Poetics 1453b.11 and Natya-Satra 6), the plausibility of them aspiring to a climax in their aesthetic-universal art forms is thus enhanced especially if they considered of themselves as a visionary or alchemist (see Chu’ang Tzu 12 and Rig Veda 10). Hence, it is almost not justifiable to attribute the cathartic aspirations entirely to the creativity of the post-Axial artworld. By so discussing, I do not claim that there were no expansions or elaborations of the cathartic aspirations. My main concern here is to recognise the possibility that the act of Kiefer, Tillers and Young projecting their catharsis and communicating it to the contemporary artworld has some kernel of aesthetic truth and its relevance to the cathartic aspirations.


This recognition has also led to much effort being spent on separating the authentic focal point and tracing the connections between the cathartic aspirations. Were there actually recurrent aspirations? Or was there actually only one that was utilised to develop the subsequent processes? Most work of this nature tends to focus on the first processional gesture and transitional actions, with the recessional act often being bypassed. This is also due to the fact that the final recessional act process developed from the installation account, and dismissed as an evidently *ex eventu* formulation because of its detailed nature.

But the final recessional act process cannot be so easily ignored. Recently, Crowther has argued cogently for the traditional nature of the objective level of experience. A strong case for the independence of the recessional act from the installation process account can be defended. This can be understood that the Chinese aesthetics, in the *Tao-Te Ching* cathartic aspirations, may offer another piece of evidence to show that Kiefer’s, Tillers’ or Young’s recurrent aspirations is in their art and nowhere else.

I have, in this chapter, argued for a comparative and theoretical paradigm for aesthetics based on the liberating praxis of transculturality. This is what transcultural practitioners experienced with regard to the marginalised and what they later developed as the foundation for the comparative artworld. The contemporary artworld is constantly reforming through the praxis of transculturality unity, liberating from its conformity to nature and culture and its tendency to institutionalise the text/image. Kiefer, Tillers and Young desired that their art practices would come to a transcendental climax in their cathartic aesthetic-universals art as an expression of their transcultural intentionality, and that this would involve their cathartic expressions. This will also have implications for my understanding of art practitioners’ transcultural intentions in their art form; and these will be explored in Part III. Regardless of their negative or affirmative attitude towards their art

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form, it must be balanced by the consideration that aesthetic-universals art was also to be regarded as a magnet by them. This dialectic of cathartic negativity versus cathartic attraction will be spelt out further in chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5

THE ATTRACTION OF GAO’S AND FEDERLE’S ART FORMS:

KENOSIS OF DESIRE

The discourse of cathartic intention and identity, in Chapter 4, from Poetics and Natya-Sastra on ‘catharsis’ or ‘sattvika bhava’ (Poetics 1458 and Natya-Sastra 24.146) offers significant evidence to show how contemporary practitioners viewed their art forms as the terminus of their art practices, and that the necessity of their aesthetic releases in mediator-praxis art forms did not arise from purely human initiative (Tao-Te Ching 42 and Rig Veda 10.129.2).

This chapter continues to explore how art practitioners appreciate art as essence, which brings different notions of what it take to be content or fulfilled through the kenotic view of art forms, commonly known as the discourse of presence. In the transcultural aesthetics of the art practitioner, their practice is dynamically based on the creative becoming nature of a kenotic individual. A kenotic individual is understood as one who is generally more aware than usual, where he or she is expressed as an embodiment of the authentic self and voice.

This recurring theme in the Zen-like art of Gao Xingjian and Helmut Federle suggests that these practitioners did not initially approach their art from the perspective of possessing the self-consciousness of an enlightened person, but rather from the position of being a person

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‘without isms’ (to use Gao’s term for ‘being without’). Their unswerving allegiance in discourse and action to a consciousness of empathy and compassion, their acts of aesthetic kenosis and their presence as the cathartic mediator-praxis address their creative nature as kenotic individuals with authentic voices. In fact they did not become creative individuals simply through their act of aesthetic kenosis but because they were a creative individuals who engaged kenotic aesthetics, and thus became source of inspiration for others.

Similarly, one could say that the aesthetics of transcultural art practitioners is based on its kenotic nature, as the contemporary practitioners are ontologically rooted in their mediator-praxes. Gao and Federle certainly appreciated the Axial sages for their critical content of the inner outworking of life and practice of an individual as the core ontological reality that gave meaning to the events and details contained in the narrative of the practitioner’s aesthetics. Likewise, Gao and Federle could concur with Eliot Deutsch, who considers a creative person not as a given, but an achievement: ‘a person is a creative articulation, in varying degrees of rightness, of his or her individuality within the matrix of social community and within the enduring reality of the self’. As the inner life and practice of Gao and Federle is in their relation to the aesthetic force, it is constitutive of the mediator-praxis that the inner life and practice of contemporary practitioners (in their experience of mediator-praxis) is indeed a constitutive part of contemporary art institutions today.

My main concern in this chapter is then to explore the ontological basis for the kenotic nature of transcultural art practitioner and their aesthetics from two perspectives. First, I examine the nature of the transcultural practitioner as a creative living individual/person, and then the practitioner as a kenotic responsive self (§1 and §2). There is but one living form of being human/individual, that of the living Tao 道 (the way of non-manifest and

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manifest essence of the universe) or *Logos* (the rational, ruling principle of nature). Both expressions have in common implications of ‘necessary laws’ and ‘speaking’ in etymology, but each expresses these concepts differently – the former being practical, the latter rational. The contemporary practitioner is not a continuation of this living self, nor is it another expression. However, to speak of the transcultural art practitioner, as a living kenotic person, is to describe the contemporary art practitioner as a self formed by the aesthetic force through mediator-praxis in the aesthetic life and practice of practitioners. It is also the purpose of this chapter to study this related kenotic text to see to what extent it can be attributed to the contemporary art practitioners. Following this discourse of kenotic presence (in being consciousness), I will then set out its significance for research into contemporary art practitioners’ attitude towards their art forms (§3 and §4).

1. **Gao and Federle as kenotic living individuals**

The kenotic person of aesthetic force, such as Gao and Federle, can be said to be the ontological basis for the transcultural aesthetics practice of embodying the authentic creative self and voice. This creative manifestation is not simply an act of moral transcendence. As Deutsch’s interpretation of kenosis indicates:

> Creativity always manifests concern; and thus by its very nature, art is a celebration of personhood and world, if not in their given actualities at least in their (real) potentialities.\(^6\)

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[And] Art by its nature points to community, even when it intends, for a specific political purpose, to be subversive. … It thus recognises, in the last analysis, that powers of art, being celebratory, are essentially spiritual and not narrowly political.\(^7\)

Being creativity is also an act of *kenosis*, or ‘self-emptying’.\(^8\) In Homer’s *Iliad* (ca. 800 BCE), he looks at the heroic ideal critically. In order for Homer’s hero to attain the posthumous glory (which was for the hero to die), death was a tragedy. The violence and death that the warrior suffered is often pointless, almost to the point of sheer self-destruction. But in an act of compassion for the father of the person who had killed his beloved friend, Achilles recovered his humanity and his *philotes*:

Priam, son of Dardanos, gazed upon Achilles, wondering
At his size and beauty, for he seemed like an outright vision
Of gods, Achilles in turn gazed on Dardanian Priam
And wondered, as he saw his brave looks, and listened to him talking.\(^9\)

This aesthetic experience of kenotic sympathy enabled each to see the divine and image of God/gods in the other (*Iliad* 24.634). Indeed, Karen Armstrong noted that ‘Homer had perfectly expressed the spirit of the Axial Age’.\(^10\) By revering the Grecian cosmology, it was possible to perceive a unity that drew apparent contradictions together. Each Greek god-like persona expressed the rich diversity and complexity of life, yet without evading the paradox or denying any part of the revealed universe. The Western genius for emancipation

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\(^8\) A state of consciousness: *Kenosis* (Greek), ‘emptying’. In Axial spirituality, the word is commonly used to describe the emptying of self, the dismantling of egotism.


eventually transformed the world, and turned towards a scientific ‘logos’ for a more mundane illumination.

In the East, the sages of Indian and Chinese aesthetics gravitated toward the spirited Tao/Unity, training their aesthetic intuitive minds toward mystical enlightenment. One kenotic Eastern Da-jian is Hui-neng, the Sixth and Last Patriarch of Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism (638-713ce). In Platform Sūtra 8, the text seems to support Gao’s and Federle’s attitude towards their aesthetic-universal art forms:

*In sudden enlightenment there is no tree, the bright mirror is not a stand.*  
[Formula one]

*Fundamentally not one thing exists; where, then, is a grain of dust to cling?*  
[Formula two]

But is the Platform Sūtra 8 a theory of presence? Or is it a product of a transcultural hermeneutic that involves Hui-neng creating the discourse *de novo* or his creative borrowing of another text in his practice?

Veracity of Gao’s and Federle’s desire of kenosis

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12 The possibility of Platform Sūtra 6 being true on its own is remote as the text is intricately linked to the whole matter of presence in being consciousness.

I shall begin with the consideration of whether there is an authentic point to the kenotic formulation as a whole in the *Platform Sūtra* (ca. 830–860 CE) for Gao’s and Federle’s art forms. In Hui-neng’s *Platform Sūtra*, his *gatha* poem elucidates Gao’s and Federle’s aesthetic attitude towards desiring the emptying or liberation (see *FIGURE 13*). Gao’s desire to be ‘without isms’ is one that is ‘not to be without reverence, but it is not reverence for spiritual beings, might or death. It is reverence for the boundless unknowable that lies beyond the dividing line of death’. For Federle, his desire is to be a ‘stimuli without defined intention’ and by opening oneself to the experiencing of a ‘logic of vegetation’ where the interplay of colour and form characterises his works – the history of cultures and of the individual that have fused into one unity.

Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*) by itself is the subtlest of all motivations; it is the ontological source and motive behind emptiness that gives it its character. Thus emptiness is not the central

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motive in the aesthetic life and practice of Gao and Federle. Rather, it is the inner life and practice of the creative individual that comes to expression through their emptiness that characterises Gao and Federle. And it is in this creative personhood that we also find the motif of kenosis exemplified through their identity with both the observer as the object of transcendental quality of the creative individual as well as the aesthetic force as the source of compassion and inspiration. Undeniably, it may be considered that in this creative personhood there is exemplified not only the compassion/inspiration of aesthetic force but the compassion/inspiration of the creative individuals for the aesthetic force as well.

Most scholars today in fact hold that there is indeed a kernel of aesthetic truth to the kenotic formulation *in sudden enlightenment there is no tree, the bright mirror is not a stand*. The reasons for this confident outlook are twofold: Gao's and Federle's absolute desiring of kenosis goes beyond the many criticisms made by the transcultural aesthetics of their time;\(^{16}\) and like *Chu'ang Tzu* 6.29-31 on ‘what was the Way?’ (that is independent of *Platform Sūtra* 8)\(^{17}\) provides good collateral evidence for a discourse of presence: *it had no qualities, no form; it could be experienced but never seen*. In the opinion of Karen Armstrong, from her *The Great Transformation* (2006), the veracity of the kenosis in the Axial Period had been well documented.

This kenotic act or self-emptying can thus be said to be the central ontological reality of the existence of the art practitioner's identity. In this perspective kenosis does not represent a functional or moral act of transcendence (of a temporal nature), but of an ontological reality that exists as the focus of creative being itself. It is disclosed to us in terms of the internal relationship of the creative individual and the creative aesthetic force as a

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\(^{17}\) In *Platform Sūtra* 8, a discourse of presence reads: ‘fundamentally not one thing exists; where, then, is a grain of dust to cling?’
differentiated order of aesthetic quality. The self is essentially creative in the differentiation between aesthetic force and the creative individual.\textsuperscript{18}

When the \textit{kenosis} of Gao and Federle is considered as an essential relationship of the creative individual to the aesthetic force as transcendental creative being, we are including more than a principle by which an ethical necessity can be included in transcultural aesthetic life and practice as such. What the living creative person discloses to us through a transcendence of art that embodies art forms is in fact the actual content of creativity \textit{itself}. Thus Gao and Federle do not simply empty themselves into their aesthetic worldliness, nor do they offer themselves first to the demands of the world as an ethical necessity that is co-opted into their field of compassion/inspiration for aesthetic force. Rather, their acts of kenosis are in reality a crucial aspect with regard to their relationship to the aesthetic force in transculturality; they are the creative individuals that become the constitutive creative beings of transcendental aesthetic histories.

Armstrong attributes a third century BCE discourse of presence to Chu’ang Tzu\textsuperscript{19} and claims that the kenotic formulation actually goes back to a seventh century BCE Axial unity tradition.\textsuperscript{20} Her main observations for the case are as follows:

(i) There are parallel materials such as Homer’s \textit{Iliad} 24.634 or \textit{Hosea} 1.2f, prompting a spirituality of self-surrender.\textsuperscript{21} Hence, the kenotic formulation (at the core of the Axial ideal) in \textit{Platform Sūtra} 8 is not so radically different from some \textit{zazen} aesthetics (that is, presence in Being-consciousness) that it should be accepted as authentic Hui-neng tradition on the grounds of the criterion of dissimilarity.

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\textsuperscript{20} Ibid: 86-124.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid: 89 and 108.
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(ii) There is a contradiction between the axial kenotic formulation in the *Rites Sūtra* and the use of *zazen* (a practice of the realisation of one's own true nature) in the Hui-neng's *Platform Sūtra* tradition.\(^{22}\)

(iii) Her third observation concerns the kenotic formulation in Chinese aesthetics, particularly as evinced in Chu’ang Tzu’s mystical writings (*Chu’ang Tzu* 6.31-32a).\(^{23}\) She observes that Chu'ang Tzu was the most aware of the fact that such an axial unity tradition had flowered to its highest heights.\(^{24}\)

From the discourse of presence, Armstrong’s observation illuminates its force in the context of Hui-neng’s aesthetics via Chu’ang Tzu. For Armstrong’s second observation to be valid, one must assume Hui-neng cannot contradict himself. Clearly, this is an *a priori* supposition. Hence, even if Armstrong is correct about the contradiction between Hui-neng’s sudden enlightenment and his kenotic formulation as found in *Platform Sūtra* 8, it does not necessitate that the sudden enlightenment is inauthentic. In fact, if Armstrong is correct about the contradiction, there would then be greater bases for us to believe that the sudden enlightenment is authentic, as it is highly unlikely that a discourse of presence (in being consciousness), which necessitates that ‘Hui-neng contradicted himself’ would have been a creation of the early Ch’an aesthetic tradition. In other words, observations against authenticity based on supposed contradictions are not decisive.

Nevertheless, Gao and Federle have shown quite convincingly that there is essentially no contradiction in the kenotic formulation. They instead offer three main analyses. First, the focus of the discourse of presence (in being consciousness) is not a kenotic formulation in a strict sense. Secondly, the discourse of presence corresponds to the *satori* (the awakening to true existence) in *Platform Sūtra* 8. And finally, what may seem contradictory to us might not have been so for Hui-neng and his contemporaries in their realisations amid their daily activities. Hence, Armstrong’s second observation collapses.

\(^{22}\) Ibid: 118.


\(^{24}\) Ibid: 371.
As for the plausibility of Gao and Federle knowing that their theory of kenotic presence was also found in the *Platform Sūtra 8*, the grounds for such a conclusion are many. It is clear that there are characteristically common concepts shared throughout the artworld: presence-consciousness, body-mind, and so on.²⁵ With the discourse of presence (in being consciousness) as their living enlightenment, Gao’s and Federle’s frequent art engagements offer a host of different kenotic formulae. In fact, there exists enough dissimilarity both between Gao and Federle, and with the typical kenotic formulae, to posit that they might not be thinking alike while applying the kenotic formulation of Hui-neng as the findings are varied.

In sum, Armstrong’s tracing of the authenticity and veracity of the kenotic formulation stands up to historical scrutiny. There are firm bases for believing at least the fact that Hui-neng practiced ‘emptying.’ Although there are other interesting issues connected with the study of kenotic formulation, they will be bypassed as the interest of this discourse of presence chapter lies elsewhere: the reference to art in *Platform Sūtra 8*. Therefore, the rest of this chapter will focus on the issue of the relevance of the referents found in the kenotic formulation and the discourse of kenotic presence (Heideggerian Daisen, or ‘Being’ consciousness) of the *Platform Sūtra*, and the assessment of the significance of these discourses for the theoretical enquiry into the attitude of Gao and Federle towards their art forms.

The collective origin for kenotic mediator-praxis aesthetics

It follows from this that the discourse of creative being (identity) must be explicated in terms of the discourse of presence.²⁶ At the core of the creative aesthetic of reconstitution and reconciliation, there is receptivity and kenosis that is capable of assuming a human

²⁵ Many theoreticians and commentators commonly observe this conclusion. For instance essays by G. Fong (Gao’s *Snow in August*), S.R. Quah and P. Ong (Gao Xingjian: Experience), M.J. Chang (A Groundbreaking Fusion of East and West), and E. Franz, G. Boehm, and G. Franck (Federle’s Helmut Federle). See also n. 5.

alienation/dislocation\(^{27}\) that does not result in what Deutsch will call ‘pseudo-art’ (or propaganda or pornography masquerading as art) within art itself.\(^{28}\) In their identification with genuine art, even to the point of the experience of ‘aesthetic stylisation’, transcultural practitioners such as Gao and Federle do not move beyond the ‘moral dimension’ that is embedded in the totality of their artworks,\(^{29}\) in order to fulfil a moral intention located in the freedom of art to enact its aesthetic force. However there is within practitioners’ own creative personhood a relationship with conscience that has a depth of humility and kenosis that grasps what is essentially human in its present situation.

The identification of nature and humanity with alienation or otherness is thus established in the creative personhood, not merely in the catharsis of being. The catharsis is therefore based on the essence of aesthetic force rather than in a moral act \textit{ad extra}, as in an operation beyond the aesthetic force. That is to say, it is the knowledge of the aesthetic force that only the creative kenotic person possesses and the knowledge of the creative kenotic person interfacing with the aesthetic force (that discloses and) that constitutes the ‘inner logic’ of creative kenotic personhood.

Living kenotic personhood means that the creative life and practice of kenotic individuals continues to exist through the ontological reality of transculturality. Gao and Federle saw clearly that the transculturality that constitutes the freedom of a person is the cathartic mediator-praxis itself. Thus Gao and Federle view the transhistorical practitioners in transculturality as ‘creative kenotic beings.’ Gao and Federle therefore exist in an embodiment of their relationship with the aesthetic force characterised by kenosis or kenotic presence in the world. It is in fact this nature of creative kenotic individual who determines the art form of their aesthetics. Both Gao and Federle express this quite specifically in their Zen-like approach to artwork: ‘there is Ch’an (Zen) in every person, and everyone can

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
become a bodhisattva’,\textsuperscript{30} and ‘the highest to which we can inspire is emptiness, being … this emptiness permits us to be open towards everything and to make distinctions’.\textsuperscript{31} The ‘person/being’ and the ‘become/permit’ constitute the hinge on which the aesthetic force as inspirer and reconciler turns without into the artworld. Aesthetics thus precedes and determines the creative kenotic person as the aesthetics of kenotic mediator-praxis.

The development of mediator-praxis in the artworld

This kenosis is the mediator-praxis art form in the transcultural artworld because it is the content of the life and practice of the kenotic living individuals under the aesthetic force. As the constitution of mediator-praxis in the everyday/artworld, kenotic practitioners must also first consider being the re-constitution of humanity into the humanity of cathartic mediator-praxis. A human being realises oneself as one ought to be to the extent to which one becomes a \textit{person}, says Deutsch, ‘On this account personhood is an achievement; it is not simply given to us in virtue of our being human’.\textsuperscript{32} Through their own humanity Gao and Federle bring the observers and readers under aesthetic judgement, and therefore under a cathartic as well as a kenotic presence. This art form also cuts through all presumptions based on the intrinsic ability of humanity, apart from the aesthetic force itself. Indeed, this is an aesthetic judgment on human ideologies as well as human institutions.

For the transcultural world to find its true humanity in aesthetic mediator-praxis is to know oneself as brought under aesthetic judgement for the sake of its potentialities. In this sense, as Deutsch observed, the \textit{Personae} were thought to conceal as well as to reveal. Similarly, psychologically speaking, they are partly voluntary (as artifice) and partly

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involuntary (as faithful presentation). He goes on to say, however, that ‘to be articulated rightly as a person, I want to argue, means essentially to create masks that fit properly’.\textsuperscript{33} This reconstitution and reconciliation of humanity into the cathartic mediator-praxis as the life of the creative individual with aesthetic force carries as its presupposition an aesthetic judgement for human possibilities. Every person wants emancipation but usually not the dissolution that it necessarily presupposes. Virtues must at times be killed, in order then to be made alive. Thus it is from such awareness of the self as pure spontaneity and as an individual qua individual, that genuine masking is possible, for ‘without that awareness there would be – as indeed so often with those lacking the awareness – only earnest egos striving fanatically to be something or other. With consciousness of the self we have person development as a kind of play. Masking becomes a creative undertaking that is aware of itself and its ground’:\textsuperscript{34} This is the re-constitution of creative being into the humanity of mediator-praxis. And it is the nature of the creative being to demonstrate the everyday/artworld under the same aesthetic judgment and therefore into the same potentiality. This too is what the transcultural artworld, as the contemporary practitioners bound themselves to mediator-praxis, affirms.

Along with the re-constitution of humanity with the human element of mediator-praxis, the kenotic practitioners exist as the constitution of mediator-praxis in the everyday/artworld. This artistic constitution does not simply occur as an act of separation from the everyday/artworld for the sake of art or of exemplifying certain transcultural characteristics that may be considered to personify an ideal of mediator-praxis. Rather, it occurs as a mediator-praxis that continues to have both a kenotic presence and practice in the everyday/artworld. Gao and Federle thus become part of the unity art form of mediator-praxis in the world through its own aesthetic of reconciling human conditions, creativity and innovations. Transcultural practitioners do not ‘own’ mediator-praxis – for it is only in the midst of the everyday/artworld that mediator-praxis is mediated and

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid: 24.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
practiced. Indeed, a transcultural focus does not mean to bring mediator-praxis into the everyday *per se*, but to show, via practitioners and their aesthetic kenotic presence in the everyday/artworld, that mediator-praxis has embodied our reality. And in response, transcultural practitioners have then taken up the cause of the marginalised voices as their own cause, just by being human or *jen*, 仁. This creative personhood solidarity is therefore the theoretical presupposition of all transcultural meditation in the everyday/artworld. This solidarity between the practitioners and the everyday/artworld is not one of substance but of virtue. It is by virtue of the aesthetic force that fellow humans bear the sacred image of God/gods. And it is by this virtue of aesthetic force that the transcultural practitioners express themselves in the everyday/artworld and for art’s sake recognise this transformative power of mediator-praxis.

It must be emphasised, however, that this concept of the creative being in its kenotic life and practice does not mean conformity to the everyday/artworld in the practice of solidarity. In fact I have already established that solidarity cannot mean conformity by asserting, through the re-constitution of humanity, the human element of mediator-praxis as the theoretical basis for existence in the everyday/artworld and yet not of it (*Iliad* 24 and *Platform Sūtra* 8).

As Deutsch points out, the constitution of mediator-praxis in the everyday/artworld must be engage with a ‘waking consciousness’:

> Waking consciousness seeking oblivion, a diminution of its being as a power. Waking consciousness unable to sustain its incessant changes, unable finally to be among the contents it becomes. Oblivion haunts consciousness not as a prereflective *cogito* so much as a postreflective dismissal of thought. Nothingness is negativity without transcendence.\(^{35}\)

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This strategic power of discernment connects the everyday/artworld to its own condition and allows the creative practitioners to engage tactically in order to nurture their own ‘life-support’ system. Waking consciousness is thus (1) selective and reflexive; (2) active, with an organic temporality and continuity; (3) qualitatively discriminating; (4) socially dependent; and (5) driven toward a kind of extinction.\(^{36}\) In mediator-praxis solidarity with the everyday/artworld, the creative individual is fully engaged with a humane obligation in context. This humane obligation to the aesthetic force in regard to the everyday/artworld is our consciousness. Deutsch notes that consciousness ‘enables its objects (which it takes to be existent) to be what they are for it … which is to say, consciousness enables objects to be phenomena for consciousness’.\(^{37}\)

### 2. Gao and Federle as kenotic responsive selves

The intention of the transcultural practitioner, as I have asserted above, is based on the kenotic nature of the creative individual. It is the nature of the creative individual to experience humanity or jen, 仁 that is grounded in creativity and personal freedom, and reconciliation with the aesthetic force that is realised through the creative kenotic individual and the catharsis of mediator-praxis. As the creative individual in which mediator-praxis is made present through the contemporary practitioner’s aesthetics in the everyday/artworld, the transcultural practitioner has their existence based on this creative aesthetics of the creative individual with the aesthetic force.

Gao and Federle as kenotic responsive selves are more than social entities; they are the cathartic mediator-praxis presentation of their own creative personhood, their own aesthetics as creative individuals in transculturality. Thus their aesthetics as creative individuals is the source paradigm of their kenotic responsive selves. Or, one could say the

\(^{36}\) Ibid: 80-1.

\(^{37}\) Ibid: 82.
responsive selves are the art form paradigm by which integration and cultivation of the self is experienced in terms of kenotic desire and connection with the aesthetic force.

14
GAO Xingjian:
Paintings – Dream Animation
2009
Animation for Prague Writers Festival
New Media Art:

Helmut FEDERLE:
Landeszentralbank Sachsen-Thüringen in Meiningen
2009
Fusingglastechnik glazing glass object art:
South windows: 16 Nos. of 6.56x8.35m panel; single fields divided in 1.55x2.02cm.

Installation work by Architects Kollhoff and Timmermann with Nicolas Perren, Berlin, Meiningen for The Central Bank of the Free States of Saxony and Thuringia
Photo: DESAG Schott
But this means that the kenotic responsive self exists as a transcendental as well as a creative personal reality in the everyday/world (see Figure 14). This exists for Gao’s and Federle’s kenotic mediator-praxis as the transcendence of the everyday/artworld. Their art forms bring re-constitution, connection and compassion into the everyday/artworld. This aesthetics of mediator-praxis is a crucial aspect in the sense that it is from the authenticity of their responsive selves from which all possibilities for the everyday/artworld proceeds. In this manner our study of the possible and the permissible functions of the creative individual must proceed systemically out of the authenticity of the mediator-praxis, and yet with the transcendental tension in balance between the liminal time and space.

The inquiries that arise in such a study as to the nature and function of Gao and Federle as kenotic responsive selves are basically the question of authority, order and praxis. These inquiries asked by Gao and Federle are anticipated and answered in the prioritising of mediator-praxis and process that these creative individuals set before us. In the aesthetics of mediator praxis, in which Gao and Federle embody the aesthetic force, there is the priority of the text/image that precedes and determines the human kenotic response – that is the authorial authority of Gao and Federle. As the aesthetic force that inspires Gao and Federle, it is revealed that the creative aesthetics both precedes and determines that Gao and Federle are the mediator-praxes – that is the order of the creative personhood of Gao and Federle. And finally, as a mediator-praxis that exists in transculturality, there is demonstrated the priority of connection that precedes and determines the process of embodying – that is the praxis of the creative personhood, as well as the artworld.

The Inquiry of Authority

When we ask by what cultural-authorial authority Gao and Federle perform the aesthetics of mediator-praxis, we are in fact considering the inquiry of accountability as the fountainhead of transcultural aesthetics. Not all forms of responsive and creative practitioners that might attract one’s interest or even support can be considered to be
creative living individuals. It is normal that there should be some apprehension over this aspect. This is not a case that contemporary the artworld has its authority by way of its own existence any more than Gao and Federle has their authorial authority by way of their own existence. They appeal to their connection to aesthetic force that inspires them and has enabled them to articulate their art form.

The bare fact of solidarity is not evidence of creative personhood. They are definitely human societies quite perverse in their common cause as well as communal life. Transcultural practitioners quite rightly probe the inquiry of authority when they ask ‘to what is a movement accountable when it purports to exist as a transcultural artworld of re-constitution, and purports to act as reconciliation between the aesthetic force and humanity?’

Yet the inquiry of authority is one that also includes a litmus test. It is a litmus test to put the inquiry in such a manner that the one inquiring is accountable to the one who probes. The Chinese authorities questioning the authority of Gao did not consider to question their own, nor the Modern authorities questioning Federle’s use of varied symbols and icons that violated the conventional understanding of what abstract art was supposed to be. If ‘Gao’ and ‘Federle’ as institutional entities place themselves in the position of one who has not been authorised, it has momentarily been forgotten that the inquiry must first of all be addressed to itself. By what authority in fact does any human being function as the creative person of mediator-praxis? They can do so only by the authorial authority of the aesthetic text/image embodied, and be present in it as a ‘responsive self’.

The embodiment of text/image, along with its kenotic presence as a responsive self, in fact, removes it from the domain of a principle or ‘authority’ in the abstract sense. As creative beings that co-exist with the aesthetic force, Gao and Federle bring humanity into

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the work of the aesthetic force in the concrete sense of their social-aesthetic life and practice of being creative and in harmony with the affective influence of art. Gao and Federle are ‘authorised’ for this aesthetics because they themselves are acknowledged and recognised as the creative individuals. Therefore, in mediator-praxis authority is manifested as the aesthetic power of creative individuals. In mediator-praxis the priority of the text/image that precedes and creates human response invests their every action with authority of the creative text/image itself.

For this reason the social relations that existed between Gao and Federle and their observers became an art form paradigm of responsive selves that exists between the transcultural practitioners and the aesthetic force. In binding discourse and actions together, the observers, readers and artworld established by the creative individual can only be accountable to its self-existence as the paradigm of mediator-praxis’ art forms – that is, his or her grasp of the work of art as inspired by the aesthetic force. This evidently is a kenotic art form, and its basic framework is a self-emptying existence and practice. Thus its accountability to self-existence as determined by the creative text/image is the hallmark of its transcendent power and authority. If it should seek to endorse itself by any other external criterion, it would compromise this transcendent basis and so dissipate its creative individual authority.41 The intrinsic existence of a creative individual and the mediator-praxis art form is thus qualified by the ontological status of the ‘being’ of the transcultural artworld itself.

The Inquiry of Order

When we then ask about the order of the creative individual in their aesthetics, we are seeking to discover the media through which the mediator-praxis art form flows as a

responsive self. Because every contemporary practitioner inherits and absorbs from its culture sets of values that are relatively not criticised, the inquiry of order often constitutes a crisis of the artworld. Indeed it might be considered that the crisis of the contemporary artworld is a crisis of order, often mistaken for the inquiry of authority. In the face of cultural relativity, where the artworld can often assume the art form of the prevailing social framework, ideologies and aesthetics may provide strong approvals and order, for they are usually narrowly perceived, conceived, rigorously logical and thoroughly demanding. They are also simplistic, but this may account for their appeal. Ideologies and cultural aesthetics also tend to create and focus on a concept of leadership that is typically dictatorial rather than serving and sustaining. As a consequence, a posture toward provincialism and national protectionism can result, with a string of polemic against other forms of order.

The classic case of the critical contemporary art discourse is the conflict between the postmodern concept of order grounded in mediator-praxis as responsive selves and the modern concept of order grounded in historical continuity with the art-and-aesthetic institution, coupled with a hierarchical concept of ‘Western colonialism’ over ‘transculturality’. Unable to sense the priority of the international artworld over institution, of humanity over ethnic privilege and of the responsive selves over institutional issues, the Western artworld sought to bring order to what was perceived as disorder through the principle of separation/duality. Only reluctantly did they concede to the authority of transculturality and art-and-aesthetics, and only by this concession did they recognise the other and unity/nonduality transcultural practitioners as practising in the mediator-praxis.

While this tension has been recognised for its historical and theoretical importance to studies in transcultural aesthetics, the deeper issue at stake is not simply how the transcultural artworld determines its order in being the transcultural artworld but how the transcultural artworld finds its order in the mediator-praxis art form. If we allow that the mediator-praxis axiom also holds for the transcultural axiom, then we must return to the statement that the nature of the transcultural artworld determines their intention, even as the nature of mediator-praxis determined their respective artistic vocation. The basic mediator-
praxis of Gao and Federle was not conditioned by their mediatory capability, but rather their mediatory intention that was based on their essential nature as creative individuals of aesthetic force. Gao and Federle did not become creative individuals of aesthetic force through inspiration alone but as the creative individuals in the mediator-praxis. It was through this creative personhood that they received the mediator-praxis institution and carried out the mediator-praxis intention. In their artwork they were considered to be creative individuals, not simply cathartic mediator-praxis practitioners, as Gao and Federle make clear at the outset:

A writer does not speak as the spokesperson of the people or as the embodiment of righteousness. His voice is inevitably weak, but it is this weak voice that is the most authentic. … This is the inevitable fate of the poet or writer who sets out to preserve his own voice. … [But] literature allows a person to preserve a human consciousness.42

His [Federle's] aim was different from the traditional one of abstract modern art. Rather than seeking to free the elements of his works from all subject matter, to distil them, he included various semantic elements in his paintings. The ciphers he started to use marked a decisive turning point that was all the more surprising because abstraction seemed compulsorily to entail the suspension of meaning. According to the generally held view, it implied visual neutrality, purity not only as a basic premise but also as the aim of artistic work. The dismantling of references was assumed to be the precondition for the painter introducing elements of colour and form, using them for the purpose of representation.43

The contemporary order of the creative individual is thus an intermediary order through which humanity is grasped by the creative text/image so that the creative practitioner in mediator-praxis experiences in his or her practice with the aesthetic force. Here we could

say that there is a proxy or certain complicity established by which observers view within the order of transcultural aesthetics so as to provide the context for the liminal act of reconstitution and reconciliation.

The creative individual thus functions as an aesthetic ‘bridge’ in the case for John Young, a ‘producer of data’ in Imants Tillers, and Gao Xingjian as an ‘one man’s bible’ and Helmut Federle a ‘pictorial sign’. The observers and readers of their artworks are mediated because of the priority of creative mediator-praxis, which inspires and becomes embodied in the transcultural artworld. This is exactly what Gao and Federle express their creative kenotic art form: the kenotic mediator-praxis art form occurs first in our everyday/artworld and then is mediated by the aesthetic force as the ongoing art forms of mediator-praxis.

The Inquiry of Praxis

It is valid then to consider that the ordering of transcultural practice is that of embodying the truth by action, not merely applying theoretical truth. Thus the kenotic mediator-praxis art form is first and foremost revealed as praxis. In praxis, as Aristotle drew our attention to, the telos of the action is contained within the act. This is unlike the act of ‘art making’ an art form, where the telos lies beyond the act. Both authority and order are disclosed through the aesthetic action.


This is evident in both Gao’s and Federle’s art practices. Their aesthetic acts through transcultural discourse and action brought the telos within the action itself. Thus they present human consciousness to the marginalised or the powerless, and thereby raise the inquiry of both authority and order (see Figure 15). Their authority to empower as an aesthetic transcendental reality is itself the praxis of aesthetic force, and their authority to demonstrate this creative mediator-praxis art form in the emotional healing of humanity’s horrific past,\(^{46}\) or of the amnesia of modern art history.\(^ {47}\)

The creative individual is not merely the ‘comparative aesthetics’ department of the contemporary artworld, where aesthetic truths learned in institutions are simply put into practice. Rather, the praxis of art is itself the context in which both the authority and true order of theoretical enquiry is based. The theoretical task is that of interpreting the praxis of mediator-praxis, both in its disclosure sense as the essence of the purpose of creative mediator-praxis and in its contemporary art form. It is noteworthy that comparative theoreticians and philosophers from various world art institutions with their own praxis of


transcultural aesthetics produced the core theoretical documents of contemporary
transcultural aesthetics.\textsuperscript{48} Philosophers who are first of all recognised as academic scholars
and theoreticians may not be the philosophers that transcultural practitioners need in
unpacking their own theoretical task for the creative mediator-praxis art forms.

The creative individual did not happen as a result of a series of human artistic decisions,
nor was it something that the aesthetic force simply ‘inspired’ as a product, awaiting its \textit{telos}
through human artistic actions. Aesthetic embodiment in mediator-praxis creates the
environment and the space in which aesthetic intuition is made possible for creative
imagination. The true artistic freedom to express only results from the reality of the relation
that a creative individual has to the mediator-praxis art form. And this is done with
authority and as the order of practice.

In drawing out these implications of the nature of transcultural practitioners and their
aesthetics considered as praxis, I see the task of transcultural art making and installation as
the presentation of the message that mediator-praxis is a proxy of humanity negotiating. It
addresses the core social frameworks rather than attempting to alter the creative individual’s
self-perception through the mind’s eye. A theory of art making and installation must be
developed – one that is indigenous to the social and cultural context in terms of the social
frameworks that the message seeks to address.

The transcultural intention does not bring mediator-praxis to the everyday/artworld, but
rather the creative individuals, whose transculturality is realised through their own presence
in the everyday/artworld, have interfaced with and taken up the cause of the marginalised
as fellow human. The call for theoretical reflexion is thus pressed on those who aim to give
account of that which is done and experienced through mediator-praxis.

In the basic form of humanity as fellow human, nature has thus becomes part of our otherness. In mediator-praxis, aesthetic force embodies creative individuals as the true form of natural humanity. Transcultural humanity is hence humanity as a determination of human being with aesthetic-universal force; it is transculturally human in the form of a creative being of one with the other (in unity), and it is in this sense that humanity becomes a collaborator.

The kenotic creative individuals do not produce another form of humanity but can be understood as the ‘transculturalisation’ of humanity. Through the creative individual mediator-praxis, it is determined that humanity, in its concrete and particular form as co-humanity/collaborator, is a more elemental and authentic humanity than that, which exists as ‘nature’, including all racial and cultural forms. In such forms of humanity as co-humanity/collaborator, the creaturely and natural aspect of creative human personhood is ‘humanised’ without the need to appeal to any ‘orders of preservation’. The creative individual mediator-praxis therefore ‘humanised’ humanity (which is, reconnecting our humanness).

3. Kenotic unity in mediator-praxis art forms of Gao and Federle

Gao’s and Federle’s Kenotic formulation: Two formulae

While Quah Sy Ren attributes Gao’s artistic significance to the transcultural unity traditions on the basis of the parallel found in Platform Sūtra 8, Patricia Ong does not fully explain how Gao’s kenosis takes place but assigns Gao’s xieyi or ‘free-spirited’ tradition and visual experience to Ch’an. For Gao, in his Ink Paintings (2002), his inner vision’s location shifts

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and floats, yet without resorting to strict perspective, the images of his mind are subjected to a growth process.\textsuperscript{52} However he insists that his aim is to express ‘human nature’, the ‘innermost mind’, so long as it grasps the essence of Ch’an.\textsuperscript{53} Even as Liu Zaifu recognises Gao’s kenotic art forms as his ‘self-salvation’,\textsuperscript{54} Gilbert Fong simply alludes Gao’s ‘the bodhi is not a tree, nor the mind a mirror bright’ to his non-conformist attitude towards actualising his individualism in its ultimate form. Similarly, he attributes Gao’s second formulation ‘fundamentally not one thing exists; where, then, is a grain of dust to cling?’ to his ‘inherent understanding of the truth about human existence and salvation, which represents a major breakthrough and the “freeing up” of religion’.\textsuperscript{55}

16

GAO Xingjian:
(Left) Emptiness
2005
280x206cm,
Chinese ink on paper
Painting of Feeling
Exhibition, Paris

Helmut FEDERLE:
(Right) Japanese Sea in Moonlight
2009
Acrylic on canvas
336x400cm
Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tamaki
Purchased 1988


\textsuperscript{54} X.-J. Gao \textit{Snow in August} (2003): ix.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. ‘...what is without self, that is not mine, that I am not, that is not my self. Thus should it be seen by “perfect wisdom” (sammappa~n~naaya) as it really is. Who sees by perfect wisdom, as it really is, his mind, not grasping, is detached from taints; he is liberated’ (\textit{Samyutta Nik\textperiodcenteredya} 22.45).
Although art scholars are aware (and are in agreement) that Platform Sūtra 8 offers valuable evidence for the reconstruction of the kenotic formulation of Gao as well as Federle, some do not come to terms with it seriously enough (see FIGURE 16). Gottfried Boehm accepts that in the case of Federle a basic part of Eastern emptying discourse may have belonged to his original process. According to Boehm, in Dark Light (1998), Federle responds to the artistic enquiries from a ‘world he perceives as being spent and exhausted’ and he acknowledges that ‘the recognition of our finiteness frees our gaze for the inaccessibility of the reality of an “immaterial being”’. Boehm further states that if the discourse of presence (which is, according to him, motivated by the new responsibility of the artist for the ‘signs’) is regarded as secondary, then to decipher the ‘sign’ is the task of the artist and his work that is spoken ‘of the metaphysical quality of form, of art’s spirituality and the sublime, of a sensation of being which knows that the fruits it is given to taste can be savoured but never possessed’. In short, Boehm is establishing his case by kenotic formulation considerations. In such cases, it is the contents of the discourse of presence that constitutes decisive evidence. But this is not altogether convincing, as there is no inherent reason why the two parts ought to be of more or less equal contents of one’s reflexion. For Federle simply pronounced:

What I can do is to translate vegetative or social reality into a pictorial parallel using the means of pure painting. … In essence, the picture is itself, but for the person viewing it, it opens up climatic associations which he may draw upon from his memory or which may act upon his memory in a stimulating way.

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57 Ibid: 71 and 74.
In fact, there are important arguments that support the authenticity of the kenotic formulae. Before delineating them, I shall first clarify a statement. While Gilbert Fong clarifies the finer point of why Gao's discourse of presence should be secondary in the context of promoting Zen,\(^6^0\) Fong is implicit in pointing out that Gao's hyperbolic pronouncement in his ultimate goal of theatre is his kōan.\(^6^1\) Moreover, given the fact that kenotic formulation could be a common phenomenon in twentieth-first century transcultural aesthetics\(^6^2\) would not Gao have dealt with them in any other art form? Hence, it is perhaps more historically plausible that Gao expanded his kenotic formulation (by exposition or explanation) in his *Return to Painting* (2002) than for him just to state a kenotic formulation *simpliciter*.\(^6^3\) It therefore appears to us that in viewing the *Platform Sūtra* 8 as an *a priori* stance (whether conscious or unconscious) Gao did explicate and apply his hermeneutical understandings; hence, such an ambiguity is cleared. This is to say then that every strand of the discourse of presence is authentic, but it has to be validated. Rather, there is naturally some form of expansion in view of the radical nature of the dictum and the contemporaneous situation. What have just been set out are general considerations, and they do not clinch the case. It has to be further substantiated.

Between Gao and Federle: a third formula?

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When a comparison is made between Gao and Federle, it can be seen that even Federle included kenotic formulations in his reflexion (see **FIGURE 17**). Federle has ‘powerlessness … that there isn’t even any obvious programme anymore, but that the energy is manifested from one picture to the next’.

The two kenotic release formulae found in Federle are also found in Gao in the same order and form. It is precisely due to this collateral evidence offered by Federle that Franck views the first two kenotic formulations as authentic pronouncements.

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**FIGURE 17**

GAO Xingjian:
(Left) **Melancholy**
2003
Chinese ink on paper,
449x500cm
Between Figurative and Abstract: Recent Paintings 2007

(Right) **Question**
2001
Chinese ink on paper,
81x82cm
Darkness and Light 2001
Private Collection

Helmut FEDERLE:
(Below) **Zwei Felder**
1995
Acrylic on cardboards,
261x161cm
Brooklyn Rail Installation, Peter Blum Gallery

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Hence, by the invocation of the criterion of multiple attestations, the first two kenotic formulas can be claimed to be authentic.

What about a third kenotic formula: ‘art form in installation’? Gao’s third kenotic formulation, similar to Ni Zan’s empty pavilion, is a representation of his abandoned homeland and the end of his idealistic vision of the world (as his heartland) into which he was born. The single trunk standing alone in the barren mindscape of Under the Rain (1990) or Melancholy (2003) reverberates with the same hidden declaration of survival in a hostile world. Just as in Gao's figurative works, such as Soul Mountain (2000), his ‘ego’ self manifests itself as a chaotic dark hole with a lone figure. The image depicts the angst within his innermost thoughts, and Gao sees himself as ‘more than self-expression … [but] as a case of self-purification – observing with a pair of somewhat sober eyes the ever-changing world and one's own mainly unconnected self – than an act of self-expression’.

Whereas Federle’s statement: ‘we are not fascinated by the unfamiliar but by what we have within ourselves – by our expectation of harmony which is fulfilled right there – and less in other culture’ would seem then to imply that Federle was aware of more kenotic formulas in the aesthetic tradition that he received and practiced. Federle’s own comment indicates that he intends to show the absolute nature of the pronouncement for kenosis of desire through his Being-consciousness. Whether this is so, remains to be explained by Georg Franck.

Franck has suggested an affirmation for the third kenotic formula and the discourse of presence that accompanies it is connected to the first two formulas. Franck, in a sense, formulates a thesis on two key insights. First, the transcultural unity parallels in Platform Sūtra 8 contained rejection of being consciousness, which shows that the two kenotic

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formulas are not conjoined but independent of each other.68 Secondly, these first two kenotic formulas apply the discourse of presence that refers to ‘expectation of harmony which is fulfilled right there’, which evinces the presence.69 From a discourse of presence (Husserl’s Analyses), the third kenotic formula should also be considered as originally separate from the first two.

4. The significance of the transcultural discourse of kenotic presence

Observation of the kenotic formulation and the theory of presence

18
GAO Xingjian:
(Left) The Appeal
1998
Chinese ink on paper,
150x156cm

(Right) Culture Revolution in 1966-76, Midwater
2007
Installation view
300x201cm each canvas

(Middle) Day and Night
2007
Chinese ink on paper
193 x 471cm
Collection of Singapore Art
Museum Donation of the Artist

Gottfried Franck’s first affirmation is reassuring in that we have here a summary treatment of kenotic formulation for Federle and therefore a citation of kenotic (being-)consciousness should not be astonishing (see FIGURE 18). Besides, the fact that they are conjoined in the text is evidence that someone has done so. Why should we assume that it wasn’t the work of Federle?

Franck’s second affirmation, which makes reference to the discourse of presence in the kenotic formula, is convincing. Two possible alternative explanations may be given as to why ‘presence’ is manifested here. The first explanation is that it is simply a matter of style: presence can be considered as the equivalent of release in dissolution or emancipation. The second is that the use of presence may reflect the Heideggarian distinction between Being-consciousness ‘towards art forms’ and Being-consciousness ‘by art forms’.

In agreeing with Franck’s affirmative attitude towards a third kenotic formula, the following considerations should be noted. If Federle and Gao knew they were making a radical pronouncement, and if they intended to make themselves ‘intelligible’ to their contemporaries, then, in the context of the use of the discourse of presence in their kenotic formulated art forms, the likelihood of Federle or Gao referring to these kenotic formulas is conceivable.
What has just been set out forms a cumulative case: It begins with the observation that Federle might have known the third kenotic formula when he stated ‘by our expectation of harmony which is fulfilled right there’. It then proceeds to show that Federle would have ‘realised’ the common transcultural kenotic formula of his time (which made reference to the discourse of presence via memory in the art forms), according to the contemporary phenomenological literature were pervasive. Following this, it was emphasised that if I accept the postmodern period of Federle’s or Gao’s art form, the fact that Federle and Gao included something that had become a normality in the postmodern era the presence points to its authenticity and relevance. And if it also borne in mind, that the *Platform Sūtra 8* probably forms a transcultural unity; my case is further strengthened.

Critique of the kenotic formulation and the theory of presence

I hope to have shown that the case for the significance of the kenotic formulas found in *Platform Sūtra 8* can stand up to critical scrutiny as well. Thus I propose to set forth the case for, and in doing so give an account of, what may have stimulated the kenotic formulation and the discourse of presence, with an emphasis on the aesthetics of Gao and Federle.

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71 Gao cites: ‘a return to painting is not a return to tradition in order to resurrect the forms and tastes that were amply expressed by the ancients. It is rather a return to discover the remaining and far from exhausted possibilities and to unearth a personal means of expression’. See *Return to Painting* (2002).

72 The method here would possibly be quite akin to the principle of ‘internal continuity’. It is denying the implication of authenticity from such consistency, which demands either a theory of authorial agreement and deliberate concurrence beyond belief or a theory of verbal inspiration that outdoes the literalists. The principle of parsimony would seem to demand a simple answer: behind this unity stands an enlightened person, whose authentic mind has come through the exigencies of unity tradition formation reasonably intact. Burnham attributes ‘the idea of little perceptions allows Leibniz to account for how such continuity actually happens even in everyday circumstances. The principle of continuity is very important for Leibniz’s physics (e.g. Specimen Dynamicum) and turns up in Leibniz’s account of change in the monad.’ [G. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, (Ed. and Trans.) Remnant and Bennett, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1996): 56.] Cf. D. Burnham, “Implications of Conceiving Substances as Monads on “Little Perceptions”” in *Leibniz: Metaphysics*, Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: A peer-reviewed academic resource, IEP, http://www.iep.utm.edu/leib-met/; Accessed as at 11.11.2011.
If my earlier arguments for the authenticity of the kenotic formulas are correct, there is a *prima facie* case for concluding that Gao and Federle would have proceeded to express the reasons for their kenotic formulas. This appears even more plausible when one bears in mind that these formulas are likely to be prevalent in the modern phenomenological aesthetics. Hence, if Gao or Federle meant to attack the whole system of the kenosis of desire, there is a high probability that they would have dealt with these formulas and offered explanations for their rejection. Such a biographical sketch of both Gao and Federle is more credible and believable than the one that acknowledges their kenotic formulation without explaining why.

The discourse of presence is essential to the true understanding of the whole issue of the kenosis of desire: Gao and Federle criticised the casuistry of the aesthetics practice of using circumventing kenotic formulas because ultimately they made reference back to a creative origin that is, nothingness or the void (womb) and impinged on their prerogatives. The kenosis in question was developed out of an authentic intention to avoid the misappropriating the essences of art. Although the contemporary artworld is more concerned about the enquiry of the validity of kenosis, the concerns of Gao and Federle were something else altogether. Their whole idea is that, as good as these other substitute kenosis are in terms of intention, they nonetheless cannot be dissociated from the essence of art. Hence, there is thus no ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ kenosis. Every kenosis is a kenosis subjected before the essence of art. Gao and Federle are thus emphasising that such circumventing is not beneficial or successful. If this interpretation is correct, a coherent trend of thought perhaps emerges from the *Platform Sūtra* 8. The strong emphasis of kenotic release is meant to demonstrate that the substitute formulas are probably conceived to engage the aesthetic force. And how this could come about is explained by the discourse of presence. Heidegger would then be a strong recommendation or consideration for both Gao

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and Federle, as he tacitly suggests that all kenosis impinges on the affective influence of aesthetic force/impact.  

There is perhaps an important assumption behind the kenosis. This is the assumption that the catharsis has revealed its vista, and the moment has now come to begin the creative act: a true act without recourse to kenosis that should now be discerned and applied. This heightened awareness of the artistic presence in mundane worldly affairs is characteristic of contemporary practitioners’ transcultural aesthetics: the vista and the liminal have opened up. This bringing to bear of the immanence and kenosis to our worldly matters is, I submit, an important presupposition behind the kenotic formulation and the cause of the discourse of presence (and memory).

Finally, I shall demonstrate the unity of the process and articulate how they converge with an important aspect of Gao and Federle’s aesthetics. The connection of the three presences with the impact of art often goes unnoticed. The first two presences, which are mentioned in George Steiner’s Real Presences, signify the extent of the realm in which the absolute reality of art is embodied. But the locus of aesthetic force is none other than the art form, which is mentioned in the third kenosis. In other words, the prevailing concept found in the three discourses of kenotic presence is that art is sovereign. Such an observation enhances the authenticity of the three discourses of presences when we bear in mind the characteristic message of contemporary transcultural aesthetics: the site of art. It is precisely the presence (or proximity) of the topos of the artwork that necessitates the kenotic formulas to be encountered. There is thus a profound convergence of the concept of the three kenotic presences with the characteristic message of transcultural practitioners. Such a convergence


of these underlying presuppositions is implicit and not explicit and therefore further provides a powerful indication of authenticity.

We shall now summarise regarding the authenticity of the kenotic presences. It is reasonable to believe that the art practitioners Gao and Federle would have some explanations within the context of their radical pronouncements on the prevalence of kenotic formulas in modern times. Chinese aesthetics probably did not tag their art forms to the kenosis formula involving the use of kenotic art form. The emphases of *Platform Sūtra* 8 are in profound harmony with the characteristic message (the criterion of coherence) of both Gao and Federle. I submit that the case for the authenticity and relevancy of *Platform Sūtra* is strong and this should override objection (ii) mentioned earlier. And if one bears in mind also that the other objections to their authenticity are tenuous, there are bases for concluding that *Platform Sūtra* 8 is authentic and true to kenotic transcultural aesthetics.

In closing on kenotic unity: Gao, Federle and *Platform Sūtra* 8

If what I have argued for in the foregoing pages is correct, this text offers a premise on Gao’s and Federle’s attitude towards their aesthetic-universals mediator-praxis art form. This premise is important in five respects.

First, this text stems from the Chinese aesthetics unity tradition. Chapter four briefly dealt with some aspects of the *Tao-Te Ching* and *Rig Vedic* texts (*Tao-Te Ching* 42; *Rig Veda* 1.164.4 and 10.129.2) and demonstrated that kenotic aesthetic-universals art form figure prominently there, so it is of interest to highlight that further premise for reconstructing contemporary art practitioner’s attitude towards their art form is found in another aspect of the unity traditions. Hence, it is not just a concern of Chinese, Indian or European
aesthetics to show the relationship between Gao and Federle and their art forms.\textsuperscript{78} Moreover, this attestation from multiple sources would help to establish my study on a firmer basis.

Second, in the context of the negative view of art forms in Poetics 1449b.24-8, Tao-Te Ching 42 and Rig Veda 1.164.4 and 10.129.2, these texts offer a counterbalance and explain why art form looms so large in Gao and Federle’s art practises. From Platform Sūtra 6 it can be gathered that Gao and Federle regarded the aesthetic-universal art form of kenotic desire as transcendence, and that it held status as the site of kenotic consciousness. This would imply that Gao and Federle sought to go to their kenotic art forms of desire not just because it was an art form but because it also had an intrinsic importance that was not obliterated by its emptying acts. It seems therefore incontrovertible to state that kenotic art forms of desire were important to transcultural art practitioners. Moreover, it should be noted that Gao and Federle are transcultural and that the unity tradition would instil in practitioners the importance and significance of the art form of desire in the truth of ultimate reality or of nothingness. It is tempting to seek a developmental hypothesis to account for these seemingly contradictory stances. However, this is precarious, as we do not know which text is chronologically prior (in the remaking of that, which is important in any developmental hypothesis). Hence I cannot reconstruct any development in Gao’s or Federle’s attitude. Perhaps such a transcultural quest is unnecessary as such contradictory stances may be more of the nature of a dialectical tension than true contradiction. Gao and Federle could not distance themselves from the conception of art form of desire as transcendentally significant, nor could they escape from their belief that the art form of kenosis would dissipate or emancipate visions. This dialectical tension is seen in a clearer light in the next chapter.

Third, the emphasis that the kenotic art form of desire is the site of transcendence recalls a very important aspect of the unity traditions. The essence of art is acknowledged by the

\textsuperscript{78} The importance of art form to European aesthetic has been studied by many scholars as evident in the following works: B. Bloemink and J. Cunningham, Design [does not equal] art: functional objects from Donald Judd to Rachel Whitread, Merrell: The University of Michigan (2004), and A. Alberro, Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press (2003).
transcultural world art practitioners to be their recurrent affective inspiration but it is especially in the kenotic art form of desire that art is to be manifested as homeostatic realities. Indeed, the aesthetic-universals art form of desire is the chosen site where art is affectively impacted. This nexus of ideas is essentially related to the unity traditions. From the context of the unity traditions texts, art is enshrined in the mind, not as an attribute of creative individuals but as mediator-praxis. It is also to be observed that the following context in the unity traditions texts speak of unity as ‘the bliss’ and of ‘the overcame suffering or angst’. Whether such a nexus of meaning and freedom were in Gao’s or Federle’s mind cannot be deduced from Platform Sūtra 8 alone for the enlightenment is tantalising sudden. However if I were to juxtapose this text with the actions of Gao and Federle in their art form during the recessional act of their art practices, some significant findings may arise. I shall do this in Part III. Suffice it to state here that the art form of desire is important and looms large in the aesthetics of transcultural art practitioners such as Gao and Federle because, as explained by the significant kenotic formulae, it is their synthesis art form of emancipation or dissolution. One therefore must empty their art form of desire. In this short explanatory formula a whole nexus of images has been conjured up.

Fourthly, if the message Gao and Federle work is that the transcendence of art is near and sudden, and if the site of the art form is understood in the abstract sense as ‘embodiment’, surely Platform Sūtra 8 or Chu’ang Tzu’s Commentaries 6.31-32a implies that this embodiment of art must be established in the art form since it is the site of transcendence. It therefore seems probable that Gao and Federle view their art form of desire as the site of the climax or the vindication of their aesthetics, whereby the confrontation between the sovereignty of art and art form of desire is enacted. Once again, I find evidence for embracing the concept


80 It should be noted that Ps it is unity that the site of the desire. The change to art form may be due to the reason that the purity of form (Gastel) is used in the kenotic formulas instead of unity (unity being more evocative and symbolic). E. Cassirer, ‘Geist and Life’, in Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. 4: The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms (Vol. 4), New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press (1996): 3-113.
that the aesthetic-universals art form performed an attraction on transcultural art practitioners such as Gao and Federle. As an important strand of their transcultural message concerns the site of ultimate reality, it is perfectly congruent that Gao and Federle should seek to bring to a climax their aesthetics in their art form of desire. In other words, the status of the art form as the site of transcendence and the fundamental nature of Gao and Federle’s message would inexorably lead to a collision between the two. *Platform Sūtra* 6 thus allows us to affirm that the unity traditions probably had a great impact on Gao and Federle and their own conception of their art practices. The observations set out in this chapter explain why the art form was to Gao and Federle a magnet. This has been intimated already in this chapter, and I find here a significant convergence of it with *Platform Sūtra* 8. In chapter seven, I hope to confirm this further and to demonstrate that one very important aim of transcultural art practitioners’ art practices is most probably shaped by the unity traditions.

Finally, it should be highlighted that this chapter confirms that, for Gao and Federle, transcendental and theoretical considerations take precedence over the sociological, political or other factors directly. This is not to deny that these other considerations were also important for Gao and Federle, but that it is this concept that art is sovereign, and that therefore it is transcendental, which becomes the fundamental and organising factor for these other strands. This will have an important bearing on my next chapter.
CHAPTER 6

SPATIAL TIME OF LEE’S UFAN RELATUM:

HOMEOSTASIS OF REALITY

Previous chapter guides both art practitioners and viewers to adopt the kenotic view of art forms in the Platform Sūtra dictum with caution, for in Edmund Husserl’s unity we see Gao Xingjian and Helmut Federle recognise the importance of art forms to essence. Husserl’s notion of presence in time-consciousness (Idea of Phenomenology 3.2 [1913]; The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness [1905]) thus provides us another positive resolution. Through transcultural aesthetics, Lee Ufan also understood that the essence of art is inviting viewers to ‘negotiate’ both art form and consciousness (following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who was probably connecting the concept of ‘bodily’ presence from Husserl to an existence of temporalis). In this chapter, I propose to adduce a few arguments offered by Lee Ufan who is in favour of the idea that the cyclic conception of time can accommodate the linear conception of reality. This discourse meditation shows that cyclic

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recurrence is not necessarily a mechanical repetition with aesthetic innovation. The methodological approach that I adopt is empirical, psychological, and phenomenological. According to Lee, there is ‘pure experience’ of time, ‘consciousness and the world’ of time, ‘correspondences’ of time, or even ‘poetic moments’ of time, that has inspired many diverse descriptions and conceptions of time. Felt time, in particular for Lee, inaugurates any objectively measured time, which concurs to give the idea that the ‘unreality of time’ is illusionary, and time is not simply a mental construction but an encounter, or deai – a lived experience – with all human condition and worldly innovative processes.3

Every culture has their hidden history of spatial time and within it lays an implicit socio-anthropological paradigm of humanity. Human beings are defined by their social behavioural frameworks as well as by the rituals of their culture. This implicit socio-anthropological paradigm is the pre-critical mass from which social-anthropological theories are developed and of which today’s art theoreticians and philosophers inquire. One of the most present concerns of transcultural practitioners is the subject of time and its temporal passage: ‘Is passage of time possible?’ ‘And what is time, anyway?’ and ‘How do art practitioner mediate the realities such as space, time, event, and movement in the past and the future which are somehow “just as real” as the present?’ If this assertion is true and accepted, it means that all subsequent theories on the nature of time in relation to humanity are in some generic sense culturally relative. Yet as relativity is also accepted as a socio-anthropological paradigm of humanity that lies behind each culture, it is possible that the socio-anthropological framework of humanity contains some elements of a common core understanding that is recognised in every culture, race and ethnic society.

It is also the contention of this chapter that there is a socio-anthropological paradigm of humanity based on spatial time in the art form of Lee, and it is the task of a critical

theoretical enquiry to define that essential core that is significant in contemporary art practitioners’ attitude towards their art forms. The task of defining this essential core will lead to the task of developing transcultural concepts and frameworks that Lee have as the aim of disclosure of the essential goodness ‘jen, 仁’ and unity of humanity, or jen, 仁, along with the differentiations fully present and concretely affirmed.\(^5\)

This critical task of definition and disclosure is scientific in its approach as well as comprehensive in its epistemology. That is to say, the concrete social framework of humanity as a ‘pre-critical’ mass is the objective reality that controls, by its very nature, the methodology by which it is known. Cultural anthropologies, or theories about the nature of human beings, must be submitted to the scientific rigor of investigation in respect of the concrete centre of humanity as a social construct. These theories are related by their very nature to the cultural matrix of experience and its objective understanding of human beings. They would be considered in an absolutist sense within that particular cultural worldview.

In Lee’s Relatum, he asked two questions: Can a theoretical enquiry presented in an art form be comprehensible and engaging to observers – and if so, how? Can observers and readers then continue on in that aesthetic direction and then to what extent?\(^6\) Lee, in his statement, continues:

\(^4\) Jen, 仁: Jen (humanity) has been variously translated as benevolence, perfect virtue, goodness, human-heartedness, loving-kindness, love, hasad, altruism, and etc. None of these expresses all the meanings of the term. It means a particular virtue, benevolence, and also the general virtue, the basis of all goodness. In Book of Mencius (6a.11; 7b.16), it is ‘human’s mind’. Confucianists understood it as love or ‘humanity living together’. Han Yu (768-824) applied it as universal love. Neo-Confucianists read it as ‘impartiality’, the ‘character of production and reproduction, consciousness, seeds that generate, the will to grow, one who forms one body with Heaven and Earth’, or ‘the character of love and the principle of mind’. In modern times, it has even been equated with ether and electricity. Y.-L. Fung, History of Chinese Philosophy, (Trans.) D. Bodde, 2 Vols. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, Vol. I (1952/3): 69.


I am responsible for producing the energy of the interaction, but I depend on the power of empty space to evoke a sense of infinity in the work. Thus the work is given vitality through reality and ideas and it influences the reality and ideas at the same time. I want my works to be non-transparent entities containing the unknown for me and for others.\(^7\)

Lee’s inquires and statement should be perceived as a fresh invitation to continue exploring and developing a theoretical aesthetics relevant to the transcultural context. The creative individuality of Lee’s mediator-praxis is clearly understood as a transcultural social-anthropological paradigm that defines and determines human nature and destiny. A transcultural anthropology thus does not simply start with the humanity of human being in seeking to find relationship with the other (nature or aesthetic force), but rather it begins with the transcultural artworld of aesthetic force within the one that is already known and engaged. His approach towards his art form in relation to spatial time does not deny the empirical understanding of humanity, as we know it in our everyday experience, but makes possible the perception of humanity with its own contemporary social and cultural setting. This aesthetic-universals art form of Lee allows transcultural humanity in its cultural setting to retain its very own unique distinctiveness.

Therefore I will first address the aesthetics of Lee by focusing on his transcultural perspective of spatial time-consciousness (§1 and §2), and thereafter to draw forth implications from the socio-anthropological paradigm for Lee’s approach to the aim of seeking the goodness and unity of humanity, or *jen*, 仁 (§3 and §4).

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1. Lee’s enquiry of spatial time-consciousness

It is the task of transcultural art practitioners to actively negotiate consciousness and their aesthetic-universal art forms phenomenologically in order to lay bare the most foundational awareness of spatial time, which inaugurates two metaphors of time: linear and cyclical. This notion of spatial time for Lee is also referred to as the space of an event that is opened up through an encounter between self and other. 

Lee’s meditation on infinity and transcendental space
(Merleau-Ponty 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception* 1.2)

It is this transcendental space, as Lee asserts, where the self is only manifested fully when perceived and connected with something beyond the self – it is a place where a relationship exists. The foundational nature of time consciousness certainly represents an encounter, in the sense of an experiential subjectivity, which is also the phenomenologically imbued source of reality.

The enterprise of empirical-phenomenological foundation is therefore not foundationalism through formal-logical principles. However, it is something of a constant challenge for the foundational nature of formal principles to consider a different set of approaches – the primordial, experiential evidence pointing to a more innate framework of experience.

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In Lee’s *From Point* and *From Line* series of 1973–78 (see FIGURE 19), and in his collected writings *The Art of Encounter* (2004), he presents temporality or impermanence as not any physical space, event or movement in the external universe but the site of negotiation for the interior experience of a continuous flow that moves relentlessly toward the end, which is dissolution or nullification of culture: ‘do artists make art, [or] do they dream of its ultimate destruction?’

Significant for Lee’s thinking here are also the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty that describes time as an operative phenomenon – ‘the belonging-time of space and the becoming-space of time’.

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Although cyclic patterns repeat themselves rhythmically in nature, in human histories, and even in personal life, the transcultural practitioner expresses the art form in a successive manner, allowing the linear model its due manifestation. This approach of repetition in linear time does not simply personify tautology, as for Lee, or observers who enjoy and experience these repetitions – they are not the same.12

The theory of unity in time: a visual empirical-phenomenological approach
(Husserl 1905 *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*)

The first enquiry here is ‘How do we visually experience the passage of time?’ One visual empirical-phenomenological study of time is the exploration of encounter, the most foundational pure experience of succession, which is not the same as the succession of experience. The latter is a phenomenologically given datum that is a subset of the ‘experience of succession’. The term *encounter* or *pure experience* represents intuitively lived evidences as representative of our inner consciousness. It is the most primordial of all experiences, the creating of ‘absolute beginning’, as Edmund Husserl describes it, and the foundation of all knowledge.13 Husserl is very lucid on this point: ‘No theory we can conceive can mislead us in regard to the principle of all principles: that every primordial dator intuition is a source of authority (*Rechtsquelle*) for knowledge that whatever presents itself in ‘intuition’ in primordial form (as it were in its bodily reality), is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be’.14 However it was William James who, in 1890, used the term ‘specious present’ to describe the same single act of awareness that provides a

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homeostatic experience within a short period of a few seconds.\textsuperscript{15} But it has often been considered ambiguous to call this present ‘specious’, as it is clearly the ‘non-specious’ time consciousness that is being entangled up with the events and processes experienced that is the substance of our time consciousness.\textsuperscript{16}

Despite the fact that in practical terms we live, think, feel, see and act together within time consciousness, sometimes it appears almost unattainable to describe our time consciousness without the aid of metaphors. Hence it is not merely the consciousness of time, of events, or of movement processes as such, but our experienced relationship of self and the world (which is motivated by a desire for a \textit{relatum} of site and the duration of a moment) that gives rise to our time consciousness.\textsuperscript{17} However, the aesthetic anthropological constant of intentionality with its emotional and intellectual prospect invites in the \textit{third} element, which is necessary for our time consciousness in unity, for we do experience our seizing or slipping moments in our everyday pursuit of actualising our intended hopes and meanings. Indeed for a human being who is without the need of any actualisation, time simply loses its essence and meaning.

Husserl asserted that time consciousness is neither subjective (for the things that we do not create through our will) nor objective (for the intentional constitution of our human nature in experiencing events and processes that are based on time); time consciousness occurs to us and allows us to experience events and processes only when we desire them to.\textsuperscript{18} Any discussion of time must, then, elucidate that human beings are intentional and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} See W. James, \textit{The Principles of Psychology}, New York: Dover Publications Inc. ([1890], 1950): 609. According to James, the term ‘specious present’ was first introduced by Psychologist E.R. Clay to indicate that it is a fact of our immediate experience and triggers the experiential nature of sensible duration. James understood the term to mean the way in which we are directly aware of the instant past and the instant future, all at once.
\end{itemize}
emotional beings set in the cosmic network of needs and their actualisation. This reasoning includes why we fear and/or desire the past, the present and the future as gathered from our perceptual rationalisation. The sheer certainty of our death merely intensifies the condition. The ‘telos’ or end of things, which for us is death, is of a completely different quality. Ends within the unified continuum of a life embrace many other origins or arche, whilst the complete end of life embraces it origin.

In response to the inquiry such as ‘What can be measured when time is measured in artwork’, we cannot exactly pinpoint any particular divisible entity that is being encountered, unless we negotiate ourselves in abstraction and eventually lose all possible contacts with life. In other words, the question becomes one of how to measure this reality (of time) that had created a condition in the artwork, and simultaneously to measure how that reality (of time) can in turn clear human perception of any possible illusion. This is similar to the situation of some bridegrooms in the west, who experience the same passage of time against a very differently message about time: where depending on whether the message of the bride’s arrival about being an hour late while waiting for his beloved to show up at the local church. Hence, it is true that time is wholly relational – measured time as countable units is the same in such cases, but it is too broad, universal, and devoid of any possible meaning for human encounters. Although quantitatively measured time might assert total universality beyond cultural boundaries, qualitatively felt time also inhabits some form of universality that is evolved or modified from its transculturally valid anthropological amalgamation.
Lee’s meditation of this amalgamation and subsequent leap beyond any societal impasse is embodied in his theory of encounter and in installation work such as *Relatum* (see Figure 20). Originally titled *Phenomena and Perception A* in 1969, *Relatum* is about a situation, a set of relationships between three distinct yet common materials, and an interactive physical event of their contact. Pared of their context, minimal and basic, each element embodies a fresh lucid state. The specific properties of each material are enhanced by means of differences – hovering between the transparent and opaque, between the fragile and dense qualities of glass and steel, and between the natural and the industrial. On another aspect of appropriating the Duchampian readymade, Lee’s act of cracking the glass bears both intention and chance. According to Lee, the group *Mono-ha* (School of Things) appeared from this particular moment of social and political contact, where art practitioners were struck by the inability to describe the things that lay before them. Breaking things thus became an expression and insight to see the world anew.
As the modern anthropological insight sees human activities and human beings as a bundle of wants and necessities, it points us to an innate common network of strategic means to satisfy these human conditions. Although many cultural devices bear their specific cultural markings, the approach to experiencing time with different modes of human fulfilment and dissatisfaction is generally alike across cultures. This unified observation reveals the plausibility of the idea of a transcultural experience of time for what Lee and other contemporary transcultural practitioners seek to engage.

On the Tao of linear and cyclical time
(Aristotle Physics 4.222 and Brahma Sūtra Bhasya 2.2.31)

Lee, in his art form, expresses spatial time as a series of momentary events; he poetically describes how we change, and the world transforms through our sensing of the reverberations of a larger universe. It is a sort of indisputable fact of the organic microcosm of human experience that there is a repetitive pattern exists not only in cosmic nature but also in human history and in life itself.

The day-night cycle, the four-season cycle in nature, the harvest cycle, the conflicts and struggles in human history, and the varied forms of habitual repetition in human life are exemplars; whereas the philosophical theory of cyclical time is an inductive inference from these countless repeated observations. Augustine thus, in his Confessions (397CE), ruminates:

What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know. Yet I say with confidence that I know that if nothing passed away,
there would be no past time; and if nothing were still coming, there would be no future time; and if there were nothing at all, there would be no present time.21

Richard Gale, in his *The Philosophy of Time* (1968), observed that time is not only subjective, circular, temporal, and mind-dependent, but it is only the presence of things past perceived as memory, of things present as sight, and things future as expectation.22 Likewise, there are some forms of inductive simplification at work in both the linear time and the cyclical time models.

Cyclical may imply the idea of a possible genesis-less, an endless process in presence. Against the cyclical time model, the linear time perspective asserts the theory of a ‘one-direction’ conception of time that formulates a possible beginning and also an ending in progressing through the passage of time based on events. If we group the mytho-cosmological, religious, and cultural consciousness traditions, we may thoroughly visualise the linear time to be genesis-less and endless. We may then describe linear time, via the phenomenological method of eidetic and reflective variations, as an endless ‘møbius strip’, with structural repetition in both the past and the future. There is arguably no complete solution to the inquiry of why linear time must have a genesis and an end formulation.

Still, the various alternative conceptions of time affirm one thing: that time perception does vary in various cultures and overlaps with certain differences. From the cosmic to the anthropologic perspectives, the cyclical model of time has been dominant among the Chinese, Asiatic Indian and Aztec traditions.23 The Western conception of time however has mainly been the linear model derived from the influence of Western Christianity. Despite all the differences between these two models of time, both claim to describe time but often fail in providing clear explanations and interpretations.

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The linear time model (which can be inclined towards either optimistic or pessimistic notions of human chronological history) is in fact the opposite of the cyclical time model (which carries fewer cataclysmic feelings and apocalyptic notions). As Aristotle views time simply as ‘the nature of all change to alter things from their former condition’ (Physics 4.222b), Heraclitus (ca. 535-475 BCE) finds that ‘there is no static being, no unchanging substratum. Change, movement, is Lord of the Universe. Everything is in a state of becoming, of continual flux’ (Panta Rhei)\textsuperscript{24} The conceptual Western religious doctrinal belief in Heilsgeschichte or ‘salvation history’ is one instance, where a Christian conception of a divinely ordained spiritual progress in the time-flow is represented as the aeon of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{25} While at the same time in the progressive Western secularised model of history, the divine is substituted with human agency. Western progressive models of time may thus transpire to be something to be revered if ever humanity lacks faith either in a Sovereign God or in historical necessity.

Progressive humanity thus seems to be troubled by such a lack of faith and intuition. Similarly the Advaita Vedânta or ‘nondual’ conception of kalpas and yugas (cosmic and historical epochs) does create similar space for progression, but allows it to develop by a regress and for succeeding turn by a progress (Brahma Sûtra Bhasya 2.2.31). Indeed, there is great spatial potential for transcultural art practitioners to create a text/image of linear time within the cyclical model of time. An imbalanced emphasis in our understanding of time from an anthropocentric bias has only lead to an idealistic prejudice. Hence, Confucius is right in assessing the three methods that we may learn wisdom from life and time: ‘first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third, by experience, which is the most bitter’ (The Analects 16.9). True human being may deny the reality of time or time-being, in the course of experiencing life and time in itself, however it will still hurt.


With the above meditations, Lee presents metaphors that are connected to objects and variable space, so that the difference between Lee’s art and basho or ‘place’ is that ‘I focus on direct encounters rather than indirect images ... Ultimately, I hope that my slight “imprints” that avoid overstatement will lead people’s eyes to emptiness and turn their ears to silence’. It is concluded that Lee’s spatial time art form forms an integral unit.

2. A critical transcultural study of homeostatic unity in spatial time models


The authenticity of Lee’s spatial time art form has good grounds for accepting these above discourses as his discourse of homeostatic mediator-praxis art form (see FIGURE 21). We shall set these out after interacting with homeostatic unity in Lee’s spatial time models in regard to his authenticity.

Models of time

There is a common misunderstanding that the linear and cyclical models of time oppose each other because the linear time makes space for progress and innovation whereas cyclical time does not. My meditations on time attempt to reduce this antagonism and propose interdependence between the two models. An understanding of the cyclical model of time that is too extreme will often misconstrue the recurrence as identical repetition. Lee’s understanding of cyclical time is ‘the dynamics of distance’ where he is involved in different relationships yet none of them are permanent.28

Given the context of his work and travel, Lee remarked, ‘I am careful to keep moving. By adhering to this pattern, I have become accustomed to taking everything outside of the community and seeing it in terms of infinite difference’.29 Lee noted that he recognised the cyclical pattern in his earliest contact with art, especially under the tutelage of Dongcho, a distinguished scholar of Chinese classics, who introduced him to the three Chinese classical arts: poetry, calligraphy and painting. He started learning the interdependent nature of art forms, drawing points and lines. The system of points and lines does not function purely as the basis of language and painting, but it exemplifies the organic microcosm from which ‘the entirety of the universe begins and returns to one point’.30 Thus, for Lee, our

30 Lee Ufan and Y. Nakahara, ‘Lee Ufan to kataru: zettai teki na keiken no ba toshite no kaiga seisaku’ [Conversation with Lee Ufan: Producing painting as the site of absolute experience], Mizue 875(Feb), (1978): 99.
understanding of the cyclical model of time does emphasise the repetition of pattern, making space for innovation and creativity.

In the cyclical model of time, however, the recurrent patterns within nature and human history do not equate with structural recurrences as exact repetition of what has occurred previously. In fact the present is not just a replica of the past, or the future a replica of the present. They are like the concept of life and death that replicate itself harmoniously, except those who choose to live life and suffer death express their realities differently and quite individually. In Francis Hsu’s *The Self in Cross-cultural Perspective* (1985), he proposed a concept of personality that allows for a combination of the two time models to enable humans to better understand their time, history, and destiny, especially in relation to the considerations of justice and the logicality in nature, human history and behaviour. Hsu’s concept of personality is based on his *psychosocial homeostasis* (PSH) formulation to achieve ‘dynamic balance’. Therefore, if a phenomenon cannot be accounted for via its recurrence in society, then we can consider the matter as either unique or chance. Otherwise, such phenomena such as habits and rituals simply testify to the cold fact of repetition in life.

These two models of time are relatively established in most cultures with varying degrees of emphasis. However, when we discuss a perpetual recurrence, we must not overlook its mythical and liturgical nuances. The *Advaita Vedânta* tradition, for instance, stresses the cycles of births and deaths, but it also suggests an alternative. The liturgical experience of time, with this sacred perspective, is not only circular but also reversible. The Indian perspective of this cyclical time consequently points to an emphasis of both the repetitive pattern of cosmic evolutions-and-involution as well as of creation models (*Brahma Sûtra Bhasya* 2.2.31; *Rig Veda* 10.129).


When understood in this way, the *Advaita Vedânta*’s religious concept of circularity is one of ‘cosmic and historical’ cycles that converge to produce a massive repetitive recurrence of changes, for these repetitive patterns need the law of karma within the cosmological and soteriological framework to enable human beings to free themselves from these perpetually circling trajectories. The idea of *karma* or ‘action’ in the *Bhagavad-gîtâ* 4.18 is, essentially, a metaphysical theory connected with rebirth and liberation, so the belief in the truth – of this ontological theory – that past actions determine our present state and our current actions indeed determine our future are influential and transformative to one’s life.

In contrast to the deterministic theories stressing impersonal and collective determinants, karmic determinism is individualistic and congruent with freedom and responsibility. According to Shastri Sadhale, he noted that there are karmas that bind us and make us victims of the life-death circle, but there are also karmas that are virtuous, which release us and help overcome this bondage. It is here that a transcultural study of spatial time may be of help to demystify some common platitudes. ‘Good’ karmas are those that free us from entrapments, and they are both meaningful in the religious and the secular context.

There is a diversity of perspectives regarding the concept of spatial time in both Indian and European philosophical traditions. The concept of the ‘eternal recurrence of the same’, often connected to Empedocles, Zeno of Citium and Stoicism, was resurrected by Friedrich Nietzsche, who suggested a recurring universe that will continue to recur across infinite time and space. This recurrence pattern in Nietzschean thought is not that of cycles that identically repeat themselves. Rather, the cycles bear a template that enables us to compare

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them. Hence what repeats is the simplification of the recurrence pattern with the innovation of individual cases within the same pattern, and the recognition of the teleological nature of a ritualistic pattern that looks back to its past. Ritual is an overarching feature of human beings throughout history, and in a characteristic recurring pattern Nietzsche pronounces the earth as the ‘ascetic planet par excellence, an outpost of discontented, arrogant and nasty creatures who harboured a deep disgust for themselves, for the world, for all life and hurt themselves as much as possible out of pleasure in hurting’. 38 One cannot simply insist that we lose all motivation to aesthetic action without the attested certainty that things will change. Nietzsche’s negative moral evaluation of eternal recurrence as being the contradiction of ‘life and against life’39 is closely linked to modernity and to Lee’s vision that seeks to set humanity free from the constraints of history and time.

Humanity in time

Humanity within the outside world, according to Lee, is humanity in time: worlds that are already historicised and systematised from the same context.40 He added that in our ‘direct sensory responses and intuitive experiences, antecedent to the structuring power of thought and reason, [they] teach us that human beings are physical beings connected to the outside world as well as conscious beings. Because our bodies are connected to what is outside us, they have an existence prior to reason, which performs representational operations’.41

Kitarō Nishida however sees the objective world not as a given that can be viewed from without, but as the self-expression of reality.42 So when humanity seeks to clarify its relation to the world in terms of a common reality at work, our consciousness becomes more acutely aware of ‘ourselves’ than when it works on the objective world from the position of the

39 Ibid: 93.
41 Ibid: 96.
thinking subject. This self-awareness is the ultimate form of the self-expression of homeostatic reality in seeing through the ordinary idea of a subject looking at the world at work:

When we submerge ourselves in active intuition and take the standpoint of a self whose seeing has negated the seer, all things that exist are transformed into self-awareness and a self-expression. From such a standpoint, what we think of as the “conscious self” is no more than a self that has become visible because it has been expressed.\(^4\)

Hence the transcultural aesthetics perspective on what it means to be expressively creative human in spatial time is:

1. To be a creative human is to be the person who is free to perceive and respond to the aesthetic force.
2. To be a creative human is to be the individual who is free to respond to other persons as their counterpart to one’s own creative personhood.
3. To be a creative human is to seek and fulfil one’s nature and being/destiny in a homeostatic/symbiotic relationship with the creative artworld and its ethos.
4. To be a creative human is to be solidly ‘this person’ integrating into ‘these people’, whilst being simultaneously responsive and responsible for the good of all people.

The concept of *homeostasis* is intended thereby to suggest that the uniqueness and particularity of humanity is dissolved into a ‘undifferentiated whole’ or equilibrium. With this essential uniqueness and differentiation, the first two theses are established. There is however a cooperative and mutually dependent connection between the human and the non-human. Humanity then remains an open framework when this homeostatic relation with others (between the individual and nature) surmounts the dualism found in

\(^4\) Ibid.
philosophical anthropologies. This ambiguity viewed from the perspective of the human as subject is due to the relation of the humanity to the natural world, which includes the personal world. A transcultural perspective therefore surmounts this ambiguity through a view of human agencies, as creative individuals who are the objects of aesthetic scrutiny, where the natural and the personal are experienced concurrently as a reality of life.

As a positive framework of humanity, the homeostatic unity in this reality of life, as qi or ‘zoe’ involves the creative individual. The contemporary art discourse of reality clearly identifies this distinctiveness by viewing the everyday life/artworld as inspired by the aesthetic force and by those that are constitutive of humanity in its wholeness as life. This is a common theme of transcultural aesthetics, especially among the Chinese, Indian and European aesthetics, as it is in postmodern aesthetics, where models of time and the concept of aesthetic action presuppose the reality of time.

Eliot Deutsch considers time, at a basic existential level, is one of the foremost determining factors in creative humanity's inescapable finitude. Like everything else, works of art exist as objects 'in time', says Deutsch. Works of art are thus 'locatable (datable) in public time [an agreed-upon measure of change] and are subject to processes of change (some of which, in varying degrees with the different arts, can be anticipated and controlled)'. Artwork time, for Deutsch, is thus:

At once quantitative and qualitative: it is analysable formally in terms of the diverse elements which compose it (sequences, rhythms, etc.) and it is experience-able as working aesthetically to achieve various expressive values. Timing thus becomes the dominant temporal aspect of art. Each pattern, sequence, rhythm is what it is as it is thought to contribute to the inherent rightness of the work. The articulation temporality, the time

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intrinsic to the work, is just what it ought to be when the artwork is a successful work. We sense the inevitability of the relations created in, through, and by the work. Artwork time is, then, consummatory in virtue of the fact that the temporal relations created are precisely intentionally primary to the activity. They constitute the activity in a fundamental (not simply adventitious) way. ... With artwork time we are presented with a unified organising of a temporal field; we are given a world. Time is uniquely performed in art.47

22
LEE Ufan: Marking Infinity
2011
(Top) Relatum – Holzwege II
2000
Steel plate and natural stones,
Dimensions variable,
Kunst Foundation, Haus Weitmar
Park, Bochum, Germany

LEE Ufan and TADAO Ando: Relatum
2010
(Below) Relatum
2010
Steel and stone: 2 steel plates
25.4 x 221 x 1cm each; 2 natural stones, 35 x 45cm high.
Collaborative work
Installation view
Lee Ufan Museum Courtyard
Kagawa prefecture

In engaging people around the aesthetic-universals art form, Lee re-created his observers and readers in the spatial time-based form of an artworld that shares the transcultural life and common identity (see FIGURE 22). Even within the narrower circle, defined by the group called Mono-ha, he was structurally open to the wider observers of neo-avant-gardism, Post-Minimalism, Earthworks, Abstract Expressionism, Anti-Form, Gutai, the Zero Group, and various groups of ambiguous affiliations. Through contact with Lee, transcultural humanity was liberated from the aesthetic blindness and capricious powers of Modernism, as well as from the cruel and inhuman practices of the social and spiritual tyranny of the strong over the weak. In the transcultural humanity of Lee we see the trans-humanisation as well as the socialisation of transcultural humanity. In his art form there is a spiritual integrity that revitalised the spirit of creative homeostatic human persons. As Lee states:

I would like people to see in my work a statement about what's happened with the earthquake, the tsunami and the nuclear reactor. It's not that I can help in the recovery effort, but I want to say that what occurred in Japan recently should never happen again. My work is simple, but there is energy and power that one feels through my sculpture and paintings, and it's physicality that I'm dealing with. In this day of computers, it's about information and the processing of information, but that alone is not enough. People are part of nature, and there are environmental issues we need to consider. I would like Americans and Europeans to set their eyes toward this aspect of physicality. By physicality I don't mean just the body itself, but with the body and the relationship between the space and air and so forth. In my exhibition, whether you like it or not, one should feel the air and the vibration within. I want there to be a feeling of healing, and I hope that people will receive some hints of that, through seeing my work.48

The aesthetic life and practice of Lee was indeed a moral integrity that brought an absolute sense of rightness to specific human situations; in one sense, where Lee was, there was an aesthetic truth. Such aesthetic truth resonated with a personal integrity that spoke with cultural-authorial authority against the enslaving influences of neo-liberalism, Western liberal formalism and pseudo-art delusion; whatever Lee sought to embody, there was an aesthetic-universals art form of freedom that he advocated.49

If there is such an expressive culture that extends to the artworld and transcends all art forms of cultures, it is a transculture of true humanity as the imbued power and presence of mediator-praxis in a framework of human social and personal relations. This transcultural aesthetics has no other language and no other practice other than that of the contemporary artworld that befit its manifestation. Yet these existing transcultural aesthetic art forms are abstracted from the creative humanity of mediator-praxis as expressed through the embodiment of the consciousness and intentionality in the lives of transcultural practitioners. Every culture is connected to the critical construct of creative humanity through the aesthetic force. And to that extent every culture can thus support in its own social-anthropological frameworks – the reality of the creative artworld – and transfigure the humanity of the creative artworld through its own aesthetic-universals art forms.

Triangulation for time-consciousness

As Husserl aptly observes, ‘without time there is no consciousness and without consciousness there is no understanding of time.’50 There is, however, a triangulation of three key aspects concerning the time consciousness of the artwork in Lee’s art form:

1. With no awareness of change in events and art processes, we cannot have an aesthetic experience of time.

2. Although it is a necessary condition to explain our time consciousness, the notion of recurrent change does not do so adequately. What is necessary is a primordial intuition of time and space as we experience it in the living present with all its retentive and protensive features.

3. We perceive and experience changes that are both in the interior world as well as the exterior. These fluxes are constantly attended by our needs and desires in seeking satisfaction and contentment.

These movements in our imaginative speculation often get their temporal dimension from our most fundamental and empirical awareness when we are in contact with the world of things and beings. Thus, this foundational time consciousness is not simply a consciousness besides the empirical consciousness for Lee and transcultural practitioners; it is a reflective-meditative posture, an attitude that allows us to view and perceive time as both circular and linear, depending on the different modes of experiencing time under different cultural and interpretative circumstances.

Linear time and cyclical time are two very compelling metaphors for expressing our views concerning spatial time, especially when there are some experiential time-consciousness embedded in these two descriptors which over time have become starkly formal and abstract.

Husserl nevertheless shows us quite properly that his concept of the ‘living present’ or *lebendige Gegenwart* represents the experience of the givenness of the flux consciousness:
The real thing is in real space, endures, changes in real time, and so on. The appearing thing of perception has a space of appearance and a time of appearance.\textsuperscript{51}

In its retention and protension, Husserl’s living present does not necessarily support a linear model of the succession of many presents. Instead, it is seen as an ever-accompanying self-presence of all of our previous experiences in our lifetimes. In fact it is the fundamental consciousness that processes the inquiry of whether the ‘living present’ is recently outmoded, for it is simply the ever-present consciousness of our last point of reference to all our empirical consciousness. Herewith, as one mediator-praxis art form of discovering our ‘self-denial and externality’ (a dynamics of distance), Lee and fellow transcultural practitioners find their art forms more prescient and provocative.\textsuperscript{52}

With this also, we have tried to show above that these are good indications for the authenticity of these texts for Lee’s mediator-praxis art form.

3. Homeostatic unity in mediator-praxis of Lee

Demonstrating the authenticity of Lee’s mediator-praxis is but the first step towards tapping data from it for a reconstruction of Lee’s attitude vis-à-vis art form. In this section we intend to uncover the background of, and the imagery behind, Lee’s motivation (humanity); and the meaning of art form in encounter and the pronouncement in \textit{relatum}; and the context of temporality and historicity. The ascertaining of these is of crucial importance to our study of the site of aesthetic-universals art form in Lee’s art practice. Therefore other important issues of interpretation will not be dealt with, as they do not contribute substantially to this study.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid: 50.

Lee’s homeostatic formulation: the imagery and its background

23
LEE Ufan:

(Left) *Correspondance*, 1999
Oil and stone pigment on canvas,
260 x 195cm

(Right) *From Winds*, 1986
Oil and stone pigment on canvas,
227 x 182cm

(Middle) *From Point*, 1975
Ink on Japanese paper (scroll),
720 x 30cm

(Below) *From Line*, 1976
Graphite on Japanese paper (scroll),
725 x 30cm

Photographs from the archives of Lee Ufan and Silke von Berswordt-Wallrobe. 
Middle: collection of Lee Ufan 
Below: private collection
Some scholars have proposed that the background of the motivation and imagery Lee employed were derived from Chinese aesthetics cosmology\(^{53}\) (see FIGURE 23 and FIGURE 19). The arguments given are usually the following:

(i) The imagery of points and lines is an organic microcosm image for nature in art forms;
(ii) The motivation presupposes a supra-transhistorical figuration/object; and
(iii) The withdrawal of the speaker recalls *Platform Sūtra* 8 or at least is a reworking of *Chu’ang Tzu Mystical Writings*, both dealing with life seeking a site to embody from its synesthetic phenomenon.\(^ {54}\)

Here, a few points must be noted. First, as was shown earlier, Chinese aesthetics need not presuppose a supra-transhistorical reference. In fact, it is not prescient insight, but the imagery applied which may presuppose such a reality and context: *Tao-Te Ching* 1-2 and 25.\(^ {55}\) Secondly, the idea of the withdrawal of speaker is found in two texts: *Chu’ang Tzu* 6.31-32a, and *Platform Sūtra* 8.\(^ {56}\) *Chu’ang Tzu* 6.31-32 [1961] barely speaks about aesthetic force seeking a location to embody; nor has aesthetic force withdrawn itself in this text. It is better to understand v.32 as constituting an equality of life and death. One could barely read any aesthetic force depicting the withdrawal of the speaker from v.32a without being first predisposed to do so. There is therefore no evidence for a fully flowered aesthetics that describes its transformation and aesthetic force as evolving: ‘the material force was transformed to be form, form was transformed to become life, and now birth has transformed to become death. This is like the rotation of the four seasons, spring, summer,
fall and winter’. Ch’ien Mu recognises this causation and cautions against speaking of the other or coexistence.\(^5^7\) Thirdly, the use of the ‘point-line’ imagery (‘symbolic value marking’) is often attested in the Axial corpus.\(^5^8\) But the ‘energy-power’ image exists in the Chinese aesthetics and is used as a powerful image \(qi/ch’i\) to depict nature’s creative forces (\(Tao-Te Ching\) 16 and the \(I-Ching\)). Hence, if anything, the imagery evokes the idea of universal energy of nature’s creative power instead of cosmological \(qi/ch’i\). The use of the concept of ‘point-line’ imagery instead of ‘yin/yang’ may be due to the desire on the part of Lee to make the imagery congruent with the idea of mathematical creative symbols. Although some scholars have made recourse to the equation, Point-Line = Yin-Yang, for the purpose of co-opting the energy image into the domain of cosmology/becoming, Joan Kee has shown that in the theory of ‘From Line’ to ‘From Point’ relocates the central focus ‘from the mark to the viewer’, and the two are identified and connected.\(^5^9\) Therefore in the motivation in Lee’s art form we have his use of a powerful image to express aesthetic force in the mediator-praxis aesthetic-universals art form. Not only is the image powerful, it is also an evocation of ‘action and process’. Indeed, the whole discourse closely resembles the ontological writings found scattered across the Axial corpus. The ‘symbolic value marking’ imagery conceived of by Lee serves as a powerful homeostatic unity message of the becoming of aesthetic force for the transcultural artworld, and, at the same time, heightens its potentials.

We therefore conclude that the imagery used in Lee’s homeostatic unity does fit suitably with cosmology. Indeed, the imagery has its roots in the Axial corpus and is often applied for nature and aesthetic force. ‘Point-line’ as an image for transformation and creation is


\(^{58}\) Perhaps one may see here the unique contribution of Lee in that he has transformed the nature symbol that is used for aesthetic force as an image of power into a symbolic value: i.e. from \(qi/ch’i\) into ‘point-line’. See J. Fowler, ‘Creative Forces: Yin and Yang and the Five Agents’ in *An Introduction to the Philosophy and Religion of Taoism: Pathways to Immortality*, Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press (2005): 65-94.

used in Chinese aesthetics for the Yin/Yang.⁶⁰ Although the use of the image of a point-line direction for aesthetic force is not commonly proposed, the point-line image as a representation of aesthetic force and creation in the Axial corpus is common (Physics 4.212-222; Timaeus [29d-47e and] 52a; Metaphysics 1.6.1 (987a); Rig Veda 1; Brahma Sūtra Bays 2.2.31; Bhagavad-gītā 6.12; Genesis 1; Jubilee 2). The references speak of locating the creative force projecting into the form. Hence, the motivation is a visionary articulation of Lee and in it he conceived himself to be the practitioner through whose visionary art practice the art form is to be aesthetically located.

The meaning of art form in encounter: the pronouncement in relatum

The visionary pronouncement of ‘the other’ reads ‘artworks and writings that appear before us deal with issues that are relevant in today’s industrial urban society and whether they are contemporary statements that transcend ethnic, geographical, religious, and ideological barriers’.⁶¹ How are we to understand ‘artworks and writings’? It can possibly refer to two things: the art form or the artworld.

In the Axial corpus, the term ‘art form’ is often substituted for ‘artwork’ (Republic 10 and 401c-d; Doctrine of Mean 20). Hence, the likelihood that Lee is referring to in his ‘artworks and writings’ is the works of art themselves (the artefacts of culture and humanity), even though it has to be reckoned that part of the motivation is addressed to the artworld or the observers. In the wake of opinion, some scholars counsel that both intentions were all bound up together.⁶² Such advice is wise and perhaps valid, but to eliminate the danger of

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committing what Günter Wohlfart once called ‘intercultural incompetence’,\textsuperscript{63} i.e., by ‘artworks and writings’, a whole network of relative meaning and non-comparative approaches to artists’ theories should be avoided.\textsuperscript{64}

From a transcultural perspective in Lee’s \textit{relatum}, we found both of the spatial time models – linear and cyclical – have been prevailing in various settings and different cultures\textsuperscript{65} (see \textbf{FIGURE 21}). What is undeniable is the recurrence of nature, the human life and in its creative homeostatic experience.\textsuperscript{66} Francis Crick and Christof Koch observe that this singular phenomenon of discrete mental processes which converge into a unified state is the ‘experience of perceptual unity’, the totality of our phenomenal experience which is thought to be held together as one.\textsuperscript{67}

In the cyclical model of Lee’s spatial time, since it does not mean an exact repetition, his art form accommodates within its limits the linear model of spatial time. Despite the empirical evidence that is more in favour to the cyclical model of spatial time than the linear model, there is however a neutral sense of temporality (in the Husserlian concept of the ‘living present’) that applies to the use of both metaphors and allows transcendence in them. Every real experience in relation to ‘the other’ experiences is thus bound up with temporality in one endless stream of experience, known as a ‘continuum of duration’.\textsuperscript{68} It is this progressive transcendence that also aesthetically serves as the base of our different

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{64} The word ‘referred’ is applied deliberately here for it is possible in our aesthetic judgement that a referent can carry a few inferents.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} S. von Berswordt-Wallrabe, \textit{Lee Ufan: Encounters with the Other} (2007): 21-3.
  \item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid: 61-72; and see Lee Ufan, ‘Steel, Plate and Stones [1984]’ in \textit{The Art of Encounter} (2004): 125-31.
\end{itemize}
spatial time metaphors of a lived, expressive encounter and consciousness in Lee’s aesthetic-universals art form.

Much of the mystery still intrigues Lee and art philosophers, who in their attempt to give a clear articulation of their spatial time art forms, especially when come to the linguistic formulation of their theoretical enquiry. Some instead of probing, ‘What is time?’ find it more beneficial to inquiry, ‘What human experience is meant when we apply the concept of time spatially and visually?’

Hence when we ask ‘What is spatial time?’ we are generally misled to expect a direct answer such as when we ask ‘What is a stone?’ Although spatial time is not something more than our consciousness of human emotion and cognition processing in an ever-changing cosmic constitution, it is in fact very much a part of our human history and aesthetic life. Even when human feeling makes it seem real and possible, we as creative human beings can never have time consciousness without an experience of change, there is nothing that is unchanging. Human consciousness of spatial time’s flow is, in homeostatic reality, our consciousness of things that are constantly changing, and our perceptual grouping of the spatial time dimensions (past, present, and future) that is essentially rooted in our anthropological-psychological activities of memories (remembering, perceiving, and anticipating, respectively). Human consciousness and our experiential spatial time’s flow thus do not need to be modelled on any particular spatial time models.

The context of temporality and historicity

Lee remarks that his ‘historical awareness and view of the world lead me to see the self in connection with a larger outside world, which includes human beings. The world transcends me and is non-transparent. In my approach, as I face this non-transparent other, the self continually loses its purity and is filtered and then reborn as the other. It shows the
art is a kind of overcoming, a leap from one condition to another’.69 This observation forms a good introduction to this idea of temporality or impermanence, which has been of utmost importance to the concept of Lee’s historicity. We shall review the arguments given to support Lee’s view.

A question to ask is: ‘Must a cyclical conception of spatial time be incompatible with a philosophy of history in order to be meaningful?’ J.N. Mohanty believes that an ontological reality of cyclical spatial time conception does offer a deep significance for a philosophy of history.70 He delineates the Indian mind as one that is convinced of the fact that ultimate values and eternal truths are all realised in trans-historical spatial time. A meaningful linkage is then made when the interpretation of the cyclical conception of spatial time with its extensive recurrent patterns is manifestly compatible with the philosophical concern for historicity and transcendence. Karl Löwith, in his Meaning in History (1949), on the other hand derives his deep philosophical concern for history from the inquiry of its meaning and its purpose within historical linear time. Löwith’s history is a meaningful process of change in spatial time, and that history’s meaning is inherently within history, which also includes the supra-historicity in ‘salvation history’ parlance.71 Thus, Eliot Deutsch states: ‘If time-space is as articulate temporality and spatiality, then on death there could not be a when or a where for a person to reside’.72

We are thus led to conclude from the above brief discussion that Lee’s historicity and intentionality is a valid series of events and processes that does not necessarily collide with his consciousness of histories. This is because Lee’s temporality of consciousness – through

the fulfilment/un-fulfilment of projected and intended meanings – experiences an essential ambiguity in the nature of the relationship between consciousness and history. This is to say that Lee’s historicity is neither a completely meaningless process of change. Nor is it the case that the meaning Lee searches for in and through history in within the historical-cultural horizon (that which we are often led to bestow meaning to); instead he finds it within the transhistorical setting. If what we suggest is correct, Lee’s reading of homeostatic reality is in his art form:

A work of art [that] must be the site of such a leap, a place where there is interactive mediation between self and other. … my work is not a closed, self-contained object that reproduces the self. It is arranged as an open place by means of a relationship between self and other.74

Summary of interpretation

The motivation of Lee is framed like a vision of many encounters: ‘things’, ‘place’, ‘happenings’, ‘emptiness’ and ‘the other’. Although some themes may be found in the relatum, it is best to understand the relatum as being steeped in the spatial vision traditions. Lee’s art forms express the recurring desire of one who is seeking to gather the transcultural artworld under his ‘point-line’ artistic direction, as the energy revitalises the cosmos. Such an image is unique in transcultural aesthetics literature and we have argued that it is conceived originally by Lee to express the creative energy and vibrations of aesthetic force (the Axial corpus or Chinese aesthetics frequently has ‘yin/yang’ or just ‘qi/ch’i’ simpliciter). The imagery serves to emphasise the creative nature of aesthetic force’s overtures and, simultaneously, the compensating disposition of the art form. But such overtures, expressed

through the art practice of Lee, were encountered and, as a result, the quintessence of the art form was aesthetically judged and appreciated. It is further suggested that such a motivation, which contains elements of finality, is expressed during the final installation of Lee’s art practice, possibly just after the kenosis of his art form. But on this we cannot be absolutely certain.

The transcultural artworld thus finds its true trans-humanity in the relation between Lee’s mediator-praxis art form and humanity. The transcultural artworld also finds its true aesthetics in the preservation, regeneration and transformation of the humanity of others, who are already inspired and influenced by the aesthetic force through its catharsis, kenosis and homeostasis unity in their mediator-praxis art forms. This is the authentic praxis of transcultural aesthetics through the practitioners’ humanity – which is truly mediator-praxis. Indeed the transcultural artworld cannot be truly human when it denies and dehumanises the very humanity of others.75

4. The significance of transcultural discourse of homeostatic realities

In this section, I will draw the threads of our study together to explore and sketch its significance and implications for our understanding and reconstruction of Lee’s intentions and his relationship to homeostatic mediator-praxis art forms.

Lee’s conception of his role and the unity traditions

Husserl writes that ‘we must move about the corporeal thing in such a way in order to attain, in this sphere of relatively best presentations, the clear consciousness of the givenness of the corporeal form and the corporeal colouration. Among these presentations, one

presentation or one continuous sphere can again be pre-eminent in that it offers the best in that regard. It is to this presentation that the intentional references will then lead us’.\textsuperscript{76} This observation therefore directed us to consider the self-consciousness of transcultural practitioners by inquiring how Lee viewed his role \textit{vis-à-vis} the transcultural artworld. Hence, we shall attempt to draw some conclusions from this important pronouncement about this matter, while recognising the limitations:

My own work is aimed at creating stimulating moments of this kind in the impassive world of everyday life. I hope it will produce scenes that trigger a flash of poetic insight.\textsuperscript{77}

The first is the possibility that Lee adopted the persona of a visionary philosopher (poetic insight); this stems from textual criticism considerations of this pronouncement as a creative work of vitality; and from the background to his aesthetic aspiration, which we have taken to be visionary. This can be seen in three ways: from the reference of his ‘imprints’ to lead people’s eyes to emptiness and turn their ears to silence;\textsuperscript{78} from the textual criticism considerations of the discourse as an aesthetic trigger of poetic insight; and in the background to the art form, which we have taken to be visionary in time-consciousness. There are some other aspects in connection with this that are worth noting. Lee’s visionary aesthetics is concerned primarily with the aesthetic-universals art form and its site. Visionary aesthetic judgement is pronounced on its unresponsiveness to the overtures of the one who desires to gather it. Such overtures ultimately stemmed from the aesthetic force. The motif of re-gathering is especially significant, especially when judgement is pronounced on its refusals. The crucial significance of Lee’s aesthetics, which is emphasised by the fact that it through Lee, the aesthetic force seeks to restore the artworld (and, in this sense, the


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
idea of contentment is present), and may indicate that the visionary grouping alone may not be adequate to describe what Lee thinks of his own person. This is further supported if ‘me’ refers to Lee and not the aesthetic force. However, Part III (our study on transcultural practitioners’ actions in their art forms) may cast light on this particular matter.

The second significant point to note is the imagery applied. As is observed by Lee, ‘to encounter’ is the regular word that evokes the aesthetic force but also delivers humanity from their ego’s one-sidedness and closedness. This creative regeneration does not simply mean a potentiality but also how ‘human’s will always tries to fix things and connect them with meaning and histories, the world as “it is” is the [ever] indeterminate and infinite’. Further, he adds that it is ‘a borderless “interactive site,” wherein hierarchies between self and other, man and nature dissolve, [which] opens up ‘a sense of infinity that transcends the human’:

Just as countries that have broken free of the chains of imperialism strive as much as possible to recognise each other as equals, in the territory of art, attention is being given to the types of boundaries and relations of expression where self encounters other (rather than constructing a painted empire on canvas through representations of the self). Expression achieves externality and imagination is liberated by structuring an interactive site where dialogue between inside and outside is possible. Using ambiguous expression that is simultaneously passive and active, I hope to cut into it and stimulating an awareness of infinity that transcends the human, to awaken a world that is always open.

It should be noted that the image of evolving forms suggests homeostatic innovation. In this sense, it is interesting to note that in Physics 4.212.20-21 the innovation of the art form in a

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homeostatic manner as *topos* is specifically mentioned. Such homeostatic connection is mediated precisely through the aesthetics of Lee. In this light, Joan Kee’s *Points, Lines, Encounter: The World According to Lee Ufan* (2008), where Lee explains his phenomenological of the art form, carries a similar motif as found in Jean Ladrière’s writings. And this leads to the third point – the regenerative innovation of the art form as the intention of Lee.

To understand the significance of this third factor, both world art history and comparative aesthetics have to be taken into consideration. In chapter three, we concluded that there was an ongoing development of transcultural thought concerning unity and creative innovation, and the latter had become the focus even of the former. If such a progressive idea is borne in mind, Lee’s aspiration over the art form in this discourse signifies that the realisation of such a recurring aspiration is to be created in his aesthetics. That this is eminently possible is further supported by the results arrived at in chapter four: Lee understood the art form as the *telos* of his art practice. The tone of impermanence in *Brahma Sūtra Bhasya* 2.2.31 (Sankara) and the aesthetic experience of perceptual unity in *Physics* 4.222 and *Enneads* 3.7.11 (the pronouncement of *mahakala*, ‘the condition for destruction’, and of cyclical forward begetting) lends further support to the view that the ‘assembling’ of art forms back from the aesthetic force was significant to Lee. These observations serve to emphasise the congruence of Lee’s homeostatic mediator-praxis art form with the important aspects of the unity traditions where the regeneration of unity is the representation and crown of the regeneration of transculturality and of the potentiality in art. Such congruence is evident in the possibility that in this transcultural meditation Lee’s presupposition was probably that the mediator-praxis art form was the mother of the transcultural artworld. If this is correct, another aspect of the unity traditions, in which unity is the mother of the transcultural artworld, is seen to be part of Lee’s beliefs.

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However, in light of the aesthetic judgement pronouncement of transcultural practitioners over their art form, a question must be posed: what would this pronouncement of aesthetic judgement on the part of practitioners like Lee reveal about their attitude and position towards the unity traditions? Did Lee embrace them? If so, Platform Sūtra 8 is authentic and we could at least articulate that there was a spatial time that Lee and other transcultural art practitioners held to such traditions. But in view of the embracement they faced in their mediator-praxis art forms, did Lee and other transcultural practitioners finally embody them?

It should be noted that the observers and the artworld are constantly embodying regenerative potentiality while in the midst of aesthetic judgement (Physics 4.222). The homeostatic reality of the mediator-praxis art form is the practitioner’s embodiment appropriated by transculturality. Mediator-praxis allows practitioners and the artworld to converge in an embodiment of living art form. In fact it is this external world that isolates creative persons and then reconstitutes homeostatic living individuals into anonymous audiences, only to utilise them for its own benefits. It is mediator-praxis that personalises and humanises creative persons, creating new collaborators for the other. Such a connection would mean that Lee and the transcultural artworld appropriated and embraced the unity traditions.

Homeostasis unity: Lee’s *relatum* art form in the context of Physics 4.222

We saw that many elements of this study of spatial time converge with the main aspects of Lee’s art practice, especially with our previous studies on Poetics 1452-3 and Platform Sūtra 8.

First, the data for concluding that the mediator-praxis art form had an important locus, *topos* or *basho* in Lee’s art practice could be found in yet another strand of tradition – a combination of common materials but not necessary of a unitary source. There is therefore evidence from three different strands of tradition that exhibits this phenomenon: European
aesthetics (*Physics* 4.222), Chinese Ch’an aesthetics (*Chu’ang Tzu* 6.31-32a; *Platform Sūtra* 8) and Indian aesthetics (*Brahma Sūtra Bhasya* 2.2.31; *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.18; *Yoga Sūtra* 6-8). This gives our study an even firmer base.

Secondly, it is interesting to note that Lee appropriated a visionary persona as well, *vis-à-vis* the mediator-praxis art form, and here we find a convergence between this discourse with *Poetics* 1452-3 (chapter 4). It must be pointed out that in the Axial corpus, many sages are connected with their art forms (their destiny, homeostasis, catharsis, kenosis), whether in thought or deed. It should also be noted that in both discourses (empathy, *Poetics* 1452-3; and presence, *Platform Sūtra* 8) the dissolution and emancipation of practitioners receives mention and this demonstrates that the identification of the mediator-praxis art form as one that produces works of art that embody consciousness is a typical characterisation made by transcultural art practitioners. The identifying of aesthetic-universals mediator-praxis art form as the unique artefact cuts across the usual transcultural artworld’s understanding of the significance of the aesthetic-universals mediator-praxis art form, its’ being the mother of every transcultural practitioner and the art form of transcendence.

Thirdly, the fact that Lee understood the aesthetic force to embody the art form through his own art practice offers another line of convergence with the findings arrived at earlier in this study in chapter five. The mediator-praxis art form was to Lee the object of kenotic meditation, and it is not surprising that Lee himself and his collaborators should seek homeostatic regeneration to this meditation of spatial time in realities.

This theory of spatial time indeed depends largely on the force of philosophical arguments, including our empirical-phenomenological biases, cultural dispositions and socialisations. What is central to our aesthetic contact is the experience of homeostatic repetition and recurrence, an essential element in any conception of spatial time-consciousness. Our human consciousness of temporality is therefore not the innermost consciousness’s being *in*
time, but rather the innermost consciousness’s being *itself* time. All forms of spatial time conceptions bear broadly a *relatum* to our experiential temporality of human consciousness, which is the elemental framework where all transcultural and trans-subjectivity are based and negotiated. This transcultural perspective of homeostatic realities shows us clearly that the cross-cultural superimposition in our understanding of spatial time promotes a combination of both the linear and cyclical models.
CONCLUSIONS TO PART II:

Part II is an intense probe into the discourses of contemporary transcultural art practitioners and it focuses on certain key discourses from diverse streams of the unity traditions in order to respond to the two theoretical enquiries posed at the outset of the study. The historical settings of these discourses studied have not been clarified. Additionally, a chronological and psychological development of transcultural practitioners’ attitude towards their aesthetic-universals art forms has also been avoided: in fact Silke von Berswordt-Wallrobe and Tsutomu Mizusawa rightly insist that the nature of the transmission of the discourse tradition pre-empts such an attempt.\(^2\)

Some significant findings have been obtained. The first concerns the magnetic factor of the art form with regard to the contemporary transcultural practitioners’ art practice. The mediator-praxis art form is to be the site of the contemporary transcultural practitioners’ \textit{telos}. There are two added significant features under this head: the first is the visionary aspect. Transcultural practitioners Anselm Kiefer, Imants Tillers, and John Young all embraced the persona of a visionary when expressing their mediator-praxis art form as the


telos of their art practices (Poetics 1432-3, 1453; Natya-Sastra 24; and so on). Such a phenomenon is also corroborated by evidence from the Tao-Te Ching 42 and the Rig Veda 10.129. This outlook corresponds with many elements of visionary tradition in the Axial corpus – such as the link between the mediator-praxis art form and the visionary art practitioner. Hence, the contemporary art practitioner as visionary is inexorably attracted to the aesthetic-universals mediator-praxis art form. This is the aspect of this creative cathartic unity. The contemporary art practitioners also regard their art forms as the site of aesthetic force.

As the contemporary art practitioners’ cultural-authorial worldview or message-statement concerns the establishment of aesthetic force in the everyday, it would be legitimate to infer that they would be impelled by their very aesthetic intentionality to be associated in their cathartic art forms. Exactly such a phenomenon is confirmed by Physics 4.333, Brahma Sūtra Bhasya 2.2.31 and Bhagavad-gītā 4.18. In the discourses of cathartic experience and of kenotic presence, contemporary art practitioners understand that aesthetic force is constantly negotiated and embodied in the aesthetic-universals mediator-praxis art form through the transcultural practitioners’ art practices. Such a convergence between the two discourses is aptly understandable, given how the mediator-praxis art form is the site of aesthetic force and how the contemporary art practitioners’ articulations are found in their ‘unity’ art forms, in that both will seek to embody the cathartic mediator-praxis art form. Hence, the attraction of transcultural art forms to contemporary art practitioners is therefore a vital consideration to bear in mind in any investigation of the contemporary art practitioners’ transcultural intentions. It also facilitates the responses of the two theoretical enquiries posed at the beginning of the introduction to this thesis. It should also be indicated that this aligns very cogently with the findings of chapter three, where the regeneration of unity is thus shown to be of great significance in the postmodern period.

The second finding concerns the nature of the transcultural telos. In reference to the Ox-herding Pictures, the nature of transcultural telos is ultimately ‘both ox and self forgotten’. Enlightenment for Gao and Federle as an unconditioned state of mind is then experienced
when their illusion of reality (being separate from the mind) is shattered and dissolved. To draw a picture (for the Ox-herding pictures) would be a contradiction of ‘no thing’. Two critical points thus ought to be highlighted: the first is that contemporary art practitioners, Gao Xingjian and Helmut Federle understand their telos to involve their kenotic dissolution or emancipation (Platform Sūtra). Although kenotic dissolution or emancipation may be a consequence expected by the contemporary art practitioners Gao and Federle in the kenotic practice of their mediator-praxis art forms, they actually understand it to be the necessary culmination of their whole art practices. This observation has significant contributions as well as repercussions for our understanding of the contemporary art practitioners’ transcultural intentions in their art forms. The second point is that the transcultural telos of their art practices also involves the creative task of art’s regenerative potentiality, which is embodied in their mediator-praxis art forms. This observation is developed from a conjunction of Iliad 24.634, Rite Sūtra with Chu’ang Tzu Commentaries 6.29-31, and Rig Veda 10.129. From the latter text, I discovered that the contemporary art practitioners’ practices concern the task of such creative kenotic potentials. In many elements of transcultural thought this forms the crown of art’s regenerative programme for the jen, 仁, or ‘human’ manifestoes in the artworld. Hence, the contemporary art practitioners’ telos involves both the climatic aesthetic task of the regenerative potentials to unity and the art practitioners’ dissolution or emancipation. How these two are related is not shown by the textual tradition. Data however has to be sought from the contemporary art practitioners’ significant actions in their mediator-praxis art forms (Part III of my study).

The third finding concerns the contemporary art practitioners’ appropriation of the unity traditions. Although there is no concrete evidence of the direct statement of the word ‘unity’ by the contemporary art practitioners, it can be safely concluded that the homeostatic unity traditions play an important role in Lee Ufan’s conception of his aesthetics and art practices. In this sense, it should be underscored once again that these traditions are not a static entity but a conglomerate of motifs and themes that both direct and ensure the significance of unity in the transcultural mind. In this context, although it is often applied in
the ‘Axial’ scholarship, the term ‘unity traditions’ is a modern scholarly construct (*Physics* 4.222; *Brahma Sūtra Bhasya* 2.2.31; and Husserl’s 1917 *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*). Therefore, the lack of a specific and deliberate mention of the word ‘unity’ by the contemporary art practitioners is not startling. What is significant here in its place is that Lee’s discourses are demonstrably congruent with many important factors of these traditions. This implies that they would probably have significantly influenced the contemporary art practitioners. It is vital to note that if what we are discussing is correct, then it is the theoretical and transcultural importance of the aesthetic-universal mediator-praxis art form that is the main reason why the contemporary art practitioners process their art forms. The social, spiritual, economic and political aspects have, indefinitely, played a significant part. However, these are not the overarching aspects; they are merely the subsidiary.

The key data from Part II that allow me to suggest that the unity traditions have been appropriated by the contemporary transcultural art practitioners for their mediator-praxis art forms are as follows: Unity attracts the contemporary art practitioners and they regard it as the cathartic site of their transcultural telos of their art practices. No other site is to have that cathartic function and priority. Unity also stands for the contemporary art practitioners as the site for their kenotic art forms. Its sanctity is often recognised and as such, in the context of creative potentials, there is a disdain of aesthetic-universal mediator-praxis art forms that are anti-social and discouraging. It is therefore probable that the contemporary art practitioners also understand unity to be the mother of transcultural practitioners and the artworld (*Physics* 4.333; *Brahma Sūtra Bhasya* 2.2.31; *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.18). Such a motif belongs to these traditions. Finally, the contemporary art practitioners as being effected through their homeostatic aesthetics and art practice realities understand their artistic fulfilment of the regenerative potentialities of unity.

Although aesthetic judgement is pronounced both for and against unity, the contemporary art practitioners do not ultimately seal their fate or destiny. In this context, it should be considered that the contemporary art practitioners’ attitudes towards their art
forms revolve around a tension between two ends: negativity and affirmation. It is negative in that the contemporary art practitioners designate the aesthetic-universals art form as the site that dissipates the visionaries. Yet, conversely, they affirm that, in the face of this, it has a unique and profound locus, *topos* or *basho* in art’s recurrent connection with its observers.

In summary, the three discourses therefore confirm that unity was to contemporary art practitioners a magnet and a *telos* of their aesthetics. It was understood by them to be the very site of creativity and interactivity and they in turn sought the aspiration of their cathartic art form to the ‘sovereignty of art’. In spite of their transcultural expectation of creative dissolution in their art forms, the art form remained for contemporary art practitioners the central site of creative potentiality and reconstitution. As a result, the level of appropriation of the unity traditions by contemporary art practitioners can be said to be foundational, as the aim of their key intentions and they informed their messages.

Indeed it remains to be seen whether these findings converge with a detailed study of art practitioners’ transcultural intentions in their significant ecological actions in their mediator-praxis art forms. To this we now turn.
PART III

Ecological application
INTRODUCTION TO PART III:

Can the results gathered in Part II from the study of discourses meditation (from the unity discourse traditions) be confirmed by a detailed study of contemporary art practitioners’ important actions in their mediator-praxis art forms? That is, do these actions ecologically show the impact of the unity traditions on the contemporary art practitioners? And do these traditions shed light on the transcultural intentions of contemporary art practitioners in their performance of those actions (from the processional gesture stage through the recessional act stage) and thus provide us with the possibility of a unifying hypothesis for them? Part III expands these theoretical enquiries further (chapters 7-9). The purpose of this part of the study is then to probe into the important ecological actions of transcultural art practitioners in their site of interaction, negotiation and creation so as to discover the intentions and presence of consciousness underlying them. Undue focus on any one episode to the neglect of others would possibly lead to a fair amount of distortion and skewed findings. Therefore, three significant events, actions or movements have been selected: processional gesture (chapter 7), transitional actions (chapter 8), and recessional act (chapter 9). These movements follow after Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka’s phenomenological interpretation *Logo and Life: Three Movements of the Soul* (1988), and in light of Kuo-An Shih-yuan’s twelfth

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century work *Ox-Herding: Stages of Practice*, for constructing an overarching theory of ecological-transcultural development, via a phenomenological analysis of three creative-spiritual acts: vis-à-vis, radical examination; exalted existence; and the movement towards transcendence.³

Creative mediator-praxis art form (III): processional, transitional, and recessional

An enquiry into whether there is an underlying unity behind these ecological actions will therefore be conducted. This part of the study will also verify whether the results obtained from the study of these ecological actions converge with those in Part II.

CHAPTER 7

ART PRACTITIONERS IN TRANSCULTURAL ART FORM (PROCESS I):

PROCESSIONAL GESTURE

One prominent scholarly discussion of the intentions of transcultural art practitioners has focussed on the processional gesture process. For example, Eliot Deutsch\(^2\) and the other scholars who subscribe to the cultural-authorial theory of art practitioners’ intention have based their studies largely on this episode and the ‘aesthetic cathartic experience’ of the art form.\(^3\) More recently, however, this first gestural process has largely been overlooked in transcultural aesthetics research.\(^4\) We believe that this aspect is important for the understanding both of transcultural art practitioners’ intentions for going to their art forms and for their appropriation of unity traditions. In this chapter, we shall begin first by analysing the contemporary transcultural traditions of this aspect (especially those offered

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3. For a good account of this trend in scholarship, see Alan Paskow, ‘What is aesthetic catharsis?’ *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42 (1), (1983): 59-68.
4. Most recent monographs on the transcultural art practitioner devote only a brief treatment to this episode. See David Davies, *Art as Performance, Art as Performance*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004): 12 and chapters 2-3: the ‘common-sense’ theories for artworks have largely based their enquiries on this first marking episode, as well as on the identification of the materials and site.
1. **Historical reconstruction**

The first processional gesture is one of the key aspects that can be found in transcultural art. The similarity between these transcultural art practitioners’ approaches is close, although there are also interesting and significant variations, especially between east and west. In this section, we shall first resolve the general enquiry as to the relevance and the authenticity of the event, and then endeavour to reflect on the event itself. Concerning the question of authenticity, we propose to consider first the event of understanding the fact of first marking and thereafter the processional gesture event proper.

**The relevance of the first marking event**

It should be noted from the beginning that there seems to be a consensus among scholars that at least the fact of transcultural art practitioners’ first marking in their mediator-praxis art forms is historical, but one with the condition that the account has been overlaid with supra-histories, nuanced worldviews and aesthetic preferences. Although some scholars may derive only attenuated interpretations from this gestural event, the majority are in

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agreement that there is at least a historical kernel to the accounts presented to us in the Chinese, Indian and European aesthetics, including contemporary modern aesthetics.\textsuperscript{6}

Three reasons for the authenticity of the first marking process

There are basically three key reasons for this confidence in authenticating the first marking process. Firstly, Eliot Deutsch, in his essay ‘Truth in Propositional Language’ in \textit{On Truth: An Ontological Theory} (1979), points out that the ‘criteria for meaning’ for transcultural art practitioners can be sought in what is being articulated in the ‘context of a speech-act’.\textsuperscript{7} Deutsch comments, ‘A warning or an expression of anger can be what it is only in the rule-related structures wherein a respondent R can recognise the illocutionary force, or what kind of statement is being made, only, in part, in virtue of his knowing, if only implicitly, those structures’.\textsuperscript{8}

Secondly, it should be noted that regulative rules relate to an action or activity whose ‘existence is independent of the rules – they regulate pre-existing activities’.\textsuperscript{9} In this regard, Deutsch noted that constitutive rules relate to action or activities whose ‘existence is logically dependent upon the rules which they both regulate and constitute an activity’.\textsuperscript{10} Hence, to engage a meaningful illocutionary act involves the rule that the practitioner is compelled to or at least intends to realise it. ‘A sense of rightness’, Deutsch argues further,

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may be an integral factor in ‘determining how and when one does apply various genuine rules, but the sense of rightness is not itself a “rule”.’\textsuperscript{11} This propositional possibility functions and informs a process of intelligent and yet intuitive art making. This foregoing demonstrates that the first marking or processional account of practitioners into their art form may be dissimilar to other transcultural expectations of their context.

Thirdly, John R. Searle points out that one of the most extraordinary properties of human communication is achieved by means of our utterance.\textsuperscript{12} ‘The intention of an utterance is its locutionary-illocutionary force’, and regardless of its traditions, the intention of an utterance is what the articulation is seeking to be through the articulator; this “meaning” according to Deutsch entails the ‘appropriate exhibition and recognition of that intention’ in the art form.\textsuperscript{13} Deutsch here observes that only if the statement or expressed proposition is ‘recognisable as aiming to present facts’, a proposition does not have to be true in order to be meaningful.\textsuperscript{14} It has only to exhibit its intention in order to be a ‘proposition, which is to say, it must be recognisable as an assertion about what [it] is thought to be the case’.\textsuperscript{15} It is, however, difficult to explain these phenomena of the processional gesture from texts such as \textit{Republic} 7.514-520 if it is true that the institutional artworld created the tradition to prove that contemporary art practitioners had demonstrated their form of visions. Nor should, in fact, any other Axial corpus be regarded as the substratum on which the present discourse is built. The link between the Axial corpus and the first marking discourse is not explicitly formulated until much later in modern aesthetics.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid: 71
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid ‘Notes’ in \textit{On Truth}: 117, n16.
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The foregoing may not amount to a full demonstration of the authenticity of this processional gesture event, but it does prevent one from attributing this episode to the presumed creative genius of the contemporary transcultural artworld working on the substratum provided by the Axial corpus, such as Republic 7.514-520 or from the Chinese corpus in the Yuan period, such as Kuo-an's *Ox-Herding Stages of Practice* [picture 1 to 3] from the Ch’an (Zen) traditions (see FIGURE 24). The best explanation for the existence of such an event is that there was a point in time that involved the art practitioner making his or her first marking. This should not be taken to imply that we disallow the possibility of mediator-practical expansions being made to this episode during the process of aesthetic transmission. But whether this is so, it has to be closely studied. Suffice it to indicate here that there are good bases for concluding this event is possibly historical, and one could justifiably conclude that the account of art practitioners’ making their first mark on the surface of their artwork, the processed art form, is also historical. What follows is an endeavour to reflect on the episode and this will form the basis for the following discussion on the significance of the processional gesture event and the meaning intended by transcultural art practitioners in the processing of this act.
2. Examining the processional gesture event: a case of unsatisfactoriness

The cathartic moment

There has been a tendency to consider catharsis as the experience of angst on the part of the practitioner, as indicated by the use of such terms as ‘intense impulse’ or ‘sublime moment of pity and terror’, and the natural association that these are the emotions and ideas that the practitioner requires for their art practice (Poetics 1453; Natya-Sastra 24). There is however not necessary to view this processional gesture episode as containing any extra cultural-authorial elements. In many ways, these elements can be understood as a result of prearrangement. It is therefore probable that any forceful account is historical and that it forms an integral part of the first marking event.

In sum, transcultural art practitioners took steps to process their first marking. The processional gesture event begins when a practitioner turns away from the everyday artworld or lifeworld in search of meaning and resolution to their finite and contingent existence. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, in her Three Movements of the Soul (1988), asserts that this human ‘disentanglement’ derives from the social lifeworld, which upon inquisition began the mystical tradition process. She adds that the determined soul’s drive for transcendence at the first marking process finds no specific resolves to his or her probing – all projects are found to be void of ultimate meaning.

A case of ‘unsatisfactoriness’ or dukkha

Human’s nature is indeed the nature of dukkha, that is, pain, suffering and sorrow. Their mind, said the Buddha, ‘whatever is felt is included in dukkha’ (Samyutta Nikāya 35.11). Jean-Paul Sartre agrees and considers ‘human reality therefore is by nature an
unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state’. But as the Hebrew Bible in Ecclesiastes 2.23 reminds humanity of their ceaseless labour that ‘for all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief, yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night’. Undeniably humanity’s labour comes to nothing, since ‘for what profit hath a man of all his labour?’ (Ecclesiastes 1.3)

This phenomenon of cathartic angst or dread, in the Heideggerian ontology, is essentially revealed as the basic mood of human existence. It is in fact the one and only mood manifestly unaffected by the swings and directions to the outside worlds. This sense of incompleteness of existence is therefore a search to wholeness: ‘in anguish we do not simply apprehend the fact that the possibles, which we project are perpetually eaten away by our freedom-to-come; in addition we apprehend our choice — i.e., ourselves — as unjustifiable’. In other words, Jean-Paul Sartre considers ‘the essential thing is contingency. I mean that by definition existence is not necessity’.

The above cases of unsatisfactoriness for humanity are thus a useless passion to escape from oneself. One way to overcome unsatisfactoriness is through an understanding and an awareness of the depth within human angst as the source of its own overcoming. As Søren Kierkegaard rightly observes that ‘every man who has not tasted the bitterness of despair has missed the significance of life’, this passion of life, according to the Dhammapada, Maggavagga 20.278, is bhavatāna, ‘the will-to-live, the burning flame that knows no satisfaction’. In reality, the way of grasping such existence as suffering for the Buddha is the development of estrangement or nibbidā: where from it, that will also lead to their extinction or nibbāna.

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17 Ibid: 40.
20 Dhammapada, Maggavagga 20.278: Verse 278: ‘All conditioned phenomena are dukkha’; when one sees this with Insight-wisdom, one becomes weary of dukkha (i.e., the khandhas). This is the Path to Purity. The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories, (Trans.) Daw Mya Tin, Rangoon: Burma Tipitaka Association (1986): v. 278.
3. Significance and meaning of the processional gesture episode

There are three possible conclusions that could be drawn from the first processional gesture. First, the art practitioner probably gave no specific statement or commentary during the event; if there were a statement, it would have been preserved by the subsequent moments. Secondly, the action may have been intended to be incomplete in itself, i.e., the meaning is only intimated but must be described expressly by another event. In other words, the first marking process should not be read on its own; it must be correlated and understood in the context of other episodes. Thirdly, we can derive clues from the gesture since meaning is nonetheless intimated by the deliberate and planned nature of the event. These points are to be mindfully considered when interpreting the significance of this processional event.

The significance intended by transcultural art practitioners

That the first gesture is symbolic is evident from the intentional nature of the event or occasion and the possible lack of statement and commentary on the part of the artist who included into it. But what is the symbolic content? Marking the first gesture in the art form on either the canvas or the intended surface would be tantamount to the art practitioner saying that he or she was an important figure, or personifying him or herself as such. In accounts of the first processional gesture of an art form, the act is often likened to a public ribbon cutting ceremony to inaugurate an auspicious opening of a business to the general public.

(i) The background

Such a symbolic action would be meaningful only if there was an attested and accepted background to it. The site to start with in the search for this background is the transcultural
unity traditions inherited by the art practitioners, especially the Axial corpus or early modern literatures. To aid this study, two key elements of the episode must be observed: (1) the marking, and (2) the surface of the art form.

In Eliot Deutsch’s essay ‘Truth in Propositional Language’ in *On Truth: An Ontological Theory* (1979), we are introduced to the articulation of intentionality. In order for the practitioner to present an artwork, s/he has to present a fact, a proposition that must be an articulation of its intentionality. ‘A proposition must mean something’ says Deutsch, ‘it must have a meaning; and it must, therefore, be conveyed by, be articulated in, a symbol system’.\(^{21}\) He notes that an act or marking is a ‘fact’ or *factum*, describing ‘a report of the occurrence or the nature of any content of consciousness’.\(^{22}\) By symbolism expression, Deutsch refers to artwork that ‘exhibits its intention “to lead consciousness to”, “to uncover”, or “to reveal” aspects and dimensions of self and world that otherwise remain hidden and inarticulate’. Symbols are not usually self-expressive forms unless they function integrally and appear seldom in isolation. This visual language, in turn, is read in context – recognising its intention in the light of our familiarity with both the elements, which constitute the utterance and the rules, which govern these elements.\(^{23}\) It should be stressed here that the first marking that art practitioners apply does not symbolise any particular meaning or diminish the dignity of the creator: the act simply signals the opening up of an artist’s proposition and recognises the rightness of artist’s intention to the proposition within the matrix of its presentation.\(^{24}\)

For the surface of the art form, Deutsch, in his essay ‘Truth as Rightness’ (1979) also suggests that the authenticity lies in the truth applied ‘to anything that has the capacity to be what is right for itself according to its own aim or intentionality’.\(^{25}\) That being the case, Deutsch’s surface of the art form is likely to have been the intended background for the

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\(^{22}\) Ibid: 79.

\(^{23}\) Ibid: 73-4.

\(^{24}\) Ibid: 89-90.

mediator-praxis of the practitioners’ processional gesture. Inasmuch as it is the first marking in the mediator-praxis art form of Kiefer or Gao, Plato’s ‘Allegory of the Cave’ in Republic 7.514-520 is referenced to being the “divided line” (Republic 509d-513e) and provides the most plausible background to the art practitioners’ processional gesture, which can be interpreted as a method invented for the purpose of specifying how thought is shaped. Some indirect evidence further confirms this conclusion. First, the use of Republic 7.514-520 by practitioners would indicate that practitioners did apply it poetically to their art form to describe their role within action theory. This would suggest broadly that practitioners in the present processional episode might possibly have appropriated Republic 7.514-520. Second, the evidence of art historians on the practitioners’ latest art form understanding of the event supports this contention. Moreover, if the Republic text does not feature as a form of sourcebook for creative intentionality among the Axial age, it is possible to speculate that the later use of Republic for world poetic speculation was prompted by the modern aesthetics. An explanation, therefore, has to be given for the genesis of this phenomenon in the transcultural aesthetics at least. The most plausible explanation is that the impetus for such a usage came from transcultural practitioners themselves through their art forms.


27 Socrates remarks that his ‘Allegory of the Cave’ can be considered as what was previously said: vis-à-vis the ‘metaphor of the Sun’, and the ‘divided line’. Especially, he likens: “The region revealed through sight”—the ordinary objects we see around us—“to the prison home, and the light of the fire in it to the power of the Sun. And in applying the going up and the seeing of what's above to the soul’s journey to the Intelligible place; you not mistake my expectation, since you desire to hear it. A god doubtless knows if it happens to be true. At all events, this is the way the phenomena look to me: in the region of the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the idea of good; but once seen, it must be concluded that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful—in the visible realm it gives birth to light and its sovereign; in the intelligible realm, itself sovereign, it provided truth and intelligence—and that the man who is going to act prudently in private or in public must see it” (Republic 7.517b–c). Plato, Complete Works, (Ed.) J.M. Cooper, (Trans.) A. Kenny, Indianapolis: Hackett (1997): Republic 7.517.


Republic 7.514-520 is probably one of the intended backgrounds of transcultural art practitioners’ action.

(ii) The intention of art practitioners

Assuming that our understanding of the meaning and context of Republic 7.514-520 is correct, it could be said that in considering this particular text as the background and hermeneutic for their action, transcultural art practitioners probably intended to convey the idea that, with their first marking, the aesthetic force is ushered into the mediator-praxis art form. In other words, art’s regenerative potentiality in the art form is to be seen as fulfilled in the art practitioner’s first processional gesture. As the first marking forms an important part of Republic 7.514-520, an art practitioners’ mode of marking has the significance that they were part of aesthetic force in art making process.30

From the first marking alone one cannot really ascertain whether the idea of empathy or compassion in humanity was in the mind of art practitioners as the material use for marking itself does not signify the desire to quest for any particular aesthetic quality. But if the art practitioner intended Republic 7.514-520 to be applied as the backcloth and hermeneutic for their action, it then becomes plausible that they may have intended to convey the idea that an era of human enlightenment would be ushered in. Therefore, it is not so much the particular material used for the first marking chosen but perhaps the background that may suggest that the art practitioners may have conceived of their first mark as ushering a becoming of humanity in their art forms. Further evidence must be sought before this conclusion is reached confidently.

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(iii) The role of the transcultural art practitioner

We have intimated above the role of the transcultural art practitioner as their embodiment of the symbolic act of first marking in their art form. It is important to note here that as transcultural art practitioners, they did not intend to convey any idea that they were either a visionary or advocate, but to signify the advent of subsequent intentions in the mediator-praxis art form. Hence, this particular episode or process offers strong evidence that transcultural art practitioners conceived their role to be more than that of a visionary or an advocate.

For mediator-praxis to be a form of art practice for the transcultural practitioners, they expect the transcendental presence of mediator-praxis to be released as an aesthetic cathartic experience. In this is the danger of yielding to the lure of pietism, individualism and corporate inwardness as alternatives to authentic transcultural experience. To the extent that this happens, there is no longer ‘peril’ in the manifestation of the transcultural artworld in the real presence of mediator-praxis. The authentic aesthetic force that empowers is mediator-praxis’s impact that inspires and releases humanity from the social, political, and institutional forms of influence that dehumanise. The aim of visionary or advocate is therefore neither mere enlightenment of nor freedom from these binding frameworks, but an empowerment to be truly human under those situations and circumstances that are not yet liberated.

The theory that transcultural art practitioners conceiving of themselves as an aesthetic human witness can thus now be supported by other evidence and considerations. According to C.M. Lowe, morals are relative to social and cultural expectations. Values are often thought to be discerned by individuals and moral standards derived from them as the social norms. This would appear to make public human morality relative to the agreed-on social determination of what is good, while leaving individuals free to follow privately held values as the basis for personal moral actions. Human beings are not informed what the source of the individuality held values might be, except that they have ‘personal meaning’
attached.\textsuperscript{31} Therefore, as John Young has observed, transculturality is the attempt to ‘elucidate some sort of emotional certainty which is paradoxical or contradictory at the same time’.\textsuperscript{32}

John Clark highlights the fact that the transcultural art practitioners’ role could be summarised by the terms ‘mediator’ or ‘empathiser’.\textsuperscript{33} But exactly what sort of mediator role the transcultural practitioners view themselves as embodying is another matter altogether, and we shall attempt to resolve this inquiry after a study of transcultural art practitioners’ action in their art form in the next chapter.

Summary

The action of transcultural art practitioners, being symbolic, would in all accounts have a background to it in order to be understood. We suggest that two factors have to be taken into account to ascertain this background: the choice of material used for the first marking and the surface of the art form on which the procession terminates or leads up to. Taking these two aspects into consideration, Republic 7.514-520 forms the most plausible background. While one cannot be certain whether the whole context and meaning of Republic 7.514-520 was in the purview of the transcultural art practitioners when they planned or intuitively enacted the first marking, one could at least conclude from the above two factors that transcultural practitioners signified by their gesture the starting point of the aesthetic force to inspire the contemporary artworld and their role in the realisation of it. The regenerative potentials made in the mediator-praxis art form are to be transformed, and empathy and human compassion are to be embodied in it, and the transcultural art practitioners are then to be the effecter of these. Other evidences, such as the Doctrine of the

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
Mean 20 and Chu’ang Tzu 7.36b, support the plausibility of transcultural practitioners, conceiving themselves as a transhuman witness. While their lack of explicitness on this process and the lack of transformative action on the part of observers may lead one to infer that the transcultural art practitioners’ idea of trans-human witness was different from that embodied by any class system, the symbolic action alone does not lead to firm conclusions. Other evidence has to be brought in by other events or actions when one realises that the intended processional gesture in itself is to be completed.

4. The processional gesture and the unity traditions

Marchianò has observed that, according to the comparative tradition, a ‘strain’ on the poetic catharsis was characteristic of the practitioners’ art practice because of the urgent need to experience and to support it for the affective influence of aesthetic force. This urgency ignited flashes of self-revelation on the part of practitioners like Kiefer or Gao. What is true for the unity tradition is also true for the historical art practice of transcultural practitioners in so far as one can speak of a tendency on his or her part to keep his or her own cathartic conception of his or her role in the unfolding dramatic aspiration. Even so, one has to admit that in this demonstration charged with meaning and significance, implicitness and not explicitness was intuitively pronounced. In connection with this ‘tendency’, two points are to be noted. The first is the telling change in profile and the second concerns the timing of the moment.


(i) *The change in profile*

We have concluded in Part II that the transcultural practitioners adopted the general persona of a visionary in relation to their art forms. But, in the processional act, transcultural practitioners revealed instead that they were actually the trans-human actor embodying the aesthetic force for the task of creating the art forms. It could thus be seen that art practitioners in terms of their own understanding of their profile and role had taken a significant step. This change in profile probably implies that the art practitioners regarded their own art practices to have reached a climax at this particular juncture.

(ii) *The timing of the moment*

While this deliberate and significant insight has often been observed, the question of why it was acted on at this particular time and space is seldom explored. It has been inferred earlier that one reason for this change in profile on the part of the art practitioners is that they had considered this particular phase of their practice as a climax. But it is also significant to note the site of such climax – the art form. This art form was to be the *telos* of their ‘artistic processes’. If one is to consider the idea (which in our view is correct) that transcultural art practitioners had anticipated their art forms in numerous reflexions before their first processional gesture, then the question of timing becomes critical. In other words, the transcultural art practitioner would have thought that the climax or *telos* of their art practice had emancipated them when they processed their marking in their mediator-praxis art forms. If this was the case, it may mean that the mediator-praxis art form had never been distant from their intention and the influence of transcultural practitioners’ art practice even when they were practicing it elsewhere. In other words, it could justifiably be said that their art practices prior to this processional event was meant to be only a sort of preparatory stage for their true aesthetics as intimated in the first marking. Hence, the climax of the transcultural practitioners’ art practice is to be seen in terms of both time and space. The mediator-praxis art form was thus the site, *topos or basho* for this *telos*; they also understood
this particular phase of their art practice as illuminating. These two observations would then emphasise the intimate link between the first mark and the unity traditions. Unity is the site of climax for the aesthetic force's regenerative potential for the transcultural artworld. It is both the microcosm and symbol of aesthetic presence and power, and its regenerative quality signifies the reconstitution of the artworld. Moreover, in transcultural transcendental aspirations, the schemes of regeneration often culminate in the renaissance of the art forms. Hence, the reconstitution of unity is also the illuminating moment for the realisation of transcendental aesthetic potentials.

Once more, the transcultural art practitioner's intention in the first marking is seen to be related to the unity traditions and in this moment they were signifying through their gesture that they were co-opted by the aesthetic force that lay claim to their art forms to inaugurate the transcendental reconstitution. Implicit in this demonstration (of the homeostasis of realties) is their challenge to the art institutions in the contemporary artworld concerning the rightness and destiny of humanity. This particular aspect can be seen in full clarity in the episode in the art form that our next chapter will investigate.

Concluding Remarks

In the processional gesture, the transcultural art practitioners’ own understanding of their role in transcendental aesthetic potentialities and their appropriation of the unity traditions are seen unfolded. The mediator-praxis art form was indeed the telos of their art practice and they process a gesture that signified the regenerative overtures the aesthetic force was affecting through the transcultural practitioners as trans-human witnesses and visionaries in their art forms. However, as the episode was not generally commented on by transcultural practitioners, an examination of subsequent episodes is needed to better serve as further confirmation of what we have concluded thus far. The fact that such significance as there may be in the first marking is being demonstrated only implicitly may well imply that the transcultural practitioners’ view of visionaries was very different from the prevailing models.
The context of *Republic* 7.514-520 suggests this. But whether this thesis is sustainable depends on further evidence, especially the evidence substantiated by the cathartic art form by transcultural art practitioners such as Kiefer, Gao and Young.
CHAPTER 8

ART PRACTITIONERS IN TRANSCULTURAL ART FORM (PROCESS II):

TRANSITIONAL ACTIONS

The previous chapter explores how the movement from processional act into transcultural art form was deliberate on the part of contemporary art practitioners, although the lack of statement and commentary or silence was forthcoming from the lips of art practitioners. There, I suggest that the practitioners intended this processional event to be interpreted by one closely following it – the transitional liminal\textsuperscript{2} acts in the art forms. In this chapter, I will consider how a transcultural perspective of dissolution will lead to a transcultural perspective of regeneration in life and expressive art forms. This transitory episode opens up: what meaning does dissolution bring to regeneration? By comparing and contrasting the idea of reality as impermanence with the essence of art in metaphysics, a phenomenological theory of art is thus mapped out. In as much as unity is inseparable from the site and the

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\textsuperscript{2} The term 'liminal' or 'liminality' has been re-introduced by the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner to indicate processes of social transition, where individual or groups who are on a threshold, leaving old structures to enter open space where they can invent new structures and identities: “Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations and of ideas and relations may arise”. V.W. Turner, ‘Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de PASSAGE in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembe Ritual, New York: Cornell University Press (1967): 97.
transcultural mediator-praxis art form of the twentieth first century, the study of transcultural art practitioners’ cathartic action on site is of the utmost importance for our present discussion of the impact of the unity traditions in art practices of the transcultural practitioner, and also for determining the intentions of the contemporary practitioner in their mediator-praxis art form. This transitional actions episode, in particular, is also of great significance in the modern effort to reconstruct the purposes of transcultural art practitioners and their relationship to both the transcultural contemporary artworld and their aesthetics. Kathleen Higgins’ understanding of this relationship depends greatly on her understanding of this transitory impermanence episode, as it forms the origin of her enquiry. Moreover, many contemporary transcultural aesthetics scholars believe that the immediate impetus of transcultural art practitioners’ emancipation or dissolution may be attributed to this particular action in their art forms.

As with so many other actions of transcultural practitioners, there are interpretative challenges. At present, there is a lack of consensus over the interpretation of this transitional actions episode. This current situation is largely attributed to the fact that scholars often consider only a limited and narrow range of evidence without giving full consideration to other equally significant evidence. We therefore propose to study this transitory episode in detail, reviewing the different views which have been offered on its interpretation and advancing the state of scholarship a step further by drawing attention

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4 The word ‘action’ is applied in order not to beg any enquiries in the context of the present uncertainty over the interpretation of its meaning.
5 This episode forms a paramount component in the cultural-authorial worldview of interpreting the intentionality of the transcultural art practitioners.
onto some aspects that are important for our understanding of transcultural art practitioners’ own conception of their role, namely their immediate artworld (§1 and §2). We also hope to demonstrate that this action of transcultural art practitioners is in harmony with their processing of their marking in their mediator-praxis art forms (§3 and §4).

1. The transitional field – a case of impermanence

The model of transcultural art practitioners’ action in their art form can be found in both Eastern and Western aesthetics. Variations between the Western art forms are slight. Western contemporary international art has probably followed Euro-America art forms in the main. Eastern art, however, does present some significant differences, which prompt two inquiries: the relationship and priority between the Eastern and the Western aesthetics traditions, and also whether transcultural art practitioners carried out two similar actions in their art practices. These inquiries will be dealt with in this section, along with other preliminary points, before we move on to a discussion about the meaning of transcultural art practitioner’s action.

The historicity of the transitional actions episode

Chu’ang Tzu, by way of comparison, describes a dialogue in which the Tao operates and he concludes:

Tzu-yu said, ‘by piping of the earth … you mean simply [the sound of] these hollows, and by the piping of man [the sound of] flutes and whistles. But may I ask about the piping of Heaven?’
Tzu-ch’i said, ‘Blowing on ten thousand things in a different way, so that each can be itself—
all take what they want for themselves, but who does the sounding?’

Most contemporary art scholars regard that transcultural art practitioners, such as Lee, Gao
or Kiefer, challenged the processes of their art forms as a firm historical premise. The main
reason for this is that the tension over the art form and its content is deeply embedded in the
transcultural traditions (cf. Poetics 1453a; Platform Sūtra 8; Chu’ang Tzu 6.29-31; Natya-Sastra
6).

As with many aspects of transcultural aesthetics studies, there are dissenting voices. Recently, Yasuko Claremont, like Joan Kee in relation to Lee Ufan’s Points, Lines, Encounters (2008), mounted a challenge against the consensus. She bases her case in
Takashi Hiraide’s Postcards to Donald Evans (2001) on an oft-used argument as to why
transcultural art practitioners’ poetic prose cannot be found in narratives of all forms. Arguing from an alternative world embodied in thousands of paintings of stamps, a
seemingly enclosed world that expands into a field full of life, Claremont allows for prose
poems to enter into ‘the intersection of time and timelessness, the reality of the unknown’. She opts the explanation for sanbunshi “prose poetry”, which is a branch of shi ‘free verse’: It
is a hybrid, a new form in the tradition of Japanese poetry to prove that the cathartic action
was possible. An equally valid possibility of viewing transcultural practitioners’ action as
being limited in time and space with the intention of making a visionary insight was

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considered, where a distinction between prose poetry and poetic prose can be made, yet without being sophistic. Claremont cogently presents the comparative argument that the tension over the art form is deeply embedded in the transcultural practitioners’ traditions.

The impermanence ‘aniccam’ of the transitory actions

Impermanence is the essential characteristic of all phenomenal existence: physical form, feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness. The enquiry of spatial time is of special significance to our enquiry into the impermanence of the transitory acts as we hope to show that transcultural practitioners are propelled to go to their art form by their own understanding of the importance of the unity traditions, and that they considered the final process of their aesthetics as the climatic finale whereby the universal potentiality of the regeneration of the art form would be realised. But if the action in the art form was carried out much earlier in their process, it would possibly mean that the unity traditions might not have been of significance to the transcultural practitioners as the climatic element would have been lost and unrealised.

As mentioned earlier, there are significant differences between the east and west accounts of the action in the art forms, notably that of spatial time. While most contemporary art scholars today would regard the Western location of the actions in the final process or phase of transcultural practitioners’ art practice as authentic, there are however some prominent scholars who opt for the Eastern spatial time scheme. Notably, G. Marchianò, “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Birds and Crabgrass Notwithstanding” in Proceedings (1998a): 1-5; and R. Wilkerson ‘Aesthetic Virtues in the Context of Nirvanic Values’ in Frontiers (2001): 91-104.

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propose to discuss firstly whether there were one or two catharses, and then to address the
question of whose scheme is original if there was only one catharsis in the art form.

(i) *One catharsis or two?*

Some scholars claim that there were in reality two separate acts of catharsis in the art form,
one performed at the beginning of transcultural art practitioners’ art process and the other at
the final installation. While not ruling out this possibility, such an interpretation appears to
be misconceived as it fails to express the linguistic difference between the Eastern and the
Western models.18 Others who have objected to this hypothesis rest with the nature of the
act itself. Once the act is recognised as a provocative demonstration (which its transcultural
context demands), it is highly improbable that the respective cultural authorities would not
have responded in due course. The theory of two separate acts of catharsis thus depends on
a quite unrealistic reduction of the significance and impact of the transitory action of
transcultural art practitioners. It is more probable that there was only one catharsis.

(ii) *Whose spatial time-consciousness?*

The recognition of the paramount significance of the action would tend to support the
Western theory of change or impermanence as the historical model. There are other
arguments that support this contention. First, such an act or fact would possibly have been
executed only after a prior visionary’s attitude for its impact to be effective in the artworld.
Second, an act of overt protestation against the relevant authorities of that respective
country is more readily aware at the climax than at the beginning of the process (see Kiefer’s
*Besetzungen* (1969), FIGURE 11). As Howard Morphy observed of Imants Tillers’ identity
artwork *The Nine Shots* (1985) – which is based on locality, removed icons-images from their

cultural contexts, and juxtaposed it with images from other places and times – he remarked how Tillers ‘opened himself up to accusations of appropriating Aboriginal imagery without permission and impinging on the moral rights of the artist’. While it is premature to conclude at this juncture that this was an act of overt provocative action, Morphy’s observation is still helpful in this regard.

Contemporary art scholars who support the Eastern theory of impermanence usually regard the Western model as being stylised, as the Western model has room for only one direction of transcultural art practitioners to practice their art form. While not denying the stylised character of the Western presentation of transcultural practitioners’ art processes, such a consideration in and of itself does not negate the contention that these transitional actions were probably performed during their final installation process. Notwithstanding the stylised character of the Western presentation, there is, however, a significant reason for us to conclude that the Eastern impermanence in regard to this transitory episode is in some sense redactional: Eastern model may be intending to offer its observers not just a spatial time scheme of events *per se*, but a theoretical aesthetics one. In the Eastern scheme, the particular function of this transitional actions episode is to apprise the observers of the mediator-praxis authority of transcultural practitioners, and of the basic challenge that the Eastern model presents to established transculturality. Such a perspective is intended to clarify for observers any potential controversies for transcultural practitioners with the contemporary artworld, which will be a prominent feature in its works of art. Thus, this episode is somewhat programmatic in regard to the Eastern presentation of the relationship between transcultural practitioners and transculturality.

Although the Western impermanence of this episode, to some, is probably original (see Heraclitus’ *Panta Rhei*), it does not follow that the Eastern model may not have preserved the more authentic traditions of the elements of transcultural art practitioners’ one action.

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and the discourse uttered during that event. Whether this is so will be discussed in due course.

2. Meaning and significance of the transitional actions episode

Three things have been established in the earlier section. First, that the transitional actions episode has very good claims to historicity. Second is that the Western impermanence of this event is reliable. And third, that all the elements of the action as found in the Western model are probably authentic (although there is doubt over the discourse). We now come to the paramount question: ‘What was intended by transcultural practitioners when they performed this provocative action in their art form?’

A visionary or symbolic act

Most comparative aesthetics scholars today would view transcultural practitioners as engaging in a visionary or symbolic action. Although these two categories are often taken as synonymous, due consideration should be given to the distinction between them. A visionary act, although often symbolic, may be intended simply as a protest against or denunciation of certain practices (in the spirit of the classical visionaries, e.g., Aristotle’s Poetics 1351; Hui-neng’s Platform Sūtra 8) without the intention of symbolising anything, while a symbolic act may not be visionary at all (e.g., Chu’ang Tzu 6.15-6; Kuo-an’s Ox-Herding). To regard all visionary acts as symbolic is unwarranted.

Given that the compass of transcultural practitioners’ action was small, what were they trying to convey? We will test the various proposals that have been given by scholars and see whether they take into account the elements of the action isolated earlier in the impermanence of the transitory episode.
The determination of the human soul as it strives for transcendence is persistent, and it's not abating. It searches for ultimate meaning to pass beyond the contingency of the constituted realities, especially of a motivation for ideal objects: truth, beauty, justice, and so on. This transitory process or stage of practice (‘exalted existence’ in Tymieniecka’s term) constitutes a search that is considered to be futile. From the ‘catching the ox’ stage (picture 3) to ‘riding the ox’ stage, a new, deeper way of being is also developed and perceived, where motivation is more fervent. This impermanence in perspective and being leads the human soul or the creative being to abandon one’s search for ideals, and in picture 6 (see FIGURE 25) ‘the struggle is over, “gain” and “loss” no longer affect him … astride the ox’s back, he gazes serenely at the clouds above’.  

Higgins’ provocative thesis proposes that transcultural practitioners’ action symbolises the dissolution of the art form, and dissolution in turn looks to regeneration. In Higgins’ interpretation, this dissolution was brought about not by anything unworthy that was

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transpiring in the art form but because dissolution of the art form in impermanence must logically occur before regeneration in the site and the art form could be installed.\textsuperscript{22} Therefore, if one were to carry Higgins’ logic to its conclusion, transcultural practitioners’ actions are a portent not of aesthetic judgement but of destiny and regeneration, for it pronounces the reconstitution of the previous art form (by kenotic dissolution) with the contemporary art form.\textsuperscript{23}

It is instructive to note how Robert Wilkinson also arrives at a similar interpretation as Higgins. First Wilkinson asserts that there is no concrete evidence for the perspective that the mediator-praxis art form establishment was politically and financially corrupt. Secondly, the organisations in the institutional spaces were necessary for its proper function. It is reasonable therefore to expect that some fair amount of political and economical profiteering should be taken into consideration for these systemic facilities to be politically and economically viable and in place. Thirdly, dissolution/emancipation is the most apparent meaning of the transitional or sabi action of interrogating the mediator-praxis art forms.\textsuperscript{24} Fourthly, Wilkinson considers the discourse of cathartic art form in dhvani or ‘resonance’\textsuperscript{25} as authentic and argues instead that something similar to the Western model from the Poetics 1453a was considered during their transitory moments. When encountering this Aristotelian discourse of katharsis in their artwork, like in Kiefer’s Jeder Mensch steht unter Himmelskugel (1970) or Federle’s Japanese Sea in Moonlight (2009), the transcultural practitioner endorses the dissolution of the art form and hence substituted it with a conflated citation taken from Natya-Sastra 6 and Platform Sūtra 8.

In sum, it remains to be pointed out that both Higgins and Wilkinson reject the authenticity of the discourse of Katharsis and opt instead for a discourse similar to Natya-

\textsuperscript{23} R. Wilkinson, ‘Aesthetics Virtues in the Context of Nirvanic Values’ in Frontiers (2001): 93-4, and 95-6 have also observed this logic.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid: 92.
Sastra 6. If Poetics 1453a were authentic, their case would be further strengthened. We hope to show that Poetics 1453a has good claims to authenticity.

Hence, from the transitional actions episode we can be seen that Higgins’ and Wilkinson’s interpretation of the site and art form is tenuous in the extreme. However, they are to be welcomed for critiquing viewpoints that impose a contemporary presupposition on twentieth-first century world aesthetics beliefs and sources.

Act of symbolising catharsis and visionary demonstration

We propose that transcultural art practitioners intended their transitional actions in their mediator-praxis art forms to be a visionary demonstration (probe or protest) against the conditions of nature, injustice or even human mismanagement of the creative art spaces (either by the institution or by representation).26 That it is an action performed in order to make a stand that can be seen from its aesthetic scale. It was not however intended to put a stop to all the administration or operations in the site of artworks.

Regarding the meaning of the transitional action, we propose that it was not meant to symbolise the catharsis of the art form by a transcendental agency of aesthetic force. Nor does it symbolise its destruction and disconnection. Rather, it was a protestation, carried out in the spirit of the Axial sages and visionaries against oppression, exploitation and corrupt profiteering of the art form or art establishment.27 And thus what they were actually up against was the exploitation of these contemporary facilities by the powerful art establishment for their own political and economic gain. This conclusion is plausible and can be seen from our interpretation of the different elements from the one action of

transcultural practitioners, and their discourse that surrounds that which was articulated during that transitory event.\textsuperscript{28} We have found that they are all of one piece.

Indeed, a visionary provocation or protest can carry implications that the site of art, because of its political affiliation or mismanagement by the establishment, is rejected and condemned. Whether this is so cannot be gathered explicitly from the episode itself, although there are hints. The fact that part of the discourse of the transcultural art practitioners in catharsis aesthetics was taken from various world aesthetics (\textit{Poetics} 1453a; \textit{Natya-Sastra} 24, and so on) may well imply that transcultural art practitioners were associating the custodians or prime-movers of their generation with those of ancient sages and visionaries\textsuperscript{29} and that they understood the ‘fate of art’ as certain.\textsuperscript{30} That this is a plausible reading of the intention of transcultural art practitioners can be seen from the fact that the Western model records transcultural art practitioners as pronouncing the fate of the site, movement and art. Hence, Higgins may not be completely wrong when she opines that the dissolution of the art form was linked to this action of transcultural practitioners. The dissolution of the art form is only implied and is a logical outworking of the provocation against the lifeworld, or the injustices of it. This occurred not through any action of transcultural practitioners, but purely through the fact that the site and art form has failed in its function as the site, \textit{topos} or \textit{basho} of spiritual significance for all cultures and nations.\textsuperscript{31} That such a description of the site and art form is usually found in a transcendental context has paramount implications for our enquiry and this will be explored later.

The visionary protest was directed against the establishment that operates the situations not just of the site, but also of the art form, under the auspices of the state or international


committees. From this, it can be seen that such a visionary remonstration is also implicitly a challenge to the political-economic base in the mediator-praxis art form. While this is one plausible slant for considering the motivation behind transcultural practitioners’ action, there is, however, a more significant motivation behind art practitioners’ action. And to this we now turn.

3. **The cathartic mediator-praxis event and the unity traditions**

What comparative aesthetics presupposition or motivation, if there was any, led transcultural practitioners to perform this audacious and provocative action? Transcultural practitioners’ actions can be interpreted from sociological, political, or economic slants, but we believe that their main motivation was theoretically being human.\(^{32}\) This is not to say that we want to separate out transcultural practitioners’ actions that cannot influence theoretical transcultural aesthetics. Rather, it is to say that transcultural practitioners’ actions cannot be detached from their understating of aesthetic force that was coming to expression through their artwork and art practice, the role they had in this artworld, and the crucial ‘moment’ of this artworld.\(^{33}\) That this is a plausible explication of the drive behind the transcultural practitioners’ action can be seen from a careful consideration of *Poetics* 1453a as it gives the theoretical underpinning and rationale for it.

*Poetics* 1453a is composed of two parts with one part being antithetical to the other. The fundamental contrast is between the two descriptions of the form: one, the transcendental ideal, and the other, the present misfortune. Events in the twentieth-first century probably

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\(^{32}\) Deutsch views the idea of human destiny as ‘the existence of a unified self-capable of bearing an identity over time. A person must be able to have a coherent narrative history before he or she can have a destiny. If one were to lack unity (i.e., numerical identity) and some kind of sameness over time (i.e., personal identity), one would be at best a collection of short stories’. E. Deutsch, ‘Human Destiny’ in *Creative Being: the Crafting of Person and World*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press (1992): 224.

led Indian aesthetics to classify it either because it had become superfluous, or because it might be construed as a nondual vision by their observers.34

In transcultural practitioners’ eyes, what the institutional custodian had done with the site was manifestly conservative and this evoked the description of it as a site of enlightenment. What the site should be instead, at this particular juncture (destiny) of artistic renaissance in the artworld (fate), is ‘global hub of empathy and compassion’.35 What was envisaged by these discourses taken from the Axial corpus was usually understood in twentieth first century concepts of fate and destiny to refer to the enlightened site or mind of consciousness. When such a site is thus established, there would be an influx of global transcultural practitioners to a renaissance of unity in experiencing the aesthetic force for regeneration and reconstitution. And thus would be realised of the illuminated vision of the site that would be a global hub of empathy and compassion (canonical texts of classical Taoism – Lao Tzu’s Tao-Te Ching, Chu’ang Tzu and Lieh Tzu; The Analects; The Platform Sūtra; Mundaka Upanishad; Bhagavad-gītā; The Hebrew Bible; Homer’s Iliad, The Poetics and The Republic).36 That the site of the transcultural practitioners’ installation work was better understood as not to have realised such a transcendental aesthetic function, it can be seen from the fact that access into this site was sui generis.37

Against the grain of scholarship, some scholars like Eliot Deutsch write that transcultural practitioners were not referring to the transcendental aesthetic site when the discourse was articulated. Instead, transcultural practitioners were disclosing that what was to be revealed in the idyllic or utopian state has been the intention for the site throughout cyclical histories

35 E. Deutsch, ‘Human Destiny’ in Creative Being (1992): 222. That is, destiny is fate functioning in particular cases.
and psychical phenomena.\textsuperscript{38} Their reason for such a perspective is that the aesthetic site establishment could not be blamed for contradicting a transcultural intention that was meant to be realised only when the enlightened site and art form is recognised.\textsuperscript{39}

But such a perspective discounts the rich evidence that shows the link between the global gathering hub of unity and the enlightened site.\textsuperscript{40} That is, the common understanding of transcultural practitioners’ contemporaries was that the world art practitioners would come to unity only when the enlightened site was installed. There was a growing gathering of international world art practitioners before such a site was set up, such as the Biennales and art shows such as Documenta, Art Basel, the Whitney Show, and the likes.

In this context, Eliot Deutsch, Grazia Marchianò and Robert Wilkerson are faced with the challenge of promoting the case within the art establishment that the site should function as a global hub for empathy and compassion. Deutsch, Marchianò and Wilkerson to promote this intimate connection between the ingathering of the transcultural, east and west, the in-betweens and the enlightened site is greatly attested to in the extant transcultural aesthetics literature in the twentieth-first century (\textit{Frontiers of Transculturality in Contemporary Aesthetics} (2001); \textit{Pursuit of Comparative Aesthetics: An interface between East and West} (2006); \textit{Intercultural Aesthetics} (2011); and so on).

In sum: transcultural art practitioners’ theoretical aesthetics motivation for their actions in the site and the art form is informed thoroughly by the unity traditions. Some significant results follow from this.

First, the transcendental character of transcultural practitioners’ art practice in their art forms (especially the site designated) is prominent. The fact that it was anticipated of the twentieth century art form and its immediate site in context to be the global hub of empathy

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} E. Deutsch, ‘The Emotions’ in \textit{On Truth} (1979): 41.
\item \textsuperscript{40} See Thesis: chapter 3.
\end{itemize}
and compassion for all contemporary art practitioners, a function realisable only in the postmodern period, shows clearly that transcultural practitioners’ ingathering and installation on site was illuminating. In other words, according to the transcultural practitioners, the regeneration of unity has been set in motion in their visit and gathering on site through the aesthetic-universals art forms.

Secondly, as a corollary of the first point, the fulfilment character of transcultural practitioners’ homeostatic presence in the art form has to be mentioned. The potentials energised by aesthetic force are to be realised at its core – that is, the mediator-praxis art form is realised through the art practices of transcultural practitioners in their mediator-praxis art forms. Once again, we see the theoretical and transcendental attraction the mediator-praxis art form had for the transcultural practitioners. They began their art practices installing and performing on the site that the artworld is still evolving (Poetics 1453). That message must be presented and its content demonstrated in the core of transculturality, unity itself.

Finally, the conflict with the art establishment becomes more significant. It was not just a city, class, identity, or gender struggle waged by transcultural practitioners against prevailing ideologies, trends and mindset. Rather, the transcultural practitioners’ presence in their mediator-praxis art form represents the confrontation of the contemporary artworld with the institutions, representations and societal authorities who had been given the responsibility of running the core of humanity as a master–art forms. Through the presence of transcultural practitioners, the leaders, partners and collaborators were confronted with their conscience and the aesthetic force of the universe.
4. The transitional actions (in the cathartic art form) and the marking in their art form

In the ‘synoptic’ world (Chinese, Indian and European) aesthetics, the transitional action is closely placed alongside the transitional actions in the mediator-praxis art form. Undoubtedly, the world transcultural art practitioners hope their observers to see a connection between the two transitional action episodes. We propose to explore this connection here.

A thematic unity

We have suggested in chapter seven that, through transcultural practitioners subsequent markings into their art form, art practitioners were signifying that they were the mere trans-human witnesses laying claim to their artwork in order to inaugurate the transcendental renaissance of unity. In the transitional actions in the art form, the basic transcultural motivation for the art practitioners’ provocative response comes from their existing understanding that the moment whereby the art form is brought into an encounter with the transcendental aesthetics of art. It simply needs to be identified that the themes of the two transitional action episodes can be viewed to be a unity. What is this unity? It will be going too far to claim that, in the installation work in the art form, the transcultural art practitioners were assuming a visionary profile and thus embody it as its vision?

The thematic unity can be fully recognised and appreciated only when it is viewed in the context of both their backgrounds in the unity traditions and the moment of events in the

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41 Scholars have noted that there might be a thematic unity between the two episodes, although, unfortunately, it is seldom articulated. See Chantal Maillard, ‘The Aesthetic Pleasure of Tragedy in Western and Indian Thought’ in The Pursuit of Comparative Aesthetics: An interface between East and West, (Eds.) Hussain and Wilkinson (2006): 29-38.
transcultural practitioners’ own perception of the course of their own art practices, as in the
tradition of Nicholas of Cusa ‘religio una in rituum varietate’ “one religion within the diversity
of rites”. Transcultural art practitioners understood their kenotic presence in their mediator-
praxis art form as the climax of their art practices and the hinge moment of aesthetic force
for their artworld. It was with this confidence that they intuitively install and implement
their artworks. The artworld has to be manoeuvred into a decisive encounter with the core
of transculturality: the art form and the artwork in it. For the mediator-praxis art form was
not only the political and aesthetic institution of transcultural aesthetics, it was also the
focus of aesthetic transcendence for the artworld. In this encounter, the art form and
artwork had to recognise this decisive moment. Such an encounter would inexorably result
in a challenge to the institutional leadership and representatives, whose task was a custodian
of the arts – art forms and artworks. The first marking indeed was a symbolical event; it was
also a challenge to both the art form and the artworld leaderships. While the cathartic
promise or protest in the artworks has relatively less symbolical content, it was also a
challenge to the institution leadership and the mediator-praxis art forms. The motivation
behind the latter challenge is often similar with the symbolical content/values of the first
marking. There, the institutional leadership ethics are constantly challenged and
confronted. But in the transitional actions in the art form and site, the artistic direction is
advanced a process further. The institutional leadership’s integrity was challenged and
confronted as well. In transcultural thought, the art form and artwork share in the artistic
directions and decisions of the collective leadership in the artworld, even though they are
symbols of art’s presence. Therefore, the resistance or promotion of leadership would
involve aesthetic judgement not only on them but also on the art form and the artwork itself.

It has been indicated earlier that the artistic process of the broader artworld is a motif
linked with the unity traditions: i.e., concern for one another and all-is-one transformative
aspects to name a few. This particular motif may be present in both episodes. We have
suggested in chapter seven that the conceptual background behind transcultural art
practitioners’ processing of their first marking comes from Republic 7.514-520. In this text,
the visionary, after embodying unity, went on to make peace and share mutual concerns with the larger artworld – a similar deep concern for the weak and the marginalised. While the first marking may implicitly pointed out that transcultural art practitioners had in mind the partaking of the transcultural artworld in the transcendental aesthetics in unity, the discourse of Poetics 1453a is more obvious on this matter.

The impermanent spatial-time events

While the thematic unity of the two episodes is evident, their spatial time proximity is less definite. We have seen that the transitional actions in the art form took place on site (the presence of the promoter of the arts is indicative of this). What about the first marking episode? Was there an important spatial-time between the two events?

The spatial-time proximity of these episodes would lend further support to the thematic unity for which we are arguing. And this raises the question of whether the site installation episode was intended to be an explication of the meaning of the processional gesture as there was no statement or commentary from transcultural practitioners to explain the latter. This is certainly possible as the site installation episode shows that a challenge (implicit in the first marking) was directed at either the site establishment or international contexts. In other words, it could be that the inaugurating of the artworld in the spirit of transculturality is necessitated first and foremost – a challenge to the transcultural artworld and the mediator-praxis art forms. Its effect on the international dimension was unparalleled by transcultural practitioners. Thus, the phenomenal ideas usually associated with aesthetic force’s regeneration of the contemporary artworld in the phenomenological aesthetics were the high point to inspire and to provide a concrete framework for understanding aesthetic experience as a fundamental and pervasive quality of everyday life.43

Would the understanding of the less considered old art form of transcultural art practitioners lead to the embrace of the new? This transitional actions episode does not provide any complete evidence. But if one assumes that transcultural practitioners' transcendental aesthetics has some continuity with the unity traditions, one would expect oneself to search for a new site and mediator-praxis art form. It is also possible that transcultural practitioners could have appropriated a similar form to that found in the *Natya-Sastra* where the artworld functioned as the ‘interim’ site and art form. Would the transcultural art practitioners proceed to form their own artworld with a perspective that this artworld was to be the site of the aesthetic force would then impact? In other words, would transcultural practitioners take remedying actions for the sake of their own people? Would transcultural practitioners found a transcendental artworld that would be the bearer of the transcendental artworld? Would the founding of a new artworld within the contemporary artworld necessitate a manifestoes action? Such significant questions do not receive answers from this episode although they are motivated by it. However, one is driven along inexorably in the quest for an answer to the final recessional act of transcultural practitioners on site and in their art form.
CHAPTER 9

THE RECESSIONAL ACT:

RECONSTITUTION, MANIFESTOS AND THE ARTWORLD

The study of the final recessional act is of immense significant in our quest to understand transcultural art practitioners’ intentions in their cathartic mediator-praxis art forms. This can be observed in two aspects: first, they purportedly preserve the transcultural practitioners’ own understanding of what their kenotic dissolution signified and meant. If what they relate is correct, further context is established for the results formulated in chapter four.

Secondly, a question could legitimately be posed about the relationship of the recessional act to the two provocative actions studied earlier (in chapter 7 and 8). Both of these actions have to do with challenging the site to consider their message in the light of the climatic realisation of the regenerative potentials made available via the aesthetic force in their art form.

The above considerations impel one to investigate the final recessional act episode in this chapter. While these events have a significant place in the aesthetics of transcultural practitioner research, we are also confronted with unsolicited problems presented by them. We shall not delve into all these debates, which range from questions of artistic authenticity to the forms of manifestos; instead we shall discuss only the issues that are relevant to us, in particular the motif of the manifesto discourse (§1 and §2). This obviously implicates a prior discussion on the authenticity of the event and also of the manifesto discourse. The argument of this chapter is that from the motif of the manifesto discourse the transcultural practitioners intended to ratify a manifesto for renewing the transcultural artworld through their universal consciousness. In other words, the final recessional act is proleptic and signifies the definitive constitution of the transcendental artworld to be the bearers of transcendental aesthetics. We shall also try to show that the unity traditions have compelled transcultural practitioners to perform this manifesto action on site through their art forms (§3 and §4).

1. **The authenticity of the recessional episode**

Most contemporary comparative aesthetics scholars are confident that transcultural practitioners understood the final recessional act episode to be the artist's final affirmative progression act. Kathleen Higgins regards the historicity of this event as almost equally as certain as an on-site installation, although she does not explain the reasons for such confidence.² Higgins, like many scholars, also does not see a need to defend the authenticity of the episode when dealing with the more difficult issues related to the manifesto discourses, stating: ‘the ten thousand things’ 十千有 is the Chinese aesthetics worldview, an ‘ad hoc summing up of beings and events’.³ The manifesto expression is one

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³ Ibid: 90
form of documentation that communicates of how diverse entities of the world are interrelated, drawing the relational connections that do not ‘efface individuating distinctions; [but] in fact, they constitute the context that makes these distinctions evident’.

Although previous theories find it to be normative, the final recessional act was often understood by the early modern artworld to have its roots in the final act of art practitioners, where the documentation indicates the process of receipt and transmission of a tradition.

The early attestation of its normativity, its dissimilarity from other unity traditions, and the un-tenability of possible objections that are raised against it offer strong grounds for us to view the final recessional act as the transcultural practitioners’ setting in life and art practice. Just as Kristine Stiles, in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art* (1996), documents ‘the assertions and imagination of artists [that] enable a more responsible vision of culture’, she contends that: ‘We invite everyone to question the entire culture we have taken for granted’. This does not aesthetically prejudge the issue of whether later interpretations and reflections on the part of the middle period or the early modern art institutions were added to their original account. The possibility and extent of this phenomenon, however, can be determined only through a thorough analysis of the evidence coming from all sources: both the West and East unity traditions.

Motif of the manifesto discourse in context

Understanding the final recessional act in the context of the transcultural artworld is however critical for practitioners. It means that the context of the human life is not alien to the culture of the artworld. People can be accepted in the social context in which they live

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4 Ibid.
5 This idiom represents technical language for the receipt and transmission of traditions that has been recognised by commentators. The collection of documents need not imply transcultural practitioners or schools’ independence of tradition, but that the practitioners received the factual tradition by human means although the basis of interpretation comes directly from cultural-authorial worldview or aesthetics preferences.
and express themselves. The transcultural artworld does not simply discriminate between those who share a particular belief of aesthetic force and those who do not, but treats each creative human being as someone who is part of the natural world and as an object of sentient being in the whole universe: this is the expressed motif of the manifesto discourse for the unity traditions.

This belief also means that the transcultural artworld works from within the existing social and cultural matrix of each person’s own their social setting. The transcultural artworld is not primarily a political or religious culture but a power that liberates and frees creative persons from within their existing culture to experience the ‘human’ living culture that connects the aesthetic creative force to each creative individual. No longer are individuals oppressed by impersonal and tyrannical world powers; instead they are liberated to experience a renewed artworld whose social relations become the nectar of personal identity, and power is transformed into manifesto virtues: empathy and compassion.

Transcendental manifesto in Kuo-An’s *Ox-Herding*, pictures 7 to 9 process

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KUO-AN:
*Ox-herding Pictures*

(Left) No. 7
Ox forgotten, Self alone

(Middle) No. 8
Both Ox and Self forgotten

(Right) No. 9
Returning to the Source
In Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka’s ‘Towards Transcendence’ (1988), her third stage of art practice begins with the drive for meaning – the realisation of the unique human telos or consciousness (see FIGURE 26). As the phrase go: “raising an ox”, it is a metaphor for the cultivation of the enlightened mind, which means the freedom to act without restraint yet according to and in harmony with circumstances and conditions. The meaning of Picture 7, ‘Ox forgotten, self alone’ is therefore where the subject and the object become one. Duality is transcended but practice continues. The art practitioners having learnt to let go of everything no longer has worldly attachments. Here Daniel Zelinski clearly defines the third stage as the ‘search for, and eventual attainment of the spiritual life which is carried out through a pursuit of union with the Ultimate, the One, and/or “everything-that-lives”’.7 He further adds that:

This telos receives grounding in concrete intuitions via ecstatic actions … these raptures are by no means an ending point, but instead propel the soul forward to the spiritual life, which is the culmination of the mystics' development. The new way of life is characterised by a pervasive feeling of peace and serenity, by a desire to communicate with others sharing this realisation, and by an affective moral sense (“goodwill towards others”).8

Grazia Marchianò, in her essay ‘The Hundred Secret Senses: A Preliminary Approach to Aesthetic Awakening’ (2007), also points out that human telos or consciousness has immense depth capabilities of developing comprehensive strategies. She argues that some of the unity traditions historically applied the later stages of assimilating aesthetic experience to the concept of ananda (bliss).9 Robert Wilkinson notes such a state is also

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8 Ibid.
what Abhinava meant where ‘once human consciousness is free from taint (i.e., from an individual point of view and conceptual thought), cosmic energy and consciousness become one, as do true existence and beauty’.  

Such works by Kiefer (To an Unknown Painter, 1980; and Your Blond Hair Margarete, 1981), Gao (Somewhere Inside, 1999; Emptiness, 2005; and The Case for Literature, 2006), and Lee (Relatum, 2010; Correspondance, 2011) embody such feelings and are often said to possess sabi a ‘sense of transitoriness of things tinged with melancholy’. Here Wilkinson views such art forms as those grasping the infinite and eternal (closely akin to satori), and those that are attaining perfect serenity by immersing one’s mind in the ego-less life of nature.

In sum, Wilkinson considers the authenticity of the recessional episode as part of a rich history of the deliberate cultivation of spiritual aesthetic experience. He shows that mystical union is indeed a ‘condition in which not only a sense of separate identity is dissipated, but also is [the] conceptual awareness of objects’; and that this is where (as epitomised by David Humes in Treatise 1.1.3) the ‘operation of imagination was viewed as consisting essentially in the power to recombine remembered experiences and fragments of experiences according to our aesthetic fancy’.

2. Transcendental manifesto discourse: a case of egolessness

Ecological dynamics in the final recessional act process

As we turn our focus to creative-spiritual dynamics in dialogical interaction, we need to clarify the ecological elements of human existence that bear on recessional interventions

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11 Ibid: 11.
made by transcultural practitioners. The ecological dimension of the self implies a relation to others as well as to the aesthetic force. This necessarily involves a social and cultural context in which interventions, initiatives and art creation takes place.

FIGURE 1 (in chapter one) represents the three spheres that also make up the ecological construct of creative persons: physical, spiritual (both within the inner sphere), and social (outer sphere). The ‘ego-self’ is present in each of the three spheres, but each sphere also touches on the others, affecting the behaviour of the person.¹⁴

Every encounter with impersonality has political implications. This was certainly true of transcultural practitioners and the aesthetics institutions that are directly challenged by the prevailing ethical and religio-political culture of any transcultural practitioners’ society. Often transcultural practitioners will attribute these aesthetic regenerative creative qualities as a general sign that the transcultural artworld had awakened and manifested its aesthetic power.

Regenerative aesthetic benefits however do not manifest in a cultural or social vacuum. Transcultural art practitioners and advocates are acutely aware of this; they realise that they cannot intervene in regeneration aesthetically without a conscious or unconscious intention to inspire those observers who are adapted to their cultural context. However, the very fact that a creative person seeks artistic insight or is urged by others to consider artistic inspiration indicates some fair amount of cultural and social manipulation, for implicit in every creative inspiration is a form or theory of culture.

From a transcultural perspective, the issue of cultural theory in relation to creative inspirational goals becomes both critical and implicated. The practitioners’ attempts to

extend creative inspiration to include growth and development toward specific personal and artistic values and goals could be considered as inappropriate or even unethical from the view of secularism.\textsuperscript{15}

The social and cultural context that the artworld brings to the situation will then affect the developmental process in some respects. Firstly, any incremental growth or change in the artworld will require integration back into their culture and context. This often entails redefining one’s identity and association to that culture. Failing to bridge this integrative factor will often leave the person or group alienated from the dominant culture they face. Secondly, the culture that the regenerative benefit brings to the situation will affect the developmental process in some manner. The long-range regenerative goals negotiated between transcultural practitioners and observers may require slightly modifying the culture of either side. When the culture of the transcultural practitioners includes values and aims that are assumed to be essential to human health and wholeness as theoretically delineated, there may be a clash of cultures in managing the regenerative aims without justification producing a conflict that is disruptive and non-generative.

Those who seek resolution know better than most philosophers that wisdom is only discovered in the living of life, not merely in reflecting on it \textit{per se}. This discovery of the way of living is called \textit{praxis}. Wisdom is therefore a discerning mediator-praxis, and as such it is one significant aspect of the culture of the transcultural artworld.

In Aristotle's \textit{Nichomachean Ethics} 9.6.5, there is a clear distinction between the two forms of action: the first is \textit{poiesis}, the act of making something that results in a product; the second is \textit{praxis}, the final value or character of this process is the \textit{telos}. This \textit{telos} is both the outcome of an intentional, incorporated purpose within the action and also a principle for the quality of the action. Therefore in authentic praxis, the transcultural practitioners are guided by the

intention of realising their telos, as well as the discovery of the telos through their egoless action in their final recessional act.

The egolessness anattaa of the recessional act

Egolessness is a no-ego entity that exists separately and independently of the physical and mental processes, which constitute life. The roots of the ego-illusory impressions are however strong only when it is fed by deep effective processes known as bhava-raagaanusaya ‘the latent desire for continued existence’ – the self as ego-illusion, ego-feeling, ego-perception, ego-dispositions, and ego–conscience. Erich Fromm, in The Heart of Man (1964) astutely observes that the essential teachings of all humanistic world religions are indeed ‘the goal of man to overcome one’s narcissism’. He believes that if humanity sheds the ‘illusion of his/her indestructible ego’ and the other forms of covetousness, s/he will then be enlightened – open, awake, liberated and connected with the universe.

In his Man for Himself (1947), Fromm considers a healthy mature self-love as a fullness of genuine self-love, one that is not ‘selfishness’ but ‘selflessness’. He further defines genuine love as an ‘expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibilities and knowledge’:

It is not an ‘affect’ in the sense of being affected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one’s own capacity to love.

The practice of ‘loving-kindness’ or *metta-bhaavanaa* is therefore an expression of both mature self-love and love for others, one that is first developed towards oneself and then radiates towards others.

3. **Manifesto themes in the unity corpus**

Having established the high probability that the final recessional act has its basis in the practice of the transcultural practitioners, we shall proceed to discuss the manifesto discourse and the manifesto theme that it evokes, bypassing issues related to the other cultural-authorial discourses, the form of manifestoes and the vexed enquiry of the precise spatial-time of the event itself. There are two reasons for doing this. First, the manifesto discourse was intended by transcultural practitioners’ to display their understanding of what the final recessional act was meant to signify. It can perhaps be said that the full importance of the other cultural-authorial discourses only becomes clear in the context of the manifesto discourse. And even though the discourse of embodiment and transcendental anticipation helps us to appreciate who the transcultural practitioners understood them to be, we are primarily interested in how transcultural practitioners viewed their dissolution or emancipation. Secondly, the manifesto discourse contains the manifesto motif. This is something that this chapter is focused on and we hope to show this manifesto theme ties in with the transcultural practitioners’ other significant actions in their art form (chapters seven and eight).

The manifesto discourse is found in all three major world aesthetics (Chinese, Indian and European aesthetics: *Tao-Te Ching* 42; *Rig Veda* 10.29; *Republic* 10), and other more contemporary aesthetics (Rene Descartes, *Meditations II*: *cogito ergo sum* ‘I think, therefore I am’). It should be noted, that it is the transcultural practitioners’ conscience, which the discourse is concerned with, and that this consciousness becomes the effective means of the new order.
It is the ‘new order’ aspect that has generated acute disagreement. European aesthetics has new order simpliciter while Chinese and Indian aesthetics have the unfolding pure experience elements. Masayuki Hakoishi suggests that this is the important difference evoked in the Axial corpus. The Western aesthetics’ idiom recalls the ratification of the manifesto in Poetics 1453a or Jeremiah 31.31-34 (while the primary text it refers to is taken from the Iliad or Exodus 24.8f, respectively). The question that arises is: which form is original? Is the different as stark as Hakoishi considers it? Since the Western aesthetics form may suggest that the manifesto was being renewed and regenerated, did transcultural practitioners therefore intend to renew a ‘old’ or ‘recurring’ order and not institute a ‘new’ one? Hakoishi also mentions that the Western aesthetics’ idiom is geared towards the installation while the Eastern aesthetics’ idiom is fundamentally transcendental.

We believe that the significance of marks as conceived by Hakoishi is insightful and plausible. For one aspect, the renewed manifesto in Eastern aesthetics is connected to transcultural practitioners and this aspect is also definitely ceremonial. Additionally, as will be demonstrated later, the Western idiom may be transcendently oriented.

More significantly, it should be noted that the difference between a ‘new’ manifesto and a ‘renewed’ pact may justify or may simply be unimportantly in the theoretical outlook of the transcultural period. This remarkable background also serves as a very significant pointer to what transcultural practitioners meant when the manifesto discourse was being articulated.

The manifesto in the Axial corpus and the Middle period literature

The concept of a manifesto has a significant place in the aesthetics of the Axial period, especially in the visionary corpus, is undeniable. The visionary charges that the

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transcultural artworld had breached the manifesto with the consequent entailment of a transcendental impact raised desires and aspirations for a renewing manifesto. This section will be devoted to exploring the transcultural anticipation of a renewed manifesto and the seminal ideas that are usually associated with it. The concept of ‘manifesto’ occurs over time and space in history, such as the *Poetics* 1453a and *Jeremiah* 31.33-34:

Nor again the passing of a thoroughly bad man from good fortune to bad fortune. Such a structure might satisfy our feelings but it arouses neither pity nor fear, the one being for the man who does not deserve his misfortune and the other for the man who is like ourselves—pity for the undeserved misfortune, fear for the man like ourselves—so that the result will arouse neither pity nor fear.

… Judged then by the theory of the art, the best tragedy is of this construction. Those critics are therefore wrong who charge Euripides with doing this in his tragedies, and say that many of his end in misfortune. That is, as we have shown, correct. And there is very good evidence of this, for on the stage and in competitions such plays appear the most tragic of all, if they are successful, and even if Euripides is in other respects a bad manager, yet he is certainly the most tragic of the poets.

Next in order comes the structure which some put first, that which has a double issue, like the *Odyssey*, and ends in opposite ways for the good characters and the bad. It is the sentimentality of the audience that makes this seems the best form: for the poets follow the wish of the spectators. But this is not the true tragic pleasure but rather characteristic of comedy, where those who are bitter enemies in the story, Orestes and Aegisthus, for instance, go off at the end, having made friends, and nobody kills anybody.  

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21 Aristotle (1920): *Poetics* 1453a.1
But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.  

(i) The manifesto in the Axial period

In what sense is the manifesto evident in Poetics 1453a or Jeremiah 31.31-34? In other words, do the Axial authors envisage a manifesto renewing in aesthetic quality or time (the latter Middle period would imply that a renewed manifesto is being made)? Scholars have observed that in the new manifesto is the Poetics or Jeremiah, and that there are elements of continuity as well as discontinuity. The parties of the manifesto remain the same: it is to be a manifesto between the benevolent and the benefactors. It is evident that the existing manifesto is not obsolete; it does not envisage a new manifesto. Hence, the elements of continuity are clear. However, it can be considered that there is at least some renewal element in the manifesto of the Poetics or Jeremiah and this has to do with the interiorisation of the manifesto in the consciences of the communities from which it emerged.

From the above commentary and discussion, it can be viewed that the renewal manifesto evident in the Poetics 1453a or Jeremiah 31.31-34 cannot be considered to be completely ‘new’, but there is a listening back to the unity traditions of the Iliad or the Exodus 24 and, by implication, the Homeric or Sinaitic manifesto. In other words, the renewal manifesto as found in the Poetics or Jeremiah has important elements of a manifesto of renewal albeit in a different period and with different findings. Therefore, the inclusion of renewal to qualify the manifesto/pact may not be any more radical than the other manifestos of renewal envisaged by other visionaries, which we will consider later. That this is probably true can

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be seen in the fact that the renewal manifesto of the Poetics 1453a or Jeremiah 31.31-34 was hardly referred to in the Middle period literature (this will be shown later). In other words, it appears that the transcultural thought during the Axial Age with which we are dealing did not look forward to a radical, brand new form of manifesto or pact and, perhaps, did not understand the Poetics 1453a or Jeremiah 31.31-35 to be such a manifesto.

It is thus also significant to note that this manifesto-ratification is conducted side by side with the regeneration of the transcultural lifeworld and artworld. In the Poetics 1453a and Jeremiah 31.31-35, Aristotle and Jeremiah envisage not only that the Axial lifeworld would be regenerated to its site and art form but that they would also be reconstituted as the transcultural lifeworld and artworld. Interestingly, in discussing the final recessional act, the discourse of the artworld of this envisaged period would make reference to the site. This could only refer to the art form and its installation site, where the concept of regeneration is closely linked with other visionary texts.

(ii) Manifesto renewal in other post-Axial visionaries

The connection between regeneration and the renewal of the manifesto receives some mention in the visionary corpus. These visionary texts presuppose a gap in the relation between aesthetic force and the transcultural practitioners that formed the dynamics of the manifesto. The crux of creative potential offered by the transcultural practitioners’ manifesto would be renewed after the regeneration of the lifeworld and artworld to the site and the transcultural practitioners’ mediator-praxis art forms. In Platform Śūtra 8, the manifesto involves the discourses of identity and presences, with aesthetic force being embodied through the transcultural practitioners’ and their art forms readily (cf. the Poetics 1453a and Jeremiah 31.31-35). And this manifesto develops due to the advent of the aesthetic force to unity that in transcultural ideology involves regeneration. Again, in Platform Śūtra 8, an enlightened manifesto is referred to and the link to the regeneration of the transcultural lifeworld and artworld is re-made and realised.
In summarising our results in regard to renewal manifesto terminology and any explicit statements in either the *Poetics* 1453a or *Jeremiah* 31.31-35 or in the Axial Period corpus, it appears that visionaries saw a dynamic potential and ratification of a manifesto both in the present and in the future. This phenomenon may further imply that the manifesto in the *Poetics* and *Jeremiah* is understood as being similar to the other visionary texts about manifesto renewal. The link between manifesto, regeneration and lifeworld/artworld should not be ignored.

(iii) Manifesto in the post-Axial period

The most frequent references to the concept of the manifesto in the Middle period literature emanating from the transcultural lifeworld is found in the *Platform Sūtra*; they particularly represent a stark contrast to the other post-Axial writings. Indeed, the manifesto concept is foundational to the transcultural artworld. While it is true to consider that the artworld was simply appropriating a fundamental Axial idea to their art forms, this stark contrast emphasised earlier deserves a clarification. There may be two reasons for this: the transcendental outlook of the artworld, and their transcultural nature. The frequent mention of a manifesto may be prompted by a polemic that serves to define the artworld and their lifeworld over and against transcultural orthodoxy in their final installation work.

There are elements of continuity (repristination) and discontinuity (transcendental renewal) in the Ch’an (Zen) aesthetics’ understanding of the renewed manifesto. This is similar to the outlook of the Axial visionaries and sages. But unlike the Axial visionary philosophers, the transcultural artworld believed that the renewed manifesto in the future to be ratified between the aesthetic force and the transcultural artworld (*Platform Sūtra* 8). However, it should be highlighted that the transcultural artworld did not fully understand

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23 It will be noticed by now that the ‘recurrent’ manifesto or pact receives more emphasis than the ‘new’ pact in the Axial period and in post-Axialic literature and art forms. Perhaps the idea of impermanence suggested by the word ‘recurrent’ was attractive to the community or the idea of permanence for the word ‘everlasting’ during a period where uncertainty reigned. They longed for a pact that could never be breached by either party.
their renewed manifesto as a completely and radically new art form. It seems therefore only correct to conclude that the difference between a new and a renewed manifesto is at an impasse. The expectation of a renewal of the manifesto includes new elements that are profoundly connected with either the Iliad or the Exodus’ Sinatic pact.

Although the renewed manifesto expression was applied, there was no explicit mention of the Poetics 1453a or Jeremiah 31.31-35 in the transcultural artworld. This is highly significant when an account is being taken of the fact that the manifesto concept was pertinent to the transcultural art practitioners for their self-understanding. This may indicate that the Poetics 1453a or Jeremiah 31.31-35 was not understood as the future manifesto par excellence as opposed to other visionary texts about a future manifesto renewal. It seems true to consider that there appears to be no important difference between a ‘new’ or a ‘renewed’ manifesto to the transcultural artworld, and that they were not striving for any particular expressive precision. Hence, one expression could easily slide into the other.

It should be noted that the manifesto expression is applied in the service of polemic in the Middle period, and this polemic thus serves to point out that the lifeworld was indeed the transcultural artworld. It should also be noted that the conviction that sages, philosophers and art practitioners were the transcultural artworld and that in some sense the transcendental aesthetics has dawned on them, points to their realisation of aesthetic regenerative potentials. Hence the manifesto is once again associated with regeneration, innovation and the artworld.

4. The intention of transcultural art practitioners in the manifesto discourse

The material surveyed earlier has produced significant results for our understanding of the intentions of transcultural practitioners in the manifesto discourse.
First, the recessional act discourse in Eastern and Western aesthetics could imply that an implicit reference is made to the Axial corpus. Secondly, the Western idiom (e.g. Aristotle’s Poetics) can be said to be transcendental if one bears in mind that a renewal of the manifesto can be transcendental. Thirdly, the Western idiom envisages a new ratification of the manifesto with a new element – transcultural consciousness. Although the Western form may look back to The Iliad as its primary background, the Western idiom may not be separated from this either. It should also be noted that the renewed manifesto in Jeremiah 31.31-35 looks back to the Sinaitic pact. Fourthly, if one assumes that contemporary Westerners have preserved the original idiom of transcultural practitioners’ application, it is highly probable that they understood the renewed manifesto in the Poetics or Jeremiah as not to be completely new but as continuing the unity traditions. Therefore, to consider one concept that is perceived in two separate contexts as two totally different ideas is often misleading. We contend that there is no necessity to determine the original form that is applied by transcultural practitioners to bear similar meaning. In short, whether one opts for one art form or the other, the element of renewal is present (discontinuity) and the reference of consciousness may look back to The Iliad or Exodus 24.8 in both artforms (continuity). Thus transcultural practitioners are expressing to the artworld that the aesthetic force is initiating something important and new. Yet this new element is not completely separated from the aesthetic force from the unity traditions.

A further conclusion could be drawn from the preceding discussion. It was highlighted that the idea of manifesto renewal is closely linked to the motifs of regeneration and the artworld. Such concepts were also probably present at the final installation works of transcultural art practitioners. It was also noteworthy that there is an element of renewal in the ratification recessional act for it was the consciousness of transcultural practitioners and not any ceremonial default that was used for the ratification. Whether one understands this as something mediatory or that transcultural practitioners’ dissolution represented the

cathartic ‘Death of Marat’ for the artworld is of great significance, but not for the purposes of this study. What we want to highlight here is that the recessional act discourse signifies that it is only through the consciousness of transcultural practitioners that such a manifesto is to be ratified. Thus, it is through transcultural practitioners’ giving of their mediator-praxis to observers that the constitution of the renewed transcultural artworld can be realised.\(^{25}\) This is further corroborated by the critical discourse whose authenticity has been supported by many prominent contemporary art scholars.\(^{26}\)

Our conclusions have ramifications for two significant aspects of transcultural practitioners’ art practice: their choosing of their key approach, and their distancing of themselves from the potential corruption of their art form from the art establishment.

Higgins has ably defended the historicity of the unity traditions movement.\(^{27}\) It is likely that the movement symbolises the enlightenment of a society. The interesting point to note now is that the definitive constitution of this renewed transcultural artworld \textit{in nuce} was done in a proleptic manner at the final recessional act.\(^{28}\) This ratification was developed proleptically since it involved transcultural practitioners’ dissolution or emancipation. It was the transcultural practitioners’ realisation that was the actual moment of the ratification of the manifesto. By partaking of the same recessional act, the observers were also given a point of access into the manifesto, and thus were made the renewed transcultural artworld.\(^{29}\) Hence, what then indicated in a symbolic manner during the practitioners’ art practice was then indeed definitively ratified at the final recessional act episode.

\(^{25}\) Ibid. It is interesting to see that during the Middle or Modern period there is less cultic form of ratification for their manifesto. This may be due to the fact that they have distanced themselves from the site and artforms. Instead, the manifesto ceremony is ratified by an embrace on the part of the adherents.


\(^{28}\) It should also be noted that the manifesto at \textit{Iliad} or Sinai has to do with the constitution of the transcultural lifeworld and artworld.

\(^{29}\) Much has been written on the meaning of the act of sharing and giving (on the part of the transcultural practitioners) and receiving (on the responsive part of the observers).
We have seen in chapter three that the regeneration of transcultural unity is indispensable for the regeneration of the transcultural artworld. In the regeneration of unity, a manifesto is usually ratified and its endorsement would lead directly to the constitution of transcultural lifeworld. Hence, the motif of the regeneration of unity implicitly conjures up the ideas of regeneration, manifesto-confirmation and the constitution of the transcultural artworld. Hence it is not implausible that transcultural practitioners considered that the ratification of a renewed manifesto has to be established on unity.

In chapter eight, we suggested that the embracement or rejection of the site for the art form could have led to transcultural practitioners installing at a different site than that deemed by the contemporary artworld (whether interim or otherwise), thus altering who would be the recipients and bearers of transcendental potentialities. What is of significance here is the transcultural artworld, who conceived of their artworld as shaping the ‘interim’ art spaces, regarded the manifesto idea as vital to the existence of the artworld. Moreover, this manifesto idea was applied in a polemical manner to indicate that they were the transcultural artworld in receipt of their transcendental potentialities. The manifesto-ratification episode performed by transcultural practitioners in the final recessional act may have served a similar function.

We therefore suggest that the ineffectiveness of the site to be the site of transcendence directed transcultural practitioners to constitute definitively the regenerated artworld through a manifesto-ratification episode so that this transcultural artworld would serve as recipients and bearers of transcendental potentiality. In other words, the ineffectiveness of the art form and its site to bear the intention of resistance and regenerative potentials on transcultural lifeworld was localised in this artworld. The manifesto-ratification episode served to confirm thus in a definitive manner. Regeneration indeed had manifested; but it was neither the art form nor the site but the transcultural artworld, partaking in the final recessional act episodes, that were the recipients of this transcendental regeneration.
Conclusions

In this chapter, we have not attempted to deal with all the issues related to the study of the final recessional act episodes. Instead we have focused on the recessional discourse that contains the manifesto motif. We conclude that the transcultural practitioner thought of their impending dissolution as the effective means for the ratification of a manifesto where aesthetic force would affect a renewed relation with the transcultural artworld. The adherents who partook of the manifesto offered by transcultural practitioners comprised this regenerative art community in nuce. It is the ratification of this ‘renewed’ manifesto and the constitution of the renewed artworld, in light of the regeneration of unity that the transcultural practitioners understood their dissolution to signify. Hence, in the final recessional act, motifs of regeneration, manifesto and the artworld are prominent and intertwined.

Once this is recognised, the thread connecting the three significant episodes in transcultural aesthetics that involved art practitioners could be established. The thread may be referred to as ‘the regeneration thread’ in light of the regeneration of the transcultural artworld and the unity traditions. In the processional gesture, the transcultural practitioners signified that vision has begat its art form, ushering in the site and the art form simultaneously through the regenerative intention and the message of aesthetic force. Unity is thus to be renewed and affirmed, and it is now realised through the transcultural practitioners’ processional gesture in relation to its traditions. But the site was constantly found to be challenging as the site of transcendence. The transcultural custodian was also found to be unworthy. Hence the mediator-praxis art form, the site and the artworld were aesthetically judged. Unity traditions and its site had this transcendence of aesthetic force and these potentials were expressed to the renewed transcultural artworld. This was also brought about by the transcultural practitioners’ ratification of the manifesto between practitioners and the aesthetic force, a ratification that involved the universal consciousness.
The observers and its adherents constituted the artworld that would be the recipients and bearers of these unity aesthetic qualities. The regenerative potentials of art have indeed been realised, not in the site or the art form but for those who partook of the manifesto during the final recessional act.
CONCLUSIONS TO PART III:

In Part III, we have attempted to deal with the aspects of creative mediator-praxis art form focusing on the processional, transitional and recessional actions through which the unity traditions had impacted on and informed the transcultural practitioners – namely the understanding and objects of their art practice. However, in the course of our study on this captivating matter, a gap has become apparent that calls for a resolution. It was stated in chapter seven that transcultural practitioners understood their first marking in their art form, in order to signify the potentials for regeneration, and that it would lead to the development of the enlightened person. It was also asserted that, at the final recessional act, transcultural practitioners signified by manifesto discourse that their impending dissolution or emancipation would be the process for the ratification of the renewed manifesto. How are these two ideas to be reconciled: the strand about their realising the unity transcultural aspirations and the strand concerning their death as ratification of the renewed manifesto? In particular, how did they identify their role to be transitory, moving between the first processional gesture and the final installation act?

One possible way of resolving the challenge is to regard the transcultural practitioners as not expecting any form of significant investigative role. They might have considered that together with the transcultural lifeworld, they would be enlightened simply to enjoy the

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transcultural artworld. If this were the case, transcultural practitioners would probably have understood their dissolution as the ‘Death of Marat’, perhaps in the same light as that attributed to misunderstood martyrs. Their commitment would then signify their unswerving dedication to the aesthetic force and that the climax of their art practices was their dissolution to ratify the renewing manifesto. But this entails envisaging transcultural practitioners as understanding their enlightened role to be a transitory action art form between the processional gesture and the final recessional act that is rather peculiar.

Another possibility is to consider transcultural practitioners as expecting to play an investigative role that was pertinent to the future establishment of the transcultural artworld. Transcultural practitioners might have considered their dissolution as ratifying the renewing manifesto but that death would not simply indicate the culmination of their aesthetics. They would have considered cultivated regeneration (through the aesthetic force) to be their appointed role as ‘gentlemen’ (君子) (in Confucian parlance) or ‘enlightened’ persons. If this line of resolution is accepted, the gap is to a large extent prevented. But is there evidence to suggest that transcultural practitioners expected an investigative role for themselves through the enlightenment as inspired by the aesthetic force? And was such an expectation conceivable in those periods?

The answer to these enquiries is inexorably connected to the resolution of another complex challenge that concerns the discourses on the enlightenment and the unfolding events attributed to transcultural practitioners by various art promoters. We cannot hope to solve this problem within the limited compass of this study. There are, nonetheless, good arguments to show it is plausible that the transcultural practitioners expected that they would play a somewhat investigative role, namely in regard to the transcendental artworld.

First, it must be said that it is entirely conceivable that an observer during the time of the transcultural practitioners might consider in the unfolding of great visions of art. There is an Axial anticipation of the unfolding of knowledge and truth (The Republic, The Great Learning, and The Upanishad). The anticipation of regeneration in either the Hebrew Psalter
and *Exodus* or Homeric *Iliad* provides further evidence of such a background. Thus, it can be concluded that the understanding that a significant group of transcultural practitioners would in the future bear a crucial illuminating role is not inconceivable for a transcultural artworld of the Axial Period.

Secondly, the post-recessional observers recognised that transcultural practitioners ushered in the renewing transcultural order. Such a belief is multiplied and attested to in the different writings of the artworld of the time, signifying that such belief was widely held. Admittedly, this evidence could be double-edged. It could mean that it was the contemporary post-enlightened artworld who created the discourses on the enlightenment and the unfolding understanding of transcendental reality in tandem with their own stand, or it could mean that the prevalence of this belief came about as a result of having its groundings in the theoretical enquiry of transcultural aesthetics. Unfortunately, some scholarship often shows bias against the latter and, thus, opts for the former without giving due consideration to evidence that might support the latter. Such a bias should not be allowed to pre-empt serious consideration of the possibility that transcultural practitioners might have seriously anticipated both an investigative role and human witness element.

Thirdly, it must be recognised that the only effective means of circumventing our proposal is to deny the historicity of all the discourses on the enlightened and the unfolding that are attributed to transcultural practitioners by the comparative art advocates. Such a course of action simply amounts to denying too much material that has good indications of authenticity and relevancy. We have argued earlier (in chapter 6) that Lee Ufan’s *Relatum* is authentic and that transcultural practitioners probably expected their unfolding encounter to take place when the site was critical and ready to inspire transculturality.

Some of the foregoing observation serves to show the plausibility of transcultural practitioners’ anticipating their significant investigative role in relation to the transcultural artworld. Such dissolution and emancipation, human witness advocacy and regeneration could have been understood as embodying the form of catharsis and kenotic presences and
events. In fact, this conviction of transcultural practitioners is not to be seen as incredible for a contemporary artworld today, as there are transcultural precedents for it.

In closing, there is therefore a thematic unity that runs through and connects the three significant actions of contemporary art practitioners in their transcultural art forms. I have termed this ‘the regenerative thread’. Hence, the common unit between these actions is the word ‘regeneration’ or ‘reconstitution’, and transcultural art practitioners of the unity traditions accomplish this creative reconstitution in the light of the appropriation. The artworld was to be reconstituted (and this would imply the renewal of the transcultural artworld), but this has to manifest definitively in their art forms.

Hence in this context, the ratification of the regenerative manifesto has to be accomplished through their transcultural art forms even though in the expanded field of transcultural art movements the transcultural practitioners signified that they were the reconstituted transcultural artworld in nuce. Considering the three actions from the perspective of the unity traditions allows us to see their thematic unity. Thus, the findings gathered in Part II are confirmed in Part III.

Those transcultural art practitioners understood their art practices in their art form, which commenced with the processional gesture, to be their telos can be inferred from the character of their actions that they performed in their mediator-praxis art form. The provocative character of the transcultural practitioners’ action in their processional gestures and the transitional action episodes would amount to a situation where no reversal was possible. Either both the art form and its custodians were to accept their propositions, or they would have to deny them and find a way to abate them. It was in that art form and its art spaces, topos or basho that the creative regenerative artworld was challenged. Moreover, the partaking of the final recessional act by transcultural art practitioners and their observers affords a further corroboration that transcultural art practitioners understood their mediator-praxis art forms as the site of their recurring telos.
CONCLUSION

Transcultural Quests
CHAPTER 10

PURSUIT OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTITIONERS AND THE UNITY TRADITIONS

1. Thesis

My thesis is plain: contemporary art practitioners in their transcultural aesthetics appropriated the unity traditions. They enable us to understand the unifying recurrent aspirations behind their artistic actions through their mediation art forms. There, transcultural contemporary art practitioners also went to their creative art forms to reify their aesthetics and bring art’s affective creative qualities to a climax. This highlight causes the realisation of art’s creative, innovative, and regenerative benefits made available to the unity traditions and the constitution of a transcultural artworld.

Transcultural contemporary art practitioners would have agreed with one possible aspect of transcultural intentionality that considered the artworld movements as being uniformly established (cf. Platform Sūtra 6.8)\(^2\) and that the renewal of its potentialities, as advocated by

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the unity art practitioners, who are constantly being enlightened. They would hold instead the contrary viewpoint, expressed in many transcultural discourses and movements of the postmodern period, that the art community was still, to some extent, in a state of becoming enlightened\textsuperscript{3} and that, therefore, the constitution of regenerating humanity was still a continuing project. However, the transcultural contemporary art practitioners also understood that with their vocation, the creative, cathartic and regenerative programme would recur, and by the sovereignty of art will continue to regenerate a presence-in-time consciousness framework. That is, the great fount of creative potentialities in art was to be realised through art practitioners, and, in this reconstitution, presence-in-time consciousness potentialities would be channelled to the regenerated communities of sense, with whom a new manifesto was re-made. It is probable that, in light of the intransigence and hostility of art custodians in art spaces today, transcultural contemporary art practitioners would have expected to have a decisive recurring post-mortem role to achieve the culmination of the creative, cathartic and regenerative programme that had already begun and was already practiced by transcultural observers and practitioners.

Roger Fry’s notion of \textit{formal content} is thus seen to be compromising.\textsuperscript{4} The contemporary art practitioners did not go to their art forms simply to dissipate or emancipate. To regard this as their one and only aim would not make much sense out of their ecological actions in their aesthetics (especially the first processional gesture and the transitory actions moments) unless they were to regard them as performed simply to provoke the custodians to put them in conflict. Moreover, the symbolic quality of the processional gesture would have been insignificant. Nor should contemporary art practitioners be regarded as going to their art form simply to ‘work’ (as a form of the \textit{Doctrine of Mean} or the \textit{rasa-dhvani} theory) or to


\textsuperscript{4} According to Deutsch’s statement on formal content, he firmly contended that ‘the future of philosophical aesthetics as a vital and important discipline will depend to a considerable extent upon its becoming a genuine global undertaking (but not one that involves an imperialistic ‘globalisation’). While seeking valid general principles, this aesthetics will always recognise fully the rich plurality not only of the arts themselves but of ways of thinking about the arts that many enhance the understanding of all of us’. E. Deutsch, ‘Interpreting Artworks: Prolegomenon to a Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics’ in \textit{Frontiers of Transculturality in Contemporary Aesthetics: Proceedings Volume of the Intercontinental Conference, University of Bologna}, (Eds.) G. Marchianò and R. Milani, Torino, Turin: Trauben (2001): 172.
challenge the site of creation, negotiation and interaction with their transcultural intentions and message.\footnote{Cf. E. Man, ‘The Origin of “Aesthetic Experience” as the Key of Comparative Aesthetics’ in in \textit{New Essays in Comparative Aesthetics}, (Ed.) R. Wilkinson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2007): 109ff.} This also fails to take into consideration the realisation quality of the first processional gestures and their expressed understanding that the climax of their aesthetics must include their dissolution or emancipation (the recessional act and \textit{Tao-Te Ching} or \textit{Bhagavad-gītā} dictum).

It would seem that both intentions of Peter Lamarque’s discourse explain the contemporary art practitioners’ transcultural intentions in going to their \textit{topos}, \textit{basho} or art forms. Kathleen Higgins suggests that one approach for understanding how contemporary art practitioners regarded their dissolution or emancipation in their art forms within the context of their artworks is that they sought to charge the art forms with the meaning they expected to enact through dissolution or emancipation.\footnote{K. Higgins, ‘Comparative Aesthetics’ in \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics}, (Ed.) J. Levinson, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2003): 682. See also K. Higgins, ‘Music and the Ten Thousand Things: Musical Metaphysics in China’ in \textit{Proceedings of the Pacific Rim Conference in Transcultural Aesthetics}, (Ed.) E. Benitez, Sydney, New South Wales: The University of Sydney ([1998], 1998): 82 and 92.} This, although helpful, is still questionable in that the contemporary art practitioners might have understood their enactment to be already charged with meaning by their sense of vocation from art for art’s sake, and might simply have submitted to what they thought was necessary in their vocation as art practitioners (c.f. The \textit{Platform Sūtra} \footnote{Ibid.} and the recessional act).

Eliot Deutsch’s \textit{four strata},\footnote{E. Deutsch, ‘Interpreting Artworks: Prolegomenon to a Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics’ in \textit{Frontiers} (2001): 172.} while sensitive to the possibility that there was a unifying motivation on the part of contemporary art practitioners behind the processional gesture and the transitory actions moments, opens up new possibilities for contemporary art practitioners who intend to embody their art form with formal content.\footnote{Ibid.} Transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ reticence in the processional gesture and transitory action of protest against the shadow players of art world institutions (and not against the external institutions) would suggest that the motivations behind these actions were far from an
intended revolution/reformation. Instead, they were motivated by their understanding of time, where art’s affective regenerative programme for unity had dawned (or perhaps a reopening of another ‘Axial’ moment). The question of how the external institutions were to be dealt with in the context of art’s affective regeneration was not directly addressed by those actions, but they do not suggest that contemporary art practitioners intended the liberation of their art forms from the external institutions, at least not in a neo-avant-garde revolutionary ploy. ⁹ Perhaps this would explain why, while being profoundly informed by the unity traditions in their own conception of their aesthetics, the transcultural contemporary art practitioners were not too bothered about the site per se (see introduction to Part II), which is often connected to the unity traditions. This would probably indicate that the theoretical symbolism of art forms was more pertinent to art practitioners than the political form. However, I have no wish to dichotomise the two. My study only suggests that the former is more prominent than the latter.

One vital finding of my thesis is that an important element of transcultural traditions – the unity traditions – has been brought into a fruitful dialogue with transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ contemporary aesthetics. The contemporary art practitioners appropriated these traditions in a very significant way. This helps us to further understand another illuminating aspect of the transculturality of contemporary art practitioners and to show how an individual practitioner could creatively appropriate their timeless heritage in their own particular aesthetics. The window provided by this dialogue allows us to understand that the provocative ecological actions of contemporary art practitioners in their art forms were not performed in a moment of sheer impulse: they stemmed from a concerted, unified motivation. More importantly, transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ appropriation of the unity traditions explains why they understood that the climax of their transcultural aesthetics and their emancipation or dissolution had to take place nowhere else except in their art form.

⁹ Although some see in these actions in an implicit universalism, see R. Wilkinson, ‘Introduction’ in New Essays (2007): 1-5.
Such conclusions reveal the possibilities for some recent treatments of the transcultural intentions of the transcultural contemporary art practitioners. Thus, the theoreticians’ picture of a transcultural or transhistorical contemporary art practitioner without any definite intentions\textsuperscript{10} collapses in the light of my thesis. It should also be pointed out that art practitioners’ goals should not be construed in merely moral terms (for instance, community charitable projects), for this would not explain their significant actions in their art forms, nor the raison d’être behind their charitable or political associations.

2. Some implications for transcultural aesthetics and transcultural art practitioners research

The thesis has executed an intense enquiry into a particular, but more importantly the motivation of contemporary art practitioners. It centres on selected but significant portions to verify the hypothesis assumed at the outset: that is, the interrelatedness of the unity traditions and contemporary art practitioner’s transcultural intentions in their art forms. Because of its narrow focus, other aspects of the study of contemporary art practitioners have not been largely considered. Therefore I shall attempt here a brief sketch of the implications for historical research into transcultural contemporary art practitioners that arise from my thesis.

1. The recent profile of transcultural contemporary art practitioners

I have already discussed the possibilities of certain scholarly reconstructions of transcultural contemporary art practitioners appertaining to the topic of the transcultural intentions of art practitioners. I now move on to other aspects of contemporary art practitioner research, which recent works have highlighted.

\textsuperscript{10} Those theoreticians that do not based their framework on intercultural tend to be biased and non-transcultural.
Robert Wilkinson’s recent article on transcultural aesthetics scholarship on the transcultural contemporary art practitioners suggests that two enquiries central to the renaissance of ‘transcultural studies’ concern contemporary art practitioners’ presence-in-time consciousness or transcendence and their relationship to the social world. According to Wilkinson, it is the weight assigned to these enquiries that unites the works of the thirteen scholars he was reviewing. My thesis does not engage itself directly with these enquiries specifically. However, since I have shown that the unity traditions were an important factor that had influenced the transcultural contemporary art practitioner’s conceptions of their intentions, and that it was the transcendental and theoretical aspects of these traditions that attracted them to their art forms, my thesis lends support to portraits of contemporary art practitioners which picture them as working in a predominantly transcendental framework. The importance of transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ relationship to their social world is not denied, but I would want to highlight that, for the art practitioners, art theory overrides societal constraints and informs their relationship to the social environment. Hence, many aspects of their art practice are spiritual or emotional first, even though they certainly have social roots. I hope to have demonstrated in chapter three that this is also true for some of the transcultural practitioners’ contemporaries.

There has been an increasing tendency on the part of certain comparative aesthetics scholars to view the art practitioner as a pure wisdom philosopher. Interestingly, such a view is linked to the increased veneration of postmodern plurality of new art forms (where the actions of art practitioners do not receive as much significant mention) on the part of

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13 Theoreticians whose reconstructed framework of the art practitioner’s art practice that have a problem with the meaning of ‘transcendental’ have to be dealt with in light of the phenomenological use of the term. On this, see the excellent discussions in D. Moran, ‘Immanence, Self-Experience, and Transcendence in Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, and Karl Jaspers’ in American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 82, No. 2 (2008): 265-91. To expurgate the word would be futile. Generally, the term is taken to mean a reference to the potential evidence to givenness without further specifying whether this potential involves dissolution. See also B. Scharfstein, A Comparative History of World Philosophy: From the Upanishads to Kant, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press (1998); and G. Hughes, Transcendence and History: The Search for Ultimacy from Ancient Societies to Postmodernity, Kansas: University of Missouri Press (2003).
these scholars. Such profiles may be misleading in that they are derived principally from the
discourses of art practitioners without due regard to the actions of art practitioners in their
art forms and without reckoning with the transcultural intentions of art practitioners in their
art forms. Transcultural contemporary art practitioners had goals that engaged with the
destiny of the artworld; they were not mere philosopher.

2. Transcultural art practitioners’ attitude towards art forms: transcultural intention

What was the transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ attitude towards their art forms? Did art practitioners reject or affirm the central importance of the aesthetic-universals art forms as the site, *topos*, and *basho* of art’s impact and regeneration? From my study, it would seem that a neat synthetic picture is not immediately available, as there are elements for and against both rejection and affirmation. On the other hand, the contemporary art practitioners made the unparalleled statement that their aesthetic-universals art forms was the site of dissolution and emancipation for visionary *par excellence* (of Greco-Roman European aesthetics, and so on). Moreover, chaos in the artscape and site was also often pronounced within spatial time (in phenomenological aesthetics). On the other hand, transcultural contemporary art practitioners affirmed the central importance of their art forms as the site for art’s affective creative impact to bring about artistic and transcendental realisation for humanity. Such a picture is reminiscent of the stance of many premodern as well as postmodern visionaries towards their art forms: condemnation for its depravity and potentiality when their mediator-praxis art forms is realised. This ‘ambiguity’ could also be located in the western artworld (chapter two and three). If a synthesis is to be proposed at all, it is perhaps this: transcultural art practitioners accepted the authority of art forms as serving the symbolic reality of aesthetic force, but that did not fossilise them into any historical or traditional art forms. From pre-modern to contemporary visionaries, transcultural art practitioners sought to connect the liminal space between the historical art

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forms and the transcendental form. In this light, Higgins’ statement of the attitude of contemporary art practitioners’ toward their art forms is probably correct: despite art practitioners’ pronouncement of dissolution in their art form and the site, unity remained for them the futuristic centre of the regenerated transcendental artworld.15

3. Transcultural contemporary art practitioners and the Artworld: actions

How should one describe the relationship of transcultural contemporary art practitioners to their existing artworld? From the conclusions derived from our study, it would follow that contemporary art practitioners were concerned for the culmination of the regenerative potentialities of art for the artworld. These were to be made concrete by their constitution of a regenerated relationship between art and art communities of sense. Higgins has attempted to interpret the vocation of world art contemporary art practitioners from this vantage point.16 And from this vantage point, the contemporary art practitioners’ vocation becomes intelligible as a unity. While I cannot explore the relationship of transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ transcultural intentions in their art forms to their goals in their vocational prior to that, Higgins’ thesis offers a fruitful way of viewing it. Both phases have to do with the matter of regeneration in the context of the imminent impact of art. Indeed, the art practitioners’ art practice in their mediator-praxis art forms can be considered to be the crown and climax of the other.

An enquiry that is often posed is whether contemporary world art practitioners intended to found their movement. According to our study, the finding should be no, even though it is admitted that some subsequent movement-like qualities may be present in the contemporary art practitioners’ understanding of their vocation (see chapter 9). But this is a feature that every movement shares if it differs from the general or official ethos. The transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ action in the transitory actions moment and

their lament over their art forms (Lee Ufan’s *Relatum*) need not imply the rejection of the ‘world’ *in toto* (the *relatum* dictum implies that a lifeline is held out to the world even in chaos). Nor should the constitution of the regenerated artworld by the ratification of a new manifesto through the art practitioners’ lifeline imply their desire to found a movement. By partaking of the contents of the art form, the contemporary artworld adherents constituted the enlightened artworld *in nuce* with an aim of reaching out to the greater artworld (the evidence provided by transcultural histories). It would seem that the idea of ‘enlightened theory’¹⁷ would be a better term to describe this phenomenon than the term ‘movement theory’. To borrow the terms of Jacque Rancière, contemporary art practitioners probably viewed the community of sense as a community of connection and disconnection,¹⁸ although the failure to heed their intention and message would eventually lead to the consensual ‘death of a modern lifeworld’.

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APPENDICE:

PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER TRANSCULTURAL AESTHETICS RESEARCH

The unity traditions in the transcultural contemporary artworld:

In summation, it will be fruitful to study how different aspects of the life and transcultural aesthetics theory of the contemporary artworld were related to these traditions.

(i) The origins of the contemporary transcultural studies and its influences

The tentative steps that the postmodern-axial community took in the transcultural congress (and after much hesitation) have often been viewed as casting doubt on the connection between the historical art practitioners and such an intercultural exchange. Various distinct cultural aesthetics (such as Chinese aesthetics or Indian aesthetics) has often been given the responsibility for the genesis of such an intercultural exchange. The issues are complex, but I suggest that reading the intercultural exchange in the context of the transcultural unity traditions may help. My conclusions in chapter eight show that art practitioners probably were aware of the motifs of the international exchanges of the transcultural in the transcendence. Perhaps it was the centripetal aspect of the exchange of the transcultural

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exchange that caused the post-axial artworld to be hesitant in taking steps to initiate such an exchange. Could it be that the historically probable limitation by contemporary art practitioners of the transcultural to the larger artworld might be explained in the context of the unity traditions, that is, ‘unity’ was not yet enlightened and, therefore, any intercultural exchange to transcultural was premature? If this speculation is correct, this helps us to see that the contemporary art practitioners’ limitation of transcultural community to the larger contemporary artworld and their expectation that the comparative artworld would stream into the larger artworld (the discourse of care for everyone: Mencius 26.4: 15, and Plato’s Apologia 38a.5-6)² are then probably consistent and not contradictory.

(ii) The origins of the transcultural community

It is surprising that the transcultural centres that emancipate or dissipate the art practitioner of the postmodern-axial artworld soon became the transcultural artworld’s international oasis and have important meeting points in the development of the transcultural movement (before the World Wars era). Why was this artworld’s sanctuary established in the site where art practitioners’ were dissipated or emancipated, when, logically, it would be more sensible to establish it elsewhere without being too confronting to unnecessary perils? Given the fact that major cities like Tôkyô, Seoul, Vienna, Sydney, Montreal or Singapore would be more suitable sites for such biennales and international meetings, was the theoretical and transcendental importance of the site for the art forms part of the reason that led to the establishment of a transcultural renaissance artworld there? Furthermore, how did this transcultural artworld become prominent even when other centres were already established before any major events, such as the World Wars in the early part of the twentieth century? Were the unity traditions influential? Are there bases for linking the cause of the

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importance of the unity artworld with the discourses of art practitioners in the Chinese, Indian, or European aesthetics? Such enquiries prompt further research.

The transcultural contemporary art practitioners and their aesthetics

My thesis has concentrated on the recent events of transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ practises and their intentions behind them, vis-à-vis Kiefer, Tillers, Young, Gao, Federle and Lee. However, a more fruitful and necessary step from here is to relate my conclusions to the intentions of the transcultural contemporary art practitioners in their aesthetics prior to the time I have been studying. Richard Francis, in his *Negotiating Rapture: The Power of Art to Transform Lives* (1996), has attempted to reconstruct contemporary art practitioners’ art forms in the postmodern western aesthetics and to show how that dissolution and emancipation led to a change in the direction of their art practises. This sort of study ought to be expanded to factor in the transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ complete aesthetic vocation. Are we then advocating a return to writing the ‘lives’ of contemporary art practitioners, which was such a popular recreation in the twentieth century? The data available is not adequate for a full biographical approach. None the less, certain broad images of the transcultural contemporary art practitioner’s life could in principle be drawn, bearing in mind the limitation of the contemporary times. Perhaps the ‘synoptic’ world aesthetics (Chinese, Indian and European) stylised presentation of the aesthetics of transcultural contemporary art practitioners serves to capture the development of art practitioners’ own transcultural conception of their practices. That is, the ‘synoptic’ world aesthetics wants to show the theoretical progression of transcultural contemporary art practitioners’ practices instead of the geographical one, with geography being used in the service of transcultural aesthetics.

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

A priori (Latin): “what comes before”; propositions that are known to be true independent of experience; arguments whose conclusions are deduced from a priori premises.

Advaita Vedānta (Sanskrit): The school of Indian philosophy expounded by Samkara (c. seventh-eighth century BCE), which emphasises the identity between the self (atman) and reality (Brahman) and the empirical status only of the individual self (jīva).

Ahimsa (Sanskrit): “nonviolence or to do no harm.” For Gandhi, the means to achieve political and social ends through organised resistance to one’s oppressors.

Anagogy; anagogical (Greek): the mystical or eschatological meaning of a biblical text.

Anarchism: the political view that denies the legitimacy of governmental authority of any kind in favour of free cooperative arrangements between autonomous persons.

Anātman (Sanskrit): “Anatta” in Pāli, “non-ego, not-self or no self,” the Buddhist doctrine that denied the existence of a constant, stable, and discrete personality, designed to encourage Buddhists to live as though “the self” did not exist; an underlying self (atman) in favour of seeing oneself as a collection of empirical constituents (e.g., mental, physical, volitional) that form a pattern of individuality.

Anicca (Pāli): “impermanence, change”; one of the three signs of conditional existence.

Apeiron (Greek): the “indefinite” original substance of the cosmos in the philosophy of Anaximander.

Apophatic (Greek): “silent,” an experience beyond the reach of speech. Greek Christians came to believe that all theology should have an element of stillness, paradox and restraint in order to emphasize the ineffability and mystery of God.

Appearance: the world as it appears to us, usually taken as an ever-changing order of experience in contrast to an unchanging, permanent reality.

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Appreciation, aesthetic: a feat of the competent judge of aesthetic properties. Aesthetic appreciation presupposes such ideas as aesthetic experience and aesthetic attitude. It is from the vantage point of this unique state of mind that the perception, identification, description and evaluation of aesthetic properties are made possible. Aesthetic appreciation is construed primarily in terms of a reflective, evaluative species of perception that sieves out what is aesthetically worthwhile in a give object.

Arche (Greek): “prior, original, first, origin”; a first principle.

Atman (Sanskrit): the immortal and eternal “self” sought by renouncers and Upanishadic mystics, which was believed to be identical with brahman. For Advaita Vedānta, one’s true self, which is timeless and undifferentiated, a state of pure consciousness identical to the supreme reality (brahman), which is without distinction of any kind.

Attitude, aesthetic: the idea that aesthetic experience requires or even consists in adopting a peculiar, voluntary state of mind toward a certain object or event – artificial or natural – when we take aesthetic interest in it, and appreciate it aesthetically. This idea originated in early modern empiricist taste theories as well as in Kant aesthetics, and proved immensely fruitful for the grounding of the idea of aesthetic autonomy. It has allowed metaphysical leeway for Schopenhauer, Hegel and Heidegger to argue that our engagement with artworks is revelatory of reality in a unique way.

Axial Age/Period: it is the name given to the sixth century BCE, reflecting the nearly simultaneous appearance of major philosophical and religious leaders along an axis from southern Italy to northern China.

Basho (Japanese): “place, locality, site, spot, space, area or occasion”; a haibun style created by the wandering Japanese poet-monk who showed his travels of places or topoi through Japan. Contemporary haibun prose/poetry tends to focus more on everyday experiences—the journey of the human being living mostly in urban settings as well as ventures into natural settings. Some have described haibun as a narrative of an epiphany, but many haibun are simply narratives of special encounters or moments in a person's life. Judging or predication in turn takes place in the topos of consciousness, which is further concretised as the universal or topos of reflexive self-awareness—wherein acts of seeing, knowing, desiring and willing take place. Similarly the world of self-awareness enfolds the world of nature described in judgments; it in turn is enfolded in the topos (Kitarō Nishida calls it “the intelligible world”) within which the creative self pursues ideal values like truth, beauty and goodness.
**Bhagavad-gītā**: it is the scripture that most Western adherents of Hinduism take to be the primary Hindu scripture. It appeared about the third century BCE as a central feature of the recommitment of Hinduism to the gods.

**Bhakti** (Sanskrit): “love”; “devotion”; the name given to the Indian religion that is based on an emotional surrender to a god. A bhakti is a devotee of, for example, Shiva or Vishnu.

**Brahman** (Sanskrit): “the All”; the whole of reality; the essence of existence; the foundation of everything that exists; being itself; the power that holds the cosmos together and enables it to grow and develop; the supreme reality of Vedic religion.

**Buddha** (Sanskrit; Pāli): an enlightened or “awakened” person.

**Categorical imperative**: For Kant, one’s willing that one’s own maxim – rule or intention – be universalisable, i.e., that everyone could follow it without contradiction; acting in such a way as to treat another person always as an end and never merely as a means.

**Ch’an** (Chinese): A shortened form of Ch’anna, derived from the Sanskrit Dhyāna. The Japanese pronounced Chán as Zen.

**Cheng** (Chinese): “sincerity.” A person was supposed to perform the rituals of China wholeheartedly, not hypocritically or grudgingly.

**Chun-tzu** (Chinese): “the superior man” or “authoritative person” in Confucianism; one who has realised the possibilities of being human (ren/jen) and displays appropriate behaviour (li) in all things.

**Cogito ergo sum** (Latin): “I think; therefore I am,” Descartes’ assertion regarding the indubitability of the consciousness of one’s own existence as a thinking being.

**Coherence (theory of truth)**: Doctrine associated historically with objective idealism that a statement of belief is true to the degree to which it fits into, “coheres” with, a system of necessary truths or with a body of established beliefs.

**Correspondence (theory of truth)**: Doctrine that truth is a matter of establishing an accord or “correspondence” between a statement and a state of affairs or “facts” independent of it.

**Cosmology**: study of the origin and nature of the universe as a whole.

**Deai** (Japanese): “encounter, a lived experience.”

**Dhamma** (Pāli): See dharma. In Buddhist terminology, it generally meant the teaching of a particular school or “the way of salvation”.
Dharma (Sanskrit): “doctrine, system, universal truth, law or duty, cosmic order (according to context)”; a complicated word, with a range of different meanings. Originally it meant the natural condition of things, their essence, the fundamental law of their existence. Then it came to stand for the laws and duties of each class of Vedic society, which defined their function and way of life. Finally it referred to religious system. In Pāli, dharma became dhamma.

Dhyāna (Sanskrit): “Jhāna” in Pāli, “concentration of the mind.” It refers to various states of Samadhi (oneness), a state of consciousness where the observer detaches from several qualities of the mind. In this state the mind has become focused, firm and stable, and the ability to concentrate is highly enhanced. Dhyāna was translated as Chán (and later as Zen), giving Zen Buddhism its name.

Dukkha (Sanskrit/Pāli): “awry, flawed, unsatisfactory”; often translated simply as “suffering.” In Buddhist doctrine, all life is subject to impermanence and misery, the frustration of human desires (in the Theravāda School). In the Mahāyāna, equating with manifestation itself as being in duality, the goal is non-duality.

Ego; egoism: “Asmināna” in Pāli. For Freud, the individual, waking self that seeks self-preservation and is compelled to adjust to the external conditions of experience (the “reality principle”); generally regarded as the locus for all the characteristics that make one’s character or personality unique.

Ekstasis (Greek): “ecstasy”; literally “stepping out,” going beyond the self, transcending normal experience.

Emanation: a process whereby the various grades of reality were imagined to flow from a single, primal source, which Jews, Christians and Muslims identified with God; some preferred to use the metaphor of emanation to describe the origins of life rather than creation ex nihilo, the instantaneous creation of all things at a given moment in time.

Empiricism: the view that all knowledge derives from sense experience; denial of the position that the human mind contains a variety of ideas or concepts independent of all experience.

Eunomia (Greek): order, a balanced society in which no single element is allowed to dominate the others. This is the term for the polity established by Solon in Athens in the sixth century BCE.

Ex nihilo (Latin): “out of nothing”; the phrase used to describe God’s creation of the universe from nothingness in a free, spontaneous and unique act in time. Some philosophers found this an impossible notion, because in Greek rational theology the universe is eternal and God is impassable and not subject to sudden actions and change.
Existentialism: the view that one’s self is made up of one’s actions carried out against a background of total freedom; the need for each person to determine, through the choices they make, their own nature and character.

Experience, aesthetic: the idea that the perceptual experience and the state of mind appropriate to aesthetic objects is *sui generis* – introspectively identifiable, phenomenologically distinct, and epistemologically valuable – can be traced back most straightforwardly to Kant, who characterised aesthetic experience in terms of pleasurable disinterestedness and identified it as the determining ground of aesthetic judgement.

Focus-field self: The view ascribed to Confucius that a person is a “field of selves” comprising social, political, personal relationships, with the family as a central focus.

Gatha (Pali): “a stanza or verse.”

Good (the idea of the): for Plato, the highest idea, grasped by pure reason that unifies all knowledge and morality.

Great doubt: one of the three pillars of Zen practice; it provides the edge that keeps practitioners moving forward in their search for clarification of the great matter.

Ground of being: Buddha nature; the true nature of the self.

Hesed (Hebrew): often translated as “love” or “mercy,” but originally a tribal term denoting the loyalty of a kinship relationship that demanded altruistic behaviour toward the family group.

Homeostasis (Greek): “equilibrium or self regulating and balancing process of stabilising living elements system into a undifferentiated whole”; it is a process that maintains the stability of the system’s internal conditions or environment to remain stable and relatively constant especially when responding to changes in external conditions. In George Leonard’s *Mastery*, he discusses how *homeostasis* affects our behaviour and who we are. Leonard notes that *homeostasis* will prevent our body from making drastic changes and maintain stability in our lives even if it is detrimental to us. The purpose of *homeostasis* is to provide a consistent internal environment for set processes to occur.

Intentionality: feature of mental states like beliefs, desires, and thoughts by virtue of which they are about, directed at, mean, or represent, something beyond themselves.

Īśvara (Sanskrit): “God, the ātman or self, puruṣa”; in Indian thought, reality as expressed or manifest as an infinite being with innumerable attributes who is taken as the cause of the world.

Jian ai (Chinese): the chief virtue of the Mohist school; often translated as “universal love,” but more accurately rendered “concern for everybody,” a principled impartiality.
Jiva (Sanskrit): for Vedānta, the individual self in waking, dream, and deep-sleep consciousness is constituted by material, intellectual, emotional and volitional factors.

Karma (Sanskrit): “Kamma” in Pāli “action”; the law of cause and effect, as applied to the mind. At first it referred to ritual activity, but was later extended to include all deeds, including mental acts such as fear, attachment, desire, or hatred. The principle of one’s becoming the results of one’s own actions through the acquiring of dispositions to act in certain ways, usually conceived of as occurring over many lives.

Katharsis (Greek): “cleansing, purification.” It referred originally to the purification of sacrifice and ritual; in tragedy, the audience cleansed their emotions of hatred and terror.

Kenosis (Greek): “emptying.” In spirituality, the word is used broadly to describe the emptying of self, the dismantling of egotism.

Kōan (Japanese): an apparently paradoxical statement or question used in Zen training to induce great doubt, allowing students to cut through conventional descriptions of reality and see directly into their true nature.

Li (Chinese): “propriety” as based on feelings of respect and reverence; rite, ritual, ceremony; the range of ritual love that regulated the entire life of a Chun-tzu/junzi. In Confucianism, the awareness of what is the right or appropriate way to behave in particular circumstances.

Logos (Greek): “dialogue speech”; reasoned, logical, and scientific thought. In some philosophies, such as Stoicism, it refers to the rational, ruling principle of nature. In Hebrew Bible, God’s *Logos* was identified with the Wisdom and Word of God, which brought everything into being, and had seminally communicated with human beings throughout history. In prologue of John’s gospel, the author claimed that the seed-Word had become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.

Metaphysics: the study of the most basic and fundamental principles that inform all experience; the inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality.

Mirror: fundamental awareness, reflecting reality without conditioning.

Mythos (Greek): “myth.” A reality that in one sense happened once, but that also happened all the time. The mythical discourse that deals with elusive, timeless truth and the search for ultimate meaning, which is complemented by *logos*.

Narrative concept of self: MacIntyre’s view that a person’s identity arises from the unity of one’s life story as grounded in various social and historical contexts.
Nirvana (Sanskrit): “Nibbana” in Pāli, literally “putting out fire”; union with the absolute; the attainment of enlightenment through extinguishing all desires and selfish craving, releasing from the limitations of separate existence; a state attainable in this life. In Zen it is essential to realise that samsara is nirvana, form is emptiness, and all beings are innately perfect from the outset.

Niyama (Sanskrit): the preparatory “disciplines” of the yogin, including the study of the guru’s teaching, habitual serenity, and kindness to all.

Nondual, nonduality: the term denotes a stance of “not one” and “not two,” i.e., “position-less position,” where “not two” signals a negation of the stance that divides the whole into two parts, i.e., dualism, while “not one” designates a negation of this stance when the Zen practitioner embodies in the whole as one, while suspending judgment in meditation, i.e., non-dualism. Free, bilateral movement between “not one” and “not two” characterises Zen’s achievement of a personhood with a third perspective that cannot, however, be confined to either dualism or non-dualism (i.e., neither “not one” nor “not two”).

Noumenal: “posited object or event”; for Kant, the world as it is in itself and as unknowable by us.

Nous (Greek): “mind.”

Numinous: the religious state of mind said to be irreducible as it confronts the mystery of spiritual being, “that than which nothing greater can be conceived,” to his existence.

Ontology: the study of existence or being as such; inquiry into the fundamental kinds of things that exist in the universe.

Phenomenology: the descriptive method that seeks to grasp the essential character of the objects of experience; theory of consciousness that holds that all consciousness is of something or other.

Poiesis (Greek): “creative process of fabrication”; it refers to an affective act of making something. David Whitehead views it as a “liberating force which seeks to engage the multiple conditions of contemporary aesthetic reflection, and at a practical level I argue that the poietic act may be seen in those undercurrents of artistic activity that impel us toward a space of ‘unitary multiplicity,’ wherein the artist, the artwork, and the receiver of such a work are brought forward in all the features of their self-presentation.”

Pragmatic (theory of truth): doctrine according to which a belief is held to be true if it “works” in enabling us to predict and control experience, to function well, to lead richer lives; truth “happens,” it is made, not found.
**Purusha** (Sanskrit): “person.” The term first applies to the primordial human Person who voluntarily allowed the gods to sacrifice him in order to bring the world into being. This archetypal sacrifice was celebrated in the Purusha Hymn of the *Rig Veda*. Later the Purusha was merged with the figure of the creator god Prajapati, and thus became crucial to the ritual reform that began India’s Axial Age. In Samkhya philosophy, the *purusha* referred to the eternal, sacred self of every single individual, which had to be liberated from nature.

**Qi/Ch’i** (Chinese): “*Zôê*” in Greek, “the raw material of life; its basic energy and its primal spirit; it animates all beings”. Endlessly active, it conglomerates in different combinations, under the guidance of the *Tao*, to form individual creatures; after a time, the *qi* disperses, the creatures die or disintegrate, but *qi* lives on, combining in new ways to bring quite different beings into existence. *Qi* gives everything its distinctive shape and form. To allow the *qi* to flow through human person became the chief aim of Chinese mysticism: it was the base of the personality, the ground of being, and therefore in prefect harmony with the *Tao*.

**Raising an ox**: a Zen metaphor for the cultivation of the enlightened mind, which means the freedom to act without restraint yet according to and in harmony with circumstances and conditions.

**Rasa** (Sanskrit): “relishing.” Rasa resides primarily in the character and secondarily in the actor. The actor identifies himself with the historical character according to Bhatta Lollata’s comment on *rasasûtra*. The locus of rasa can however not be in the character and actor, but in the spectator, for the realisation of rasa is now ultimately takes place in the consciousness of the beholder.

**Rationalism**: the philosophy that extols the power of reason to determine through its own methods the basic rational structure of the universe; the belief that reason can in principle explain everything within a single system of knowledge.

**Realism**: the view that there exists a world of objects and relations external to the mind; that our perceptions are of independent objects that are ordered spatially, temporally, and casually, and about which we may have genuine knowledge.

**Reality principle**: for Freud, all the demands that physical nature and society make or impose on one and to which the ego must-adjust.

**Relativism**: the recognition of a variety of moralities, ways of knowing, etc., which are fundamentally different from one another and are cultural or historically specific; doctrine that there is not, and cannot be, a single correct account of reality.
Ren/Jen (Chinese): originally, “human being, basic humanness or genuine humanity”
Confucius gave the word new significance, but refused to describe it because it transcended any of the intellectual categories of his time. It was a transcendent value, the highest good. Ren would always be associated with the concept of humanity and has been translated as “human-heartedness.” Later Confucians equated it with benevolence or compassion. It is the chief Confucian virtue.

Representationalism: the view that the mental states involving qualia are ultimately entirely representational in nature, in the sense that their possessing qualia is said to be reducible to their being representations of a certain sort, where being a representation is understood to involve nothing more than having intentionality. Representationalism is thus a variety of intentionalism.

Rig Veda (Sanskrit): “Knowledge in Verse”; the most sacred part of the Vedic scriptures, consisting of over a thousand inspired hymns.

Sabi (Japanese): “a sense of transitoriness of things tinged with melancholy.”

Sādhāranikarana (Sanskrit): “impersonality or trans-personality mechanism.” In Indian aesthetics, the mechanism is sādhāranikarana when the beholder’s consciousness is free from limiting psychological, volitional and physical activities, and that it is akin to the mystic experience of Brahman and comes close to Brahmānanda.

Sahrdyata (Sanskrit): “selfless sympathy, sensitive or poetically inclined”; an Indian concept that oscillates around two poles, first hrid, ‘heart’ derived from the root source of emotion, and then ‘selflessness’ is the field where subjectivity and pleasure that are being transcended.

Śakti (Sanskrit): “force, power or energy that resides in the temporal”; in Indian thought in the phenomenal world, it is viewed as the feminine active divine aspect (as contrasted with the masculine passive divine aspect) that affects the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe or cosmos, and possesses intelligence, will, knowledge, and action as modes. In Hinduism, it is personified as the divine consort of the god Siva.

Sāṃkhya (Sanskrit): “Nature (Prakṛti) and persons (puruṣa-s)”; Nature is singular, and persons are numerous. Both are eternal and independent of each other. Persons are essentially unchangeable, inactive, conscious entities who nonetheless gain something from contact with Nature. Creation as we know it comes about by a conjunction of Nature and persons. Nature is comprised of three qualities: (1) the highest of the three is sattva “essence”: the principle of light, goodness and intelligence. (2) Rajas “dust” is the principle of change, energy and passion, while (3) tamas “darkness” appears as inactivity, dullness, heaviness and despair. An Indian philosophy, akin to yoga, that analysed the cosmos into twenty-
four different categories and devised a cosmology that was intended as an object of meditation to induce *moksha*.

**Samsara** (Sanskrit): “keeping going”; existence prior to liberation (conditioned by the three attitudes of greed, anger, and ignorance) and marked by continuous cycle of death and rebirth, which propelled people from one life to the next. It often referred to the restlessness and transience of the human condition.

**Satori** (Japanese): “in Zen Buddhism, the immediate, non-rational insight into reality”; a state of consciousness that varies in quality and duration from a flash of intuitive awareness to *Nirvana*.

**Sāttvika bhāva** (Sanskrit): “involuntary emotion (constitutional quality) of lightness, goodness, brightness and purity”; actions are willed by the actor in emotion whilst involuntary physical changes are prompt and non-verbal sign of emotion such as blush and horripilation.

**Self-transcendence**: going beyond or overcoming the limitations of one’s empirical individuality.

**Shu** (Chinese): “likening to oneself.” The Confucian virtue of consideration, linked with the Golden Criterion: never do to others what you not like them to do to you.

**Subjective idealism**: the school of thought associated in the West with Berkeley and in Asia with *yogacara* Buddhism that explains the world by reference to the mind and holds that the “mental” alone exists.

**Substance**: generally, the essential nature of a thing that underlies and supports its various properties; that which exists by itself and can be conceived only by itself.

**Substantial self**: an underlying self that is conceived either as supporting various empirical qualities or as being different in kind from all ordinary experience.

**śūnyatā** (Sanskrit): “emptiness”; the doctrine of Voidness of Ultimate Reality, in which all things are without self-nature; often equated with the absolute in Mahayana, since it is formless and nondual.

**Superego**: for Freud, all the moral rules taught to one in childhood, primarily from one’s parents, which subsequently become “internalised” or accepted by one and which dictate one’s sense of responsibility.

**Sūtra** (Sanskrit): “Sutta” in Pāli, literary a thread, on which teachings were strung; a sermon of the Buddha.
Sympatheia (Greek): “feeling with”; a profound affinity with the ritual, and later, by extension, with other suffering human beings.

Tao-Te (Chinese): the “moral force or power of the Way,” the power inherent in virtue; expressed particularly by the king or prince; a magical potency that brings order to the world and to the kingdom.

Tao/Dao (Chinese): the Way; the correct course or path. The object of much Chinese ritual was to ensure that human affairs were aligned with the Way of Heaven. Human virtue consists of living in accordance with the de, the potency that expresses the Tao on earth. The natural-spiritual principle that is the primal source of all being and is manifest in all-natural processes. In Taoism, the school represented in the Axial Age by Zhuangzi and Laozi, the Tao becomes the ultimate, ineffable reality, the source from which all appearance drives, unproduced producer of all that exists, which guarantees the stability and order of the world.

Tautology: the term is used in rhetoric to refer to statements that are in-themselves redundant. In logic, it is a formula that is always true on any valuation of its terms, which is often called ‘valid formulas’ or ‘logical truths’.

Techné (Greek): “craft or technology.” The term is often used to define the process of rhetoric as an art of persuasion.

Telos (Greek): “a thing, process or action that exists for the sake of an end”; a question about its validity. “Teleology” is any philosophical account that holds that final causes exist in nature.

Theòria (Greek): “contemplation.”

Topos; topology (Greek): “site, locus, place.” Possibly derived from an ancient mnemotechnique method for memorising a great number of items on a list by associating them with successive places, say the houses along a street, one is acquainted with. By recalling the houses along the street we can also remember the associated items. Aristotle (in Topics VIII.1: 155b4–5) also applies the word ‘topos’ (location) to mean a starting point for attacking the theses of the opponents.

Upanishads (Sanskrit): “to sit down near to”; esoteric mystical scriptures, revered as to the culmination of the Veda. Thirteen classical Upanishads were composed between the seventh and second centuries BCE.

Unity traditions: Axial communities that use unity and aesthetic-universals in their practices, where unique art forms are applied as a focus and symbol of transcultural thought.

Veda (Sanskrit): “knowledge.” The term used to denote the huge corpus of sacred literature of the Aryan Indians.
**Vijñāna** (Sanskrit): “Viññāṇa” in Pāli, “consciousness”; the faculty by which one recognises the phenomenal world.

**Visuddhi** (Sanskrit): “purification.”

**Wu wei** (Chinese): “doing nothing.”

**Yoga** (Sanskrit): “yoking.” Initially the term referred to the yoking of draft animals to war chariots at the beginning of a raid. Later it referred to the “yoking” of the powers of the mind to achieve enlightenment. The meditative discipline designed to eliminate the egotism that holds us back from moksha and nibbana.

**Yuga** (Sanskrit): “an age, era; a cycle of history.”

**Yūgen** (Japanese): “profound grace”; it is an awareness of the universe that triggers emotional responses too deep and mysterious for words. In the Chinese philosophical texts, yūgen is meant as “dim, deep or mysterious.” While Yūgen experiences may connect humanity with the Infinite, they are mere experiences of every day life that serve as a connection to something higher.

**Za-zen** (Japanese): sitting meditation, taught in Zen as the most direct way to enlightenment; practice of the realisation of one’s own true nature.

**Zen** (Japanese): the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese ideograph for Ch’an, which is derived from the Sanskrit Dhyana. The School that founded in China passed to Japan. Dr. D.T. Suzuki for Rinzai Zen. For Soto Zen, less known in the West, see The Soto Approach to Zen by Reiho Masunaga, Layman Buddhist Society Press, Tôkyô.
The priest Hung-jen asked me: ‘Where are you from that you come to this mountain to make obeisance to me? Just what is it that you are looking for from me?’

“I replied: ‘I am from Ling-nan, a commoner from Hsin-chou. I have come this long distance only to make obeisance to you. I am seeking no particular thing, but only the Buddhadharma.’

“The Master then reproved me, saying: ‘If you’re from Ling-nan then you’re a barbarian. How can you become a Buddha?’

“I replied: ‘Although people from the south and people from the north differ, there is no north and south in Buddha nature. Although my barbarian’s body and your body are not the same, what difference is there in our Buddha nature?’

The text reads: "wei ch'iu Fo-fa tso. Since we have here a series of four-character phrases, it would seem best to regard the tso as an extraneous character. Koshoji, p. 7, however, renders the clause: "wei ch'i'u tso Fo (I seek only to become a Buddha), and since later in this section of the Tun-huang text we read: "How can you become a Buddha?" it would appear very likely that the original wording of the clause is as found in the Koshoji edition.

20 Ko-lao. Term of insult, indicating that the inhabitants of southern China are barbarians, quite close to wild animals.

“The Master wished to continue his discussion with me; however, seeing that there were other people nearby, he said no more. Then he sent me to work with the assembly. Later a lay disciple had me go to the threshing room where I spent over eight months treading the pestle.

4. “Unexpectedly one day the Fifth Patriarch called his disciples to come, and when they had assembled, he said: ‘Let me preach to you. For people in this world birth and death are vital matters. You disciples make offerings all day long and seek only the field of blessings, but you do not seek to escape from the bitter sea of birth and death. Your own self-nature obscures the gateway to blessings; how can you be saved? All of you return to your rooms and look into yourselves. Men of wisdom will of themselves grasp the original nature of their prajna intuition. Each of you write a verse and bring it to me. I will read your verses, and if there is one who is awakened to the cardinal meaning, I will give him the robe and the Dharma and make him the Sixth Patriarch. Hurry, hurry!’

5. “The disciples received his instructions and returned, each to his own room. They talked it over among themselves, saying: ‘There’s no point in our purifying our minds and making efforts to compose a verse to present to the priest. Shen-hsiu, the head monk, is our teacher. After he obtains the Dharma we can rely on him, so let’s not compose verses.’ They all then gave up trying and did not have the courage to present a verse.

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21 Sheng-ssu shih-ta. The same expression is found in Shen-hui yii-lu; see Hu Shih, Shen-hui ho-shang i-chi, p. 149.

22 Fu-t’ien. The term implies that by good works in this world a person prepares the ground (t’en), which will produce the fruits and flowers (fu) of the next world. The subject is discussed in detail in Tokiwa Daijo, Shina Bukkyo shi no kenkyu, II, 473-98.

23 This passage may also be interpreted as: “Your self-nature is confused by the blessings method.” Koshoji, p. 8, revises the text to read: “If your own self-natures are deluded, how can blessings save you?”

24 The text has ch’eng [to present]; Koshoji, p. 9, substitutes ch’eng [purify], which has been followed here. The characters are homophones.
“At that time there was a three-sectioned corridor in front of the Master’s hall. On the walls were to be painted pictures of stories from the Lankavatara Sūtra, together with a picture in commemoration of the Fifth Patriarch transmitting the robe and Dharma, in order to disseminate them to later generations and preserve a record of them. The artist, Lu Chen, had examined the walls and was to start work the next day.

6. “The head monk Shen-hsiu thought: ‘The others won’t present mind-verses because I am their teacher. If I don’t offer a mind-verse, how can the Fifth Patriarch estimate the degree of understanding within my mind? If I offer my mind to the Fifth Patriarch with the intention of gaining the Dharma, it is justifiable; however, if I am seeking the patriarchship, then it cannot be justified. Then it would be like a common man usurping the saintly position. But if I don’t offer my mind then I cannot learn the Dharma.” For a long time he thought about it and was very much perplexed.

25 *Pien* and *pien-hsiang*. Reference is to paintings or sculpture, which furnish a pictorial representation of the sūtra and their teachings. For a detailed consideration of the various paintings of this type, see Matsumoto Eiichi, *Tonko ga no kenkyu*, Zuzo hen, pp. 1-211. Paintings representing the Lankavatara Sūtra as such are not to be found among Tun-huang materials.

26 This passage is difficult to follow. “A picture of the Dharma” makes no sense; what is probably meant is a picture of the robe as symbolic of the Dharma. Reference may also be to the robe and bowl, which, as symbols of the transmission, would be equivalent to the robe and the Dharma. *Ko sho ji*, p. 10, indicates that the reference is to some kind of genealogical chart, showing the succession of the Five Chinese Patriarchs through Hung-jen.

27 Unknown. The Tun-huang text uses Morohashi character no. 280873 for the personal name of the artist Lu. This character may be read *lin*, *yin*, or *hsien*. *Ko sho ji* and all later texts change to Chen (Matthews no. 301), which has been followed here.

28 This statement does not fit into the context of the rest of the passage. The *Ko sho ji* version, p. 10: “If I don’t offer my verse, then I’ll end up by not gaining the Dharma,” makes better sense.
“At midnight, without letting anyone see him, he went to write his mind-verse on the central section of the south corridor wall, hoping to gain the Dharma. ‘If the Fifth Patriarch sees my verse and says that it ... and there is a weighty obstacle in my past karma, then I cannot gain the Dharma and shall have to give up. The honorable Patriarch’s intention is difficult to fathom.’

“Then the head monk Shen-hsiu, at midnight, holding a candle, wrote a verse on the central section of the south corridor, without anyone else knowing about it. The verse read:

The body is the Bodhi tree,
The mind is like a clear mirror.
At all times we must strive to polish it,
And must not let the dust collect.

7. “After he had finished writing this verse, the head monk Shen-hsiu returned to his room and lay down. No one had seen him.

“At dawn the Fifth Patriarch called the painter Lu to draw illustrations from the Lankavatara Sūtra on the south corridor wall. The Fifth Patriarch suddenly saw this verse and, having read it; said to the painter Lu: ‘I will give you thirty thousand cash. You have come a long distance to do this arduous work, but I have decided not to have the pictures painted after all. It is said in the Diamond Sūtra:

29 The Tun-huang text is corrupt and scarcely readable. It also contains an obvious omission at this point. Koshoji, p. 11, reads: “If the Fifth Patriarch sees the verse tomorrow and is pleased with it, then I shall come forward and say that I wrote it. If he tells me that it is not worth while, then I shall know that the homage I have received for these several years on this mountain has been in vain, and that I have no hope of learning the Tao.”

30 The text has ch'ing-chi [please record]. A copyist's error for tu-ch'i [finished reading]?
“All forms everywhere are unreal and false.” 31 It would be best to leave this verse here and to have the deluded ones recite it. If they practice in accordance with it they will not fall into the three evil ways. 32 Those who practice by it will gain great benefit.’

“The Master then called all his disciples to come, and burned incense before the verse. The disciples came in to see and all were filled with admiration.

“The Fifth Patriarch said: ‘You should all recite this verse so that you will be able to see into your own natures. 33 With this practice you will not fall into the three evil ways.’

“The disciples all recited it, and feeling great admiration, cried out: ‘How excellent!’

“The Fifth Patriarch then called the head monk Shen-hsiu inside the hall and asked: ‘Did you write this verse or not? If you wrote it you are qualified to attain my Dharma.’ 34

“The head monk Shen-hsiu said: ‘I am ashamed to say that I actually did write the verse, but I do not dare to seek the patriarchship. I beg you to be so compassionate as to tell me whether I have even a small amount of wisdom and discernment of the cardinal meaning or not.’

31 T8, p. 749a.

32 The three evil paths (gati): hell, hungry demons, beasts.

33 Since later on in the text Hung-jen says that Shen-hsiu’s verse does not show true understanding, it would perhaps be better to consider this last clause as a later interpolation, not as a part of the original version.

34 Here again the text is contradictory; see above, n. 33.
“The Fifth Patriarch said: ‘This verse you wrote shows that you still have not reached true understanding. You have merely arrived at the front of the gate but have yet to be able to enter it. If common people practice according to your verse they will not fall. But in seeking the ultimate enlightenment (bodhi) one will not succeed with such an understanding. You must enter the gate and see your own original nature. Go and think about it for a day or two and then make another verse and present it to me. If you have been able to enter the gate and see your own original nature, then I will give you the robe and the Dharma.’ The head monk Shen-hsiu left, but after several days he was still unable to write a verse.

8. “One day an acolyte passed by the threshing room reciting this verse. As soon as I heard it I knew that the person who had written it had yet to know his own nature and to discern the cardinal meaning. I asked the boy: ‘What’s the name of the verse you were reciting just now?’

“The boy answered me, saying: ‘Don’t you know? The Master said that birth and death are vital matters, and he told his disciples each to write a verse if they wanted to inherit the robe and the Dharma, and to bring it for him to see. He who was awakened to the cardinal meaning would be given the robe and the Dharma and be made the Sixth Patriarch. There is a head monk by the name of Shen-hsiu who happened to write a verse on formlessness on the walls of the south corridor. The Fifth Patriarch had all his disciples recite the verse, [saying] that those who awakened to it would see into their own self-natures, and that those who practiced according to it would attain emancipation.’

“I said: ‘I’ve been treading the pestle for more than eight months, but haven’t been to the hall yet. I beg you to take me to the south corridor so that I can see this verse and make obeisance to it. I also want to recite it so that I can establish causation for my next birth and be born in a Buddha-land.’

35 A further contradiction; see above, nn. 33-34.
“The boy took me to the south corridor and I made obeisance before the verse. Because I was uneducated I asked someone\textsuperscript{36} to read it to me. As soon as I had heard it I understood the cardinal meaning. I made a verse and asked someone who was able to write to put it on the wall of the west corridor, so that I might offer my own original mind. If you do not know the original mind, studying the Dharma is to no avail. If you know the mind and see its true nature, you then awaken to the cardinal meaning.\textsuperscript{37} My verse said:

Bodhi originally has no tree,
The mirror also has no stand.
Buddha nature is always clean and pure;\textsuperscript{38}
Where is there room for dust?

“Another verse said:

The mind is the Bodhi tree,
The body is the mirror stand.
The mirror is originally clean and pure;
Where can it be stained by dust?  \textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36}The \textit{Koshoji} edition, p. 13, identifies this man as Chang Jih-yung, vice-governor of Chiang-chou.

\textsuperscript{37}The above four clauses scarcely fit in with the sequence of the story and would not appear to be anything that Hui-neng would have said on this occasion. The \textit{Koshoji} text is completely different at this point; however, the two clauses: “If you do not know the original mind, studying the Dharma is to no avail,” appear later in the \textit{Koshoji} text, p. 15, as words addressed to Hui-neng by the Fifth Patriarch.

\textsuperscript{38}It is only in the Tun-huang version and the Hsi-hsia translation of 1071 that the third line of this verse appears in this form (see Kawakami Tenzan, “Seikago-yaku Rokuso dankyo ni tsuite,” \textit{Shina Bukkyo shigaku}, II [no. 3, September, 1938], 64). Later works change it to the famous: “From the beginning not a thing is.” See in introduction, p. 94.

\textsuperscript{39}This second verse is to be found only in the Tun-huang and the Hsi-hsia versions. Hu Shih, “An Appeal…,” pp. 20-21, believes that the presence of two verses indicates that the "unknown author of this fictionalized autobiography of Hui-neng was evidently experimenting with his verse writing and was not sure which verse was better.”
“The followers in the temple were all amazed when they heard my verse. Then I returned to the threshing room. The Fifth Patriarch realized that I had a splendid understanding of the cardinal meaning. Being afraid lest the assembly know this, he said to them: ‘This is still not complete understanding.’

9. “At midnight the Fifth Patriarch called me into the hall and expounded the Diamond Sūtra to me. Hearing it but once, I was immediately awakened, and that night I received the Dharma. None of the others knew anything about it. Then he transmitted to me the Dharma of Sudden Enlightenment and the robe, saying: ‘I make you the Sixth Patriarch. The robe is the proof and is to be handed down from generation to generation. My Dharma must be transmitted from mind to mind. You must make people awaken to themselves.’

“The Fifth Patriarch told me: ‘From ancient times the transmission of the Dharma has been as tenuous as a dangling thread. If you stay here there are people who will harm you. You must leave at once.’

40 The Tun-huang text: Tan chi shan chih shih ta. i is corrupt at this point. Both the tan chi and the chih very likely represent a copyist's error, and have been treated as superfluous characters. Compare W. T. Chan, The Platform Scripture, pp. 40-41.

41 In place of “Hearing it but once…,” the Koshoji text, p. 15, reads: “Just when he came to the passage, ‘You must not be attached [to things], yet must produce a mind which stays in no place …’ ” That Hui-neng was enlightened upon hearing this passage from the Diamond Sūtra (T8, p.749c) is a celebrated story in Ch’an Buddhism, and it is of interest that it is not included in the Tun-huang version. The identical passage from the Diamond Sūtra is quoted in Shen-hui yii-lu (Suzuki text, p. 18; Hu Shih, Shen-hui ho-shang i-chi, p. 102; Gernet, Entretiens du Maitre de Dhyana Chen-houei du Ho-tso, p. 15).

Strictly speaking, the Chinese translation does not follow the Sanskrit original which, following Conze, reads: “should produce … a thought which is nowhere supported” (Edward Conze, Buddhist Wisdom Books, p. 48).

42 This statement is contradicted in section 49, where Hui-neng states that the robe is not to be handed down.
10. “I set out at midnight with the robe and the Dharma. The Fifth Patriarch saw me off as far as Chiu-chiang Station. I was instantly enlightened. The Fifth Patriarch instructed me: ‘Leave, work hard, take the Dharma with you to the south. For three years do not spread the teaching or else calamity will befall the Dharma. Later work to convert people; you must guide deluded persons well. If you are able to awaken another’s mind, he will be no different from me.’ After completing my leave-taking I set out for the south.

11. “After about two months I reached Ta-yu ling. Unknown to me, several hundred men were following behind, wishing to try to kill me and to steal my robe and Dharma. By the time I had gone halfway up the mountain they had all turned back. But there was one monk of the family name of Chen, whose personal name was Hui-ming. Formerly he had been a general of the third rank and he was by nature and conduct coarse and violent. Reaching the top of the mountain, he caught up with me and threatened me. I handed over the dharma-robe, but he was not willing to take it.

43 This station cannot be placed exactly. Ui, Zenshu shi kenkyu, II, 198, identifies it with Hsin-yang Station of the Ming period, located on the south bank of the Yangzte, near Chiu-chiang hsien, Kiangsi.

44 This clause scarcely fits into the context of the passage. In the Koshoji edition, p. 16, there is an additional episode not contained here, and it is possible that there is a textual omission to which the clause refers. The clause does not, however, appear as such in the Koshoji edition.

45 Koshoji, p. 17, has been followed; the Tun-huang text reads: “His enlightenment will be no different from your own.”

46 Located in Chiu-chiang hsien, Kiangsi, on the Kwangtung border.

47 The Tun-huang text here refers to this monk by the name of Hui-hsun, but is the only text that gives this name. The Shen-hui yu-lu (Suzuki text), p. 61, Tsu-t'ang chi, V, 61, and the Koshoji, p. 17, all give him as Hui-ming. His biography is to be found in Sung kao-seng chuan, t50, p. 756b-c, where he is identified as a native of P'o-yang in Kiangsi. Upon gaining enlightenment from the Sixth Patriarch, he changed his name, which had been Tao-ming, to Hui-ming. This account is based on the pagoda inscription by Ch'ing-chou, T'ang Hu-chou Fo-ch'uan ssu ku ta-shih t'a-ming, CTW, ch. 917 (XIX, 12062-63). His biography is also found in Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu, t51, p. 232a, under the title: Yuan-chou Meng-shan Tao-ming ch'an-shih. Here he is given as an heir of the Fifth Patriarch, and it is stated that his name was originally Hui-ming, but that he changed it in order to avoid using the same character contained in Hui-neng’s name.
“[He said]: ‘I have come this long distance just to seek the Dharma. I have no need for the robe.’ Then, on top of the mountain, I transmitted the Dharma to Hui-ming, who when he heard it, was at once enlightened.48 I then ordered him to return to the north and to convert people there.49

12. “I was predestined to come to live here50 and to preach to you officials, monks, and laymen. My teaching has been handed down from the sages of the past; it is not my own personal knowledge. If you wish to hear the teachings of the sages of the past, each of you must quiet his mind and hear me to the end. Please cast aside your own delusions; then you will be no different from the sages of the past.51 (What follows below is the Dharma).52

The Master Hui-neng called, saying: 53 “Good friends, enlightenment (bodhi) and intuitive wisdom (prajna) are from the outset possessed by men of this world themselves. It is just because the mind is deluded that men cannot attain awakening to themselves. They must seek a good teacher to show them how to see into their own natures. Good friends, if you meet awakening, [Buddha]-wisdom will be achieved.

48 It is on this occasion that Hui-neng is credited in later works with having uttered the famous lines: “Not thinking of good, not thinking of evil, just at this moment, what is your original face before your mother and father were born?” See introduction, p. 110.

49 The Koshoji edition continues with two more episodes, which are not to be found in the Tun-huang edition.

50 Ts’ao-ch’i.

51 The Tun-huang text is unreadable here; Koshoji, p. 18, has been followed.

52 This note is in the original text.

53 Here the preaching begins.
Books and articles on transcultural aesthetics and art practitioner research are legion. The following list is restricted only to those cited in the text and notes.

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PAUL ALBERT TANCHIO (Australia, Singapore): His research interest is in the emergence of transcultural aesthetics from the unity traditions matrix, it includes comparative philosophy and aesthetics, metaphysics, visual culture within the Asia-Pacific, and the influence of all these on art forms. Tanchio's thesis focuses on transcultural aesthetics and contemporary art, through the work of practitioners such as Anselm Kiefer, Imants Tillers, John Young, Gao Xingjian, Helmut Federle and Lee Ufan. He is interested in developing an interpretation of transcultural aesthetics in the light of human consciousness, and in challenging problematic aspects of the transcultural art form with reference to key features of Chinese, Indian and European aesthetic traditions, and the work of Eliot Deutsch, Grazia Marchianò, Wilfried van Damme and Robert Wilkinson.

Best known for his multi-layered paintings, drawings, and other art forms, Tanchio explores World Poetical Histories, epigrams and human experience in his practice, and he transforms the everyday subjects into conceptually rich images and ideas. Life size to intimate framed lyrical abstract representation of landscapes, to figures and objects has explored themes such as the nature of phenomenological and intercultural mass-produced artifacts: incorporating dialogic nurture of the architectural and liturgical diplomacy in the politics of ideas, sexual identity and power. He has exhibited in Berkeley, San Francisco, Singapore and Sydney. Some works are in the collections of the United Overseas Bank and homes of private collectors.