

The Pairs: *constellation* and *no-thingness* as rhetorical figures for the exploration of modalities of transposition - (things could be otherwise)

The task of this paper is to identify and interrogate two critical perspectives on a central concept or theme. I have chosen to consider two thought-forms<sup>1</sup>; the constellation and no-thingness. These structures function as forms-for-thinking; gathering experience and thought into form. Both are considered in relation to art and creative work. Both posit or draw attention to that which is not-thought.

The two articles I have chosen are; *Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss*, and *From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture* by Jin Baek (Part 1).

Krauss' piece is the editorial preface to the Modern Language Notes bulletin dedicated to examining the constellation as an operative structure. By necessity, the article is somewhat cursory in its exploration of the concept but it serves to outline the editorial approach, constellating the contributions of various writers across disciplines, mostly in and through their variance.<sup>2</sup> This constellating action holds meaning open and interrogates the economies of time.<sup>3</sup>

Baek's article has formed through his initial, direct translation of Nishida's philosophical writing. It is one person's reading of another's writing. The piece emphasizes the logic of contradictory identity which Nishida uses to elucidate his concept of the *place of nothingness*, making reference to broad array of writings in Kitarō's oeuvre in which he reinterpreted the writings of western philosophers and theologians to gradually frame a logic informed through his Buddhist worldview. A re-reading of a re-articulation, the article sits happily with the ontological notion of no original. Also of interest is Baek's introduction of Lee Ufan's writing, another re-interpretation of Nishida's concepts as they relate to art and art making.

I do not intend to put forward a position or advance a particular agenda, rather to examine strategies and operative structures for thinking by bringing together Western figurings of the concept of constellation informed by Benjamin and Nishida Kitarō's concept of no-thing-ness. In both instances 'opposing' concepts like abstraction and concreteness, self and world, being and non-being are engaged dialogically and dualities operate non-dialectically.

...

The act of pairing prompted me to think on the various ways in which two's can function. Simply placing one thing next to (near, alongside, after, under, before) another creates meanings. Setting one thing, concept or order in relation to another seems a simple action. There is this, and that other. A point of comparison. A line of connection. These two, and a nearness or distance. Adjacency, negation, translation, reinhabitation, attenuation, quotation, iteration, doubling, mirroring, juxtaposition, embellishment, notation, commentary, coincidence... When one thing does not simply stand on top of, as or against another, binary and hierarchical structures soon unravel and proliferate. Like is not like, and the in-between space does not necessarily imply polarity.

Boundaries and concepts are a product of the way we categorise and transpose our experience into thought and concepts as 'gathering things'. Experience and form, modalities of transition and how matter comes to matter are all in the doing and the undoing. The event of language generates a conceptual flow. Its structures operate to effect a vantage. Turning to see itself; vantage includes the way in which objects come into question even as they come into view.

In 2012, James Elkins made a drawing; *The history of art imagined as a field of stars*, as a constellation formed of intuitive, personally meaningful links and leaps. Rather than taking a linear form, he suggests many possible histories and configurations as ways to investigate the making of meaning. In this achronological, provisional and necessarily partial arrangement, disparities and connections emerge as a way to introduce play and reciprocal determination and unseat long held readings, dynamics and linkages.<sup>4</sup> The transformation of one form into another, shifting the means of access, is an alteration that creates the possibility of new views and different vantages formed in the process of drafting.<sup>5</sup> Thinking things could be otherwise, means that findings are mutable, capable of breaking apart and reforming differently.

When two non-contemporaries are set in a symbolic landscape; non-instrumental relations of interest held provisionally in place, there is a revealed insufficiency.<sup>6</sup> No longer standing on the shoulders of others, such pairings show intervals, lapses and unintentional (historical) breaks. They intimate the abyss of no-meaningful thing as a background of possibility against which new meanings may be offered. I think of Roni Horn and her quotation of Emily Dickinson in the context of doubling, in which pairing becomes a special form of repetition. An intimate poetics of drafting introduces a moving element; a 'negative handwriting', that performs to open up blanks in the commentary itself.<sup>7</sup> Our constructions of autonomy and assumptions of shared authority require a distance, not just from precepts but also from things.<sup>8</sup>

How are thresholds created and how do they shift? When do connecting lines turn to fault lines or edges? I like to think about structure as useful shifting ground, and pairings as crossing places. 'Chains of associations, trajectories and dispatches that let us allow the provisional form of humans and the provisional essence of matter',<sup>9</sup> they look, not at how something is, but how it could be. Positing the idea of thing, no-thing and the generative influence of 'context' to complicate and thicken relational networks, such encounters permit the retrieval and reinhabitation of concepts and terms. Other generative structures or manoeuvres for designating difference and articulation are the path, hinge, aside, chimera, abyss and fold.<sup>10</sup> These useful, leading- astray structures allow for play and reflection. They interrogate themselves, imply something outside themselves but never contain it. They allow things to contradict one another and be co-present, co-emergent.

In common understanding, the constellation<sup>11</sup> refers to a group of stars that forms a particular shape in the sky and has been given a name or an assemblage or group of usually related people, qualities or things. Think of the night sky projecting its diagram,<sup>12</sup> a blossoming chariot 'printed strangely on us here'.<sup>13</sup> Think of Orpheus and the Greek paradigm in which metaphysics is overcome and the gods are with us, here and now. Think of vantage as the relative position of the observer determining connections among variously distant points of light.

For Krauss, the *concept* of constellation designates 'both the instrument and the object of reading, mutually intertwined with each other.'<sup>14</sup> It becomes paradoxical when we consider that what is read as a given object also holds open the site of eventual meaning. 'In the features of constellation, the experience of finitude becomes effective as dynamic opening, that is, it becomes legible in its representation.'<sup>15</sup> This Non-Kantian use of self-reflection, is used, not positively to determine scope and structure of a priori concepts (like shifting the deck chairs) but negatively to poke a hole into wholeness. Here I find a similarity with Nishida's 'topos of nothingness' which will be addressed later.

The constellation draws attention to the discursive production of objects of knowledge. Logos, also knowing how knowledge is produced, identifies the limits of its own logic. Linking 'words with things' for example, enables a kind of knowledge system that, once in place, becomes circumscribed and self-repeating. Naming, saying, asserting; the noemic cluster of language subsumes the various rich material instances of thing into the titular carrier of the word. But to name something also 'implies first the positing of a question... what is this?'<sup>16</sup> It implies a vantage, a 'given', an 'outside'.

Referencing Walter Benjamin<sup>17</sup> and Theodor Adorno<sup>18</sup>, for Krauss constellations are self-reflective interpretive operations. They 'name that in which a truth not "direct[ly]" knowable is, in a mediated way, is able in to become legible.'<sup>19</sup>

Encountered in the formative stages of creative work and also in the transmission of materials across language or format, constellations not only problematize 'the interpretive operations of interpreters',<sup>20</sup> they also reflect on the conditions of production - on how what has gone before becomes part of the problem of their conception.<sup>21</sup> Constellations make possible the reading of 'non-intentional language', the transmission of knowledge in unexpected ways and 'the appearance of a non-known'.<sup>22</sup> Considered in relation to creative work, the constellation is a turning point and origin that 'stages a non-linear representational process whose results are unpredictable.'<sup>23</sup>

Artist Martin Creed reflects on agency and how language insinuates itself into world. 'At the start there is potential in all directions, 360 degrees of hope. You are free, and so maybe it is best to stay at the start. Stay still, stand there and throw things. Keep starting again and again, and never go on. Just keep making starts. Not false starts, but true starts that start and stop. Keep your options open. If you only ever start and never finish you can always hope and you can never lose. / But one thing leads to another, and a sequence of starts starts to form a pattern which clearly has a beginning and a bit after that and a bit after that, and by that time you have moved on from the start and things have developed, and before you know it you are entangled and involved, and there is no going back, not easily. The more you do, the more you have to contend with, and the more you have to do to cope. Everything has consequences and ramifications that multiply and fly off in all directions like sparks from a grinder. It is a can of worms on a stormy sea in a hall of mirrors on a slippery slope to a bottomless pit...'<sup>24</sup>

...

Kitarō Nishida (1913 - 1988), Japanese philosopher and founder of the Kyoto School,<sup>25</sup> 'constellates' eastern and western thinking on aesthetics, phenomenology and perception, reading Continental European Philosophers like Kant, Heidegger, Husserl, Bergson and Merleau-Ponty through a Buddhist lens. Baek focuses on Nishida's transformative notion of *shintai* as body or intuitive apprehension and traces Nishida's influence on Japanese postwar Mono-ha artists such as Lee Ufan and Nobuo Sekine.<sup>26</sup>

In summary: Nishida activates the perceiving body to rephrase dichotomous judgement. On the basis of the premise of the fundamental emptiness of selfhood, Nishida proposes the activity of mind and body as one lived reality. The corporeal fabric between the sense of 'I' and 'other' (*shintai*) - is proposed as an action-sensation continuum, not simply a phenomenon of consciousness. A volitional, non-judgemental state, *shintai* conditions one's relationality with the world.<sup>27</sup>

As with the 'constellation', the [synthesizing] logic of this encounter is not only concerned with upholding the system of discrete particulars, but is simultaneously predicated on their synthetic ground, [a topos] which envelops them and gives rise to them in interconnectedness, while being neither of them. This ontological ground creates a situational fabric in which 'nothingness, the

depth of the self, sees its being imbued by the other.<sup>28</sup> In this fabric, the subject's experience of object is grounded in interwovenness.

The self involves its own voluntary negation to bring forth the self,<sup>29</sup> and ultimately becomes an instrument or empty vessel for the flow of intuition, in which the self throws itself into the world of action.<sup>30</sup> 'Action takes place not through a dictation made by the contemplative consciousness but through the very negation of it'.<sup>31</sup> Through the negative possibility of language,<sup>32</sup> '*shintai* concretizes the reciprocal matrix of actions from the subject to the world, and from the world to the subject'.<sup>33</sup>

Of interest is Nishida's notion of active-intuition which frames consciousness as an action that both negates the self and instances it in relation to world. The apprehending self dissolves in a mutually constitutive relationship, body to world, world to body. The body is mediator and intercessor, rather than passive perceiver in Nishida's version.

Baek relates Monoha artist Lee Ufan's rephrasing of Nishida's *shintai* as mediating structure *kōzō*.<sup>34</sup> This 'structure is present yet self effacing'.<sup>35</sup> On making art, Lee writes that 'the moment of the self's engagement with the outside occurs not in the form of intentionality as a trait of consciousness, but as an act of the self's voluntary delimitation from which the intentionality itself arises'.<sup>36</sup> Ufan offers the example of a 'structural being', a piece of lacquerware, which despite its presence, comes to be melted... empties its selfhood – into the practical situation of a dinner gathering.<sup>37</sup> 'Its situated-ness breathes and shines through the course of a family history... The waning of its glossy surface indicates the thickening radiance of its situated-ness in the actual world of the family's everyday life... This sedimentation of ... 'corporeal reciprocity' between the piece and family members [eyes and hands] allows the lacquerware to overcome its instrumentality [aesthetic value] and self-enclosed status as a particular object'.<sup>38</sup>

How do artists choose their specific material, their means of communication and engagement with world? Anni Albers writes; 'Accidentally. Something speaks to us, a sound, a touch, a hardness or softness, it catches us and asks us to be formed. We are finding our language, [constellating] and as we go along we learn to obey their rules and their limits... The more subtly we are tuned to our medium, the more inventive our actions will become... What I am trying to get across is that material is a means of communication. That listening to it, not dominating it, makes us truly active, that is: to be active, be passive. The finer we are tuned to it, the closer we come to art'.<sup>39</sup> Lee contrasts such 'acts of expression based on self-negation and free from any sense of preset choreography' (*shigusa*) with performances or happenings, which for Lee are 'attempts to make every part of the human being including consciousness and action into objects'.<sup>40</sup>

'Invoking the dimension of the something else', the 'non-logical self' is a term Eva Hesse used when referring to subject matter of another order that she thought lay under the formal visual logic in her work. The formal principles were those known to be readable as art, but she was far more interested in an 'underlying inarticulacy'. 'The formal principals are understandable and understood. It is the unknown quantity from which and where I want to go. As a thing, an object, it accedes into its non-logical self. It is something, it is nothing'.<sup>41</sup>

The *transparent space* or *place of nothingness*, Lee's translation of Nishida's *topos* is not a 'minimalistic annihilation of figures' nor does it posit a metaphysical beyond. It is an ethical space, offering the possibility of choice; of response, where the 'I' - built on imagined futures and what we have learned (and forgotten) – falls away.<sup>42</sup> Renouncing, but not denying, the inwardness of self – and the boundedness of conceptual thought – is also a way of making its structure visible. For Lee, the full manifestation of the figurative power of an entity ...[lies] in its paradoxically self-effacing sedimentation into the thickness... of the everyday.<sup>43</sup> Nothingness in this sense of transparent fullness.<sup>44</sup> For Benjamin, whatever becomes transparent does not become *nothing* at all, but remains something that conceals, though only in such a ways as it is permeable to what it conceals.

In this pairing of texts, the *constellation* and *nothingness* are considered as form and action; locus and encounter. Fluid models for thinking and apprehension, they are linked with creative work in which negation appears as a fundamental element. Both refute an eternal or objective world view in which subject is posed in opposition to its object, to focus on vantage and experience as other ways of knowing. The self creating world, the world creating self, 'world' and 'self' are re-inhabited in and through their limitations. In each instance, what makes these correspondences possible, is specific to experience, circumstance, and attention. The encounter with world takes place, 'not with a fully unfolded presence, but with its aberrations, remains, with what escapes the digestive power of the same'.<sup>45</sup> Disjunction and discontinuity disclose something. When read through Walter Benjamin's presentation or *Darstellung*; a movement of thought interrupted again and again; 'an incessant pausing for breath that is the mode most proper to contemplation',<sup>46</sup> such pauses or lapses are not emptinesses waiting to be filled, they are the renunciation of linking them.

Ways of figuring and un-figuring thinking, Nishida's *shintai* and Benjamin's 'constellating action' are something like drawing when the articulated structure is not derived externally, but set up from 'inside'. As methodological measures opening to what is not-self, other, non-conceptual or non-communicative in language, both activate a presentational relationship to what is withdrawn. Context (continuous text) is not conveyed, but 'overcome'. It arises out of a convergence or encounter that presupposes discontinuity, and makes presentation possible. Such improvisational gestures disrupt a sense of fixity, finitude and inertia to let the unexpected enter; calling forth an apprehension of world and self that cannot appear other than in it.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, Theodor, *The Adorno Reader*, O'Connor, Brian, (ed.) Blackwell, Massachusetts, U.S.A. 2000.

Adorno, Theodor, 'The Actuality of Philosophy', Snow, B. (trans.), *Telos*, no.31, Spring, 1977.

Agamben, Giorgio, 'The Thing Itself', *SubStance*, Vol. 16, No.2, Issue 53, Contemporary Italian Thought, 1987, pp.18-28.  
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0049-2426%281987%2916%3A2%3C18%3ATTI&3E2.0.CO%3B2-7>

Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (Part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January 2008, pp.83-107.  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pew/summary/v058/58.1baek.html>

Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999.

Benso, Silvia, 'Prelude: Toward and Ethics of Things', Chapter 10, pp.126 – 142, in *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2000.

Besant, Mahatma Annie & Leadbeater, C.W., *Thought-Forms*, (1901), The Theosophical Publishing House, Madra & Illinois, 1978.

Briggs, Kate in Fayen d'Evie and Elizabeth Newman, (eds.), *Elizabeth Newman : more than what there is*, 3-Ply, 2013.

Creed, Martin, Foreword in *Martin Creed Works*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2010.

Dean, Tacita, *An Aside*, Hayward Gallery, London, 2005.

Deleuze, Giles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Conley, T. (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993. 'What is an Event?' pp.76-82.

Deleuze, Giles, & Guattari, Felix, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (1980), Massumi, Brian, (trans.), University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Dilworth, David, A., 'Nishida's Final Essay: The Logic of Place and a Religious World-View', *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 20, No. 4., October, 1970, pp.355-367.

Elkins, James, *Stories of Art*, Routledge, New York, 2002.

Ferris, David. S., (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, Stanford University Press, California, 1996.

Frey, Hans-Jost, 'On Presentation in Benjamin', in Ferris, David, S., (ed.) *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, Stanford University Press, California, 1996, pp.139-164.

Horn, Roni, 'Among Essential Furnishings' in *Earth Grows Thick*, Wexner Centre for the Arts, Ohio State University, Ohio, 1996.

Krauss, Andrea, Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss, *MLN*, Volume 126, number 3, April 2011, (German issue) pp. 439-445.  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mln/summary/v126/126.3.krauss.html>

Latour, Bruno, 'How To Do Words With Things', in *Ecstatic Alphabets / Heaps of Language*, Bulletins of the Serving Library #3, Sternberg Press and Exhibition catalogue, Hoptman, Laura (curator), Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012.

Machado, Roberto Pinheiro, 'Nothingness and the Work of Art: A Comparative approach to Existential Phenomenology and the Ontological Foundation of Aesthetics', *Philosophy East & West*, Volume 58, Number 2, April 2008.

McFarland, James, 'Sailing by the Stars: Constellations in the Space of Thought', *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April, 2011, James Hopkins University Press, pp.471 -485.  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mln/summary/v126/126.3.macfarland.html>

Negarestani, Reza, 'The Snake, The Goat and The Ladder (A Board Game For Playing Chimera)' in *Chimerizations: Florian Hecker*, Primary Information, New York, 2013, p.205.

Kitarō, Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good*, (1921), Abe, Maso & Ives, Christopher (trans.), Yale University Press, New haven & New York, 1990.

Kitarō, Nishida, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, Dilworth, David. A. (trans.), University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1987.

Nishitani Keiji, *Religion and Nothingness*, Jan Van Bragt, Jan (trans.)

Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus*, Mitchell, Stephen (ed. & trans.), Vintage International, Random House, New York,

2009.

Selene, Xander, 'A Philosophy that Imitates Art? Theodor W. Adorno's Changing Constellations', University of Montreal, Graduate student essay reproduced in *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, pp.151-170.

Ufan, Lee, 'Regarding Monoha', (1987) in Munroe, Alexandra, *Japanese Art after 1954: Scream Against the Sky*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1994.

Ufan, Lee, *The Search for Encounter – the Sources of Contemporary Art*, Baek, Jan (trans.), Bijutsu Shiupansha, Tokyo, 2000.

## IMAGE LIST

Besant, Mahatma Annie & Leadbeater, C.W., *Thought-Forms*, (1901), The Theosophical Publishing House, Madra & Illinois, 1978.

Burchfield, Charles, *Seeking Beauty*,

Davis, Lydia, 'Lost Things' in *The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis*, Penguin, London, 2009.

Debord, Guy, *The Naked City Map*, 1957.

Elkins, James, 'History imagined as a field of stars', *Stories of Art*, Routledge, New York, 2002, p.3.

Horn, Roni, *When Dickinson Shut Her Eyes*, No. 1027, 1993.

Kiefer, Anselm, *Sternenfall*, detail, 2007.

Negarestani, Reza, 'The Snake, The Goat and The Ladder (A Board Game For Playing Chimera)' in *Chimerizations: Florian Hecker, Primary Information*, New York, 2013, p.205.

Sekine, Nobuo, *Phase - Mother Earth*,

Sala, Anri, *Ravel Ravel Unravel*, Venice Biennale, 2013,  
HD video projection, colour, on 2 screens, multi channel sound Duration: 20' 45" each  
Courtesy : Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; Hauser & Wirth, Zurich/London

Ando, Tadao, *Ishikawa Nishida Kitaro Museum of Philosophy*, Chubu, Japan.

*Constellations*, 2013, Tate Liverpool, London.  
Press release. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/display/dla-piper-series-constellations>

Ufan, Lee, *Relatum-Response*, 1991.

Besant, Mahatma Annie & Leadbeater, C.W., 'The Intention to Know, Thought-Form', *Thought-Forms*, (1901), The Theosophical Publishing House, Madra & Illinois, 1978, Fig.19.

Clark, Lygia, *Pocket Critter*, 1966.

Beuys, Joseph, *Untitled (Sun State)*, 1974.

Warburg, Aby, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, final version. No. 45, 1928-29.

Duchamp, Marcel, *Sixteen Miles of String*, 1942.

Dean, Tacita, *Still Life*, 2009. Location shot.









---

## NOTES

I have used extensive footnotes as a way of introducing substantive material, some of it wayward.

### <sup>1</sup> 'Thought-Forms'.

According to Theosophy, the observable material world coexists with a number of invisible worlds, each consisting of various grades of rarefied "matter" or energy. Besant and Leadbeater's writing suggests various ways in which thought energy may actually coalesce, take shape, and have a quasi-objective type of existence.

'One of the most interesting of the highroads from the physical to the astral is that of the study of thought... We have often heard it said that thoughts are things... Yet very few of us have any clear idea as to what kind of thing a thought is... When we try to make a drawing of even a very simple thought-form... limited to the consciousness of three dimensions... [we] have not the slightest conception of that inner world to which thought-forms belong, with all its splendid light and colour.'

'Every thought gives rise to a set of correlated vibrations in the matter of [the mental] body, accompanied with a marvellous play of colour... The body under this impulse throws off a vibrating portion of itself, shaped by the nature of the vibrations... and this gathers from the surrounding atmosphere matter like itself in fineness from the elemental essence of the mental world. We have then a thought-form pure and simple, and it is a living entity of intense activity animated by the one idea that generated it... Each definite thought produces a double effect—a radiating vibration and a floating form... There are Three Classes of Thought-Forms : (1) That which takes the image of the thinker. (2) That which takes the image of some material object. (3) That which takes a form entirely its own, expressing its inherent qualities in the matter which it draws round it. Only thought-forms of this third class can usefully be illustrated.'

Besant, Mahatma Annie & Leadbeater, C.W., *Thought-Forms*, (1901), The Theosophical Publishing House, Madra & Illinois, 1978. extracts from pp.6-40.

Walter Benjamin writes of 'thought-images'; dialectical images that function both as word (as figure of writing) and image (as model of reality). Benjamin's 'thought-images' are chiasmic. They have to do with experience, ways of thinking, historical materialism. Their primary space is that of language. "[T]he place where one encounters them [images] is language."

Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999, p.142.

<sup>2</sup> Thematic articles included in the MLN bulletin consider; Adorno's constellation(s) as translation and transmission (Gerhard Richter); the constellation as philosophical concept (James McFarland); in the context of diverse modes of writing in a literary archive (Barbara Hahn); the constellation and interpretation of syntactic relationships, and the inaccessibility of a poetic text (Roland Reuss); the polyvalence of the term constellation as used by Nietzsche (Jocelyn Holland); conceptions of temporality in Benjamin's notion of constellation, reading and correspondences (Michael G. Levine, Eric Downing); a reconstellation of Aby Warburg's atlas with spectral afterimages (Marianne Schuller).

<sup>3</sup> For the French curator, Nicolas Bourriaud, the recent Altermodern is a sort of constellation, in which art 'needs to reinvent itself in a planetary scale.'

Nicholas Bourriaud, (ed.), *Altermodern : Tate Triennial, 4<sup>th</sup> Tate Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary Art*, Tate Publishing, London, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Elkins, James, *Stories of Art*, Routledge, New York, 2002, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> Paradigm change is often, 'a question of bringing one's intended actions into a relation with the ambient unintended ones.'

Cage, John, *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, Wesleyan University Press, Middleton, Connecticut, 1973, Erik Satie, *Silence*, pp.76-81.

<sup>6</sup> Silvia Benso writing to extend Levinas' notion of ethics to Heidegger's concept of things, posits 'a chiasmic structure'.

'The meeting of two concepts that do not complement each other... and do not need each other is made in the heart of a chiasmus in which each offers non-traditional notions of the other... The modality of the meeting is a relation characterized by the supplement. For Derrida, two different meanings coinhabit the supplement. In both there is a remainder that is not described, that is forgotten in their mediation. Each of them offers the other that remainder that the other leaves unthought.'

Benso, Silvia, 'Prelude: Toward and Ethics of Things', Chapter 10, pp.126 – 142, in *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2000, p.129.

<sup>7</sup> Horn, Roni, 'Among Essential Furnishings' in *Earth Grows Thick*, Wexner Centre for the Arts, Ohio State University, Ohio, 1996, p.77-83.

<sup>8</sup> Some notes on 'things':

'Things do not exist without being full of people, and the more modern and complicated they are, the more people swarm through them... it is no longer a matter of mixing pure forms chosen from two great reservoirs, one in which would lie the social aspect of meaning or subject, the other where one would stockpile material components belonging to physics, biology and the science of materials. A dialectic?, if you like but only on the condition that we abandon the mad idea that the subject is posed in opposition to its object [ and I want to do this right away upfront] - for there are neither subjects nor objects, neither in the beginning – mythical – or in the end – equally mythical. Circulations, runs, transfers, translations, displacements, crystallisations – ...practices, not objects and the transformation of chains of associations... there are many motions... but not a single one of them perhaps, that resembles a contradiction.'

Latour, Bruno, 'How To Do Words With Things', in *Ecstatic Alphabets / Heaps of Language*, Bulletins of the Serving Library #3, Sternberg Press and Exhibition catalogue, Hoptman, Laura (curator), Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012, p.9.

With no delimited position or stable vantage, new lines of focus and backgrounds emerge. Buddhism teaches that not-self characterizes things. If everything arises from an intricate web of cause and effect, how do I find a place to stand? Where am I in this?

---

<sup>9</sup> Latour, Bruno, 'How To Do Words With Things', in *Ecstatic Alphabets / Heaps of Language*, Bulletins of the Serving Library #3, Sternberg Press and Exhibition catalogue, Hoptman, Laura (curator), Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012, p.10.

<sup>10</sup> The chimera is a Greek mythological creature made of the parts of three animals; a lioness, a serpent and a she-goat... an abstract fusion 'she' represents the bonding of unlike properties that become a complete, topographically unique whole in which the distinct components can still be seen.

Wood, Catherine, 'Cave', in *Chimerizations: Florian Hecker*, Primary Information, New York, 2013, p.3.

The hinge is a word used by Jacques Derrida to press the reader towards holding two contradictory concepts in mind at the same time - brisure; folding joint; elbow-room of the mind. The path is a continual process of disruption and re-reading that introduces new temporalities and trails of influence and flow. Derrida's path is an 'ensemble' of exclusions.

Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, in McFarland, James, 'Sailing by the Stars: Constellations in the Space of Thought', *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April, 2011, James Hopkins University Press, pp.471 -485.

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mln/summary/v126/126.3.macfarland.html>

[The aside] 'is no stage whisper but a decisive moment when an actor chooses to address the audience directly whilst not affecting the action on stage. The play is not interrupted, and the players continue to work together to form the whole, but the individual has spoken out to us, in character or out of it, as is their wont, desire or instruction.'

Dean, Tacita, *An Aside*, Hayward Gallery, London, 2005.

The aside might be pictured as a provisional mapping of rhizomatic linkages, nodal points and connecting lines. W.G Sebald's writing celebrates diaspora, a perpetual marginality and refusal of destination (final intentions) that itself becomes an aesthetic. Memory and place weave a nomadic path subject to constant change and re-visioning.

Negarestani posits the geometric schema of the abyss as a snakes-and-ladders ludic, constantly shifting orientation/style/language, '...unbinding a particular composition in terms of its continuous variations and alternative compositional address, [to bring more] freedom of choice and... improvisational flexibility.'

Negarestani, Reza, 'The Snake, The Goat and The Ladder (A Board Game For Playing Chimera)' in *Chimerizations: Florian Hecker*, Primary Information, New York, 2013, p.205.

'A fold... one surface is placed, touched folded one against the other in the moment of an act and the record of its event.'

Briggs, Kate in Fayen d'Evie and Elizabeth Newman, (eds.), *Elizabeth Newman : more than what there is*, 3-Ply, 2013.

also Deleuze, Giles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Conley, T. (trans), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993. 'What is an Event?' pp.76-82.

<sup>11</sup> The constellation is a mode of thought based on translation that works inside language but has the uncertain status of the diagram. While any 'star' can be connected to any other, the constellation plots points and pathways and fixes a provisional order. It is not a closed, self-contained category or figure, but can be easily held, solidified. The constellation fixed becomes an illustration. It communicates something that would otherwise have been said rather than presents what cannot be communicated in any other way. Like any structure, it can be hackneyed, overused. Such perversions are interesting.

A museum exhibition; *Constellations*, 2013, at Tate Liverpool, explores the connections between major works in the collection by arranging over one hundred works in constellations formed around nine originating 'stars' across art history.

'Artworks that have a similarity, apparent variance or transformative connection to the trigger work are arranged in groupings, creating an accumulation of diverse relationships and meanings to extend the themes and concerns of the originating work. Using the constellation, affinities between even seemingly antithetical artworks are revealed.

'The [constellational] approach proposes the idea that the effect of an artist or artwork can take multiple directions at different points in time and space. The notion that the interplay between artworks and the viewer can also generate new meanings underpins the curatorial intention to involve audiences in formulating the reading and understanding of art.'

<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/display/dla-piper-series-constellations>

Another museum show; *Once Upon a Time... The Collection Now* at the Van Abbemuseum, Netherlands (November 2013, ongoing) uses the constellation to open 'a completely new narrative presentation of its collection... [in which] artworks, archives, histories and relations are brought together in historical constellations that connect individual artworks to the social and political contexts in which they were made and exhibited... By not only showing the artworks but also the history of their display and interpretation we may be able to define better their importance for our present era, as well as understand how they came into being.' s for Benjamin, here transparency and layering become important historiographical elements in understanding the shift between one constellated reading and another.

[http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/browse-](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/browse-all/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bptype%5D=18&tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bproject%5D=1173&cHash=25a46086bc173e48f7ecb3bdf83698e1)

[all/?tx\\_vabdisplay\\_pi1%5Bptype%5D=18&tx\\_vabdisplay\\_pi1%5Bproject%5D=1173&cHash=25a46086bc173e48f7ecb3bdf83698e1](http://www.vanabbemuseum.nl/en/browse-all/?tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bptype%5D=18&tx_vabdisplay_pi1%5Bproject%5D=1173&cHash=25a46086bc173e48f7ecb3bdf83698e1)

On the perversion of structures; a piece by John Cage (reminiscent of Italo Calvino's 'The King Listens');

It's a large stairway, very large.

It has more than a thousand steps,  
all made of ivory.

It is very handsome.

Nobody dares uses it

For fear of spoiling it.

The king himself never does.

---

Leaving his room  
He jumps out the window.

So, he often says:  
I love this stairway so much  
I'm going to have it stuffed.

Isn't the King right?

Cage, John, 'Erik Satie; Silence', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, Wesleyan University Press, Middleton, Connecticut, 1973, pp.76-81.

<sup>12</sup> A diagram is abstract yet plainly representational. It has a specific status and relationship to the processes of abstraction.

<sup>13</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Sonnets to Orpheus*, Stephen Mitchell, (ed. & trans.), Random House, New York, 1982, pp.Xi, part 1, p.103.

<sup>14</sup> Krauss, Andrea, Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss, *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April 2011, p.440

<sup>15</sup> Krauss, Andrea, Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss, *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April 2011, pp.440-441.

<sup>16</sup> Machado, Roberto Pinheiro, 'Nothingness and the Work of Art: A Comparative approach to Existential Phenomenology and the Ontological Foundation of Aesthetics', *Philosophy East & West*, Volume 58, Number 2, April 2008, p.249.

<sup>17</sup> On *Darstellung* (representation, presentation, performance) and the modern positive sciences, Benjamin writes that new assumptions are introduced into existing knowledge systems through 'methodological incoherence'. Produced out of heterogeneity and differential tension, the sudden insight and inter-disciplinary paradigm shift are essential for a theory of knowledge as project and representation. Benjamin, Walter, *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, Ferris, David. S., (ed.), Stanford University Press, California, 1996. p.96.

According to Benjamin, in the constellation, 'ideas are not represented in themselves, but solely and exclusively in an arrangement of concrete elements in the concept: as the configuration... Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars.. It is the function of concepts to group phenomena together, and the division which is brought about within them thanks to the distinguishing power of the intellect is all the more significant in that it brings about two things at a single stroke: the salvation of phenomena and the representation of ideas.' Benjamin, Walter, (1977) quoted in Rose, Bernice, 'Joseph Beuys and the Language of Drawing', in *Thinking is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys*, Temkin, Ann & Rose, Bernice (curators), exhibition catalogue, Philadelphia Museum of Art & The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1993, p.111.

<sup>18</sup> Adorno; 'No object is wholly known; knowledge is not supposed to prepare the phantasm of a whole... in principle, philosophy can always go astray, which is the sole reason why it can go forward.' Adorno, Theodor, *The Adorno Reader*, O'Connor, Brian, (ed.) Blackwell, Massachusetts, U.S.A. 2000, p.64.

Adorno appropriates Kierkegaard's ideas that concepts could touch one another and these meetings would mark sudden, inorganic transformations not divergences along the lines of continuous growth and reproduction.

'In order to interpret what is not intended in a concept, but nonetheless real, this form of critique attempts to zero in on this reading by bringing to bear on it a constellation of concepts that themselves do not intend this reality nor imply one another. The art of sudden transition produced by an exact imagination on one side and the possibility of concepts to hang together on the other – these conjunctions of concepts are forms of reality that attempt to save rationality from itself.'

For Adorno, the construction of constellation is posited as a model of 'exact imagination'. Philosophical thought imagines the characteristics of a possible construction of blind reified material. Working materially with concepts, the implicit history of such concepts limits the ways in which they can enter the constellation, and the philosopher experiences the real in working against these limits. Non-intentional reality is the refuse or by-product of instrumental conceptual practice. Constellation is not art.

Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Actuality of Philosophy' in *Telos*, n.31, Spring, 1977, B. Snow (trans.), p. 127.

<sup>19</sup> A paradoxical rather than dialectical logical operator, the constellational trope functions in this context both as prismatic structure and action. The constellation (as in astrology) is a syncretic structure that fixes fugitive forms allowing elements (earth and star) that do in-themselves not need each other to 'be held' and examined in relationship. Depending how it is held, the constellation prompts turnings and overturning rather than iteration or refutation. A method for discovering new and more inclusive ideas out of the clash of opposing ones, the paradoxical logic of the constellation preserves the thesis and antithesis in tension.

Krauss, Andrea, Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss, *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April 2011, p.440.

<sup>20</sup> Krauss, Andrea, Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss, *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April 2011, p.442.

<sup>21</sup> In a recent work by Anri Sala, *Ravel Ravel Unravel*, for the French Pavilion shown in the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale this year, two films, offer interpretations of the same piece of music – a composition for the left hand by Maurice Ravel in 1930.\*

Sala writes; 'my intention, is to make a space resound consecutively to the temporal gap between the two performances; to paradoxically create an 'other' space in an environment conceived to annihilate the sense of space (by suppressing echoes).' To further extend the experience of difference and sameness and generate a three-fold narration, 'two other films are presented under the single title *Unravel*. The face and turntable of a disc jockey, is filmed silently as she attempts to unite the two versions of the Concerto through her unique interpretation.' [http://www.institutfrancais.com/sites/default/files/dossier\\_de\\_presse\\_anglais.pdf](http://www.institutfrancais.com/sites/default/files/dossier_de_presse_anglais.pdf)

A Sisiphan task, that of trying to integrate fugitive forms, Sala's work is a surplus not contained. This excess, and the inability to 'hold' all

---

elements in relation opens the horizon of thinking and apprehending posits a different horizon in which each individual meanings are constituted in and through misapprehension, gaps, losses and coincident lines of contact or flow. This takes us to an awareness of somewhere indiscriminatory, 'outside' of our autonomous selves and introduces a ground – not of shared meaning – but of discursive method. Sala's use of formal means to disrupt and heighten the forward structure of music and film.

'They call him (Mahler) uncreative because he suspends their concept of creation itself. Everything with which he occupies himself is already there. he accepts it in its state of deprivation; his themes are expropriated ones. Nevertheless, nothing sounds as it was wont to: all things are diverted as if by a magnet. What is worn out yields pliantly to the improvising hand; the used parts win second life as variants.'

Adorno, Theodor, W. 'On the fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' in *Essays on Music*, Susan H. Gillespie (trans.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002, pp.314-315.

\* In 1930 Ravel composed two piano concertos: the Concerto in G and the Concerto in D for the Left Hand (for Wittgensteins' war-wounded nephew) almost simultaneously.

<sup>22</sup> Krauss, Andrea, Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss, *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April 2011, p.444.

<sup>23</sup> Krauss, Andrea, Constellations: A Brief Introduction by Andrea Krauss, *MLN*, Volume 126, Number 3, April 2011, p.444.

<sup>24</sup> Creed, Martin, Foreword in *Martin Creed Works*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2010, p.vii.

<sup>25</sup> Keiji Nishitani (1900 –1990) was a disciple of Kitaro Nishida who studied under Martin Heidegger in Freiburg from 1937-9.

<sup>26</sup> Baek also promises to examine architect Alvaro Aalto, and his design of a building in homage to Nishida's 'place of nothingness', but this never eventuates – perhaps its is Part 2.

<sup>27</sup> Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (Part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, p.93.  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pew/summary/v058/58.1baek.html>

<sup>28</sup> Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, p.84.

<sup>29</sup> Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, p.87.

<sup>30</sup> Baek quoting Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body: Toward and Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, Kasulis, Thomas, P. (ed.), Shigenori, Nagatomo & Kasulis, Thomas, P., (trans.), State University of New York Press, Albany, 1987, in Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, s p.85, footnote 18.

<sup>31</sup> Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (Part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, p.87.

<sup>32</sup> 'The figure is seen in conjunction with its background of nonbeing'... and 'the illusion of the constancy and permanency of selfhood on the part of the subject dissolves. Each moment of seeing, touching and feeling in active intuition does not result in either the loss of one's self or the absorption of the other into the self's interiority, but leads to the inter-expression between the self and the other in absolute reciprocity... this dynamism is predicated on *shintai's* intermediary status to operate as absolutely contradictory simultaneity.'

Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, pp.88-89.

<sup>33</sup> Baek, Jin, From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (part 1), *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, p.87.

<sup>34</sup> Ufan, Lee, 'Regarding Monoha', (1987) in *Munroe, Alexandra, Japanese Art after 1954: Scream Against the Sky*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1994, p.265.

<sup>35</sup> Ufan, Lee, *The Search for Encounter – the Sources of Contemporary Art*, Baek, Jan (trans.), Bijutsu Shiupansha, Tokyo, 2000, pp.136-138.

<sup>36</sup> Ufan, Lee, *The Search for Encounter – the Sources of Contemporary Art*, Baek, Jan (trans.), Bijutsu Shiupansha, Tokyo, 2000, p.98.

<sup>37</sup> Ufan, Lee, *The Search for Encounter – the Sources of Contemporary Art*, Baek, Jan (trans.), Bijutsu Shiupansha, Tokyo, 2000, p.95.

<sup>38</sup> Ufan, Lee, *The Search for Encounter – the Sources of Contemporary Art*, Baek, Jan (trans.), Bijutsu Shiupansha, Tokyo, 2000, p.208.

<sup>39</sup> Anni Albers, 'Material as Metaphor', in *Selected Writings on Design*, February 25, 1982. *From Eva Hesse Drawing*. ed. Catherine De Zegher. The Drawing Center and Yale University Press. New York. 2006, p.59.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ufan, Lee, *The World of Structure*, Baek, Jan (trans.), *Design hihyō*, June 1969, p.125, in Baek, Jin, *From the 'Topos of Nothingness' to the 'Space of Transparency': Kitarō Nishida's Notion of Shintai and Its Influence on Art and Architecture (part 1)*, *Philosophy East and West*, Volume 58, Number 1, January, 2008, p.98, footnote 92.

<sup>41</sup> Eva Hesse, in Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art*, Yale University Press, U.S.A. 1997, p.112 in Lucy Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, New York University Press, 1976.

<sup>42</sup> Not to be in the old way of thinking; experiencing the world, what is going on, in the 'inconceivable capacity of mind' is a premise of Buddhism. Nishida was still working on the logic of his place of nothingness in his last writings made just two months before he died. Kitarō, Nishida, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, Dilworth, David. A. (trans.), University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1987.

<sup>43</sup> In their exploration of modalities of transition and subjectivities, does the constellation / transparent space effect a temporal thickening of everyday structures? Are they revelatory structures? Perce, Agamben and de Certeau write of the possibilities for hidden revelation in the everyday or for making the familiar strange.

<sup>44</sup> Ufan, Lee, *The World of Structure*, Baek, Jan (trans.), *Design hihyō*, June 1969, p.99.

<sup>45</sup> Benso, Silvia, 'Prelude: Toward and Ethics of Things', Chapter 10, pp.126 – 142, in *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2000, p.131.

<sup>46</sup> Benjamin's *Darstellung*, presentation is a speaking or writing that never ceases to communicate, but that accomplishes beyond that something else from which communication is excluded. (1.1:208; *Origin*, 28) Frey, Hans-Jost, 'On Presentation in Benjamin', in Ferris, David, S., (ed.) *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, Stanford University Press, California, 1996, pp.139-164.