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INTRODUCTION TO INTERFACES ARAKAWA AND GINS SPECIAL ISSUE

When in 1966 Foucault published his philosophical survey of the origins of the modern age, the surprisingly best-selling book *The Order of Things* which concluded with a few ominous sentences announcing the "end of man," the apocalyptic tone of his final predictions was greeted with incomprehension and dismay. Almost half a century later, and in the context of Arakawa's and Gins's strenuous effort to rethink concretely and dynamically the foundations of what makes us "human beings," I believe that Foucault's words have not lost their relevance and are worth quoting once more:

In fact, among all the mutations that have affected the knowledge of things and their order, the knowledge of identities, differences, characters, equivalences, words [...] only one, that which began a century and a half ago and is now perhaps drawing to a close, has made it possible for the figure of man to appear. And that appearance was not the liberation of an old anxiety, the transition into luminous consciousness of an age-old concern, the entry into objectivity of something that had long remained trapped within beliefs and philosophies: it was the effect of a change in fundamental arrangements of knowledge. As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.

If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility—without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises—were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did at the end of the 18th century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea. (386-87)

What Arakawa and Gins have done for forty years now has been to act upon Foucault's admonitions by investigating the conditions of possibility of a new *episteme* that would take stock of the exhaustion of the old humanistic paradigm. This paradigm was defined by the promotion of "man" as an object of action and knowledge, man taken in the dimension of a mortal being whose authenticity was determined and conditioned by a singular relation to death. Since the beginning of Aristotelian logic, we have been taught to reason on the various ways in which we may be concerned by the fact that Socrates is mortal. Precisely by starting at the root and negating the "major" of such an apparent truism, Arakawa and Gins immediately launch a complex re-arrangement of knowledge that is capable of taking in technological advances that have marked our new century. Their revisionist re-definition of man in this post-human(istic) state is tantamount to launching a scientific revolution, if not a revolution *tout court*.

Such a gesture entails first moving back and forth between different disciplines that are endlessly recombined, connected and articulated, taken as they are in the nets of a scientific idiom that needs new terms so as to de-familiarize old notions weighed down by centuries of use and abuse (thus the importance of specific coinings such as "landing site," "bioscleave," "architectural surround," and so on). But this linguistic creativity does not remain purely semantic, of course, since the new language it produces is born out of real problems and experiments, thus entails more than rethinking an *episteme* but working concretely on the crea-

tion of objects, from poems, novels, films and paintings to installations, houses, temples, parks, museums and even whole cities.

To return to Foucault, one can note that the last project that took up his later years was devoted to an exploration of what he called "bio-power," a regime that "brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of the transformation of human life" (qtd. in Rabinow 17). Bio-power originally described a set of "procedures" and "technologies" that aimed at controlling the body; but as Foucault discovered as he was examining the history of sexuality and the way Ancient thinkers in Athens and Rome would talk about the "care of the self," the same procedures could also be used to free the body, to teach it "how to live" better. Foucault sums up this type of "classical" and pre-Christian problem as the fundamental question: "which *techne* do I have to use in order to live as well as I ought to live?" (Rabinow 348).

These are pre-classical problems have also concerned a non-Western thinking about the "good life" to which Arakawa and Gins often refer. It would certainly be a life free from expressivity (this was, after all, the lesson Japan taught to Roland Barthes) and all the myths associated with subjective interiority. What is important here is that Arakawa and Gins feel the deep need to think in more than one language. The concrete problems posed by the issue of "what can I do to live well?" are those that a blind and deaf girl will face again and again if she wishes to keep on living like a normal person, as Helen Keller's plight has revealed in a more drastic fashion. Not long after they met, Arakawa told Gins that Helen Keller, who each day upon awakening had to make the world anew, best represented what being an artist amounts to.¹ Arakawa and Gins force us first to go deeper and deeper into ourselves to test the limit of our perceptions, and analyze how we construct our world, and then apply some of their hypotheses to the building of large-scale structures. Given the increasing importance of these experiments and their mounting stakes, Interfaces felt the need to present a vast panorama of responses to Arakawa's and Gins's work. All these essays have been specially commissioned or rewritten for the occasion as they address the multifarious facets of their work. Jean-Jacques Lercercle's important essay was circulated relatively early in the game, and a few contributors engaged in a fruitful dialogue with it. The vast array of discourses mobilized-from Deleuzian or Heideggerian philosophy and linguistic analysis to art criticism, phenomenology, urban studies, poetry, design, sociology, neuro-sciences, biotechnologies, neuro-physiology, cognitive sciences, Buddhist logic of the blank meaning, contemporary physics, embryology, evolution theory, ecology and, of course, architecture-attest to the immense vitality of a procedural thinking that traverses all categories. Coordinology is an apt word that can be used, and Jondi Keane explores its multi-modal organization in this very issue.

Inter-connectedness may be the key-word here, and it was inevitable that classical divisions and conceptual distinctions should overlap; nevertheless it was crucial to give a sense of progression to these essays, which is why the categories used to classify them, although they blend approaches and discourses,

¹ From a note by Madeline Gins on her book Helen Keller or Arakawa.

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map out roughly three broad domains: first, the philosophy of architecture that has been deployed in many works and texts by Arakawa and Gins; then, the poetic impact of paintings, poems and books, avant-garde art leading to a reflexive and productive process combining the theory of its own genesis in what may be called an "auto-poesis" and the generalizations of universal procedures for building; finally, a view of a possible future, from an utopian drift to a radical re-definition of life in the new possibilities that have opened. This is also why the double issue will begin with a new and unpublished text by Arakawa and Gins, in which they convey their sense that architectural "procedures" have to be generalized and also made public as widely as possible.

What remains to be accounted for is the preeminence of architecture in an activity that could be called "poetic" in the strictest sense of the word. Looking for predecessors in this slow emergence of a multiple concern for life, ethics and architecture, one might find some help in Hermann Broch's trilogy, *The Sleepwalkers* (completed in 1931). In the third installment of the theoretical digressions on the "Disintegration of Values" that are interspersed throughout the narrative of the "Realist," Broch addresses a similar issue:

The primacy of architectural style among the things that characterize an epoch is a very curious phenomenon. But, in general, so is the uniquely privileged position that plastic art has maintained in history. It is after all only a very small excerpt of the totality of human activities with which an age is filled, and certainly not even a particularly spiritual excerpt, and yet in power of characterization it surpasses every other province of the spirit, surpasses even science, surpasses even religion. (397)

The character who is at the origin of these meditations is a philosopher walking through the streets of Berlin in the late twenties, a critical thinker appalled as much by the coldness of modernist architecture as by the weakness of the new decorative *Kitsch*. In his musings on bad contemporary architecture, he echoes one of Broch's most systematic assertions, the idea that whatever man does, it is in order to annihilate death:

And perhaps all the disquietude which bad architecture evokes, forcing me to hide in my house, is nothing else than dread. For whatever a man may do, he does it in order to annihilate time, in order to revoke it, and that revocation is called space. Even music, which exists only in time and fills time, transmutes time into space, and it is absolutely probable that all thought represents a combination of indescribably complicated many-dimensional logically extended spaces. (398; transl. modified)

My choice of Broch to introduce Arakawa and Gins is not as random as it may seem; like the poetspainters-architects Arakawa and Gins, he was a gifted novelist and poet allied with a capable mathematician who had studied Husserl and Brentano; like Arakawa and Gins, he was a practical utopian who had been a successful industrialist besides studying the philosophy of sciences and history, political theory and critically observing mass psychosis.² His theoretical thought never reached its full exposition as Nazi persecution forced him into exile, and Hannah Arendt was the first to keep the impact of his ideas alive (she wrote a glo-

² The best systematic exposition of his philosophy is to be found in Schlant, especially 155-180 for an analysis of the concept of the "Earthly absolute" and its political and psychological consequences.

wing introduction to his essays in the collected works published by Rhein-Verlag in 1955 in which she stressed his concept of an "earthly absolute" in which death is abolished). Arendt has since been followed by the novelist Milan Kundera who claimed Broch as a model in the effort to write novels that leave room for knowledge, at least under the form of epistemological questions.³ At the end of his life, Broch hesitated between writing novels and short stories after his acclaimed *Death of Virgil*, drafting literary essays on Austrian compatriots like von Hofmannsthal, and disseminating political tracts on the "earthly absolute," "the city of man" and "total democracy." The theme of the "abolition of death" led him to the idea of a strong democracy capable of borrowing some weapons from totalitarian regimes but able to preserve inalienable human rights, which includes for instance the suppression of the death penalty.

What Broch theorized as the need to overcome traditional dichotomies and dualisms has been superbly analyzed by Jean-Jacques Lecercle in "The Tense of Architecture." Indeed, for Broch as for Arakawa and Gins, the revolution that matters is a revolution in thought, and it will ineluctably be brought about by the creation of a new logic of sense and the senses. Here is Broch, once more, in one of his theoretical digressions:

Now it may be asserted with some confidence that a sweeping revolution in the style of thinking—and the revolutionary aspect of all these phenomena entitles us to infer such a complete revolution in thinking—invariably results from the fact that thought has reached its provisional limit of infinity, that it is no longer able to resolve the antinomies of infinity by the old methods, and so is compelled to revise it own basic principles. (The Sleepwalkers 481)

It is to such a revolution in thought and in the art of living-dwelling-building that we are invited by Arakawa and Gins, and happily, you are too.

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³ See his "Notes Inspired by the Sleepwalkers" in *The Art of the Novel* (47-67).

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DIRECTIONS FOR Architectural Procedure Invention and Assembly

These directions are based on the principles and concepts of procedural architecture as adduced in the text Architectural Body.

Having read through the following eight steps once, spend time studying the accompanying material (VCI) before attempting to invent and assemble an architectural procedure.

STEP ONE

Choosing a stellar purpose for an architectural procedure equals selecting or diving into an area of emphasis that begs for change. So as to discover what most urgently needs to be made to be otherwise, take a long, boldly uncompromising look at what goes on as (an) *organism that persons (human being)*. Directly addressing your own body and keeping it always in the forefront, give some thought as to how, by broadening your know-how or by expanding or reordering what you exist as, you might come to be more in the know.

It would not be possible to go on as an organism that persons if certain prevailing conditions did not obtain. Architectural procedures can and should be used both to investigate and to alter these prevailing conditions.

Do not forget that it is the task of those who would produce architectural procedures to augment the bioscleave, the insufficiently procedural bioscleave, and thereby recast it. Architectural procedures are meant to fill in gaps and to address subtle lacks or glaring or nearly glaring insufficiencies. You may desire to resuscitate an underused X (a property; an attribute; an urge; a tendency; a propensity; an arena of know-how; an overall capacity, an activating condition; a qualitative state; a quality; an ability; a skill; a coordinating skill; a landing site; a landing-site configuration, or whatever) that has over time receded into the background (i.e., tentativeness), or, terrifically, there might arise in you an intimation of an X that might be a tremendous boon. It is never amiss when inventing an architectural procedure to concentrate on landing sites, but landing sites can also be kept in the background to good effect.

To help you get started, here is a list of prevailing conditions that could and should be improved upon, suggested areas of emphasis, stellar purposes, and X's to be pursued.

Finding a purpose for an *architectural procedure*—x's that an *architectural procedure* might be able to call forth

Identify an X that would seem thus far to be beyond the capacity of an organism that persons.

Think of a currently underplayed X that, if used more fully, could significantly alter what it means to be alive.

* * *

Could there possibly be an X that, once activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to how it is that they are able to think?

Could there possibly be an X that, once activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to how it is that they are able to have the feelings that they have?

Could there possibly be an X that, when activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to how it is that they can come to know what they are thinking?

Could there possibly be an X that when activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to how it is that they can realize what it is that they are saying?

Could there possibly be an X that, when activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to how it is they are able to be aware of what they are doing?

Could there possibly be an X that, when activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to what makes them able to feel in sympathy with others?

* * *

Could there possibly be an X that, upon being activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to how to stop having to be mortal?

Could there possibly be an X that, upon being activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would decrease their ultimate cluelessness as to how to maintain promising attitudinal stances for years on end?

Could there possibly be an X that, upon being activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would help them to get in under and take a stand against their own automaticity?

Arakawa and Gins: Direction for Architectural Procedure Invention and Assembly

Could there possibly be an X that, upon being activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would help increase their capacity to know how to take direct action—keeping the end firmly in sight—through a set of indirect actions?

Could there possibly be an X that, upon being activated in or brought somehow into the possession of organisms that person, would make them more adept at being architectural bodies?

Could there possibly be an X that, upon being activated in or brought to be in the possession of organisms that person, would qualify them as judges of when it is best to defer action and when not?

STEP TWO

An improbable event would be that you would find it hard to choose between promising candidates for an X to be sought. If faced with such an eventuality, select the one that will be most likely to stand you in good stead for becoming a transhuman/a posthuman/a bioscleavist, i.e., what will help you most in the engineering of a reversible destiny.

STEP THREE

Designate the hoped-for outcome of your nascent architectural procedure to be the supplementing of the body's repertoire with the X you have come up with. So as better to bring about what you need to effect, proceed to name your nascent procedure for your choice of an X, which is to say, architectural procedures should be named for their hoped-for outcomes (i.e., tentativeness-cradling procedure).

STEP FOUR

Strive throughout your body to imagine sequences of actions (also, if need be, [provisionally] isolated actions) that might lead to or in some way be constitutive of what you seek to put in place, which is to say, assemble a list of bodily actions that could directly get you to your hoped-for outcome even before you have begun to manage the situation architecturally; which is furthermore to say, have at the ready all those actions that could nudge events in the direction of your nascent architectural procedure's hoped-for outcome.

STEP FIVE

Think of how to structure into a built surround the capacity to call forth precisely what it is you seek. Devise architectural elements and features, and various juxtapositions of them, that will help call this forth. The hoped-for outcome may simply spring into existence as a result of what has been worked into the architectural surround, but it is more likely that it will only make an appearance *indirectly*, having been brought into existence by called-forth sequences of actions that have led the way to it and which will, in some cases, turn out to be, to various degrees, constitutive of it. What physical circumstances—juxtapositions of which elements and which features—might precipitate the hoped-for outcome?

STEP SIX

Before a nascent architectural procedure can be declared a full-fledged one, it has to prove itself able to be built. Unable to deliver on this score, many nascent architectural procedures will fall by the wayside. If, in the course of an architectural procedure's being invented and assembled, architectural elements and features suited to its purpose readily suggest themselves, or, put another way, if novel ways of structuring an architectural surround to produce the hoped-for outcome tend to turn up on a fairly frequent basis, that should be taken as indication enough of its being a keeper.

STEP SEVEN

This step parades for all to see and use as a copyediting feature or a back-to-the-drawing-board one. Review what you have invented and assembled into (being) an *architectural procedure*, adjusting any item or segment that calls out to be changed. Even go so far as to adjust the X you have chosen to seek so that it matches more closely what currently presents itself, now with more information and an even more incisive purposefulness in play, as the exigency of greatest moment. Add or subtract sequences of actions meant to lead up to the hoped-for outcome. Make ever bolder design decisions, rethink architectural elements and features, piling refinement upon refinement—all for adding a new X to the body's repertoire or for beefing up an underused one. All of these steps would be well worth repeating, but this one, alternately might have been classified UNNUMBERED STEP, requires by definition frequent repetition.

STEP EIGHT

Provide written instructions for how best to activate or perform your architectural procedure, how to play it to the hilt. The work of procedural architecture (house or town) that will have your architectural pro-

Arakawa and Gins: Direction for Architectural Procedure Invention and Assembly

cedure embedded into it will be delivered to its occupants together with a set of *Directions for Use* in which these instructions for your architectural procedure appear alongside the instructions written for the other architectural procedures it contains.

* * *

Once an architectural procedure has been invented and assembled, still other ways to assemble it will become apparent; in other words, architectural procedures can be assembled in more than one way.

Arakawa and Madeline Gins

VITAL CONTEXTUALIZING INFORMATION FOR DIRECTIONS FOR Architectural Procedure Invention and Assembly

"Those hearing the term *architectural procedure* are bound to wonder how anyone could have come up with such an illogical concept."

"Medical procedures are performed on patients by doctors and nurses; scientific procedures are performed by lab technicians using test tubes, chemicals, tissue cultures, or laboratory animals. It is, of course, completely unclear at first, and for some time after that, who performs an architectural procedure in what place and on whom or what."

"Correct, that is why the conceiving of this concept was so big a travail. Architecture, that which is on the inanimate side of things, 'performs' a procedure. There's a piece of nonsense."

"But we have forced the issue and proved this to be possible. Architecture can be organized in such a way as to invite particular procedures to be performed."

"Then there is the matter of how to say what needs to be said around and about this awkward concept. Usually, procedures are worked out or devised, but we speak of 'inventing' a procedure and 'assembling,' and that is a bit of a stretch."

"It won't do to speak of 'designing an architectural procedure or planning one,' because putting what we are referring to that way fails by a long shot to indicate all that someone is obliged to go through in order to come up with one."

"For speaking of the producing of an architectural procedure, we have chosen to rely on not only one but on two verbal nouns: *invention* and *assembly*. An architectural procedure comes to exist only after it has passed through both these phases of its "manufacture.""

"Unless it has been assembled, an architectural procedure is nowhere to be found."

"Procedures that have not been made to be architectural are of limited interest to us."

"And an architectural procedure is a very particular something indeed."

"We are, of course, using 'architectural' in two ways at once."

"It—procedure or procedural action—*has* to be linked to architecture as that is commonly defined. Then there is our definition of architecture: *a tentative constructing toward a holding in place*."

"When architecture is thought of as a tentative constructing toward a holding in place, the two words that form the term soften in each other's direction."

"With this term, as with every term, but with this term even more so, coming around to know what it means happens dozens upon dozens of times."

Procedural tools

An architectural procedure is a procedural tool, and so too is the architectural surround into which it gets embedded. Because embedding an architectural procedure adds up to tactically posing elements and features of an *architectural surround* so that an architectural procedure can serve the purpose that it is meant to, architectural surrounds that have architectural procedures embedded in them shall be known as *tactically posed surrounds*. Each tactically posed surround generally has embedded in it two or more distinctly different architectural procedures.

Procedural tools as distinguished from functional tools

Whereas an *organism that persons* can and does use functional tools to enhance her sensations and actions and, in general, to improve her situation in the world at large, she can and will use procedural tools to study her own nature and to reorder and change it. Functional tools address single aspects of the total capability of an organism that persons, but procedural tools address the capability of an organism that persons as a whole. It is only because a procedural tool addresses the whole of an organism that persons, nothing less than the whole of her multidimensionality, that an organism that persons can make use of it for reassembling herself.

Trying to come up with an object that will perform a desired action or enhance a sensation, the inventor of a functional tool directs her very localized efforts, limited to one object's worth of spatial expanse, toward a single specified end; trying to come up with a tactically posed surround within which an organism that persons can study her own nature and reorder and change it, the inventor of a procedural tool directs her wide-ranging efforts, extending all across an architectural surround, toward a single specified end (the eliciting of a sequence of actions) that leads in turn to another single specified end (the sought-after X). The procedural tool's inventor has by necessity a more roundabout path to her goal than does the functional tool's inventor.

To arrive at their goals both the inventor of a functional tool and the inventor of a procedural one will need to go through a great many steps, some that, to an outside observer, seem to be beside the point but which are, in fact, essential to the project, others which would appear to be pertinent but which turn out to be dead ends, and many of which yield less than they had been expected to; but whereas the inventor of the functional tool will need to have a greater number of coordinating skills and far more patience at the ready than will subsequent users of that tool, the inventor of a procedural tool will not need more coordinating skills and will be required to be only slightly more patient than that tool's eventual users.

Arakawa and Gins: Vital Contextualizing Information

Architectural procedures for architectural bodies

An architectural body has theoretical and actual existence, but it has such a remarkable degree of instability as an entity of sorts that it is fair to say it is as elusive as anything can be. Covering a large area indeterminately, an architectural body, that which is purported to be one, exists, when you come down to it, as a statistical entity, having now these proportions, now those. This huge and difficult-to-track entity of sorts does have a highly visible generating source, and that is the human body, which itself has a statistical existence as a composite of actions and events in addition to its every man, woman, and child appearance as articulated corporeality. Architectural procedures define architectural bodies insofar as they contribute to the tactically posed surround into which that extended body flows and according to which it is obliged, as would be anything that can be spoken of as flowing into a container of sorts, to assemble itself. Thus architectural procedures delimit architectural bodies purposefully so that the actions they have been invented and assembled to call forth transpire.

Architectural procedures are so new in the making that it is hardly possible to know yet all that they will be able to bring about. Their general purpose will be to help organisms that person rearrange their landing sites—perceptual landing sites/imaging landing sites/dimensionalizing landing sites—so as to be able to live as architectural bodies.

An organism that persons who, by means of invented and assembled architectural procedures, approaches with flexible, systematic precision the part she plays in the bioscleavic-evolutionary-libidinal economy will be able to reinvent herself to good and great effect.

When the steps (of "Directions for *Architectural Procedure* Invention and Assembly") are carried out with 360-degree precise abandon and multifariously distributed and suitably hinged concern, they will tremble and hurry humans to the brink of the transhuman (architectural body) and, for that matter, exhilarate and usher transhumans to the brink of the posthuman (architectural body plus X). Those adept at coordinating an architectural body will also be known as bioscleavists.

Those who will surface as transhumans/bioscleavists/posthumans will be humans who have undone the human condition through sweet and harsh artificial means, by means of architectural procedures, and who are therefore no longer quite so in the dark as to why they think and feel; they will know how to avail themselves more fully of biosleave.

Humans are those who are mortal, and transhumans/bioscleavists/posthumans are those who are learning how not to be mortal.

Conceptual juggling and coordinating skills

By all accounts, organisms that person have gone on for thousands of years, and do so to this day, without having the slightest suspicion of the need for an architectural procedure, neither in the form of a concept nor as an actuality. Only those having a high tolerance for the illogical could have dreamed up this concept that straddles unapologetically what is logical and what is not, and that, by so doing, puts what it means to be logical in question. The same conceptual juggling—requiring the expansion of a thinking skill that might be thought of as a non-ironic irony, an extremely open-ended double thinking—that went into the producing of the concept of an architectural procedure will no doubt be a necessary part of all subsequent attempts at getting the hang of it (the concept of an architectural procedure).

When it comes to the patching together of a specimen of this zone-straddling concept, that is, where the invention and the assembly of an architectural procedure is concerned, it will be necessary to couple the above-mentioned skill with an existing set of skills of long standing, that set of skills by means of which tools can get devised. Coordinating skills that underpin the making of tools include but are not limited to the following: being able to counteract to some extent one's own automaticity; being able to augment one's own body; being able to consider more than one solution to a problem; being able to put something between oneself and the problem in question; being able to inhibit and defer actions so as to come up with an effective measure; being able to think in terms of bringing about a result indirectly.

Parlaying indirectness

An organism that persons develops coordinating skills for resisting and redirecting the urge to go ahead without delay directly to a desired end; the parlaying of a certain amount of indirectness—that is, the coordinating of a series of actions in which actions become beneficiaries of one another—can bring the end to be in sight; given enough time and effort, the feat of managing to accomplish what needs to be done can be pulled off, albeit indirectly; a certain amount of parlayed indirectness strangely dilates time so that no matter how much time has elapsed one finds that it has in the end been just the amount of time that was needed for a cumulative effort—be it that of one performer or many—to have taken care of the problem.

A herd of bison watch helplessly, with eyes and *miens* that call out to be read as suffused with fellow-feeling, as one of their number falls through the ice to—the documentary's voice-over informs us—a protracted dying that will have to be endured for at least four hours. The herd has no rope; it never had rope; nor, for that matter, has it ever been in possession of a "knot."

Even members of the troubled herd of bison know how to inhibit direct action that could prove harmful. No member of the herd ventures further out onto the thin ice to extend a hoof to a parting friend, although many

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of them turn back, staring helplessly, as if desirous of being able to. How do they know, for they do seem to know, that at this juncture direct action would be the end of them?

Organisms that person would get themselves off the ice in a hurry. A rope would be thrown to the one who has plunged into icy waters. A tree branch might be slid into place, or the group might try to reach the victim and haul him up and out by forming a human chain. Someone would be likely to have a cell phone. A call would be put through to the local fire department or to the national guard, and soon enough a helicopter would be on the scene and its crew lowering a rope to the victim. Just because what needs to be done cannot be achieved directly does not mean that it has no chance of getting done. Getting a rope and tying it to one of your number to pull him out of freezing water equals the taking of direct action through a great number of intermediate steps; that these intermediate actions directly lead to what needs to be done does not necessarily telegraph itself to those involved. The more coordinating skills that are mastered, the more complexly can indirect means be put to a direct purpose—the parlaying of indirectness.

The move toward indirectness can also be read as a move toward the procedural. A setting might be constructed for the purpose of making the herd of bison more procedurally inclined. Putting rope near members of the herd would be simply to fit them out with a functional tool; building a setting within and by which to zero in on any leeway to be had within the automaticity of *organisms that bison* would be to give them the benefit of a procedural tool.

Gearing up and switching gears

Not by a long shot is it a straightforward affair to invent and assemble an architectural procedure. A direct pursuing of a goal will have to be stopped in mid-course. Although a direct approach to the matter of its invention and assembly can and should be taken, the bringing of this direct initiative to some conclusion requires a complete switching of gears resulting in the adoption of an indirect approach. It may then occur to the person who experiences this complete turnabout that, in a sense, it has all along been a question of an indirect approach. At what point in architectural procedure invention and assembly does indirection enter the picture? Despite its being the case that each architectural procedure is meant to lead directly to the unfolding of a particular X, paths to desired X's cannot be anything but circuitous. For an X to be found or formed, a Y (a series of actions) that could lead to that X must be envisaged, and a Z (an architectural surround) that prompts Y (a series of actions) must be pieced together. Put another way, a "direct" pursuit of X requires a detour through the planning and construction of a Z which itself requires a detour through an envisioning of Y in light of X. The desired goal can be achieved only through a certain roundabout or encircling type of thinking. What one wants to accomplish at this very moment must be put off for later. Perhaps no other endeavor has quite the degree of indirection that inventing and assembling an architectural procedure does.

Phases A and B of architectural procedure "manufacture"

A new breed of something, an architectural procedure belongs to more than one category, and not all its disparate types of existence occur simultaneously. An architectural procedure only begins to take form fully once it has been built into a physical setup. But along the way it can still be spoken of as a something in its own right; during phase A, the chrysalis stage, it is a *nascent architectural procedure*, one that is in the process of being invented. A nascent architectural procedure lives as a conceived-of measure that, given the context in which it was dreamed up and granted substance, awaits nothing other than architectural implementation. This conceived-of measure harbors within it, across the realm of fuzzy logic, which in our estimation is the supreme logic, a fuzzy procedural tool—the architectural procedure that phase B will bring into existence.

Phase A (invention)—steps one through four

The whole cloth out of which an architectural procedure will be invented will be bioscleave, for there is nothing else.

Steps one, two, and three

Step one asks the would-be inventor and assembler of an architectural procedure to come up with an X or a purpose to pursue; step two gives a guideline for making the final selection; and step three explains that, having selected an X or a purpose, an inventor will have gone quite far toward producing a new architectural procedure which by all rights should be named after it (the selected X or purpose).

- (a) Once architectural procedures will have become part of common knowledge and people come to know their importance as life shapers, so to speak, these three steps will most likely fade into the background, having outlived their use, for, at that point, those desirous of producing their own architectural procedure will not even think of beginning without having an X or purpose to pursue in mind.
- (b) On one hand, these first three steps can be seen to weigh in on the side of direct action. They elicit and put in place the defining goal of a new architectural procedure. This architectural procedure will go directly after this and only this, they as much as say.
- (c) On the other hand, they cause the one desirous of inventing and assembling an architectural procedure to step back for a moment from what it is she has it in mind to do. Before she can invent an architectural procedure, she must first review what is missing from the repertoire of an organism that persons. Stepping back for a moment equals putting some indirection into direct action.

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Step four

Now a wide search needs to be instituted for all actions that could lead directly to X. All that the organism that persons has in or near its command will need to become part of this search. There can be within the body direct knowledge of such actions, but that knowledge will be likely to have an imagined component, and would therefore have to be thought of as having been arrived at through indirect means. It is, then, quite probable that one will be led indirectly to know—as this is the primary means by which organisms that person come to know what it is they need to try to do—the sequence of actions necessary to this purpose.

A quick overview before a discussion of phase B

Although **steps one through four** would seem to lead directly to the hoped-for outcome, they clearly do not have what it takes to produce it. Nothing other than a steady recurring of those sequences of actions that lead up to or in part constitute the hoped-for outcome will be productive of it. For this to come about, for these sequences of action to be prompted on an ongoing basis, surroundings must have built into them a conveyable know-how for several coordinating skills; these surroundings will then, by virtue of how they are structured, be able to remind the body body-wide how best to move, weaving sequences of actions into each other and grouping collections of activities of both the focused and the unfocused kind; which is to say, conditions appropriate to the prompting of the needed actions must be in place in order for them to occur consistently enough for abrupt changes, such as a hoped-for outcome, to come about. Only with the help of architectural surrounds that have features and elements so structured as to cause landing-site occurrence to happen in a highly ordered and guiding-of-actions fashion can organisms that person reinvent themselves to be contexts within which new activating conditions, for this tendency or that propensity, can occur.

Phase B (assembly)—steps five through eight

Upon its attaining embodiment, a conceived-of measure becomes a piece of equipment (an architectural procedure embedded in a tactically posed surround) that has as its purpose the rearranging of another piece of equipment (organism that persons/architectural body). As outlined above, unlike functional tools, which only extend the senses, procedural tools give sustenance to and reassemble sensoria themselves. Architectural surrounds will be tactically posed in ways that instantiate this fuzzily precise procedural tool that rearranges or reassembles organisms that person. The architectural procedure produced in phase B will be every nature of tool: a servomechanism; a "musical" score for corporeality; a bioscleavic keyboard; a tactically posed surround.

Steps five and six

The crux of the matter: the great indirection required for the piecing together of a procedural tool.

Although X does not go away—it never goes away—it must at this point intermittently go missing. Think of what leads to X rather than of X; submerge X in all that might potentiate it. The stepping back and stepping away are surely marks of indirectness. A piece of equipment (organism that persons/architectural body) that on a daily basis handles indirectness will be surrounded so that it can be redirected. How else to accomplish this surrounding but through indirection? To do X or to accomplish it, simply do not think of X at all. Never worry, it will come to you through indirection, even directly so.

Step seven

In view of and in light of and in refraction from the full-fledged architectural procedure that forms as a conceived-of measure (the product of steps one through four) becomes embodied (by means of steps five and six), still other measures that might be tried will turn up; which is to say, once some direction is given to the great indirection-at-large, other coming-in-from-left-field and around-the-corner, so to speak, direct "hits" or aperçus become possible. This is reminiscent of how scale models are useful both for the indication they give of what the final full-scale work will be like and because they make it possible to see what by all means must be changed for the finished product to be all that it should be.

Step eight

The full-fledged architectural procedure is a fuzzy procedural tool or piece of equipment that has been arrived at through a tremendous acquiescence to indirect means, an overwhelming holding-in-abeyance of what one had thought to try to do. The architectural procedure thus produced, a guiding scheme that prompts with architectonic astuteness continual reconfiguring, sits tight as an indirect approach that can directly affect all who move within it. Within tactically posed surrounds containing full-fledged architectural procedures, direct commands such as DO THIS! gracefully permeate the whole to some purpose, indirectly of course.

An architectural procedure can also be thought of as a something whose use needs to be discovered as it is being used—an unfinished instrument or a 3-D score in the process of finding itself to be such.

Inscribed in a set of Directions for Use, means both direct and indirect should, at this juncture, be let to fly for the sake of a cascading eliciting of X. (forthcoming: GUIDE TO WRITING A SET OF DIRECTIONS FOR USE FOR A TACTICALLY POSED SURROUND)

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In support of step two—Engineering of atmospherically intricate domains productive of reversible destiny

Decide not to die. Take as your overall goal a bodily cultivating and engineering of atmospherically intricate domains productive of reversible destiny. Without reversible destiny the human condition is beyond repair. By fiercely hearkening to the desire for a reversible destiny, you can amass an enormous forming power within and around you.

In support of step five—Overnight an architect

Use the forming power that you are amassing, and tentatively but firmly directing, an avalanche of skillfully applied know-how, to grow more wildly confident of your ability to assemble an architectural procedure, and, presto, become an architect in earnest.

It should not be viewed as preposterous, by you or by your neighbors of all sizes and densities, that you have overnight become an architect. Do not laugh at yourself for having as much as declared yourself to be an architect—unless.

In support of step five—An indirect acquaintance with forming power/Operative wigglewaggles/An architect-in-training

An organism that persons has at best only an indirect acquaintance with the operative basis of her forming power. The body that she is, the product of a related, if not an identical, forming power, is a direct architectural expression, albeit through a circuitous route, of operative wiggle-waggles or maneuvers (constitutive of forming power) that run the show. This relatively small-scale forming power that wields forming power on a variety of scales, and that has been produced by one forming power acting as many or many as one, is, and therefore should be declared to be, both the ongoing project of an unsteady architect-in-training mysteriously afoot in the world (?) and an architect-in-training in her own right.

Markers of indirection/indirectness

We have decided not to favor one term over the other. The dictionary suggests that "indirection" has more to do with actions and means to ends, but it then goes on to define "indirectness" in such a way as to suggest that it, too, could cover this domain. For us, for the moment, the two pull each other open so that even more of what they are loosely about pours out. Soon other terms will arrive in support of these two.

Actions and events through which indirection/indirectness enters the picture, turning a direct approach to a problem into an indirect one, and which should come to be seen as markers of indirectness/indirection:

(a) The allowing of what is very much desired to fade away or be absent for a period of time.

(b) A stepping away from the problem at hand with the intention of coming back at it in another away.

(c) Any thinking ahead.

(d) Going in the opposite direction of what you seek so as to find what you seek.

(e) A thought or an X comes to you rather than your going toward it.

(f) An overall meeting up with what comes about in a largely indiscriminate fashion.

(g) Even the slightest shifting off course.

(h) Whatever gives the appearance of being a detour.

Indirectness

(a) Synonyms?

(b) Directness is always an abstraction/a reduction from indirectness.

- (c) Life can only be proven indirectly.
- (d) indirect = procedural

A new order of tool/A systematic approach THROUGH which to engineer the most daring escape ever

Inasmuch as an architectural procedure offers a systematic approach to moment-by-moment living, it should be deemed a new order of tool, one through which it may eventually become possible to engineer the most daring escape ever—an escape from mortality.

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Do the bodily mathematics!

"Who the hell are you to take poetry/philosophy away from me!"

Do the bodily mathematics: adding, under the aegis and through the production channels of an architectural procedure, an engineering skill or a coordinating one to the repertoire of the world-inventor known as poet/philosopher hardly constitutes a subtraction!

All human inventions art—science, technology, philosophy—surface with great promise but lock us always only into infinitesimally little hopes that by all rights should be registered as despair.

By means of architectural procedures our species will release itself from the stranglehold that its own culture has on it.

Arakawa and Madeline Gins

SECTION I

ARCHITECTURE AGAINST DEATH

THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF HOLDING OPEN: THE RADICAL YES OF ARCHITECTURAL BODY

But there is a turn with mortals when these find their way to their own nature.

(Martin Heidegger, "What Are Poets For?" 93)

In Stanley Kubrick's film 2001, an ape-human picks up a long piece of bone and, with dramatic drumming music in the background, begins to use that bone as a tool, the ape-human completely absorbed in the ecstatic experience of using the tool to pound and to smash. A fragment of bone—in slow motion—drifts upward, and the camera cuts from the floating bone fragment to a space ship heading outward in space. In terms of human development, Kubrick shows us the absolute continuity of this lengthy time sequence. Once humans become tool users, there is an absolute and direct line that can be drawn from that initial use to the space ship. No new fundamental development in human consciousness is required to get from moment A to moment B; the first gesture of tool-using extends directly and logically to the flight of the spacecraft.

What might be the next primordially formative change in the nature of human being? *Architectural Body* places us in the midst of such a tradition of philosophical thinking. It is a question that is central, for example, to Heidegger's thinking and to Rilke's poetry. In *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Rilke's poem-series of fifty-five sonnets (written in February 1922), the poet asks us to "will transformation" (II, 12, 1. 1); the means of doing so involves a renewed knowing, entering, and confronting of death:

Be—and at the same time know the condition of not-being, the infinite ground of your deep vibration, that you may fully fulfill it this single time. (II, 13, lines 9-11)

As Rilke describes it, ours is a history of daring and of venturing, moving out of loosened clay to a sketching of the gods, and, as Rilke suggests, moving toward a possible fulfillment of the terms of being human through a self-surpassing change:

We, a generation through thousands of years: mothers and fathers, more and more full of the future child, so that someday, surpassing, it may overwhelm us, later. (II, 26, lines 9-11)

Heidegger, in "The Origin of the Work of Art," sees history as "the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entrance into that people's endowment" (77). Arakawa and Gins ask us to reconsider—indeed, inaugurate us into a reconceived version of—our species' endowment. They offer us a new sense of our founding by providing a new foundation for our thinking about what we are.

Heidegger's reading of Rilke (in "What Are Poets For?") turns our thinking about the foundation of the human toward the technological—a domain and an activity that both Rilke and Heidegger understand as tragic and as obscuring the foundations of our relationship to Being. Heidegger, reading Rilke, finds "a hint from the rising technology, directing it [human attention] toward those realms from which there could perhaps emerge a surpassing of the technical—a surpassing that would be primordially formative" (112). That is precisely what Arakawa and Gins point us toward: a *next* fundamentally different mode of human being.

For Heidegger, and for Arakawa and Gins, an inquiry into the nature of our being involves simultaneously an inquiry into the nature of our dwelling here. In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger establishes the proximity of those inquiries by etymological means:

Bauen originally means to dwell. Where the word bauen still speaks in its original sense it also says how far the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, bauen, buan, bhu, beo are our word bin in the versions: ich bin, I am, du bist, you are, the imperative form bis, be. What then does ich bin mean? The old word bauen, to which the bin belongs, answers: ich bin, du bist mean: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is Buan, dwelling. (147)

Heidegger's investigation of *bauen* leads him to conclude that it means "to remain, to stay in a place," and that

To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving. (149)

Whereas for Heidegger dwelling essentially means "the stay of mortals on the earth" (149), for Arakawa and Gins—who have a similar understanding of the intimate relationship of building, dwelling, thinking, and being—the assumption of "mortal" as an essential feature of human being is a mistaken one. While they might share Heidegger's conclusion that "thinking itself belongs to dwelling in the same sense as building" (160), they think *building* and think *dwelling* toward the possibility of a primordially formative turn wherein *mortal* is no longer a governing presupposition.

How might we build or shape ourselves toward that emerging possibility? For Arakawa and Gins, that process of building—of self-lathing or of self-milling—begins as a rhetorical activity. We must build up our optimism; we must acknowledge our pessimistic, defeatist foundation: "Without doubt, the human race had hideously acquiesced in regard to its own abysmal fate. [...] So unquestionably mortal are we that we have even come to call ourselves mortals, for God's sake. [...] A bunch of defeatists all" (xiv).

Arakawa and Gins choose and build their words carefully. They do not write "without a doubt," they write "without doubt." And that is our problem: as a species we have been without doubt—we have proceeded "unquestionably"—along a defeatist path that assumes rather than engages our mortality. In a moment at once humorous and audacious, Arakawa and Gins suggest that we have done so "for God's sake."

Like that other great American manifesto of how to live, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, Arakawa and Gins's *Architectural Body* goads us, confronts us, cajoles us, persuades us. They ask us to examine and

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to re-think our most basic governing assumption: the terms of our own mortality. Like Thoreau, who wrote, "men labor under a mistake" (5), they conclude "that the whole crowd has it all wrong" (xiv). And like Thoreau, who wrote in *Walden* that "man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried" (10), Arakawa and Gins's insistence that we rethink our basic understandings of our existence has a contagious exuberance that derives from their awareness that we have not considered, from a non-defeatist viewpoint, who or what we might be.

Throughout their careers, as is amply shown in the retrospective (and prospective) *Reversible Destiny*, Arakawa and Gins have been engaged in training our methods and awareness of perception. *Architectural Body* constitutes a continuity and culmination of that project, the ultimate reconfiguring being one that fundamentally changes the nature of our being: "Three decades ago, by wedding the word *reversible* with the term *destiny*, a supposedly set-in-stone sequence of events, we announced a war on mortality. Reversible destiny was our first step into a crisis ethics" (xviii). In a fundamental sense, that activity—at times, as an instance of "defamiliarization," at others, of "transgressive" or "Socratic art"—lies at the heart of the making of art. Arakawa and Gins have moved from more specifically focused individual, discrete works of art to an architectural surround to an entire city as the scale and scope of their activities in perceptual training.

Architectural Body begins with a specific address: the book is addressed to and dedicated to "transhumans." It is a book addressed to what we will or might become. The logical outcome, or the outward projection, of Arakawa and Gins's work is a re-casting or re-configuring of human life. This new structuring of our life amounts to an autopoiesis. If we, of the present, are transitional—beings on the way toward a transhuman existence—then a work that urges us forward becomes the most essential kind of avant garde art, perhaps even a final avant garde, a horizon imagined, constructed, and inhabited that allows us passage into that (imagined and then realized) primordially formative change.

We are already edging toward that change. We are already becoming an increasingly prosthetic form of the human, extending our range and abilities through non-carbon complements, through digitized, compact surrogates, supplements, and enhancers. Arakawa and Gins take the dramatic step of thinking through this gradualism at its base, which, of course, means a confrontation with our mortality and our assumptions about the terms and ethics of existence.

To re-energize our living and its possibilities, and to counter an implicit or assumed defeatism, Arakawa and Gins ask us to consider "how to be most fully at the service of the body" (xi). The answer involves a seriousness of intent and a newly imagined outcome.

Architectural Body takes its place as a central philosophical text (as well as a manifesto or provocation). It is a work in the spirit of Heidegger's recurring insistence that we re-think our knowledge and lack of knowledge regarding the fundamental term "being." Similarly, Arakawa and Gins ask us to confront the fact that as a species humans must return to "the nature of itself as the central problem" (xvii). Linked to Heidegger's insistence on a renewed awareness and understanding of "being," Arakawa and Gins add, "Figuring ourselves out must include determining what coheres as sentience" (xii).

As Heidegger established a critique of western metaphysics—as a philosophical tradition built upon an incomplete and repressed non-understanding of "being"—Arakawa and Gins, similarly, require us to begin by confronting the fact that we do not know what we are:

Who or what are we as this species? Puzzle creatures to ourselves, we are visitations of inexplicability. What is in fact the case? We must surely go to all possible lengths to find out what we exist in regard to. [...] We, the members of this species, have thus far failed to come up with a set of explanatory statements that could be universally countenanced as the definitive figuring out of ourselves. (xii)

We are figures sited in figuration who need figuring out. The figuring out will be artful. How we have learned to make and to inhabit art will help us in this figuring out. As we will see, the ability to exist in a state of negative capability will assist us in the requisite courage to admit what we don't know and to imagine (and, ultimately, to construct) what we might be. Autopoeisis as a key architectural skill should invoke what we have learned and are learning about the more finite construction of poems.

"The nature of itself as the central problem" (xvii)—in asking that we think, with *urgency* and with *emphasis*—about the nature of our species, Arakawa and Gins decisively open us toward the draft of a new premise, initially posed as a question: "What if it turned out that to be mortal was not an essential condition of our species?" (xviii).

While such thinking is relatively rare within the traditions of philosophy and art (with the exception of the imagination of *the work of art* [rather than the artist] achieving immortality), it is a line of thinking quite fully realized in the genre of science fiction. Notable instances include Arthur C. Clarke's 2001 (the concluding entry into a new realm of being) as well as his earlier *Childhood's End* (with much more attention paid to the emotional repercussions for the parents' generation as they witness the next generation make the transition to a radically changed mode of being), as well as the more recent writings of Octavia Butler (particularly *Wild Seed* and *Mind of My Mind*).

The concept of the landing site becomes a key point of intersection through which Arakawa and Gins are able to link their lifelong artistic work with a philosophical project of re-thinking the nature of human life (in our intimate and perpetually reciprocal relationship to our surroundings). The landing site names the place of our ongoing (and often unacknowledged) perceptual activity, the site by which and in which we imagine and construct our being and our being-in-the-world:

[...] a landing site is but a neutral marker, a simple taking note of, nothing more. When how the world is apportioned out is translated into landing sites, all stays the same, touched but untouched. A person parses the world at any given instant into particular distributions of landing sites... (6)

The landing site is "a heuristic device [...] capable of reading what else has been and is being apportioned out" (9). Think of the landing site as constituting a feedback loop, a location and a method for achieving self-awareness (of our processes of self and self-world construction), and as the locale for refiguring what we are. It is via the landing site that Arakawa and Gins's thinking "rhymes" with the making and experiencing of experimental or innovative art. Defamiliarization—a seeking after states of intensified awareness
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of consciousness and of our perceptual activities and assumptions—invokes an opportunity for new possibilities—for a heuristics—of the fundamental terms and experiences of human being.

The landing site—as it becomes a place for learning an attitude toward perception, a location for developing a craft of open attentive awareness—is positioned in Arakawa and Gins's thinking for a maximum (though muted) resonance with our relationship to particularly challenging works of art. Arakawa and Gins focus our attention on learning to hold open that particular moment of intensified nonresolvability—a phenomenon common both to aesthetic experience (our experience of certain works of art) and of those rare instances when we step back from and observe and analyze our emerging perceptions and orderings of the external world:

A landing-site configuration forms, as a heuristic device, when the continual symbolizing of a symbolizing creature ... becomes slightly muted or is put on hold for a bit [...]. A neutral stance asks that nonresolvable issues be kept on hold—fluidly and flexibly on hold—right out there in the world where they occur; it asks as well that they be held open and be made to open still further to yield additional information about what is at issue. (22)

Such a phenomenology—of sought for and maintained openness, of an appreciation of the importance of the moment of nonresolvability—indeed bears a close relationship to the frame of mind sought in *zazen* (Buddhist sitting meditation) and an uncanny relationship as well to the poet John Keats' description and definition of negative capability: "that is, when a man [sic] is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (309).

As Arakawa and Gins develop their sense of the landing site experience—a development which draws on their many years of art-making—the phenomenology that emerges extends a level of detail highly pertinent to the experiences of poem-making and of reading or entering the emerging constructed world of the poem as a new language grid: "Here is what architecture means to us: *a tentative constructing toward a hol-ding in place*. Walk into this building and you walk into a purposeful guess. The built world floats a hypothesis or two as to how and by what the apportioned out comes to be everywhere, the everywhere" (23).

So too is the poem—particularly of the open field variety practiced over the last fifty or more years by poets such as Robert Creeley, Larry Eigner, Robert Duncan, Ronald Johnson, Susan Howe, and many others—a testing out of a fabricated design of words, of words in white space, of a form of plausible and unique assembly. The poem itself—the new poem, the poem that risks or ventures a new architecture—is an essential building, a version of Heidegger's language as the house of being, a place within which we are encouraged to enter and hold open an alerted and attentive consciousness in a site of nonresolvability. As Ara-kawa and Gins describe it—a description equally applicable to the architectural project of *Architectural Body* and to the deliberate construction of the open field poem—the architecture or hypothesis (or poem) "cons-

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tructed to exist in the tense of *what if*, it presents itself as intentionally provisional, replacing definite form with tentative form, the notion of a lasting structure with that of an adaptive one" (29).¹

The word *stanza*—a key unit in the poem's construction—means *room*, and the poem as house resembles the house described in *Architectural Body*: "This house is a tool, a procedural one [...] [that] examines and reorders the sensorium" (30). It is the site for invoking that examination and potential reordering. The poem, perhaps like Arakawa and Gins's house, invokes that Socratic or meditative (or negative capability) activity by means of altering our relationship to time and to the ordering of our perceptions. To say that the landing site experience is marked by a slowing down of temporal experience only begins to hint at the fundamental changes in perceptual processing that occur. The implicit closeness of architectural site and text becomes explicit in *Architectural Body*: "If architectural procedures serve as the words of a built discourse, then tactically posed surrounds, combining these procedures as they do, are its phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and texts" (57).

Arakawa and Gins thus choose to reorient architecture, from permanence or durability as a guiding feature to a preference for the provisional, the hypothetical, the heuristic, and the tentative: "we have chosen tentativeness as organizing principle in our practice [;...] it is necessary to construct architectural works that reflect bioscleave's intrinsic tentativeness" (49). Such reversal of the nature of architecture points toward the fact that "thus far only nomads have held architecture to be as a matter of course tentative" (49).

Architectural Body reads like a guide book offering not simply exhortations but advice on how to seek, promote, and maintain that landing site experience of a holding open: "Do not mar tentativeness. One ought not to try and hold onto what one cannot hold onto. How to swim in tentativeness. How to hold tentativeness in (its/your) shape. Do not be greedy: do not try to hold onto too much. What holds or registers as tentativeness, that great on-to-the-next [...]" (84-85). Reiterating the base of architectural activity, Arakawa and Gins establish their investigative procedures as at once philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical: "Performing an architectural procedure, a person launches an inquiry-on-the-go into her own constituent factors. [...] Architectural procedures disclose, highlight, and explicate the tentative steps by which an organism maintains herself as a person" (73).

As with innovative art (which breaks the spell of habit and of the "natural"), Arakawa and Gins link their mode of heuristic architecture to a life of inquiry and to a process refiguring the terms of our lives, presenting

Architecture as the supreme context for the examined life, a stage set for body-wide thought experiments. With architectural procedures prodding the body to know all that it is capable of, this becomes an intrusive and active stage set. The body must either escape or "reenter" habitual patterns of action—habitual actions that have customized life into only a few standard patterns. Upon the body's mastering new patterns of action, bioscleave emerges reconfigured. (62)

¹ For a detailed study of "a myth of immediacy located in the making of the poem" (411), see my essay "Poetry and Myth."

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The hope, perhaps utopian, perhaps realizable, of such activity is for a renewed and renewing questioning of habit and of defeatist assumptions: "Exhorted and cajoled by their town, by virtue of being gently constrained by its features and elements, to perform architectural procedures, people work and play at figuring out what in the world they could possibly be" (61).

The recurring tone of *Architectural Body* is one of audacious optimism. Like *Walden* where Thoreau announces, "I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up" (84), Arakawa and Gins's book is similarly a call to humanity to wake up: "Once people realize that the human race has not yet availed itself of its greatest tool for learning how not to die, they will cease being defeatists in the matter" (xi). The book is an invitation for us to reinvent ourselves: "It will be a way to undo, loosening to widen and re-cast, the concept of person" (xi-xii). Arakawa and Gins write with a reassuring calm and confidence. They believe and they ask us to believe that "the architecture we speak of in this book is within our species' reach" (xi) and that we can "reconfigure supposed inevitability" (55). Their book constitutes nothing less than "an open challenge to our species to reinvent itself" (xviii).

Thoreau wrote *Walden* to inspire others to live their own version of a deliberate life—to suck the marrow out of life, to question fundamentally how to go about living so as not to give away our time in labor without purpose, to realize that the possibility of a rich life did not depend upon a level of elaborate material possessions. Thoreau realized that the chief enemy of an intense, realized life was our own laziness, our own defeatism, our own persistent doubt that such a life could be ours. Thoreau hopes to awaken us into an infinite wakefulness: "We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep" (90). Arakawa and Gins realize that as a species we may be "oblivious to its own desperateness" (xvi)—a kind of species-level version of Thoreau's "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (8). But there is an equally pernicious individual level of despair that Arakawa and Gins confront head on: our tendency, in the face of their own optimistic absolute Yes, to say no to the greatest of our own possibilities. They assert: "That mortality has been the prevailing condition throughout the ages does not mean it will always have to be" (xv). They hope that their own insistence, belief, and plan of action will inspire the rest of us to resist our own habitual negativity:

The effort to counter mortality must be constant, persistent, and total. The wish and will to do this must be in the air we breathe, having been built into the places within which we live and breathe. [...] We believe that people closely and complexly allied with their architectural surrounds can succeed in outliving their (seemingly inevitable) death sentences! (XV-XVI)

To counter our habit of saying No,² Arakawa and Gins insist that we consider their Yes: "That life must not be extinguished, yes, that is our teaching" (XVIII). *Architectural Body* represents the building of a

² In making the connection between *Architectural Body* and Thoreau's *Walden*, I am principally remarking on similarities of tone and of rhetorical strategy. But a more detailed comparison would also note that *Walden* concludes with an immor-

radical Yes: "Can it be, then, that in architecture we have the means to construct awareness on a new basis? Oh yes, that is what we have begun to believe" (56). The book ends, appropriately, provisionally, pointing toward its own and our continuation, an ending that quite rightly has no concluding period:

To be continued...

To what else life will be able to originate as beause of what architecture will have become. (Architectural Body 100)

I suspect that each reader of *Architectural Body* struggles with a recurring desire to say "no, this isn't possible; we can't *really* do that..." But Arakawa and Gins keep returning us to the fact that we *don't know* what we are, and they keep asking us to reconsider our deep-seated negative presupposition that we *must* be mortal and that somewhat mortality itself is an essential feature of human being. *Architectural Body* instructs us in the art of constructing tentativity—of building a holding open as a crucial element of transforming human consciousness. The most important construction by Arakawa and Gins is the building of a place in our reading-thinking-imagining-projecting consciousness for a line of thinking that begins "what if…" They describe their project as "revved and revving; an amassing of the provisional; a ubiquitous piecing together" (65) I hear "revved and revving" as echoing the French *rêve* (dream). The terms "revved and revving" suggest both the dream-like quality *and* a mechanical, logical truth: the machinery of that which is revved up; an *engine* of imagination; an engine that powers us toward what we *can* be. And *if* we can hold open the opening they have constructed, *Architectural Body* will mark the dawning of an age in which humans think of ourselves as perhaps not necessarily mortal, and then, perhaps, as immortal…

tality story about an egg deposited in a tree many years ago. The tree was made into a leaf of a table and stood in a farmer's kitchen for over sixty years when the egg hatches and a bug gnaws its way out of the wood. Thoreau concludes, "Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society [...] may unexpectedly come forth [...]. Only that day dawns to which we are awake" (333). At the heart of both books is a compelling and enthusiastic belief in the possibilities of human life, particularly once we set aside our habitual and limiting defeatism.

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DREAM

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Hank Lazer⁴ University of Alabama

³ "Dream" is from *Portions*, a series of 54 word poems composed from May 2001 to the present, many of the poems written during the period of time that, as co-editor of the Modern and Contemporary Poetics Series, I was corresponding with Arakawa and Madeline Gins about drafts, revisions, and editings of *Architectural Body*.

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THE TENSE OF ARCHITECTURE

Introduction

What can a philosopher of language have to say about the works of two architects? More interestingly, what can he have to learn from a book called *Architectural Body*? At first sight, the only possible answer is: nothing. Except that the architects in question are also artists or poets, and one of their previous works, *The Mechanism of Meaning*, cannot be indifferent to a philosopher of language. So that the philosopher of language can exert his talents in two ways. He can discuss and make sense of (in a technical, not a patronising acceptation of the phrase) the architects' pronouncements, especially when they seem to defy common sense and beggar belief. And he can wonder whether the series of concepts produced in their architectural manifesto cannot be distinctly, and perhaps crucially, relevant to his concerns. I shall therefore proceed in two steps. I shall consider the very formulation of the entire project; and I shall learn something from *Architectural Body*.

We have decided not to die

How can we make sense of a proposition like this, which runs contrary to our most ingrained beliefs, beliefs so firmly established that they have acquired the status of knowledge? I do not *believe* I shall eventually die, I *know* it.

There are two trivial ways out of this quandary. I can treat the proposition as a piece of artistic provocation, designed to shake me, temporarily and I hope pleasurably, out of my ingrained knowledge—this is hardly better than a pose. Or I can treat the proposition as metaphorical. The traditional way not to die in that sense is to survive through one's offspring or one's works—the metaphor is as old as the hills.

The interest of Gins and Arakawa's position is that they do not encourage either of those trivial solutions, but take their proposition, there lies their radicalness, not only seriously but literally.

This is where the philosopher of language may have something to say, simply by asking, in his professional capacity, the question: how can I construe the meaning of such a proposition, which is semantically outrageous, but has the hallmark of respectable grammaticality?

I shall attempt to do this with the help of Gilles Deleuze's theory of sense, as expressed in his *Logique du sens*. His theory is based on the contrast between meaning and sense, or rather, since this is a French text, between two acceptations of *sens*. For Deleuze, a proposition has meaning if three elements are present: manifestation, designation and signification. Manifestation denotes the relationship between the proposition and

its speaker, who asserts it and thereby claims responsibility for its meaning (the canonical grammatical marker is the shifter "I"). Designation denotes the relationship between the proposition and the world: the asserted proposition has intentionality, it is "about" something, namely the world (and the canonical marker is the deictic, "this" or "that"). Subject and object, to speak in the terms of classical German philosophy, being dealt with, what else remains? The internal coherence of the proposition, that which makes it "make sense," what Deleuze calls its signification, whose canonical grammatical markers are the marks of cohesion, syntactic or semantic, for instance the conjunction "therefore." And the ultimate guarantee that all is well with the proposition, that subject is related to object in a meaningful way, through a meaningful, because coherent, proposition, uttered by someone about something, is God, the ultimate master of signification. Taken together, the three elements of meaning determine what Deleuze calls common sense (my manifestation is no different from the other fellow's, I belong to the semantic fold; my designation has verisimilitude). They also determine what he calls good sense (my proposition is significant in that it goes in the right direction-Deleuze is playing on the two meanings of the word *sens*: direction as well as meaning—in that it does not go contrary to the eternal laws of signification as ordained by God). In other words, the combination of manifestation, designation and signification, that is of common sense (shared between the entire linguistic community) and good sense (abiding by God's guidelines) has one general name, doxa, or received and established opinion, which is the real contents of what we mean by the "meaning" of a proposition.

The most striking characteristic, and the main interest, of the proposition "We have decided not to die," is that it runs contrary to doxa, that it is not so much (unwittingly) a-doxic, as (blatantly) anti-doxic. As a result of this, it has ambiguous manifestation, doubtful designation, dubious signification, and consequently little meaning if any. For who is this "we" who have decided "not to die"? It appears to be ambiguous between the "we" of exclusion (Gins and Arakawa, as opposed to the rest of us, who have never thought of making such a decision, or have not been able to make it) and the "we" of inclusion, or conversion, which addresses one and all, you and I, and asks us to come and join the fun, or the reversible destiny project. So manifestation is ambiguous. But designation fares no better, as common and good sense tell me that, unless I am a vampire, I cannot "not die," that there is no such object as an undead, or rather a human being that has forgotten to die or decided not to, unless it is relegated to the wildest fiction (the proposition does have some limited signification, but only in the language-game of fiction, peopled with creatures of dubious ontological status). Designation, therefore, is at best doubtful. But signification fares even worse. For the logical link between the two sub-propositions ("we have decided"/"we won't die") is highly dubious. "Not dying" is a constant, but temporary, state in which we all find ourselves, but not the object or goal of a decision. Unless I had decided to commit suicide today and have changed my mind, I cannot claim in a meaningful, that is in a doxic, way, to have decided "not to die." You have to be Poe's Mr. Valdemar, that is, again, a character of fiction, to utter the unutterable, "I am dead." It would seem that I have made a considerable discovery: Gins and Arakawa, in so far as they are the speakers of the proposition "We have decided not to die," cannot exist, they must be characters of fiction, on a par with Dracula and the Frankenstein monster, or rather, to be more precise, with Rider Haggard's "She" and Lovecraft's Charles Dexter Ward.

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But this is true only if we insist on remaining in the realm of *doxa*. And for Deleuze doxic meaning is not all: there is a fourth element in the proposition, which he calls *sense*. Sense is what meaning blocks and freezes into *doxa*. It (chrono)logically precedes meaning, it marks the moment when meaning is not yet either "common" or "good." So, unlike common sense, it is event-like, in that it has no truck with verisimilitude and established meaning; and unlike good sense it proliferates, it is multidirectional and paradoxical—a rhizome of semantic potentialities rather than the tree of Porphyry that determines and fixes meaning. And it has a much closer relationship to art than doxic meaning has: it is what literature, and especially poetry, is trying to capture; it does not deal in the distinction between truth and fiction, the literal and the metaphorical, but in style, in the proliferation of potentialities of meaning, in the taking of the expressive powers of language to their limits. I shall run the risk of quoting myself—here is an account of Deleuzean sense:

Being neither the terms of the proposition, nor the state of affairs, nor the experience of the subject that expresses it, sense, neither word nor body, sensibilia nor concepts, is neutral: it does not exist, but subsists and insists, indifferent to the usual dichotomies (neither personal nor impersonal, particular nor general, etc.). Its grammatical marker in the sentence is neither a shifter, nor a deictic, nor a syncategorematic word: it is the verb itself, as marker of process, which inscribes the pure event. Sense is indistinguishable from the surface nonsense Carroll captures in his tales and his paradoxes; it is the effect produced by the circulation of the paradoxical element as it zips the two series together [...]. Lastly, like the event, its temporality is not that of time's arrow (the temporality of the Markov chain and the construction of meaning), but the eternal and at the same time bi-directional temporality of Aion, not Chronos. (123)

Gins and Arakawa's proposition, which is rich in verbs (they are the only two semantically full words, the rest being grammatical words) may not have much doxic meaning, but it emphatically makes sense. It has all the exciting subversive quality of Deleuzean sense and jogs me out of my thought routine. And this sense is developed in the rhizome of concepts that make up *Architectural Body*.

The danger here would be to treat them simply as artists, to read the proposition as a *haiku*, and their manifesto as a volume of poetry (which in a sense it is also), thus reverting to the trivial position that I outlined in my opening paragraphs, and shutting them up in an aesthetic ghetto. I shall try another path, the path of making Deleuzean sense, that is of discussing *Architectural Body* as a work of philosophy, a site for the construction of concepts, thereby hoping to learn from it. For, if we treat their work as an example of sense, the answer to the question, "What can a philosopher of language learn from such a text?" is: a lot.

The language of architecture

At first sight, there is little relationship between language and architecture. The phrase, 'the language of architecture' can take, according to common sense, four different meanings: (a) The phrase can denote a specialised lexicon of terms of art, a jargon: if I want to know what a clerestory is, I may have to look it up in a dictionary. There is nothing special, or interesting, in this, for even hairdressing has its specialised language. (b) The phrase can mean that buildings are to be taken for signs: they signify, they convey messages,

they "make statements." Walking in a town is like deciphering a text, the acting out of a process of reading and interpretation. We walk a town as we read a map. Although not uninteresting (Gins and Arakawa have used this in their Site of Reversible Destiny-Yoro), we are still at the level of metaphor (and here we must remember Deleuze's strong hostility to metaphor: sense is beyond the literal/metaphorical divide, it is strongly linked to the body, and the slogan is: no metaphors, only metamorphosis). (c) The metaphor can be made more precise. Buildings are syntactically linked into an urban landscape, a street is a sentence, a neighbourhood an utterance (that we are dealing in discourse is made explicit, for instance by street names as characterising a neighbourhood). And the erection of a building is like a construction of a sentence: in both cases, structures are involved. We may remember here that the elementary language-game devised by Wittgenstein to illustrate his favourite concept is a game the elements of which are not words but building-bricks. (d) But because we are dealing with sense, beyond metaphor, before good sense, the metaphor can be inverted. So far, the implicit concept of language involved has been close to Wittgenstein's concept of language in the Tractatus, namely the picture theory of language: the syntax of our language is homologous to the syntax of objects that make up our world, and our language is, consequently, a picture of the world. But because we are not dealing in metaphor, we may suggest that the reverse is equally relevant: it is the syntax of our language which is constitutive of the structure of our (lived) world, a structure that is materialised in the language of architecture. Buildings do not make statements, they are statements, embodied sentences or turns of phrase. We could even propose a Marxist version of this: ideas become material forces when they capture the masses; words acquire material force when they capture organisms into architectural bodies.

Gins and Arakawa have been there before us:

It is by relying on juxtaposed repeatable and re-combinable items that verbal discourse, with great sleight of mouth (or hand), encompasses and presents sequentially considered events. Modularly constructed areas and the architectural procedures they engender will be the juxtaposed repeatable and re-combinable items of a built discourse.

An architectural procedure resembles its predecessor, a word, in two respects for a start: first, it is a repeatable item that readily lends itself to discursive use; second, charged with conveying a specific experience or range of experiences, it can be evaluated as to how well it serves its purpose or how effectively it has been put to use. (Architectural Body 56-57)

It is clear, now that we have reached the Gins and Arakawa project, that we have escaped from the realm of *doxa* to dwell in sense. We must abandon the illusion of a literal meaning, or rather take the metaphor both literally and metaphorically at the same time. Buildings *are* and *are not* words and sentences, so that there will (not) be verb and noun buildings, or, to speak like Aristotle, categorematic and syncategorematic buildings.

At times, Gins and Arakawa seem very close to this, witness the phrase I have used as the title of this essay:

Because bioscleave itself occurs as a demonstrably tentative constructing towards a holding in place, architectural works constructed into it cannot be anything but tentative; furthermore—and it is for this reason that we have chosen tentativeness as an organizing principle in our practice—it is not enough to know that in

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deep time all architectural works are fleeting things: it is necessary to construct architectural works that reflect the bioscleave's intrinsic tentativeness. An architectural work that will serve the body well will maximize its chances of drawing on and blending with bioscleave, positioning the body in such a way that it can best coordinate itself within its surroundings. Simply, pretending that architecture is not tentative is just that, only a pretense. Architecture will come into its own when it becomes thoroughly associated and aligned with the body, that active other tentative constructing toward a holding in place, the ever-on-the-move body. The tense of architecture should not be that of "This is this" or "Here is this" but instead that of "What's going on?" (Architectural Body 49)

Like their general proposition, the phrase "the tense of architecture" has no doxic meaning, unless it is taken as a metaphor. But if we move into Deleuzean sense, which will involve taking the metaphor literally (and vice versa), it will make a lot of sense. All we have to do in order to grasp this is consider the contrast between the two types of sentences that immediately follow. By contrasting an assertive, designational architecture that has noun determination but not tense, and a processual architecture, an architecture of the verb, which is therefore tensed, they opt for a dynamic, not a static/monumental type of architecture, and compel us to envisage architecture, which goes against our common or our good sense, as a process in time rather than a monument in space. A linguistic analysis of the three sentences on which the passage ends will bear this out. Tense is the main verbal category, and the verbal meaning in question is not expressed in the simple present of assertion, but rather through the tentativeness of a question (we remember here that, in some grammars of English, "tentative" is one of the values of the past tense, as in "Did you want more tea," uttered in the context of the present time of utterance). A question, therefore, is what this type of architecture expresses. But not all questions are right: the questions of designation, characterised by the use of deictics (what is this?) are clearly wrong, in that they fetishize processes into objects. To be truly "tentative," the utterance must be a question rather than an assertion, it must bear not on objects, not on subjects (who are we to build such buildings?) but on pre-individual, impersonal processes. "What's going on?" is the perfect formulation of such a question. And note that the tense of architecture is not the simple present (of blunt assertion), but the present continuous, where the aspect points towards the event, the moment of change, rather than the cause or the resulting state. This event, which the tense of architecture seeks to capture, is a Deleuzean event, produced by the circulation of sense, the bearer of which is not a subject, not even a speaking subject, but what Deleuze calls a haeccity (*heccéité*), a mode of individuation that is neither that of the subject nor that of the thing. Examples of haeccities in Deleuze are a season, a date, a shower of rain, a haiku. In Gins and Arakawa, a house, in that it is a tentative constructing toward a holding in place, within a bioscleave, the site for the deployment of an architectural body, is such a haeccity.

This is where Gins and Arakawa may have something crucial to teach a philosopher of language, this is where they may be able to dispel some of the aporias in which the discipline revels. For the concept of haeccity in Deleuze provides a way out of the aporia of the concept of speaker as subject (as individual center of consciousness). And the Gins and Arakawa version of it, which is a notable improvement, may provide a way out of the quandary of the relationship between a disincarnated *logos* and the body which gives voice to it. Since Aristotle, the dichotomy of *phone* and *logos* has been central to the philosophy of language, and their exact relationship a constant puzzle.

The four bodies

The puzzle has, of course, produced many solutions. There are four standard answers, and four linguistic concepts of the body. None fits the architectural body.

In "scientific," positivist linguistics, the body of the speaker is a *biological* body. The clearest example is Chomsky's concept of language. For him, language is a faculty, located in the "mind/brain." Language has biological existence in neurone circuits and/or genes. The problem with this reductionist physicalism is that it fails to account for most of the phenomena to which we give the name "language": it excludes them outside the pale of "science." Most of all, it cuts language off from the world and human experience and practice. As a consequence, language is naturalised, maxims of linguistic behaviour become laws of nature. This has all the characteristics of what Althusser calls "a spontaneous philosophy for scientists," and is of little help.

The second body is the erotic body, the body of psychoanalysis. This has a more congenial appearance: the articulation between body and psyche, body and experience, is no longer mechanistic. Primary, secondary and tertiary processes may be distinguished: in *Logique du sens*, Deleuze erects a theory of the origins of language on such a ternary structure. As a result, the scream is accounted for, in its relation with articulated language, the depth of the unconscious is distinguished from the surface where discourse dwells. We are now able to understand the concept of a maternal tongue and the practice of *fous littéraires*. But this concept of the body is still too individual/personal for us to be entirely satisfied with it.

The third body is the labouring body envisaged by Marxists of all description. This *labouring* body, which is, if we pay attention to the carefully chosen ambiguity of the term, both material and maternal, is above all a social body. It is no longer cut off from the world, but totally involved in and determined by social life. As a result, language is no longer reductively mechanistic, but what Deleuze and Guattari call "machinic" involved in all sorts of combinations with elements of the world. The speaker is no longer an individual subject but a collective "assemblage of enunciation," an ontological mixture of discourses, institutions and objects, among which buildings play a prominent role. We are very close here to the architectural body, but not quite there.

For there is a fourth linguistic body, the phenomenological body. In linguistics and the philosophy of language, it is found in enunciation theories of linguistics (mostly in France, for instance the work of Benveniste or Culioli), and in the cognitive linguistics of Lakoff and Johnson, with their concept of embodied reason. Such a body is the site for the grammatical operations that constitute the speaker as speaker, but a speaker located within the world (here the world of perception) and oriented in and towards it—a world which she interprets and to which she adjusts in and through her discourse. This is the world of Lakoff and Johnson's three types of metaphors (orientational, structural and ontological) and Culioli's "operations of enunciation." Such a body is the body of human experience, much more so than the labouring body of the Marxists, but it is again an individual and personal body (in spite of Culioli's insistence on interlocution and "adjustment to the co-enunciator").

The interest of Gins and Arakawa's architectural body is that it avoids the aporias that none of those four bodies entirely avoid. It has obvious links with the phenomenological body, and it does not ignore the social nature of the life world from which language springs: architecture is not a solitary pleasure. Which means that it may

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help us avoid the usual dichotomies, which are so many aporias: not merely the literal/metaphorical contrast, as we have already seen, but the collective/individual or the historical/natural contrasts.

In order to show this, I shall start from what is perhaps the linguistic position that is closest to Deleuze, and possibly to the architectural body: the enunciation linguistics of Antoine Culioli. The speaker here is the subject of enunciation, that is of a process of uttering, as opposed to the grammatical subject or subject of the utterance. She finds herself in a situation (a word with obvious existentialist origins, rich with hints of *Geworfenheit*), to which she adapts her discourse, on the background of which she "takes to the word" (*prend la parole*), as a bird takes to the wing. This situation is characterised by two variables, a subjective variable ("who speaks?": the subject of enunciation, S_0) and a time variable, the moment of enunciation, T_0 . This accounts for the grammatical phenomena of deixis, aspect, tense and modality, more generally of quantification and qualification, the two main operations of enunciation. Yet, there is a curious omission in the setting up of a situation: there is no variable of localisation, L_0 , probably because such task of localisation (*repérage*) is the main concern of the process of enunciation which this body is personally and temporally, but not locally situated (unlike the embodied mind of Lakoff and Johnson): the speaker is once again the angelic site of a purely intellectual process.

This is where the concept of an architectural body helps. For it is nothing if it is not located, situated in space, as a constitutive factor of its existence, when the mere organism becomes, in Gins and Arakawa's phrase, an organism that persons. It is not difficult, of course, to find such markers of situated space in ordinary language (in deictics of space, "here" and "there," in prepositions, the original meaning of which is always one of location and orientation). Thus the ontological "there," in existential sentences ("there is a cat on the mat") is a generalisation of the eponymous local deictic. Gins and Arakawa are fully aware of this, as evidenced in the first panel of, "Localization and Transference,"¹ the second subdivision of their research project *The Mechanism of Meaning*, where "this" and "that" are used as pointers in the operation of location of meaning through pinpointing (58), a concept central to Culioli's analysis of operations of determination.

We must ask ourselves, therefore, how the concept of an architectural body enables the philosopher of language to understand the spatial location of a pre-individual, impersonal speaker endowed with a material and social body, and whether it enables us to go beyond Lakoff and Johnson's embodied mind, for they, too, attempt to think the same process through their concept of orientational metaphor.

The architectural body

Let us start from Gins and Arakawa's main thesis, as expressed in the introduction to the book:

¹ See Lecercle, fig. a (mech2_1.jpg)

An organism-person allied with, in close correspondence with, surroundings that guide skillful coordination of actions ought to be able to escape so-called human destiny, the as-if-ordained downhill course of things. Not only will houses and towns that architecturally guide and sustain an organism-person help her to compose, execute, and coordinate actions more skillfully than was ever before thought to be possible, they will also automatically enlist her in a thoroughgoing architectural questioning of the purpose of the species. An architecturally guide and sustained organism-person should then be able to reverse that destiny known to have been the lot of billions of other members of her species; when it becomes possible for an organism-person simply to go on indefinitely, a reversible destiny shall have been achieved. (Architectural Body xix-xx)

Since we are dealing in sense rather than meaning, let us take a conceptual jump, and decide that this is a recipe not just for personal survival, but for inhabiting the world, that is for undergoing and understanding the experience of being a speaking body. Once this displacement has been achieved (if displacement this may be called, rather than straightforward development), a rhizome of relevant concepts emerges. Thus the concept of "bioscleave" will have all the advantages of Culioli's concept of situation, but not its shortcomings: it is definitely a situation which is spatially defined, as the central concept of a "landing site" will show. In the same vein, the "organism that persons" is a more useful concept than the subject of enunciation, as it loses the intellectualisation, abstraction and premature individuality of such a concept. It is, however, with the concept of landing site that linguistic localisation comes into its own. That it has something to do with linguistic localisation appears in the very definition of the concept: "A person parses the world at any given instant into particular distributions of landing sites, or better, an organism-person-environment can be parsed into these distributions" (Architectural Body 6). My strategy, of course, is not to take the reference to "parsing," a grammatical notion, as a metaphor, but as a direct description of the subject's insertion into the world, of her construction of her life-world. Except, of course, that an "organism-person-environment" is no longer a "subject" in the usual sense. So that the central concept of "siting," which is much more adequate than the concept of "situation" (in particular because it avoids the imbalance of a disincarnated speaker that is only a centre of consciousness situated in time), is no mere equivalent of Culioli's "localisation" (repérage), but the very name of the speaker's being-in-the-world:

A multiple, complex siting process or procedure would seem to be in effect as organism-person-environment; or posing it more neutrally, the world one finds in place lends itself to being mapped by means of a multiple, complex siting process or procedure. Human action depends on an attributing of sites and takes place in large part through sequences of sitings. (Architectural Body 7)

The three types of landing-sites (perceptual, imaging, dimensionalizing) give contents to this process of incarnated localisation, which is still pre-linguistic, but on the basis of which language as we know it can appear. We come to the essential philosophical breakthrough that *Architectural Body* operates: the landing-site as "muted symbol," providing a "neutral zone of emphasis" that "by-passes subject-object distinctions": "The tense of landing sites holds as that split second of muting whose instantaneous time span lasts only long enough for basic positionings to be registered [...]. Landing-site: a muted symbol, or one [...] event-marker in and of the eventfabric that is organism-person-environment" (*Architectural Body* 22).

It is now clear that I am not merely indulging in the facile conceptual translation of a series of concepts expounding a philosophical position in the field of architecture into a similar series in my own field of the philosophy of language. For a major difference has emerged between Gins and Arakawa's concepts and those of pheno-

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menological linguistics: the placing of the architectural body, a social entity, a form of social praxis, in the centre of the stage. The landing site, a muted symbol and event-marker, close to the Deleuzean concept of haeccity, overcomes the separation between subject and object that has plagued the philosophy of language so far. This is to my mind Gins and Arakawa's main contribution: they enable us to avoid both the fetishism of abstraction that is induced by concentration on the system or on linguistic competence, and the methodological individualism of a speaker conceived as centre of consciousness and/or operations of enunciation. The passage through architecture is essential here, as it is what allows such *Aufhebung*: with Gins and Arakawa, *architecture speaks*.

We can now understand their apparent counter-formulation: "A person who is held in the grip of language alone will have lost touch with many other scales of action vital to her existence" (*Architectural Body* 82). What they reject here is the "internal" form of philosophy of language or linguistics, conforming to the structuralist "principle of immanence," which claims that as an object of scientific inquiry, language must be considered independently of the rest of the world, as a self-enclosed set of phenomena. But language is not self-enclosed, the body of the speaker is an architectural body, steeped in human experience and human practice. What *Architectural Body* enables us to overcome is not only the speaker by language and the counter-interpellation of language (and the lived world) by the speaker, or rather the organism-person-environment.

Conclusion

The philosopher of language has learnt a considerable amount from Gins and Arakawa. He has been comforted in his Deleuzean awareness of the contrast between sense and meaning (an analysis of *The Mechanism of Meaning* in terms of Deleuzean sense would be rewarding). He has been comforted in his Culiolian awareness of the importance of localisation in the construction of linguistic meaning. But he has also been encouraged to go beyond the phenomenological body as the site of language into a form of body that owes as much to the labouring body of social practice as to the phenomenological body of perceptual and experiential siting. In so doing, he has been able to discard the false contrasts that have plagued his branch of philosophy for generations, subject v. object, constraint v. freedom, and to avoid the twin sins of fetishism and individualism. That is a great deal indeed.

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ARCHITECTURE AGAINST MORTALITY: BUILDING ORIGINS

We know this much Death is an evil we have the gods' word for it; they too would die if death were a good thing

(Sappho, #87)

According to Plato, Diotima told Socrates that there are two ways to immortality—through the body, or through the soul (206B-209E). That is, one can reproduce and live forever through one's children, or one can live on by producing great works of art. Hitler built Nuremberg toward the latter end. Yet there is still Ozymandias, whose proud command that the mighty look upon his works and despair remains an imperative not because he is so formidable an emperor, but because the dilapidated remains of his statue demonstrate that even he was subject to the ravages of time. Gins and Arakawa reject the despair of believing that time undoes us all. They accuse such attitudes of defeatism: "Underlying all cultures, in East and West alike, is this assumption or attitudinal stance: we—each and every one of us—must die" (*Architectural Body* xiv). They develop a new kind of architecture, an architectural ethics, to change that attitude. "It is illogical," they argue, "for an ethical system that values life not to see mortality as fundamentally unethical," and they propose an alternative "crisis ethics" that opts for a reversible destiny (xviii). In their view, architecture that constructs surroundings for the benefit of the body can ultimately make it possible for "*an organism-person to go on indefinitely*" (xx). They refuse to die.

Diotima actually, however, offered Socrates a different path toward immortality—an ascent to the forms in which one catches a brief glimpse of eternity in not some beautiful thing, but in beauty itself. One can read Plato such that during the ascent, one leaves the body behind. But this is not necessarily the case. The progression is toward an *eidos*, an idea of beauty, so the journey can be construed as an inward voyage that does not transcend the physical body. Instead the self reaches eternity while staying within the circle of birth, life, and death. The philosophical architecture of Gins and Arakawa likewise tends towards immortality. But they seem to promise something more than a glimpse of eternity—the immortality of the physical body. Yet to read them so is to remain within the traditional metaphysics of matter and form, body and soul. Rather, they offer an ethics that is not *meta ta physica*. It is "an open challenge to our species to reinvent itself," not by transcending the body, but by rethinking the self as architectural body (xviii). Thereby is mortal destiny reversed.

It is not easy to catch up to such radical thinking, and I don't pretend to understand its every aspect. Nonetheless I wish to show how such a crisis ethics disrupts traditional oppositions of body and mind, sensation and understanding, nature and artifact, subject and object. My intention is not to prove their thesis of reversible destiny, but to rise to their challenge by exploring how nature's finitude can yet house immortal architectural body. I hope at the very least to provide a few axes of thought along which to engage their project.

Birth/Archê

Architecture: *archê*-tecture—*archê*: origin, beginning. *Archê* is not a mere "start," like the first point in a line. Rather, it entails the fullness of *genêsis*, birth. Architecture is matrix (Arakawa and Gins 35, 40). The original architectural site—the first place—is the womb. Aristotle argued that place cannot be a body, because if it were, two bodies would be in the same place at the same time (209a7). Impossible, he says. Clearly, Aristotle was never pregnant. Pregnancy is a rounding logic of self into other, a reconciling spiral of unity and plurality in possibility. As mother/matrix grows to become an other, who in turn has the potential to become a parent, a circle of continuity is traced.

Both baby and womb grow, but which shapes the other? They mutually "in-form". The first architectural act is the reciprocal shaping of womb and fetus: process, an interact. The womb is not a passive receptacle, but the original landing-site of architectural body, the first place with which the body finds itself co-structuring. It is not inert, but living and growing. Giving birth is not building a baby. Pregnancy is not an art, but a natural process. Contrary to the Newtonian account, wherein natural entities are bodies in motion subject to external forces, natural bodies are governed by the internal movement that is growth. Bodies have more than the material properties assigned to them by Newton—extension, hardness, impenetrability, and so on (Thayer 4-5). Human bodies, like all natural beings, have the additional feature of self-directed development. So place can be a body after all: the body of the mother, which shapes, is shaped by, and unfolds into the child. Self and world are thus co-constitutive from the very beginning.

It seems absurd, however, that two things can co-originate—mustn't one (logically, which here also means ontologically) precede the other, as cause must precede effect? No—not in the case of the teleological, that is, final causes. For example, somebody may run in order to lose weight such that weight loss is the final cause (*telos*) of running. Weight loss does not happen prior to running, because if it did, one would not need to run (except toward some other end, e.g. catching a bus). Reaching a final cause is a process of actualization. Through running, weight loss becomes actual. There is circularity—a self-referencing that is temporally extended—in the relation between running and weight loss. Future weight loss feeds back into the present, wherein the running begins that will lead to weight loss—weight loss causes running, which causes weight loss. Teleologically speaking, weight loss causes itself. In the hypothetical architecture of Gins and Arakawa, self and place are co-constitutive in that both are actualized (reach their *telos*) in the landing sites of architectural body—each brings itself into being through the other.

To think this way about architecture is to reject traditional Western logic in which opposites are irreconcilable, and to replace it with a new logic that, I propose, may be based on the circular relation between $arch\hat{e}$ and telos evident in natural growth. The architectural praxis of Gins and Arakawa evokes such teleo-

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logic—the circular logic of origin and end, cause and purpose. Aristotle pointed out in his *Physics* that simultaneously moving away and toward is impossible where rectilinear motion is concerned (261b31- 263a4). Yet if a line is not straight, if the path followed is circular, then one can depart from and approach the point of origin at the same time. A straight line has two defining points—its beginning and its end. A circle has no such singledout points—any point is both beginning and end of the circle. Hence, says Aristotle, the circle is infinite, and circular motion can be eternal (261b27). Taken teleo-logically, architecture is not the assembling of straight lines in order to master, manipulate and control space, but an idea that can invite immortality—it is process toward an end taken not eschatologically but teleo-logically, that is, end as *telos*, not death.

The self that is architectural body is accordingly no disembodied, Cartesian subject whose fundamental philosophical problem is to ensure that its place is not, after all, Hollywood's Matrix. What Gins and Arakawa suggest is that architecture has the potential "to undo, loosening to widen and re-cast, the concept of person" (xi-xii). In their view, a self is an "organism that persons… kicking and screaming, alive with process, emphatically and urgently rushed into a supporting context of embedded procedures" (1-4). Gestation is an architectural process, the arch-process that culminates in birth, the original fixing of consciousness into self, into "organism-person." Selfhood is not subjectivity, separated from the objects of consciousness, but contextualized process and integration, synthesis and co-growth—in short, life.

Life/Experience

One of the insights of twentieth-century phenomenology is that experience happens not just *in* a place. Rather, place is a fundamental moment of human experience. Hence Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* asserts that the "body is not primarily *in* space; it is of it" (148). Husserl notes in his fifth Cartesian meditation that consciousness experiences the self as "here" (145-6), and Heidegger argues that spatiality is existentially and ontologically constitutive of *Dasein*'s being-in-the world (95-113). Place is not just space as Kant defined it, an idea posited by the mind to make sensible intuition possible (67-74). Nor is it a relative or absolute part of space, as Newton suggested (Thayer 18). Place is more than mere space-time, an inert grid of coordinates, a giant graph-paper-like back-drop. It is rather the opening of human meaning, the life-world of human experience that has its *archê* contextually, in the places people dwell, in the mutual making of person and place. Gary Snyder recommends a rediscovery of place, which he thinks entails rediscovering what it means to be human. He quotes Dögen: "When you find your place where you are, practice occurs"(471). What begins, then, with architecture? Everything. That is, *world* originates in and through architecture. For place is not a container, but an experience.

Kant teaches that experience is structured by two faculties: intuition and understanding. In other words, sense-data is subsumed under categories of understanding to produce experience. Gins and Arakawa transform this modern conception of the synthetic nature of experience into an architectural account. Sentience is what structures the human experience into "world" in the Heideggerian sense—a context of intelligibility that is "of our making" (xii). Architecture is for them hypothesis—"a tentative constructing toward a holding in

place" (23). It has the "fixing in place" of axiomatic vision, and the openness to revision of the hypothetical. It is not the erection of buildings into a static world which houses equally passive bodies, but rather the active and interactive process of structuring reality to render it intelligible, giving reality a measure, apportioning it out. The organism-person brings continuity and fixity to the on-going fluidity of experience in order to make sense of the integrated whole of self and experience. She or he is "a fastening onto an area of consideration and a holding steady, a relative staying in place" (4). Fixity takes place at "landing sites" (5-22), which are matrices of intelligibility. That is, landing sites form a context of meaning within which lived experience takes place. They are where consciousness touches down in a synthetic moment in which self and world are merged into the unity of experience. Lived experience is an on-going process of sense-making, where "sense" does not mean, ambiguously, either perception or intelligibility, but both in the single dynamic process of world-building: a living that is alive and ever-changing, complete but never ending. Both organism-person (the sense-maker) and world (the sense made) are actualized in architectural body. Gins and Arakawa thus develop their newly conceived architecture to re-link the body and the world so that the "world gets invited in to be a different world" (xiv). It is not the Newtonian world of spatio-temporally extended bodies, or the philosopher's world of noumenally grounded phenomena-objects to which consciousness must build a more or less truth-preserving bridge—but the context of intelligibility that makes for experience.

Architectural body is thus not simply a self. It does not inhabit a world from which it is separate and distinguishable. Rather, architectural body is the originary unity of self and world before philosophical reflection drew them apart into subject and object, a move that reduced even the human body to *res extensa*. It is the place of world, for the sake of which world is. It is the living interaction in which consciousness does not just experience world passively, but rather actively "worlds" (used here as a verb) experience. Consciousness synthesizes into an intelligible whole the processes and events that are experience.

Accordingly, the *archê* of architecture does not end with birth. As origin (in the sense of *genêsis* rather than simply "start"), *archê* is also the ordering principle of growth.

The origin is not left behind like a vacated container, but instead remains to govern development. Once again, then, what begins with architecture? Life, existence, being. In nature, architecture, the process of building, is growth. The acorn is an *archê* within which an oak becomes present, that is, takes place, takes its place among the things that are. I say "within which" rather than "out of which" to capture the sense in which the origin, the acorn, is the site of possibilities within which the oak takes its stand. The acorn is not a used and subsequently empty vessel, but rather determines the process of growth: the acorn unfolds, as it were, into the oak, for which it both grounds possibilities and sets boundaries.

Artifacts were understood by Aristotle as different from natural entities: their process of becoming is not like that of natural beings. The act of making has a clear beginning and end. Under this account, architecture is thought of as rectilinear and finite. The building process begins, and when the house is complete, building stops. The difference between artifacts and natural entities is that a tree, for example, never stops "becoming." On a mature tree, there are always new leaves. Fully actual natural entities contain their end within themselves; *archê* and *telos*, when present together, are a self-sustaining, self-containing circle of completion—the teleo-

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logical circle described above. In contrast, the goal of carpentry is the house, and when that end is reached, the carpenter stops building—becoming and being are separate. Aristotle therefore calls the production of artifacts incomplete (1048b27-35).

But this difference between nature and artifact has been neglected in the intellectual history of the West, so that nature has been reduced by analogy to artifacts. That is, growth is simply the natural process by which form is imposed upon matter in the same way that an artist imposes shape on material. Thus generation is believed in a variety of religions to be creation by a divine artisan. This is at best, however, a metaphysics of production. Artifacts can better be understood as derivative from nature, which is not formed matter so much as directed growth. That is to say, artifacts are made from material that is borrowed from nature, and insofar as the latter retains its natural principle of growth (its *archê*), that *archê* continues to govern its changes. Aristotle took this insight from Antiphon: if a wooden bed were planted and anything grew, it would not be a bed but a tree (193a12-17). Natural processes persist throughout production—wood rots in spite of the fact that it has been built into a deck. Accordingly, artifacts are always secondary to nature, that is, they are ontologically derivative. A natural entity is not a special kind of artifact, but rather artifacts are modified nature. Consistent with this Aristotelian account, Gins and Arakawa do not reduce natural process to a kind of architecture, but instead rethink architecture as natural process. Their project therefore contains the fundamental insight that the ability to build things is in fact a natural ability, one human being has by its very nature.

Now, in the case of artifactual production, of course, the being which provides the material forces of production may be killed, such that the being's *archê* ceases to govern the processes of change to which the material is subject. In fact, natural entities die eventually anyway, even without human intervention; and likewise, under a logic of production, techno-logic, people are mortal—people are matter (body) upon which form (soul, or mind) has been imposed. But the art of architecture can be thought in a new way, suggest Gins and Arakawa, a way that challenges human mortality. For architecture is not the imposition of structure onto passive material in order then to house the similarly passive bodies of human beings. Rather, Gins and Arakawa envision architecture as a process in which being and becoming are inextricably and indistinguishably entangled—a complete, yet never-ending process. An end (*telos*) without end (death).

Death/Telos

Architecture is an art, a *techne*, a technology. Technology seems to go against nature, to control and manipulate it toward human ends. I have argued above that artifacts are secondary to natural process, and elsewhere that technology is most successful when it works with nature rather than against it. Gins and Arakawa are suggesting that architecture that works with the human body can allow the organism-person to go on indefinitely. Traditional oppositions between body and mind, sensation and understanding, nature and artifact, subject and object, fail to hold in the context of their work. Organism-persons are mindful bodies, sensing knowers, at one with their context such that subject-object distinctions are artificial. In what sense are organism-persons both nature and artifact? The distinction between the natural and the artifactual is blurred insofar as the artifactual is always alrea-

dy embedded in the natural. The organism-person is not a simple conjunction of mind and body, but an inseparable, functioning unity—a self. What are its limits?

If Gins and Arakawa are right that death is not an inevitable necessity of the human condition, then contemporary conceptions of what it means to be human need rethinking. Heidegger, for example, argued that being-towards-death is the *sine qua non* of authenticity (260-267), and he thus took finitude to be the basis of temporality, the condition for the possibility of existence as a thinker. Gins and Arakawa do not accept that death makes thinking possible, but rather that thought faces its greatest challenge in thinking *against* death. They press the thinker to give up a defeatist attitude that passively assumes and accepts human mortality. Yet nowhere do they suggest that the experience of organism-persons is outside time. Rather, they urge the thoughtful reader to take nothing for granted, to see through age-old, habitual assumptions, and to question the nature of time, human being, and understanding; indeed, to question the very nature of nature itself. Such questions stand at the definitive quintessence of human experience. If the *telos* of human being is rationality (not just "mind" in the traditional philosophical sense, but embodied reasoning), then Gins and Arakawa breathe new life into this end. They push the thinker to full realization of the human *telos* by refusing to accept death as a done deal.

I have suggested an alternative logic to make philosophical sense of their bold thesis, a circular teleo-logic for architectural body to experience life not as a rectilinear, unidirectional vector with a fixed starting-point and an inevitable end-point, but rather as natural process, cyclic and ever-moving. Milan Kundera writes of the life of Paradise, which "was not like following a straight line to the unknown [... but] moved in a circle among known objects," on the basis of "the sweet law of repetition," whose "monotony bred happiness, not boredom" (287-91). One can envision such a life that has a kind of positive repetition, positive because it is not a tedious, eternal return of the identical, but reiterative possibility: identity and difference together in cyclical movement. This life would move not according to the rationale of modern science, whose unceasing search for progress drives it ever forward, nor according to the impulse of consumer culture which insists unswervingly on the new and improved. Rather, teleo-logic supports a circular movement between *archê* and *telos* in the full actualization of natural entities and their processes of self-realization.

Such a teleo-logical rationale is also eco-logical in that it provides new ways for thinking about nature. It promotes the movement of sustainability, rather than the one-way motion of disposability in which things are not just used, but used up. Teleo-logic is not characterized by mind-created rules of reasoning, but by the logic that governs the movement of nature. Given that all arts, including architecture, are embedded in the context of natural process, then nature is a primary home for organism-persons, regardless of what walls are erected to keep the rain out. Rather than condoning a destructive logic of consumption, architectural body can be at home in its naturalness. Thus, in much the same way that Arne Naess promotes the self-realization of all living organisms in his ecosophy (30), the architecture of Gins and Arakawa is a basis for experiencing nature as a home, a home in which all organisms are respected in their movement towards their end. Architectural body can accordingly support an ecology in the true sense of "eco" (from *oikos*, home): being at home in nature; and an economy (*oikos*, home and *nomos*, law—the laws of household management) of sustainability.

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Gins and Arakawa thus make it possible to see the infinite in the finite: the eternity of the idea in the concrete particular, the infinity of the circle whose finite circumference can nonetheless be traveled eternally, the unceasing renewal and sustainability of natural process. Yet they do not argue simply for the fixing of the ethereal one in the stability of the species; their refusal to die does not mean living on through one's children. There is further the sense in which from one's perspective, experience encompasses all of time. For as Epicurus wrote to Menoeceus, "when we exist, death is not present, and when death is present we do not exist. [...] Therefore that most frightful of evils, death, is nothing to us" (150). The actualized self, the organism-person, is the ground of its own immortality, its co-extensiveness with time, because the organism-person is the basis for all experience of world. This is not the immortality of the divine, whose omniscience precludes novelty by freezing the goddess in an eternity wherein change is no longer possible. It is the infinite possibility of architectural body to play with its space while being informed by the erected spaces it inhabits.

Gins and Arakawa have challenged me no longer to accept death *unquestioningly*, and not to live my life as a straight line but to move within the infinity of the circle. I anticipate a continuing journey through the philosophical place within which they have set me—neither *Holzweg* nor *aporia*, but an open region within which thinking can reconfigure both self and world into architectural body.

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THE ULTIMATE PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

It began this way: A big book arrives at my office. Opening it, I see that it is *Reversible Destiny: We have decided not to die,* by Arakawa and Gins. I open it and give it a look, and immediately find that many of the many of its images are susceptible to my multistable analyses from *Experimental Phenomenology*. That is, the two dimensional figures can be seen in a variety of three-dimensional ways. For example, the "tube/tubes" figure.¹

Do a quick three-variation here: it can be a flat figure with a circle at both top and bottom connected by two, parallel lines; or it can be a three-dimensional tube which directional reversibility—and while I am stopping short here, this figure is "phenomenological" in that it displays itself as having multiple variations.²

In a more self-conscious version of this same variational phenomenon, take the figure with explanations which I shall call "THIS IS AN AMBIGUOUS X-RAY OF ANYTHING." Arakawa and Gins themselves point to some of the variations. Again, it could be a flat, two-dimensional object with a square at one end and a circle at the other. But if taken as three-dimensional, it, like the previous figure, can be reversible with respect to how the figure can "stand up," and in this case both the title and the phenomenology point to yet more variations. I was hooked—here are artists who *do* phenomenology.

Foregoing my usual philosophical tendency to analyze this structurally, let us simply note some associations: First, how mistaken it would be to consider *The Mechanism of Meaning*, the research project which subsumes these images I am discussing, a work of "conceptual art," for the multistabilities it presents are *seen*, and thus *perceived*. But this is a multidimensional, flexible, open perception—very far from any "stimulus-response" stuff, which is a more standard interpretation of perception. Second, if the reversibilities are actually *perceived*, this means whoever is doing the seeing is *embodied*. Perceptions are bodily activities, not the actions of some homunculus inside a *camera obscura* box looking at mental images which represent something "out there." But, third, how far do variations and reversibilities go? That is the question.

It continues: Having dropped a note to the sender address, I get a telephone call some weeks later from one Madeline Gins, who points out that she and I had actually met once, on an elevator at Fordham University at a Heidegger Conference! And thus begins a second phase of phenomenologist-meets-artistsmeet-phenomenologist, comprising several occasions in New York, including a book-exchange moment

¹ See Ihde, fig. a (mech3_4.jpg).

² See Ihde, fig. b (tubes/tube.jpg).

where we trade a half dozen books by each of us. And then one night during a blizzard, we meet for dinner. The conversation again turns to variations, this time with respect to making music. We—all four of us, Linda, Madeline, Arakawa and me—exchange musical experiences, but then I cannot resist, and once again I revert to a description of auditory multistable actions. I point out that, for example, there are cultural differences in the way flutes are played—we are most familiar with flutes played via controlled breath through mouths. But there are in some cultures flutes that are played through *noses*, and even some that are played through the *anus*, through controlled flatulence. Everyone begins to laugh, and that evening, I seem to remember, was through and through filled with laughter. Once again, however, note the role of variation, bodies, and reversibilities. We remain "phenomenological." The humans at table and those referred to with unusual abilities perform these variational reversibilities.

You will now forgive me, I hope, if I make just a few comments about phenomenology. In its late modern form, it is formulated by Edmund Husserl, who arrived at the notion that knowledge is produced through doing "phenomenological variations," which are supposed to show what is variant and what is invariant in a given region of phenomena. Variations are the means by which possibility structures are discovered. In his time, however, the dominant style of epistemology was "early modern" and held that "real" reality was external, objective, and material. The human "subject" received impressions or sensations caused by things going on "out there." So, Husserl figured that he must find some way to short-cut this established way of thinking about knowledge and experience in order to produce a more robust explanation for knowledge. He ended up calling his method *phenomenology*, and to perform it, one had to put into play a series of *reductions* or means of setting aside the beliefs and prejudices which were common to the theory of knowledge of the early twentieth century. There were a series of reductions, "natural," "eidetic," "transcendental" and the like, each of which were to make available a different and deeper level of phenomena. But this is not a course in phenomenology, so I am not going to go on and explain these in detail. I need only one clue-the "natural" reduction was supposed to set aside one's belief in "external reality"—in order to pay attention to just how any given experiential phenomenon could be experienced. Husserl's claim was that an accurate and rigorous description of the phenomenon did not require the "belief" in some particular kind of "reality." This obviously sounded radical and even counter-intuitive to many, but what was actually being set aside was the notion that objects are simply "out there" as interpreted by the Cartesian style of epistemology. Husserl contended that one could do a full description of, say, my black brief case over on the table, without having to "believe" that it existed or that it is a thing in itself apart from me. It is experientially "present" to me and I can go into exquisite detail concerning its modes of presence.

So, we have variations, referred to above, and reversibilities, and now "reductions." And I have been asking myself, ever since meeting Arakawa and Gins, is what they are doing *the ultimate phenomenological reduction*? Does setting aside the "natural belief" in a non-reversible destiny which ends in death, do something phenomenologically radical? And, if so, what is it?

One of the books we traded was *Architectural Body*, which reciprocates with sections of *Reversible Destiny* around notions of "landing sites," "architectural body," "architectural surrounds," and the like. In

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common sense parlance, we move from two-dimensional drawings and paintings to three-dimensional artifacts (For the moment, I will suspend the fourth dimension—time—from consideration). But, illustrations from books have a limitation since three-dimensionality is not quite present, and since the books remain limited to the presentation of two-dimensional *depictions* of three-dimensional installations. Why is this important to note?

Phenomenologically, it is very important because whereas I noted the *reversibilities* possible in the first two illustrations above, I did not make the next move to three-dimensionality. Return to the first example, "tube(s)." In the two-dimensional presentation there are variations and reversibilities *each of which* could be "built" as three-dimensional things, or objects. Now, in the initial two-dimensional presentation, the three-dimensional possibilities are quickly discovered (at least by one phenomenologically trained). Each of these possibilities is a perceptual *alternation*, that is, each is "either/or" and not "both/and." But if actually, materially constructed from the visual possibilities and made into three-dimensional objects, *the easy reversibilities disappear*! Each material, three-dimensional object is either one, or another, or any other of whatever the series allows (and while my analysis above stopped with a few variations, there are more than I initially mentioned!) For *purposes* here, my point is a simple one: a move from two to three dimensions introduces *constraints* upon variations and reversibilities. To put it another way, the more complex and multidimensional the phenomenon becomes, also the more constrained. Where now, Arakawa and Gins?

We must now begin to move farther, into a less "conceptual" and even "perceptual" phenomenology, into one more fully embodied, a kind of *existential* phenomenology. Two points, both of which are to be found in Arakawa and Gins. First, both phenomenology and Arakawa and Gins know that there is no such thing as a simply "visual" perception—all perception is what I call "whole body" perception. *Reversible Destiny* is filled with pages which "visually" display the multidimensional overlapping of vision/tactility/kinesthesia, so they, like all good phenomenologists, know that the old discrete senses stuff simply cannot account for whole body, active engagement with a surrounding world. This is part of a move to a three-dimensional world, both for bodies or "body-persons" as they call us, and for the objects, discrete tubes in this case. We are right on track. In addition, Arakawa and Gins also recognize the interactive character of an embodied being, a *body-person*, with an experienced environment, which in a special configuration becomes an *architectural surround*. Again, phenomenologically, there is no such thing as an isolated and autonomous "individual" apart from an ever-present experienced world or environment; but the reverse is also the case; from any projection into an environment, whoever the body-person is gets back a sense of relationship with and impact from that environment.

Go back for a second time to my first "reduction" example. I claimed that the *belief* that my briefcase over there exists externally *is not necessary* in order to do a good description of it. But this bracketing or suspension of such a belief is also not entirely "neutral" in that the very suspension of the belief in "external reality" *allows there to be a greater awareness of the relationship: briefcase-me/me-briefcase*! This is what phenomenologists call *intentionality*.

Arakawa and Gins have a different vocabulary—although many, many of their commentators recognize its basically phenomenological thrust. One tendency, which is eclectic, heterogeneous, and sometimes uniquely technical, is illustrated on the cover of *Architectural Body*. They claim they want conversations with the fields of "self-organization," "autopoeisis," "artificial life," and "consciousness studies," in spite of the fact that, so far as I can tell, the metaphysical motivations within most of these fields are diametrically opposite those of Arakawa and Gins. But theirs is also a vocabulary which plays with the notion of a body-person, in action and fully perceptual, in relation with an experienced world or environment. But we have shifted ground with this move to "architecture." We have shifted ground from the twodimensional "tube(s)," which suggest richer ranges of three-dimensional possibilities, to architectural "three-dimensionality." If parallel, does what becomes an "architectural surround" do the same at a higher level? I think this may be what Arakawa and Gins may be partly after. The architectural body is body-inrelation-with a surround, which is three-dimensionally a place within which a body-person may move, interact with, and perceive. One of their metaphors is that of a snail and its shell which it takes with it.

And it is here that variations—radical variations—return. Their fellow architects, moreover, recognize this. Greg Lynn, in Reversible Destiny, argues that "gravity" has been the "truth" of traditional architecture. Buildings must "stand" (and with this, remain in place, static, if you will), and shelter humans who find place "inside" (214). In simplest terms this means that most architecture has been that of static objects, however constructed and shaped. Many of their architectural peers discern that there is a deconstructive moment by Arakawa and Gins toward this architecture, and of course the ultimate challenge remains the decision not to die. What Arakawa and Gins do, in part, is to make the architectural surround such that the humans must *actively* interact with the surround. Arakawa and Gins load the notion, architecture, with a lot: "architecture as we newly conceive it actively participates in life and death matters [...].[We want] an architecture that could redefine life" (Architectural Body xi). Taken materially, this also means that the material object, too, must be dynamic. There are lots of experimental examples of this in their repertory, of which the rubber labyrinth in *Reversible Destiny* is an example. The person-body has to move through, and interact with the floppy sheets of rubber, finding its way within a non-rigid surround (147). What I would call an "umbrella house," described in Architectural Body, must be interacted with, so that each time one enters a new room, one must "construct it" and then let it collapse afterward when one moves to another landing site (39-43).

But even in imagined, proposed or model architectures in which the "walls," "floors," or "entrances" do not move, or are not flexible, there is a heavy call upon body-persons for *engaged action*. Labyrinths are a signature here, Arakawa and Gins claim, for their "Critical Resemblances (labyrinthine) house:" "It could take several hours to go from the living room to the kitchen" (*Reversible Destiny* 258). This is serious body-person/architectural interaction! Similarly, in all the examples I have seen, walls are curved, rooms may rotate, there may be counter-labyrinths above as well as on the floor, floors are curved, and perspectives highly skewed from "Cartesian" coordinates. The point is well taken; whether flexible or static, this architecture demands interaction.

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As an aside, I must remark that, while it is clear that Arakawa and Gins are pointedly challenging architectural traditions of *stasis* or stability, to do so is necessarily to choose another set of selected variations—the *actional* ones. This architecture is *not* for the physically disabled or challenged, or, for that matter, the very old and feeble-bodied body-person. This selection away from stasis is a selection away from the body styles associated with aging and death. Such persons would have a very hard time with this style of surround! But maybe that's a point?

Yet, all this remains a highly provocative, imaginative and original trajectory into the variational. It remains in a trajectory with art and poiesis, if these are taken as providing sets of *gestalts* which reconfigure things so as to stimulate new and different takes upon reality. That, certainly, is a selective strength of this radical variation of architectural body/architectural surround. And, most importantly, it shows dramatically its capacity to project possibility structures, not only from two to three dimensional variations, but from three to *four?*—dimensional ones.

The fourth dimension is *time*, or phenomenologically speaking, *temporality*. And it is this dimension which is the target of the ultimate phenomenological reduction, expressed by Arakawa and Gins as the decision "not to die." It is the temporal counterpart of what I called above the "natural" reduction, the belief in an "external" reality. Here one suspends the belief in the necessity of the termination of temporality, or in human terms, death. Now, I claimed with the earlier reduction, that the belief in "external reality" was not necessary in order to make a good phenomenological description, but also that this suspension is not neutral in that it allows one to forefront the relationship embodied (perceiver/perceived) or interacted with an object. What happens with a parallel suspension of a "belief" in death?

It should be parallel with the results of a "belief" in "external reality." That is, one does not have to "believe" in death to get a good phenomenological description of temporal phenomena. And as with the first reduction, what should happen is that the phenomenon in view should be clearer in its relationship with the person doing the description. Phenomenologically, this leads us to Martin Heidegger and what I will claim is the need for Arakawa and Gins to "overcome" Heidegger. Why?

No more than I did for Husserl, I shall here also eschew any long detour, other than to indicate that Heidegger, more than any other phenomenologist, performed a deep analysis of temporality, and that at its core he found "Being-towards-Death." Paraphrasing as simply as I can, temporality for "beings" such as we are (*Dasein*) is a futural projection. For Heidegger, unlike any philosopher before, it is the future which is "foundational" and out of which both past and present spring. Indeed, this view of temporality is so radical that one can say that it implies, *if the future changes, then so does the past and eventually the present itself.* Now, on the one side, this should sound promising for Arakawa and Gins—why not simply project the radical possibility of a temporality without any termination in death? But this would not work for Heidegger. For Heidegger the ultimate—the *horizon* or limit of temporality—is its utmost possibility, which he phrases as *the impossibility of my possibility, my being.* In short, the most radical limit for temporality is its very extinction, or what we in ordinary parlance call "death." Being-towards-death in Heidegger carries lots of weight and many implications including what he considers a need to get at our being

(*Dasein*) as a whole. Unless we can establish finitude, he argues, we cannot have a view upon the totality of our being. And, rather than taking spatiality as a central clue—which would primarily establish ourselves as finite "objects"—Heidegger takes temporality as the clue. We establish ourselves as finitely temporal. Here the going gets tough.

Must all humans die? I take it that both Heidegger and Arakawa and Gins find what might be called a mere empirical generalization insufficient to conclude affirmatively. In fact, we do not know with certainty that all previous humans have died. That is, we do not have definitive evidence that all humans from previous generations are dead (Although neither do we have any positive evidence that any previous generation humans have not died!). By philosophical standards, all we have empirically is a very high probability that all prior generation humans have died, a probability with billions to some unknown, perhaps infinitesimally small probability. For Heidegger, and I can't be sure about Arakawa and Gins, neither can one infer one's own death by seeing others die, by experiencing the deaths of others second hand, since, for Heidegger, death is always and necessarily *phenomenologically* one's *own* death. And in light of the above, this is "present" only as a temporal awareness of the possibility of one's own impossibility. Does this give any wiggle room?

It depends. Not much in Heidegger's own terms, since he is one of those philosophers who make it hard to accept anything in *parts*. Everything hangs together, and the difficult vocabulary which many have accused him of is part of the strategy to make you either take him or leave him. I would argue that we are left with a desire to retain this futurally foundational sense of temporality, but somehow find a way to make *his* inevitability of one's own impossibility *the ultimate fate*.

What Heidegger has done is make temporality non-parallel to the external spatiality of the materially "real." Thus being-toward-death in Heidegger is not the temporal equivalent of "external reality" in the phenomenological reduction, precisely because Heidegger has made death not something external, but something within and unique to human temporality. Still death is, while living, always the *not yet*. Can this reverberate with the decision not to die? Is the decision not to die the affirmative choice to live in the *not yet*? While I do not think this "gets beyond" Heidegger, maybe it "gets around" him? It's a bit of a fudge. But one must beware, because if Heidegger is right, to live in the *not yet* may be to foreswear what he thinks is getting *Dasein* into view as a whole. So, there is a price to be paid here. Yet Arakawa and Gins could make one more move here to overcome Heidegger. Futurity is what shapes both past and present, and futurity is revealed through being resolute—for Heidegger, being-towards-death. Arakawa and Gins are resolute towards non-death; is this a viable possibility for temporality?

Having now faced the utmost or the ultimate phenomenological reduction in its Heideggerian form, we must now return to the more concrete, more embodied role of architectural bodies. Once again I shall refer in passing to some phenomenological history. Maurice Merleau-Ponty was perhaps the most nuanced phenomenologist of the body (and perception). Reading his *Phenomenology of Perception* makes it clear that human incarnation is such that it is *active* and is the "opening to the world" which we humans are. I have argued that Merleau-Ponty not only describes the active body, but that his hidden ideal of an engaged

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body is something like a "sports body"—that is, the well tuned body of one who is able to act both transparently and project that action into a world, or a "surround" if we use Arakawa-Gins language. This is doubly apparent in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, because his counterfoil to a transparent bodily human action is *Schneider*, an aphasiac, who cannot act in such a way, but who has to either mimic others' gestures to gesture, or to, in effect, give commands to his limbs since he suffers a brain lesion. Similarly, I believe the secret, active bodies of Arakawa and Gins are those persons who *engage* with the architectural surrounds with which they are provided with this new architecture.

And, now I add something from my own phenomenology of technology: artifacts, technologies, and "architectures" insofar as they are material are relativistically relational to body-persons. I have always held this, but phenomenologically, it is also the case that all such relationships are *non-neutral*, that they are transformative and selective. This should be a positive point for Arakawa and Gins, because unless a different architecture provides a *difference*, which in their case is participation in life and death matters, then architecture would be of little use or interest. But, precisely because such materiality *does selectively transform*, it also *magnifies or amplifies* certain possibilities while *reducing or dampening* others.

In the Arawaka and Gins case, it seems clear that bodily, perceptual action is called for. None of their architectural designs, even those which are materially in-place, call for passivity. Cemeteries will not exist in their cities; death directionality is excluded. But more than this, the very action-centric—if I can call it that—trajectories of this architecture are selectivities *against* passivity, inactivity, and if I may suggest it, bodily incapacities, and maybe even any long term repose. I return to "umbrella house": "Everything that can be done in an ordinary house can be done in this one, but some maneuvering may be necessary to reach the point of sitting pretty" (28, emphasis mine). That maneuvering includes, each time one enters a new space, opening up or "constructing" that space: "Each piece of material on the pile has ribs or spokes that open like those of an umbrella. Ready-to-be-activated expanding mechanisms lie at four-foot intervals." Then, in what seems to be unique, there is an acknowledged recognition that this may be difficult for the physically challenged: "Remote control switches operate sensors that bloom and fabricate the house on behalf of those who are ill or handicapped" (28). But while action is reduced, the handicapped must still directly or indirectly activate the switch! If their sensors are like motion sensors, the ultimate stillness of death would not activate the fabrication. This concession aside—wherein the house itself is remotely active for an inactive body-person-the focal idea is that one must participate in the opening and "making" of the house in use. This sort of architecture "demands" activity on the part of its inhabitants. It is the polar opposite of a mausoleum!

Let us look at where we are: At the heart of phenomenology, I contend, lies a *variational* method which includes as the examples above have shown, multistabilities and multidimensionalities. Phenomena may undergo variations, reversibilities and multiple possibilities. These are best revealed when the usual "objectivist" position is set aside in "reductions." But, variations also have certain structural feature; for example, the more complex the phenomena, the more constrained the possible variations. Also, variations are always selective. For the architecture of Arakawa and Gins, I have tried to show that selectivity moves away from various familiar stases and toward a kind of "self organizing" activity. Selectivities may thus

become *trajectories*, and the ultimate trajectory Arakawa and Gins claim is the reversible destiny of a trajectory towards dying.

What I am claiming is that there is much which can be understood in this most radical conceptuality of all, by viewing it as a kind of phenomenological practice. What would it mean to *live* this variational trajectory? Can this phenomenology be fully *existentialized*? That is the question. If so, then this would be the ultimate phenomenological reduction.

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THE ARCHE-TECHNICS OF LIFE

In a recent essay, I argued that Arakawa and Gins's radical architectural theory was constrained by its "primary focus on the body" ("Wearable Space" 339). In this paper, I would like to nuance, if not effectively correct, that claim by situating their ecological—or, as I shall prefer to put it, *transductive*¹—conception of the "architectural body" in the context of recent theoretical debates concerning life and its correlation with the concept of the human. Doing so will show that Arakawa and Gins's understanding of embodiment is both more sophisticated than I earlier realized and, more consequentially, that it is thoroughly rooted in an integral theory of life.

In their theoretical articulations and practical ventures, both of which remain equally concrete, Arakawa and Gins foreground the originary coupling of embodied human life with what they call the "architectural surround." As the original supplement, a *transductive correlate*, of the human body, architecture constitutes the basis for *any* activity that would inform the "epiphylogenetic" evolution of the human (evolution by means other than life, following the concept of philosopher Bernard Stiegler). Here I shall try to work through the consequences of this radical gesture for our understanding of life, the human, and the status of technics in/as the juncture between them. For if architecture, considered as a primary dimension of the living, forms the basis for the very existence of the human as a being constitutively in excess of itself, then the investment of architecture as a means for the intensification of life can be expected to have important evolutionary consequences. Such, I contend, is the purport of Arakawa and Gins's provocative program for an architecture of "reversible destiny" and for their more recent formulation of a "crisis ethics."

Life

In their recent treatise, *Architectural Body*, Arakawa and Gins position architecture as an activity of life, a means by which life is constituted or constitutes itself:

Architecture occurs as one of many ways life sees fit to conduct and construct itself; a form of life, and all forms of life have, without doubt, as of this date, but a limited and uncertain existence. [...] Life—Bios—would seem to be constituted by interactions between tentative constructings toward a holding in place, with the body, the body-in-action, surely the main fiddler at the fair. Bodily movements that take place within and happen in relation to works of architecture, architectural surrounds, are to some extent formative of them.

¹ Proposed by philosopher Gilbert Simondon, transduction defines a relation whose terms is secondary to the relation itself and has no existence outside the relation. See Simondon, *L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*, the introduction of which has been translated into English as "The Genesis of the Individual," in *Incorporations*, ed. J. Crary and S. Kwinter.

Those living within and reading and making what they can of an architectural surround are instrumental in and crucial to its tentative constructing toward a holding in place. We do not mean to suggest that architecture exists only for the one who beholds or inhabits it, but rather that the body-in-action and the architectural surround should not be defined apart from each other, or apart from bioscleave. [...] What is authoritative in human life: a person's tentativeness—a totally constructed tentativeness—surefooted rightful hesitation, on-the-hesitating-mark. Persons need to be rescued from self-certainty, but they also need to put their tentativeness in precise order in relation to works of architecture. The hypotheses of procedural architecture query how it is possible—what a tentative constructing toward a holding in place entails—to be a knowing body in a bioscleave—the ins and outs of viability. (49-50)

What we are given here is a thoroughly integral conception of embodied life: one in which life is, from the get-go, *bios*, that is, life endowed with a supplementary dimension, as in the supplements of reason or of politics that, from Aristotle onwards, have more or less co-determined the Western philosophical conception of the human being. Yet the supplement at issue in Arakawa and Gins's work—indeed, the supplement at issue in architecture as such—is neither that of reason nor that of politics, but instead the supplement of architecture itself: the originary relation of the body-proper with something outside it, with the architectural surround—the transduction of the architectural body itself. If this originary relation forms the basis for subsequent transductive materializations of the body in/and the biosphere (bioscleave), up to the point of knowledge proper (the *knowing* relation envisioned at the end of the above citation), its bodily origins indicate an affiliation with that other Greek term for life, *zoe*, the root of the very term (zoology) that is held to be supplemented in the species-defining, epiphylogenetic evolution of the human.

How are we to understand this affiliation and the suture of *zoe* and *bios* that it would seem to propose? What are the effects of this crossing-back-over-to-the-domain-of-life that makes architecture (itself the vehicle for a supplementation of life) the transductive correlate of the living body? And what is it about architecture itself, about the transductive operation from which the architectural body arises, that facilitates the realization of such a suturing, such an active in-differentiation between these two concepts of life whose very separability has, in the eyes of philosopher Giorgio Agamben, facilitated the nightmare we call modernity?

If architecture in-divides *zoe* and *bios*, if it constitutes "a form of life that is wholly exhausted in bare life and a *bios* that is only its own *zoe*" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 187), it is precisely because it distills culture (*bios*) down to a point of origin prior to the division between the purely zoological and the supplementary (epiphylogenetic evolution). Can it really be a surprise, then, to discover that, approached from another angle, Arakawa and Gins's work comprises a thorough assault on culture itself? For them, everything begins with the insufficiency of our current experience of culture, of the embodied habits responsible for destining us to die, or, what amounts to the same thing, to live a life of mere survival, life as temporary resistance to the inevitability of death. In essence, what is wrong with culture is that it has lost touch with the transductive correlation linking person and bioscleave:

The totally mad and relentless wasting away of life—bodies-proper and their extended or architectural bodies alike—is a consequence of a fundamental procedural insufficiency of bioscleave; that is, bioscleave, if looked at from the perspective of those who want to live and are even so routinely denied life, should be taken as being [...] half-baked [read insufficiently procedural]. (95)
Informed by a thorough-going functionalist determination, culture does not challenge our bodies to explore and discover what they can do, but furnishes a static set of habits that allow us simply to get by.

In opposition to such an architecture of function and to such a static concept of culture, Arakawa and Gins propose a procedural architecture; one that deploys tactically posed architectural surrounds to stimulate the body (or more precisely: the "organism that persons") to extend its power, to intensify its own proper vitality. Given our cultural addiction to mortality, they contend, the path toward a procedurally sufficient concept of culture can be trod only if we submit *bios* to *zoe*, or, more exactly, only if we invest the body—that site of intersection between the zoological and the supplementary—with the task of taking us beyond what we might call the "possibility barrier." Just as embodiment "trickles up" to impact higher-order conceptual demarcations on the model of cognitive linguists like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,² so too does the embodied response to a challenging architectural surround stimulate new sensations and, with them, new questions. Once again, the operative distinction separates a functionalist deployment of architecture from a procedural one:

An architectural surround that is functional, such as a space capsule, and such as the greater part of the built world of our day, facilitates an organism that persons in its actions, extending the senses no questions asked, whereas an architectural surround that is procedural, a tactically posed surround, fills an organism that persons with questions by enabling it to move within and between its own modes of sensing. (Arakawa and Gins 58)

As a vehicle for redefining life, the body forms a concrete mode of processing and answering questions. As a vehicle for reconfiguring the body, architecture forms a concrete mode of posing questions. Put together, body and architecture allow for a rich exploration of ourselves, of the human species, that remains situated in the concrete, and thus responsive to what's really going on. Once again, the rationale here is the demands posed by the topic of life:

Questions about the nature and purpose of our species cannot be answered through reflection alone. Questions and answers are always handled body-wide [...]. Depending on reflection alone represents too drastic a reduction, one that unnecessarily distorts the picture, when it is the body that is being queried as to itself. [...] The body can yield answers through that which it subsists as, through the whole of itself, inclusive of its sequences of actions and the surroundings into which, in a variety of ways, it extends itself. The investigative work that can yield answers cannot be done in the abstract; it must, on the contrary, be done on-site where living happens. (xv)

Defined as the experimental deployment of the environment (the architectural surround) in order to open new intensities of life, architecture allows the embodied organism to explore its own sensory potentiality. It opens possibilities for sensation that remain "between" its actualized modes of sensing and "between" its actualized experience as particular "persons" or "behavioral subsets of the organism" (2). Architecture, in short, opens a domain of excess—excess of the organism over itself, that is, over its own actual capacity for sensation and expe-

² See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, and, especially, Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*.

rience. In this sense, it might be said to tap into the wisdom of the body, to open a modality of radically impersonal embodiment that quite simply remains inaccessible to reflection alone. Because this modality is coconstitutive of the experience of life that defines the human, architecture must be accorded a role as transductive complement of the body. But this means that the architectural body must be granted priority over the body proper and the architectural surround, considered separately. The architectural body: emergence of bodily sense and environmental extension beyond or beneath the actual experience comprising an organism that persons.

One can discern in this program for architectural embodiment echoes of Gilles Deleuze's neo-Spinozist ethics of affect. For Deleuze as for Arakawa and Gins, it is a question of discovering what one is capable of, a question of moving beyond or before the possibility barrier. Thus Deleuze writes:

[...] no one knows ahead of time the affects one is capable of; it is a long affair of experimentation, requiring a lasting prudence, a Spinozan wisdom that implies the construction of a plane of immanence or consistency. Spinoza's ethics [is conceived as] an ethology, that is, as a composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities for affecting and being affected on this plane of immanence. That is why Spinoza calls out to us in the way he does: you do not know beforehand what a body or a mind can do, in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination. (Spinoza 125)

If there is a crucial difference between Deleuze's neo-Spinozist ethics of affect and Arakawa and Gins's "crisis ethics," that is because they determine affective capacity at fundamentally different scales. Whereas Deleuze (modifying, but in essence following, Spinoza's monism of substance) determines affect against the backdrop of a plane of immanence and thus in a manner wholly indifferent to any organizational logic that might characterize one form of being as against another, Arakawa and Gins specifically invest the form of structural coupling that defines the human being (i.e., the transductive operation responsible for generating the architectural body). Because Deleuze defines the human body as a body like any other, through the conjunction of molecular relations that define its individuality, he renders it a virtual entity whose potentiality is disjoined from its specific organization as a living organism. For Arakawa and Gins, by contrast, the potentiality of the human is rooted in its concrete embodiment, and can only be experimentally actualized as a function of the organism considered as an integral, that is, organizationally closed, but structurally-plastic, whole.

This difference appears in all its starkness when it is a question of accounting for the relation between life and the person. For Deleuze, and for Agamben following him, life is, in its essence, radically impersonal: *a* life, life in the indefinite. It is to Charles Dickens that Deleuze turns to exemplify his claim, citing the character of Riderhood, a despicable man, held in universal contempt, who nonetheless and unexpectedly comes to inspire respect, even love, at the moment when life seems to be passing from him.³ "Between his life and his death," writes Deleuze,

³ Riderhood is a character in *Our Mutual Friend*. Agamben cites the relevant passage: "See! A token of life! An indubitable token of life! The spark may smoulder and go out, or it may glow and expand, but see! The four rough fellows seeing, shed tears. Neither Riderhood in this world, nor Riderhood in the other, could draw tears from them; but a striking human soul between the two can do it easily. He is struggling to come back. Now he is almost here, now he is far away again.

[t]here is a moment that is only that of a life playing with death. The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens: a "Homo tantum" with whom everyone empathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. (Pure Immanence 28-29)

This impersonal life can be said to double *the* life of the person, and yet, in contrast to the accidents that make up the latter, it comprises life's essence, the "singularities and the events" that constitute life. Like the molecular composition of the human being, impersonal life is pure immanence, that which lies behind yet outside the individual, the person—a kind of pure virtuality, a virtual field unbound to the concrete organization of the living (human) organism.

For Arakawa and Gins, by contrast, the impersonal *is* the organism, or organismic life, and personal life happens only when the "organism persons":

Each organism that persons finds the new territory that is itself, and, having found it, adjusts. [...] The organism we are speaking of persons the world [...]. Various instances of an organism's having behaved as a person, many in succession, sum up as a person. It may seem that an organism has a person with which it is associated, but rather than actually having a person, an organism has a long-term association only with behaving as a person. Who has been accepted as a person by other persons is really nothing more than the set of ways an organism that persons behaves. (1)

In this account, the organism is the source of life, and personhood is the form in which the (human) organism engages the world. In contrast to Deleuze's concept of doubling, where life is split along parallel lines, one indefinite, the other definite, what is at issue here is an intimate correlation or co-functioning of person and organism, personal and impersonal life. For just as the organism comprises the source for the life of the person, so too is personing the activity that allows the organism to deploy its life. This is why personing concerns, first and foremost, the positioning of the organism's body, and it is also why the organism is sensitive to—why it can be impacted by—the architectural surround: "The momentum an organism is able to gain on being a person, or rather, on behaving as one—that set of conditions, born of actions taken, that makes person-formation possible depends directly on how it positions its body. Surroundings invite, provoke, and entice persons to perform actions" (1). As the trigger for personing, the architectural organization of space instigates modifications in the configuration of an organism's sense organs:

[...] the enacting motions of these actions [provoked by surroundings] not only serve up alternate vantage points but also inevitably shift sense organs about. The shifting about of the sense organs naturally affects how

Now he is struggling harder to get back. And yet—like us all, when we swoon—like us all, every day of our life, when we wake—he is instinctively unwilling to be restored to the consciousness of his existence, and would be left dormant, if he could" (cited in Agamben, "Absolute Immanence" 229).

a person fields her surroundings and has much to do with what of the surroundings ends up standing for or approximating the surroundings. (1-2)

What is at stake in the architectural body is, accordingly, not a body-without-organs but an organism with flexible, reconfigurable organs. Whatever margin of indetermination characterizes the human, it is one constrained by the integral organization of the organism.

When they suggest the heuristic value of keeping the boundary between the organism and the person indeterminate, Arakawa and Gins underscore the integral picture they accord life: refraining from specifying where exactly the division between impersonal and personal life lies maintains an optimal degree of "tentativeness," the very condition for that form of experimentation called the architectural body. This, indeed, is the key to architecture's role as an aid to reflection:

> An integrally intelligent whole, always capable of bringing conscious reflection into the mix, the organismperson feels and thinks its (way through an) environment. Upon its being granted that each person acts within her environment as a thinking body—nerve tissue can be found throughout the body, the neuromuscular system can coordinate itself to act thoughtfully, and each organ acts "knowledgeably" within its own domain architecture then looms large as a great aid to critical thinking. Architecture's task is to mete out the world in such a way that it might be reflected on bodywide. (3)

If architecture can stimulate the evolution of the human species—if it forms the first supplement to genetic epigenesis—that is precisely because it couples life, organismic life, *human* organismic potentiality, with the activity of personing, with actualization in concrete architectural situations.

Given their broadly "naturalistic" understanding of life, what exactly are we to make of Arakawa and Gins's celebration of a reversible destiny architecture? How can they defend an integral conception of life rooted in the organism and at the same time claim that architecture can suspend the condition of mortality? As I understand it, their concept of "reversible destiny" and the "crisis ethics" to which it points call on us to resist embracing human mortality as a foregone conclusion. By resisting the urge to set mortality apart as a special category of event, Arakawa and Gins suggest, we will find ourselves in a position to explore the potentiality of the human organism beyond the possibility barrier. Thus, the immortality they champion is something of a regulative ideal: by intensifying the life that we enjoy as organisms that person, reversible destiny architecture opens future possibility—a certain margin of immortality—without abandoning the organic basis of life.

We would do well then to listen carefully to the injunction Arakawa and Gins pose to us:

What if it turned out that to be mortal was not an essential condition of our species? [...] What if it turned out that members of our species were not forever slated to be mortal? [Isn't] reversible destiny [...] an open challenge to our species to reinvent itself and to desist from foreclosing on any possibility, even those our contemporaries judge to be impossible [?] (xviii)

To be immortal, on this understanding, does not necessarily mean to escape from mortality. Rather, it designates the potentiality—a potentiality characteristic, for Arakawa and Gins, of the human being as such—to resist the foreclosure of the impossible, the identification of the real with the possible, that is always operated from the present static state of the human organism. The immortality enjoyed by the human species comes from its capaci-

ty to interrupt, to think and act beyond, the program of life that dictates its genetic evolution: immortality is what allows the human organism to be more than merely organismic without in any way ceasing to be organismic.⁴

Thus, in contrast to the impersonality of life celebrated by Deleuze as fundamentally a-human (since the human is merely a molar configuration of more primary molecular forces), the experience of immortality championed by Arakawa and Gins informs what is, in the end, a most forceful affirmation of the human, understood as a flexible organismic condition. Without needing to draw any discrete dividing line between human animality and animality as such, Arakawa and Gins are thus able to demarcate the human in a way that resolutely refuses to jettison its organismic, living basis.

On this score, crisis ethics could not differ more markedly from the ethics of philosopher Alain Badiou, who sees in immortality nothing less than a break from the mere "animal substructure" we all necessarily possess as sentient beings. Badiou's denunciation of animality is part and parcel of his critique of Western conceptions of ethics, all of which allegedly define the human being as a victim, or better as "the being who is capable of recognizing itself as a victim" (10). By so defining the human, ethics equates it with the animal, reducing the human being "to the level of a living organism pure and simple." Although it is, incontestably, an animal species, neither its mortality nor its predatory nature can "distinguish humanity within the world of the living" (11). That requires the experience of the immortal understood precisely as a break from life: the determination to remain "something other than a mortal being" (12). Not insignificantly, the possibility for such experience comes only in situations that challenge human complacency, the complacency of the living, in the most radical way:

An immortal: this is what the worst situations that can be inflicted upon Man show him to be, in so far as he distinguishes himself within the varied and rapacious flux of life. In order to think any aspect of Man, we must begin from this principle. So if "rights of man" exist, they are surely not rights of life against death, or rights of survival against misery. They are the rights of the Immortal, affirmed in their own right, or the rights of the Infinite, exercised over the contingency of suffering and death. The fact that in the end we all die, that only dust remains, in no way alters Man's identity as immortal at the instant in which he affirms himself as someone who runs counter to the temptation of wanting-to-be-an-animal to which circumstances may expose him. And we know that every human being is capable of being this immortal—unpredictably, be it in circumstances great or small, for truths important or secondary. In each case, subjectivation is immortal, and makes Man. (12)

Leaving aside the dubious elitism inherent in this conception, we can discern in Badiou's ethics *the precise inversion* of the correlation of organism and person that Arakawa and Gins develop: for Badiou, the experience of

⁴ This, incidentally, is why Arakawa and Gins can celebrate the quantum leap promised by genetic technologies. Far from facilitating the end of the human species, such technologies have the capacity to contribute toward the intensification of human life: "Within the life sciences, [defeatists] try to cure the human body or figure it out such as they find it to be, never attempting to reconfigure it altogether, never thinking to reorder the body radically so that it might elude mortality. Because most life scientists have, along with everyone else, dismissed out of hand any thought of a possible fundamental reordering of the body, they are at a loss as to how to judge the import of human cloning, for example, as method through which the body could conceivably be reconfigured for the better" (xvii).

the immortal, and the birth of the human, occurs precisely at those moments where the person—what he calls the subject—transcends its animal basis. Badiou explains:

There is only a particular kind of animal, convoked by certain circumstances to become a subject—or rather, to enter into the composing of a subject. This is to say that at a given moment, everything he is—his body, his abilities—is called upon to enable the passing of a truth along its path. This is when the human animal is convoked [requis] to be the immortal that he was not yet. (40)

The composition of the subject thus requires "something extra," something external to a situation.

Yet paradoxically, this something extra, even as it marks the break with animality, does not cease to find its support in "the animal of the human species": "Let us say that a *subject*, which goes beyond the animal (although the animal remains its sole foundation [support]) needs something to have happened, something that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in 'what there is'" (41). If the subject, in becoming subject, does not cease to be the very animal from which it would mark the most radical break, it is precisely because its advent marks a doubling constitutive of the human. Not entirely unlike the parallelism obtained between the plane of immanence and the plane of organization on Deleuze's ontology, a relation of "consistency" holds the animal and the immortal together in a vaguely tenuous correlation. Badiou defines consistency as the superimposition of the "composition of the subject of truth" onto "the simple perseverance-of-self [Spinoza's conatus]" (46): "consistency is the engagement of one's singularity (the animal 'some-one') in the continuation of a subject of truth. Or again: it is to submit the perseverance of what is known to a duration [durée] peculiar to the not known" (47). Still, whereas Deleuze's ethics of affect remains naturalistic through and through, Badiou's ethics of subjectivization, in the very process of occupying the troubled split between animal interest and immortal fidelity to a singular truth, would appear to want it both ways: for if "the 'myself' engaged in the subjective composition is identical to the one that pursues his interest," then the subjectivization that occurs by transcending the animal substructure can only be driven by animal interest (54). As Badiou sees it, the paradoxical duality informing the relation of consistency is made good by the production of an excess external to the animal some-one, an excess that comes from the singularity of the event:

> The "some-one" thus caught up in what attests that he belongs to the truth-process as one of its foundationpoints is simultaneously himself, nothing other than himself, a multiple singularity recognizable among all others, and in excess of himself, because the uncertain course [tracé aléatoire] of fidelity passes through him, transfixes his singular body and inscribes him, from within time, in an instant of eternity. (45)

This event-derived excess is sufficient to reconfigure the situation in a way that, by provoking fidelity, necessarily calls the animal beyond itself.

We are now in a position to specify the radical gambit pursued by Arakawa and Gins: put bluntly, they seek the excess of the human being over itself not in a contingent encounter with the truth *but in the very animal condition that characterizes it* as an organism that persons. For them, it is not a question of directing the body toward a fidelity beyond itself, but rather one of extending, through the encounter with architecture, that of which the body is capable. If the human organism is necessarily in excess over the person, that is because its embodiment brings a flexibility that lets it reconfigure itself so as to maximize life.

Consider Arakawa and Gins's *Gaze Brace*, designed as a "means of showing how changes in bodily position alter the shape of awareness" (Arakawa and Gins 85). *Gaze Brace* is the name given to a room constructed from a bird's eye view and placed contiguous to the same room viewed straight on (literally, it was intended to form a brace, a "prosthetic augmentation," for "*all* modes of perception"). As the artists explain, the effect of this experimentation with the architectural surround was to facilitate the "disperse-to-contrast procedure," that procedure whereby landing sites are dispersed under contrastive conditions to make them more palpable:

People moving back and forth between the room and its bird's-eye-view twin—the two exactly the same but precisely different—would be able to track with some ease the landing sites they would be obliged to disperse in the course of noticing room features repeated in identical locations, but from radically different vantage points. (86)

Like many of Arakawa and Gins's architectural ventures, *Gaze Brace* facilitates reflective awareness of the process whereby bodily flexibility can be drawn upon. It is designed to make salient the choice continuously faced by the body and, with it, the fact that the body has this choice to make in the first place: "The body must either escape or 'reenter' habitual patterns of action—habitual actions that have customized life into only a few standard patterns. Upon the body's mastering new patterns of action, bioscleave emerges reconfigured" (62).

The heuristic nature of Arakawa and Gins's work attests to their effort to construct a culture that would emerge from and remain in close resonance with the needs and capacities of the human organism. Their hope is that, by being made aware of the body's "margin of immortality," we humans might be in a better position to construct the world as a transductive correlate of our embodiment. That such a venture is necessarily a collective one forms yet another point of divergence from Badiou: for whereas Badiou's ethics of subjectivization is individualistic with a vengeance (consider the heroic tendency of his examples: Galileo's creation of physics, Haydn's invention of the classical music style, a personal amorous passion, etc.), Arakawa and Gins's crisis ethics aims to make the world a richer place for all. Indeed, the concept of the architectural body is necessarily, essentially collective: "In cooperation with other organisms, not only synchronically but also in some respects diachronically, the architectural body mediates the body proper and the architectural surround, and it therefore ought to be viewed as communal" (70-71). What this passage alludes to is the incontestable fact of architecture's public dimension: because any given architectural surround—be it a private dwelling or an office park—necessarily perturbs or entices more than one organism, architecture itself forms a privileged procedure for reconfiguring human community as an outgrowth of organic life, and the architectural body ceases being the strict correlate of one body-proper in order to be a collective embodiment in which many bodies can participate, albeit in variant ways. The architectural body, accordingly, comprises a form of what Gilbert Simondon calls collective individuation: an individuation of a group, and at the limit of the human species itself, that is not simply the sum of individual individuations, but that draws on the excess of the organism over itself, what Simondon calls its participation in the "preindividual" domain, that is, the impersonality of life itself (L'Individuation psychique et collective). In fact, the architectural body transductively correlates two terms that are themselves collective by nature: the body understood as the impersonal life of the organism and the architectural surround as the organization of an environment, that is, the delimitation of a world for a group of organisms.

At the limit, this transductive correlation of collective body and architectural surround gives rise to a total recursivity, a literal coevolution, of organisms and urban space:

Because issues of viability are everyone's concern [...], procedural architecture, a populist architecture of hypothesis, should be approached as a community-wide collaborative initiative. Together, the members of our species will exponentially increase the tremendous amount of forethought that is needed for town planning. Exhorted and cajoled by their town, by virtue of being gently constrained by its features and elements, to perform architectural procedures, people work and play at figuring out what in the world they could possibly be. Hypotheses put forward through built form will be predictive of built hypothesizing to come. [...] a closely argued built-discourse can foster fundamental reconfigurings of bioscleave that will continue or lead to a restructuring of viability, to be translated immediately into life on new terms. (61)

Thought of in this way, urban formations differ from simpler architectural surrounds, from the first environmental scaffold onward, precisely because they animate a more complex architectural body. For example, the flow of people into and out of cities not only places continually changing demands on the environment, but also taps the creativity of the body that is unleashed through the procedure of disperse-to-contrast. Put simply, each body brings with itself a history of experience that informs its own margin of immortality: "The town has been prepped to recognize and expand on, affirm or negate, in part of in full, what other towns have led her to be able to feel and know. At issue always: what the body can come to know on its own behalf and what the body comes to be able to say to itself" (61). The architectural body generated by a town is, accordingly, a complex, evolving construction informed equally by the set of bodies that variantly enter into its scope and by the particular kinds of challenges posed to these bodies by the town's architectural surround. For this reason, we can speak of the urban experience itself as a continuously evolving architectural body: bodies and surrounds grow to fit one another in ways that resemble organic genesis or individuation far more than mere fabrication.

Arche-technics

For Arakawa and Gins, the stakes of crisis ethics concern life itself, or more exactly, that form of life we call the human. Thus they see architecture—the reflective formation of an architectural body—as the ultimate human project, the very construction of the human as such:

Activating an architectural procedure, a person comes alive to her own tacit knowing; body-wide and wider, occurent tacit knowing goes explicit. A built world, designed with foresight peering through forethought, and that will have been, with great deliberation, arrayed as a communal project, will frame the formation of "the human." (60)

With this understanding, we are returned to our starting point: to the question of architecture as the first or originary supplement that, precisely by opening an extragenetic component of evolution, marks the advent of the human.

It is philosopher Bernard Stiegler, following on the heels of paleontologist André Leroi-Gourhan, who has theorized the "différance of the human" as "epiphylogenesis" or "the pursuit of the evolution of the living by

means other than life" (Stiegler, *Technics and Time* 135). For Stiegler, the human is that being constitutively in correlation with the domain of technics, which is to say, with culture, as a precondition for its own proper evolution. Stiegler seeks to push the logic of technical invention to its extreme point, the point at which the distinction between a "who" (who invents?) and a "what" (what is invented?) is not simply inverted, but indeed dissolved, such that it must be said to be both the human and the technical domain together that drives the evolution of the human (or, more precisely, the coevolution of the human *and* technics). To do so, he begins at the beginning, as it were, at that moment when the cortex found itself doubled by the flint:

[...]we shall focus on the passage into the human leading from the Zinjanthropian to the Neanthropian. This ground breaking [frayage], which is that of corticalization, is also effected in stone, in the course of the slow evolution of techniques of stonecutting. And evolution so slow—it still occurs at the rhythm of "genetic drift"that one can hardly imagine the human as its operator, that is, as its inventor; rather, one much more readily imagines the human as what is invented. The emergence of this being-producer, constructor, if not conceiver-begins then in a process of neurological evolution. However, on the one hand, it is no longer strictly a matter of a zoological phenomenon: the most archaic technical evolution is already no longer "genetically programmed;" on the other hand, beyond the Neanthropian, this process continues as pure technological evolution, the organization of the cortex being genetically stabilized. [...] One must first ask what mirage of the cortex is experienced [s'éprouve], as pathbreaking, in the hardness of the flint; what plasticity of gray matter corresponds to the flake of mineral matter; what proto-stage of the mirror is thus installed. One must then ask what the closure of the cortical evolution of the human implies from the vantage of a general history of life, the closure of the cortical evolution of the human, and therefore the pursuit of the evolution of the living by other means than life—which is what the history of technics consists in, from the first flaked pebbles to today, a history that is also the history of humanity—a statement that will lead us to the unusual concept of "epiphylogenesis." (134-135)

This originary supplementation of the genetic program of the human yields a dialectic of sorts that will drive the process of history precisely by making the evolution of the human dependent on the sedimentation of human epigenesis in exteriorized forms of memorial support: "epigenetic sedimentation, a memorization of what has come to pass, is what is called the past, what we shall name the *epiphylogenesis* of man, meaning the conservation, accumulation, and sedimentation of successive epigeneses [...]" (140). More simply put: the human is that living being who can pass on its experience not merely through its genes, but through the conservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge.

One of the fundamental consequences of Stiegler's conceptualization of *différance* as life is the necessity to specify *différance* historically, by means of the concrete technical conditions or stage of technical evolution, that allows it to come into play. While this aspect of Stiegler's work is largely beyond the scope of our current discussion, one of its elements will prove particularly important here: for by placing the impact of technical evolution exclusively on the side of culture understood as a departure from the living, by restricting it to the storage of the past in various forms of technical memory supports, Stiegler effectively drives a wedge between the human being and its technical supplement. This restriction has at least two important consequences. First, it insures that whatever impact it may ultimately have on human evolution, technics must be mediated through memory: technics, we might say, can only impact the human being indirectly, by altering the conditions for the reactivation of the past in

the present. Second, this restriction has the effect of keeping the evolution of technics and the evolution of the human separate from one another, despite the originary recursivity that once interlinked cortex and flint. As we shall see, the direct consequence of this separation is a certain passivity of the human, or, put another way, the priority of the technical as the driving element in the differential synthesis of life.

Turning to our contemporary techno culture, Stiegler contends that today's global, real time televisual network has the effect of programming consciousness at the collective level. What happens when all the world watches televised images of a global event in real time (that is, at the same time) is something unprecedented, at least from the standpoint of its technical dimension: it is a collective programming of the rhythm of consciousness that, according to Stiegler, threatens to homogenize subjectivity. The agent of this programming, if there is one, is Hollywood or America which, by way of taking control over the flux of consciousness itself, has literally transformed life itself:

[...] today, the world lives to the beat of televisions, no event can be produced (can produce its effects, be inscribed in "world consciousness") without having been selected, seized, filtered, deconstructed, reassembled, produced, co-produced and post-produced by the universal synchronizing production center. [...] Cinema qua "reproduction" of life transforms life just as writing qua "reproduction" of speech, far from simply describing language, writes it, precisely. Which is to say that it invents life. This invention is by nature a geopolitical struggle. The "macdonaldization" of the world is the American pursuit of the extension of the extended Latin grammar and the major rupture with its properly European episode. However [and this is the crucial point], the possibility of such a global adoption of a way of life through cinema and television was only realizable [...] owing to the systematic exploitation of the persuasive force proper to cinematographic coincidences in so far as they induce quasi-irresistible processes of adoption, adhesion and belief. ("The Time of Cinema" 111-112)

The very possibility for a technical programming of consciousness at the collective level hangs upon the identification of consciousness, life, and cinema. The global, realtime televisual network can captivate consciousness, and induce a collective homogenization, precisely because-which is also to say only insofar asconsciousness requires a temporal object for its constitution. Stiegler bases his analysis here on Husserl's concept of the temporal object. According to Husserl, time-consciousness, that is, consciousness of the self existing in time, can only occur indirectly, through the mediation of a special kind of technical object, what Husserl calls a temporal object. A temporal object—Husserl's preferred example is a melody—is an object that does not simply exist in time but that is constituted *from* time itself. Focusing on the technical conditions of the contemporary temporal object allows Stiegler to complicate Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness by introducing technicity-what he calls "tertiary memory"-into the heart of primary retention. Tertiary memory, meaning the storage of the past not lived by present consciousness in forms that nonetheless allow it to be revivified or assumed by consciousness in the present, becomes the very condition for consciousness as such, which is why Stiegler can claim that consciousness is cinematographic. It is only because a subject has the capacity to assume a collective past that has not been lived by it that it can assume and re-present its own past (secondary retention or remembrance) and that it experiences the present "now" as a thickness comprised of protentions and retentions. For Stiegler, in sum, consciousness is essentially technical since it can only experience itself through its consciousness of a temporal object.

The devastating limitation of Stiegler's identification of consciousness with cinema—its fundamental neglect of embodiment—appears clearly in his own celebration of digital image technology as a means to intervene in the cinematic programming of consciousness.⁵ For Stiegler, the digital image holds forth the promise of a "more knowing belief," of new forms of "objective analysis" and of "subjective synthesis" of the visible precisely because it allows us unprecedented flexibility to intervene in the technical synthesis that, as we have just seen, conditions consciousness itself. With its capacity to interrupt the machinic flow of the real time broadcast, digital technology promises to expose the determining role of the technical synthesis, and, more importantly still, to open it up to unprecedented forms of experimentation. The basic notion informing the hope Stiegler places in digital image technology is that the capacity it offers to "decompose" the image into discrete units will allow human beings to take back some control over the technical conditions of consciousness. If we can intervene, slow down, and manipulate the machined flux of images that comprise today's global televisual temporal object, we will be able to create different technical conditions for the spectatorial synthesis that is consciousness. The ultimate payoff of digital image technology will be nothing less than a transformation of the spectatorial synthesis that is catalyzed by a manipulation of the technical synthesis:

Because synthesis is double, the gain in new analytic capacities is also a gain in new synthetic capacities. [...] [N]ew image-objects are going to engender new mental images, as well as another intelligence of movement, for it is essentially a question of animated images. The intelligence I'm talking about here is not the intelligence of what I called the new knowledges of the image. It designates techno-intuitive knowledges—intentions in the Barthesian sense—of a new kind. (Stiegler, Echographies 159, 162)

This capacity to alter the technical conditions for the subjective synthesis does nothing to question the priority accorded the technical synthesis; neither does it escape the reduction of life to consciousness understood, effectively, as a purely visual experience. Indeed, by transformatively appropriating Husserl's concept of the temporal object, Stiegler actually trades in a richly and multiply embodied perceptual experience (the acoustic perception of a melody) for the most abstract sense (the visual perception of cinematic images). What is more, he gives priority to the pre-selection that the cinematic temporal object has always already operated on retention over the selection that occurs in the actual rehearing of a recorded musical memory (or, for that matter, the re-viewing of a film) where it is the entirety of bodily response that drives the selection. If Stiegler's concept of consciousness thus remains woefully disembodied, that is because he effectively views it as an epiphenomenon of the technical synthesis: the subjective synthesis cannot contribute anything from itself, but can only follow the dictates of its technical conditioning. That, moreover, is why Stiegler's program for a resistance to the reign of real time televisual media puts all its effort into modifying the technical synthesis.

Understood as an alternative to this account of epiphylogenesis, Arakawa and Gins's concept of the architectural body—as the transduction of body and architectural surround—furnishes a better model of originary (technical) supplementary for the precise reason that it invests in the creativity of embodiment. Thus, rather than assuming that technical and human evolution confront one another extrinsically, Arakawa and Gins wager every-

⁵ For a more detailed critical account of Stiegler's project, see my paper, "The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life."

thing on the intrinsic correlation of the two: architectural surroundings can become triggers for creative evolution precisely because they are at issue in embodied life, and embodied life can induce modifications of architectural surroundings precisely as a means to intensify itself, to exercise its margin of immortality. In actual fact, if body and surround are transductive correlates, they cannot be considered apart from one another, which means that Arakawa and Gins's concept of the architectural body—taken as a model for the epiphylogenesis of the human—sketches a return to the originary condition of human technogenesis: the recursivity linking cortex and flint. And, from this originary condition, Arakawa and Gins propose to reconstruct a different culture, one that, unlike Stiegler's culture of technically-supported (tertiary) memory, never cuts its ties to embodiment as the hinge connecting body and environment, the zoological and the technical. No matter how complex culture becomes, it will always harbor, at its very center, the architectural transduction of life prior to any subsequent division. That is why an architectural revolution is necessary:

Only subsequent to their having been an architectural revolution, a thorough re-visioning of architecture, will difficult questions [...] call forth answers in the bodies of our contemporaries. [...] The wish and will to [counter mortality] must be in the air we breathe, having been built into the places within which we live and breathe. Architecture must be made to fit the body as a second, third, fourth, and, when necessary, ninth (and counting) skin. (Arakawa and Gins xv)

Faced with a world in which the technical domain seems to confront us from the outside—whether this be envisioned as Stiegler's technical programming of consciousness or Badiou's denunciation of the situation—we must find a way to rediscover the recursivity that is contained, *in potentia*, in our own embodiment. That is our only hope to gain agency over the extra-genetic dimension—but also the extra-genetic *capacity*—that makes us human. Whereas Stiegler's program for a digital decomposition of the image leaves us abjectly passive in the face of a technical outside, and whereas Badiou's ethics of subjectivation turns its back on the living body as such, Arakawa and Gins's crisis ethics urges an investment in architecture (culture) that would necessarily be an investment in life itself. Such an investment comprises a chance for us to redirect our epiphylogenetic supplement toward the furtherance of the life of our species: "We ask only that enormous sums of money be spent on constructing the world as tactically posed surrounding for the benefit of the body. A procedural constructing of the world will constitute a way for our species to take evolution into its own hands" (xix).

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THE MYSTERY OF NAGI'S RYOANJI: Arakawa and Gins and Autopoiesis

One of the outstanding masterpieces of the Arakawa and Gins's oeuvre is "Ubiquitous Site—Nagi's Ryoanji—Architectural Body." Located in Nagi, which is situated in Okayama Prefecture in Western Japan, Nagi's Ryoanji intricately and playfully reconstructs the architecture of an original stroll garden in Kyoto. The Kyoto garden, built in the fifteenth century under the influence of Zen Buddhism, stands as one of the most famous temple gardens in Japan. Nagi's Ryoanji recreates the Kyoto garden twice on the two inner walls of a huge inclined cylinder, producing unexpected perceptual and bodily experiences in the visitor. This work continues to harbor riddles, despite the many attempts that have been made to decipher it. Because a work of any kind often transcends the intentions of those who produce it, these are riddles that perhaps even its architects could not solve. In fact, perhaps Nagi's Ryoanji far exceeds the expectations of its producers by creating in the visitor an experience of self-organization. In this paper, I will address the emergence of self-organization in Arakawa and Gins's Nagi's Ryoanji.

Section One of this paper discusses several works of Arakawa and Gins prior to their creation of Nagi's Ryoanji (8. Reassembling, panel 2 of the research project/book *The Mechanism of Meaning*; the book, *To Not To Die*; and the seven-acre park, Site of Reversible Destiny—Yoro). Section Two sets forth a reformulated autopoietic systems theory, one that substantially differs from the incomplete and at times vague autopoietic systems theory of neurophysiologists Maturana and Varela. This reformulation, which makes the body primary to autopoietic thinking, suggests new possibilities for self-generated meaning. Finally, section Three returns to Nagi's Ryoanji but now with a reformulated autopoietic systems theory in place, declaring what transpires in Nagi's Ryoanji to be more than what Arakawa and Gins believed would occur within it.

What Arakawa and Gins's creative process altered

Arakawa and Gins's working method gives all appearances of including from the start phenomenological reduction, a bracketing of all reality. Their philosophical outlook strongly resembles that of quantum theorist Niels H. D. Bohr, who insisted that reality is essentially indeterminate. In so far as all facts and perceived phenomena can and do become reduced under the logical possibility that another reality exists, it readily becomes apparent that when consciousness is so reduced no guide whatsoever remains by which to determine what reality is. In principle, once a phenomenological reduction has been performed, reality has been excluded. This, however, leads to a nasty paradox. On one hand, consciousness can drastically reduce reality by judging it to be of an entirely other order, that is, not at all reality as first presented. On the other hand, if the reality that consciousness originates as is not the one first presenting itself, but rather the result of a phenomenological reduction, then clearly un-

certainty reigns within such a reduction—which reality is which (?). All gets reduced uncertainly but surely to uncertainty. Even as they accept this blanket uncertainty, Gins and Arakawa presuppose the reality of the body.

Arakawa and Gins give primacy of place to the body in their work, attributing to it three important and distinctive characteristics. First, unlike consciousness, the body cannot be phenomenologically reduced, and furthermore consciousness certainly cannot, through its own operations, produce a body of its own. Second, the bodily is inextricably part of the fabrication not only of the real but also of that which might become real, that is, out of the body's actions not only does life as we recognize it take shape, but also that which we cannot yet recognize as life. Bodily movements participate in, penetrate into, and intermingle with all acts of perception, actively underpinning all perception. Even if human existence and its surrounding environment get produced in modes that differ from the modes of production that we are able to observe, the actual body inevitably participates in this fabrication. Third, the body is formed through a different type of process than that which forms images and perceptions.

At this juncture, Arakawa and Gins's third presupposition becomes clear. Given that it is possible for one reality to switch into being another reality, any constructed work offers up, in some measure, the possibility for a new reality. Although Arakawa and Gins do not describe the criteria they use to formulate their new reality prototypes, they do present us with models—architectural constructions—that help us learn what is involved in the forming of an image or a perception. Because these criteria are shaped by means of active engagement with the world, they are quite different from mathematical or semiotic ones. In general, when people face new realities, they seek a new set of guidelines for reckoning with the unknown, e.g., they seek to find the set of conditions necessary to life within a particular environment. In any event, humans might be able, through a supreme effort, to arrive at a definition of life, but this would, of course, only characterize life in the historical present; it would be a very limited definition indeed. An exciting new alternative might be to try, in effect, to construct life, independent of consciousness as presently known. This constructed or produced life could then serve as a control against which to measure life as heretofore known. I am convinced that this is exactly the state of affairs Arakawa and Gins wish to bring about.

We might assume along with Arakawa and Gins that an extensive and intricate involvement with bodily movements as these relate to and operate within perception and cognition can lead to a constructing of life on another basis. But so that a newly constructed life might be recognized as such, conditions allowing for a stable and repeated experiencing of this would need to prevail. Why, then, should it be that Arakawa and Gins's Ryoanji manages not only to construct life on new terms but also to constitute a means by which to recognize that life has come to be newly constructed, and this despite the fact that, as a structure, it does not provide a place in which a stable and repeated experiencing of the world can be had? It seems to me that the mechanism that enables a visitor to Arakawa and Gins's Ryoanji not only to experience it but also to recognize himself as experiencing it greatly resembles that which lies at the core of an autopoetic system.

Generally speaking, if we encounter a space whose context forces us to form our experience anew, we are overtaken by this radical and heretofore-unknown experience. When such a space is artificially produced, as is the case with a work of art, we do not see the work only as an object, but rather, in seeing the work we find ourselves simultaneously required to experience how we have gone about constructing our perception of it. For instance, in

many of Van Gogh's works, we notice ourselves organizing perception itself coincidentally with our taking in of the painting. I choose to call what is operative as experience in this way the "double operation." Attempting to understand any work that elicits the double operation, we come up against a clash of meanings in which new formations of meaning destroy existing ones. That is, the double operation severs all context and suspends meaning, fragmenting it so that the very borders of meaning seem to be compromised. And yet, this has less to do with the indefiniteness of meaning than with the emergence of new meaning from which surprisingly different experiences inevitably form.

For example, in Arakawa and Gins's *The Mechanism of Meaning*, we confront what seems at first glance to be a meaningless chart, and most people probably doubt that they have the skills necessary to connect the two figures.¹ But in performing the topological conversion needed to compress the random spiral of the figure on the left into the lower right quadrant of the figure on the right, we manage to translate an unlimited line into a finite plane. Various interpretations of what processes could be used to negotiate the distance between the two figures are possible. However, no plausible interpretation of how to perceive a solution is initially possible. As far as we can tell from the operations involved in *The Mechanism of Meaning*, it is impossible to derive any stable meaning from the accomplished operation. Yet it would seem that *The Mechanism of Meaning* has something to do not only with the limit or impossibility of meaning, but also with the active formation of our own perceptions of the two figures. In other words, the work urges us to construct for ourselves right there within it an expanded view of our ability to perceive. As we perceive the chart, we must form our perception within it so that we can perceive it: a typical example of double operation. This chart, then, is both an artifact to be perceived, and the place in which perception actually forms.

We are dealing here with more than a mere indication of the place where meanings emerge. If this were the case, all we would be pointing to would be the locus of a hermeneutic circle. Whereas a hermeneutic circle marks a sphere in which meaning has been previously determined, the work of Arakawa and Gins marks a topological space from which meaning as such emerges. In fact, their work produces a topological space that forces us to reconfigure perception itself if our goal is to locate meaning. *The Mechanism of Meaning* is thus not bound by semantic structure. To recap: necessitating both the act of seeing and the act of perceiving this seeing as it occurs, *The Mechanism of Meaning* provokes the seeing of perception's very formation.

In their text *To Not To Die*, Arakawa and Gins explore mechanisms of formative experience, giving primacy to perception. Because perception involves movement, I propose that we conceive of it as a special type of movement. Others have also characterized perception as a type of movement; I think, for example, of Bergson's *élan vital* or Deleuze's *différenciation*. Arakawa and Gins use the term "blank" to name the place where perception forms. An extreme phenomenological reduction of all that appears in the visual field causes the emergence of (a) "blank;" once within blank we are able to notice perception's movement. *To Not To Die* investigates modes of movement characterizing nascent perception.

¹ See Kawamoto, fig. a (mech8_2.jpg).

There is something that keeps moving within the blank that surfaces when all objects in the visual field are bracketed. This movement operates prior to all space and time, and therefore prior to the coordinate system. The mode of this movement can be called "cleaving." Arakawa and Gins make innovative use of the term "cleaving" to indicate the act of sensation forming its own domain through its delimitation of a boundary. The first boundary delimits a proto-sensation, that is, a sensation that forms a boundary around itself at the exact moment that which it will become stirs and begins to emerge. I find this concept of cleaving fruitful because it puts the focus on the act that is productive of reality rather than on any worldview constructed by philosophers to interpret reality. From here, we can further expand this concept by describing the mechanism that characterizes movement within models of self-organization.

Perception involves two operations—cognition and movement—through which it forms a topological space of its own. With respect to cognitive function, sensation produces the boundary that divides the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, etc. The visible region is selected from wider wavelengths of light, and the outside, invisible region may be approximately termed "present" within ultraviolet and infrared spectrums. The range of visible brightness will be reported by sensation. This is also one of the ways to divide space, and we can call such a divided space a topological space produced by sensation. At this point, sensation occurs as the movement that forms a boundary and subsequently maintains that boundary through repetition. Both cognition and movement, although they function separately, are indispensable to one another during the formation of *boundary sensation*. Clearly, a double operation is also at work in this situation.

We should remark that some examples of double operation can be found in the history of philosophy, and a close look at these cases reveals them generally to involve relationships between types of activities that distinctly differ from one another. If two qualitatively different activities belong to the same individual unit, the unit becomes something of the order of a Leibnizian monad. Although it may be said that within Arakawa and Gins's concept of blank, movement functions as a type of perception and perception as a type of movement, these two activities cannot be described as a single function. On the contrary, each of these activities has a tendency towards independence, and one does not necessarily determine the other.

Turning to another example, the nervous and immune systems operate in such a way that the movement within the system is at the same time a kind of cognition. In both cases, the operation of the system does not constitute its cognition, nor is the system controlled by its cognition. Rather, the movement of the system is "coherent" with its cognition, through and through, and vice versa. We need, in fact, a detailed analysis of the relation of "coherence" to movement and cognition. This is an issue that has not yet received enough attention in current philosophical debate. The typical example given of a complex system that is said to contain both movement and cognition, of course, is the body. The body forms itself as an integrated unit at each stage with its two different boundaries instantiated by the operations of movement and cognition. Nonetheless, any description of movement can describe only movement, and similarly, any description of cognition can describe only cognition. This is a problem that perhaps exists not on the level of description alone. The relation between the system of movement and that of cognition can be called "coherent" with respect to the functional phenomena of the two systems, and we can label it as a double operation with respect to the operational mode of one of the systems.

In the "Working Notes" published along with *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes of the moving body thus:

This also means: my body is not only one perceived among others, it is the measurement (mesurant) of all, Nullpunkt of all the dimensions of the world. For example, it is not one mobile among the mobiles or movings, I am not conscious of its movements as a distance taken by relation to me, it sich bewegt whereas the things are moved. This means a sort of "reflectedness" (sich bewegen), it thereby constitutes itself in itself. In a parallel way: it touches itself, sees itself. [...]The touching itself, seeing itself of the body is itself to be understood in terms of what we said of the seeing and the visible, the touching and the touchable. I.e., it is not an act, it is a being at (être à). To touch oneself, to see oneself, accordingly, is not to apprehend oneself, as an ob-ject, it is to be open to oneself, destined to oneself [...]. (248-249)

According to Merleau-Ponty, properties of body with respect to movement are: the body (1) *bewegt sich*, (2) has a kind of reflexivity, and (3) continues itself in itself. With respect to cognition, moreover, the properties of the body require that it (4) is touching itself, (5) is not apprehending itself as an object, and (6) is open to itself. If we are to deal with these experiences in the works of Arakawa and Gins, we need a new kind of systematic phenomenological research. Perception and cognition relate closely to each other and cooperate in such a way that the one does not define the other, because each action is formed in the respective circularity of its operation. In autopoietic systems theory, the cooperation of two different actions that do not determine one another is called a "coupling" of two systems. For Arakawa and Gins, cleaving is not only the first stage of the systemic operation of sensation, it is the very condition necessary for an origination point—i.e. a landing site—that would bring about perception, imagination, and bodily action in the continuing activity of its operation. Because both cleaving and landing sites fundamentally relate to the acts of living bodies, they cannot be relegated to a metaphysical world-view.

I would now like to contrast briefly Arakawa and Gins's conception of cleaving with Deleuze's notion of divergence (*Difference and Repetition*). For Deleuze, differentiation is a key concept that refers to the formation of sensation. When we understand a unit of movement of sensation to be a minute difference, the unit can be said to resemble a term of mathematical differentiation, calculus's dx. This unit of differentiation automatically produces a difference from itself, and causes various patterns of diversity to emerge. In practice, this unit surfaces as an event of reality corresponding to sensation. Therefore it is not only a limit concept or structuring principle demanded by a limit operation, but it is also the unit of reality that intuition takes up as sensation. Nothing would remain were perceptive intuition to be subtracted from this principle. Relating one minute difference to another one, we arrive at a relation that becomes a differential equation that is similar to dx/dy.

The concept I am offering, when viewed in the light of Deleuze's argument as outlined above, functions as a general principle with the potential to bring about the fundamental split that would allow intuition to recognize both movement and change. Movement cannot be understood according to a conceptual analysis or analytical measurement. Its mechanism is such that what is potential can still be realized whether an operation is deemed a success or a failure. Deleuze's way of dealing with this particular issue seems inadequate. A differential equation is generally of this form: dx/dy = x/y. This equation shows the relation between minute movements and extensions of reality (length): in other words, the unit of movement in relation to a "length" of reality. An actuality can be

technically drawn out from a unit of movement by means of an integration operation. What should be noted here is that this differs from an abstract mathematical operation, inasmuch as a differential movement involves matter, which means to say that what we are dealing with in this case is a substantial realization of matter through movement.

This cannot be designated by using terms for integrating units of differences. Instead we must acknowledge the formation of space, a topological space. Deleuze's conception of self, for example, presents the embryonic development and formation of forms, but nonetheless remains only a metaphorical conception since it does not designate how integration gets organized into higher modes of matter-based reality. Because there is no mechanism in Deleuze's thinking for forming various units in multiple dimensions, his concept fails to provide what is needed. Arakawa and Gins's cleaving is, however, just such a mechanism. But the matter at hand is not so easily wrapped up: we need to clarify what is at stake within cleaving by bringing it into relation with the core mechanism of self-organizing, autopoiesis.

In order to do this, we must give the body more careful consideration. Certainly, the work of Arakawa and Gins, and especially *The Site of Reversible Destiny* in Yoro, contains devices for inducing changes in the body/bodily field. Because bringing about changes to perception alone cannot easily alter the experience of perception itself, we might try to modify this by, for example, putting an enormous load on the body, requiring so much of it that we come to feel it as having a kind of endless depth. For instance, each operation through which the body balances itself in respect to gravity has already been "built into" the body during infancy through repeated trial and error. These operations are now irretrievable memories so that how one finds one's balance in relation to gravity is not a conscious matter. This kind of memory is a part of what Schelling termed the "transcendental past." Almost all memories built into the body belong to this transcendental past whereas those that we can recall belong to an empirical past. Thus, memories that we are no longer able to recall are nonetheless operative within our bodily actions. We might say, then, that consciousness arrives too late to know the transcendental past. We can, though, reorganize our conscious experience through devices that shift and re-activate the layers of these sedimentary experiences.

Site of Reversible Destiny is one such device.² We can recall the transcendental past because when we move about within this work it manages to loosen consciousness's grip on our experience. There are various elements at work within this device, such as the cave shaped like a U dug into the middle of the park. When I enter into this cave, I am in the dark, but once I have walked halfway through, light from the exit comes at me. At this point, it seems that my body automatically tries to orient itself in relation to this light. Yet at the same moment, I become aware of a deep depression in the ground at my feet, causing my whole body to lurch in the opposite direction of the light (and exit) toward which it was just oriented. Such an abrupt surprise allows me to become suddenly aware of the movements that the body, without conscious direction, usually executes on its own. In fact, it is a common presupposition for some phenomenologists, as well as for Arakawa and Gins, that bodily acts func-

² See Kawamoto, fig. b (yoro.jpg).

tion internally to perception. But there are various degrees of this inner relation between action and perception. Arakawa and Gins well understand this situation, and their architectural innovations make us confront new formations of experience. Because perception is an act that conceals the fact that it is an act, it perforce always involves a degree of self-misunderstanding with respect to its being an act. For this reason it is necessary to investigate the nature of perception across a broad range of bodily actions.

The architectural project Critical Resemblances House,³ which stands near the entrance of the Site of Reversible Destiny, assembles many of these possibilities in one place. Critical Resemblances House derives its shape from two labyrinths: a rectilinear labyrinth sits atop a curvilinear one. This utterly labyrinthine house, which can be entered from all sides, has many entranceways that do not, as one may hope, seem to double as exits. As in all labyrinths, one often finds oneself, then, coming to a dead stop, unable to proceed to exit through one's point of entry. In this space, the normal schemas no longer structure perception. The interior elements, such as a chair hung from the ceiling and what seems to be blue sky as the ground, further add to this perceptual confusion. A space that has neither a top nor bottom, neither a before nor after, will not at first glance guide us as to how to direct our movements. We can draw an analogy here that links our comings and goings in and out of this building to the distribution of matter flows within a primitive animal. If the primitive animal is to proceed into differentiation, movements must have specific circuits. Because our entering and exiting of the building resembles movements of this order, we are offered in some respect the chance to experience the evolution of an individual from a more primitive animal-like, or even child-like state. When I am in this space, for instance, I can imagine that I am moving about inside an enormity, as if I were a small child. In such a circumstance, I would have to form a topological space through my own movement. Surely through this I would be able to experience different and new possibilities of bodily action and perception.

On the Development of autopoietic systems theory

Arakawa and Gins's productive enactments belong to a different scientific tradition than that framed by Galileo, Descartes, and Newton. According to Aristotle's methodological classification of the sciences, they fall within the genealogy not of *Theoria* (theory) but of *Poiesis* (production). Poiesis, as the form of knowledge which human beings instantiate with their bodies, exists without a pre-defined model. When we understand Arakawa and Gins's art works in this tradition, we identify some of their forerunners as Goethe's theory of colors, Darwin's theory of evolution, and the self-organizing system theories of the latter half of the twentieth century. In particular, the theory of autopoiesis has significantly altered what we conceive knowledge (poeisis) to be within the realm of higher-order phenomena (human mental life). This theory, first conceived by neural physiologists Maturana and Varela, exhibits several shortcomings when applied to other fields. In the following section, I want to explain this theory and elaborate the mechanisms by which it may be made pertinent to the formation of knowledge and bod-

³ See Kawamoto, fig. c (Critical_Resemblances_House.jpg).

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ily action. As a result of my explication of and addition to this theory, I hope it will become clearer that the project of Arakawa and Gins operates at the highest level of the poietic sciences.

Autopoiesis was first formulated by Maturana and Varela and then further developed by the sociologist Niklas Luhmann as a general theory of systems (see Kawamoto). The theory of autopoiesis examines the mechanism of self-production (derived from the Greek terms *auto* and *poiesis*). This mechanism involves a certain number of necessary conditions outlined as follows:

- (1) A generative process is automatically connected with another generative process that proceeds from it. This situation arises even when the first generative process happens by chance.
- (2) The elements of a system are produced in the generative processes. The generative processes and the elements do not exist in a mutual causal relation but in different dimensions. The peculiar relation of the different dimensions is termed "production." This situation is evident, for example, when fog becomes a drop of water.
- (3) The produced elements operate once again in the generative processes. The processes that are produced by these elements then produce the next group of elements. This situation is similar to the relations that are traditionally called feedback and feedforward.
- (4) The continual operation between the generative processes and the elements automatically forms a closed region. This region is the self of the system. Because human languages exist in linear relation, if an observer were to describe this self and the circular operation of the system, the definition would necessarily rely on self-referential language. The fundamental non-adjustment between operational circularity and the linearity of language brings about the problem of self-reference.
- (5) Produced elements create the particular places where elements exist. The generative processes appear in a specific space, that is, in a topological space. As a result, the system as a network of processes exists in this peculiar space. The true form of the system consists in continuation of the movement, which then comes to exist in the specific space that the produced elements specify.
- Maturana and Varela's first formulation of the mechanism of autopoiesis:

An autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components that produces the components which: (1) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (2) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in the space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network. (78-79)

This definition lacks refinement and moreover, is much more difficult to understand than the content being presented. Furthermore, it does not inform us of the conditions necessary to autopoiesis. Upon studying this formulation, we ascertain that a system is a network consisting of generative processes, and that a system is not defined by the set of elements it contains. If we attempt to define a system by a set of elements, we immediately face the problem of how to determine this set. If an *observer* defines the range of elements for a set, the definition will not be in accordance with what is in operation as the system, but only in accord with the observer's point of view.

Maturana and Varela show how a system in the course of operating determines the set of elements, that is, a system produces its elements.

If we now take up the cell as an example of a system, proteins, the elements of the cell, will be consumed for a certain period (about 100 days on average), and then produced again. Thus we cannot presume the continuous identity of the elements. Even though elements are necessary to the continued operation of a system, they are at the same time repeatedly produced and consumed. From the point of view of a system, a system produces its own movement by using the elements it produces. From the point of view of elements, elements drive the system that produces them. The system is thus able to keep operating by capitalizing on the material elements it produces. A system realizes itself in the space that is projected by its elements. If the elements are proteins, the system—that is, a cell—realizes itself in a physical space. If the elements are those of a communication system (Luhmann's emphasis)—that is, a social system—the system realizes itself in a social topological space.

If we limit our examination to the mechanism of continuous movement, two problems become immediately apparent in Maturana and Varela's formulation: firstly, a system's components differ from the elements it produces. When, for example, the components of a cell system are macromolecules, that is, cell proteins, the cell system will produce proteins that then serve to regenerate it. It may, however, happen that proteins thus produced are different from those that were the cell's original components, and some of what is produced may even turn out to be foreign matter. Only those elements that can continue operating the system become its components. When elements that have been produced do not in turn become components of the system, waste elements accumulate within the cell. In sum, formed elements become first-time components of a cell system when they enter a circuit of continuous movement; by means of these elements, the system continues to operate, and the range of components factor out differently at each stage.

The second problem lies in Maturana and Varela's assumption that a system realizes itself in its own topological space as specified by its components. It is quite difficult to imagine each individual component proceeding to form that space in which it is going to exist. According to Maturana and Varela, if a component is a macromolecule, one needs to assume that a physical space whose dimensions correspond to this macromolecule will have preceded it into existence, and similarly, but now according to Luhmann, if a system is a social system, a topological space whose dimensions correspond to loci of interactions under consideration will be assumed to have existed beforehand. In both approaches the components appear first, and then the topological space. This mode of understanding comes from a popular scientific paradigm in which we can first designate a topological space and then observe the realization of a system within it. In any case, it is only the observer who constructs this topological space. It is not, it should be noted, formed by the operation of the system. Luhmann's work uses this same scientific schematization: the topological space is for the observer (for us), not for the system (for itself).

Responding to Luhmann's thesis, we find ourselves needing to ask: at what point will the requisite topological space be formed? Either the topological space corresponding to the system's components can be assumed to have formed beforehand or the system will need to form this space through its own operations. When the components produced by the system form a type of circularity through the interrelation of its components, a real

boundary becomes possible, that is, one that divides the real outside and the real inside of the system. In other words, a topological-space-for-itself is formed for the first time.

In general, autopoietic formulations reveal an open circulation between a system producing components and components re-operating the system that produces them. This circular operation might at this stage be called *Sich*, which is similar to "the self before the self," composed, as it is, of continuous movement. It should be remarked, though, that produced components occupy a particular area: the topological space. The cell system's boundary also gets formed as a result of how its components relate to one another. Because in this case the system realizes and exists in a specific space, this self-enclosure by a boundary might be called *Selbst* (the self). However, this is not yet the self that may be likened to the ego or the subject. Indeed, the autopoietic conception of self (*Selbst*) includes both of these aspects of selfhood, i.e., *Sich* as well as *Selbst*, or an itself as well as a self. *Sich* is repeatedly produced through continuous movement, whereas *Selbst* exists in the space formed by interactions of components.

Making use of the properties of its components and their ongoing interactions, *Selbst* divides the topological space into a real inside and a real outside. *Selbst* thus has both movement and cognition. Furthermore, when components interrelate to form topological space, sets of properties belonging to each of the various components emerge. For instance, the movement of molecules is the decisive factor in determining what the volume of a quantity of water will be. A given quantity of water would only have 5% of the volume that it does were all of its molecules motionless. The continuous motion of molecules gives water its actual volume. Thus, the topological area of a system is not only determined by productive operation but also by the movement and physical properties of its components. At this stage, the system begins to manifest primitive cognition. *Selbst* thus gets formed from movement and primitive cognition.

The following reformulation of Maturana and Varela's definition of autopoiesis attempts to resolve the two aforementioned problems, namely the difference between elements and components, and the way a system constructs its own topological space. I believe this reformulation represents both a clarification and a further development of the mechanism at work within autopoiesis. Firstly, and in keeping with Maturana and Varela, an autopoietic system is a system (defined as a unity) organized as a network of processes of repeated production (transformation and destruction) of elements. Secondly, when the elements re-operate, the network of processes (relations) that produced them continues, and these elements become the components of the system. Through continuous operation, the range of components (*Sich*) is formed each time. Finally, when the relationship of the components produced by the network of processes creates a closed region with interactions and properties of components, the network (system) becomes a concrete unit and exists in a special topological space. At this point, the space that is the closed region (*Selbst*) forms both an inside (the real system) and an outside (the real environment). This is both the topological space of the system, and the topological space for the system.

Autopoiesis forms a circuit of productive acts, and we can say that productive acts generally have a target, since they are executed according to a model. Using the works of Arakawa and Gins, I want to raise the possibility that productive acts might be executed without any reference to a model. In such an event, the operations could form the self of the producer, and this should then be called self-production (autopoiesis). The self is automati-

cally formed through the continuance of its own acts; in this way, the products are formed in parallel with the formation of the self by itself. If products independent of all causal relations are created, the subsequent productive acts may not necessarily be able to perceive these products as their objects. In so far as, on one hand, acts will be operating quite on their own while, on the other hand, out of this operation by-products emerge, we have in this a typical example of double-operation.

If we apply this view of an autopoeitic system to the body as a system, several remarkable features come to light:

- (1) Each of the operations determining a bodily action can be taken to be a unity. If the act of blinking is stopped halfway through its execution, the erstwhile blinking eyes will be seen as partly shut and partly open. But an incomplete blink must of course still be part of *some* operation and, before one knows it, it quickly takes on the look of a grimace. This operative unit is also, of course, a constituent of the operating system—the bodily system—that continues functioning throughout the repeated executions of individual operative units. When a unit is forcibly divided, it changes qualitatively, allowing a pure movement to appear in perception (which Deleuze termed "Intensity"). This intensity as pure movement corresponds to the *Sich* in autopoietic systems theory. Arakawa and Gins's *Site of Reversible Destiny* provides the visitor unexpected opportunities to experience a unit through which one could repeatedly enter into new operative circles (and at times into an intensive operation).
- (2) When it comes to repeating a bodily action, such as walking or running, being able to continue the operation does not result from the experience of having executed many times over the exact same action. For example, an infant learning to walk is forming the operative self (*Selbst*) whenever he takes a step. Executing the operation of walking amounts to forming the operative self step by step. Therefore, an infant can never take the same qualitative step twice inasmuch as each step is part of the ongoing formation of the operative self that takes shape whenever walking takes place. The action is at the same time *(immer zugleich)* a formation of the active self; evidently, the operation of the body is always a double operation, that is, both execution and formation.⁴ The architecture and landscape of *Site of Reversible Destiny* force us to move and act under peculiar conditions that seem akin to those of an infant learning to walk. The experience created by these special conditions causes us to "re-form" our actions even as we execute them.
- (3) Within any continual bodily action, there is a juncture between one unified action and the next, and here we must choose which type of action to pursue. A step that is part of walking can connect with a step in the action of jumping, flying up, squatting down, or, for that matter, simply coming to a stop. In Gibson's theory of affordances, the sudden starting up of one action minus the connection to the next action is termed a "micro-slip" (Sasaki 84-85). Along the locus between one elemental action and the other, there are always possibilities for connections not yet executed. It seems, moreover, that the continuance

⁴ Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* is substantially based on this mechanism of an operative system.

of elemental actions tends to advance in the most efficient way. Two actions are connected as necessary parts of the continuance of a single, consistent operation. Nonetheless, at the juncture of two elemental actions, there are many possible but still unexecuted connections. When one of these possibilities is realized, a new bodily action forms, a movement that perhaps takes observers by surprise. *Site of Reversible Destiny* leads us to notice this array of possibilities for new movement.

Considering the conceptual similarities between autopoietic systems theory and the works of Arakawa and Gins, we can see how these works create sites in which we are called on to grapple simultaneously with the formation of the body and that of perception. Indeed, in the constructions of Arakawa and Gins, we often encounter exactly that place in which we are able to attend to the formation of perception and to the ways in which the body, through moving, forms itself. So far, I have shown how these formations are closely synchronized such that the one provides a parameter of operation for the other, although each forms according to its own particular process. This synchronization is called a *coupling* in autopoietic systems theory. I believe that the experience we have within Nagi's Ryoanji involves a special type of coupling.

Mysteries of Nagi's Ryoanji

Gravity, light, air, etc., may not be perceivable as objects, but they are nonetheless a part of each human being's environment, and they are vital to his existence. Because gravity and light are not part of our objective field, they should be thought of as belonging to the "transcendental environment." Gravity and light of necessity play a part in the body's formation and thus exist for the body in a way that is neither strictly internal nor external. Modern science has not succeeded in creating a synthesis between bodily movement and gravity, and it has additionally failed to come up with a coherent formulation of how light relates to color. We thus remain unable to know gravity and light as objects of experience. Were we once again able to experience bodily and perceptual formation, we might feel the changes to/in the body and perception brought about by gravity and light. A place in which to begin this re-forming of the body and of perception is Arakawa and Gins's *Ubiquitous Site—Nagi's Ryoanji— Architectural Body*.

As we approach this site, a huge, white and slightly slanted cylinder appears suddenly against the background of Nagi's rather small-scaled mountains.⁵ Inside this cylinder we find two large replications of the Ryoanji garden of Kyoto.⁶ One of the most famous classic Japanese rock gardens, the original Ryoanji is constructed with innumerable white pebbles and an arrangement of twelve rocks of varying sizes. We experience quietude and the mind grows still within the original garden, but the exact opposite is true in Nagi's Ryoanji. Let us explore the surprising and disquieting aspects of this "ubiquitous site."

⁵ See Kawamoto, fig. d (nagioutside.jpg).

⁶ See Kawamoto, fig. e (Ubiquitous.jpg).

A replication of Ryoanji appears on each of the cylinder's facing walls; because the two replicated gardens are affixed to the cylinder's curved wall, the stones of which they are composed jut out horizontally and the ground upon which these stones sit curves distinctly upwards. The fact that this cylindrical two-in-one garden is completely closed in forces us to notice how we process its landscape as perception. Under ordinary conditions, human sensation and perception can cleave voluntarily at/to a given site. As already noted, it is through this cleaving that they form a topological domain, that is, the sensed and perceived world. But the unusual conditions inside this two-in-one garden prevent this cleaving from taking place in the customary manner. Normally, when sensation comes into existence through cleaving, there can be "found" both blankness and space capable of harboring repetitions of certain operations. Within Nagi's Ryoanji, no such blanks or spaces are anywhere to be found.

In other words, the unique design of Nagi's Ryoanji requires us to separate sensation and perception as we take in the garden's landscape. The set of elements necessary for cleaving to occur are not readily provided by this garden. The only possible avenue through which to enter into and operate within points of origin, i.e. landing sites, turns out to be the broad path delineated simply by a continual production of landing sites. Moreover, because we are simply unable to establish a locus of origin within this two-in-one garden, we cannot rely on our normal perceptual abilities to create a bird's-eye view of any given object, and thus our perception, operating under a restriction, is less ample than usual.

Another peculiar effect of the design of Nagi's Ryoanji is its colliding colors. The ceiling is evenly divided into green and gray with each color running the length of the cylinder, and the floor has the same divide, although it is colored red and gray. The red (floor) and the green (ceiling) occupy opposite sides of the divide. Whereas the human eye can see yellow-green between yellow and green and blue-green between blue and green, it cannot see red-green between red and green. We cannot envision (a) "red-green," as Wittgenstein indicates in his "Remarks on Color." When red and green are adjacent, a kind of sensory collision takes place. This effect has been repeatedly made use of in paintings: I refer you to *Nature morte au magnolia* (1941) and *Intérieur rouge, Nature morte sur table bleue* (1947) by Henri Matisse. Oddly enough, within Nagi's Ryoanji, a mysterious feeling of security and calm radiates out of the endless collision between the green on the ceiling and the red on the ground, tempered by the colors of the pebbles and the rocks that form the two wall-affixed gardens. In addition, light pours in from one end of the cylinder and fills it with a gentle brightness that varies greatly from spot to spot. We find gradually changing tones of color within the sloping cylinder; innumerable different reds and greens surface. Since the wide array of degrees of brightness within Nagi's Ryoanji sort out differently as the position of the sun changes, we continually meet with different conditions for sensation-formation and for color perception.

The huge cylinder stands at a tilt, creating a further optical challenge by moving standard points of reference. When the body is unable to find points of reference with which to stabilize itself, it immediately switches over to another type of formative process. At the precise instant the body makes a switch, it must begin to form itself anew, and this happens repeatedly. Within this cylinder, perception must be formed and bodily actions structured over and over again, under conditions different from those one usually encounters. Although a person is impelled to produce his body and perception over and over again in this space, he has scant understanding either of what he is in the process of producing, or of what he has just produced.

Not only does Nagi's Ryoanji contain many elements that provide a visitor with the opportunity to observe the ineluctable formation of sensation, perception, and body, it also presents two great mysteries. First, as I have just shown, there is the mystery of the gap that lies between perception and action. Consider the self-subsistent life system of a cell: High-resolution microscopes can show the movements of the cell in great detail. But the cell acts, forms, and maintains itself by itself, and, moreover, we do not yet have the capacity to observe these activities as such. Were the cell able on its own to view its appearance, it would perhaps be surprised at the great gap between its activities and its appearance. Analogously, when someone lives in a structure of his own design, he is often surprised by how wide a gap there is between how the structure appears to him and how it feels to inhabit it. Maturana and Varela state it thus:

> What occurs in a living system is analogous to what occurs in an instrumental flight where the pilot does not have access to the outside world and must function only as a controller of the values shown in his flight instruments. His task is to secure a path of variations in the readings of his instruments, either according to a prescribed plan, or to one that becomes specified by these readings. When the pilot steps out of the plane he is bewildered by the congratulations of his friends on account of the perfect flight and landing that he performed in absolute darkness. He is perplexed because in his knowledge all that he did at any moment was to maintain the readings of his instruments within certain specified limits, a task which is in no way represented by the description that his friends (observers) make of his conduct. (51)

Maturana and Varela adroitly cue us into the great gap that exists between what an observer gathers is happening and what is actually happening. A person continually acting on his own recognizance routinely operates by forming a self and dividing this self from its environment.

That which forms as a result of this activity cannot go on to relate itself to its environment. This goes a long way towards explaining why an observer cannot be made to understand a living system solely through a description of how it relates to its environment. That is, the two perspectives differ from each other not only from the point of view of logic but also from that of commonsense.

One might argue that a subject's perspective repeatedly takes in and intermingles with an observer's inasmuch as the subject also considers the observer's viewpoint. A subject who reflects on himself from what he believes to be an observer's viewpoint greatly widens his perspective and eventually is able to capture a view of himself in the world. This description can also serve as a general description of the dynamics underlying experience; it is, in effect, how Hegel describes experience in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Conversely, a subject's perspective can be considered as neither translatable into nor reducible to an observer's. For Hegel, the gap between subject and observer is breachable by an observer, but some phenomenologists would have it that this gap can never be done away with; the subject must remain strangely isolated. In any event, it should be noted that not only do adherents of these two positions never doubt the possibility of this relationship, they presuppose it.

Nagi's Ryoanji casts doubt on the possibility of such a relationship. What occurs within it overrides both philosophical positions described above. What the surroundings offer up for observation and what someone actually observes do not mesh. More precisely, the subject who is practiced not only in taking in the viewpoints of other observers but also, naturally, in getting going with its own viewpoint as observer can do neither within this setting. In such precipitous circumstances these are not viable options, because time is simply too short for any of

this. I believe that the way in which experience occurs in *Site of Reversible Destiny* (particularly so in *Critical Resemblances House*) is consonant with this observer-subject matter gap. Because *Site of Reversible Destiny* both calls for and brings about enhanced perceptual ability, it would seem to require a more diverse set of perceptual skills than ordinarily needed. Experience does not occur this way at Nagi; it does not require us to enhance or to diversify our perceptual ability. The following citation from Maturana and Varela demonstrates what I have in mind:

Let us suppose that we want to build two houses. For such a purpose we hire two groups of thirteen workers each. We name one of the workers of the first group as the group leader and give him a book which contains all the plans of the house showing in a standard way the layout of walls, water pipes, electric connections, windows, etc., plus several views in perspective of the finished house. The workers study the plans and under the guidance of the leader construct the house, approximating continuously the final state prescribed by the description. In the second group we do not name a leader, we only arrange the workers in a starting line in the field and give each of them a book, the same book for all, containing only neighborhood instructions. These instructions do not contain words such as house, pipes, or windows, nor do they contain drawings or plans of the house to be constructed; they contain only instructions of what a worker should do in the different positions and in the different relations in which he finds himself as his position and relations change. Although these books are all identical, the workers read and apply different instructions because they start from different positions and follow different paths of change. The end result in both cases is the same, namely, a house. The workers of the first group construct something whose final appearance they know all the time, while the workers of the second group have no views of what they are building, nor do they need to have obtained them even when they are finished. (53-54)

The two groups construct their respective houses by following distinctly different programs. The workers who follow the first program rely on images and make use of plans to get the job done. In this paper, I favor the program that the second group follows: this program does not require of those who follow it that they envision a result. Rather, it presents a set of processes and the rest happens through a series of bodily actions that the workers are instructed to perform. Maturana and Varela suggest that theoretical reflection cannot close the gap between rules that govern the recognize ourselves as having produced does not at all match what actually has been produced; that is to say, an action as perceived and its actual occurrence might in no way coincide. In fact, recognition never occurs in a timely enough manner to catch an action in progress.

In conclusion, I believe that Arakawa and Gins have dismantled to good effect the rules of recognition by using an extreme environment to force a unique type of phenomenological reduction upon a subject. They present us with a place where action and perception can and indeed must occur coincidentally with a consideration of the processes through which they form. Although perception and action occur each according to a different principle, processes that lead to bodily action usually become quickly integrated into and therefore inseparable from (a subject's) cognitive perception. When cognition is allowed to dominate bodily sensation in this way, action on the human-scale dominates to the exclusion of all other scales of action.

When cognition manifests as recognition, we can only note the newly acquired recognition as a blip in consciousness while making use of that which has been recognized in order to fine-tune bodily action. Both co-

gnizing and the incorporating of change need to be integrated equally through an observer's perspective and through repeated action. Within Nagi's Ryoanji, it is impossible to repeat bodily actions in the usual manner; and integration through an observer's perspective is not an option for a subject—indeed, it is impossible—within the logic of autopoiesis. Because Nagi's Ryoanji manages to produce impossibilities within a real space, a visitor's image of it will always be filled with lacunae; he will never be able to retrieve or pin down what materialized within it.

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BUILDING, TIMING, THINKING: Reversible Destiny After Hegel, Heidegger, and Smithson

"We have decided not to die." If we begin to think about this uncanny declaration, and give ourselves over to the possibility of immortality or vastly extended life that it promises (or threatens), we will entertain the idea of living into the indefinite future. We would have time to do all those things, we imagine, that are now postponed until we retire or win the lottery. And for all too many postponement is absolute deferral. For years we have tantalized ourselves with thoughts of the "if only ... " variety, and so many of them hinge on the availability of time (as well as power and money). It is a condition endemic to humans in advanced or late capitalism, which encourages our desire to reinvent ourselves, to find a new life, to be all we can be. New loves, new professions, new pursuits. Why not spend fifty years painting water colors, playing Casanova, exploring archaeological sites, or becoming a world-class gardener? In fact, if there is infinite time at our disposal, the very notion of "spending" it seems to lose its meaning. Just as the fabulously wealthy person should from an accounting point of view have no computcion about spending a million or two, so the prospective immortal should have no hesitation to devote a lustrum to whatever strikes her fancy, so long as interest does not lag. Of course, just as the now securely rich veterans of hard economic times may be restrained by habits and morals acquired in their early years, we can imagine that the first generations of the long-lived will think of time as a precious commodity, will attempt to evaluate and calculate whether some activity is really worth fifty years. Yet as time passes, we can expect that these outdated forms of thinking will fade. We will become comfortable with our new abundance, like the children of those born to wealth.

All of this assumes that extended life will not present us with excruciatingly difficult issues having to do with overpopulation, distribution of economic goods and medical care, unintended environmental consequences, and ensuing social conflicts and great wars (for lives that have been indefinitely extended become, like accumulations of wealth and resources, all the more worth fighting for). Let us leave these concerns to futurologists, who imagine that it is possible to project plausible scenarios concerning such matters. To explore the daring project of Arakawa and Madeline Gins (hereafter AG), let us assume that such problems would become manageable in the new regime of Reversible Destiny. Better yet, let us briefly see why the very terms in which such problems are posed are superficial and shortsighted, within the horizon opened by AG's Copernican revolution in architecture.

Nevertheless, the question must arise as to how AG's project alters the relation of time and architecture. It is not just that AG propose a radical extension of life but that they aim to *reverse* both the destiny of the species and the traditional, almost unquestioned conception of architecture and time. This they do in two ways: (1) they suggest that architecture and its theories can be reoriented so as no longer to assume that building is for mortals, and (2) that architecture, long associated with the quest for marking time as well as space, with becoming monumental, will focus not on its own longevity, but on that of its inhabitants. As Engels would have said, we are pre-

sented here with a case of the dialectic in which a quantitative change becomes qualitative. If individual and collective human life begins to seem indefinitely extendable, what will the experience of time be like? How will the phenomenology of time be transformed? Questions like this, about a temporality to come, are beyond the reach of futurologists, whose *-ology* or logos is based upon the past, and usually upon a very limited segment of it (generally industrial society of the last century or so).

To understand AG, it helps to see that traditional architecture and its theory aspire to a monumentality in sharp contrast to the fragile mortality these disciplines ascribe to humans. AG aim, in effect, at a Copernican revolution in our conception of architecture, one that bears some relation to Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy. Rather than seeking the image of immortality in a monumental architecture, they *reverse* expectations and propose that we become immortal by inhabiting new buildings. In the language of Deleuze and Guattari, this reversible destiny is the invocation of "new people and new earth." In order to see the radical force of this reversal, let me suggest how deeply rooted is the association of architecture, philosophy, and mortality that they are seeking to transvalue.

Philosophy has been thinking about architecture for a long time, whether in the form of an explicit aesthetics of the art (as in Hegel) or in a metaphorics of building and foundation-laying (as in Descartes and Kant). Responding to AG as a philosopher of art, I note that they are hardly the first to raise the issue of mortality with regard to architecture. What they show us is that the condition of mortality has simply been taken for granted; "the human race has hideously acquiesced in regard to its own abysmal fate" (Arakawa and Gins xiv). The major thinkers of the European philosophical tradition since Plato think of architecture very decidedly within the horizon of mortality. This has been little noticed or spoken of, perhaps because the entire tradition (not just in its thought about art) thinks of the human generally within the confines of this same limit. Nietzsche analyzes the "madness" of the history of philosophy as its having inscribed itself, wittingly or not, under the sign of the thought already evident in philosophy's first recorded saving, the sentence of Anaximander, rendered in (a translation of) his translation as: "Everything passes away; therefore everything deserves to pass away. And this too is justice, this law of time that it must devour its children" (Nietzsche 140) What does it mean when philosophy specifically associates architecture and mortality? Why is the monumental so typically architectural? What would be the character of a genealogy or archaeology of aesthetics that interrogated the arts with respect to the *question* of mortality? Is architecture as conceived by that long line of Platonic thinkers always already involved with death? Is et in Arcadia ego always the sign of the architectural? Must architecture continue to be thought within the horizon of the epitaph and the monumental?

Martin Heidegger claimed to have comprehended the history of western thought as a single story, the quest for presence, from Plato's ideas to Nietzsche's will to power. At the end of this story, an end that may continue interminably in the unfolding of the technological world of *Gestell* (enframing), he offers a few pointers on how we might begin to think beyond the confines of that tradition. Given Heidegger's philosophical prestige, let us take him seriously when he invites us to see the peasant house as a form of "building dwelling thinking" that points to a way of human life twisting free from the domination of technology, or when he employs architectural language to call us to a renewed attentiveness to who we are and might be, as in "language is the house of being." Heidegger's house is the peasant house of the mortals, part of whose dwelling is to teach the meaning of mortality

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to the next generation. He was a thinker of the house of the dead. His two bravura commentaries in the essay "On the Origin of the Work of Art," on Van Gogh's *Old Shoes* and the Greek temple, evoke worlds in which humans face death in battle, in childbirth, or of disease and age,. Is this simply the remnant of Heidegger's Nazism of the 30's, speaking in the more discrete and subdued tones of the 1950's, where the preservation of the archaic could be seen as challenging the domination of the era of *Gestell*? Or does Heidegger repeat, a traditional philosophical gesture, even if in his own accent? This, after all is what he taught us to see so many other thinkers do: "Mortals dwell in that they initiate their own nature—their being capable of death as death—into the use and practice of this capacity, so that there may be a good death" (Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" 151).

This is what Heidegger tells us in "Building Dwelling Thinking." In this essay of 1951 for the Darmstadt Colloquium on Space, Heidegger took the occasion to address the disciplines of geography and architecture disciplines that seem primarily oriented to spatiality, that is, to extension, to mapping. We do not think of their objects primarily in temporal terms, even if the earth changes, always slowly (and sometimes catastrophically), and even if these disciplines change, and adopt radically new models. Heidegger's most significant contribution in this essay is his proposing a concept of Wohnen (dwelling) that builds on and enlarges his description of the instrumental world he had sketched in *Being and Time*. Dwelling not only involves seeing the world as a set of virtual interventions and tools; dwelling is situated, both receptive and constructive of place. Dwelling is embodied: it involves crossing a bridge, tending fields or hearth. This dwelling in the four-fold. In 1927, in Sein und Zeit Heidegger had introduced the concept of Sein-zum-Tode (being towards death), so it seemed, to indicate the radical temporality of *Dasein* (human existence). Even there he insisted that this in no way implies that authenticity necessarily requires a concern with the specifics of one's end (although one could be authentically concerned with such). In 1951, with a glance at the postwar housing shortage, Heidegger shifts the emphasis in his talk about mortality; it is now an aspect of the fourfold; earth, heavens, mortals, divinity play in a ring-dance, in which we participate through dwelling. And Dasein has become die Sterbliche. Or does he imagine a kind of dwelling almost destroyed by Gestell, yet somehow prior to it and perhaps even surviving sporadically? In any case, language is the house of being, as we had heard in the Letter on Humanism (1946). How shall mortals initiate "their own nature" (themselves and their progeny?) into "being capable of death as such"? These issues are raised in the midst of Heidegger's address to a group concerned with the future of space in the postwar Bundesrepublik, in a narrowed homeland, at a time of re-building within the orbit of liberal democratic capitalist reconstruction. Heidegger's explanation of the mortals dwelling, our dwelling, as initiation into the good death, comes at the conclusion of his analysis of how mortals dwell with respect to earth, heavens, divinities, and mortals. They save the earth, receive the sky, await the divinities, and teach their own nature how to die. It is, we might say, the Hegelian or self-reflexive moment of Heidegger's analysis, where mortals become concerned with their nature as mortals. So death now has a place, it is central to dwelling, it is what dwelling must be. And it is not as if dwelling could focus on saving the earth, receiving the sky, or awaiting the divinities without also engaging in initiation into death, thanatopaideia. Heidegger of course means more by dwelling than architectural inhabitation, but as (always) plays between the ontic and ontological levels, it is the peasant house, the bridge, the path in the field, or the rough Holzweg that emerge in his discourse. All these, in Heidegger's mini-narratives, lend themselves to intimations of mortality. But "we have decided not to die." To be sure, Heidegger insists on certain limits to dwelling as

thanatopaideia: "To initiate mortals into the nature of death in no way means to make death, as empty nothing, the goal. Nor does it mean to darken dwelling by blindly staring toward the end" ("Building" 151).

But neither does it mean to see dwelling as experimental, as raising the question of a dwelling-to-come. Could raising the question of mortality be a way of initiating into the meaning of death? Heidegger might say that the very possibility of making the statement "we have decided not to die" is a symptom of technocratic culture; it evinces, on this account, the assumption that even the biological and human worlds can be endlessly produced, reproduced and varied. Or might a Heideggerian point out that the boldest contemporary biological speculations on the extension of human life hardly begin to envision a world in which humans could be guaranteed to survive cosmic accidents, let alone industrial ones or armed attacks. In that sense, she might claim, we would all still be mortal; we are the only ones who know our own fragility. No doubt, but why take this, with Heidegger, as indicating that dwelling must be fundamentally oriented toward this awareness? In *Sein und Zeit, Dasein* was said to be the being for whom its being is a question. So why should dwelling not be a questioning? This is precisely the intervention of Arakawa and Gins who call for a tentative, exploratory architecture, one that keeps in mind the possibilities of the trans-human or the human-to-come.

Heidegger's association of dwelling and architecture with mortality has deep roots in the philosophical tradition. The aesthetics of German idealism led to systems of the arts, hierarchical orderings in which the arts move from the most earthbound material medium to those which are more spiritual. While Schopenhauer and Hegel disagree over whether it is music or poetry which provides the most immediate access to a higher, non-material dimension of reality (*Wille* for Schopenhauer, *Geist* for Hegel), they are at one in classifying architecture as the most material of the arts, necessarily structured by the inevitability of gravity and the resistance of materials. It is no accident, for them, that the paradigmatic architectural works are monuments, memorials, temples, and churches, which starkly mark the fact of mortality, sometimes by pointing to the idea of survival in another world; witness the beginning and end points of Hegel's architectural itinerary from the Egyptian pyramids to the Gothic cathedral.

We can go further back in unearthing the tie between architecture and mortality in the philosophical tradition that Heidegger both criticizes and exemplifies. Plato's most noteworthy analysis of mortality and immortality is in the *Phaedo*; Plato uses his narrative of Socrates' last hours to set up an equivalence between the prison and the human body. Socrates is confined in the prison, where he will drink the poison and die. Just so, the human soul is confined, limited, and confused by its life in the body, a prison from which death will liberate it. All architecture is prison architecture; it is all an extension of the prison of the body. Plato maintains the spatial and (cosmic) architectural tenor of this analogy in the myth, put in the mouth of Socrates, about the true earth which the liberated soul will see when free from the body. We live in a crooked hollow of the earth, filled with impurities, but there, on the true surface of the globe, other people live much longer in a world of groves and temples actually inhabited by the gods. A subtle reading of Plato would aim at translating this *mythos* into *logos*. Yes, a distinction is to be drawn between two worlds, two dimensions of reality; but as Nietzsche tells us, the Platonic other world is best seen as the world of ideas in which the sage already lives. Yet Plato feels the need to say this by way of a myth in which the architecture of the prison and the topography of the true earth are the contrasting environments of the soul. In prison, in the dwelling which fits his account of the mortal body and immortal soul, Socrates initia-
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tes his interlocutors and himself into mortality. The prison house is the very figure of architecture and there is no alternative form.

Hegel produced the most systematic, if not the most satisfying, philosophical account of architecture of all the great thinkers. His thinking about the arts is inscribed within the dialectic of life and death which constitutes *Geist* or spirit. Spirit's development or self-manifestation operates by means of the contrast of the finite and the infinite. If the grand narrative of spirit requires the death of individuals, demonstrating the limits of their finite nature, it also explains the overcoming, incorporation, and inclusion of such death within a larger, trans-personal life. The story of art, whether told in terms of the triad of symbolic, classic, and romantic, or in terms of the separate development of the arts from the most earthy and material—architecture—to the most purely imaginative and thought-like—poetry—is a story of how media are transformed by spiritual meaning. The history of art is the great educator, by which we humans come to know our spiritual vocation. Hegel deployed the theological language of Christianity in order to make his grand narrative culturally acceptable, but he also transformed the sense of that language by suggesting that it, like art, is only an imaginative and not a fully conceptual, philosophical form of spirit's self-knowledge. It is not surprising, then, that Hegel's analysis of architecture turns on the question of mortality.

For Hegel there are three great forms of each of the arts: symbolic, classic, and romantic. These distinctions are understood in terms of the relationship between sensuous medium and spiritual meaning. The symbolic type exhibits either a deficiency or a wildly indeterminate excess of meaning, as in enigmatic Egyptian obelisks or what Hegel saw as the undisciplined proliferation of grotesque figures in Hindu temples. Classical art, always exemplified by Greek sculpture, finds a fusion of the two aspects in the human figure as expression of the mind. Finally, the romantic type shows the ultimate inadequacy of the sensuous vehicle for the richness of spiritual meaning to which it points. While architecture is fundamentally a symbolic art, because the constraints of its medium do not allow the explicit articulation of spiritual meaning, it nevertheless has a complex internal history in which the intensive symbolic form (like the Egyptian pyramid) is succeeded by such exemplary forms as the classical Greek temple or the romantic Gothic cathedral.

For Hegel, the Egyptian pyramid is the symbol of the symbolic as such, a point made quite clear in his frequent recourse to this form in his explanations of his system of the arts. At the same time, the pyramid and the mausoleum begin to subordinate architecture to an external purpose, the memorializing and worship of the dead, so that it heralds the functional dimension of the classical temple, conceived as the place of the gods in the city. Hegel's account of the pyramid form begins by contrasting it with Hindu temples, and indeed the "transition" from Indian art to Egyptian is crucial to Hegel's account. Indian art is grotesque, excessive, monstrous in its multiplicity of gods, demons, and fantastic stories and symbols. Hegel lets us know that he finds its constant reference to the organs of generation and the life process disturbing. Real architecture begins with the Egyptian cult of death. The Hindus, Hegel remarks, burn their dead or leave them to rot on the ground; their belief in the cycle of reincarnation (in his version of it) makes no sharp distinction between life and death, and evinces a deficient sense of human individuality. Preserving the dead in their individuality, and not letting them dissolve into mere nature or the cycle of reincarnation, marks the emergence of an architecture that gives humans a meaningful habitation on the earth. In describing the revolution wrought by memorializing architecture, Hegel contrasts nomadic and

settled ways of life. Tombs, pyramids, and mausoleums tie people to a specific place; they humanize what would otherwise be mere territory. He quotes Herodotus on the Scythians to suggest that even (some) nomads create a relative attachment to place by means of architectural burial. The nomadic Scythians, challenged by the Persian King Darius replied that they had no cultivated lands or towns to attack, but that if the king should meddle with their ancestors' tombs they were prepared to fight (Hegel 650). The nomads, in this case, are not fully nomadic. The point is that architecture localizes, grounds, and situates by marking burials, by making death the theme of architecture. In the background are possibly more radically nomadic peoples who establish no city of the dead (Hegel imagines such primitives occasionally, as in his account of Africa). Founding the history of art, Hegel establishes a firm association of the architecture of death with a fixed territory and a regime of meaning. Indians confuse life and death, and so have a very vague conception of individuality. In contrast, Egyptian architecture demonstrates "the rise of the individual concrete spirit. The dead are therefore preserved as something individual and in this way are fortified and preserved against the idea of absorption into nature." There is no true architecture then, for Hegel, that does not thematize mortality in the service of the state. The anecdote of the Scythians and the contrast with Hindu practices suggest that if (contrary to the facts of this case) there were a nomadic people who did not architecturally mark burial sites, they would have neither art nor state. As Deleuze and Guattari would point out, Hegel's recognition of the possibility of the nomadic is inconsistent, and symptomatic of a geophilosophy which assumes the state form as normative. This is worth pondering in the light of AG's project of a nonthanatological architecture. It may be more than a coincidence that their work has a decidedly international aspect and is relatively devoid of local characteristics. The figure of the snail, which carries its own house wherever it goes, is central to their conception of dwelling.

I have already suggested that Hegel's firmly rooted concept of architecture with the recognition and acceptance of mortality is anticipated in Plato and continued in Heidegger. For all their differences, Plato and Hegel invoke the thought of an immortality independent of the decaying earthly body as the other side of such an architecture. For Heidegger, dwelling is where mortals teach the importance of mortality, but it is not so clear whether he has a place for either Platonic or Hegelian immortality. Following Derrida's radicalization of Heidegger's critique of the metaphysics of presence, I suspect that Heidegger would see such thoughts of immortality as implicated inextricably with the notion of a soul (or collective spirit, in Hegel's case) that would be fully present to itself. To what extent does "modern" or "postmodern" architectural thought continue to think within a horizon that maintains such a tie between architecture and mortality? Let me consider the case of one such "postmodern" thinker, perhaps the most original artist-theorist of the last fifty years or so to have dealt with the confluence of time, monumentality, and death, Robert Smithson. Smithson is an architectural thinker in so far as he is concerned with the fundamental parameters of human building and marking of the earth. In Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel, I presented Smithson's ideas by way of a contrast with Hegel on the history of art. Smithson, I maintained, attempted to circumvent the tradition of art history by bracketing its conception of time and history. While not mentioning Hegel by name, Smithson argued that art history relied on an excessively narrow concept of human time which failed to situate it in its cosmic and geological context. Museums reinforced a parochial ideology of progress and development in their very arrangement of successive styles and cultures. A more adequate temporal perspective would see that the time of recorded history was perhaps just a blip within a very *longue durée*. We should look to prehistoric markings of the earth to better orient ourselves in terms of art's own time. We should

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pursue those places where "remote futures meet remote pasts" (Smithson 113). Smithson's own work explores the intersection of a variety of different temporalities. The *Spiral Jetty* in Utah is situated at such an intersection, which involves the real time of the artist's experience, the *Jetty*'s relation to geological and meteorological change, and its place amid industrial ruins not far from an earlier monument to technological "progress," the Golden Spike that marks the completion of the transcontinental railway in 1869. Now, one of Smithson's central concepts is entropy, the tendency for disorder to increase, or as he illustrates it by example, the infinitely greater ease of mixing two sands of different colors as opposed to the task of separating them. In Smithson's essay on the *Jetty*, he deforms the epitaph in Poussin's pastoral elegy, "*Et in Utah ego*." The pastoral is, always already, mortal. Smithson, flying over the very different landscape of the almost dead salt lake—the only organic life being red algae—declares the reign of entropy and suggests the fragility of the I, or ego. It is not only mortal but fragile, mutable, dissolving (as the essay and Smithson's film say and show).

The mind of the art world associated both Smithson and Arakawa with Minimalism in the early to midsixties. This made initial sense because of the geometrical aspect of their earlier works and their common compulsion on the viewer to inhabit and reflect on real space and time, rather than escaping into illusion or fiction. Moreover, both were engaged in rethinking the floor or the ground plane, Smithson in his project of flattening out, culminating perhaps in the *Jetty* as a flattened Tower of Babel, Arakawa in the early paintings that began to explore what later came to be called landing sites (Haxthausen). In his interrogation and exploration of the ground, Smithson came to focus on our being on the earth, which included the dynamics of travel (Yucatan or the wilds of New Jersey), the entropic dimension of all building (*Partially Buried Woodshed*), and the cave and labyrinth forms (actual and possible museums and movie houses) that could shake up our habitual sense of body, movement, and place. In his first paintings Arakawa began to articulate some structures of centering and decentering, an articulation which continues in AG's projects of reversible destiny.

AG would ask Smithson whether he doesn't consider that confronting humans with limits, even limits that solicit, alter, and decenter them, or link them with unfamiliar processes, like the earth-moving machinery he admired, might not be a sign of inevitable disappearance, but could also be an opening to a creative transformation. AG dedicate *Architectural Body* to "the Transhumans." They sketch an architecture for the transhumans, those "seekers and adventurers" as Nietzsche called them, who respond to the question "What shall be the sense of the earth?" by accepting the invitation to work for the *Übermensch*. (That fateful term is indeed best translated as "transhuman," freeing it from misleading associations with race, gender, and unsavory political regimes).¹ AG want to realize these possibilities, to draw upon the virtual field that Nietzsche began to adumbrate. They would play Marx to his Feuerbach. Marx said "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it" ("Theses on Feuerbach," number 11). AG describe their "architecural revolution": "A pro-

¹ This is not to deny the many offensive things that Nietzsche *says* about such things, although it would always be useful to examine rhetorical or poetic context. But as Daniel Conway, Robert Gooding-Williams and others have argued, the conception of the *Übermensch* can be read as a generic place-holder for a kind of being that had become affirmative, creative, and self-creative. The specific configuration of such an *Übermensch* could be individual, corporate, social, or cyborg —to cite a few of Conway's examples (20-27).

cedural constructing of the world will constitute a way for the species to take evolution into its own hands" (xix). Smithson was somewhat hostile to biology or perhaps biologism, which he saw as a parochial and narcissistic perspective. He favored the machinic, the geological, and the cosmic, and, unlike Hegel, found gardens disturbing because they were too spiritual rather than not spiritual enough. Who knows if this autodidact who had absorbed much of structuralism, paleontology, and earth science might have seen things differently if he had encountered the study of self-organizing systems which emerged after his death? Deleuze and Guattari speak of "non-organic life," indicating that we can think of such systems even at (for example) the geological level.

Which brings us to the philosophical voice that could be most significant for AG's architectural revolution, Spinoza. (So far as I know, they have not said anything explicit about this great predecessor, honored by Nietz-sche and Deleuze).

"We have decided not to die." On the surface, there could be no greater tension between this declaration and Spinoza's proposition that "A free person thinks of death least of all things, and his or her wisdom is a meditation of life, not of death" (Ethics IV, Proposition 67). An architecture whose basic principle is the project of human immortality, or perhaps the emergence of the post- or trans-human, might appear to be obsessed with the question of death, as it seeks some escape from what seems the inevitable human lot. The motto "reversible destiny" seems focused on the destiny of mortality taken for granted by common sense, religion, and philosophy. I want to suggest a reading of Spinoza and of Arakawa and Gins that diminishes or eliminates the apparent tension between the two principles. What, after all, did Spinoza mean by this statement? It is a rebuke to all of those religious and philosophical traditions that would have us dwell on the fragility of human life, and that would lead us to meditate on our sins and our salvation in another world. Spinoza defines the free man in terms of his concern with action, life, and the increase of his power-an increase that he best promotes in association with others. The free person-who as such is beyond good and evil-does not anxiously think about judgment day, or dwell on human weakness and finitude as exemplified by the approaching end. She acts, she lives, she increases her power. Yet surely she takes care to avoid death and extend life, and in cooperation with others aims at the best, the most powerful human life. Surely these are the themes that Nietzsche found attractive in Spinoza, when he wrote to his friend Overbeck in 1881 that he was "utterly amazed, utterly enchanted" to have discovered Spinoza as his "precursor" (92). As Spinoza makes clear in the Ethics it is the fear of one's own death, and its association with the binary of good and evil, that the free man necessarily avoids. In his gloss on the story of the fall in Genesis he explains that God forbade man from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because "as soon as he should eat of it he would straightway fear death instead of desiring to live" (Ethics IV, Proposition 68, Scholium). AG stand amazed at a human history that has eaten from that tree, and which has created cultures that fill the earth's surface with monstrous mausoleums rather than machines for living.

Spinoza has little or nothing to say about architecture in the narrow sense, but he speaks movingly of human beings as situated, embodied beings, who are just beginning to have a sense of how to make sense of nature and so to identify themselves with *natura naturans* as they increase their power. Is it helpful to recall that he lived during the heady construction boom of the Dutch republic. Having recently freed themselves from Spanish rule, the people of Spinoza's Amsterdam were busily acting, living, and extending their power; they were building a city out of marsh and sea, the absolutely modern city of the seventeenth century. More than a city, a republic, a

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growing maritime capitalist, would-be empire. We can imagine the philosopher (who had worked in international trade for his father's firm) seeing all of this activity as a testament to the barely tapped potential of human *conatus*. When he wrote that we scarcely have any idea yet of what the human body is capable, he would have been encouraged by the creation of cities, the expansion of power, that he saw all around him.

I would like to think of AG as Spinozists, then. They do not fear death or insinuate that we should be meditating on our individual mortality, but invite and challenge us, asking that we join them in a project of intensifying and expanding human power. Like Spinoza, they know that we are just beginning to learn about the powers of the body, where the body must also include its landing sites, its constructed environment. It is a similar sense of the expansive and creative human body that led Marx to talk about the earth as the human's inorganic body. The Spinoza that I associate with AG is the one who helps to inspire Nietzsche's conception of the trans-human and Deleuze and Guattari's call for a philosophy that would be directed toward producing a new people and a new earth.

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"TO LOSE ONE'S WAY" (FOR SNAILS AND NOMADS): THE RADICAL LABYRINTHS OF CONSTANT AND ARAKAWA AND GINS

The city is the realization of the ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth.

(Walter Benjamin Arcades Project, M6a, 4: 429)

Hermann Kern concludes *Through the Labyrinth*, his magisterial study and exhaustive cataloguing of that genre, with a short chapter on the "labyrinth revival." Since 1982, Kern contends, "a renewed interest in labyrinths has swept the globe" (311). Although his catalogue is daunting, neither the contributions of Constant, nor those of Arakawa and Gins are given consideration. This paper attempts to contextualize Constant's New Babylon (Nieuw Babylon) project as well as the labyrinth elements in Arakawa and Gins's truly post-ontological procedural architecture. In both congruent and dissimilar ways these contemporary projects modify, but in some aspects also perpetuate, this 5,000 year old architectural obsession.

The labyrinth in its original sense is a walled unicursal path designed to control the pattern of movement to a central point. The perimeter of the structure has a single opening that serves as dual entry and exit points. The path consists of seven circuits, the form of which suggests a vital anthropological connection. "The path does not move in a straight line but rather in the rhythm of systole and diastole. Hence, much like a chest expanding to inhale [...]" (Kern 24). The origin of the seven-circuit labyrinth is shrouded in mythology and mystery. Kern speculates a neolithic source, possibly in celestial observation rituals or in initiation rites, and in both possibilities there is an intimate relation to dance. There is also a strong likelihood that the labyrinth developed out of cave cults in which winding, natural caverns symbolized the bowels of the earth or the uterus of the Earth Mother. The path marked as an inner, then outward circuitry with a central point to be reached and then departed from, affords obvious comparison to the path through life to death to rebirth. Indeed, in the Christian appropriation of the labyrinth it is Christ who replaces Theseus as the protagonist in an Easter ritual of rebirth. The "*computus*" labyrinth is the medieval contribution to the history of this design used as "a symbol of the astronomical determination of the date of Easter" (Massini, qtd. in Kern 110).

It is also worth noting the morphological affinities between the classical labyrinth and early Greek writing practice. Early Greek poetry was written in *boustrophedon*, with lines alternating direction from left to right and right to left, in imitation of the turn of the ox in ploughing. All writing in early Greece took the form of *scriptio continua*, a practice of undifferentiated writing without capitalization or word breaks.¹ Both

¹ The phenomenon is noted by Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass and Nancy J. Vickers in their Introduction to *Language Machines. Technologies of Literary and Cultural Production.* Full discussions of *scriptio continua* can be found in Saenger; Parkes; and McCaffery.

phenomena occasion a cancellation of space (respectively, the empty retinal movement back across a page and the meaningful differentiation between verbal units) and together bear a remarkable affinity to the unicursal labyrinth design. It might be said that the labyrinth precipitates a "baroque" embellishment upon an architectural *boustrophedon*.

No doubt the labyrinth remarks an architecture incapable of avoiding a centrifugal pull into metaphorical contaminants: the labyrinth of life, of love, of existence. As well "[i]t suffices for a short time to follow the trace, the repeated course of words, in order to perceive, in a sort of vision, the labyrinthine constitution of being" (83-4). This passage, taken from Bataille's *Inner Experience* and so insistent on the profound link of the labyrinth to writing, should not be dismissed as a mere metaphorical application of an architectural term. Indeed, in the case of Bataille, as Dennis Hollier argues, the question that insists itself is the following: What precedence should be given to the labyrinth of words? Is such textuality the ur-space which the classical labyrinth subsequently concretises in architectural space? Hollier describes this textual condition: The "labyrinth is basically the space where oppositions disintegrate and grow complicated, where diacritical couples are unbalanced and perverted, etc., where the system on which linguistic function is based disintegrates, but somehow disintegrates by itself, having jammed its own works" (58). Petitioned here is an inoperative, auto-destructional writing in constant errancy through an undecidable space. "[N]either the category of subjectivity nor the category of objectivity can exist in this space, which, having made them unsound, nevertheless has no replacement to offer. [...] In this sense one is never either inside or outside the labyrinth" (58).

The story so far...

This myth is a famous one. Once upon a time a sea god, Poseidon, sends a white bull to the court of Minos at Knossos for ritual slaughter. Minos declines to kill the animal and in revenge Poseidon engenders in Pasiphae, the queen of Minos, an uncontrollable lust for the bull. The outcome of her sexual gratification is a monstrous hybrid, half-man, half-beast. The ever-ingenious Minos hires the architect Daedalus to construct a private space in which to house the savage beast, which cruel Minos feeds on captured victims. Death now turns to a love-story. The captured Theseus, fully expecting to become the Minotaur's snack, discovers to his felicitous surprise that Ariadne, one of the King's daughters, has fallen in love with him. Ariadne supplies Theseus with a thread of gold by which he can retrace his course through the winding structure. Brave Theseus enters the labyrinth, slays the Minotaur, retraces his steps back along the thread, sets the palace on fire and escapes with Ariadne to Naxos where he deserts her. The rest is architecture and speculation.

Choreography, allegory, architecture and celestial computer, the labyrinth is a complex notion, often misunderstood and misapplied in its multifarious resonances.² The prototypical classic, Minoan, or Cretan

² It remains uncertain whether the labyrinth has an architectural, mythic, or diagrammatic origin. No remains were found at Knossos, and neither Diodorus (ca. 50BCE) nor Pliny the Elder (23-79CE) report them.

labyrinth (from which all early labyrinths derive) functions equally as a kennel, the prototype of our contemporary zoo, and an architectural death-trap. Both a home and a feeding tract, it is a wrapped model that includes a labyrinth inside a labyrinth: the Daedalian construct *per se* plus the curvilinear anfractuosities called the minotaur's intestines. And the demonic rite of passage demands the move through one into the other (I will return to this intertwining theme of architecture and death later in this paper).³ The classic labyrinth cannot be mapped by its occupants; interior movement is entirely local, provisional and motivated by the binding purpose of arriving at a central destination. As such, labyrinths initiate serpentines, not trajectories. As an occupied site, or situation, a labyrinth might be best considered as a continuously cursive movement constructed on the rhetorical model of an extended periphrasis. As Pierre Rosenstiehl correctly discerns, "[I]t is the traveller and his myopia who makes the labyrinth, not the architect and his perspectives" (qtd. in Damisch 31). In other words, a labyrinth is only a labyrinth to unwitting users. How convenient it would be, then, for the dweller not to think and react emotionally. For without thought and feeling, the body of the person would be processed mechanically into and out of the structure.⁴

There is a popular terminological confusion between maze and labyrinth, although the former did not emerge until the late Renaissance. The maze and the labyrinth are topological invariants involving two vastly different logics of passage. In the latter, passage occurs along and around the convolution of a single path; the architectural subject is never lost in a labyrinth. Linear, deterministic and with zero requirements of choice from its perambulator, Eco likens this topology to a skein which on unwinding "one obtains a continuous line. In this kind of labyrinth the Ariadne thread is useless, since one *cannot* get lost: the labyrinth itself is the Ariadne thread" (80). The maze, or *Irrweg*, gains in complexity presenting choices among alternative routes of which some are deliberate dead-ends.⁵

Bernard Tschumi appropriates the figure of the labyrinth as one term in an architectural binary, opposing it—as intransigently non-conceptual and a pure, immediate ontological experience—to the Pyramid, understood as "a dematerialization of architecture in its ontological form" (43). Together these terms articu-

³ Most labyrinth-scholars, e.g. Mayer, Kretschmer, Spiegelberg, Picard, Palmer, Galini, and Frisk, concur that the structure takes it name from "labrys" the two-bladed or Janusian axe that was the symbol of the Cretan king Minos. This, however, is disputed by Hermann Kern: "All we can be certain of is that the suffix '-inthos' was usually employed in place names in a language that the Greeks encountered upon migration (ca. 2000 BCE). At the very least, this suffix could be an indication of how long the word has been in use. An analysis of the rest of the word leads one to assume, with some reservations, that it is associated, somewhat mysteriously, with 'stone'" (Kern 2 and 43-45).

⁴ The classical labyrinth, inverted and complicated as we shall see by Arakawa and Gins, petitions an additional, *emotional* landing site to the three they outline (Imaging, Perceptual and Architectural). Karen Mac Cormack makes such a proposal in discussing their work. See her "Innovation's Inventory" on-line at *The North American Centre for Interdisciplinary Poetics* <www.poetics.yorku.ca>. Mac Cormack has discussed this matter by phone and e-mail with Madeline Gins.

⁵ The desire to connect *Irrweg* to Joyce's Earwicker is an obvious desire and offers a guiding bar into a new reading of *Finnegans Wake*: Finnegans Irrweg a wake in the maze of language.

late the ruling paradox of architecture: the impossibility to conceptualize and experience space at the same time. Tschumi likens the labyrinth to "the dark corners of experience [...] where all sensations, all feelings are enhanced, but where no overview is present to provide a clue about how to get out. Occasional consciousness is of little help, for perception in the Labyrinth presupposes immediacy" (42). A labyrinth of this kind offers, first and foremost, a disorientation of architectural time; the required itinerary is one of local decisions and indeterminate windings and returns in which erroneous decisions and unproductive itineraries are impossible. Again, one cannot get lost in a labyrinth, nor even make a mistake. (In this respect Bernard Tschumi's claim that "there may be no way out of a labyrinth" [43] is architecturally incorrect). One can and does, however, experience an illusion of being lost in the windowless, unicursal.⁶ Indeed, the classical labyrinth is prototypical of what Germano Celant calls "deprived space" in which "participants' can only find themselves as the subject, aware only of their own fantasies and pulsations, able only to react to the low-density signals of their own bodies" (qtd. in Tschumi 43).

Background: the refusal of architectural functionalism

Before proceeding to a more detailed discussion of the labyrinth in both Situationist and Arakawa/Gins's procedural architecture, a brief historical background is necessary to explain the grounds for a shared common *telos*: the uncompromising repudiation of the planetary malfeasance named functionalism.⁷ The date 1933 is marked in the history of western architecture by the ratification of the Athens Charter that outlined and endorsed the nature of "the future city," encoding the Corbusian style and principles of the modern "functionalist" city predicated on the twin linked paradigms of utility and efficiency. As Rayner Banham elucidates:

The persuasive generality which gave this Charter its air of universal applicability concealed a very narrow conception of both architectureand town planning and committed the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) unequivocally: (a) a rigid functional zoning of city plans, with green belts between the areas reserved to the different functions and (b) a single type of urban housing, expressed in the words of the Charter as "high, widely-spaced apartment blocks wherever the necessity of housing high densities of population exists." (qtd. in Sadler 22)

The anaesthetic safety of suburban housing and apartment blocks, so stifling to spontaneity and freedom, marked the brutal actualization of an architecture of alienation and constraint, which in its turn bolstered the claustrophobic tranquillity of bourgeois life. It is the settled, juxtaposed immobility of this officially

⁶ Eco adds to the maze and labyrinth, a third labyrinth type: the net or rhizome. See Eco 80-82.

⁷ This summary section is profoundly indebted to Simon Sadler's detailed and provocative history of Situationist architecture, *The Situationist City*.

sanctioned "A"rchitecture that Constant and Gins and Arakawa confront with an unmatched vehemence and determination.

However, the justifiable diatribes against pacifying functionality in architecture do not originate with Constant. Prior to New Babylon, in the 1920s, Czech cubist architecture launched a direct attack on stability, aspiring to a disorder built into permanence. Robert Harbison's colourful description effectively conveys the psychological and emotional impact of this architecture.

In its exciting moments hardly an inch of the fabric holds still. We have entered a world, like some fairground prank with mirrors, without a truly flat surface anywhere. So the entrance of Josef Chochol's flats on Neklanova in Prague with its appended prismatic porch induces something akin to paranoia. For us there can be no rest or relaxation but a kind of mental circling like that of a bird looking unsuccessfully for a perch. Finally of course this design raises the doubt brought on by any building which tries to enshrine a moment of crisis: will one's identity continue susceptible under its methodical attack, or will one begin to find its terrible uncertainty diverting? (Harbison 172-73)

The affinities with, and inspirations on, Situationist unitary urbanism are found in numerous architectural projects from the mid-1950s on. Aldo van Eyck calls for cities of "labyrinthine clarity" that offer individual users and dwellers "a relative freedom of choice in the use and discovery of its spaces and places;" such clarity is the desideratum in his 1955 design for the Amsterdam Children's Home which facilitates playful interaction and chance encounters among its child residents (Sadler 30). Contrasting yet sympathetic to New Babylon is Rayner Banham's approach to urban core planning—seen in his proposal for a "City as Scrambled Egg"—an approach Sadler estimates to be a liberal appropriation of Situationist unitary urbanism stripped of its politics. "The core of Banham's Scrambled Egg City would be a labyrinth negotiated by pedestrians in ways that confound the logic of rationalist planning" (Sadler 30). Banham's "Other Architecture" launched in 1955 as an "alternative to rationalist orderliness" with a governing proposition "that inhabitants define their own environments by a fluid and playful selection of objects, services, and technologies, rather than submit to a monumental architecture imposed by the architect" instantly confesses to its Situationist affinities (Sadler 38).

A broad pessimism about the positive function of the architect in capitalist society characterised the radical architecture of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Michel Colle bemoaned the "cadaverous rigidity" of Corbusian architecture, with its "[a]rchitectural rigor mortis brought on less by its choice of materials, than the intransigent and uncompromising rationalism that spawned its angular regulative grids which culminate in the concept of the functional machine for living in" (qtd. in Sadler 7). *Potlatch* (the magazine of the Situationist International, subsequently referred to as S.I.) called the machinic aesthetic of Corbusian rationalism both a "scab" and a "neo-cubist crust" (Sadler 10). The Situationists located the flaw of Functionalism in a fatal choice of priorities: that of collective over individual interests, and in response, both the S.I. and the British Independent Group (IG) turned to a non-Cartesian "cluster model" of the city that provided a megastructural model for emphasizing and preserving individual habitation and individual inhabitants. In its somber reassessment of rational functionalism the S.I. pitted an expressionist will (seen as inherent in Bauhaus) against the technocratic rationalism of its later practitioners. Asger Jorn, in his debate with Swiss sculptor

Max Bill, accuses him of converting Bauhaus from artistic inspiration to a dead doctrine without inspiration. The S.I. further detected a causal link between planned functionalism and alienation and offered an extreme antidote in the form of disequilibrium and dysfunction.

Capitalising on the recent sociological studies of Henri Lefebvre (*Critique of Everyday Life*, 1946) and Pierre-Henri Chaubart de Lauwe (*Paris and the Parisian Agglomeration*, 1952) that cogently exposed the non-unitary nature of cities as fragile yet dynamic micro-sociologies, the Situationists located authenticated life at a hypo-spectacular level beneath the dense lamination of images and commodities spawned by official urban capitalism.⁸ The S.I. advanced theories for participatory, spontaneous urbanism in lives not prearranged by transportation, work hours and techno-functional facilities that fostered habit, convenience, passivity and consequent ontological alienation. This anti-technological proclivity arose from a conviction that technological spin-offs in the domestic arena and the workplace are servo-mechanical and totalitarian in their mass organizational effects. It was thought that specular urbanism amounted to nothingness and it drew acrimonious comments from Raoul Vaneigem, for instance, who compared it "to the advertising propagated around Coca-Cola—pure spectacular ideology" (qtd. in Sadler 16). For Vaneigem both information and urbanism function to "organize silence," and in liberal democracies and totalitarian regimes alike the urban ideal portrayed is nothing but "the projection in space of a social hierarchy without conflict" (qtd. in Sadler 16, 18).

Constant and Guy Debord supplied a terse theoretical model for such "ideal" urbanism: *unitary urbanism*, defined by them as "[t]he Theory of the combined use of arts and techniques for the integral construction of a milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior" (qtd. in Knabb 45). No boundaries are acknowledged in such a construction, and the separations of private and public, work and leisure spheres will be abolished. Conceived as a complex and protean activity, it was deliberately designed to intervene in the workings of everyday life and aimed at establishing a harmony between human living and human needs that itself open up to new possibilities "that will in turn transform those needs" (qtd. in Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 132). Debord, for instance, proposed a radical alternative to the Athens Charter's functional zoning plans that would link traffic flows to the key function of housing, work and recreation by simply rethinking the function of the automobile as an adjunct not to work but to pleasure. In contrast to the CIAM, which argued for the home as the shelter of the family and the nucleus of town planning, unitary urbanists insisted on the necessary transformation of architecture "to accord with the whole development of society, criticizing [...] condemned forms of social relationships in the first rank of which is the family" (Sadler 27).

Where Arakawa and Gins offer an "architectural body," the Situationists proposed a "psychogeographical body" redolent with Mallarméan impersonality whose every-day mandate is the practice of *dérive*, defined by the S.I. as a "mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiences" (qtd. in Knabb 45). Vincent Kaufmann describes this

⁸ By contrast, the avant gardist *Independent Group* in England voiced a more conciliatory relation to image and mass consumerism.

practice as a "walking purged of autobiographical representation, [...] requiring the enunciatory and ambulatory disappearance of the walker" (Kaufmann 61). It is precisely the repudiation of any flâneuristic selfconsciousness and the embrace of spontaneous and non-habitual movement that connects the *dérive* to labyrinthine circuitry. Debord remarks the intimate connection between the *dérive* to architectural labyrinthine construction. "Within architecture itself, the task for *dériving* tends to promote all sorts of new forms of labyrinths made possible by modern techniques of construction" (qtd. in Knabb 53). Returning to the classic model of the labyrinth one might say the *dérive* provides the Ariadne thread that is itself the labyrinth. The radical break with the classical model lies however in the variant desires of the labyrinth-dweller. The classical model is one of entry and sure return, one guaranteed by the unicursal structure of the building; the *dérive*, as a paralogic of action whose architectural form is determined entirely by human desire, consecrates and celebrates irreversibility.

Kaufmann notes "the frequency of the figure of the labyrinth from which the Situationists have no intention of exiting, a kind of ultimate refuge from the society of the spectacle" (62). In their planned psychogeographic alteration of Les Halles (the famous Paris market complex), the S.I. proposed replacing the central pavilions of the market with a series of Situationist architectural complexes, erected in the vicinity of perpetually changing labyrinths. There is a link by strategy here, of labyrinthine complexity onto fundamental instability and morphological mobility. In this way, the labyrinth is refashioned as an evanescent and constantly mutating site fulfilling Bataille's own revisionist labyrinthine desire to always lose one's way.

Constant and New Babylon

New Babylon expanded from Constant's 1957 design for a permanent Gypsy Camp at Alba in Italy, and the name "New Babylon" was first used in 1960 at Guy Debord's suggestion (ill. Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 80-81). Its origins and initial development, however, lay in a specific cartographical disruption enacted during the years of 1957 and 1959. As part of their psychogeographic explorations Debord and Asger Jorn produced several cut-up tourist maps of Paris, discarding whole areas and reassembling only an axis of "psychogeographical" intensities that offered a would-be traveller drifting itineraries of desire. Psychogeographic maps such as "The Naked City" and "Psychogeographic Guide" (ill. Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 19) are conscious reactions to the Cartesian grid and return cartography to disorientation and multiple lines of flight, extending the practice beyond a mapping of physical terrains to that of intimate states of consciousness and feeling.⁹ Constant's New Babylon was envisioned to be the architectural realization of such a map as an inhabitable city.

⁹ Sadler sees these laboriously detailed maps as "examples of the general postwar mania for systems analysis" (88).

Like Arakawa, Constant came to architecture through painting, and New Babylon would not have been conceived without his prior involvement with visual art through the COBRA group during the late 1940s and 1950s.¹⁰ Founded in late 1948 by three young artists—Asger Jorn in Copenhagen, Constant (then Constant Nieuwenhuys) in Amsterdam, and Christian Dotremont in Brussels-COBRA embraced and developed an imaginative practice whose anti-aesthetic, anti-theoretical paradigms of spontaneity, decomposition, desire, and the complete psychological emancipation of the individual, set them apart from mainstream Surrealism.¹¹ One of their major retroactive sources of inspiration derived from the ontology and praxis of childhood. COBRA's brute anti-formalism, its unconditional embrace of spontaneity and its energetic immediacy all establish their model in the panoply of expressions, graphic and acoustic licence, and play of children. Both Breton and Bataille before him had caught upon the paradoxical quality of children's art: that its playfulness, innocence and spontaneity engendered subversion and restlessness. As Bataille noted in his reflections on *l'informe*, children indulge in formal distortion rather than formal construction. If Constant heard the call of brute desire emerging from the child and consecrated the latter as a counter-cultural heromodel during his COBRA years, he left the group with the anticipations of an even greater potential of the child to be a mobilizing architectural figure. There were at least two ready precedents that proved influential on the designs and vision of New Babylon: Aldo Van Eyck's sixty playgrounds in Amsterdam designed between 1947 and 1955, and Peter and Alison Smithson's 1952 Golden Lane Housing Project in London (ill. in Zegher and Wigley 46). The latter developed out of a close analysis of the movement patterns of children playing and took the form of a spreading network, approximating a maze rather than a labyrinth, in which solid organization disappears in favour of free mobility.

Constant's short essay from late 1959, "A Different City for a Different Life" offers a succinct description of New Babylon (there referred to as "the city of the future").¹²

The city of the future must be conceived of as a continuous construction on pillars, or else as an extended system of different constructions, in which premises for living, pleasure, etc., are suspended as well as those designed for production and distribution, leaving the ground free for circulation and public meetings. The use of ultra-light and insulating materials, now being tried experimentally, will allow for light construction and broadly based supports. In this way it will be possible to build a multilayered city: underground, ground level, stories, terraces, of an expanse that may vary from a neighbourhood to a metropolis. (111)

¹⁰ Constant's 1953 wooden reliefs mark the artifactual transition from painting through sculpture into architectural model. Developing out of Giacometti's work on ludic sites of the 1930s (illus. de Zegher 19), Constant's reliefs mark the first illustrations of his thoughts on architecture and urbanism.

¹¹ The name COBRA comes from the initial letters of the three cities where the founding members lived.

¹² The article first appeared in *Internationale situationniste* 3 (December 1959), 37-40, and is reprinted in *October* 79 (Winter 1997), 109-112.

In their collaborative *Mémoires* Debord and Jorn refer to the image of a "floating city," an image realized in Constant's megastructure, which was envisioned as suspended sixteen metres above the ground and representing "a sort of extension of the Earth's surface, a new skin that covers the earth and multiplies its living space" (qtd. in Sadler 129-30). The design took the form of a paratactic, cluster configuration of loosely interlocking sectors suspended above the terrain in which were housed a number of movable partitions the effects of which Constant summarizes as "a quite chaotic arrangement of small and bigger spaces that are constantly mounted and dismounted by means of standardised mobile construction elements, like walls, floors and staircases" (qtd. in Sadler 132). Unlike Arakawa and Gins's "ubiquitous site in a locally circumscribed area," New Babylon was planned to literally leech over cities and countries. Cartographic schemes for New Babylon were drawn up for several European cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Paris, The Hague, Cologne, Barcelona and a vast plan for the Ruhrgebiet).¹³

It is the *dérive* that supplies the link between Situationist architecture and agency. Indeed, New Babylon remains prototypical of an architecture of *dérive*. Its most important feature is the vast and unconditional participatory potential of its occupants. Constant referred to New Babylon as "a creative game with an imaginary environment" (qtd. in Sadler 123) and as late as 1964 admitted the plan was "nothing but a suggestion" (in Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 67). New Babylonians are presented with a multiplicity of control options: temperature, lighting, humidity, atmosphere, and walls, with the shape of the architectural space open to alteration at a mere push of a button. The broad sociological shift demanded by Constant's project is from worker to player, from *homo faber* to *homo ludens*. New Babylon, under the temporal rubric of ephemerality as well spontaneity among a plethora of individual creative options, attempts to replace controlled function (it comes as no surprise that it is the modern airport, predicated on transient passage rather than sedentary "dwelling," that offered Constant the vision of his future city). The intimate equation in this provisional, boundaryless anti-architecture *à pilotis* is that of mobility to creative freedom.¹⁴ The Situationist architect will be a new Daedalus of constructed situations whose aspirations manifest as the endless diversionary traces of both visible and invisible labyrinths in a soft architecture of the *dérive*.¹⁵ Situations will

¹³ A curious feature of New Babylon is its uncustomary development and exhibition in the form of models and photographs as opposed to drawings and blue prints. Many of Constant's labyrinth designs were constructed after his return to painting in 1969.

¹⁴ Constant's vision of a spreading city suspended above a city is not in itself original. Leonardo da Vinci offered designs for a "City on two levels," while in the twentieth century Le Corbusier adopted the suspended deck structure in his own *Pilotis.* In 1958 Alison and Peter Smithson's designed a pedestrian net slung over the entire old street plan of Berlin, that proved influential to Constant's own design. One might even mention that suspended guerrilla architectural phenomenon of "lateral piercing" employed during the Paris Commune where elevated passages were created by breaking through the walls of adjoining houses. Here, as elsewhere, I am grateful to Simon Sadler (139). Leonardo's designs can be found in Ms. B fol. 3r and 3v, and fol. 36r, now housed in Paris at L'Institut de France but more readily available in Arasse (163).

¹⁵ For Heidegger contemporary scientific pursuit involves the "extinguishing of the situation" in the current life context. Heidegger tenders three characteristics of the situation: 1. a situation is "an 'event' [*ereignis*] not a 'process.'" 2. a situation is relatively closed [*Geschlossenheit*]. 3. in a situation the "I" is never "detached" or "disengaged" [*Unabgehoben-*

provide the germinal forces for architectural and environmental reconstruction, and discrete artistic practice (sculptures, paintings, poems) will be replaced by imaginative practices of everyday life.

Within this condition of structural impermanence and change, the labyrinth figured importantly as an architectural agent of disorientation, a psycho-somatic quality Constant valued as an instrument for lateral thinking and experience.¹⁶ In March 1955 the S.I. announced the first "do-it-yourself labyrinth" in the form of a New York Building,

[...] that showed the first signs of the applicability of the dérive to apartment interiors: "The rooms in the helicoidal house will be like slices of cake. They can be made larger or smaller at will by shifting partitions. [...] This system makes it possible to transform three four-room apartments into a single apartment with twelve or more rooms in six hours." (qtd. in Kaufmann 63)¹⁷

In New Babylon (as will be noted soon in Arakawa and Gins's Reversible Destiny sites), structure and metamorphosis are designed to have a direct impact on bodies. "New Babylon" wrote Constant, "is one immeasurable labyrinth. Every space is temporary, nothing is recognizable, everything is discovery, everything changes, nothing can serve as a landmark. Thus psychologically a space is created which is many times larger than the actual space" (qtd. in Sadler 143). The labyrinth and the city become one. Constant's salient contribution to the history of the labyrinth lies in his fundamental repudiation of the static classical model while retaining its archaic force. In his Yellow Sector, Constant installed two labyrinth houses expressly designed to "take up and develop the ancient forces of architectural confusion" (in Wigley, *Constant's New Babyon* 122, ill. 88-89).

New Babylon is to be a dynamic labyrinth, a collective assemblage (and disassemblage) designed to serve the whims of a ludic society in which explosive creativity, spontaneous and instinctual, is upheld as the paramount desire. What Constant finds attractive in the dynamic labyrinth is the polymorphic provisionalities of its structure and its power of inducing efficacious disorientations. The New Babylonian "takes an active stance vis-à-vis his surroundings: he seeks to intervene, to change things, he travels extensively and

heit]—"The 'I' never needs to come into view, [for] it swims within the situation" (Heidegger 29). How does this compare to the S.I.'s notion of a situation? In "Definitions," (included in the 1958 journal S.I., #1,) the S.I. does not include an entry on the situation *per se* but defines a "constructed situation" as "A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events" (in Knabb 45). For the Situation-ists the term had its immediate roots in Sartrean existentialism. "Sartre argued that life is a series of given situations which affect the individual's consciousness and will, and which must in turn be negotiated by that individual" (qtd. in Sadler 45). Debord rethinks the "situation" as simply a given toward a willful construction of "collective ambiences, ensembles of impressions determining the quality of a moment" (Sadler 46).

¹⁶ As his prefatory motto for "The New Babylonian Culture," Constant chose Rimbaud's famous sentence "It is a matter of achieving the unknown by a derangement of the senses" (*le dérèglement de tous les sens*).

¹⁷ The uncanny apposition of commodity logic's built-in obsolescence and the S.I.'s impermanent architectures might prove to be a permanent and irreconcilable irony.

wherever he goes he leaves traces of his ludic activities. Space for him is a toy for exploration, adventure, and play" (Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 225). Constant envisions a "Zone of Play" containing "'labyrinth houses' consisting of a large number of rooms of irregular form, stairs at angles, lost corners, open spaces, culs-de-sac" (Vidler 213) and the constant possibility to realize *dérive*.¹⁸

As late as 1974, Constant, reflecting on the problematic nature of such a highly processual "construction," frankly admits to an ideological, political and economic impasse:

A dynamic labyrinth cannot be designed, it cannot originate in the mind of a single individual. It arises in the first instance as a non-stop process that can be initiated and maintained by the simultaneous activity of a great many individuals. And this implies a social freedom and, concomitantly, a massive creative potential, that are inconceivable in the utilitarian society. ("The Principle of Disorientation" 225)

The situational and collective nature of the dynamic labyrinth presupposes play and creative leisure as the governing ideological paradigm and life-style. In light of this, Constant is aware of the compromise formation that any limited laboratory form of experimental space will offer:

The essential precondition for a dynamic labyrinth, namely the simultaneous creative activity of a large number of individuals, resulting in a collectively generated situation, cannot, of course, be realized in the context of an experimental space. The experimental space is no more than an (imperfect) object of study. (225)

Despite an unqualified commitment to spontaneity and emancipation, Constant, like Arakawa and Gins, elevates the heuristic to an architectural imperative. This agenda becomes clear in his exhilarating 1962-63 hybrid *Labyratorium (Labyratoire)*, designed to incorporate the playful meanderings and disorientations of labyrinthine space with the scientific and hermeneutic experiments of a laboratory condition (ill. in McDonough 99). The design and technology that make up the *Labyratorium*, complete with atmospheric obstacles and transformations in temperature, and the transformation of visual space by means of sliding mirrors, precipitate a gamut of sensory defamiliarization and novel experiences induced from impediments. Thus, it would be misleading to paint an image of New Babylon as a constant creative mutation. Constant's Rotterdam labyrinth (1966) as well as containing "rooms that exposed their occupants to sounds, colors, and smells" also contained rooms that compressed occupants into cramped, small areas in which they had to crawl their way through (Sadler 149). And at least one aspect of the project back-fired: Constant's plan of wiring the labyrinth with a telephonic update of the Ariadne thread so that the occupants could phone out with their reactions actually helped keep their behaviour conditioned and rational.

Constant's designs have some surprising morphological evocations and premonitions. The L-shaped labyrinths (found in some Reversible Destiny designs) are evident in the Orient Sector, the 1959 plan of the

¹⁸ One inspiration for Constant were the ludic models outlined in Huizanga's 1944 book *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play Element in culture.* Perhaps the true heir of this presidential spirit of play is Fluxus. On the relationship of Fluxus to architecture see *Fantastic Architecture*, edited by Dick Higgins and Wolf Vostell. New York: Something Else Press, 1969.

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Yellow Sector, and in the lesser known *Architectural Maquette* of 1958 (ill. *October* 79 107), which structurally anticipates Arakawa and Gins's *Antimortality Fractal Zipper City* whose contours all derive from abutting twin L-shaped labyrinths (ill. *Reversible Destiny* 252-53).¹⁹ A 1968 coloured sketch shows a mobile labyrinth of open, intersecting cubic spaces forming a multilevel construction connected by ladders, instantly evoking a Piranesi open plan, with the *carceri* deprived of their solidity but not of their spatial illogic.²⁰ The catena of evocations does not end here. Constant peoples his labyrinth with cyclists riding up the ladders, suspended monocycles and a more complex wheeled vehicle (an intended allusion to both Marcel Duchamp and Jarry's Père Ubu in this staffage is not inconceivable). Freely drawn circles undercut the angularity of the structure with hints of dynamic cyclic action (ill. in Zegher and Wigley 116). But perhaps the most surprising morphological evocation is that of the simple wooden, multilevel fishing platforms found around Stanleyville in the Belgian Congo and in Vieste, Italy.²¹ The startling apposition may be chance but the link of dynamic labyrinth to function.²² Piranesi's spatial illogicalities and the consequent architectural dangers are once more picked up in a 1969 colour crayon drawing of a "Labyrinth space" but here synthesized with the flat modularity of modernist space (ill. in Zegher and Wigley 117).

With its perpetual motion, dynamic change and consequent labyrinthine architectural insecurity, it is not fanciful to claim that New Babylon approximates a Baroque atmospherics. Omar Calabrese claims the labyrinth to be a "profoundly baroque" figure, most frequently drawing critical and creative attention "during 'baroque' periods" (131-32). At the same time New Babylon elicits a different consideration through various Deleuzean topics. Deleuze's impact on contemporary architectural thought is considerable, notably through a single publication: *The Fold*. Evidence of this narrow importation of Deleuze's concepts can be gathered from the contents page of *Folding in Architecture*, edited by Greg Lynn and published in 1993: "Architectural Curvilinearity" (Greg Lynn), "Folding in Time" (Peter Eisenman), "Unfolding Architecture" (Chuck Hoberman), "Out of the Fold" (John Rachman), and "The Material Fold" (Claire Robinson).

Notwithstanding the architectural usefulness of folding, there are two more of Deleuze's concepts that seem strikingly appositional with Constant's project. One agenda of *The Fold* is to rehabilitate the Baroque as a trans-historic phenomenon of folding and the book is redolent with architectural suggestions (preeminently the Baroque or Leibnizian monad conceived as a two-story windowless building). Early in the

¹⁹ See McCaffery, fig. a (Antimort_City.jpg).

²⁰ John Wilton-Ely suggests certain influences on Piranesi's vortical constructions. These include a stage design for a prison now in the Albertina, Vienna, by Ferdinando Bibiena, & Jean-Louis sado-carceral architectural Fantasies. See Wilton-Ely 89.

²¹ Images of both appeared in Bernard Rudofsky's 1964 MoMA exhibition catalogue Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture, illus. 107-08.

²² I will have occasion to speak of Rudofsky's book again in relation to Arakawa and Gins.

book Deleuze introduces the *objectile*, a technological concept newly formulated by the French architect, Bernard Cache. The *objectile* refers to

[...] our current state of things, where fluctuation of the norm replaces the permanence of a law; where the object assumes a place in a continuum by variation [...]. The new status of the object no longer refers its condition to a spatial mould—in other words, to a relation of form-matter—but to a temporal modulation that implies as much the beginnings of a continuous variation of matter as a continuous development of form. (19 my emphases)

This describes New Babylon in a nutshell, where form, solidity and consistency give way to "temporal modulation" and continuous, unpredictable variation of architectural matter. Moreover, if we theorize the inhabitants of such *objectile* architecture as *subjectiles*, that is, theorize the dweller as free agent of *objectility*, we approximate the entire *desiderata* of Constant's project.

Cache's *objectile* immediately conjures up Deleuze's similar notion of *becoming*. For Deleuze, becoming is a profoundly a-historic move to "create something new" (*Negotiations* 171). "Becomings" he avers, "belong to geography, they are orientations, directions, entries and exits. [...] There is no terminus from which you set out, none which you arrive at or which you ought to arrive at." Becomings "are acts which can only be contained in a life and expressed in a style. Styles are not constructions, any more than are modes of life" (Deleuze and Parnet 2-3). Given this Deleuzean inflection "becoming" accurately describes both the structure and occupation of New Babylon as dynamic labyrinth.

A Deleuzean architecture figured as a constant becoming? Mark Wigley specifies the presiding paradox in New Babylon. Within (and in this instance what is it to be within?) a multimedia megastructure that is ever changing at the wills and creative intervention of its users how can such a structure be presented? "Since the basic principle of New Babylon was constant change, any one representation of it or anyone medium of representation, was clearly suspect" ("Paper, Scissors, Blur" 33). Thomas McDonough similarly ruminates on the irresolvable paradox that was to be New Babylon: "The basis of this utopian city lay, after all, in the conviction that the need of a truly free society would be so complex, so changeable, that any attempt by a single architect to anticipate them would lead to inevitably repressive results" (97).

Let's recall here Tschumi's comments on the dark spaces of experience, where sensory enhancement collides with the absence, the impossible presence, of an overview. The unavoidable architectural aporia locates the utter triumph of provisionality in a constantly changing labyrinth whose architects (constructively and destructively) are the New Babylonians themselves. The sociological consequence of this paradoxical anti-architecture is an increase of unprecedented enormity in the powers by which inhabitants determine their own architectural surrounds and vectors. Constant himself was aware of the paradoxical nature of his project: "the structures are anything but permanent. It is effectively a matter of a microstructure in continuous transformation, in which the time factor—the fourth dimension—plays a considerable role" (qtd. in McDo-

Interfaces	21	/22	(200)	3)
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nough 97).²³ We still remain however in a version of Celantian deprived space albeit one significantly transposed from the individual to the collective level.

Marc Wigley concludes that "Constant dedicated himself to drawing a mirage" ("Paper, Scissors, Blur" 52), and it is indeed difficult to rescue New Babylon from the detritus and misprisions of historical contingency. Constant too was aware of the practical unrealizability of New Babylon in the economic climate of the 1960s. His entire project, and the S.I. movement as a whole, was predicated on the validity of a general theory of leisure conceived in a state of post-capitalist abundance. Both mistakenly assumed a future characterized by the total automatization of production, collective ownership of land, and a potential lifestyle of unbounded leisure. In the nascent stages of the twenty-first century we are closer to actualizing the former but moving further and further from the latter. Moreover, the celebration of ephemerality and change carried a more ominous burden of its own kinetics of impermanence: a Heraclitan urbanism whose potential to violence is the omnipresent norm. The Situationist Ivan Chtcheglov (pseudonym of Gilles Ivain) warned against the "explosion, dissolution, dissociation, disintegration" that threatens the continual drifter (qtd. in Sadler 145). Given its embrace of anarchic freedom New Babylon remains a constantly uncertain, *unheimlich* locale, where the "space of desire is finally understood as a place of conflict" (Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 69). Constant himself had already noted this sinister return of the Minotaur to the labyrinth admitting

New Babylon is an uncertain universe where the "normal" man is at the mercy of every possible destructive force, every kind of aggression. [...] The image of a free man who does not have to struggle for his existence is without historical basis [...] man's aggressivity does not disappear with the satisfaction of his immediate material needs. (qtd. in Wigley, Constant's New Babylon 69)

"To really appreciate architecture" Bernard Tschumi comments, "you may even have to commit murder" (100).²⁴

We might be justified then in writing off New Babylon as an inevitably failed utopia, yet some of its prophecies may in fact have been realized. Constant's vision waxed and waned under the conceptual guidance and apothegmic challenge of Walter Benjamin's belief that the labyrinth ranks as the ancient dream of humanity and that the city is its realization. But perhaps the actualization transcends the civic dimension and takes an immaterial, hyperspatial form. Both prophetic and reflective, New Babylon finds its realization in the technologically inspired mobile cities of Archigram and, as Marcos Novak insists, in the electronic circuitries of the web (20-27). The fifth point in Constant and Debord's 1958 Amsterdam Declaration defined

²³ As long ago as 1921 Kasimir Malevich claimed that human being was already in a new fourth dimension of motion.

²⁴ Tschumi embraces violence as a necessary component of architecture: "Architecture is defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by the enclosure of its walls. Murder in the Street differs from Murder in the Cathedral in the same way as love in the street differs from the Street of Love. Radically" (100). For a full discussion see "Violence of Architecture" in Tschumi 121-34.

unitary urbanism as "the complex, ongoing activity which consciously recreates man's environment *according to the most advanced conceptions in every domain*" (qtd. in Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 87, emphasis mine). Constant readily embraced contemporary technology; the computer was central to New Babylon and, in spirit at least, his visionary project augured the realm of virtual and cyber-architectonics. Catherine de Zegher endorses this prophetic, labyrinthine, technological dimension of New Babylon:

Prefiguring the current debate about architecture in the often placeless age of electronics, Constant seems to have conceived of an urban model that literally envisaged the World Wide Web. In the network of sectors in New Babylon, one configures his or her own space and can wander in an unobstructed way from site to site, without limits. (Zegher and Wigley 10)

In his "Theory of the Dérive," Debord seized on the fecund analogy of ocean and city likening the "psychogeographical relief [of cities to] constant currents, fixed point and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or from certain zones" (qtd. in Knabb 5). This link of city to ocean served as a formative analogy in New Babylon and is currently intransigently installed as the governing metaphor of the Web (itself a metaphor). The *dérive* returns in the activity of surfing, set against the more protentive act of "navigating." Moreover, it resuscitates the ancestral phenotype of the New Babylonian in the Baudelarian flâneur, with streets, crowds, cafés and peregrination updated to a solitary, seated manual connection to a world of web sites and links.

It is beyond dispute that the web and internet have successfully incorporated many of the features of New Babylon and have realized certain of Constant's aspirations: de-centeredness, user control, multiple choice and variations, sensory euphoria. But questions linger beneath superficial comparisons. What, for instance, is the fate of collective lived experience, so central to New Babylon, in an age of Digital Immaterialism? The triumph of machinic interactivity is indisputable when considering the fate of inter-subjective communication. As Lev Manovich elucidates, when surfing, a human user addresses a machine, with communication "centered on the physical channel and the very act of connection between addresser and addressee" (206). Web sites, computer games and virtual worlds are governed by a specific temporal dynamic that Manovich describes as "constant, repetitive oscillation between an illusion and its suspense" (205). Historically, the emergence of the World Wide Web is not a parallel birth to that of post-industrial capitalism but rather a consequence of it. In our contemporary global, techno-political condition, it is sobering to reflect on the fact that New Babylon drew criticism from the S.I. for its attempt to integrate mass living into a totally technological environment, thus constituting an extension, not rejection, of capitalist ideology.

The labyrinth in procedural architecture: Arakawa and Gins, Reversible Destiny

A map of the world without utopia on it is not worth looking at, because it excludes the only country where mankind is constantly landing.

(Oscar Wilde, qtd. in Braye and Simonot 186)

Any discussion of Arakawa and Gins's position in the history of the labyrinth must take into account the labyrinth's function within their wider, revolutionary project, Reversible Destiny, whose own urgent context seems accurately formulated in the following statement by British architect Neil Spiller:

"The architectural subject" is changing (by "subject" both the body and practice is meant). Traditional notions of architectural enclosure are unable to respond to the growing range and virtuosity of the body and this is an escalating problem. Architectural theory has been slow, if not frighteningly inert, in understanding and facilitating the metamorphosis of its own subject, both spatially and biologically. (104)

At the outset I must admit that I find one aspect of their self-historicizing problematic. The sub-title of their book *Architecture Sites of Reversible Destiny*, reads "Architectural Experiments after Auschwitz-Hiroshima." To grammatically link two vastly discrete events, both horrendous and genocidal but so contex-tually different, strikes me as ethically—because historically—irresponsible. It is a ghastly irony that Heidegger commits the almost identical conflation in his notoriously minimal break with taciturnity around the matter of the Nazi extermination of the Jews (and others) in his 1949 second Bremen Lecture: "Agriculture is now a mechanized food industry, in essence the same as the manufacture of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starvation of the countryside, the same as the production of the hydrogen bombs" (qtd. in Lang 16). Leaving aside whatever these comments reveal about Heidegger, their substance should warn against grasping at essences, reveal the danger of analogy and the irresponsibility of false copulas.

I will need to touch on the historic trauma named "Auschwitz" towards the end of this paper where I consider Reversible Destiny (with its slogan "We have decided not to die") against certain bio-political assertions of Giorgio Agamben. Ironically, it is a Situationist, Raoul Vaneigem, who briefly alludes to these two event-atrocities in relation to urban planning, writing in his 1961 notes with bitter sarcasm, "[i]f the Nazis had known contemporary urbanists, they would have transformed concentration camps into low-income housing" and later in the same article "to destroy one's adversary with H-bombs is to condemn oneself to die in more protracted suffering" (123, 126).

A different, more practical problem that I face is my limited exposure to Reversible Destiny sites. Rather than any in-hand-on-foot exploration of the *Multilevel labyrinth* or the *Site of Reversible Destiny*—*Yoro*

in Japan (ill. Arakawa and Gins, *Reversible Destiny* 194-213),²⁵ my knowledge of their work is restricted to computer-generated images and texts in books and magazines, as well as personal discussions with Ms. Gins on the odd occasion. Strictly speaking, at this point in time, we should discriminate between two Reversible Destinies: the texts, images and models, i.e. the sum of its representations, and the growing number of realized constructions. We must additionally and constantly stay alert to the fact that Reversible Destiny is *not* a paper or computer architecture but one intended for construction and habitation. Unlike Constant, Arakawa and Gins have brought some of their visionary architecture to reality, and as more sites of Reversible Destiny are built and utilized, more pragmatic answers will be forthcoming to the questions their project raises. These answers will be supplied by the users, the dwellers, the "Reversed Destinarians" of Reversible Destiny.

If Lebbeus Woods offers a "radical architecture" then what do Arakawa and Gins propose? This is an urgent and timely question that should occupy the thinking of all contemporary architects whose work has any ethical inflection; it is also a question that should not be answered too readily. Their work as procedural architects finds itself in a complicated situation among and between the three major discourses of ethics, philosophy and history. Mark Taylor situates it intellectually in a post-Kantian idealism, a phenomenology of perception that "falls between Hegel's phenomenology of spirit and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception" (128). Yet the greater proximity to the latter is clearly evident in the following comments on Merleau-Ponty by Ignasi de Solà-Morales that illustrate cogently the undeniable affinity of Reversible Destiny to post-war phenomenological aspirations:

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Phénoménologie de la perception of 1945 offers a synthetic summary of a body of research based on studies of both the structure of behavior and the primacy of perception. This research displaced the merely visual, replacing it with the idea that our experience of the world around us comes from the body in its totality: spatio-temporal, sexual, mobile, and expressive. The visual-tactile dichotomy posited by Alois Riegl in the early years of the [20th] century in order to analyze the various different orders of aesthetic experience was converted by the phenomenologists into a much more general, more basic theory. Even the aesthetic was thus to be understood as that which was connected not with artistic perception but, in a much wider sense, with interactions of every kind between the self and the world. (22)

Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's separate contributions to architectural theory (albeit indirectly) rest in a common depreciation of the optical paradigm and the recovery of the essential relation of body to labyrinth in the radical proposal that a being's relationship to space is quintessentially one of movement.²⁶

"In fact, unless one is in some way enclosed in one [body], one is nothing; but if, on the other hand, one is perfectly truthful, bodies do not exist." (St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, qtd. in Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* 264). Augustine inscribes here a Christian dogma that Reversible Destiny refutes. An architectural

²⁵ See McCaffery, fig. b (Terrain_Model.jpg).

²⁶ The survival of the classical labyrinth in schematizations that present it as a miniaturized pattern experienced solely visually from above, annuls its primarily tactile and kinetic experience.

body will succeed Augustine's aporial body and be installed in the initiatory premise of procedural architecture as its basic presupposition.²⁷ It equally eschews Bataille's 1929 definition of architecture as the violent imposition of social order via a calculated monumentality whose productions were seen by him to be "the real masters of the world, grouping servile multitudes in their shadows" (qtd. in Hollier 53). For Arakawa and Gins "[a]rchitecture, in anyone's definition of it, exists primarily to be at the service of the body" (*Architectural Body* xi). Bataille, of course, did not endorse his own definition. Thinking back to Haussmann and anticipating Albert Speer, he remains alert to the violence at the heart of any monumental aspiration. In the direct lineage of Vitruvian architectural thinking, Bataille connects human to architectural form via a system of projected proportions. To his mind, however, this anthropomorphism results in the petrification of all human activity. Both Constant and Arakawa and Gins are attracted to the benefits of architectural disequilibrium whereas what fascinates Bataille is a latent anti-architecture brought about in the purposeful disfiguration of the human form in certain expressionist painting, and in children's drawings.

For Arakawa and Gins and non-procedural architects like Robin Evans, who alike see architecture as the construction of the preconditions that govern the way bodies occupy and negotiate space, the question of architectural form and architectural thinking is one of architecture's relation to the scale and matter of human freedom.²⁸ Arakawa and Gins's singular insight, however, derives from the basic premise that the body is a place not an identity. Body is local and geographic before it is cognitive and subjective; it is *dasein* understood as a being "there" in an architectural surround. Moreover, it should be made clear from the outset that their concern with the human body is uncontaminated by intrusive, historical aesthetics. Indeed, their work involves a seminal repudiation not only of Modernist functionality but architecture's enduring anthropomorphic paradigm.

In "It and I: Bodies as Objects, Bodies as Subjects," Karen A. Franck offers the useful distinction between designs *for* the body and designs *from* the body; i.e. embodied from transcendental architecting. Designs *from* the body led to the anthropomorphic paradigm that governed architecture from Vitruvius to Modernism, precipitating a litany of humanist theories on the relation of human bodily proportions to extrinsic and enveloping dwellings. Liane Lefaivre traces the emergence of the anthropomorphic metaphor (so central to humanist architectural thinking) through three dominant counter-strategies to the patristic conception of buildings as "dangerous bodies." The first, developing in the tenth-century, reconfigures the body as the "marvelous body," a repository or magnet attracting a panoply of glittering appurtenances: jewels, clothes, etc. Further developing in the twelfth-century is the "divine" body, linked to incorporeality, divine luminescence, and geometric proportion and relation. Finally, the "desired" body, conceived as a vital attractor and

²⁷ Arakawa and Gins' use of the term "architectural body" should not be confused with Liane Lefaivre's use of it in her 1997 book Leon Battista Alberti's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: Re-cognizing the Architectural Body in the Early Italian Renaissance.

²⁸ See "Towards Anarchitecture" which opens Robin Evans' *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* 11-34.

target of ardour and passionate forces, emerges with Alberti in the fifteenth-century.²⁹ The anthropomorphic episteme governing the canons of proportion remained pandemic precisely because the measure of man was taken to be the measure of God. This isomorphism of *anthropos* and *theos* granted divine sanction to numerous aberrant architectural feats such as the howling face at Bomarzo "behind which is a room entered by the mouth lit by the eyes" (Harbison 49).³⁰

As well as a carte blanche rejection of anthropomorphsim, Modernist architecture also deserted the body as living, projective and permeable embodiment, losing sight of the fact that bodies inhabit and negotiate space as their primary architecture. This latter fact, quintessential to Arakawa and Gins's procedural praxis, is the legacy of phenomenology from Heidegger through Merleau-Ponty up to Karen A. Franck, and equally of that "other" tradition of Modernism that includes Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, and Eric Mendelsohn noted by Colin St. John.³¹

Juhani Pallasmaa comments on the dominating optical paradigm which governed Modernist architecture's obsessive focus on the visible and effected the mental separation of buildings from human bodies. "Modernist design has housed the intellect and the eyes, but it has left the body and other senses, as wells as our memories and dreams, homeless" (10). This retinal privileging is exacerbated in Postmodern building with its definitive lamination of semiotics onto visual form in order to render architecture "readable" as contrasting codes. It thus seems a curious irony in Reversible Destiny that the concern for an architectural body is to a large extent arrived at and disseminated through sophisticated computer generation and cybertechnology and most readily available through illustrations and documentation in books and magazines. Indeed, at the present stage, Arakawa and Gins's work largely exists in what would have been Constant's dream: the disembodied immateriality of computer-generated virtual architecture. Karen Franck comments on the physical, servo-mechanistic consequences of a computer screen: Engaged in three-dimensional models and interactive computer programs "[t]he architect's body can remain nearly immobile: there is no need for physical manipulation of materials and tools" (Franck 18).

With the additional elimination of tactile and olfactory sensations virtual architecting signals the triumph of the visual in a techno-transcendental space of simulacra. Franck's comments can be extended to the dwellers and users of cybernetic spaces where, for designers and users alike, embodiment in a multi-

²⁹ These fascinating mutations and developments are ably traced in Lefaivre 200-51.

³⁰ This history is not without other maverick disfigurers. In *Figueras*, for instance, Salvador Dali offered a reconstructed face of Mae West into which museum visitors walked in at a surprising entry point. "[W]e cross the chin (a short flight of steps), sit down on the lips (a sofa), where we can admire the eyes (pictures on the wall) or look out through the hair (curtains framing the whole interior)" (Harbison 49-50).

³¹ For practical examples of moves towards this other tradition I refer the reader to the sensory exercises described in Franck and implemented by Galen Cranz at Berkeley, Nadi Alhasani at the University of Pennsylvania, Kim Tanzer, (Florida) and Karen Franck (New Jersey Institute of Technology).

sensory engagement ultimately gives way to the simulacral gaze. Notwithstanding this irony, Franck's heroic defence of the subjective body is one shared by Arakawa and Gins as well as by Juhanni Pallasmaa in his architecture designed for sensory stimulation and addressed directly to the body's own systems of orientation (see Pallasmaa). Arakawa and Gins clearly share Palassmaa's credo that "basic architectural experiences have a verb form rather than being nouns" (44-45) and open up architecture in its verbal form as active "architecting" for lived, experimental experience; to adopt Franck's useful distinction, their focus falls on *how* not *what* the body is (16).

Robert A. Morgan tenders a candid, negative assessment of Reversible Destiny:

What is significant about these cybergenerated projects, in spite of their totally fragmented impracticality, is how they represent the current cultural crisis to the extreme. [...] The illusory aspect of the work related to its computer programming. It functions as a digital system, yet has limited applications in terms of actual mindbody involvement. The seduction of virtual time-space gives a convincing display of a virtual environment, but one that is highly self-conscious reflecting a type of narcissistic indulgence. (78)

Morgan's assessment, however, is inaccurate, because it conflates means with ends and fails to credit the project of Reversible Destiny as trenchantly set against the cyberspatial consecration of ek-stasis and virtual disembodiment. Indeed, Reversible Destiny *cannot be experienced* merely within texts, images, and cybertechnic representations, and only if the ratio of simulacra and representation to actual construction widens in favour of the former will Morgan's claims gain in validity.

Constant's decisive shift in emphasis from formal to ambient constructions marks a significant moment in architectural revision. In his "Inaugural Report on the Munich Conference" (1959), he states clearly what he considers to be the architectural issue of the day: "What makes contemporary architecture so boring is its principally formal preoccupations. [...] Even as he uses existing forms and creates new ones, the architect's principle concern has got to become *the effect that it is going to have on the dweller's behavior and existence*" (qtd. in Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon* 101, emphasis mine). Such a credo, conceived in the last years of the 1950s, lies at the heart of Arakawa and Gins's Reversible Destiny project. The lexicon of form is replaced in their work by a detailed constellation of new concepts and initially daunting formulations: bioscleave, landing sites, critical holders, engaging and guiding bars (this latter term has a Kantian antecedent), all designed to explain primary architectural and perceptual effects on the body and senses of the dweller.³² Rather than repeat the definitions of these important concepts I will refer the reader to published sources, especially the recent *Architectural Body*.³³

³² Kant speaks of *leitfäden* (guiding threads) in the third *Critique* when discussing the gesture of aesthetic subreption as a grasping of one of such threads. For details see Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* 183.

³³ They share this terminological fecundity with Deleuze and Guattari who situate the production of new concepts at the heart of the philosophical enterprise: "Simply, the time has come for us to ask what philosophy is. We have never stopped asking this question, and we already had the answer, which has not changed: philosophy is the art of forming, inventing,

Like Richard Serra's *Clara Clara*, Reversible Destiny focuses on the broad issue of spatial tolerance, and the more specific matter of proximity with contact and implicit convergences; it seems concordant too with what Manfredo Tafuri calls a "*self-disalienation* launched by negative design" (143). Its confrontational challenge is to the ultimate efficacy of behaviorally normative environments.³⁴ Arakawa and Gins are not isolated in this proclivity to practical disequilibrium. Indeed, their work in part fits into a broad contemporary artistic and architectural inclination. A comparable purposeful disequilibrium is obtained in Robert Gober's "pitched" cribs and playpens, where the normally vertical rectangular structures are pitched at a 45° angle and thus rendered non-utilitarian. Gober's work has been compared to Duchamp's readymades and "corrected readymades" but the intended inoperability, when assessed according to the functional paradigm, is clearly a feature shared with some Reversible Destiny houses.³⁵ One need only compare Gober's pitched furniture with the tilted floors of Arakawa and Gins's *Infancy House* and *Transitional House* where a tilt converts floors into terrains (ill. *Reversible Destiny* 266-69).³⁶

For his part, Gerrit Rietveld offers stick chairs which question the nature and function of chairs, inducing a condition in which "the leg meeting the chair isn't two but four entities negotiating a settlement" (Harbison 42). Harbison's own conclusion emphasizes the same qualities of tentativeness and uncertainty that are the defining features of Reversible Destiny: "[U]nderlying [the principle of the stick chair] is a sense that nothing is safe or certain [...], one can't take even chairs for granted" (Harbison 42). Reversible Destiny has also been compared to the strategic "dislocations" advanced by Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas.³⁷ Peter Eisenman evinces a similar desire in his plan for the Parc de la Villette where visitors "should sense something else and feel dislocated. That is the important thing—the dislocation from the ordinary expectation of what is a garden" (Eisenman and Derrida 70). But perhaps the most compellingly comparable works to those of Reversible Destiny are the domestic subversions of Günther Feuerstein.

Repudiating in 1960 the serial facilities of functional design, Feuerstein, in his plan for "impractical flats," advocated a radical estrangement of the familiar domicile, introducing noisy doors, useless locks and tortuous passages (Sadler 7). Sadler describes the ontological consequences:

[A dweller's home] would no longer protect him from the environment nor the sensations of his own body: ripping out his air conditioning and throwing open his windows, he could swelter, shiver and struggle to hear

and fabricating concepts" (Deleuze and Guattari 2). If we lend credence to this terse assertion, then part of Arakawa and Gins' Reversible Destiny project is truly philosophical.

³⁴ For a concise description of Serra's project see Harbison 14.

³⁵ See, for example, Masheck 109-12.

³⁶ See McCaffery, fig. c (Infancy House.jpg).

³⁷ See "Four Architects on Reversible Destiny" in *Reversible Destiny* 215-21.

himself think above the roar of the city; later he might bump and hurt himself against one of the myriad sharp corners in his flat, and sit at his wobbly table and on his uncomfortable sofa. (8)

It is as if the abandoned structures and ruined buildings rendered famous in Gordon Matta-Clark's photographic installations are suddenly designed that way for occupation.

All of the above examples (and to them we add New Babylon and Reversible Destiny) are the consanguineous heirs to the Russian Formalist principle of *ostranenie* (de-familiarization or "making strange"). Coined by Viktor Sklovskij as a counter strategy to urban and aesthetic automatism, the principle demands a rejection of the desensitizing effects of habit. Sklovskij writes (and its content perhaps deliberately evokes Rimbaud's famous phrase "too bad for the violin"): "We are like a violinist who has stopped feeling his bow and strings" (qtd. in Steiner 49).

Like Constant before them, Arakawa and Gins are attracted to labyrinths as architectural spaces for inducing disequilibrium and imbalance: "It is desirable" they counsel, "to keep the body in a state of imbalance for as long as possible. The actions, the range of actions, possible to the body for righting itself and regaining its balance will both define and reveal the body's essential nature" (*Architecture* 18). The break with the classic model is unmistakable; imbalance is impossible in the unicursal classical labyrinth where only cognitive uncertainty pertains and nothing is revealed about the body's essential nature (other than its inevitable death). In another way, however, New Babylon and the labyrinths of Arakawa and Gins accord with the central feature of the labyrinth, a feature Wittgenstein attributes to language when asserting "language is a labyrinth of paths" (*Philosophical Investigations* 203). Wittgenstein comes close here to specifying the true nature of the labyrinth as a pathway rather than an architecture. Labyrinths, in fact, relate less to architecture *per se* than to orchestrated passage and choreographies; it is the complications and impediments to normative movement of bodies in space that mark the essence of labyrinthine experience.

Labyrinths and labyrinthine elements populate Reversible Destiny sites. Arakawa and Gins have constructed two single-level labyrinths out of rubber and other materials (*Reversible Destiny* 147); their 1985 *Terrain Study Model No. 2* is redolent in labyrinthine effects induced by the dweller's inability to hold a general and complete plan (*Reversible Destiny* 225).³⁸ In *Antimortality Fractal Zipper City* labyrinth effects find themselves complemented by mirror opposites. "All contours of the city" Arakawa and Gins explain, "have their basis in twin L-shaped labyrinths that abut. Areas selected to be enclosed in one twin remain open public spaces in the other, making two halves of the city complementary opposites in regard to function" (*Reversible Destiny* 252-53). The *Inflected Arcade House* (ill. *Reversible Destiny* 264-65) combines labyrinthine perplexity with inflection.³⁹ One structure especially recaptures the architectural intimacy and tactility of the classical labyrinth and fuses it with the Situationist vision of an architecture to promulgate desire. As Arakawa and Gins describe it, "[t]he Trench House accommodates and embodies the body's

³⁸ See McCaffery, fig. b (Terrain_Model.jpg).

³⁹ See McCaffery, fig. e (inflected_arcade.jpg).

endless desire to draw close to and be in rapport with virtually everything. Trenches cut through surfaces, carving out circular labyrinths. What would normally not be within the body's reach comes to be so. A mould of the paths of desire" (*Architecture* 105).

All Reversible Destiny houses are constructed as "counter dwellings" and like all procedural architecture are designed to foreground landing site activity. Arakawa and Gins describe their important *Critical Resemblances House* as a "reworked labyrinth" utilizing labyrinth-derived patterns in a binary operation of rectilinear and curvilinear groupings (ill. *Reversible Destiny* 258-61).⁴⁰ In its three-level plan it clearly anticipates the multilevel labyrinth, offering a comparably torturous negotiation of interior spaces:

> [T]he body is invited to move through composite passageways—rectilinear above, curvilinear below—often in two opposing ways at once. It could take several hours to go from the living room to the kitchen. Parts of the kitchen or the living room reappear in the bedroom or bathroom. It might take several days to find everywhere in the house that the dining room turns up. (Reversible Destiny 258)

Moreover, by featuring "the underside of things," Arakawa and Gins succeed in transposing an imaging landing site into a perceptual one. Although similarities to Feuerstein's "impractical flats" with their non-functioning facilities and deliberate delapidations seem undeniable, those similarities are superficial. A radical defamiliarization of dwelling is obviously common to both, but the unsettling of the temporalprotentive dimension, complicating any projected move through time, is distinct to the *Critical Resemblances House*. It expands and maximizes the temporal dimension of the classical labyrinth, complicating the periphrastic trope of the classical meander with an additional architectural catachresis. *The Ubiquitous Site House (Reversible Destiny* 300-01) extends the labyrinth into a chaos to be occupied; it is the closest Reversible Destiny design to fully capture the spirit of New Babylon as a dweller-determined architecture:

> Shape precludes entry, but entry can occur when a resident forcibly inserts herself into the pliant, halfstructured muddle. Room size is proportional to energy expended. [...] [G]enerally each area pushed open constitutes an architectural surround whose every feature lies within touching distance. (Reversible Destiny 301)

Arakawa and Gins's *multilevel labyrinth* is the subject of Chapter 8 of their *Architectural Body* and computer-generated images of it form part of the section on Landing Sites in *Architecture: Sites of Reversible Destiny*. It is proffered as "a prime example of a critical holder" providing its user "with an activating field set up to coordinate and track landing-site dispersal and to depict and augment a person's coordinating skills" (82). Like Constant, they confuse the classical labyrinth with the later maze, attributing to the former "secret passages" and a mandate to puzzle one's way out (*Architectural Body* 84).⁴¹ Like its classical ances-

⁴⁰ See McCaffery, fig. d (Rubber_Labyrinth.jpg) and fig. f (critical_house_plan.jpg)..

⁴¹ They are not alone in this misprision, Derrida too makes the same mistake: "I have a very ambiguous relationship with the labyrinth. I like it, of course, but I think it is too close to the desire to find the exit door from the reappropriation. It's too classical; it's a topos" (Eisenman and Derrida 48). As I have argued the classical labyrinth is less a topos than an orchestrated itinerary along a pathway.

tor the multilevel labyrinth, both simple and ingenious, is not difficult to construct. Indeed, the recipe provided reads like a Situationist *détourne* of a child's toy:

Start with a six-inch-thick hula-hoop at hip level. Add enough hula hoops, all at hip level, to glue together a six-inch plane of them throughout the room. Cut into these fifty or so glued together hula hoops to make a labyrinth-layer, bending the hoops to vary the curves and occasionally straightening them to make a more direct path. Make two or three distinctly different labyrinth-layers out of the hula hoop plane. Stacking the labyrinth-layers with one-foot-wide rows of blankness between them, a bit wider proportionately than the blanks accompanying these lines, fill the room with them. (Architectural Body 89)

The efficacy of the multilevel labyrinth derives from its blocking rather than facilitating of passage (in this respect it is a radical reversal of the classical model): "How convenient that this labyrinth stops the body proper in its tracks. Within it people will be able to keep track of near and far components of their architectural bodies" (84). This blocking and tracking ability derives from the transparent nature of the labyrinth, revisioned here not as a winding warren of stone wall but as an open "lattice for praxis" (84). Transparency and openness. The multilevel labyrinth shares these two characteristics with several of Constant's multilevel labyrinths. In Constant's envisioned constructions, however, transparency articulates onto the reflective and mirror distortion, and though levels connect they do not share the intimacy of simultaneous negotiation. Constant's ladder labyrinth resembles an updated hybrid of Piranesi's *carceri* and a 3-D version of the game of Snakes and Ladders. Unlike Arakawa and Gins's model, there is little suggestion of a function other than that of play.

In the multilevel labyrinth there is a calculated trade-off for this tracking and blocking ability: the physical disequilibrium precipitated by the forced contortions of the human body through non-parallel but simultaneous passages poses a severe threat to any unified sense of identity. It is here, in the lattice of the multilevel labyrinth, that the contestation between "person" and "architectural body" arises in a veritable corporealization of schizopoetics:

Bodily inserting every last finger of herself into the multilevel labyrinth, she propels and squeezes her body through it [...]; she elbows and shoulders and elbows, and pushes and pulls, and otherwise insinuates bone and flesh to gain, ever again, traction so as to inch and cram, wedge, and, in full flesh, secrete herself through a lattice that by impinging on her trajectory as a person gives her the many trajectories of an architectural body. (Architectural Body 90-91)

I refer to a *corporealization* of schizopoetics deliberately, for the consequence desired from the imbalance are not lines of flight but enhanced landing site configurative comportment. For Arakawa and Gins it is within the multilevel labyrinth, with its multiple demands for contradictory but simultaneous trajectories that "the linking of the body proper to an architectural body begins in earnest [...]." (*Architectural Body* 84).

Immortality suite

The Situationists dreamed of an elevation beyond eschatology into the sort of immortality that angels enjoy. "Angels never age, being beautiful children who never become corpses" (Kaufman 65). Kaufman captures the Situationist's attitude to death

According to the Situationist ideal, even death's ward will be made for life—for living in peace: "Ward off death, not for dying but for living there in peace" (I, 19). At its worst, Situationist death is a kind of unjustly slandered mishap, but it comes across more often as a form of serenity. In any event, it never really occurs because there is never any lack of time in the Situationist world. (65)

New Babylon forgot the body, or at best assumed it as a package for a child's eternal spirit, in a constantly creative flux in which even the dead must move on: "There is no place for tombs in the Situationist city. Consequently, the dead themselves must move about, becoming if not angels then at least phantoms [...]" (Kaufman 65).

For Theseus the labyrinth was a matter of life and death and we have not deserted that theme. The primary purpose of the multilevel labyrinth—as a physical obstacle—is to urge a radical rethinking of the destiny of the human species. For Arakawa and Gins procedural architecture is an emergent response to what they consider a primary human need: a crisis ethics, and their vision embraces nothing less than an architectural and optional reversal of the fate of our species. WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO DIE. This too was the decision of Theseus in that moment before slaying the man-bull hybrid, but for these Theseans Death itself is the Minotaur. AN ARCHITECTURE TO HELP KILL DEATH DEAD? Arakawa and Gins believe death is unfashionable and undesirable; their urban call is for "cities without graveyards." ⁴² Their Yoro Park in Japan offers a taste of the heightened perceptual awareness architectural imbalance induces. Through such architecture, they hypothesize, human destiny can be reversed, and immortality, rather than a wished-for theological beyond, will be an atheistic matter of individual choice. The design of the Park is apt, with its tilts and curvatures it brings to mind an almost identical terrain: the ancient cemetery on Okinawa.⁴³ George Lakoff is one of several supporters of Arakawa and Gins's architectural inventions that baulk at this post-ontological prospect, ending his sympathetic article "Testing the Limits of Brain Plasticity Or, Why is there a Wall Down the Middle of the Tub?" with an imaginary, tongue-in-cheek Woody Allen scenario (*Reversible Destiny* 121-22).

⁴² But death still has its say. Ironically, the aim of Reversible Destiny is to bring about in life one effect of death viz. the removal of commonplace experience.

⁴³ It is hard not to conjecture that the New York based Arakawa and Gins were familiar with this image, readily available in Bernard Rudofsky's *Architecture without Architecture* (6), an illustrative catalogue of non-pedigreed architecture prepared for a show at the Museum of Modern Art, Nov. 9, 1964 to Feb. 7, 1965. Rudofsky cites the source of this image as "From *Nihon Chiri Fuzuoku*, 1936."

Bataille considered death the ultimate human luxury, and since the 1980s science has been telling us that both the terms *life* and *death* are otiose and meaningless, that we have already passed beyond death as a useful concept.⁴⁴ Yet death, as human life's ineluctable destiny, as the ultimate and irreversible negativity of human being, still occupies the heart of Western philosophy. Arakawa and Gins have shown a courageous disdain for philosophy, and perhaps rightly so, yet their procedural architecture occupies a pivotal moment in ontology, arguably the threshold of its end. In a bold negation of the negation Reversible Destiny refuses to embrace the fundamental negativity that has formed the ground of Western metaphysics. Refusing to subscribe to (at least part of) the binding Heideggerian tenet of a doubly negative constitution of human being as both a being-towards-language and being-towards-death, Arakawa and Gins aspire beyond the ontological project of philosophy to voluntary immortal being. Such a post-ontological destiny would mark the end of being as we understand it and the beginning of a life of endless becoming, in other words the dream of Constant Nieuwenhuys come true.

Assuming that Reversible Destiny can be realized, that eventually human death can be overcome, at least two thorny issues remain. To speak of immortality alone is to ignore the issue of the quality of life. Where does pleasure, love, recreation, even evil figure in this vision? Moreover, given our planetary limitations, "to not to die" might register on the level of the most selfish project imaginable. As it stands—and never forget that Reversible Destiny is an ongoing project—the architectural body, as innovative a concept as it is, remains perilously close to the order of that which Giorgio Agamben terms "naked life." Current juridico-medical ideology embraces this notion as paramount to its efficient operation and at the cost of ignoring the essential forms and qualities of life. Indeed, since Foucault's analyses, we have the evidence to prove the epistemic shift from politics to bio-politics in which bare life is what should be saved at all costs. Agamben unmasks the insidious force that lies behind all obvious systems of current power:

Biological life, which is the secularized form of naked life and which shares it unutterability and impenetrability, thus constitutes the real forms of life literally as forms of survival: biological life remains inviolate in such forms as that obscure threat that can suddenly actualize itself in violence, in extraneousness, in illnesses, in accidents. (Means without End 8)

It is in the name of bare, naked life that biopolitics exercises its power. Agamben notes a double trajectory: the preservation of bare life at all costs, and the reduction of forms of life to nakedness in the structure and paralegality of the camp. In the history of Germany—the camp did not originate in Germany, nor was it created by the Nazis—such spaces as Dachau, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Sachsehausen gained legitimacy via a suspension of law in certain states of exception (*ausnahmezustanden*) which then became the law outside the Law. Agamben elucidates the paradoxical nature of the camp in which the exception is "*taken outside*, included through its own exclusion" (*Homo Sacer* 170) and offers an image of imbalance and unclarity that will require a comparison to the spatial perplications of the labyrinth in its classic and Situationist manifestations. "Whoever entered the camp moved in a zone of indistinction between outside and inside,

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Peter and Jean Medawar 66-67.

exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer make any sense" (170). For Agamben, these comments are not merely historical. Far from it. As the inaugural site of modernity the camp is now firmly entrenched as an instrument of biopolitical power: Kossovo, Kabul, Guantanamo Bay, and Agamben is alert to the architectural and urban consequences of this power.

This principle [birth] is now adrift: it has entered a process of dislocation in which its functioning is becoming patently impossible and in which we can expect not only new camps but also always new and more delirious normative definitions of the inscription of life in the city. The camp, which is now firmly settled inside it, is the new biopolitical nomos of the planet. (Means without End 45)

An eschatological residue still remains. For human beings die twice, ultimately into non-existence but first into language. The Situationist child emerges from an infant corpse still warm outside, at the limit of the debt of life to living toward language. Already belated, this infant is there as a not-yet-something. And infancy has no survivors precisely because infancy is the non-ground of language withholding the secret of language that "language" can never recover. Of course, this scenario, constituting a primal scene, is the happening of a non-event, an impossible event because the infant occupies the space of the imaginary. The phrase an "infant is being killed" is of the order of a phantasmatic designation of a passage in which one infant dies and another survives. A recurrent theme in Rilke's poetry is the disinherited child suspended between two worlds "to whom no longer what's been, and not yet what's coming, belongs" (Agamben, *Infancy and History* 43). This remarks the interstitial space of infancy, a brief epoch condemned from the start to a death.

Lyotard both defines and defends the infantile as "whatever does not permit itself to be written, in writing" (qtd. in Harvey and Schehr 25) and perhaps the least visionary and utopian, yet most realizable agenda possible for Arakawa and Gins is to prevent the death of the infant by sustaining the form of an inhabitable infancy of architecture. The seeds of this are already nascent in the multilevel labyrinth where the human body is reversed to the uncoordinated movements of an infant. Indeed, imbalance is a necessary condition of the infant body, the body without writing. There are four full-colour pages, presented without text or captions, which describe this body without words in *Reversible Destiny* (179-81). In response to a letter from their friend, and great theoretician of infancy, Jean-François Lyotard (in *Reversible Destiny* 11), Arakawa and Gins propose a new hybrid to replace the Minotaur: the less savage concept of the "infant-adult." But in his letter Lyotard speaks of the child and Arakawa and Gins respond with the infant.⁴⁵ The infant not the child. Because it was the child that fuelled the architectural hopes of Constant and the S.I., New Babylon could never have attained that infancy of architecture we find and experience in Reversible Destiny sites like the *Infancy House*. And does not this prelinguistic state, this human life before language return us to the labyrinthine state that Hollier notes in Bataille's anti-architecture of writing; the state "where oppositions di-

⁴⁵ Lyotard asks "Would the possibilities reserved for childhood remain open in every circumstance? Might they even multiply? Could the body be younger at sixty years of age than at fifteen?"

sintegrate and grow complicated [...], where the system on which linguistic function is based disintegrates, but somehow disintegrates by itself, having jammed its own works" (58).

Whatever else it confronts, Reversible Destiny must face the infant's entry into the labyrinthine condition that is language. That said, perhaps a lasting (if not *the* lasting) contribution of Reversible Destiny is to have returned infancy to the scene of architectural praxis. Moreover, one should be cautious if one concludes that Reversible Destiny is an incomplete project whose grand *telos* appears currently impractical. One should not dismiss the project outright for perhaps, PERHAPS, like the voyage through the labyrinth, the point is the journey not the destination.

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DOES DEATH SURVIVE? A REVERSE TELEOLOGY

We are confronted with a most unusual claim, "We have decided not to die," together with an ethical manifesto, "crisis ethics." The former seems to try to answer the demands of the latter. What kind of logical limits constrain this issue, and is it possible to make such a claim without changing the meanings of terms such as "life," "identity," "self," "survival," etc., to the extent that they no longer function in ways that are recognizable here, today, approximately? Can common usage, and indeed ordinary experience, *survive* such a claim? These preliminary questions already suggest a difficulty with limiting the topic to issues of life and death and point to the fact that the matters at stake have not only to do with the problem under investigation, mortality, but even with the very structure of this discourse, that is, with what governs language itself. We are aware from the outset of a fundamental shift that is taking place in meanings, paradigms, and existential relations.

Beyond the broad range of cultural and historical rituals and conventions surrounding death, we will be confronted with several central philosophical issues, including identity over change, personal identity, life, being as presence, survival, iterability, etc.

More specifically than the general philosophical problems, we will be dealing with an attempt, or the beginning of an attempt, by artist-architects Arakawa and Madeline Gins (henceforth A/G) to question or circumvent these constraints, and we will be left with the very interesting question of whether this is even possible. Is it possible to get around the given constraints through an empirical intervention, through building and construction in A/G's sense, or through other means?

While there are countless moments where art can provide insight in leaps and bounds where philosophy proceeds only in minute steps, it will remain open whether the question at issue isn't so deeply structural as to constrain even the artist. Will A/G be restricted to the poetic gesture of trying to imagine the impossible, left to battle windmills,¹ or will they be able to use architecture (in an emphatically broadened sense) to supplement our skills, abilities, and understanding of survival, to such an extent as to displace our condition towards a transhuman one? This is after all one of their main claims: we have the real possibility of inventing "architectural procedures" that are capable of providing remedy for our existential state of affairs. What do such procedures have to effect?

¹ "That is to say, first off, that we have seen our contemporaries looking at the two of us as if we were Don Quixotes. And indeed we tip our hats to a comparable indominatableness, even as we rush to contrast our impossibilities with his" (A/G, *Architectural Body* xix).

What is the force of A/G's statement?

Unconventional statements that defy literal interpretation and refuse metaphor are also means of shifting semantic configurations and changing discourses. There seems to be a decidedly performative momentum in A/G's statement. When such statements can initiate a debate, which articulates the reasons why what they assert is considered impossible, these statements are also made in the hope of using provocation to uncover hidden reserves within the previously unquestioned complex of concepts. They reopen supposedly closed issues that have not been analytically exhausted, i.e. which are often everything other than settled or clear, reawakening issues considered *dead*. In view of the issue at hand in our case, this mechanism itself is not without significance.

Given the incredibly broad scope of the theme of mortality, making sense of A/G's effort will involve looking at A/G's actual interventions and then asking which of the structures concerning mortality are effected by these interventions. The two main issues I will focus on will be identity over change and being as presence, and I will read A/G's interventions with respect to these.

It will help also, in narrowing the possibilities of interpreting A/G's phrase, to note that they consistently speak of "not dying," and not of "becoming immortal" or the like. This is significant, first, because of the long and varied history of considering immortality for humans (also called "mortals") a matter of *surviving* death in an afterlife, not of not dying at all. So far, only infinite or divine beings have been immortal without first dying. The second issue is the statement of the phrase as an activity, not a state. The issue is not to *be immortal*, it is *not to die*, and the difference will become clearer further on.

Finally, the issue as formulated by A/G is strongly governed by the verb "to decide." The importance of claiming the ability to decide, or at least claiming the possibility of having that ability, shapes much of the phenomenology of the issue. It is also indispensable to the ethical claims and definitions attempted in *Architectural Body*: insofar as ethical judgements are concerned with voluntary action, reasonable *ethical* consternation about death can normally only occur in light of the possibility of having a willful choice about the matter. A/G's consternation toward the acceptance of death in general, understood in the context of the generally accepted injunction against killing, extends ethics beyond its normally accepted scope. A/G define crisis ethics thus: "An ethics that permits no category of event, not even mortality, to be set apart for special treatment, and that requires there to be nothing more unethical than that we are required to be mortal [...]" (xviii). Similarly, the decision not to die involves exceeding the limits of a subject's authority, extending its scope to include contingent influences. These extensions would seem to be without limit.

The next section will take a closer look at the significance of this limit, which will be seen as appearing as the result of an existential condition guided by a certain kind of teleology. In the third section, A/G's actual interventions will be interpreted as a resistance to that teleology and as an attempt to reconfigure a set of paradigms and an existential situation. In the fourth section, this resistance will be read as an attempt to answer the ethical/existential demand of crisis ethics, and ultimately that of A/G's overall project, *Reversible Destiny*.

Structures of not dying: Extension and transcendence

Taking control of the question

There is a stated claim in *Architectural Body* that the problem of mortality is not alterable within the confines of *any* traditional philosophical discourse known to the authors. The phrase, "We contend that philosophical puzzles cannot be solved short of a thorough architectural reworking" (xiv) heralds an attempt not only to reshape an environment and a concept of "person" architecturally but also to take control of the architecture of a question and its solution.

The need to take control on such a broad basis is almost certainly grounded in the logical and empirical constraints posed by traditional concepts of a person and the issue of mortality. These constraints already exist within the structure of language, specifically within the sign. Not only is the condition aimed for "transhuman," as A/G's dedication to *Architectural Body* suggests,² but many of the neologisms introduced throughout the text are used as if already from the point of view of transhumans. In this sense the book attempts to exceed what is possible within writing alone. A/G's text is also an invitation to enter into a transhuman discourse and an attempt to develop a heuristics for shifting toward such a discourse.

The logic of identity within change, or the telephone call

While *Architectural Body* spends much of its efforts against mortality with undermining and attempting to reconfigure our position as subjects by recasting us as "organisms that person," one of the most significant passages in the text *seems* at first to appeal to the notion that temporal extension could constitute reversible destiny: "When it becomes possible for an organism-person simply to go on indefinitely, a reversible destiny shall have been achieved" (xx).

The sentence just mentioned, and the entire paragraph which it finishes, are italicized in the original and are preceded with the phrase "Consider this." The appeal is followed by the words "If you say no, or yes, to this automatically, who are you, then and where does it get you?" Apparently we are not to take all at face value here. A/G's actual interventions will later give us further clues about how to proceed here.

What are the problems involved in extending life temporally, and what is the force of A/G's manifesto together with the question that follows it? Let's consider this within the context of the issue of identity of persons and the problem of identity over change.

² "To those who have wanted to go on/living and been unable to/and therefore/even more so/To transhumans" (A/G, *Architectural Body*, dedication).

Persons, and many other things as well, need to be able to change considerably and still be able to be considered as "the same." However, with an extremely long-lived person, this can lead to unusual effects. The following issue comes up (in the words of David Lewis):

We sometimes say: in later life I will be a different person. For us short-lived creatures, such remarks are an extravagance. A philosophical study of identity can ignore them. For Methuselah, however, the fading out of personal identity looms large as a fact of life. It is incumbent on us to make it literally true that he will be a different person after one and a half centuries or so. (30)

The reasons for this fading out of identity are numerous. They might seem to be concerned with the limits of our faculties, particularly memory, and, one might add, those of our fellow persons, since they play no small part in determining what counts as the same person. However, the issue is not just one of empirical constraints, which would always be relative to a certain *normal* set of faculties or time span. It is, rather, a structural problem. In the context of considering identity over change, having no limits means extending identity potentially to everything at any time, and thus not to have a distinguishable identity. We begin to suspect that finding a good philosophical way of dealing with identity over change will not be helpful if the aim is not to die.

If we insist on some notion of identity or survival as the basis of the notion of "one life," then life extension begins to play tricks on our sense of personhood. Consider this: imagine I am on the telephone with Madeline Gins.³ My phone line is actually (by some incredible technical feat) going through time, and it turns out that she is a future continuation of myself. Her memory extends nowhere nearly long enough to reach back to her earlier state (nor does anyone else's, and there are no public records surviving). She does not remember me, and I have no way of anticipating her as a future self.

I realize that the "continuity" would require a rather extraordinary metamorphosis. Still, I am perfectly willing to imagine her as a future continuation of myself. As such, I might think I have not died in the process, even though this "extended" self is unimaginable to me.

Consider, however, that in reality Madeline Gins is speaking on the phone with me in our current time. *She is here, right now*!⁴ What need do I have of continuity in considering her as a future self? In fact, what need have I of the future in this paradigm? If a future "extension of myself" is for all practical purposes a different person, then it is a different person. Whatever causal chains or continuities might have led "me" there, they seem to have no merit anymore, no more than would procreation, inheritance, friendship, or just

³ This whole passage is actually inspired by fact. The paradigm of the phone call into the future occurred to me during a (normal, non-future) call with Madeline Gins. It was not until afterwards, however that the issue of the irrelevance of continuity occurred to me. I am certain not to be able to exhaust the consequences of this paradigm here. I hope to expand on this in the future. I have included it, however, since I consider it extremely significant to the issue at hand.

⁴ The terms *she*, *here*, and *right now*, all appear in a revealingly problematic form when they appear in this text. This problem already anticipates the analysis ahead.

plain chance, if the so called extension is a different person. Extension plays no part here whatsoever. Death is not just the event, celebrated by a funeral, that might cut off my continuity. Death is more fundamentally my limited condition, the horizon of my existence. And my limited condition is what individuates me from Madeline Gins's limited condition, and others' for that matter. Consequently, if I were to accept a completely different person as a continuation of myself, then I would be close to immortal now (though it would hardly constitute part of *my* experience), since anyone at any time could then function as my own successor. The limit and the horizon are necessary for individuation, even while they seem all the more mysterious in this context.

It seems, then, that the notion of *simply* "going on" would be futile here. For the moment it leaves us with a logic in which death, in terms of violent change followed by a funeral ceremony, could perhaps be avoided in some sense. We slowly lose our identity nevertheless. Old soldiers never die, they only fade away, as the saying goes.

Presence and signs

Perhaps old soldiers have possibilities of which they never dreamed.

If I am someday no longer the same person, then this is to say that at some point I have disappeared. Perhaps, however, saying *I will be a different person* is less extravagant a claim for short-lived persons than it might seem.

If metamorphosis seems unsatisfactory with respect to avoiding death, then it seems this is an additional threat inasmuch as death would gradually begin to encroach on a self at any given moment. We need only to gradually reduce the time frame until we finally arrive at the "present." The irrelevance of the time interval in the telecommunication example exemplifies this. My own identity therefore only seems certain at the "present" moment, in the certainty of my experience of myself as a self-presence.

Beginning with a reduction of the smallest difference (or interval) between production and perception of my own actions, which I efface with the goal (*telos*) of maintaining a sense of identity and the very *sense* of self-presence (along with intention, will, decision, responsibility, etc.), I then project this presence into the future with a strange certainty that it will be repeated perfectly. This I call "I am." This presence must "survive" through all differences, as an idealized form. Simultaneously, it must also be effected by differences, or else I would survive any complete metamorphosis and therefore would have no specific identity.

Jacques Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena* contains a passage that describes a further detail of this relation particularly succinctly, and it explains how mortality is built into this system:

To think of presence as the universal form of transcendental life is to open myself to the knowledge that in my absence, beyond my empirical existence, before my birth and after my death, the present is. I can empty all empirical content, imagine an absolute overthrow of the content of every possible experience, a radical transformation of the world. I have a strange and unique certitude that this universal form of presence, since it concerns no determined being, will not be affected by it. The relationship with my death (my disappearance

in general) thus lurks in this determination of being as presence, ideality, the absolute possibility of repetition. The possibility of the sign is this relationship with death. The determination and elimination of the sign in metaphysics is the dissimulation of this relationship with death, which yet produced signification.

If the possibility of my own disappearance in general must somehow be experienced in order for a relationship with presence in general to be instituted, we can no longer say that the experience of the possibility of my absolute disappearance (my death) affects me, occurs to an I am, and modifies a subject. The I am, being experienced only as an I am present, itself presupposes the relationship with presence in general, with being as presence. The appearing of the I to itself in the I am is thus originally a relationship with its own possible disappearance. Therefore, I am originally means I am mortal. I am immortal is an impossible proposition. We can go even further: as a linguistic statement "I am he who am" is the admission of a mortal. (54)

These remarks from Derrida's very early text are aimed at certain ideals within Husserl's phenomenology, yet these ideals are manifest, in some form or other, in a broad range of philosophical discourse. The fact that he locates a relation with death in the possibility of the sign makes the example more generally applicable and will apply to "going on" as well, insofar as it is understood as "going on" in the terms of an identity within change. For the moment, Derrida's remarks show how a very specifically oriented discourse, pursuing certain definite interests, leads to a mutual exclusion in the life/death relation, and does so by excluding all that would threaten this desired ideality, even if, as will be claimed below, this ideality is never completely manifest or never quite takes place.

It would seem that we have arrived at a strange impasse in which the *I am* is destined to be mortal, yet the structure of presence and the effacements it involves would also make the instantiation of the *I am* always incomplete or ultimately impossible. The phrase "I am immortal" is an aporia, but an incomplete one, because the *I am* never quite takes place. The entire life/death dichotomy begins to take the shape of an unreachable ideality, and our relation to this ideality is one of arbitrarily limiting too careful inquiry into our own existence for the very sake of maintaining the ideality. In what follows I will call this an existential teleology.

Teleology

A certain mortal inevitability is located in the structure of the *I am* and within *presence*, yet it is an inevitability which assumes that these idealities can take place, completely, and without remains. Dissimulations, effacements, exclusions, these terms seem in the same breath always to describe a certain *inaccuracy* or *inadequacy* in the move toward ideality, or toward identity. The very real experience of difference, of limits, of the effect of the other, of non-self-identity within present experience, of change, is effaced in service of a *teleology* that aims at the certitude and permanence of idealities, while simultaneously effacing and utilizing their non-permanence. Idealization pulls us up short when we compare it with experience. In fact, experience itself involves the simultaneous experience of ideality together with its incompleteness and its ephemeral character. It is the complacency toward and fear of death that functions as a "deer in the head-

lights effect" (*Architectural Body* 39), maintaining the effacement of periphery and stopping further inquiry, even while we yearn to breach this effacement in order no to die.

It is not that talk of identity is completely "wrong." It seems nearly indispensable, in fact. However, it is utilized in and by language within the confines of an exclusionary construct, which seems simultaneously to betray *experience*. We have a sense of a certain inadequacy in language, and this sense is as old as, and runs in opposition to, the philosophical tradition since Plato. Our relation to this inadequacy is shaped by a teleology of exclusion rather than being guided by taking this incompleteness as constituent of experience as such.

The teleology toward ideality is instituted by the form of the question "what *is* that?" (*ti esti*), which demands an answer with reference to an idealized, iterable entity, and in a present *tense*. This teleology goes so far as to govern how we formulate our understanding of how language works, governing the very grammatical and semiotic terminology we employ. It is also certain way of producing and responding to experience.

If there is any opening or reserve to be found in the issue of mortality, then it is in the displacement of, transformation of, or resistance to this teleology. A/G's question, "If you say no, or yes, to this *automatically*, who are you, then, and *where does it get you*?" (*Architectural Body* xx, my emphasis), is also the opening of a teleological question. However, it will not be possible simply to eliminate the structures at work in this problem. It is a question of changing a focus and teleology toward inclusion of what has been excluded (or perhaps to reverse the pull implied by the Aristotelian sense of "teleology" itself. To move away from, rather than toward, the "goal"). Reversible destiny is also a reversal of a teleology.

This is not a process that can ever end, it is rather a continuous engagement. The reversal of this teleology also involves subordinating the importance of the present tense of the verb "to be" to new paradigms. This is not an elimination of old structures. It is a reorientation toward an eternally required supplement in need of attention. The focus away from ideality is also a keeping open of the question of mortality, marked, in A/G's case, by the statement "We have decided not to die," which performs what it says by keeping open indefinitely an issue that has been considered closed.

Furthermore, it is a significant aspect of A/G's crisis ethics that the question is kept open as a matter of duty. This effort would need its own tools, and A/G claim architecture as the most appropriate tool for their purpose even while they continuously refashion it. The teleological shift would also be an attempt to do justice to that which has been excluded in the act of idealization. In A/G's case, this attempt will go so far as to include into an ethics that which lies beyond the scope of the responsibility of a subject. Not just killing, but death itself is seen as unethical.

Some of Derrida's more recent writings might help to clarify the existential structures of A/G's "crisis ethics." A/G, however, are clearly developing a discourse of their own, which even revises the architecture of an ethical discourse. Therefore we had better first look at a few of the characteristic features of their interventions.

Some characteristics of A/G's interventions

General issues

Someone confronts me with the phrase "Your money or your life." I would perhaps think, "*I have de-cided not to die*," and hand him my money (perhaps "enormous sums of money").⁵ Compare this with the following: I have an intuition that the airplane I am about to board will crash. I decide not to board. How-ever, the airplane is grounded because there are too few passengers (perhaps intuitions are running rampant at the time). I never learn whether my intuition was "correct." Did I *decide* not to die?

What intervention is powerful and all-encompassing enough to count as a decision in this context? We might understand A/G in the following manner. In nearly all we have learned in our lives, we have always been told that one day we will die. Being confronted with this threat, we undertake the actions we deem necessary not to die. This is perhaps a direct appeal to us to understand the broad significance of our existential structure as mortal beings. The claim is irreducible to the "literal" but rather opens up *whatever avenue is necessary* to succeed. The unrelenting demand of crisis ethics to leave nothing untouched must also be an unrelenting call for inquiry, which can turn back upon the asker of the question.

When looking at what A/G propose, we might ask where in the structures that constitute our life/death existence they want to intervene. One of the structures that needs to be dealt with is precisely that of what it means to "decide" within the context of the life/death dichotomy.⁶ A/G's statement has a performative force of refusing certain limits and reaching for inclusion. The limitedness that constitutes my individuality is nothing other than the border between what *I* can decide and that which is, now or in the future, *beyond my own life* and can take this decision out of my hands. This structure is already my mortality. Can *I* decide not to fade away? No. Can *I* decide to *be* immortal? No. Can I decide to investigate what constitutes an *I*, and perhaps realize that an *I* needs to efface everything *other* that affects it, spatially or temporally, in order to have the strange certitude of having decided, and indeed, of existing as an iterable presence? Will gaining such awareness in turn, exercised as understanding or experience (e.g. through deliberate interventions in the "architectural surrounds"), affect our very constitution by changing our (self) understanding and experience? Can I be the architect of a transhuman condition? Perhaps the notion of a *condition* will even have to be displaced, perhaps it is a matter of a constant transhuman *effort*.

⁵ "We ask only that enormous sums of money be spent constructing the world as a tactically posed surrounding for the benefit of the body" (*Architectural Body* xix). A/G give the phrase "Your money or your life" a completely new significance here.

⁶ The analysis of decision could also be repeated with the concept of *wanting* in the phrase "wanting to go on," as it occurs in the dedication. What constitutes wanting in contrast to what was not explicitly wanted? Death finds its way into this terminology as well, as the horizon of what I want and what is beyond my wanting, or contrary to my wanting.

It would be the task of an extensive separate investigation to point to some close similarities which A/G's interventions have with the methods of Buddhist soteriology.⁷ Presenting death as an unavoidably urgent existential riddle to be solved is surely an obvious parallel. Yet the closest similarity is perhaps the broadly based attempt to intervene in the phenomenology of existence with interventions that guide our understanding of self-manifestation. The topics on which I focus in the next section will look familiar with respect to this similarity. All of these points move toward a sense of reversible destiny as a teleological shift within existence, guided by an architectural heuristics in A/G's sense.

Doing vs. being

There is a consistent tendency throughout A/G's discourse on "not dying" of stating things in terms of activities or processes instead of states of being. "Not dying" replaces "becoming immortal," or "an organism that persons" replaces "a person," for example. This amounts to something like an anti-reification of the subject. A person becomes an activity rather than a thing, and this activity is guided deliberately by specific and coordinated architectural interventions. Personhood is also subordinated to more global activity, performed by the "architectural body" within the "bioscleave."

Instead of letting us take refuge in the safety of the ideal of self-presence, we are required, as an activity of resisting death, to constantly leave this refuge by engaging in death-defying and world-inquiring activity. The complacency toward the inaccuracy of idealization that makes the *I am* "possible," yet never quite lets it take place, is interrupted by a demand to engage in the activity of not dying and to do so without stopping.

This is also an active displacement of the *priority* of the present tense of the word "to be" and the structures invoked by the traditional *ti esti* question. A/G make a clear statement against this metaphysical tradition by coining the phrase "the tense of architecture," which they claim is not "This is this' or 'Here is this', but instead that of 'What's going on?" (*Architectural Body* 49). This is a direct confrontation with the *ti esti* question, and this "tense" determines the teleology not only of a discourse, but of a kind of existence.

Existential holism and dissolving the subject/object dichotomy

The concept of an architectural body itself already points toward a broad extension of what we normally recognize as constituting ourselves, and above all a teleological change in focus with respect to what constitutes a person: "A ruling concern is that nothing conceivably belonging in the picture (to be painted of the world) be left out of it. If bound to err one is, then choose always, when judging what merits inclusion, to err in the direction of being overly inclusive" (*Architectural Body* xix).

⁷ A/G's reference to Dogen also gives us a hint about influences here (*Architectural Body*, back cover).

The exclusion of peripherals implied by asking "what is this?"—which is indeed implied by reference insofar as we understand reference as a relation to an iterable entity—is actually an opening in the question of identity (and thus mortality) because of its necessary incompleteness. A/G apply forceful leverage to this opening by means of an architecture that functions as a phenomenological and existential heuristics designed to pry open the complacency of being as presence and to open this notion to exceed its own horizon. To performatively, and thus forcefully, reopen the "closed" question of mortality is also a reopening of the limits of all its constituent terms and structures, and indeed experience, toward an unceasingly holistic understanding or experience. Death only functions completely so long as it remains a closed question.

The notion of an *architectural body* also disassembles any subject-object dichotomy through its broad reversal of a teleology of identification toward that of constant inclusion of periphery. In the process of focusing more on doing than on being, the relation of the subject to its environment is deflected away from the relation instituted by the *ti esti* question with respect to the asker of the question, and it is changed conceptually and perceptually as a means of reorienting a state of affairs that one can no longer call a "subject." Much in the way that *The Mechanism of Meaning* provided a broad heuristics for questioning fundamental notions of sense, *Architectural Body* begins to provide a heuristics and a concept of architecture that are aimed at, among other things, altering the subject-object experience.

The central architecturally heuristic concept that counters the ideality of identity is A/G's notion of *sitedness*. A/G criticize a broad range of philosophical concepts for not taking sitedness into consideration. When considering a term, first ask how it is sited. We should point out that this has an importance for the phrase "we have decided not to die" itself. While it must be pointed out that hardly any philosopher today would still consider a subject in idealizing terms when speaking of what *constitutes* a person, persons are still frequently considered in terms implying just this kind of notion in certain other kinds of discourse, particularly in ethics. All discourse that needs to identify a person as a clear and discrete entity, whether this is discourse on intention, authorship, responsibility, etc., implies at minimum a case-by-case judgment concerning the boundaries of a person, if not a more permanent ideal of a self.

A/G's *sitedness* reverses this formula and, instead of separating the conceptual context from the architectural environment, makes context central within a broad inquiry into *how* the environment, in particular the architectural environment, when it is configured correctly, arrives at making it possible for one of its constituent organisms "to person," an activity that is not terribly specific but need only be "good enough."⁸ This is a radically different notion than an *I am*. It would seem natural enough to object at this point that so long as there is consciousness, identity can hardly be avoided. Consciousness is always consciousness of some *thing*.

⁸ A/G refer to D.W. Winnicott (*Architectural Body* 49). Wittgenstein's ideas on rule following might also suffice here.

At least two things can be pointed out in response to this. First, this objection presupposes a very specific type of discourse that uncritically takes a certain notion of consciousness for granted which then leads to the objection being put forward. This begs the question if that discourse itself is what is at stake.

The second is that the phenomenon (if we can call it that) of the pull toward identification might be acknowledged without subscribing to the philosophical paradigm of identity. In *Architectural Body*, there seems to be a concerted effort to do just this (i.e. the "landing sites"). It is important to understand that it is not the case that presence formerly determined metaphysics, and now all-inclusion has become the ideal. Presence never functioned separately or completely to begin with. What is taking place is a recognition of the inadequacy of this paradigm, a reorientation of the teleology involved in it. "Presence," or the moment, does not vanish, but is re-viewed, re-experienced, re-sited in a way that transforms its representation of itself, subordinating it ontologically to activity. At the same time, sitedness is a transition beyond the horizon of language toward architecture and beyond.

Given A/G's claim that philosophical discourse is always inadequate, one might wonder how they can *write* at all; should they not stick to deploying their ideal implement, architecture, and simply build? However, to the extent that A/G have produced a text, they have submitted to the problem of finding a way to use language in a way that will fit their needs. A teleological shift toward holism perhaps also constitutes a teleological shift *within* language on the whole. The shift is not an elimination of ideality but rather a neverending concentration on its inadequacy. The concept of *tentativeness* takes on a central role in this, as it does in their heuristics.

Tentativeness

"Landing sites," "sitedness," "tentative constructions toward a holding in place," etc.—these paradigms and their related terms have the allure of an unusually close description of how we experience things even now, while supplying us with paradigms and neologisms that hope to convey to us what is missing in philosophical discourse. Terms like "site" or "in place" might make us suspect a reinstatement of the paradigm of presence, but it seems that these terms are transformed by a consistent emphasis on their relation to tentativeness. For this to be in any way effective, tentativeness cannot simply refer to fleeting moments of identity, for otherwise little would have been achieved other than to make experience more fragmentary. Tentativeness becomes an irreducible term that guides a shifted existential teleology. Concerning the first "architectural procedures" that A/G have developed, which are meant to mend our "insufficiently procedural bioscleave," it is no mistake that one of them is the "tentativeness-cradling procedure." Tentativeness is precisely the metaphysical term displacing presence, and it marks actively inquiring existence that refuses the horizon.

It is clear that these are only the first beginnings, and one may reasonably expect that *The Mechanism* of *Meaning* will inspire further procedures that will be translated into architecture. And it is in fact the concept of "cradling" that most succinctly describes the relation and function architecture has toward the existential makeup of its *organisms that person*.

The ethics of not dying

"Your house is shorter than its shrubbery"

In the chapter from *Architectural Body* entitled "Architecture as Hypothesis," two people, Robert and Angela, are led by A/G through a house that has different settings, the *snail setting*, the *close-to-snail setting*, and *roomy*. This dwelling might appear to some as an allegory of reversible destiny, yet it goes far beyond allegory. It becomes for its inhabitants a place in which to conduct existential research. It performs what it represents. Numerous aspects of *sitedness* can be explored here. The activity of *personing* can be tested in changing, dynamic contexts. My house is shorter than its shrubbery, then I expand it, I test the relation of its different stages to my senses. The house encourages me to understand the dynamic process of (self) manifestation. I emphasize peripherals in varying degrees, constantly adjusting their relations.

This house as architecture wants to do justice at least in part to the call of crisis ethics. Crisis ethics itself already begins what it demands by stating an ethical demand that denies the finality of responsibility and the limitedness of subjectivity. It amounts to claiming that "I am immortal" is an imperfect aporia, as is reversible destiny. It is the imperfection that provides us with the opening toward an understanding of the non-finality of the impasse.

While we used a passage from a very early work of Derrida's to describe this incomplete aporia, his later works have provided a broad range of further explications and new insights into subjectivity in the context of ethics, justice, decision, and impossibility. Without being able to reproduce these analyses here, I would like to show how crisis ethics takes on a unique role when viewed through some of the important concepts within these analyses. This role is constantly manifest in the architectural interventions of *Architectural Body*.

The moment of decision

In his essay "Force of Law," Derrida discusses three aporias concerning justice, all of which can also be seen as pertaining to decision and subjectivity. These will also further explicate the aporia we arrived at concerning the *I am*. He entitles these aporias (1) the *épokhè* of the rule, (2) the ghost of the undecidable, and (3) the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge. All three of these are structurally tied to what we have called the experience of presence.

First, the *épokhè* of the rule necessitates that justice cannot be a matter of calculation, but must consist of a fresh, independent judgment for each application of a rule. The structural independence of judgments has exactly the structure of a free decision. It cannot be tied causally, mechanically, or by calculation to any earlier instance. Similarly, the *I am* must be instantiated anew at every moment as a fresh and independent sense of self-presence and as an instance of presence in general. We can think of it as a fresh instantiation of a "rule" which we call a self. All of these structures are tied to the general economy of iterability, and in this sense also to identity over change.

Second, the ghost of the undecidable designates precisely that which is foreign to the order of calculation within justice, and as such presents us with an ordeal that must be lived through within judgment, and simultaneously becomes a remainder after a judgment has taken place. Once a judgment has been assimilated to a rule under which it falls, it is no longer fully just to the extent that it has reinserted itself into the order of the calculable. "The undecidable remains caught, lodged, at least as a ghost—but as an essential ghost—in every decision, in every event of decision" ("Force of Law" 24).

When A/G "decide not to die," the impossibility of attempting to exceed the limits of decidability opens a unique double gesture. On the one hand, the limit of the moment of decision would normally instantiate mortality in the border between self and other which makes the decision a free decision. On the other hand, the impossibility of this moment, which remains as a ghost after the decision has "taken place" (which it never does completely), opens and reopens the limits of the subject. The content of A/G's decision explicitly calls attention to the impossibility of decision in general in that it refuses not only mortality in general but the very mortality, the very horizon, *implicit in the decision*.

Architecturally, A/G's gestures emphasize a constant sense of duty toward this ghost of the undecidable. This is a profound sense of justice, which attempts to exceed the very economy involved by reversing the teleology of the present tense of the *ti esti* question. A/G's house refuses a fixed hierarchical or teleological relation to its shrubbery as well as to its inhabitants. The inhabitants can use the house to explore precisely the shifting of these relations and can as such begin to experience the very economy of their existence, which in the process becomes shifted itself.

ARAKAWA: [...] This house is a tool, a procedural one. GINS: A functional tool, whether it be a hammer, a telephone, or a telescope, extends the senses, but a procedural tool examines and reorders the sensorium. (Architectural Body 30)

This is a decidedly different relation to decision within architecture in that its teleology is not directed at the moment but at the *exploration of the economy of the moment*. The "sensorium," which the procedural tool explores and reorders, is not bent toward an experience in terms of the present tense but becomes a field for inquiry and construction that fashions and continuously refashions existential and experiential structures.

Third, the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge describes the limits within a judgment based on the fact that a judgment *takes place*: "But justice, however unrepresentable it may be, doesn't wait. It is that which must not wait. To be direct, simple, and brief, let us say this: It cannot furnish itself with infinite information and the unlimited conditions, rules or hypothetical imperatives that could justify it" ("Force of Law" 26).

The structure of the *I am*, as we described it, requires a kind of ultimate urgency within presence, in which no conditions at all hold anymore and the horizon of knowledge and experience is made absolute. It is a kind of ultimate cutoff of information, knowledge, or causality. The past and present instances of presence are the ghosts of this primary effacement. My relation to the other in the telephone call describes precisely the horizon of urgency that individuates me from Madeline Gins both as spatial distance, and temporally in that I can only stay on the phone so long. She appears only as the ghost of a possible future, as something I can imagine or as an other, since I do not extend my horizon to her. Finally, my own life-span involves a broadened urgency with respect to

limiting my personhood, an urgency that Methuselah begins to breach as he loses his identity over time. Personhood is an always incomplete approximation. The phrase "To know all is to forgive all" tells us that judgment is impossible without a horizon. To know all is not to have an identity or know identities. Justice and experience both take place incompletely within this economy between the limitless and the limited.

Architectural Body, on the one hand, resists this urgency by attempting a less idealizing use of paradigms within its own discourse, and on the other hand it provides tools for understanding the role of the horizon of knowledge with respect to mortality and the concept of reversible destiny, which involves a broad existential reorientation toward this horizon. The *architectural body* is both the result of such a reorientation and a means for continuing such a reorientation. The horizon is not eliminated; it is placed into a different perspective conceptually, teleologically, experientially, and architecturally. The economy of the horizon, rather than its effects, is the theme of A/G's house.

These three aporias concerning justice designate precisely the horizon of subjectivity that presents itself to the subject as an existential problem: its mortality. "Everyday life," as we call it, demands a kind of pragmatic complacence toward mortality that precisely instantiates our "everyday-life-personhood," with its approximate and always rather sloppy ethics, which condemns killing and in the same breath constantly tolerates and profits from killing, while remaining in the dark about what all this has to do with its own mortality. To the extent, then, that mortality presents itself to us as an intolerable existential problem, it is also a problem with respect to this ethics which maintains the horizon by violence, which is the very violence that maintains the existential problem.

Attempting to exceed the moment of judgment is part of the ordeal of a truly ethical decision, and part of the existential ordeal of the *I am* as it tries to live on. Living, as not dying, means always pushing at the horizon of knowledge and experience. It is not a matter of "identity," nor is it simply a temporal issue. Crisis ethics, then, becomes a demand toward an impossible justice that must be affirmed as a matter of existential orientation rather than marginalized in the complacency of everyday judgment. This reorientation is initiated in the decision not to die. This decision presents itself to us as an impossibility whose horizon we *must* attempt to exceed as a matter of an ethical teleology that requires existential reorientation. This is what is being asked by A/G: do not get stuck like a "deer in the headlights," but rather inquire beyond, and above all, act within this inquiry.

Death's own horizon

We are finally left with a rather unusual question. If the horizon, and with it the *I am* and death, play a certain part in iterability and in identity, then are they themselves affected by the very forces they signify? Are the horizon, and with it the *I am* and death, *perfectly* iterable? Let us imagine they are not perfectly iterable. After all, we are dealing with "an ethics that permits no category of event, not even mortality, to be set apart for special treatment." Then just as the horizon of experience and knowledge imperfectly conditions justice, the horizon is a conditioned term itself. Do we know what death is? Is death eternally self-identical? *What is it*? We watch the *ti esti* question begin to breach its own teleology even as we ask it!

The always yet *unfulfilled* promise of immortality is not a kind of swindle but precisely the opening to extend or supplement the configurations concerning mortality by way of existential questioning far enough to allow the displacement of those unreflectively assumed configurations. It is an opening for not dying. The question is not whether A/G can make *me or you* immortal someday; it is whether our complacent understanding of death and life, and with it the *I am*, will survive our architectural inquiry and our inquiring interventions, if we dare to engage in them. An imaginary "telephone call" to a future "death" might leave us with the conclusion that it is no longer death (to apply the telecommunication paradigm to the identity of "death"). Perhaps we even have the possibility of differentiating "death" with sufficient detail to reduce the scope of this difference to the approximately here and now. Having arrived there, the question of whether death is self-identical is not a factual but a teleological question. Difference structures even our talk about identity within difference.

Conclusions

Often philosophical analysis, or any discussion for that matter, seems to lose its original theme in the course of the discussion because of the dismemberment of the terms involved, or because of the reinsertion of components into new discursive contexts: because of its iterability. This is generally not held against the discourse if the investigated terms are eventually deemed to have been chimerical. Yet it is precisely this survival or non-survival of the identity of the subject at hand which is also precisely the structure of the life-death issue.

Not to die, then, could involve a teleological shift within the logic of identity over change, a shift that opens up new avenues and grounds experience in an ongoing modification of this relation. As an existential ideal—not a focus on being, but on doing—it is a constantly further questioning effort, and it is to live as "self-guinea pigs" as A/G demand (*Architectural Body* xx).

Today we live in environments that on every level reflect our paradoxical mortal identities, which "cradle" us in a complacent self-experience of ideal identity conflicting with a simultaneous experience of self-change, and thus present death to us as limit and paradox of these concepts. We should consider for a moment the disproportionate sums spent on infrastructure and architecture designed to ease, guide, organize, simplify, emphasize, monumentalize, commemorate, and hierarchically structure our mortal selves, and we should consider the enormous expense of the violent consequences of "cradling" this paradoxical ideal. How else could we be cradled? This, I believe, is the essential question within A/G's project.

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SECTION II

POESIS AND AUTOPOESIS

CONSTRUCTING AUTOPOIESIS: The Architectural Body in Light of Contemporary Cognitive Science

"Constructing life"/constructing metaphors

We wanted it because it signaled the connection between what we do and work being done in the fields of self-organization, autopoiesis, artificial life and consciousness studies.

(Arakawa and Gins, Architectural Body, "Preface" n. pag.)

When crossing disciplinary domains, one always crashes head-first into the problem of metaphor: how can you connect ideas from distinct intellectual fields by means of a device analogous to what mathematicians recognize as an equal sign or a congruency sign?¹ The problem intensifies when both domains have to buy into the term employed.² Since theorizers about metaphor now understand that a metaphor has no absolute stability, even with respect to its home discourse, one can question why bother: as Jean-Jacques Lecercle argues in this collection, Gilles Deleuze famously denies their existence. Given: 1) Their tacit or "conventional" status; 2) their drifting, gaseous irreducibility: Why bother to employ metaphors (or tropes generally), or even attempt to cross disciplines, if all that happens is to turn distinct orderly domains into a maze? Perhaps that is the point. When questions become unanswerable within a single domain, innovators seek analogous questions in foreign realms in order to resituate their lines of inquiry, and even to pursue several lines simultaneously, hoping, through juxtaposition, to find answers or more powerful questions in between, or beyond, Perhaps what we need are periplum meanderings from questions formerly situated on standard grids. Arakawa's early visual works often involve a mazy juxtaposition of different cognitive and conceptual schema, as well as an immanent "blankness," all competing for the aesthetic attention of the conventional art consumer. Metaphor and planes of interdisciplinary schema; foreground and background—navigation can become treacherous quickly.

¹ Yet, the work of Brian Rotman reveals the rhetorical and semiotic nature of mathematical communication. (see workscited list). Mathematics and metaphoricity are not as far apart as they once appeared

² See the famous collection outlining the problem over the stability of metaphor in scientific discourses, *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony. See also Bono; and Rosenberg "*Chess RHIZOME* and Phase Space," for a more extended discussion of this point.

In the above quote from Arakawa and Gins, we seem to have terms that refer not just to one discipline but to four. Uh oh. We can simplify things by noting that these four terms are all relevant to one discipline, albeit the hybrid discipline of cognitive science—born of recent increasingly stable alliances amongst linguistics, philosophy of mind, neuroscience and artificial intelligence—which have processed, in parallel, a series of questions concerning the nature of mind (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 7). Now, I'm speaking to a construction of cognitive science that rejects an exclusively top-down model of cognitive functioning dominant until recently and exemplified by the strengths and weaknesses of symbolic manipulation by mainframe computers. This top-down model has had correlates in the organization of information and even of human beings so ancient that it seemed to its early advocates Von Neumann and others to have been somehow "natural." Yet the weaknesses of the model, including and yet not limited to the tendency to global catastrophic failure, required further theorizing, which in turn led to at least a partial rejection of the model.

Accompanying this rejection, we find an embrace of a model of cognitive functioning which, while recognizing top-down behavior (and its socio-cultural correlates), signals an investigation into bottom-up emergent properties. The term emergent properties refers to processes of self-organization with two related properties—distributed and enactive—which force the analysis of even single organisms as societies united through spontaneous cognitive activity. Whether talking analogically about connectionist computer architecture, the behavior of organic neural nets, aggregating natural and artificial life forms, or models of distributed "social" cognition, "mind," and its behavior, become understood not as that which controls the body, but as that which results spontaneously as embodied cognitive processes emerging locally, and then producing global effects (see Haugeland; Dyson; Holland; Edelman; Ramsey, Stitch, and Rumerlhart; Shostak; Prigogine and Stengers). For the human corpus, we refer to processes of cognition located in the senses, the nervous systems, muscles, endocrine system and the individual organs of the body. In particular, we may find analogical explorations of these issues in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, whose smooth and striated spaces of the *Body Without Organs* bears a strong resemblance to the distinction between bottom-up and top-down cognitive processes.

Notice that I imply that academic inquiry across the disciplines often works analogically, and that analogic thinking may have something to do with the methodology informing Arakawa and Gins's architectural and poetic practices. One need only to refer to the work of Douglas Hofstadter and his Fluid Analogies Research Group to recognize that analogy formation seems to lie at the heart of the struggle for dominance by these two competing models of cognition, even with respect to their simulation in computer architecture and software processes.

Arakawa and Gins refer to standard terms in cognitive science which are associated with the bottomup hypothesis: *self-organization* (a description of emergence applicable to physics, chemistry, and biology as well as cognition), *autopoiesis* (a description of an emergent mechanism originally from biology), *artificial life* (an application of self-organization to the realm of non-organic, even virtual domains in computer science), and *consciousness studies* (noting that these other terms represent parallel investigations into the prime target of inquiry for the philosophy of mind—human consciousness!). Most relevant for a discussion of Arakawa and Gins, major figures within this new discipline of cognitive science point to an ethical dimen-

sion to this line of inquiry with respect to human socio-cultural institutions, and of relevance, to a hybriding of the study of human cognition by reference to non-western epistemologies.

Some of these terms from *Architectural Body* refer explicitly to a specific "brand" associated with the Chilean biologists, cyberneticists and cognitive scientists, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. The term *autopoiesis* specifically refers to their work. We can go farther to say that Arakawa and Gins's discourse seems initially to offer a series of easily understood analogues to the collaborations of Maturana and Varela and their later individual lines of inquiry. This raises the question: why this brand of cognitive science, rather than one seemingly more related to poetic and artistic production, with its roots in linguistics, such as the school of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson and Mark Turner. This "school" has greater familiarity, and has established ties to Arakawa and Gins since George Lakoff wrote an important essay on their work in the volume of their 1997 Guggenheim retrospective *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not To Die.* This essay attempts to explain through an analysis of the limitations of the Lakoff, Johnson and Turner school of cognitive science of Maturana and Varela and the philosophy of mind of Gilles Deleuze offer a pair of conceptual/analogical landing sites that enables them to move beyond cognitive science and philosophy of mind to a profound reconfiguration of art and ethics.³

First, let's take a stab at a simplistic, but at least temporarily useful series of analogy constructions between Maturana and Varela and Arakawa and Gins. We do this not to bring into question the significance and originality of Arakawa and Gins's corpus, but to underscore the sophistication of their analogy-formations in their attempts to confront the nature of human cognition. The following comes from *Architec-tural Body*:

³ Lecercle notes the importance of *The Logic of Sense* in articulating the Peircean semiotics at work in Deleuze's attempt to resituate the subject back into the mechanism of meaning. As he well knows, Deleuze's interest in accounting in a rigorous way for subjectivity, extends back to his first volume on Hume, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature.* See the Body Without Organs concept in Deleuze's two volume collaboration with Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, and my discussion of the BYO with respect to the cognitive science of Francisco Varela in "Portals in Duchamp and Pynchon."

Term from Maturana and Varela	Term from Ara- kawa and Gins	Relevant Quotation	Anomaly or Hybrid-reference
Embodiment: Biological activity inher- ently involves cognition even at the level of the cells of the body.	Organism that Per- sons	We have adopted the admittedly clumsy term because it portrays persons as being intermittent and transitory outcomes of coordinated forming (2)	They insist that the body "needs to be defined together with that within which it moves; peering at it from the other way around, the surround- ings need to be defined together with the bodies moving with them." (xx)
Autopoeisis: Self-making for an organ- ism involving self- referential processes capa- ble of evolution despite an operationally-closed rela- tionship with its environ- ment	Landing Sites: Perceptual/Imaging Dimensionalizing	Think of the part that judgements of dimension play in (blind) Dahlke's surprisingly precise pic- turing of the polyomino puzzle Dimensionalizing is conducted cross-modally, as are all the ac- tions of a person. (21)	The account of the internal dialogue of schematizing processes account- ing for and situating the organism that persons in relationship to "the outside" only addresses a small part of the autopoiesis hypothesis.
Structural Coupling: Occurs when autopoietic entities become linked together, as with a frog and a fly, or, in a more collaborative model, a rhizome or an aggregating slime-mold.	A tentative con- structing towards a holding in place	In any case, there can be no doubt that, as great and as intimate as the human architectural heritage is, the architectural heritage of snails is as great and far more intimate. (27)	Here I find this resonates also with the animate-inanimate coupling reminiscent of the work of Bruno Latour, Edwin Hutchins and Peter Galison. They speak of the inani- mate <i>agency</i> of tools in scientific practices, as well as current theoriz- ing about human-machine prosthe- ses, including Deleuze and Guattari among others. ⁴
Consensual Domain: An ecology enacted through multiple and com- plex couplings	Achitectural Sur- round	Everything begins for these organ- isms with a tentative constructing toward a holding in place. The environmental communal, which has everything to do with how an organism persons, can, when re- worked in a concerted manner, lead to persons being able to su- percede themselves. (47)	"Architectural Surround" resonates powerfully with current studies in ecological ethics. See Guattari, <i>Chaosmosis</i> , and Varela, <i>Ethical</i> <i>Know-How</i>

⁴ For crucial works of Bruno Latour see works-cited list. See also Hutchins; Galison; Guattari.

Arakawa and Gins employ modalities of scale, as exemplified by the large size of Arakawa's early work and the panels of their *The Mechanism of Meaning* (1963-71), in order to confront the question of how the body couples with its environment. As I stated earlier, Arakawa's early paintings force into play a number of distinct cognitive and conceptual processes within the mind and body of the art consumer. He does so perhaps to induce a chiasm where these processes cancel each other out, and perhaps to induce a pre-conceptual cognitive response where control over cognitive and conceptual input becomes impossible and the charged but blank background of the painting mirrors the chiasmic field of awareness. We see *The Mechanism of Meaning* extending these strategies by engaging an even wider range of distinct cognitive and conceptual processes at a level of specificity quite astonishing, as F. L. Rush discusses in the Guggenheim retrospective volume, *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not To Die* (42-53). Here we might have a motive at work of short-circuiting an even greater range of these cognitive and conceptual processes, where blankness becomes at least initially identified as a zone of cognitive and conceptual processes, where blankness becomes at strong resemblance with the "smooth space" of the BWO as that space intimates a "plane of immanence." But notice that even in *The Mechanism of Meaning*, we find Arakawa and Gins engaged in the structural coupling of these processes with environmental and architectural references.⁵

To those of us in literary critical circles accustomed to thinking of the post-structuralist turn as *the* moment when literary and aesthetic theory escaped its naïvety, it should be all the more sobering. Clearly, they had anticipated this important turn; now its time to conceptualize what else they may have anticipated. Rather than settling for an audience to gaze casually at works from a tranquil if sometimes troubling stance, the landscape design, architecture and city planning of Arakawa and Gins collectively require bodily engagement with bewildering landscapes inhabited by inanimate structures that defy familiar rules of use. Here, leisure is no longer an option, since the engaged body must bring to bear an even wider range of cognitive and conceptual processes.

We can more easily conceptualize this wider range if we assume that we should not consider their architectural productions and their textural productions like *Architectural Body* as separate activities. We should also assume that the goal has moved beyond simply blankness (and its Zen reverberations) to a active reconstituting of these cognitive and conceptual processes in a more life-affirming direction, in a direct manifestation of what they call "crisis ethics" involving human civilization (*Architectural Body* xvii).

Now we can look more carefully at the table above. I have linked four key concepts of Maturana and Varela to specific terms and quotations from Arakawa and Gins's *Architectural Body*. Yet, to avoid oversimplification, the fourth column offers suggestions of how this structural coupling between cognitive science and architectural poetics might become extended in order to recognize a consensual domain or "trading zone" of multiple disciplinary regimes and vocabularies within their corpus.

The first concept from Maturana and Varela, embodiment, requires a strict bottom-up model of cognition. Coming especially from Maturana's early work and their collaboration, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The*

⁵ See Rosenberg, fig. a (this_aboutto_split.jpg).

Realization of the Living, their research seems to be guided by a phenomenological account for all living processes. This account insists on the essentially cognitive nature of biological processes, even at the level of individual cells. Thus, sensation, gestation, growth, and evolution are all driven by "the realization of the living," or, to define it most controversially, by the nature of life as a force of intelligence.

Arakawa and Gins similarly insist that all we understand about human nature—sensory perception, cognition, thought, activity, and even personality—emerges from the bodily basis of existence. Thus the term "Organism that Persons," for which they explain: "We have adopted the admittedly clumsy term because it portrays persons as being intermittent and transitory outcomes of coordinated forming" (2). The anomaly or hybrid reference opens this analogy between "autopoiesis" and "organism that persons" to other couplings, and points to later work by Maturana and Varela as well as by others on the "enactive" or "distributed" nature of human bodily and cognitive existence. We are a collectivity as well as individuals, and how we negotiate that collectivity as individuals may have something to do with how we survive as a species.

To understand how Arakawa and Gins get to a conceptual model of the cognizing body that "needs to be defined together with that within which it moves" (xx), we need to address the mechanisms by which these "intermittent and transitory outcomes of coordinated forming" occur within the organism, as described by Maturana and Varela. As I hinted earlier, the term autopoiesis refers to the self-referential process of internal cognizing by which the organism makes itself, as well as enacts the contingent models of its environment in order to survive and thrive. Now this is an extended concept difficult to understand, for it first insists on what is called "operational closure": an organism cannot know anything about its environment; it can only know representations of its environment through cognitive processes that are self-reflexive and autonomous from its situation (Autopoiesis and Cognition 8-14). So the activities of the organism involve "observing" itself as it engages in processing the cognitive activity resulting from the "observations" of models of its surroundings for the purposes of survival and thriving. These internal and modeled external observations all are "organized in a closed causal circular process that allows for evolutionary change in the way that circularity is maintained, but not for the loss of circularity itself" (9). Here we can hint that what Arakawa and Gins seek to accomplish is to engage and transform these cognitive loops by which each individual observer encounters their work. The chapter on Landing Sites addresses the circularity of these cognitive processes with astonishing clarity, in part because of the attention the chapter pays to the process of observation itself, for as Maturana and Varela put it: "Anything said is said by an observer" (8). We amend this famous expression to say: "anything cognized, said, written or read, is cognized, said, written or read by an observer," and we will need to add the word "cognized" to this expression in order to account for the confrontation with embodiment which motivates their architectural procedures.

Maturana and Varela describe the internal dynamics of autopoiesis as follows:

Due to the circular nature of its organization a living system has a self-referring domain of interactions (it is a self-referring system), and its condition of being a unit of interactions is maintained because its organization has functional significance only in relation to the maintenance of its circularity and defines its domain of interactions accordingly. (10)

We distinguish here a first-order autopoietic system only, but we have enough to draw the analogies we need. With the terms perceptual landing sites (Architectural Body 10), imaging landing sites (11), and dimensionalizing landing sites (21), each of which refers to distinct yet simultaneous cognitive processes that engage each other in self-referential ways, Arakawa and Gins offer an adequate and accessible version of Maturana and Varela's account of the multiple cognitive tasks occurring simultaneously when a body engages a world: the observer beholds simultaneously the entity that he considers (an organism, in our case) and the universe in which it lies (the organism's environment). This allows h/her to interact independently with both and to have interactions that are necessarily outside the domain of interactions of the observed entity (Autopoiesis and Cognition 8). By using the blind mathematician Karl Dalkhe's attempt to solve the polyomino mapping puzzle (which had escaped a conventional mathematical solution) to illustrate how perceptual, imaging, and dimensionalized landing sites generate internal dialogic interactions capable of generating an adequate account of mathematical object which Dalkhe was physiologically incapable of actually "seeing," Arakawa and Gins offer a remarkably accessible model for operational closure. It might be useful to point out that Madeline Gins's long poem, Helen Keller or Arakawa, and even her earlier poem on the recluse Greta Garbo, anticipates the question of cognitive processes occurring under the condition of operational closure (at least as far as the senses are concerned). Arakawa and Gins offer a schematic account of landing sites in potentially N dimensions, schematic in the sense that they describe the mechanisms by which an "organism person" can actively register, and contingently, passively and tentatively embrace their bodily orientation in the world. They present scales of bodily engagement through the construction "Organism-person-environment" and indicate that there are "sites and would-be sites" in order to account for the contingent processes by which the organism-person coordinates these sites simultaneously in order to adequately account for here and now, from one instant to the next. As with a chess player, the organism person has to redraw the range of possible future trajectories for future juxtapositions of multiple sites, after each and every "move."

A perceptual landing site "lands narrowly as an immediate and direct response to a probable existent, a bit of reporting on what presents itself" (7). An imagining landing site lands widely and in an un-pinpointing way, dancing attendance on the perceptual landing site, responding indirectly and diffusely to whatever the latter leaves unprocessed. As with the above block quote from Maturana and Varela, here we have the simultaneous, hybrid cognitive construction of a strong foreground coupling (object) and a weak background coupling (environment). Arakawa and Gins call the place where these multiple cognitive processes occur and interact dialogically the "dimensionalizing landing site," which "lands simultaneously narrowly and tightly and widely and diffusely, combining the qualities of a perceptual landing site with those of an imaging one, coupling and coordinating direct responses with indirect ones, the formed with the formless" (8). While the strong perceptual landing site represents immediate data, the weak imagining landing site marks the place where modeling occurs. We will address where these models come from in a moment, but let me stoop to personal anecdote to illustrate how wrongly these two processes can interact in an uncoordinated landing site.

About twenty years ago, I visited my alma mater, wandering nostalgically from the married student housing where I had lived for three years, to the Student Union, because I had heard that they had renovated it. As I approached the entrance, I was talking with a friend when suddenly I smacked with some velocity into a recen-

tly windexed and therefore all-but-invisible glass wall. Part of a boxed portico around the entrance to save heating costs, and built after I had attended school there, the portico did not exist on the imaging landing site that I had constructed for myself after years of walking in and out of the Student Union. Furthermore, my poor vision and the distraction of my conversation had distorted the processes for constructing transitory perceptual landing sites, and as a result, my dimensionalized landing site was profoundly uncoordinated. I ended up with a nose broken in three places (and ridicule from close friends which has yet to abate). Therefore, a coordination of sites requires what Arakawa and Gins call "a neutral zone of emphasis" (Architectural Body 22), and which in turn forces a dissolving of the subject-object dichotomy by transforming the screen of cognitive coordination into an "event-marker in and of the event-fabric that is the organism-person-environment" (22). Here, Arakawa and Gins accomplish for complex cognitive causality a distinction as important as that between an event-cone and a phase-space diagram in accounting for complex causality in physics. Arakawa and Gins use the blind mathematician Dalkhe to illustrate these processes by describing a purely cognitive and conceptual feat divorced from the world accomplished through the tactile manipulation of felt objects on a table. And, this tactic should alert us to an application to philosophical investigations, as well as to an understanding of emergent cognitive properties of an "organism-person" in an "architectural surround." More on that another time. Here the next step needs to be taken: how do Arakawa and Gins get from a single cognizer scanning the foreground and background of their N Dimensions of a "landing site configuration" (9) at any particular instant, to a coupling of two cognizers becoming aware that they are not alone and that they may have entered the landing site configurations of another? Or, in an anomalous version of Maturana and Varela's concept of structural coupling, how do we get from an autopoietic construction of the organism-person to a merging of organism-person with an architectural surround constructed by an other?

For Maturana and Varela, and especially for Varela, structural coupling constitutes a second-order autopoietic system. It involves a recursive feedback system by which

[...] the continued interactions of a structurally plastic system in an environment with recurrent perturbations will produce a continual selection of the system's structure. This structure will determine, on the one hand, the state of the system and its domain of allowable perturbations, and on the other hand will allow the system to operate in an environment without disintegration. (Varela, Principles of Biological Autonomy 33)

This requires a discussion of the organic system and its environment in terms of its "interlocked history of structural transformations, selecting each other's trajectories" (33). Now, Arakawa and Gins are clearly interested in the subtleties involving competing or collaborating landing sites by multiple organism-persons, but here our main concern lies with establishing an analogy between structural coupling and architectural surrounds.

This coupling, involving all the activities of the contingent cognition of landing sites, becomes called "a tentative constructing towards a holding in place" (*Architectural Body* 23), in order to hypothesize a concept of architecture as "intentionally provisional, replacing definite form with tentative form, the notion of a lasting structure with that of an adaptive one" (29). I indicate in the table previously that Arakawa and Gins offer a hybridized version of structural coupling, seeming to embrace the theorizing about the "agency" of tools, of

physical objects having subjectivity in the context of the sociology and anthropology of scientific practices, exemplified by the work of Bruno Latour, Edwin Hutchins, and Peter Galison. In referring to one of their architectural projects meant for actual habitation measurable in square feet: "This house is a tool, a procedural one" (30). But the illustration to which they signal their investment in the concept of structural coupling with the greatest assurance is that of the snail, and the poem by Ponge: "In any case, there can be no doubt that, as great and as intimate as the human architectural heritage is, the architectural heritage of snails is as great and far more intimate" (27).

For Arakawa and Gins, the organism-person-environment complex cannot be described with greater economy than by reference to a snail. To what end, then, can we understand the range of the "tools" of architectural procedures which can bring a greater intimacy for humans and its environment? Before we get to this question, we will need to address the final coupling, between Maturana and Varela's term "consensual domain" (Varela, *Principles* 49), which is the third order of autopoiesis, and Arakawa and Gins's term "architectural surround" (39), a term which also enables them to think of building not just individual buildings for human habitation, but entire cities: "Everything begins for these organisms with a tentative constructing toward a holding in place. The environmental communal, which has everything to do with how an organism persons, can, when reworked in a concerted manner, lead to persons being able to supercede themselves" (*Architectural Bo-dy* 47). In the process of superceding themselves, reconfigured organism-persons have the capacity to link toge-ther and then reconfigure society as a collectivity.

In a chapter entitled "On the Consequences of Autopoiesis," Varela begins to formalize the extension from the individual living system to ecological systems. Describing the movement beyond the mutual deformations that occur when two entities structurally couple, Varela claims that these autopoietic entities engage in "communicative interactions." Varela writes:

If the coupled organisms are capable of plastic behavior that results in their respective structures becoming permanently modified through the communicative interactions, then their corresponding series of structural changes (which would arise in the context of their coupled deformations without loss of autopoiesis) will constitute two historically interlocked ontogenies that generate an interlocked consensual domain of behavior, which becomes specified during its process of generation. (Principles 49)

In a move important for our understanding of Arakawa and Gins's employment of cognitive science, and for understanding why they seem to embrace the work of Maturana and Varela rather than that of Lakoff and Johnson and Turner, Varela now stakes a huge claim. Once Varela proposes a "conceptual domain" out of the dynamic "communicative interactions" of coupling autopoietic entities, we have now moved to the realm of language: "such a consensual domain of interactions is a linguistic domain" (49).

The crux of this essay concerns the role of metaphor in understanding the relationship between bodily existence and cognitive processes in the context of Arakawa and Gins's corpus. In a passage relevant to a negotiation of this problem, Varela states:

A linguistic domain, then, as a consensual domain that arises from the coupling of the ontogenies of otherwise independent autopoietic systems, is intrinsically noninformative, even though an observer, by

neglecting the internal determination of the autopoietic systems that generate it, may describe it as if it were so. (49)

We are now back to where we started—the realm of metaphor, a realm threatening because of its potential to be non-informative from a disciplinary perspective. We need to ask ourselves just how informative we find this coupling between architecture and cognitive science, by juxtaposing the work of Maturana and Varela with Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner's competing theory of cognitive science, and their accounting for metaphor and cognition and the body.

Now, in an extended version of this essay, I offer a more carefully considered account of Arakawa and Gins's achitectural poetics with respect to Maturana and Varela, moving through each of these concentric circles of what might be called increasingly enlarged cognitive realms. But, for the moment, we should note that the career trajectory of Maturana and Varela (from biology to cybernetics to cognitive science) is significant because their work's signature concept (autopoiesis) involves locating cognitive processes even inside individual cells of the body, and thus finds harmony with the phenomenology of mind of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (a figure raised by Mark C. Taylor in particular with respect to Arakawa and Gins), and the empirical subjectivity of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

More important, their career shifts suggest that the biological origins of their concerns with cognition resonates with Arakawa and Gins's own movement from the body outward. Still, one concept needs to be discussed explicitly, a concept fundamental because all the other concepts and competing theories of cognitive science depend upon it for grounding assumptions: *embodiment*. By embodiment, we mean how the relationship between the human organism and its mind becomes constructed and then employed in cognitive science as a foundational assumption. For the old, computational model of top-down cognitive architecture, we have mind over body, a body manipulated by symbolic activity; for bottom-up cognitive architecture, we have mental activity as a spontaneously emergent property of organic processes, as the body negotiates the world. I would argue that we need to understand Arakawa and Gins's *Architectural Body* as a spontaneously-inspired extrapolation from concerns over cognitive freedom in their collaborative *The Mechanism of Meaning*, as well as in their individual productions: Arakawa's visual images of competing cognitive and conceptual apparatuses short-circuiting a single aesthetic frame from which to gaze; Madeline Gins's philosophical poetic explorations of creative expression emerging from a mind stripped of the will to power over the body, possible when the mind must function under the conditions of operational closure.⁶

⁶ See Rosenberg, fig. b (yoromap.jpg).

The problem: Site of Reversible Destiny, Yoro park, and embodiment

In his essay on Arakawa and Gins in *Reversible Destiny* (112-113), George Lakoff offers a trenchant critique of the question of cognitive freedom from within his own cognitive theory of embodied meaning-making. Lakoff believes that he has created an emergent-properties account for metaphor-making. Because one could argue that they have offered the most influential account of cognitive science for metaphor and literary studies generally to date, it would useful, therefore, to take Lakoff (and his school) on their own terms, in order to see if that theory remains adequate to account for Arakawa and Gins's corpus. Here, a review of a problem of bodily orientation and balance may help provide a "landing site" for this analysis. I'm thinking specifically of the treacherous environment constructed by Arakawa and Gins called *Site of Reversible Destiny—Yoro*.

In the "Initial Directions For Use (to be continued)" (203), Arakawa and Gins offer their assessment of the problem of human trajectory through their treacherous "Elliptical Field." Now, some notoriety emerged in response to their sites, because of the injuries sustained by visitors, a notoriety for which Madeline Gins, in conversation, has expressed regret because of the distraction it has created from other issues at stake at the site. But I don't think we can leave it alone just yet. The question of danger, and of balance, has been raised by Bernhard Waldenfeld, who discusses the need to recognize the condition of "free fall" for any motor activity. The question of balance and of embodied cognition can be illustrated by reference to this site in ways directly relevant to a discussion of Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner. Arakawa and Gins address balance directly in their "Directions":

To secure a sense of yourself as this site (the entire elliptical field):

Vary the rate at which you move through it.

Associate each of the extreme forms your body is forced to assume in traversing it with both a nearby and distant form.

If accidentally thrown completely off balance, try to note the number and also the type and the placement of the landing sites essential to constituting a world.

Frequently swing around to look behind you.

Minimize the number of focal areas (perceptual landing sites) at any given moment... (203)

Here they claim that the sheer difficulty of negotiating the terrain at Yoro may serve to reorient and reconfigure the mind's relationship with the body at a moment when the body must feel its own way through an environment with so few dependable visual cues as to render a person as blind as Helen Keller, or the mathematician Dalkhe. One can barely edge from one moment to another, reconfiguring one's relationship to the terrain only as fast as the reorientated mind can process. While they have tackled this fragile relationship in their earlier "Mechanism of Meaning 16. Review and Self Criticism" (108), there is nothing like an experiential basis for meaning-making to drive the point home, to make visible the epistemological and ethical implications for competing cognitive styles.⁷

When one (as a "Maker") is inside the elliptical field, one cannot resort to a bird's eye perspective (from "Above") that could help track prospective hurdles and hazards. Only the will to experience vertigo can enable a visitor to continue, to test the capacity of the body (from "Below") to process, unthinkingly, through.⁸ The question of balance, and its correlates proportion and perspective, have aesthetic and cognitive implications explored rigorously by Kant. Yet, while still considered conventionally true, Kant's model had been debunked as early as Henri Bergson and Henri Poincaré because of its dependence upon (and assumption of the "natural status" for) a Newtonian axis of time and space in a relational grid governing human cognitive freedom becomes lost. I believe that Arakawa and Gins address this loss, and that Lakoff's discussion of the limits of cognitive elasticity in his essay on the site at Yoro, reveals the point where the Lakoff school becomes inadequate in comprehending Arakawa and Gins's corpus, and why recourse to the work of Maturana and Varela, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari becomes necessary.

Body, mind, metaphor and the Lakoff School of Cognitive Science

Please consider this seeming digression as a stab at a question that has been nagging at me ever since I read backwards from Mark Turner's *Reading Minds: English Studies in the Age of Cognitive Science*, to Mark Johnson's *The Body in the Mind*, to George Lakoff's *More Than Cool Reason, Metaphors We Live By*, and *Philosophy in the Flesh*, co-authored with the others. My question has to do with the status of their systems of image-schema, specifically in terms of the arguments that Lakoff and Johnson have made concerning the embodiment of orientational metaphors in lived human experience—grounded in the orientation of the body as the body negotiates the external world. At the time I had been reading the works of Maturana and Varela, particularly Varela's take on the concept of embodiment and enaction, as these biologists and cyberneticists might inform the writings of Gilles Deleuze. I sensed that the notion of embodiment from Lakoff and Johnson was in fact incompatible with that of Varela and Deleuze.

Now I have learned from Gregory Colomb that behind Lakoff and Johnson's notions of embodiment lies Gerald Edelman's neural darwinism, and these differences might therefore be justified by the distinction between Varela's and Edelman's understanding of the conditions for emergence, a distinction that is not necessari-

⁷ See Rosenberg, fig. c (Makerpoem.doc).

⁸ See Rosenberg, fig. d (elipticalfield1.jpg).

ly incompatible because they really are discussing apples and oranges. But there is more at stake here than just playing with models of embodiment and the emergent properties.

Given that Mark Turner's ideological extensions of his colleagues' arguments fit comfortably into the image schema of argument-as-warfare against the field of contemporary critical theory, and given that my current work explores the intimate relationship between complexity theories in physics and cognitive science and contemporary critical theory, particularly the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, I felt it necessary to make visible exactly where the differences lie between these two notions of embodiment. My instinct here can be stated bluntly: Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner seem to be committing a major category error. Rather than demonstrating that their systems of metaphorical schema result from an experiential, bodily basis for meaning, as expressed by the title of Johnson's book, *The Body in the Mind*, these schema, in fact, reveal an expectation for a pre-existing condition of coherence or of a systematicity which could only be the result of a global state of cognition which, by definition, represents the condition of the mind over the body.

To put it another way: Rather than understanding these image-schema and their metaphorical and moral or ideological extensions as emerging spontaneously, a process resulting from the condition of embodiment, what they seem to demonstrate is a condition that can be described, even in the case of riding a bicycle, for example, as unmoored from sensory-motor affect: *At every moment, we are always-already disembodied.* I would argue that this condition of disembodiment, and its psychological, social and political costs, constitutes the real target for Arakawa and Gins's corpus of artistic production for the last forty-odd years.

The influential claims of Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner for an epistemological and moral imagination grounded by the bodily and experiential basis for meaning deserve to be tested against the work of cognitive scientist Francisco Varela and the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In *The Embodied Mind* (co-authored with Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson), Francisco Varela reviews the debate over the two antithetical though perhaps complementary cognitive processes discussed earlier: bottom-up emergence, which is necessarily contingent and which involves the spontaneous confluence of heterogeneic lower-order processes into a global state; and top-down repression of those heterogeneic processes, often described as a superimposition of categories or schema onto complex sensory data in a way resonant with the epistemological legacy of Immanuel Kant.

So, while the global state is indeed a fiction, it constitutes a fiction necessary to ensure the survival of the aggregate, which may refer to a computer, or a human being, or even a bureaucratic system. This distinction becomes interesting from the perspectives of epistemology and social philosophy in the following way: for the first, the emphasis is placed on the total control of the trajectories of symbolic manipulation; any loss of control brings down the computational house. For the second, the emphasis is placed on the connections among elements of systems, the deliberate relinquishing of control of those elements, and the observance of the contingent emergence of new forms of order among the connected elements that might not necessarily be predicted.

The top-down exertion of control, and the contingencies of bottom-up emergence, represent epistemological and ideological stances toward cognitive functioning, and in the study of human cognition, there is no question that both processes go on simultaneously, and perhaps even at cross purposes. I would like to argue

that, of all work in social philosophy, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's collaborations have played out the ideological as well as aesthetic implications of these two styles of cognitive functioning.

This correlation between bottom-up and top-down cognitive and social processes may help to frame a discussion of why Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner's assumption of the bodily basis for meaning remains unsatisfactory, especially given the epistemological, "moral" and ideological extensions that they have placed upon that basis for meaning. Following the trajectory of my own readings, we will move backwards from Turner to Johnson back to their mentor Lakoff.

The extent to which Lakoff and Johnson's assumption of the bodily basis for meaning has become grounds for ideological warfare within the realm of literary and culture studies can be seen in Mark Turner's attack on contemporary critical theory, *Reading Minds: English Studies in the Age of Cognitive Science*. Turner suggests that contemporary theorizing has led to a dead end in English studies; he considers these discourses suspect because of their complexity and inaccessibility. Calling contemporary theory "ungrounded bootstrapping" and "fragmented," Turner argues that "contemporary theory fails to connect with the full human world to the extent that it treats objects in literature that can only be seen by means of the theory: in that case, if the theory vanishes, its objects vanish" (4).

Turner argues for humanistic studies grounded in schemes and tropes that are working metaphors in the physical world. He grounds his systematic exploration of the matrices of schemes and tropes by resurrecting classical stasis theory: "image schemas to structure our understanding of forces"—in other words, through ordered semiotic relations reducible to geometric structures. What makes Turner's polemic so astonishing is its seeming ignorance of a trend in cognitive science, represented by the work of Maturana and Varela, called the emergent or enactive paradigm.

Instead of connecting cognitive science and English studies through reference to geometric schemes and tropes organized by an implied and unified subjectivity, one could pursue such an interdisciplinary connection by postulating a human cognizing subject that has no essential unity, but the unity that the subject perceives in itself is a fiction constructed to encompass the heterogeneity of cognitive processes occurring. Yet, what Turner misses in his attack on contemporary critical theorists is that the off' cited genealogy for this emergence paradigm can be found as early as Henri Bergson's *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*, and perhaps more immediately important, with respect to the genealogy of contemporary cognitive science in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Primacy of Perception*. Dormant though it was in cognitive science, as Varela, Thompson, and Rosch report, for over twenty years after Merleau-Ponty first conceived of the possibility for human cognition without an autonomous consciousness, the emergence-enactive paradigm has led to major reevaluations of our understanding of the human mind, computer intelligence and even social systems. Merleau-Ponty's work, crucially, has also provided some of the grounding concepts in critical theory that lead to Barthes, Foucault, and others' assaults on naive formulations of the nature of authorship as an explicitly top-down phenomenon which informs much contemporary theorizing.

Thus, Turner attempts to ground his assault on the "bootstrapping" of contemporary theorists in one paradigm in cognitive science, ignoring how another, competing paradigm of cognitive science grounds the very

theories that he attempts to refute. And, it is Turner's grounds, specifically in the works of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and behind them, in the writings on embodiment of Gerald Edelman, that I wish to make visible now.

When we examine simply Lakoff and Johnson's presentation of metaphorical systems in *Metaphors We Live By*, we are struck by how completely systematic that presentation is: their discussion of the "systematicity of metaphorical concepts," their invocation of the structuralist truism involving the interdependence of the visible and the invisible (here I am echoing Merleau-Ponty, Jean Piaget, Roland Barthes and many others), of the relational grid of metonymy and metaphor, of systems and their grounds. In fact, the project of establishing a system of metaphorical schema involving simultaneously the analysis of that system and its grounds—itself implies a grounds. And, we can find reference to the nature of the grounds for such theorizing metaphorical systems in a term that appears five times in the table of contents: *coherence*. What can coherence mean, if it applies to the *grounds* underlying "the systematicity of metaphorical concepts," *and* to the *grounds* which enable Lakoff and Johnson to construct their systems to begin with? One hint at the grounds for their systematic presentation, as well as for the metaphorical systems that they are presenting, is that the concept of space, and its capacity to be organized with reference to geometric forms, predetermines how coherence is understood as a concept.

Yet Lakoff and Johnson do demonstrate self-consciousness about their account of space as a structuring principle for the representation of concepts. While they can say "spatialization metaphors are rooted in physical and cultural experiences" (*Metaphors We Live By* 18), they also say that "there is an overall external systematicity among the various spatialization metaphors which defines coherence among them" (18). Demonstrating that their notion of coherence completely depends upon a pre-existing concept of conceptual space, they admit that "spatialization is so essential a part of a concept that it is difficult for us to imagine an alternative metaphor that might structure the concept" (18). The fact that they insist that system and coherence are inseparable concepts, forces them to hedge their bets a bit by saying that, although they believe that they are practicing a science of metaphorical systems rooted in human experience; "the concepts in a scientific theory are often—perhaps always—based on metaphors that have a physical and/or cultural basis" (19).

Finally, because of this very necessary hedge, Lakoff and Johnson really back off quite a bit on their claims for what they mean by experience: "We do not know very much about the experiential bases of metaphors. Because of our ignorance in this matter, we have described the metaphors separately, only later adding speculative notes on their possible experiential bases. We are adopting the practice out of ignorance, not out of principle" (19). Now it is important that we remember this extremely tentative attempt to straddle positions here, although the move is also strategically important so that this claim for the experiential basis for meaning does not collapse into "begging the question," thus preserving the primary rhetorical intent of *Metaphors We Live By*, which is to argue for their *system*, leaving the grounds for that system still up in the air. However, it is the grounds that we are most interested in, and we can approach those grounds from another direction by examining their claims for an "experientialism" that explodes the distinction between objectivism and subjectivism as fundamental epistemological stances.

Despite being unable to really demonstrate the connection between the metaphorical systems and their posited experiential grounds, in five concluding chapters, Lakoff and Johnson's attempt to argue that their posited "experientialism" makes visible the mythic dimension to the objectivist and subjectivist grounds for meaning systems. On the one hand, an embrace of the experiential grounds for metaphoricity and its extension into conceptual formations makes claims for an objectivist reality untenable, while at the same time insisting that the bio-orientational and social nature of these very metaphorical and conceptual systems require a rejection of the naive subjectivist postulation represented by romantic psychology and its progeny. On the other hand, the very account of this system of metaphoricity must necessarily be grounded in the top-down domination of experiential grounds by mental processes generally speaking, represented specifically by cognitive schema within the individual, and by the forms of geometry capable of spatializing even duration in establishing subject positions in science and in society. It is this top-down domination that enables "objectivity" to exist in the first place. In other words, to cut the grounds from under objectivity would be to undercut their own. What I would like to do, then is to demonstrate how this relationship between coherence and spatiality, and its origins in what Varela calls the Global State, and what Deleuze and Guattari call the Body Without Organs, requires a preexisting condition of cognitive wholeness before ANY metaphorical or conceptual or even moral system can be constructed to begin with.

The "place" where Lakoff and Johnson back off on their claims for the experiential basis for meaning systems by hedging their bets, is the starting point for Johnson's master work, *The Body in the Mind*. Mark Johnson tackles the question of the role of the body in the experientialist paradigm directly. He defines the body as "a generic term for the embodied origins of imaginative structures of understanding, such as image schemata and their metaphorical elaborations." He rejects objectivism in the final analysis by resurrecting a different representation of subjectivity from those ensconced in romantic psychology: "I focus on the indispensability of human understanding for meaning and rationality" (xv). He insists on dethroning objectivism so completely that he calls for a definition of "Understanding" as inhabited by "just those kinds of imaginative structures that emerge from our experience as bodily organisms functioning in interaction with an environment," structures dependent upon "pre-conceptual and non-propositional" forms capable of becoming "metaphorically projected and propositionally elaborated to constitute our network of meanings" (xvi). "Experience" thus must be understood as involving a range of imputs, and here Johnson comes close to an understanding of embodiment that Francisco Varela might embrace: "including basic perceptual, motor-program, emotional, historical, social and linguistic dimensions" (xvi). And he attempts to both assert this more "grounded" notion of experience, and explain its mechanisms (a very tall order!):

My purpose is not only to argue that the body is 'in' the mind (i.e.) that these imaginative structures of understanding are crucial to meaning and reason but also to explore how the body is in the mind—how it is possible, and necessary, after all, for abstract meanings, and for reason and imagination, to have a bodily basis. (xvi)

But the question we need to ask is as follows: do these systems of meaning really have a bodily basis, or are we already dealing with a level of cognition that is globally managing the body, and, in fact, with a form of cognition capable of constructing these metaphorical and conceptual systems out of image schema with the
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preconscious intent to *manage* the body by encompassing it in a wholeness capable of registering its entirety for the purposes of operational control?

Johnson's first move is to posit "image schemata," defined as "gestalt structures, consisting of parts standing in relations and organized into unified wholes, by which our experience manifests discernible order" (xix). These image schemata come into existence when "human bodily movement, manipulation of objects, and perceptual interactions involve recurring patterns without which our experience would be chaotic and incomprehensible" (xix). Johnson argues that it is by the mediation of these image schemata that we begin to comprehend our experience. We might refer to these schemata as "habit" in ways resonant with both Bergson and Bourdieu. But before we try to actually confront the priority of precisely the chaotic and the incomprehensible from the emergent properties perspective of Varela and Deleuze and Guattari, we need to examine a little more closely the claims that Johnson is making for these schemata.

First of all, by insisting that these gestalt structures consist of part-whole relations, Johnson seems to imply an essential basis for geometric forms based on the priority of the synecdoche, yet he seems to insist that these gestalt structures are actually the originating forms by which metaphoricity becomes possible. Since Johnson allows that "I will not be using 'metaphor' in the traditional sense as merely a figure of speech; rather I shall identify it as a pervasive, indispensable structure of human understanding $[...]^{"}(xx)$, we can suggest that the term metaphor here can be replaced with the more generic term trope, a wholeness capable of subsuming the part we called earlier, synecdoche. This brings us to a chicken and egg situation from which we might release ourselves through a more directed examination of his concept of experience as a condition of embodiment. He argues that, "[v]irtually everyone agrees that human experience and meaning depend in some way upon the body, for it is our contact with the entire spatio-temporal world that surrounds us" (xxi). Now Johnson is arguing for an externality in which we are embedded. Yet, he defines that externality by reference to a construct of the world as represented by a relational grid of time and space, so that time becomes simply another category of spatial form, a form which does not surround us at all, but which, as Poincaré and Bergson argued before the turn of the twentieth century, is superimposed by us upon the world for the purposes of operational control, a superimposition which grounds the very objectivism Johnson is trying so hard to dethrone. In other words, Johnson's "constructive theory of imagination and understanding that emphasizes our embodiment" seems instead to demonstrate that the functioning of the imagination as he is defining it is actually engaged in ensuring our disembodied response to external and internal stimuli from a posited transcendental ground, a being that, like a manager out of the Dilbert comic strip, controls the becomings of lower-order cognitive processes for its own metaphorical purposes. Let's test this challenge to Johnson's bodily basis for meaning by reference to one of his more powerful representations of embodied knowledge, the borrowing of Michael Polanyi's extended metaphor "bicycle rider" from his master work Personal Knowledge, to illustrate the image schemata and metaphorical extensions of "balance." We do so in order to finally argue for replacing the Body in the Mind as the source of Johnson's image-schema and their metaphorical, ideological, and moral exten-

sions, with Deleuze and Guattari's Body Without Organs, and its capacity for both striated/geometric and smooth/contingent cognitive processes.⁹

Personal knowledge, balance, and the body without organs

In *The Body In the Mind*, Mark Johnson refers to Polanyi's discussion of the bicycle rider from *Personal Knowledge*, and this reference is paradigmatic of his claims for the bodily basis for cognition. He writes: "The experience of balance is so pervasive and so absolutely basic for our coherent experience of our world, and for our survival in it, that we are seldom ever aware of its presence" (74). He goes on to say: "without it our physical reality would be utterly chaotic" (74). He emphasizes that balance is something that "*we learn with our bodies* and not by grasping a set of rules" (74). It cannot be taught, according to Johnson, because "it is something we do" (74), it is "a preconceptual bodily activity that cannot be described propositionally" (74). Here he invokes the author of *Personal Knowledge*: "As Michael Polanyi has argued, you cannot tell another what steps to take to achieve the balanced riding of a bicycle" (74). Now the footnote cites the book but not the page, and it took me some time to guess where the passage might be. It will be worth looking briefly at what Polanyi actually says, and to situate what Mark Johnson makes of Polanyi's point against our common sense understanding of what is involved in learning how to ride a bicycle, even on an easily navigable surface.

What Polanyi refers to is the concept of *unspecifiability*, a condition of cognitive and motor functioning so habitual that it becomes subsumed into our preconscious awareness "beyond recall" (*Personal Knowledge* 62). This kind of functioning involves a kind of "trial and error by which we *feel our way* to success and may continue to improve on our success without knowing how we do it" (62). He goes on to describe the mastery of swimming strokes, and then invokes "the principle of cycling without realizing that it consists in the adjustment of your momentary direction and velocity, so as to counteract continuously your momentary accidental unbalance" (62). Polanyi thus is trying to describe the instrumental processes by which one discovers the "wide range of not consciously known rules of skill and connoisseurship which comprise important technical processes that cannot be completely specified" (62). However, we are a LONG way from saying that, because something is instrumentally mastered without conscious intellectual effort, it must be knowledge and action that arises from the body itself without a mental controlling function.

Polanyi himself gives us the clue for problematizing his own assertions here when he describes an activity of adjusting "your momentary accidental unbalance" without specifying the agency which is engaged in the act of adjustment by the processing of one's direction and velocity with respect to the topology of the landscape and the force of gravity. The language of calculus which Polanyi invokes involving trajectory and velocity be-

⁹ See Rosenberg, fig. e (Mech2_2.jpg).

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comes telling here, as is the reference to an unnamed agent involved in computing these forces and processes against a spatio-temporal field.

That agency is of course the Dilbert manager that we have referred to, the top-down manager of a myriad of cognitive inputs, top-down precisely because this executive function has removed itself from the bodily processes and local cognitive inputs (from muscles and organs such as the inner ear) in order to exert control. Now here comes our bit of "common sense" reflection: Of course we cannot tell someone how to ride a bicycle. But think of how it was that you actually *learned* to ride.

I remember teaching my daughter Annie how to ride 14 years ago in a parking lot next door in Ann Arbor. I placed her on the bicycle, with her feet on the pedals (with no gears the pedals would move simply by the wheels placed in motion), her hands on the handlebars. Then I walked, slowly pushing the bicycle by holding on to the handlebar closest to me, and onto the seat upon which Annie sat, terrified, and then talking her through the sensations she would be experiencing so that she would not panic from the sensory overload. Then I went into a trot, maintaining Annie's balance on the bicycle through innumerable computations that were below my preconscious awareness concerning her trajectory, speed, and the effect of gravity on the perpendicular positioning of the bicycle frame with respect to the tar surface. In effect, I was the Dilbert manager for her at that point. But at the moment of release, the Dilbert in me attempted a pass of the reins of control over to the Dilbert manager in her, and she wobbled her way, vertical, on a trajectory with a certain velocity, over a relatively safe terrain, with her eyes firmly on a target at a closely situated horizon, until the Dilbert in her fell down on the job and brought her down to the sidewalk with him (gender distinction deliberate).

Annie did not learn to ride that time, nor the time after that, nor the time after that; but every time I served as surrogate Dilbert manager, I gave the Dilbert within her a chance to learn how to manage more and more sensations while involving itself in more and more computations from the relative condition of safety. Despite all of my good intentions, what I was teaching Annie was how to disembody herself for the purposes of top-down, operational control over her own body, which in turn enabled control over her bicycle as it traversed its terrain under the influence of gravity and velocity. Now we can talk about the epistemological and moral costs for that kind of top-down removal from embodied existence to a realm of virtuality, but for now, let us simply end by saying that as far as Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner's constructions are concerned, there ain't no body in that mind: if we have a body at all in such a moment, it is what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call the constricting striations of the Body Without Organs, a preexisting condition of wholeness capable of generating a state of coherence which can subsume and control a multiplicity of necessarily chaotic cognitive processes below the threshold of its conscious awareness. What we have is what some cognitive scientists call the "executive function," and what Francisco Varela among others calls the top-down processes of cognition which have been shown, by analogy to problems in computational science, an inadequate account of cognitive behavior, with potentially catastrophic ethical implications.

Conclusion

I am not a cognitive scientist. Nor have I played one on TV. I am trained as a literary critic interested in twentieth-century intellectual history. But the question of disembodiment, defined as the technologically driven unmooring of human cognition, has remained the focus of my scholarship since before I entered graduate school. I pursue my scholarship by exploring the parallel processing of this question in different discourses, beginning with the mathematician Henri Poincaré, the philosopher Henri Bergson, and the artist Henri Robert Marcel Duchamp at the turn of the century. I first became aware of the corpus of Arakawa and Gins when I met Madeline Gins at the Duchamp/Poincaré Conference at Harvard University in 1999. Recognizing instantly the value of their work to those of us interested in the interactions among science, philosophy, and the arts, I arranged for Arakawa and Gins to give a keynote presentation at the 2000 Conference of the Society for Literature and Science in Atlanta. In the process of getting to know the history as well as the methodologies governing their artistic and architectural corpus, I discovered that they are way ahead of us literary critics in understanding just how complex the problem of embodiment (as explicated through the term landing sites) is to grasp. In reading their equally sophisticated accounts for transforming the internal cognizing processes of organism-persons in the various texts on Architectural Procedures, including recent ones excerpted in this issue, perhaps I'm not ready to admit quite yet how ridiculously simple it might be to solve. But, as I told them some time ago, "I'm in it for the long haul" to see what happens with their development of the "architectural body" and the "procedures" for cognitive liberation. And, I certainly hope that this "long haul" is as long as they claim it could be, no matter how decrepit I become.

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THE POET AS THE WORLD: THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL POETICS OF ARAKAWA AND MADELINE GINS

Forgetting mind, its complications, My hand is free; The All appears. I use devices, simultaneously. Look—a halo penetrates the Void.

(Zen Masters qtd. in Madeline Gins, Helen Keller or Arakawa 160)

Arakawa's "blank" and the poetics of the negative mystic

In June 1997, the first major US exhibition of the collaborative art of Arakawa and Madeline Gins, entitled *Reversibly Destiny*, opened at the Guggenheim Museum in SoHo. It featured two ongoing projects, *The Mechanism of Meaning*—a cycle of paintings, diagrams and words-in-painting begun in 1963—and a separate section devoted to their more recent experimental architectural sites. These works-in-progress represent the two main "phases" of Arakawa and Gins's career up to the present day. Whereas the visual puzzles and language games of *The Mechanism of Meaning* concentrate on themes of representation, perception, and cognition (and can therefore be seen as a continuation of Arakawa's conceptual drawings and collages from the early 1960s), the *Reversible Destiny* sites address the question of how art can enact what Samira Kawash recently described as an attempt to "multipl[y] and complexif[y] the ways in which the body engages with architectural surround" (17).

These projects hold in common both a rejection of the notion that art should be the vehicle of selfexpression and an emphasis on works that stimulate the viewer's participation in the creation of meaning through interactive experiments. Building upon the Kantian insight that reality largely amounts to our awareness of it, the mixed media panels of *The Mechanism of Meaning* create an art that combines linguistic and visual stimuli as well as various forms of concrete and near-concrete poetry in order to explore a modern awareness that personal experiences and concepts of reality are biased due to the relative position of the observer and to the mental processing of sensations. Central to this project is what Arakawa and Gins call "blank." I will first concentrate on the ways in which this terms plays out in Arakawa's early solo work. On the surface, the notion of "blank" is reflected in Arakawa's use of isolated words and fragmented narratives interrupted by gaps, silences, and empty spaces, which testifies to a Beckettian desire to build an art of emptiness and "lessness." But the more specific relevance of "blank" to contemporary aesthetics and poetics is best examined in the context of an early "minimalist" painting of Arakawa entitled *Landscape* (1968) (*Reversible* 34).¹

Landscape comprises a number of dots labeled by means of arrows and familiar objects as well as two empty boxes, signaling the presence of empty signifiers that nonetheless seem to designate an unnamed object. Those two boxes point to the existence of a pre-verbal state that precedes the creation of meaningful, fixed relationships between words and objects, self and world.² In the context of Arakawa's *Landscape*, "blank" would thus not seem to denote emptiness *per se*, but rather "an event preceding language": a pre-linguistic, pre-signifying state which potentially coordinates our experience (*Reversible* 134). According to critic Dagmar Buchwald, blank "denotes by approximation that which precedes and underlies all thought, action and perception and cannot be directly thought, acted, or perceived" (*Reversible* 26). Gins and Arakawa together have described "blank" as a "neutral positing—in the sense of holding it open; it is what is there but undifferentiated, so it is not nothing [...]. It is what fills emptiness" (36). In Arakawa's 1982 painting, "Blank Dots," such a preforming space is described primarily as an image-forming process, a "FORMING BLANK... OUT OF WHICH UNRECOGNIZABLE PLACES JUMP, SHAPING VOLUMES INTO IMAGES" (27).

There are a number of connecting lines between Rosmarie Waldrop's definition of the "negative mystic" and Arakawa and Gins's notion of the blank as an inchoate state of (pre-) consciousness that is neither meaningless nor meaningful, neither nothing nor something. Waldrop uses the term "negative mystic" to refer to modern and contemporary poets "whose terminology and whose efforts towards a transcendence put them in a mystical tradition," a tradition in which "the meaningful joins the meaningless, and the scientist the mystic." Meister Eckhart's famous insight, "Gott ist Nichts," provides the conceptual ground of such negative aesthetics, which is based on the recognition that "the absolute is also the void" (Waldrop, *Against Language*? 17). Yet most of the poets she has in mind "are not mystics in the normal sense of the word; they are at best 'negative,' or perhaps abstract mystics, since the transcendence they try to explore is not God, but the void [itself]" (17).

Among modern poets, Waldrop reminds us, Stéphane Mallarmé claimed to have created his work "only by elimination... all acquired truth being born only from the loss of an impression," and was one of the first artists to conceive of the poem as an approximation to the void of silence (the "poème tu, aux blancs") and an expression of the "Nothing which is the truth" (18):

Language, even when it denies all earthly objects, still stands in front of the nothing. Even the word "nothing" is still a word, and therefore still something. But since the silent poem is not possible, Mallarmé has to make do with approximations: such as to negate every object as soon as it is named and, more important, to dislocate French syntax. This has two functions: it obscures meaning which, too, hides the void

¹ See Delville, fig. a (landscape_1968.jpg).

² "Dots can stand for things." (*Keller* 128).

which is the truth. And it gives an impression of disjunction and fragmentation which Mallarmé welcomes. For fragments approach the Nothing and are therefore "preuves nuptiales de l'Idée." (18)³

Mallarmé's conception of the blank space of the page as what Waldrop calls "a kind of abstract void, a void of pure spirit," and his exploration of silence as "an empty transcendence" enable him to create paradoxical objects, which are denied as soon as they are named (one is reminded here of his "absent tombeau," "aboli bibelot," and "vols qui n'ont pas fui") (21). Similarly, Arakawa's *Landscape* prompts a heightened, reenergized attentiveness and inventiveness on the part of the reader/viewer, who must make sense of a paradoxical diagram that signifies both the physical absence and the nominal presence of the "object" described.

Helen Keller and the architectural body

The Poet as the World.

(Madeline Gins, What the President Will Say and Do! IX)

The implications of the "blank" for Gins's own poetic project can be further explored in the context of her reading of the life of the deaf and blind Helen Keller whose autobiography, *The Story of My Life* (1902), has been extremely important to the development of Gins's phenomenological aesthetics. Helen Keller (1880-1968), who lost her sight and hearing at the age of nineteen months, recovered an ability to perceive her environment through the sense of touch. Thanks to the manual alphabet that her tutor, Anne Mansfield Sullivan—herself partially blind—began to teach Helen just before her seventh birthday, she was able to attend Radcliffe College, manually communicating through the hands of Mrs. Sullivan, who remained at her side during lectures.

In *Helen Keller or Arakawa* (1994), Gins attempts to describe the process of Keller's modes of perception through the intermingling trajectories of her own poetry, Arakawa's art and Keller's journal entries. In the absence of direct visual and auditory stimuli, the development of Keller's consciousness and identity is carried out with the help of her three remaining senses, but also, and above all, through language. Helen Keller herself described the awakening of the "strange, new sight that had come to her" as a result of her learning language. "Everything had a name," she writes, "and each name gave birth to a new thought [...], every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life" (qtd. in *Reversible* 21). In Gins's theory, this leads to an interpretation of Helen Keller as a "living canvas" whose inability to see or hear pushes her to construct "the world anew each day" (177). More generally, Helen Keller's life provides Arakawa and Gins with an extreme case of coordination between person, body, and world that is directed towards the re-creation of that world.

³ All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Architectural body: reversible destiny sites and the poetic subject

Arakawa and Gins's interest in Helen Keller's life as a continuing experiment in living and being in the world was one of the major sources of inspiration for the architectural projects they developed in the early 1990s. What remains essentially a thought experiment in *The Mechanism of Meaning* becomes an entire philosophy of life in the *Reversible Destiny* projects. In this trajectory, Arakawa and Gins's multidiscursive approach gives way to a truly multidimensional "thinking/feeling field." *The Site of Reversible Destiny*, completed in Yoro, Japan, in 1995, comprises artificial terrains, labyrinths, gardens, walls, paths, as well as a series of strangely-shaped, gravity-defying buildings that seem to challenge the predictable flat areas and vertical walls of our everyday reality. The result is a kind of multilevel, three-dimensional Cubist labyrinth that attempts to disorient walkers in their most basic conceptions of perception and space. Such sites sometimes require visitors to execute conflicting instructions (such as following, at the same time, two or three arrows that move in opposite directions), and urge them to keep their bodies "in a state of imbalance for as long as possible," making simple actions like standing or walking unbalanced by the unpredictability of the artificial landscape (*Reversible* 209).

One of the most important considerations in dealing with architecture on this level is establishing the boundaries of self and world: "to what degree the world that envelops a person's body belongs to that body and is in some way integral to its functioning has not yet been determined [...]. Where does person leave off and world begin, or, indeed, does this happen?" ("Person as Site" 58). In order to investigate those issues, Arakawa and Gins often require the viewer to touch, operate, and, in the case of the Reversible Destiny site, even inhabit the work of art. Like Diderot and D'Alembert before them (see their entries on "The Blind" and "The Apparent Distance of Objects" in the *Encyclopaedia*), Gins and Arakawa believe in the necessary interaction of the senses of sight and touch in the apprehension of external objects, especially the perception of distance, depth or relief. By literally drawing us into the work of art, the sites of reversible destiny place particular emphasis on the trajectories of self and body in the hope of revealing alternative ways of understanding and acting in the world.

The central premise of Arakawa and Gins's reversible destiny sites is that architecture assumes an unavoidable responsibility in the structuring of the self. Acting as an outer skin dictating our behavior, beliefs and perceptions, architecture influences our physical and mental abilities to interact with reality at large. Instead of "consuming" architecture, Arakawa and Gins argue, we should be "involved [...] in a process of selfinvention" (*Reversible* 2).⁴ As I have suggested, such an attitude presupposes a willingness to relinquish normative modes of apprehending space and time. In Arakawa and Gins's theoretical writings about reversible destiny sites, the question arises of how our potential for perceiving the world can be augmented or maximalized.

⁴ There is also a moral and political concern underlying Gins and Arakawa's reversible destiny sites that is linked with the artists' conviction that "those who cease being passive in relation to architecture are less likely to be cruel and murderous" (*Reversible* 246).

By multiplying the perceptive vectors by which we organize our experience, reversible destiny sites seek to account for the fact that "the fabric of the world equals all a person presently perceives plus all she believes she perceives or believes herself to have ever perceived plus all she might perceive" (*Reversible* 146).

In the description of one of their experimental houses—of which more will be said later—Arakawa and Gins write that the building "accommodates the body's endless desire to draw close to and be in rapport with virtually everything" (qtd. in Piombino, n. pag.). Reversible destiny sites urge us to reach beyond the bounds of ordinary perception—which involves the selection of details, the primacy of the visual, the separation of body and mind, the privileging of a particular point of view, and the imposition of a linear continuity on the real—in order to embrace a multiplicity of "landing sites," or the places where the body interacts with the object perceived.

Clearly, Arakawa and Gins's blank—the prime moving principle behind all the sites of reversible destiny—does not result so much from "a process of elimination" (Mallarmé's favorite method) as from what Charles Bernstein describes as "a confounding by multiplication" (*Content's Dream* 192). Such a process enacts a radical transformation of the self through a new coordination of the senses. Ideally, Arakawa and Gins's reversible destiny sites should enable the visitors to the sites to "[become] increasingly able to field an ever greater number of possibilities" in a way that would eventually teach us "how to live as a maximally invigorated sensorium" (*Reversible* 11, 241). In this respect, Arakawa and Gins's ideal reader/viewer resembles the protagonist of Borges's short story, "Funes, the Memorious" (1942), who in falling from a horse acquired a capacity for total recall.

Ireneo Funes perceives and remembers everything, not just the particulars of the world around him, but literally everything he has thought of, experienced, or imagined:

A circumference on a blackboard, a rectangular triangle, a rhomb, are forms which we can fully intuit; the same held true with Ireneo for the tempestuous mane of a stallion, a herd of cattle in a pass, the everchanging flame of the innumerable ash, the many faces of a dead man during the course of a protracted wake. He could perceive I do not know how many stars in the sky. (Ficciones 112)

However, the state of total awareness that characterizes Funes's consciousness paradoxically entails a number of psychological and intellectual limitations. Indeed, he is "almost incapable of general, platonic ideas." It is not only difficult for him "to understand that the generic term dog embrace[s] so many unlike specimens of differing sizes and different forms," he is even "disturbed by the fact that a dog at three-fourteen (seen in profile) should have the same name as the dog at three-fifteen (seen from the front)." Finally, he finds it very difficult to fall asleep because "to sleep is to be abstracted from the world"! Towards the end of the story, Borges's narrator issues a warning: "the truth is that we all live by leaving behind," which is to say that a certain degree of selection, generalization, and abstraction is necessary to the psychological survival of the individual. Funes, who lives in a world in which "there [are] nothing but details, almost contiguous details" (115), is a helpless individual whose refusal of categorization and naive commitment to an anti-Platonic form of realism leaves him intensely vulnerable and incapable of coping with the endless detail and variety of the physical world.

Gins and Arakawa would probably reject such common-sensical objections, and reply that reversible destiny sites are first and foremost about the suggestion, recognition, definition, and reconfiguration of more possibilities within a constructed space. Indeed, the multiplication of perceptual landing sites is above all a means to an end, a necessary step towards an understanding of "how it is possible to be a body, or a sensorium, and what goes into forming a person" (*Reversible* 241). As we will see, reversible destiny does not amount to a rejection of abstraction but, rather, strives towards the attainment of a "stretchable" abstraction (*Keller* 261), liable to effect the physical and spiritual transformation of the individual and thereby "engage questions of existence more intensely" (*Reversible* 241). Lastly, reversible destiny also has to do with what is probably one of the most extraordinary proposals ever put forward in the history of Western aesthetics, one which is meant to conduct nothing less than a "frontal attack on mortality itself" (*Reversible* 313).

Reversible destiny

WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO DIE.

(Arakawa and Madeline Gins)

In order to fully appreciate the nature of Arakawa and Gins's project "to construct sensoria that will elude mortality" (Keller 238), it is helpful first to consider the following examples of experimental houses. Designed by Arakawa and Gins to expand the limits of the human mind and body, these houses attempt to reverse the parameters ruling our experience of time and space. In "Rotation House," one of the experimental houses devised in the context of the Reversible Destiny project, the five different rotations of the rooms make the rooms appear to be different in size and in form even though their size and form are identical. The rooms, Gins and Arakawa conclude, "act as spatial anagrams" of each other. As the residents move from one room into another, the performance and repetition of actions within the "living space" inevitably become estranged from themselves. The residents are "struck by how the same features appear different or remain to some degree the same from one rotated version of the room to another" (Reversible 283). Another example of such anagrammatic reversibility is the doubling of rooms in the "Twin House" (304), a construction in which, next to every room, is "a twin [room] with identical layout but oppositely pitched terrain" (270). Because the two halves of the building consist of identical walls and enclosures, juxtaposed at different angles of perspective, the residents know "that an action performed in one part of the house might equally well have been performed in another." By dislocating the notion of the uniqueness of our actions and individuality, the twin house "makes the course of events seem less inevitable and surely less weighty." Eventually, the doubling of walls and rooms effected by the "Twin House" results in the doubling of the self, altering our sense of being in a way that enables us to transfer our lives and actions into those of phantom *doppelgängers* occupying the other half of the house.

One necessary condition for this "doubling" of the self is a readiness to "neutralize" one's subjectivity.⁵ "No longer needing to have a personality," Arakawa and Gins write, the residents of their experimental houses "adopt a wait-and-see policy toward themselves" (Reversible 55). But the dissolution (or suspension) of personality required by reversible destiny houses does not imply the death of the subject, nor does it have to lead to a dissociation from outer reality. On the contrary, it calls for a heightened attention towards one's surroundings while it simultaneously reaffirms the importance of the notion of proprioception. Proprioception, or the body's knowledge of its own depth, texture and placement, is an awareness that in Charles Olson's writings determines how to use oneself and on what. In the symmetrical environment of the 70-foot long cylindrical "Architectural Body" entitled Ubiquitous Site (1992-94),⁶ which now makes up an essential part of the Nagi Museum of Contemporary Art in Japan, the central notion is once again the possibility for the proprioperceptive self to "supplant identity" (189). The visitor to Ubiquitous Site, having lost balance and traditional bearing, is invited upon entering the symmetrically organized cylindrical building to "cast the little that remains of its identity as a person, outside itself." Since for Arakawa and Gins the body of a visitor cannot be separated from the space it occupies, that body coordinates itself with an "architectural body" that seems to exist both within and outside the bounds of subjectivity. Such a notion aims to blur the boundaries of traditional divisions between past, present, and future, as well as between self and community, and ultimately between life and death: "Beginning,' 'past,' 'future,' 'I,' 'me,' and 'you,'" the artists write, "are all words that have no place in this process. They are superfluous" (189). The avowed desire of the artists is to "escape the mortal condition" (*LINEbreak*). At this stage, it has become obvious that Arakawa and Gins's projects have more affinities with philosophy and cognitive psychology than with any modern tradition of art and architecture. As Samira Kawash remarks, both The Mechanism of Meaning and Reversible Destiny Architecture are conceived as "experimental apparatuses or interactive technologies rather than as formal or aesthetic expressions" (20). "Medium and form," she concludes, "are secondary to a process of inquiry that is engaged in and carried out through the reader/viewer/participant/inhabitant's interactions with the painting, page, or spatial surround" (20-21).

Arakawa and Gins's attempts to abolish the basic categories that guide the subject's awareness of itself can be usefully compared with Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, in which he lays the ground for a redefinition of contemporary social theory based on an analysis of symbolic exchange and its effects on the rituals of death. In his chapter on "Political Economy and Death," Baudrillard argues that the way we relate to death largely depends on a "disjunctive code" that prevents us from thinking otherwise than by subscribing to such dichotomies as "mind and body, man and nature, the real and the non-real, birth and death" (205). Accor-

⁵ In *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, Madeline Gins quotes a "practical mystic" (257), the Zen master Dogen (1200-1253), for whom the rational mind of scholars "fail[s] to understand the flowers of emptiness, because of their ignorance of emptiness" (269). For the Zen Buddhist, the awareness of emptiness is facilitated by a capacity to cancel one's subjectivity in order to open oneself to new ways of contemplating our environment. Such a conception links up with what *The Mechanism of Meaning* describes as the "neutralization of subjectivity" a process by which the subject divests itself from the most central beliefs conditioning our subjective modes of interpretation (*Reversible 55*).

⁶ See Delville, fig. b (Ubiquitous.jpg).

ding to Baudrillard, such a disjunction does not exist in certain "primitive" societies where death is conceived as part of the community's symbolic circulation. In contemporary Western societies, however, the dead are no longer "beings with a full role to play, worthy partners in exchange." "Death," Baudrillard concludes, has become "a delinquency, and an incurable deviancy" (126):

There is an irreversible evolution from savage societies to our own: little by little, the dead cease to exist. They are thrown out of the group's symbolic circulation. [...] In the domestic intimacy of the cemetery, the first grouping remains in the heart of the village or town, becoming the first ghetto, prefiguring every future ghetto, but are thrown further and further from the center towards the periphery, finally having nowhere to go at all, as in the new town or the contemporary metropolis, where there are no longer any provisions for the dead, either in mental or in physical space. (126)

Baudrillard then examines Robert Jaulin's anthropological study of ancestral initiation rites and Marcel Mauss's writings on the potlach (a Native American ceremonial festival involving the exchanging or destruction of gifts and counter-gifts), and concludes that those rites establish "a reciprocal relationship between the ancestors and the living" (131). In the "primitive" order described in Jaulin's *La Mort Sara*, for example, the group has to "swallow" the young initiation candidates, who "die 'symbolically' in order to be reborn" (131):

It is clear that the initiation consists in an exchange being established where there had been only a brute fact: they pass from natural, aleatory and irreversible death to a death that is given and received, and that is therefore reversible in the social exchange. [...] At the same time the opposition between birth and death disappears: they can also be exchanged under the form of symbolic reversibility. (132)

It is not, Baudrillard writes, a matter of "staging a second birth to eclipse death." What is at stake instead in these initiation rites is the possibility for "the splitting of life and death" to be "conjured away" by the power of the "revolutionary" symbolic, defined as "neither a concept, an agency, nor a 'structure,' but an act of exchange and a social relation which puts an end to the real, which resolves the real, and, at the same time, puts an end to the opposition between the real and the imaginary" (132-33). This suggests "a possible reversibility of death in exchange," a possibility confirmed by the exchange of gifts and countergifts in Mauss's analysis of potlach (147). Baudrillard's reading of Sara initiation rites also interprets initiation as "the social nexus, the darkroom where birth and death stop being the terms of life and twist into one another again; not towards some mythical fusion, but [...] to turn the initiate into a real social being" (132). In Helen Keller or Arakawa, Madeline Gins also criticizes the Western world's privileging of individualism over communality in a society encouraging what Baudrillard defines as the "extradition of the dead and the rupturing of a symbolic exchange with them" (127). She insists on the centrality of the "communal nature of self-consciousness" which is lacking in the non-East, "except among American Indians" (Keller 176). For Gins, as for Baudrillard, one way of counteracting the effects of the ghettoization of the dead is to search for a communal basis for conscious life established through a new social and architectural space. Gins and Arakawa's project for a "City without Graveyards" is one such space.

Poetic reversibility

In the closing chapter of *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard designates the poetic as the supreme example of the principle of symbolic reversibility. Baudrillard's definition of the poetic is inspired by Saussure's "law of the coupling," according to which the principle of symmetry and repetition at work in Saturnian poetry results in the mutual annihilation of phonemes (195). These phonemes are consumed by the "cycle of redoubling" which allows each vowel to be abolished by its "anagrammatic double" (236).⁷ Baudrillard begins with the assertion that there is some analogy between the exchange of gifts and counter-gifts in ancestral cultures, and between the principle of the vowel and counter-vowel in Saussure's study of Saturnian poetics, or as he puts it, "between any given signifier and the anagrammatic double that cancels it" (236). From this connection, Baudrillard develops a theory for which the poetic is a paroxistic form of symbolic exchange in which, to quote Julia Kristeva, "logical laws of speech have been weakened, the subject dissolves and, in place of the sign, the clash of signifiers eliminating each other is instituted" (qtd. in Baudrillard 340).

For Baudrillard, this principle of poetic reversibility is applicable not only to Saussure's Saturnian verses but to modern poetry as a whole. Like Kristeva before him, he posits "the ambivalence of the poetic signified (and not its mere ambiguity)" as follows:

[I]t is concrete and general at the same time, it includes both (logical) affirmation and negation, it announces the simultaneity of the possible and the impossible; far from postulating the "concrete versus the general," it explodes this conceptual break: bivalent logic (0/1) is abolished by ambivalent logic [...]. The negativity of the poetic is a radical negativity bearing on the logic of judgment itself. Something "is" and is not what it is: a utopia (in the literal sense) of the signified. The thing's self-equivalence is volatilized. Thus the poetic signified is the space where "Non-Being intertwines with Being in a thoroughly disconcerting manner." (219)

But the antithetical sense Baudrillard and Kristeva regard as one of the central properties of poetry is by no means exclusively associated with poetic language. Rather, poetry only foregrounds and systematizes an element of reversible ambivalence which is inherent in language itself. According to nineteenth-century philologist Karl Abel, early Indo-European and Semitic languages have many words that simultaneously mean one

Saussure's "law of the coupling" posits that "a vowel has no right to figure within the Saturnine unless it has its countervowel in some other place in the verse... The result of this is that if the verse has an even number of syllables, the vowels couple up exactly, and must always have a remainder of zero, with an even total for each type of vowel." "The law of consonants," Saussure writes, "is identical, and no less strict: there is always an even number of any consonants whatever." Finally, the "Law of the Theme Word" states that "entire verses [are] anagrams of other preceding verses, however far off, in the text" so that "polyphonies visually reproduce, when the occasion arises, the syllables of an important word or name, whether they figure in the text or present themselves naturally to the mind through the context" (Saussure and Starobinski qtd. in Baudrillard 195-96).

thing and its opposite.⁸ The Ancient Egyptian word for strong (*ken*), for example, was also the word for weak, and it was only by means of an additional sign or a gesture that one could distinguish the two sides of the antithesis. Abel's theories were later rediscovered by Freud, who, in his review of Abel's essay, "The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words," argues that "man has not been able to acquire even his oldest and simplest conceptions otherwise than in contrast with their opposites." It is only gradually, moreover, that he "learnt to separate the two sides of the antithesis and think of the one without conscious comparison with the other" (187). Freud cites further examples of antithetical meanings, including the Latin word *altus* (meaning both high and deep) and the German *Boden* (meaning both attic and ground floor), and eventually concludes with Abel's discovery that many words from the Aryan and Semitic languages originally could "reverse their sound as well as their sense" (the examples he cites include the pairs *Topf*, German for pot and hurry, and *Ruhe*, German for rest as well as care, and its archaic near-synonym *reck* (190).

This reversible principle of sonic and semantic, phonemic and morphemic, has notable affinities with the inverted and modified symmetries of Gins and Arakawa's anagrammatic houses. More specifically, the reversible bipolarities that characterize *Twin House* and *Ubiquitous Site* appear as a three-dimensional conceptual extension of Arakawa and Gins's concept of "cleaving"—itself an "antithetical" word, since it signifies both "to part or divide" and "to adhere closely"—a notion systematically explored in "Splitting of Meaning," the seventh section of *The Mechanism of Meaning*. In the panel entitled "This Is About to Split," a series of dots and pinheads point to basic "body-schemas" such as head, neck, thorax, arm, pelvis, forearm, hand, thigh, leg, and foot (*Reversible* 77).⁹ George Lakoff has furthermore defined these "body-schemas" as elemental universal structures we automatically and unconsciously use to structure a mental image of a thing or scene perceived (*Reversible* 118). Each "body-schema" word is associated with handwritten words like "sky," "sun," "mountain," or "ship," thereby building unusual pairs of signifiers whose combination opens up new possibilities of meaning.

If the semantic junction between the printed and the handwritten words often remains "unnatural" (the main exception, of course, being the combinations created by "LEG/leg" and "shoes/FOOT"), a hierarchical pattern is reestablished by the corollary likeliness of body and landscape (the sky whose superior position in the landscape is associated with the HEAD, the NECK with the sun, etc.). Lastly, the juxtaposition of printed/stenciled and handwritten words is indicative of the uneasy interaction between the gestural and the mechanical in the act of naming and reproducing the real. The final reference to "moving property" is ambiguous. Does it serve as an additional reminder that the act of naming may result in the (mis-)appropriation of "moving" objects through language? Is it supposed to warn us against the danger of the reification and commodification of the painting or of the unnamed and unseen individual (the viewer?) that is doing the "talking" and the

⁸ Here, I am indebted to Ben Watson's book, *Art, Class, and Cleavage*, which first drew my attention to Karl Abel's theories.

⁹ See Delville, fig. c (this_aboutto_split.jpg).

"walking," and who may well eventually become a "moving property"? Or are the implications of this punchline more positive in prefiguring the transformed self that emerges from the process of the "splitting of meaning"?

Other exercises in the cleaving of meaning include a panel that instructs the viewer to "SAY one" and "THINK two," and the following post-Magrittean illustration of the reversibility of visual and verbal signs/bidirectional arrows (*Reversible* 77, 93).¹⁰ One is again reminded of Mallarmé's paradoxical objects ("absent tombeau," "aboli bibelot") as well as Waldrop's more recent suggestion that poetry should strive for an "excluded middle" located between right and wrong (left and right, back and front,...), which are inscribed in the double aspect of the sign even as it attempts to deconstruct it.¹¹ The aim of such visual and verbal paradoxes is to encourage us to put the ambivalence of the (poetic) sign to direct use and extend it to address how we can combat the irreversibility of our perception of space-time and our use of language by neutralizing the deadening effects of habit and repetition.

In light of the architectural experiments described above, one can easily see that Arakawa and Gins's claim that their sites enact the "possibility of a nonmortal human life" is not to be taken in a metaphorical sense only (*Reversible* 313). The implications of this project, however, are left deliberately ambiguous by the artists themselves. Are reversible destiny sites providing "infinite quantities of spacetime necessary for living" liable to multiply their visitors' horizons and permit them to exist on different levels at once (302)?¹² Is it a continuation of the modernist faith in the possibility of nonlinear time and, by extension, of a consciousness unfettered by the need to frame experience along a linear narrative line?¹³ Are Gins and Arakawa merely positioning themselves against the deadening of the senses when they argue that "learning how not to die starts with learning how to live as a maximally invigorated sensorium" (*Reversible* 241)? Should the suggestion that we

¹⁰ See Delville, fig. d (mech7_3.jpg).

¹¹ For a summary of Waldrop's conception of poetic language and its interaction with language of Western rationality, see her appendix to *The Lawn of Excluded Middle*.

¹² Commenting on the "doubling of horizons," which results from such projects as the "Twin House" and the "Ubiquitous Site House," Arakawa declares that "by creating a second horizon, or better yet many more, we can be released from the out-of-date moral values or obsolete structures of common sense that accumulate on the ground-surface we normally exist on. We'd be truly free to develop potentially more fruitful and expansive moral values." Insisting on the necessity for his "landing sites" to transcend the methods and conditions of the philosophical, the poetic, and the aesthetic and account more completely for the transformations that occur in the apprehension and configuration of volumes, colors, weights, and spaces, he adds: "Poets and philosophers have said much about the possibility of such a world. But theirs is a world of words and ideas without shape or color or weight. Theirs is a fiction, no matter how wonderful. Painting turns out to be only such a fictional world, too" (*Reversible* 32-33). See also Gins and Arakawa's response to Jean-François Lyotard in *Reversible Destiny* and their definition of "growing young" as "becoming increasingly able to field an ever greater number of possibilities" (11).

¹³ See Jean-François Lyotard's suggestion that reversible architecture might neutralize "the distribution of time between beginning and end" (*Reversible* 11).

"[take] a stance against death" be metaphorically associated with the idea of "growing young" as a result of our "becoming increasingly able to field an ever greater number of possibilities" (299, 11)? Or are architectural surrounds supposed to express the body's changing relationship with its environment/the universe in a way that would prolong itself beyond the death of a human being?

The answers to these questions matter less than the implication that our most fundamental notions of self, as well as our understanding of how the world can be perceived and understood, ought to be revised according to the recognition that "changing the conditions of perception changes perception itself, and changes what it means to be a person perceiving" (Kawash 23). Looking at Arakawa and Gins's visual/verbal paradoxes and poetico-architectural sites, one begins to understand how the mind and body can be fruitfully disoriented into producing an alternative/poetic subject who rejects the notion that we are completely bounded by the mechanisms that traditionally construct us. Only in this way can their "post-utopian" sites act as a motivating force for developing "less dying" subjects who refuse to take their linguistic and concrete environments for granted (241). Only in this way, moreover, would they welcome an opportunity to systematically allow themselves to restructure their lives and aspirations. Some of the most interesting poets of this century, dedicated to providing lyrical comfort and aesthetic delight, have tended to reject traditional conceptions of poetry as a sentimentalized utterance. In a similar manner, Arakawa and Gins's reversible destiny rejects the notion that architecture should be designed to (merely) provide convenience, safety, and stability. They argue instead for a radical redefinition of what constitutes the self and its experience of time and space—a redefinition, in other words, that demands the theorization of the subject as body, rather than simply as a model of interiority.

In a recent essay entitled "Every Which Way but Loose," Charles Bernstein writes that "the idea that genres, if not the aesthetic itself, are a barrier to perceptual transformation connects the projects of Arakawa and Gins and Blake to a range of practitioners from Mallarmé and Williams to Duchamp and Cage, all of whose antifoundational investigations have a visual and verbal component" (184). He adds,

In retrospect, we might say that these artists do not so much abolish the aesthetic as extend and transform it, partly because the boundaries of the aesthetic—our willingness or ability to see something as a work of art—are surprisingly mobile. But if aesthetic is not a static category, then it may be possible for the "same" object to be viewed, alternately, as aesthetic and not aesthetic. [...] In the case of Reversible Destiny, the goal is neither to aestheticize the nonaesthetic nor to deaestheticize the aesthetic but rather to create a zone that is no longer subject to this oscillation. (184)

As we know, this pendulum movement between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic is a recurring concern in the history of the contemporary avant-garde. The happenings, ready-mades, and spectaculars of the revolutionary avant-garde merge art into life even as they proclaim the destruction of "art as art" in an act of joyful self-destruction. After abolishing traditional separations between high and low, and after positing the relativity and constructedness of the real, postmodern art rejects art in favor of the glamorous surfaces of commodity culture and the use of concepts as material. Instead of prolonging the movement of the pendulum that swings between such polarities as art and life, self and world, Gins and Arakawa's main concern is with developing an aesthetic that would encompass different systems, use-values, and activities that most avant-garde artists continue to separate.

At a time when Arakawa and Gins's conceptual works and thought experiments are beginning to extend into the domain of city planning (several reversible destiny sites have already been developed in Japan), reversible destiny suggests that twenty-first-century poetics will likely have to embrace much more than just prosody, genres, and even literary criticism *per se*, in order to encompass the consideration of not just form and content but also of cognitive and experimental psychology, art, linguistics, architecture, and the mechanisms of the perceiving body. Only by enlarging the notion of "poetics" to accommodate for this larger compendium of methods can we truly hope to come to terms with works that support the process of this aesthetic revolution. This field of study, still not fully formed, may soon prove to be one of the forming blanks out of which twenty-first-century aesthetics and poetics will emerge.

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THE MEANING OF BLANK IN ARAKAWA'S EARLY WORK

Shusaku Arakawa arrived in the United States in 1961. He met Madeline Gins in New York during the fall of 1962, and they soon married and formed a partnership. During the years they have worked together, Arakawa has continued producing paintings under his own name, and Gins has continued writing books and poetry under her own name. But they acknowledge that their projects have an "I/we" kind of authorship that is difficult to separate into individual components. In the following essay, references to "Arakawa" and "his" paintings should be understood against the background of this mutual involvement (Green 91-93).

Arakawa's paintings resemble pages from a sketchbook, or schematics from an engineering manual blown up in scale. Generally white, off-white, or light gray, his colorless expanses look like diagrams for paintings or outlines for the practice of painting. His grounds function as neutral clearings, and they often signify blankness, a concept that is crucial to his work. As he and Gins have explained, "blank is a neutral positing—in the sense of holding open; it is what is there but undifferentiated, so it is not nothing. [...] It is what fills emptiness" (Arakawa and Gins, *Shusaku Arakawa* 1). In these terms of remaining open, and not being empty, blank implies charged potentiality rather than completion (see Lyotard, *Que peindre?* 1: 67-83; also Haxthausen; Taylor; and Caws). From within blank, representation takes shape (in the sense that representation refers to or stands for something else). Arakawa's pictures depict the intellectual domain of painting, which is a space complicated by its modernist trajectory. The absence in his images responds to this space, to this historical place that is already written over and defined. By presenting us with information about what is missing, he reacts reflexively to the past, especially to the tradition of formal reductionism.

Arakawa narrows the divide between painting and writing. He draws together visual and verbal sign systems, providing his pictures with an onto-semiotic staffage that is, and was during the 1960s, very unusual. His canvases seemingly function as plans or blueprints for our reconstructions of his intentions. He offers us relatively clear designs, but his works are difficult to read. They address "non-sense," a quality that is present as a nothing (no thing) lying beyond "sense." His muted canvases mean what they mean through their illegibility. As Lyotard puts it, "*Blank* est ce qui permet ces intermittences, le non-sens dans lequel le sens se décide en oubliant le non-sens" (*Que Peindre?* 1: 74). Arakawa's blanks, which can be thought of as spaces for inquiry, are exemplified in the panels of *The Forming of Untitled*, 1962.¹ The empty parts of this diptych are marked by two sets of corner brackets or guides. These are painted using different colors. There are a few smudges here and there and some of the brackets are smeared. These minimal traces suggest that the marks were used as registers. Something else was apparently placed here and then worked on. Viewing this work, we may think of Roland Barthes's observation in *Camera Lucida* that photographs are messages

¹ See Adcock, fig. b (Forming_of_Untitled_1962.jpg).

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without codes. Of course, Arakawa's relatively unmarked diptych, a *tabula obscura*, is even less specific than a photograph.

Any mark on a surface can be read as a figure on a ground and thus already a representation. At the time Arakawa painted *The Forming of Untitled*, pictorial space had become, so it was argued, quite flat, a condition brought about through the reductive supersession of a series of self-critical states. The picture was a two-dimensional decorative surface comprehended in the relatively unfettered terms of visual delectation (see Greenberg). During his formative years in New York, Arakawa reacted to this discursive domain by spurning it. He seems to have felt that art had come to be simply too flat, a view shared by his friends among the pop artists and minimalists. Like them, he wanted to incorporate the heuretical/heretical presence of real life into his art (for the term "heuretical," see Ulmer). He celebrated the everyday world that the abstract expressionists rejected. Arakawa's inquiries are thus grounded in the here and now and involve not so much the play of sensibilities as the experience of reflection.

Barthes, in his discussions, soon generalizes from photographs to other kinds of images (*Camera Lucida*; see also his "Rhetoric of the Image"). He maintains that visual artifacts are open to almost unlimited readings. Taking examples from Cy Twombly's oeuvre, he argues that the multiplicity can be narrowed down through language. The artist, by naming his paintings, restricts our interpretations to a subset of possibilities: "Twombly's titles have the function of a maze: having followed the idea they suggest, we have to retrace our steps and start in another direction. Something remains, however, their ghosts, which pervade the painting" ("The Wisdom of Art" 173).

Arakawa's title, *The Forming of Untitled*, through its wording, leads us to understand how something untitled was formed on its surface. We find its ghost, its trace, which makes us wonder how the residual marks left on the surface can indicate the forming of untitled. We question whether or not a hypostatized "untitled" can have a form, and we wonder whether or not a traditional diptych format can have significance. What soon occurs to us is that, even with the title, we have to ask about the work's meaning. In his discussion of Twombly, Barthes argues that paintings, in general, have to be queried, and again his terms are applicable to Arakawa:

Although abstract painting (which bears an inaccurate name, as we know) has been in the making for a long time (since the later Cézanne, according to some people), each new artist endlessly debates the question again: in art, linguistic problems are never really settled, and language always turns back to reflect on itself. It is therefore never naive (in spite of the intimidation of culture, and above all of specialist culture) to ask oneself before a painting what it represents. Meaning sticks to man: even when he wants to create something against meaning or outside it, he ends up producing the very meaning of nonsense or non-meaning. It is all the more legitimate to tackle again and again the question of meaning, that is precisely the question that prevents the universality of painting. If so many people (because of cultural differences) have the impression of "not understanding" a painting, it is because they want meaning and this painting (or so they think) does not give them any. (171-72)

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To complicate matters, Arakawa refers to open areas in some of his works—much like those in the diptych—as "photographs." In *Untitled*, 1964-65,² for example, two such areas are labelled "THIS RECTANGLE IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF THIS ENTIRE PAINTING." One is oriented vertically and the other horizontally. The latter is cut off by the edge of the painting. We can, it seems, take a mental photograph of the entire painting, reduce it in size using our minds' eyes (or cameras), and place it in the rectangles provided, rotating the image ninety degrees and extending it off the edge of the canvas in the one case. The rectangles are further labeled "LEFT" and "RIGHT." The word "RIGHT," mirror-reversed, is written under the one on the left, and the word "LEFT," mirror-reversed, is written under the one on the right. Here too, we can easily read these alternative labels by mentally rotating the canvas in order to look at it "from behind." We can see the left-hand rectangle (filled with our conceptual photograph) on the left.

Arakawa's pictorial usage in *Untitled* recalls the literary trope of the *mise en abyme*: his painting is an image that contains an image of itself, or a conceptual recapitulation of its overall nature (see Dällenbach). The small rectangles function as depictions, as conceptual "photographs" or "representations," of the work as a whole (even though they are blank). By couching his visual argument in these terms, Arakawa can refer back to the definition of painting as an activity, one that abstracts from nature, that narrows down and essentializes what is given to experience. In other words, by depicting painting within painting, and even more especially by presenting it in terms of conceptual photographs, the presence of the work, and its meaning, falls away, thrown into an abyss of recursive interpretation.

In a famous discussion of the general theme of supplementarity with regard to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jacques Derrida explains how such infinite deferrals affect our understanding:

It tells us in a text what a text is, it tells us in writing what writing is, in Rousseau's writing it tells us Jean-Jacques' desire, etc. If we consider, according to the axial proposition of this essay, that there is nothing outside the text, our ultimate justification would be the following: the concept of the supplement and the theory of writing designate textuality itself in Rousseau's text in an indefinitely multiplied structure—en abyme—to employ the current phrase. And we shall see that this abyss in not a happy or unhappy accident. An entire theory of the structural necessity of the abyss will be gradually constituted in our reading; the indefinite process of supplementarity has always already infiltrated presence, always already inscribed there the space of repetition and the splitting of the self. Representation in the abyss of presence is not an accident of presence; the desire of presence is, on the contrary, born from the abyss (the indefinite multiplication) of representation, from the representation of representation, etc. The supplement itself is quite exorbitant, in every sense of the word. (Of Grammatology 163)

Arakawa's relation to the history of painting is what makes our interpreting *Untitled* in terms of the supplement and the *mise en abyme* tenable. The work's meaning does not rely wholly upon its particular iconographical elements or, for that matter, upon its particular means of expression or style, but rather upon

² See Adcock, fig. a (Untitled_1964.jpg).

all these things that surround it. Moreover, its significance hinges upon (and is supplemented by) its being a painting that was painted in the 1960s during the heyday of Pop Art and Minimalism. The discursively constructed attributes of the painting, as a whole, do not depend upon the characteristics of the medium itself, but upon its historical and critical circumstances. Our delineating the specific formal parts of the painting might be able to shed light on its organization, but we would not thereby gain an explanation of its more general capacity to signify. This last generative power derives from the status of the particular kind of painting that was unfolding at a particular historical moment—a moment that allowed *Untitled* to become "exorbitant," in the sense of its being able to exceed, or to stand outside, art's normal orbit or sphere of influence and interest (see Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 161-62).

What most viewers take to be virtually empty canvases can be complicated along multiple lines, and we can pour as much meaning into their open surfaces as we wish. We can do so within the framework of how art was being made during the 1960s by reading the surfaces as characteristic of that time. In a 1969 interview, Arakawa seems to move in this direction: "My media could not operate without history. History is a catalogue of taste. To find taste in several different languages *in the same place*—this is called art" ("Notes on My Paintings" 29). He goes on to explain that his purposes were not really aesthetic, at least not as the term was then generally conceived. Rather than making "art," Arakawa wanted to create a new pictorial language, a hybrid system of display. His approach can be seen (and heard) in the way he manipulates the linguistic colors of his spatial settings and in the way he complicates the visual overtones of the words he places in those settings.

Among the pictorial objects that occupy Untitled is the word "THINGS." To the left of it, are what appear to be other letters that have been painted out. Should we read the term "THINGS" as a reference to the individual stenciled letters, the six "things" that make up the word? Or is the term a general label for the other "things," such as the effaced letters to the left, that make up the elements of the canvas as a whole? Among these latter "things" are lines with different curvatures pointing to the word "SMELLS." Do these different lines, in some sense, "represent" an assortment of different odors, or are they visual (or virtual) smells? Can we take them as visual metaphors for different olfactory sensations? The term "HORIZONTAL SOUND" is stenciled onto the upper right side of the canvas and is written vertically. The term "VERTICAL SOUND," is stenciled in reverse on the upper left side of the canvas and is written horizontally. Can sounds be oriented in this manner? And can we hear them resonating in the open areas of the canvas? Arrows point from these terms toward the word "AIR," which is mirror-reversed and stenciled near the upper center of the painting. The unusual words and diagrams enframe a centrally placed geometrical figure. We look toward one vertex of a somewhat flattened cube. But we cannot quite read the figure as a cube, because although it seems to be transparent (we can see the horizon line of the painting through it), we cannot see its back edges (reading it as convex) or its front edges (reading it as concave). We can see nine edges of the "cube" (we would see twelve if the figure were drawn as an isomorphic projection). These edges are painted in different colors and do not quite meet at the vertices of the cube. We can see seven of these virtual corners (we would see eight if it were an isomorphic projection). The mirror-reversed "AIR" that seems to be "inside" this fig-

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ure would, because of these openings, presumably leak out into the surrounding canvas. (Or, mirror-reversed, would it go the other way?)

The elements in Arakawa's painting are related through diagrammatic lines and arrows. Our reading and thinking about these directions move us around inside and outside the painting. Together with their associated verbal expressions, the plastic elements of the work give it a quasi-scientific, or quasi-mathematical, appearance. Arakawa's use of arrows, in particular, can be taken as references to vector spaces or phase spaces (see Feynman). At the lower left of *Untitled*, a narrow rectangle, which might be the edge of a larger area extending outside the domain of the canvas, has an arrow pointing toward the words "HUMAN SIZE." The "E" of the word "SIZE" is painted out and then rewritten below the smudge. A series of horizontal lines runs across the lower register of the canvas. At the right side of these lines, upwardly-directed arrows point toward two columns. One column lists colors: "GREY, WHITE, PINK, BLUE, PURPLE, BLACK, BROWN." The other repeats variants of the word "DUST" (the "U" is doubled, tripled, and piled on top of itself, finally to be replaced by line segments that suggest indefinite repetition). This arrangement echoes a narrow band of color in the upper part of the painting that runs from left to right varying from dark grey to light shades of tan. The words and the formal elements function reciprocally as labels and objects.

In an early article, Lawrence Alloway addressed the unusual way written language functions in Arakawa's paintings: "The effect of situating words (the least iconic of signs) out of grammar and into space draws attention to their unlikeness to the objects they designate. The arbitrariness of language is emphasized by its sudden spatialization" ("Arakawa's Paintings" 26). Arakawa not only reveals the distance between words and their referents, but also the separation between images and what they represent. He verbalizes or "languagizes" his painterly elements. Especially when groups of lines, brushstrokes, and words are juxtaposed, paradoxical (or perhaps more simply parataxical) relationships are set up between his verbal and pictorial *cadrage*. Arakawa, in a sense, paints in tongues as we might say an ecstatic speaks in tongues. To push this conceit, he stands outside himself in order to use verbal and visual signs that operate according to both the orthodox rules of language and the conventionalized dictates of art. The linguistic elements, through which we ordinarily talk about things that are distant, become things that are nearby as parts of the visual design. They are components of the subject matter occupying the paintings. But despite these verbal and visual characters' acting together, they never really cohere into intentional utterances or, for that matter, into formally balanced designs. Rather, they incessantly separate and reform as we scan them for meaning.

Arakawa's paintings were produced in relation to high Modernism and were mapped onto an art world already steeped in rhetoric. They refer to both the essentialism of Abstract Expressionism and the contextualism of Pop Art and Minimalism. Arakawa's dabs of painterliness are perfunctory symbols for the action of Action Painting, and his ready-made elements, including his stenciled words, depend upon the theoretical discourse that surrounds them. Arakawa moves between referential and non-referential levels of abstraction. His hybrid surfaces play against the action of action painting and replace its painterly enthusiasm with thought. Through this process, Arakawa wants to determine how to speak and inquire about what we hold as knowledge, particularly visual knowledge. By offering other ways of reading paintings, by redescribing the ways in which paintings are looked at, he challenges the past and current history of painting. He offers us

ostensions, as did René Magritte in *The Treason of Images*, 1928-29. Magritte's realistic rendition of a pipe famously declares, "this is not a pipe." For Arakawa, the Magrittian paradox becomes: "I have decided to leave this canvas completely blank." This message is stenciled onto *Untitled*, 1969, in uppercase letters.³ The only pictorial elements on the canvas are the three lines of text: I HAVE DECIDED TO/LEAVE THIS CANVAS/COMPLETELY BLANK.

Arguably, Arakawa's picture contradicts itself (see Calas and Calas 146; and Alloway, "Arakawa's Paintings" 26), in much the way Magritte's image contradicts itself. But we do not have to take either Arakawa's or Magritte's statements as counterfactual (although they may both be treacherous). In Arakawa's case, we can simply ignore the sentence itself and see the picture as a white, unpainted canvas (even despite there being some obvious lettering on its surface). In the same way that we can take Magritte's painting to be a painting (and not a pipe), we can take the open expanse of Arakawa's work to be a void with some labeling on it. The painting's blankness depends upon our expectations. In a different context, if we were to remove a sheet of instructions from an aspirin bottle and read, "this side of the paper has been left blank intentionally," we would take that side of the paper to be, in fact, blank, in the sense that no printing error had occurred and some of the directions were missing.

Michel Foucault, in his short book about Magritte entitled *This Is Not a Pipe*, points out that the artist "knits verbal signs and plastic elements together, but without referring them to a prior isotopism" (53). Foucault is taking the term "isotopism" from linguistic theory (see, for example, Greimas, *Structural Semantics*). An "isotope" is one of the four terms of a semiotic square. Arakawa's various uses of arrows in his paintings often suggest the ways arrows are used in such diagrams to indicate relationships of meaning. With regard to Magritte's *The Treason of Images*, Foucault engages both the verbal and the visual utterances of the artist:

He skirts the base of affirmative discourse on which resemblance calmly reposes, and he brings pure similitudes and nonaffirmative verbal statements into play within the instability of a disoriented volume and an unmapped space. A process whose formulation is in some sense given by Ceci n'est pas une pipe. (53-54)

Because different stories can be told about objects, Foucault believes that we have reasons to question claims of identity; we should distrust the procedures through which an identification is made (see his "Las Meninas," chap. 1 of *The Order of Things*). Because a blank canvas can be taken to be either blank or not blank (depending upon how we regard the lettering written on it), Arakawa believes that we have reasons to question what we see in paintings. The main problem for Foucault in his reading of visual works such as Magritte's is that our understanding, our awareness, is determined by power relations that we see only through a glass darkly. For Arakawa, the glass is Duchampian. Nevertheless, what it reveals is not restricted to light-hearted and humorous meaning. It reflects the often not-so-funny nature of recognition and self-recognition (see James).

³ See Adcock, fig. c (Untitled 1969-I have decided.jpg).

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Arakawa objectifies words and erodes the status of objects through words. Part of his motivation is to get past the confines of current taste: "Beyond seeing and its incumbent dimension, in the space of immediate translation, under the operation of taste-that is what, where I have begun to investigate" (Arakawa 29). Matters of taste change through time and depend upon political circumstances. Theodor Adorno has addressed such issues using the concept of the sublime. He points out that the "sublime, which Kant reserved exclusively for nature, later became the historical constituent of art itself' (198). In these terms, when we encounter Arakawa's paintings, we attend to the sublime, to the constituent of art itself. His works offer us a subjective experience, and because the same art objects can create diverse responses, what we experience has an incapacity to attain to an idea, and we perceive an aporia (a blank space, a hidden path). The affective positions that the paintings occupy in our perceptions, their capacity to influence our casts of mind, are in keeping with Adorno's adaptations of Kant's descriptions. They can be taken as paradigms for our competence to deal with such aporias: "Kant's doctrine of the feeling of the sublime all the more describes an art that shudders inwardly by suspending itself in the name of an illusionless truth content, though without, as art, divesting itself of its semblance character" (198). The discriminations of the sublime have been used by such contemporary theorists as Derrida and Lyotard. Their observations are germane to Arakawa's paintings. As postmodern authors, Derrida and Lyotard are less interested in tracing the boundaries of aesthetic experience than in exploring the epistemological significance of the ineffable (what Arakawa calls the blank).

Whereas Adorno characterizes modernism's sublime as an intellectual uneasiness much like Kant's oscillation between attraction and repulsion (Kant 97), Derrida entails it with deconstructing language. He argues that the sublime has no *parergon*, or frame, and thus suggests an openended or infinite continuum. For Derrida, words possess "iterability." They can be repeated again and again with different purposes, and this potentially unending iteration (*mise en abyme*) undermines intentionality and makes any given author's particular meaning dispensable (Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*).

For Lyotard, the sublime was useful as a way of transfiguring the hidden precepts that inform social practice, including art making. He also recapitulates Kant:

We can conceive the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to "make visible" this absolute greatness or power appears to us painfully inadequate. Those are Ideas of which no presentation is possible. Therefore, they impart no knowledge about reality (experience); they also prevent the free union of the faculties which gives rise to the sentiment of the beautiful; and they prevent the formation and the stabilization of taste. They can be said to be unpresentable. (Postmodern Condition 78)

Making visible that there is something that cannot be made visible is the task of modern painting. The sublime can thus be used as a designation for a new manner of perceiving. Lyotard argues that abstraction, for example, reveals the realist methods used by academic painters to protect established ways of thinking: "avant-gardes are perpetually flushing out artifices of presentation which make it possible to subordinate thought to the gaze and to turn it away from the unpresentable" (*Postmodern Condition* 79; see also his "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde").

In this manner, Arakawa's paintings turn our gaze back toward what cannot be represented, toward the "artifices of presentation." And insofar as they involve language, they do not preserve false consciousness from doubt. Quite the contrary. As avant-garde abstractions heavily involved with language, they open our eyes to the machinations of display and begin a conversation about our art historical depictions, and they do so against the background of tradition, from Romanticism to Abstract Expressionism.

Arakawa's paintings involve seeing as well as thinking, and they suggest the strange qualities of these activities. The meaning of his canvases, their *vouloir-dire*, is not so much revealed as indicated or overheard. His empty surfaces can be taken to represent states of mind, waiting to be filled in with sense-data. They can also be taken as jokes waiting for punch lines. His drawings of words and phrases, his arrows and dotted lines, together with his wit and humor, seem to delineate the mental operations that go on in our cognitive machinery. Arakawa's white spaces, areas of color, and bits and pieces of imagery imply the fragmentary nature of thinking and the odd ways associations come together. They also intimate those occasions when thought fails to come together. Both looked at and read, his words are expressions and abstract expressions. They are sometimes difficult to read and understand. They can be oddly placed. They can be erased, reconfigured, given a color that is then replaced by another color. Finally, they can be translated and mistranslated by us. Faced with the interplay between the words and the formal vocabulary, we can easily lose the meaning or miss the point of the joke among the interpretive twists and turns of our own thinking.

Arakawa's allusive and metaphoric way leads us to a familiar conclusion: no matter how diligently we search or how persistently we explore language, we are liable to lose sight of our path. The best we can hope for is to draw a helpful map or to arrive at a clear image. Arakawa provides us with examples of such maps and images. His works help us to remove the hindrances that stand in the way of clear thinking. They furnish us, not only with entertaining diversions, but also with insights into the workings of our own minds. More-over, his paintings often alert us to our inability to understand the logic of how we use words (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 4.003). In this last regard, Arakawa's images help us to open our eyes to language and to look at its distinctive and perplexing achievements. The (post)structural *manipulanda* of Arakawa's practice include colors and words, pictorial inflections and multiple tones of voice (see "The Mechanism of Meaning;" also Rush; and Alloway, "Arakawa"). When we encounter his paintings, we come face to face, and hand to hand, with blank spaces, ones that exercise us according to who we happen to be as embodied observers, and we are forced to cope with the occlusions falling across our own visual fields.

One source of obscurity is our unfamiliarity with other cultures. Arakawa's work is, of course, informed by his Japanese background, and several ideas associated with eastern aesthetics seem relevant to his approach. The concepts of "nothingness" (mu) and "emptiness" (ku) can be directly related to his work (see Nishitani; also Bryson). The "nothing," or "no thing," that constitutes such blankness serves to problematize the position of the subject in relation to the object, especially since the subject and the object are in transition with respect to one another. The "viewer," to put the matter in the terms of the present discussion, becomes a kind of nullity that disintegrates under the exigency of changing places. As part of a constantly moving expanse or ground for temporary delimitations, neither the subject nor the object can be taken to have any autonomy or privileged standing. In other words, the viewing subject can have no quality that is separate

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from all the other qualities that exist around him or her, and which provide the basis for his or her being (see Herrmann).

In this larger sense of embeddedness within wide and impermanent sweeps, Arakawa's art responds to the ever-changing circumstances of daily life. It does not so much conflate painting and experience, or operate in the gap between them, as respond to their dynamic reciprocity. Read from this inside/outside position, Arakawa's remark about perception seems less enigmatic:

My medium is the area of perception created, located, and demonstrated by the combining (melting) of languages, systems into each other in the same moving place. Joke or Point of Similarity: If I could use words as objects, that would be something. The gradual creation and erosion of objects through names. The more precise a painting or a language (several languages: color, shape, words, etc.) is, the less it exists as itself, but the more it can determine an area of meaning or an unnameable presence. Consider that naming creates a multi-dimensional field according to any ontology. ("Notes on My Paintings" 29)

We may also hear in this text echoes of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who argues that our perceptions are formed as much by what lies hidden on all sides as by what lies before us. Taking the paintings of Paul Cézanne as his point of departure, Merleau-Ponty contends that the artist helps us discover those things we normally overlook. As a noetic-noematic act, epitomized by the methods of Cézanne, painting makes visible what is invisible ("Cézanne's Doubt").

The searching quality that we identify with Arakawa's notion of blank can also be compared with the Japanese concept of *ma*, which means a period or space between terms. Arakawa's canvases are pervaded by interruptions, breaks, and pauses. These spatial intervals are the "not nothings," the blanks that "fill emptiness" (Arakawa and Gins, *Shusaku Arakawa* 1). In his discussion of Twombly, Barthes also makes reference to *ma*, applying it to the often sparsely populated canvases of the abstract painter. He suggests that the term is equivalent to the Latin *rarus* ("Wisdom of Art" 171), which can, of course, be translated as "rare." But the word also means "thin" or "far apart." The separate elements in Arakawa's paintings, his words and images, not only suggest the divisions between these domains, but also the rifts that can exist between their cultural deployments. In the exiguous surfaces of Arakawa's paintings, we can recall the thin scrolls of Eastern art interrupted by gestures of flung ink (see Bryson 101-04). We can also recall the space of Western painting—the one Arakawa encountered in his new home in the United States. Merleau-Ponty characterized this historical space as being subject to metamorphosis: "Essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible—painting scrambles all our categories, spreading out before us its oneiric universe of carnal essences, actualized resemblances, mute meanings" ("Eye and Mind" 130).

The three works illustrated in this essay were chosen to suggest the range of Arakawa's approach and to show how they can provide us with meaning. They all deal with something "untitled," with something unpresentable or unnameable, something invisible that cannot be made visible, and they do so in ways that elucidate basic problems of expression. The blankness in *The Forming of Untitled* (Fig. 1) is a painted blank, a blank canvas. The blankness in *Untitled* (Fig. 2) deals with more subtle lacunas, with caesuras and ellipses and also with the mental pauses associated with drawing a blank. The blankness in *Untitled* (Fig. 3) deals more with conceptual and linguistic clearings in the sense of Wittgenstein's "language games" (see espe-

cially his *Philosophical Investigations*; also Baker and Hacker 89-98). Arakawa's pictures hinge upon fluctuations between diverse verbal and formal systems. As products of the 1960s, his flat surfaces, with all their intellectual depth, not only depend upon their time, they also define it. Arakawa poses (and posits) a series of paralinguistic and paragraphic challenges: How are we able to make sense of language and images? Do pictures, charts, diagrams, graphs, or plots help us to discover the "truth" in what we are hearing or in what we are seeing? His works, in a sense, help us to use our diverse vocabularies (see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* sec. 122). By giving us a comprehensive view of our syntax, Arakawa shows us how our statements rely on assumptions (hidden relationships) that we do not fully perceive. Without the context of art theory and art history, his patterns and designs would largely elude us, just as our words would mean nothing without the prior conditions of language.

Arakawa locates his various schemes within the perceptual customs that define his concerns, namely, the way we read pictures (and to some extent pages). His canvases reminded Lawrence Alloway of the *Ency-clopedia* of Denis Diderot ("Arakawa" 31). But we do not read them the way we read an encyclopedia, and they provide us with more than information. To be sure, our reading of Arakawa's works is informed by our lexical practices and by our visual habits. His pictures entail art history, as well as literature and philosophy. And, as multi-dimensional works, they can be interpreted from both inside and outside the frame, from both inside and outside the common settings of aesthetic practice. We perceive them in terms of words and images, and in terms of blanks—the undifferentiated visual fields that occupy the blind spots of our vision. We see Arakawa's paintings in and through the interstices, the open areas. From the margins of our own understanding, we decipher them.

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Filename: mech2_l.jpg

b.) [Indirect reference]. Catalogue Cover. *Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not To Die*. Arakawa and Madeline Gins. New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1997.

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c.) [Direct reference to "Reversibility"]. Reversibility, [[] 2 3 4 5]. Arakawa and Gins, *The Mechanism of Meaning*, 1963-1973. Acrylic balls of twine, cardboard tube covered with metallic paper and electrical. tape on canvas.

Filename: mech9_1.jpg

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Filename: mech1_4.jpg

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b.) [Unreferenced]. Bioscleave House/Gallman Residence, 2003. East Hampton, L.I. Computer generated model.

Filename: interiorbioscleave.jpg

Shaneen, Marianne

a.) [Direct reference to Infancy House on p.2 ; also referenced in McCaffery]. Proposal board for Infancy House, 1989. Computer generated model.

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c.) [Direct reference to Rotation House]. Rotation House, 1993. Computer generated model.

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b.) The Mapping of Meaning, [1 2 3 4 5]. Arakawa and Gins, *The Mechanism of Meaning*, 1963-1973. Acrylic, nails, and rubber bands on canvas.

Filename: mech11_1.jpg

c.) The Feeling of Meaning, [1] 2 3 4]. Arakawa and Gins, *The Mechanism of Meaning*, 1963-1973. Acrylic and silk-screened mylar on canvas.

Filename: Mech12_1.jpg

d.) The Logic of Meaning, [1] 2 3 4]. Arakawa and Gins, *The Mechanism of Meaning*, 1963-1973. Acrylic, metal fork, and wood rulers on canvas.

Filename: mech13_1.jpg

e.) Construction of the Memory of Meaning, [1] 2 3 4 5 6]. Arakawa and Gins, *The Mechanism of Meaning* (1963-1973). Acrylic, mirrors in wood frames, and oil on canvas.

Filename: mech14_1.jpg

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Bernstein, Charles

a.) [Unreferenced]. Reversible Destiny Eco-Housing Park. Arakawa and Gins, 2000.

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SECTION III: Vita Nuova

Wiener, Chet

a.) [Direct reference to the language on surfaces in Gifu Park]. Critical Resemblances House. Site of Reversible Destiny, Yoro, Gifu Prefecture, Japan, 1993-95.

Filename: Gifu.jpg

b.) [Direct reference to the language on surfaces in Gifu Park]. Critical Resemblances House—Close-up. Site of Reversible Destiny, Yoro, Gifu Prefecture, Japan, 1993-95.

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Shostak, Art

a) [Unreferenced]. Museum of Living Bodies. Arakawa and Gins, 2000. Computer generated model.

Filename: museum.jpg

Lavine, Shaughan

a.) [Unreferenced]. Arial view, Site of Reversible Destiny-Yoro, Gifu Prefecture, Japan, 1993-95.

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Benesch, Klaus

a.) [Direct reference to "Landing Site Study"]. "Landing Site Study," 1994. Computer generated model.

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b.) [Direct reference to Yoro]. Site of Reversible Destiny-Yoro, Gifu Prefecture, Japan, 1993-95.

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Baldwin, Sandy

a.) [Direct reference to living room of Critical Resemblance House].

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Kolb, David

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b.) [Reference to inclined planes and spatial manipulation of viewer in work from 80s; also referenced in Gallagher]. Abrupt Resemblances, 1989-1990. Diptych: acrylic and pencil on canvas. Ramp: aluminum boards, photographs, plastic, plywood and rope. Included in *Paintings for Closed Eyes*, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York Oct-Nov 1990.

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d.) [Direct Reference to proposal for Tokyo Bay]. Study for Reversible Destiny Sensorium City, Tokyo Bay, 1992-93. Computer generated model.

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c.) [Direct reference *Bottomless III*]. *Bottomless III* (Communal Body), 1963-64. Cloth, felt, mirror, steel mesh, steel wiring, string, and thread.

Filename: Bottomless 3.jpg

Keane, Jondi

a.) [Unreferenced]. Exterior view of Reversible Destiny Office, Site of Reversible Destiny—Yoro. Yoro, Gifu Prefecture, Japan, 1994-96.

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b.) [Unreferenced]. Interior view of Reversible Destiny Office, Site of Reversible Destiny—Yoro. Yoro, Gifu Prefecture, Japan, 1994-96.

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a.) [Unreferenced]. Arakawa and Madeline Gins. Architecture: Sites of Reversible Destiny (Architectural Experiments After. Auschwitz-Hiroshima). From "Constructing the Site/Terrain Studies," Image 1, p.62. Computer generated image.

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d.) [Unreferenced]. Certificate for Arthur Feldman.

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