

consigned to abject humanity on a thoroughly trashed planet? Doesn't this beg the questions of power and inequality? These are legitimate, reflective questions to which the majority of us still-humans would probably answer "no," "no," "yes," "yes." But they are beside the problem. Not at all beside the point, but beside the problem. The problem, which Stelarc's art both expresses and exacerbates, is that the process has already begun. However far the MIT Media Lab is from achieving its dream interface, however far the Internet is from the apocalyptic possible futures speculated for it, however incompletely the new media have been implanted, however faltering is their present state of interconnection, the modal conversion of the human has sensibly begun. The Stelarcian body answers the nagging questions about it with a "yes," "yes," "not necessarily," "maybe-maybe not."

The reflective critical thinker anchors the discussion in the "no's" of will not/should not, willing a clampdown on potential in the name of justice. The experimenter in criticality starts from "yes" in the name of sensation and leaves the field wide open. The Stelarcian desire is to *affirm* the conversion, not in order to denigrate the importance of the human justice issues it incontestably raises, but rather to enable them to be re-posed and operated upon in an entirely new problematic, one that may even now be waiting for us around the next node. This experimentally open, affirmative posture can be considered a socially irresponsible approach to the problem of human evolution only if the critical thinker can answer an unhegged "yes" to this counterquestion: *If all of this doesn't happen, will there be an end to impoverishment and inequality and will the earth not be trashed?* Until that affirmation is forthcoming, there is no argument, only a clash of desires. Two desires implicating divergent modes of existence: affirmed ex-human intensity and all-too-human moralism.

ON THE SUPERIORITY OF THE ANALOG

The virtual, as such, is inaccessible to the senses. This does not, however, preclude figuring it, in the sense of constructing images of it. To the contrary, it requires a multiplication of images. The virtual that cannot be felt also cannot but be felt, in its effects. When expressions of its effects are multiplied, the virtual fleetingly appears. Its fleeting is in the cracks between and the surfaces around the images.

Images of the virtual make the virtual appear not in their content or form, but in fleeting, in their sequencing or sampling. The appearance of the virtual is in the twists and folds of formed content, in the movement from one sample to another. It is in the ins and outs of imaging. This applies whether the image is verbal, as in an example or parable, or whether it is visual or aural. No one kind of image, let alone any one image, can render the virtual.

Since the virtual is in the ins and outs, the only way an image can approach it alone is to twist and fold on itself, to multiply itself internally. This happens in each of the "parables" in this book. At a certain point, they knot up: infoldings and outfoldings, redoublings and reductions, punctual events falling away from themselves into self-referential encompasment, pasts projecting ahead to futures buckling back into the moment, extended intensities and intensifying extensions. The virtual can perhaps best be imaged by superposing these deformational moments of repetition rather than sampling differences in form and content. Think of each image receding into its deformation, as into a vanishing point of its own twisted versioning.¹ That vanishing into self-variety is the fleeting of the virtual—more appearingly than in the in-between and around of the single-image forms and contents, however thoroughly resequenced by cut-and-paste (combinatorics). The folding-vanishing point is the literal appearance in words—or vision or hearing—of a virtual image center.