

The Metaphysics of Desire [Essay on Noboru Tsubaki]

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Every center of force adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder, i.e., its own particular valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance. (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §567)¹

The “real world,” however one has hitherto conceived it—it has always been the apparent world *once again*. (Ibid., §566)

[Introduction]

1—The Metaphysics of Desire

The above quotes by Nietzsche are an appropriate header for this essay because Tsubaki's work focuses on ‘desire,’ or that which has driven and continues to drive us humans today.

I shall begin with an explanation of Nietzsche's exquisite words.² The first quote states that the “valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance” of people are not based on an objective truth, but are, rather, merely in accordance with each individual's ‘way of seeing (“perspective”).’ When viewing the whole as centered on a particular point, everything enters one's field of view in a spatial relationship to one another. A ‘perspective’ is such a comprehension of the world, centered on a single point. The perspective of valuation is also based on such a central point. At the center of this perspective (way of seeing) is our ‘desire.’ The entire world is viewed and measured from this center (desire) and thus put into perspective. There is, of course, a tremendously vast world lying beyond the perspectival field of view (the world subject to one's ‘desire’) that either has not come into or has been removed from it. The second quote appears shortly before the first in the original text. Here, it is clearly stated that there is no world that can ‘be’ without any relation to such a way of seeing (a ‘perspective’) that has been created by desire. Even the removed world is related in that it ‘has been removed’ or ‘has yet to be discovered.’ All scientific truths and religious beliefs are part of an “apparent world” projected by the perspective of desire. Any undisputed truths that we (you, me, and Tsubaki) may believe have also been created by our perspective of desire. Alternately, they have been created by the perspective of someone else's desire, and

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968). For an updated edition of the original German, see: Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, hg. v. G. Colli und M. Montinari (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–).

² Regarding the modernity of Nietzsche's philosophy, see: Iwaki, *Kansei-ron—Estutetikkusu: Hirakareta keiken no riron no tameni* (Aesthetics as a Theory of Aisthesis) (Kyoto: Shōwa-dō, 2001), chap. 3, sec. 2.

we—you, me, Tsubaki—are unknowingly dominated by them.

Thus, the title of this text shall be “The Metaphysics of Desire.”³

The term ‘metaphysics’ originates with Aristotle and has two meanings. First, ‘metaphysics’ means the science of explaining ‘the fundamental principle of being.’ In this sense, ‘the metaphysics of desire’ can be understood as a statement declaring ‘desire’ to be the ultimate principle of being. Next, ‘metaphysics’ also refers to Aristotle’s writings ‘after (*meta*)’⁴ ‘*Physics* (*physica*),’⁵ or his writings on natural philosophy, which were collected as ‘*Metaphysics* (*metaphysica*),’⁶ so it also means ‘philosophy after natural philosophy.’ Tsubaki’s work encompasses both of these meanings. On one hand, he constantly questions the fundamental principle of ‘desire’ through creation, and on the other, he creates works by rethinking this fundamental question ‘after’ each time he experiences and analyzes various worlds.

From the viewpoint of ‘the metaphysics of desire,’ half-baked plans of inhibition and theories of justice lose all meaning, because such plans and theories are based on specific desires themselves. Therefore, there is no such thing as a correct theory that absolutely must be heeded, and everything is obligated to be subject to criticism. Likewise, from this viewpoint, ‘desire’ is beyond good and evil because the judgment of good and evil itself is also based on the ‘perspective’ of the judge’s desire. With these two points in mind, we should be able to gain a better understanding of Tsubaki’s work.

2—Reason: The Amplifier of Human Desire

Incidentally, unlike that of other life forms, human desire can be amplified limitlessly by a special device. This ‘special device’ consists of ‘language/symbols.’ Neither science nor religion could exist without it. Indeed, nonhuman life forms could not care less about science or religion. Through a ‘deductive operation’ by ‘language/symbols,’ humans have imagined a supreme world that goes far above and beyond the present one, a supreme truth; strived to attain the methods and rules of aspiring to this supreme world; and created tools to meet these ends. I have termed the faculty of ‘language/symbols’ a ‘special device’ because it already exists as a separate entity beyond the realm of human thought: the computer. Our brains have now been removed from our heads, our memory stored in an external device. This is only problematic when it comes to using our own handwriting on chalkboards and letters⁷—our minds literally go ‘blank.’ Nowadays, we can make

³ Regarding the genealogy of the metaphysics of ‘desire,’ see: Iwaki, *Gobyū-ron: Kanto “Junsui risei hihan” e no kansai-ron-teki apurōchi* (Theory of “Paralogismen”: An aesthetic approach to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*) (Nara: Kizasu-shobō, 2006), 33ff.

⁴ [μετά (meta) = beyond, after TRANS.]

⁵ [φυσικά (physika) = physical; natural philosophy, science TRANS.]

⁶ [τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά (ta meta ta physika) = beyond/after *Physics* TRANS.]

⁷ [Especially in the case of the Japanese alphabet, with complex *kanji* (derived from Chinese characters) that are conceived of as memorized blocks, more and more easily forgotten with the advent of computers. Cf. the ‘spell

do with nothing in our heads at all.

Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the difference between ‘the world that can be confirmed by the senses’ and ‘the world beyond the senses.’ According to Kant, ‘the world that can be confirmed by the senses’ is the world of ‘recognition,’ or ‘the world of experience,’ whereas ‘the world beyond the senses’ is the world of ‘thought’ [*Denken*]. Thus, it is important that the difference between ‘recognition,’ ‘experience,’ and ‘thought’ are understood and that the terms are not confused. Otherwise, our arguments will contradict themselves, as many assertions already do.

‘The world of experience’ and ‘the world of thought’ differ from one another. One is **a world that can be confirmed by the senses**, and the other is **a supersensory world**. The positing [*Setzen*] (assumption) of this supersensory world is made possible by language/symbols. For example, ‘∞.’ This is the ‘infinity’ symbol, made possible by the linguistic opposition between ‘finite’ and ‘infinite.’ The ‘finite’ world is one that we can sensorially experience and recognize. Conversely, the world that cannot be experienced, the supersensory world, can be termed ‘infinite’ with language/symbols, enabling us to ‘think’ of and therefore ‘posit (assume)’ its existence. The ‘∞’ symbol has thus been created and continues to be used in this way.

Science fiction is a world that has been posited (assumed) by ‘thought.’ Accordingly, its images are sensorially imagined objects in a supersensory world. The world of science fiction is an ‘assumed’ world and is not ‘reality’; this is why science fiction is so exciting. It is a form of entertainment exclusive to humans, who possess the faculty of language/symbols. (If there are any other life forms with different language/symbol systems, they are bound to have their own form of science fiction. However, while it is possible for humans to ‘assume’ this, it has yet to be ‘recognized.’)

A world that has been ‘posited (assumed)’ through ‘thought’ by ‘language/symbols’: this is the world of ‘hypothesis.’ When a ‘hypothetical world’ has actually been confirmed by the senses—in other words, ‘recognized’ and ‘experienced’—it becomes a ‘real world.’ The practice of proving a hypothesis to be reality is known as ‘verification.’ Science has proceeded, and will continue to proceed, by moving back and forth between ‘hypothesis’ and ‘verification.’ Theoretical science (the positing of a world of thought that is as consistent as possible) and empirical science (the process of confirming a hypothetical world as exhaustively as possible) are intrinsically linked to one another. Science cannot exist without one or the other. Humans have created a variety of devices in order to verify their ‘hypotheses,’ a process of trial and error, beginning with their assumptions based on language/symbols, followed by attempts to produce them as real objects. Thanks to science, which has developed on the basis of language/symbols, and the fruits of technology, we are increasingly able to sensorially recognize the world of ‘thought (hypothesis),’ transforming it into a real world that can be experienced. Thus, ‘the faculty of language/symbols’

has given humans access to a tremendously vast world of experience.

‘The sensorially recognizable world (the world of experience)’ and ‘the world of language/symbols (the world of **thought**)’ are different, but at the same time, they correlate with one another. Our experiences are transformed and rearranged within this correlation. Therefore, we must remember not only the difference between these two worlds but their correlation as well: that is to say, history, culture, and civilization. There is no world that is detached from this correlation. The concept (idea) of ‘nature’ has also continued to transform within this correlation: no absolute ‘nature’ external to this correlation exists, ‘nature’ being yet another world that transforms ‘culturally,’ ‘historically,’ and ‘socially.’⁸ The act of holding ‘civilization’ in contempt and ‘nature’ in high regard comes from the confusion of ‘recognition’ and ‘thought,’ **a delusional request for the impossible**. ‘Asking for the impossible’ and ‘delusions’ are a form of *ignava ratio* (Kant; lazy reason), a lazy desire driven by language/symbols, wherein one strives to attain an assumption (hypothesis)—presented by the faculty of language/symbols—that is taken for granted as (surely) being ‘real,’ without any effort toward verification.

This faculty of ‘language/symbols’ is, in other words, the faculty known as ‘reason’ [*Vernunft*]. The understanding of ‘reason’ as the faculty of ‘language/symbols’ is crucial for this discussion, and probably for thinking in general. This is one of the points that I especially wanted to make in my *Theory of “Paralogismen.”* However, it appears that this way of thinking is still rather uncommon, as ‘reason’ has been considered the most sacred faculty, or the correct faculty of deduction, since antiquity. Because of this, when the faculty of ‘reason’ is used incorrectly, it is referred to with such terms as ‘instrumental reason’ and thus differentiated from ‘religious reason.’ In my view, however, this understanding of ‘reason’—no matter how authoritative a thinker this terminology may come from—is completely superficial. Based on such an understanding, those who supposedly possess genuine reason would be separated from those who do not, such as (as it did indeed happen) ‘the clerical’ and ‘the secular,’ ‘the chosen sage’ and ‘the feeble-minded masses.’ These differentiations are, however, nothing more than conventions that have been established in particular societies. It is important to be aware that such conventions themselves were borne from the faculty of language/symbols.

Understanding ‘reason’ as ‘the faculty of language/symbols’ will allow one to see that no individual has an inherent sense of discrimination. Discrimination is posited by language (‘reason’), and does not come into being until that point. It relies on the amplification and firm establishment of ways of seeing based on ‘desire’ by ‘reason.’ All humans are compulsorily endowed with

⁸ Regarding ‘nature’ qua ‘culture,’ see: Iwaki, “Gendai geijutsu to shizen: Shizen gainen no haiburiddo na seikaku ni tsuite” (Contemporary art and nature: On the hybridism of the concept of nature), in *Shimpojiomu* (“*Shizen to iu bunka*” no shatei) *houkokusho* (Symposium [“The culture known as nature”] report), ed. 21st Century COE Program “Towards a Center of Excellence for the Study of Humanities in the Age of Globalization,” Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University (Kyoto: 21st Century COE Program “Towards a Center of Excellence for the Study of Humanities in the Age of Globalization,” Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, March 2003), 52–71. The discussion from this symposium is still available online on the Kyoto University Graduate School of Letters website.

‘reason,’ and ‘reason’ itself—and therefore humans themselves—embodies, from the start, the possibility of error (the possibility of ‘paralogism’).⁹

Nietzsche’s words are poignant here as well:

[In the formation of reason, logic, the categories, it was *need* that was authoritative: the need, not to “know,” but to subsume, to schematize, for the purpose of intelligibility and calculation— [...] No pre-existing “idea” was here at work, but the utilitarian fact that only when we see things coarsely and made equal do they become calculable and usable to us— (*The Will to Power*, §515)]

‘Reason’ must not be given special treatment. It is simply the faculty of ‘language/symbols’ inherent in all humans, and it is this faculty that has produced the world of desire unique to humans. To know this is surely beneficial to understanding Tsubaki’s work, which is deeply connected to ‘religion’ and ‘science’ as worlds of desire that are ceaselessly amplified by reason.

This text is being written on the occasion of the Noboru Tsubaki exhibition to be held at the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto from February 17 to March 29, 2009. I would therefore like to think about ‘the metaphysics of desire’ as it applies to Tsubaki, or how the artist is approaching ‘metaphysical desire,’ with the planned exhibits in mind. However, this text itself is also nothing more than a process of ‘assumption’ by way of ‘thought,’ or the positing of a ‘hypothesis,’ because the installation process has yet to begin. The ‘verification’ of my ‘hypothesis’ will be left up to the readers (viewers).

[Main Thesis]

The exhibition has been titled *Noboru Tsubaki: Gold/White/Black* and is scheduled to take place in the first-floor entrance hall and the third-floor exhibition hall. The following will be written with reference to the e-mails that Tsubaki has sent me, laying out his concepts for each exhibition space.

1). MUSHROOM

[There is a squishy 1:1 domestic ICBM factory in the entrance hall. It is also the portfolio of the Japanese, who have been forced to stay immature in all respects for all eternity. ...Will the freaks stay quiet with so much dangerously pent-up energy on their hands...? This will be a work in progress, made by student mobilization.]

⁹ I have also discussed this point in detail in *Theory of “Paralogismen.”*

These are Tsubaki's words regarding the work scheduled to be exhibited in the first-floor entrance hall. This spacious hall with a high ceiling will be transformed into a virtual **munitions factory**. The exhibit itself is a full-scale model of the R-7 Semyorka—the first intercontinental ballistic missile in the world, developed and deployed during the Cold War by the former Soviet Union—made of a special kind of nylon (*Emasofuto*¹⁰). Hung from the ceiling, the missile will lay irreverently across the floor. Visitors will be welcomed by five rocket boosters (its rear end) immediately upon entering the building. Something could blast out at any moment. This audacious, fake R-7 will be roughly manufactured on campus at the Kyoto University of Art and Design (where Tsubaki teaches) by its students and finished in the museum's entrance hall, which will thus become precisely a munitions factory run by "student mobilization." The second-floor walkway has also been worked into the exhibition space in order to emphasize this transformation. This walkway will become synonymous with the higher ground from which factory inspectors and military/government personnel oversee the laborers, or the student workers, and their enormous product. Not only the work exhibited in a particular space but the space itself can also change its meaning according to the way that it is used. All links between space and image produce special meanings depending on their arrangement. The exhibition space will not merely become a factory but rather 'art' = 'a sensory recognition device.' In the second-floor landing of the central staircase extending from the entrance hall, a computer room will be set up as the control tower (brain) of the factory as a whole.

Incidentally, the R-7 is over thirty meters long, and the tail end consists of five rockets (four strap-on boosters attached to a core stage), measuring approximately ten meters in diameter. With the attachment of a nuclear warhead, it becomes an enormous missile with a broad range; with the attachment of a satellite, it becomes a space development rocket: the Soyuz spacecraft. This is precisely a product of the contemporary science and technology industry, which has changed its function according to different ways of seeing ('the perspective of desire') throughout the course of history. Its lackadaisical reclining position also implies the ludicrousness of this perspective. The R-7 is a product of reason in the form of a counterplot against the desire for nuclear weapons and missiles in the West, and here, the manner in which reason can change its direction completely according to desire is ridiculed. First, the R-7 was intended to move in a parallel direction—approximately 9,500 kilometers, as a missile with an unprecedented range—allowing the remote control of a nuclear warhead, with a war against the West in mind. Next, the desire to win the Space Race turned the R-7 in a perpendicular direction as the Soyuz spacecraft. Of course, desire is surely not directed toward peace alone here, either: the same desire has incited the race to launch satellites as long-distance surveillance devices. This visual desire for surveillance in all

¹⁰ [*Emasofuto 3C Three Cut* plastic film from Okamoto, Inc. A type of ethylene-methyl methacrylate copolymer. TRANS.]

directions is humorously alluded to by *Metapolice*, the work scheduled to be installed just inside the entrance of the fourth room on the third floor. This work is covered with a multitude of eyeballs and rotates, ironically critiquing the contemporary world of full surveillance, or the device of desire realized by reason. Tsubaki's commentary on this work is as follows:

[METAPOLICE: A work from 1997, the fear of a society of super-surveillance of the public. Discontinuous rotations in a cycle synched with that of *Gold*. Unrelated things become related; chaos gaining speed.]

Metapolice is the embodiment of the desire for full 'surveillance.' Although it appears a bit macabre, a closer look shows that the eyes are somewhat amusing. In other words, the eyeballs are rather endearing. Both this work and the one on the first floor have the familiar air of Japanese anime. This is another strategy. As soon as you think to yourself, "Oh wow, look at that! Aww, how *cuuute!*!" a strong backlash will follow. Thus, this work will take hold of one's direct sensory response of reacting as one would to anime and rub it the wrong way. Perhaps the viewers will walk by with nothing more than a response of pleasure or displeasure, but what is required here is a serious discussion. Carefree suggestions that art is meant to give aesthetic pleasure and that museums of art are meant to be the site of this provision are not acceptable. Art museums are in fact sites of intellectual discourse, not recreational facilities that allow for the temporary escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Reason, as an amplification device of desire, makes technology develop in all directions: up and down, left and right, along all axes. But when one says "all directions," "up and down," "left and right," and "along all axes," where is the point of reference? This is ground zero, the invisible 'center' that is not located anywhere yet makes these expressions possible. This ground zero is where 'desire' is located, and this location is 'the body.' This body, however, is not a simple phenomenological body, but rather 'the historical body' transfigured and enlarged beyond recognition by reason, the body remodeled by its saturation in scientific-technological media, the cyborg body. Still, at any rate, it is the body of desire that is at the center, and not reason or spirit. Nietzsche's philosophy is on point here as well:

[The body and physiology the starting point: why?— We gain the correct idea of the nature of our subject-unity[...] (*The Will to Power*, §492)]

[The "pure spirit" is a piece of pure stupidity: take away the nervous system and the senses, the so-called "mortal shell," and *the rest is miscalculation*—that is all!... (*The Antichrist*, §14)]¹¹

¹¹ [Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans. H.L. Mencken (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), in Project

Let us return to the first exhibition space. The fake R-7 is emblazoned with the logo, “NIPPON.” This logo causes a change in the meaning of the missile, and it slips away from the view that it is a mere copy of an actual object (military technology of the former Soviet Union, the present-day Russia) or ‘the appropriation of cute (*kawaii*) anime.’ The work and the exhibition space itself as a whole are no longer straightforward and irresponsible transmitters of an anti-war message criticizing foreign munitions industries, nor are they an adaptation of the popular anime and manga art of today. By branding the missile—lying powerlessly across the floor, even with air continuously being sent in—with the NIPPON logo, it is turned into a question directed at the Japanese. The critical state of the Japanese people today and our nonchalant attitude in complete disregard thereof are put into question. That **slovenly** R-7 lying on the floor is us. ‘Populism’ qua ‘wish for popularity’ and ‘the otaku boom,’ which are in vogue in many circles today, are on the other side of the same coin as the ‘nonchalance’ of Japan in the face of its precarious position. Populism works through skillfully recalling attention to common knowledge shared by the majority, a comfortable and familiar world for most. In the case of the otaku boom, it is based on the underlying desire for the exclusive fulfillment of the narrow self, and it has turned into a boom because the unfulfilled narrow self relies on the power of others to fulfill it in its stereotypical state. ‘Populism’ consists of taking ‘foreign elements’ into ‘the existing perspective of desire’ and homogenizing them for consumption. ‘Foreignness’ is thus reduced to a stimulant that merely diverts the tedium of everyday life for a short while: everything is tamed, regressing to merely being ‘fun!’ or ‘cute!’ This is ‘kitsch’ in the original sense.¹²

‘Otaku’ and ‘populism’ are one and the same in that they are both forms of ‘kitsch’ consciousness. Tsubaki is aware of the precariousness of the situation. They are in truth a form of ‘fascism,’ large **masses** that could head in horrible directions if ‘desire’ points them that way. The e-mails from Tsubaki include the following comments on the times:

[1980s (the systemic metastasis of the focus): The birth of the ‘consumer’ coated in the protective film of excessive power and the attack of populism, or the market principle gone wild.]

[1990s (the age of selection): The goods-centered victory attained by postwar Japan comes to an end in a blink of an eye. Japan has no choice but to recede in the face of the strategy of getting control of the network platform that began in Silicon Valley. The development of Mosaic and the product development system by IDEO, co-founded by a Stanford alumnus,

Gutenberg, released 18 September 2006, accessed 21 January 2009; available from <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/19322>. TRANS.]

¹² Vgl. Ludwig Giesz: *Phänomenologie des Kitsches*. München 1971.

begin to lead the world (1989: visit to the US, confirmation; mid-1990s: an increase in network-based works).

Places of education (especially universities) were devastated by clashes of the left and right. That this made it permissible for university students not to study eventually led to the fatal recession from the cutting edge.

The excessive appraisal of otaku was also a strategic move toward the hackneying of Japan by the West (the immobilization of orientalism).]

It is interesting that Tsubaki's words somewhat resemble Nietzschean aphorisms.

With just one false step, the fake missile emblazoned with the NIPPON logo could become real. Japan already has the materials and technological capability to make this happen. As Tsubaki says, "Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution" has the function of making us forget this fact, and by making many people oblivious to issues such as this, it has put us in a half-slumber of peace. This is discussed in further detail in Tsubaki's "Gundam" essay in the pamphlet printed for the exhibition.

'Populism' exerts its power for the first time when thought is in a state of paralysis. By being captivated by the perspective of 'desire' that seeks the fulfillment of a 'self' that does not actually even exist, we become trapped inside a narrow 'present' and come to believe it to be a comfortable world that must be protected at all cost. This is the origin of the 'diseases of the mind.' The search for a non-existent 'self,' the desire to maintain a narrow and exclusive 'self,' and the power that is established simply by protecting these: this is the true identity of the populism that is rampant in Japan today.

Yet, no matter how big or small, 'the subject' is not real. As seen earlier, Nietzsche tried to destroy the myth of "subject-unity":

[No subject "atoms." The sphere of a subject constantly growing or decreasing, the center of the system constantly shifting[...]. (*The Will to Power*, §488)]

[The concept of substance is a consequence of the concept of the subject: not the reverse! If we relinquish the soul, "the subject," the precondition for "substance" in general disappears. One acquires degrees of being, one loses that which *has* being. [...] "The subject" is the fiction that many similar states in us are the effect of one substratum: but it is we who first created the "similarity" of these states; our adjusting them and making them similar is the fact, not their similarity (—which ought rather to be denied—). (*The Will to Power*, §485)]

The words by Nietzsche in this essay have been selected from those I quoted in *Aesthetics*

as a *Theory of Aisthesis* with the belief that they are ‘useful’ in understanding Tsubaki’s work. In this regard, it appears that I too am attempting to discuss Tsubaki from within a framework of the ‘familiar,’ from the viewpoint of ‘perspective of desire’ **criticism**.

The theme of Tsubaki’s work is the desire of science and the desire of religion. In contrast, there are few questions directed toward the ‘subject (self).’ When I asked Tsubaki about this, he gave me a clear response. “Ever since I was a child, I was never very conscious of my individuality or my ‘self,’ because my honest feeling is that I am constantly changing through contact with different things.” This was Tsubaki’s answer, and also the main reason why I agreed to write this text.

Incidentally, Nietzsche also discusses ‘populism.’ According to him, individualism and democracy can also become forms of populism that fulfill narrow desires. They are nothing more than forms of ‘herd’ mentality (*The Will to Power*, §275). Are we all right? Are those who say they value ‘the masses’ or ‘the common folk’ actually treating the common folk as ‘the herd’? Not only in the world of politics and economics, but in art as well, efficiency and achievement wield power and people are nothing more than human **resources**.

Another philosopher who destroyed the ontology of the ‘subject’—like Nietzsche, but much more logically and exactingly—was Kant, whom Nietzsche constantly criticized. In fact, Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is a thorough, logical criticism of the belief (myth) of the realness of ‘the subject,’ ‘scientific truth,’ and ‘God’ as a religious being. His theory of the self is not ‘the metaphysics of modern individuality,’ as it is often described, but rather a philosophy that demonstrates ‘the irregularity of the self,’ or a philosophy that places emphasis on the ‘being’ of individual, finite humans.¹³

Also, the dependence on power that can easily result from ‘populism = wish for popularity’ produces pseudo-religious communities—that is to say, a ‘fascistic’ world. This point was dredged up by the philosopher Hegel, who was an excellent analyst of social structures. The following is an excerpt from an essay I wrote in the past:

[“Where a human being’s senses and intellect [*Verstand*] are sound, he is fully and intelligently alive to that reality of his which gives concrete filling to his individuality: but he is awake to it in the form of interconnection between himself and the features of that reality conceived as an external and a separate world, and he is aware that this world is in itself also a complex of interconnections of a practically intelligible kind. [...] But when all that occupies the waking consciousness, the world outside it and its relationship to that world, is under a veil, and the soul is thus sunk in sleep[...], then that *immanent actuality* of the individual remains the same substantial total as before, but now as a purely sensitive life with an inward vision and an inward consciousness.” (*Encyclopaedia of the*

¹³ I have discussed this in detail in chapter two of *Theory of “Paralogismen.”*

A heart that has been closed off from a specific emotion is one that has had its gaze toward the external world put “under a veil” and has sunken into private emotions. What is missing here is a clearly delineated consciousness of reality; reality only appears through a membrane “under a veil” of extant emotions. Everything takes on the emotional coloring of a narrow self. To relate with reality through the ‘membrane’ of emotion is to be unable to see anything but certain familiar emotional values that already exist within one’s self. This becomes an endless inner search for reality (a never-ending cycle, a tautology): the heart lacks an interconnection with a clear consciousness of reality, so the heart lacks delineation itself, and therefore the other loses its outline as well. What becomes clear is the difficulty of being aware of the framework within which one unconsciously moves one’s self (language/symbols that have been absorbed into the body). When the heart becomes trapped in a specific emotion, it is swallowed up by the ceaseless flow of emotions. The solution is thus postponed, the heart is burnt out, and so it seeks a foothold that can continually provide an emotional framework. The deep contemplation of the sensitive life by an intellect that has come to know the world and ended up growing conscious of their inevitable interconnection therewith (a return to its natural state? devoted loyalty to the organization?) is actually the emotional state of a child, and cannot be said to be healthy as that of an adult.

“An essential feature of this sensitivity, with its absence of intelligent and volitional personality, is this, that it is a state of passivity, like that of the child in the womb. The patient in this condition is accordingly made, and continues to be, subject to the power of another person, the magnetizer; so that when the two are thus in psychical rapport, the selfless individual, not really a ‘person,’ has for his subjective consciousness the consciousness of the other. This latter self-possessed individual is thus the effective subjective soul of the former, and the genius which may even supply him with a train of ideas.” (Ibid.)

Hegel points out the problem of the “sensitive life” into which “educated, self-possessed” human beings tend to fall, where a community of emotion develops around the “magnetizer” as though they are literally being attracted by a magnet. The “magnetizer” knows his or her target well, and we ourselves would be mistaken to think that we are free from this magnetic field. This problem is not restricted to any religion in particular. The magnetized community exists all around us: it lies in waiting, ready to pull us in, and at the same time, we ourselves become magnetized whether we like it or not, forming links in a chain of “magnetizers.” In this magnetic

¹⁴ [G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace, accessed 21 January 2009; available from <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20-%20Philosophy%20of%20Mind.htm>. TRANS.]

field, even the ‘senses,’ which are believed to be more personal than anything else, become subordinate and therefore generalized (commonplace).

“[T]his nominal self accordingly derives its whole stock of ideas from the sensations and ideas of the other, in whom it sees, smells, tastes, reads, and hears.” (Ibid.)¹⁵

If ‘your boss (?),’ ‘an expert (?),’ ‘a celebrity (?)’ (= magnetizer) exclaims, “This is delicious!” anything can become a delicacy. The nauseating **populism of taste** and **brand consciousness** are forms of desire amplified by reason (language/symbols), and are therefore staples of ‘mass media’ (organization of language/symbols).

Hegel’s insights above will not only facilitate the understanding of the characteristics of ‘populism’ in present-day Japan, but the contemplation of Tsubaki’s apprehension toward populism as well.

‘Populism’ has become unified with “the market principle gone wild.” Tsubaki has an eye on this change in the economic background. An enormous change in the market principle will connect to the end of ‘populism’ and of the reign of economic efficiency. In actuality, the Lehman Shock has had a large impact not only on the American economy but that of the entire world. The effect is seen not only in the political and economic spheres but even in the Japanese art world, where exhibitions scheduled to take place are being cancelled due to the economic status of their sponsors. Mr. Vasif Kortun (director, Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center) discussed this point at Asian Art Museum Directors’ Forum Tokyo 2008, framing it as the collapse of economic ‘globalization’ caused by the economic decline of the ‘neoliberalists.’ The globalization of electronic money and of investment is precisely what supported the globalization promoted by neoliberalists, and their collapse also led to the end of the flourishing of the ‘art market’ as a form of cultural globalization. Mr. Kortun says that what should be considered from now on is ‘regionally-based’ activity. It was a compelling argument. To put this in the context of an art museum, it is impossible to go on with the current policy of economic efficiency, its primary goal being admission profits and attendance figures. What will be important is the steady effort to contemplate culture in more depth than ever.

The act of exhibiting Tsubaki’s art in an art museum is linked with such a future of the museum. Tsubaki works with the theme of the demise of ‘the metaphysics of desire’ that has driven the contemporary market economy (the demise of the market principle). One phenomenon of this demise is the demise of ‘populism.’ Thus, the exhibition hall becomes a site (a grave) for

¹⁵ Iwaki, “Hēgeru no kansei-ron (*Ästhetik*): Kokoro no yamai o megutte” (Hegel’s *Ästhetik*: On the diseases of the mind), *Tetsugaku kenkyū* (Philosophical studies) (The Kyoto Philosophical Society) 564 (1997).

‘the demise of desire,’ a tomb preserving the history of the perspective of desire.

The above are my main views of Tsubaki’s works that I especially wanted to express in this essay. From here on, I would like to contemplate the expressive concepts of each room on the third floor, accompanied by Tsubaki’s words.

2). 12

[The massive open-pit miners in the 10 IN room are also the crew members of MUSHROOM. The faces I sampled for the project have been set as characters of a next-generation videogame by UV mapping. They are moved by an automated program and live for all eternity in virtual space, but here in this room, they are exhibited as dead, still images.]

Twelve enormous photographs of miners, printed out on aluminum at three meters in height, receive us in the first room of the third-floor exhibition hall. These works are based on the photographs Tsubaki took at the gold mines he visited in Johannesburg, South Africa. The enlarged miners will look their ‘temple visitors’ squarely in the eye, like ‘*Niō*.’¹⁶ According to Tsubaki, twelve is “a number that mankind has always been familiar with,” referring to “the 12 deities of Japanese Buddhism, the 12 apostles, the 12 Imams.” Conversely, they are also warriors destined to come back to life and sent to the battlefield once again, as well as simulations of “videogame characters.” **Rebirth** and **immortality** are no longer religious ideas, nor are they science fiction dreams. We are already living in an age where immortality can be made a reality through science. This room is the entrance into the temple of a godless age, an age without casualties, a tomb where the dead can come back to life at any moment. The pyramid’s **dream of resurrection** is about to become a reality today. The terror of a desire that tries to make everything regenerable. The photographs here have a direct semantic link with the next room.

3). 10 IN

[As Native American legend goes, there is no symbol of human desire as apt as an open-pit mine. In one swing of the primitive pickaxe, a reverse Babel with a diameter of several kilometers is formed in the blink of an eye. Photographed in September in Utah using an 8×10, etc.]

On the left-hand wall near the entrance to this room will be photographs of open-pit mines in Salt Lake City, Utah that Tsubaki photographed himself during his visit last year. What are shown in these photographs are enormous reverse-conical holes dug for mining, and the spiraling road that continues on and on to the bottom of these holes. Tsubaki says that “10 IN” refers to

¹⁶ [Buddha’s guardians. A pair of figures frequently standing on either side of a temple gate. TRANS.]

“10-inch nails,” or the desire of a massive excavator. There is no image that expresses the perpendicular movement of ‘the metaphysics of desire’ seen in the “Introduction” as straightforwardly as this. The endless desire for underground resources turns into a ‘perspective’ and keeps on drilling an enormous hole, and the end that this desire has reached (the point of the cone) is precisely the ‘vanishing point’ of desire. The ‘collapse’ of the ‘perspective of desire’ is implied here as well. The variety of battles fought for the underground resources of the earth are also nearing their end. Thus, these photographs are not mere reproductions of familiar social criticisms of the hard labor in mining sites and their exploitation by capitalists.

Incidentally, in the title of the exhibition (*Gold/White/Black*), “Gold” implies the underground mineral of the same name as well as the religious problem in the next room, and “Black” points to underground resources, oil in particular (“White” is discussed below). However, a more generic understanding of these three colors would be that they are implications of **death and funerals**, and, furthermore, they are frequently used as background colors (ground) for all colors (image). Perhaps, unexpected as it may be, this latter point is of importance. From this viewpoint, these colors are the background (ground) for a world drawn out by the ‘perspective of desire,’ and the world of desire develops by drawing various images on this ground.

On the right-hand side, there are ten evenly-spaced pillars, each fitted with an ingot on top. These ingots have “tapeworms and roundworms.” “The supreme tyranny of human kind” will cause them to be “destroyed by the alternate survival system of insects.” This is the artist’s message. Tsubaki has presented images of insects **exterior** to humans with works such as his enormous locust. Humans can only attain comprehension through their innate faculty of understanding phenomena, yet they have been under the impression that they can comprehend and control all. However, all they have is a phenomenal understanding from a human viewpoint that has nothing to do with other life forms. Other life forms attain comprehension through innate faculties of understanding phenomena of their own. Humans only understand this ‘humanly’ by way of ‘reason,’ and what they really ought to be aware of is **the possibility of external elements that they cannot control**. The ability to sense this faintly remains in humans today, and it appears in the form of the ‘shudder’ induced by particular species of insects, or by reptiles and nematodes. The in-depth study of this is ‘the aesthetics of ugliness.’¹⁷

For reference, here is the concept for this room that Tsubaki has sent me:

[The 10 ingots of 10 IN are the 10 Sephirot of Kabbalah, 12 canvases for the paintings. The paintings of the desire that delves underground and the desire that extends to outer

¹⁷ Regarding ‘the aesthetics of ugliness,’ see: Iwaki (ed.), ‘*Shū’ to ‘haijo’ no kansei-ron: Hitei-bi no rikigaku ni kansuru kiban kenkyū* (Theory of aesthetics of ‘ugliness’ and ‘omission’: Fundamental research on the mechanics of negative beauty), FY 2005–07 Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Fundamental Research A) (rep. Bunri Usami, associate professor, Faculty of Letters, Kyoto University) Research Report (Kyoto: Ken’ichi Iwaki, 2008).

space will consist of 12 panels, and together they will add up to 22. This will refer to the Sephirot, written with 22 Hebraic letters. The layout is calculated with the number 10 as the origin so that it will form 22 once again in the direction of the 12 miners. This refers to the duplication in the Old Testament, where man is created twice. There is a link to esoteric Buddhism as well. There is also a superficial reference to monotheism, but the animism embedded within gets in the way of philosophical disillusionment, a problem shared by all mankind.]

In regard to 'religion,' one may separate out 'animism (the belief in souls)' and 'fetishism,' and 'cosmic theology' and 'ontological theology.' This has been indicated by Kant. According to this, 'monotheism' is 'ontological theology,' and 'animism' is 'natural theology.' (*Theory of "Paralogismen,"* p. 265 ff.)

4). GOLD

[Footage of the Festival of Sacrifice in Bangladesh, and my project logo (RADIKAL DIALOGUE: a dialogue with no taboo) rotating on top of a replica of the door of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. They are painted with the fake gold paint used on *Kannon* statues.¹⁸ The staggering negative legacy produced by virtue (religion...)].

We are now entering the center of the tomb. A life-sized replica of the wooden door on the entrance of the Palestinian "Church of the Holy Sepulchre" lies on the floor, covered with gold paint. Placed on this door is a large, circular seal. This seal is encircled with a logo, RADIKAL DIALOGUE (a cross between "Radical Dialogue" and "Radikaler Dialog," hence an expression of Tsubaki's Japanese spirit of service for the Germans), and engraved inside the circle is the bust of a woman with her hands raised to each side, also painted gold. It is spoofing Starbucks, the American coffee chain that has spread all around the world. Look closely and see what has been spoofed and how. The STARBUCKS COFFEE logo has been replaced by RADIKAL DIALOGUE. This is of course charged with a political meaning. As it has been reported recently, there have been active protests against Starbucks in connection to the Israeli invasion of Gaza for their significant financial support of the Israeli West Bank barrier, the wall under construction by Israel to separate Palestinians and Jews. The seal represents the strong involvement of the market principle in religious issues. The problem is the surging market principle, a question that springs back to confront us Japanese. The desires of various countries swirl about in this land where tragedies repeatedly take place. Not only sealed but also laid on the ground, the door implies that prayer in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as the dialogue that once took place there between

¹⁸ [The bodhisattva of compassion widely venerated in East Asian Buddhism. TRANS.]

Palestinians and Jews, is now closed off because of the interests of major nations.

Various conflicts and frictions have erupted on this Jewish, Christian, and Islamic holy land, but previously there was communication between the people as well. Now, however, such dialogues have been forcefully taken away, and many lives are being taken away, too, by decisions made from an invisible central control tower. “Invisible,” because the decisions of Israeli leaders—and those of Hamas alike—are made within an extremely intricate network that cannot be reduced to the leader’s personal decisions or responsibility. Be it politics or economics, what surfaces here is the inherently violent nature of ‘the organization.’ Organizations are always driven by ‘the desire for the preservation of sameness,’ and this preservation necessitates **an opposing external world**. ‘The logic of the organization’ consists of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, **the truth behind the organization is that it is dependent on the external world**. Furthermore, the peak of the organization is **hollow**. Decisions are made based on commands (invisible pressure) from this peak, and the individuals on the front line have their lives taken away. The invisible instinct of such an organization constantly fabricates the idea that ‘the enemy = the external world’ in order to protect ‘the power of the interior.’ This logic is in effect regardless of the size of the organization, or the era or locality in which it exists. Today, ‘religion’ has become the ‘excuse’ for economics and politics. But what does it mean to ‘be able to become an excuse’? This inevitably connects to the question of ‘what religion is and how it ought to be.’ At this juncture, I would like to state my opinion as it stands today.

Religion is becoming a means for politics and economics. But now that the economy is gradually losing momentum, have we not reached the age of ‘thorough dialogues’? I believe this is Tsubaki’s message. For this dialogue to take place, no established ‘organization’ or a ‘central control tower’ that constantly ‘assumes’ the presence of an ‘external world’ may exist. There is neither an exterior nor an interior; if anything exists at all, it is a flexible community that is borne from dialogues between individuals who are able to agree with and criticize aspects of either side and to change themselves accordingly. The borderline region between the interior and the exterior will play an important role in this.

As I once wrote, “the borderline region” is the very place where those with contrary opinions can clash with one another in hostility, but also engage in dialogue and communicate, gradually coming to an actual understanding of and even to help one another. In this case, along with language (reason), a human commonality at the sensory level (the commonality of image perception) and dialogues based thereon are important. I believe this role is to be played by art (*Aesthetics as a Theory of Aisthesis*, p. iii ff.). At this point, the existent perspective of desire will become meaningless. However, I feel extremely pessimistic about this becoming a reality. It seems to be impossible—and yet, I also believe this is the only way.

Video footage of the Eid-al-Adha, or the Festival of Sacrifice, in Bangladesh will be

projected on the wall. The artist traveled to Palestine and Bangladesh to collect materials himself. The footage of the Festival of Sacrifice will demonstrate the difference in the meaning of 'blood' in the two worlds. How does one respond to the question toward 'religion' that Tsubaki poses in this space? I hereby present my thoughts, as a gesture of participation in the discourse about the possibility of dialogues.

The conflicts in Palestine that continue to this day, the tragedy of the situation only worsening thanks to technological developments, originates in its qualification as a 'holy place' by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The problem held by 'religion' is clearly visible here. This problem is the one that I pointed out in the "Introduction": the confusion of 'recognition,' 'experience,' and 'thought,' that is to say, between 'that which is assumed (hypothesis)' by 'reason' qua faculty of 'language/symbols' and 'that which can actually be confirmed by the senses' or 'that which actually exists.' This confusion supports the conflicts, and with the intertwining of politics, the economy, and the fruits of reason such as science and technology—that is to say, all kinds of 'speculations'—it has become so tangled that it can no longer be unraveled. At any rate, the confusion between 'recognition' and 'thought' is ruling over all, and unless it is eliminated, the 'thorough dialogue' proposed by Tsubaki will remain impossible in the present world, leaving temporary compromise as the only solution. This problem is not exclusive to Palestine. Conflicts caused by this confusion and their resulting violence are taking place all over the world at all levels: between governments, ethnic groups, societies, individuals, and so on. This is what must be contemplated in this room: whether we ourselves are guilty of this 'confusion' or not.

Regarding 'religion,' the history told by the sacred text known as **mythology**, secular **biographies** including **autobiographies**, and **the past** as presented in these are **pasts that are always seen from the present of each era**, and are **arranged and posited (assumed) by 'reason' (language/symbols)**. They are, in other words, **fiction**. 'Holy places' are also always 'assumptions' created by posterity, and the same applies for 'the "being" of God.' Everything that is called an 'origin' is the creation of a rational desire that seeks the **essence** or **foundation** of the phenomenal world, 'dark holes' that cannot be confirmed no matter how far one goes. It is a 'dark hole' because origins and essences will always be 'assumptions' ('ideas') that can never be grasped.

We have seen in the mines that desire is amplified by reason and travels in both parallel and perpendicular directions, ultimately heading for the infinite 'conical' point (dark hole = vanishing point of the perspective of desire). The same applies to the mental world. A 'dark hole' is a term that Hegel has used to refer to the 'self' (see the essay in note 15). The 'self (me)' is an 'idea' that cannot be reached no matter how deep one digs. When this idea of the 'self' as a 'dark hole' is posited (assumed) as a supreme being in a position up high, where finite humans cannot reach, it becomes the being known as 'God.' It is 'the absolute self,' 'the self of self,' the 'absolute origin' of everything, 'the supreme cause.' When its 'realness' is asserted, it becomes 'theological

ontology.’ Arguments take place over the question of whether such a thing exists or not, whether there is an ‘absolute cause’ that cannot be traced back any further, an ‘ultimate cause’ from which everything originates. This argument cannot be won by either side and is therefore an ‘antinomy.’ It is simultaneously ‘scientific discourse (cosmology)’ and ‘theology,’ and because the assertion cannot hold true in either respect, it is an ‘antinomy.’ The following is the reason why neither can hold true.

What reason (language) posits (assumes) as ‘the absolute origin’ is posited as being ‘ultimate,’ the actual existence of which cannot be verified. Even if its realness is indeed verified, its ‘cause,’ in turn, must be assumed. On the contrary, **there is no such thing** as ‘an absolute cause,’ so when one says that everything is part of ‘a chain of causal links,’ the belief in the realness of **an infinite chain** of cause-and-effect—an idea that cannot be recognized by finite humans—is implied (*Theory of “Paralogismen,”* p. 277 ff.).

Both ‘God’ and ‘holiness’ are ‘ideas’ that have been posited (assumed) by reason. However, religion creates uniformity through faith in the being of these assumed ideas, thus endeavoring to maintain the organization. This confusion of ideas and reality, or, in Kant’s terminology, ‘paralogism’ [*Paralogismus*], is the ontological basis of religious conflicts that cannot be resolved.

Yet, this is not to say that ‘religion’ is unnecessary and that ‘God’ cannot ‘be.’ ‘Religion’ is necessary for mankind, and ‘God’ is surely a ‘being,’ too. However, ‘God’ and ‘religion’ are not ‘reality.’ Rather, they are necessary as ‘ideological beings’ that make it possible to reflect on the fact that human acts are never absolute. In this sense, ‘God’ is ‘omnipresent.’ ‘God’ is a ‘being’ in all hearts as an ‘idea’ that observes from a distance and speaks to each person when he or she engages in self-reflection from a place removed from oneself, straightens out his or her actions, and discuss how the world ought to be. ‘Reason’ (the faculty of language/symbols) is a faculty characteristic of such persons; it is the faculty of giving direction to experience from a place removed from experience. In Kantian terms, ‘God’ is a *focus imaginarius* that can never come into focus as a ‘reality,’ or an ‘idea’ that reason has established so that humans may reflect upon their finiteness (Ibid., p. 280). A ‘thorough dialogue’ begins with recognizing this in one another. At this point, ‘the holy land’ becomes the grounds for anyone of any creed to praise their own gods, and the place (‘idea’) for all persons to reflect on his or her finiteness and engage in discussions.

I would like to argue the possibility for the ‘art museum’ to become such a ‘site of discussion.’

5). WE’LL MEET AGAIN

[When we enter the final room, first the “METAPOLICE” that we saw earlier stares at us, and beyond this, there are large drawings on either wall.]

[Works that refer directly to the wall in Palestine. Israel insists that it is a fence, not a wall. I have ironically drawn a picture of its reuse as an international space station, a banal settlement made out of concrete. An homage to Kubrick is also included here, with a presentiment of the uncanny shadow of a neo-Cold War and Israel’s massive nuclear arsenal. Each painting will be covered with jokes I collected in Palestine.]

The wall in Palestine implied in the previous room crumbles and falls down in a world of ‘desire’ that is headed infinitely upward in the form of a ‘space station.’ The large images here are oil paintings, the main reference materials of which are images from (memories of) the science fiction films of Kubrick and Tarkovsky, transmitted from the computer (brain) set up in the landing of the staircase between the first and second floors. A monochromatic world, a world of death unfurls. In the background, clouds taken from the Internet turbulently cover the sky. Everything is in suspension; some things are falling down. It appears that *The Last Judgment* of the Space Age has taken place. In relation to the layout of the third floor as a whole, this room is symmetrical to the mines to the right of the entrance. This contrast is taken into consideration. While the room on the right represents desire with a downward vector, this room on the left represents desire with a vector heading straight upward. Yet in both rooms, desire ultimately meets its downfall. Thus, the ending of the tale of ‘the metaphysics of desire’ is indicated from various angles by the structure of the images.

Understanding cannot converge into one simple conclusion, and the ‘Palestinian jokes’ on the images, collected on-site by the artist himself, suggest that it must not happen. The Jewish have also come up with many excellent jokes. High-quality ‘humor,’ including jokes, is made and understood in an intellectual world. ‘Humor’ requires an ‘intellectual world’ more strongly than ‘beauty’ does (*Aesthetics as a Theory of Aisthesis*, chap. 2, sec. 3). ‘Humor’ requires an intellect that has the freedom to remove itself from ‘the present situation’ and to take out and enlarge the contradictions of the delusions that society or one’s self has fallen into, or **a multiperspectival intelligence**. By reading the words selected from jokes, we will realize that we have no right to denounce the conflicts in Palestine simply as inhuman acts by savages. Are we not the ones who are ‘savages,’ pulling simple gags without a shred of intelligence for the sake of instant pleasure? In contrast, the Palestinians and Israelis give hope of being mutually capable of sharing an intelligent dialogue. What I see in Tsubaki’s use of the jokes is this hope and the importance of ‘intelligence.’ This ‘intelligence’ is sure to make clear the relativity between the different ‘perspectives of desire’ each time.

[Conclusion]

And so we return to the munitions factory on the first floor, with a great many subjects on our minds. This factory, too, now suggests a deeper meaning than before.

The whole of the exhibition is produced by an extremely elaborate concept and technology. The works that elicit our thought take shape for the first time through their creation and the way that they are exhibited. The scrupulous creation of the works, the high density of the concept in exhibiting the works, the thoughtful consideration of the exhibition space—this is the soul of art. The structure of this beautiful tomb (temple) and the loss of the original meaning of the images that are referred to—by being enlarged or lined up in particular numbers or transmuted—make the works polysemous. The whole is no longer merely an irresponsible criticism of international problems by one Japanese artist, but a deep, broad question directed to each viewer. A ‘thorough dialogue’ is one that must be accepted and put into thought on an individual basis.

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