DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14809195
Original Scientific Article Received: November 8, 2024; Accepted: December 10, 2024

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The End as Emptiness: A Transcultural Reflection on Architectural Practices

ABSTRACT: The logic of the tetralemma, as interpreted by the Japanese philosopher Yamauchi Tokuryū, integrates space as an in-between sphere in thinking. In his understanding, the tetralemma allows for a combination of four relational operations: one of identity, one of contradiction, the complementarity of both, and even the negation of this complementarity. I will examine the notion of the end in these four parameters, regarding the relevance of this reflection for the architectural practice and theory in inter- and transcultural terms. To that end, one example from contemporary and one from traditional Japanese architecture is discussed. Because of the philosophical context of Yamauchi's research in the 1970s, his argumentation is compared to a critique on the metaphysical background of the idea of identity, by reflecting on conceptual contributions of Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Bernhard Waldenfels, to question the tetralemma in the horizon of differentiation.

KEYWORDS: emptiness, tetralemma, differentiation, responsivity, practice

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The End of Doing and Beyond: Hannah Arendt

A legitimate interest in practice from a theoretical viewpoint might be that activities shape disciplines. Historically speaking, innovative activities lead to correlative disciplines, subsequently institutionalized for long-term development in the practical field itself—as *métier*—or further expanded upon theoretical reflection.[1] The theoretical involvement depends on an idea of knowledge that differs from the practical understanding of knowing. In a functional sense, knowledge might be understood as serving the practice, as useful, while a theoretical interest in knowledge for the sake of itself establishes an indirect relation with practice by reflecting on it.[2] The benefit for theory and practice then can be the enlargement of both fields, creating an overlapping zone. In this way, we have knowledge for the sake of practice, for the sake of theory, and for the sake of both.

A modern classic to reflect on this spectrum of practice and theory is the political theory of Hannah Arendt. In her book *The Human Condition* (1958), she addresses four typical activities: laboring, working, acting, and contemplating.[3] They are characterized as follows:

Laboring serves the needs of our bodily life, it never stops as long as we live and forms a necessary cycle of everyday practices (like consuming food, digesting it)—its temporality is *endless*, and it knows no freedom, only the pleasure to live.

Working is producing objects we can use to create a stable world; it is something you can do on your own, in a studio, where you can decide when to start the process and when to stop it—so, there is a *means to an end*; its logic is utilitarian. In terms of freedom and pleasure, it is highly ambivalent: we can lighten our burden by transmitting needs to

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[1] Just think of building as an activity since human settlements have existed and its historical forms of organization starting with studio practices in antiquity to early modern guilds and academies through to institutional contexts today.

[2] Socrates advocated a form of knowledge that must be proven by practice, like virtue for example (cf. Plato, *Protagoras*, 349d–351b. See the comment of Lino Bianco in his article "The Unity of Courage and Wisdom in Plato's Protagoras" regarding Socrates: "[...] instead of saying that knowledge is a condition for 'manliness', he claims knowledge is 'manliness', practically realized in this virtue, for example. Published in Philosophia, Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University, on https://philosophia-bg.com/archive/philosophia-11-2016/the-unity-of-courage-and-wisdom-in-platos-protagoras/, accessed 3 December 2024). Aristotle instead conceptualized knowledge for the sake of itself. From this point of view, he addressed explicitly fine arts in the first philosophical study on artistic practice, his book *Poetics*.

[3] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Doubleday, New York, 1958.

objects—instead of using my fist as a hammer, the produced hammer works without feelings of its own, so I liberate myself via the thing from physical effort. Freedom in this sense means a partial liberation from something, a shift from bodily activity to shared activity with an object. The material we need for any physical object is again the result of working: by forming matter into useful units for production. Arendt emphasizes that this process always damages nature, either by killing natural life or by disrupting natural flow. In addition, pleasure is ambivalent in this case because our joy of getting the pieces we want is intrinsically connected with violence against nature.

Acting is something you do regarding others. It implies speech, a promise, or an excuse—for example, oral speech acts.[4] Acting is ambivalent in the sense that you cannot make it "unhappen" once it has been done, as you can do with a physical object by destroying it. It knows a beginning, then, but *no end*, being shared by others, carried on by them. Different to working, it is by definition pluralistic and open ended. Therefore, it is not just a liberating shift toward a means to an end, as in working—it is radically liberating in setting a process free between people. The pleasure here might be the shared experience of real emancipation, for example, a new chapter in political history.

Contemplating differs from the other three activities by not addressing a personal need, practical interest, or social engagement in the first place, but by taking distance from the self in opening up toward general observations of natural and cultural phenomena. This reduction from daily life interests follows its own purpose, a theoretical interest in knowledge as such or knowledge as indirect reference for practical activities. Contemplating can be done individually, experienced as a liberation from one's own focus, and as such constitutes a pleasure in enriching one's own horizon. As thinking, it might be embedded in daily practices, too, from early age until a person dies.

For certain reasons Arendt emphasizes acting in her reflection on these activities. The crucial one is her argumentation for our motivation to labor, to work, to act, to think. We are not born to die, she states—being born means to take initiative on your own, to take up your life, in laboring its needs, in working for objects related to it, in acting with

[4] On the notion of speech acts, see J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1975.

others in its favor, and in contemplating it profoundly. The diverse activities respond differently to the threat of death: the labor will stop, the resulting object stops the work, the thinking vanishes with your own consciousness—only acting has no end in yourself or a thing. For sure, it is not eternal, endless in a strict sense. Nevertheless, it always goes beyond yourself. The process it sets free is not only liberating in the fullest sense compared to the other activities—it also cannot be stopped by personal death. Your life must finish, though not what that life has done to others. Working can support this ongoing process via carriers of memory, objects such as books, buildings such as archives. Yet work cannot replace the action needed, to transcend endings, following a logic of means to ends. The same goes for the automatization of the carrier today, namely, by AI.

If we concentrate on architecture via this scheme of activities, the elements of working still seem to fit with its practice: in principle, designing, constructing, and building can be done by one person, getting from nature the materials one needs, beginning a certain day and ending the project after a certain amount of time, following the logic of means to an end.[5] And as activities shape disciplines, a utilitarian logic has become institutionalized, when we consider today's typical descriptions of architectural practices, such as those documented in regulations for the payment of architectural services, where clear periods within processes are defined, such as starting with first inquiries, adding pre-planning, continuing with the design, the phase of approval, then of execution, later of transmission to the client, and so on.[6] Architectural working in this sense is teleologically motivated by an end to means, which means are themselves understood as functional.

This sense is correct. Yet if it supposes to be the complete picture, then our understanding of architectural practice has not fundamentally changed since the teleological thinking in Greek antiquity. It is time, now, to compare a modern classic like Arendt with a contemporary philosophical position, especially one with an explicit interest in architecture.

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[5] Consider, for instance, the report by Henry David Thoreau on building a house in his book *Walden*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, chapter 1, "Economy."

[6] See, for example, the German regulation for conducting architectural services called "Honorarordnung für Architekten und Ingenieure (HOAI)," documented in English by the Federal Chamber of German Architects, https://en.bak.de/practical-guidelines-for-the-implementation-of-the-performance-competition/, (accessed 5 November 2024).

An Intercultural Comparison: Günter Figal

Utilitarianism is focused on human needs. While the example of a house is already central in Aristotelian physics, as the phenomenologist Günter Figal reminds us, it is never conceptualized within an existing space.[7] So, without doubt, human needs motivate architecture, and architecture is realized via certain ideas—yet this approach still says nothing about the concrete carrier of architecture itself: space. In our globalized, intercultural times, therefore, Figal refers to a different tradition of building as a telltale example, the Japanese one. Derived from the development of garden architecture in Japan, the word "*shakkei*" (借景) means borrowed scenery. This concept is not bound to gardening anymore, for it is used also regarding the coherence between already existing and new buildings, as Figal demonstrates exemplarily in his analysis of Tadao Ando's approach to design, in developing the project of a conference pavilion for the furniture and decoration company Vitra in Weil am Rhein, Germany, next to the Vitra Design Museum, designed by Frank Gehry.[8]

The idea of borrowed scenery in landscape starts with an understanding of the landscape, the surroundings, where and how the architectural intervention should take place—something evident for practical operations everywhere. The difference between traditionally Western and Japanese approaches is marked by a word that is less standardized in European architectural conceptualizations: "borrowed." What seems to be the same action is understood and in this way done differently by thinking of "*shakkei*." While Arendt has correctly addressed our highly ambivalent relationship with nature (our interrupting or destroying it for our own purposes), this conflict is contrasted here by the idea of borrowing, which implies taking, too, but includes a certain degree of responsibility for what is taken (which we lose by thinking in an opposition between nature and humans, in a rationalist Cartesian point of view, for example). In this sense, the first exploration of a landscape in finding a way to build there should concentrate on the landscape instead of one's own will and need. This perspective already differs from an anthropocentric approach. Respecting the carrier of architecture, a building should not fight its conditions in the landscape; rather, it should respond to it, be

[7] "The Aristotelian house stands nowhere (...)." ("*Das Aristotelische Haus steht nirgendwo* [...])," translated by the author. G. Figal, "Entwurf mit geliehener Landschaft: Phänomenologische Überlegungen zum Möglichkeitssinn in der Architektur," in A. Grossmann (ed.), *Kreativität denken*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2020, p. 164.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 164–167.

carried by it, yesterday just like today.[9] The space of a landscape is not limited or fixed; it changes. Its evidence comes not from a break or pause in action, as resting from something; it is resting in itself, without being for something or somebody.

The task of the architect is, then, to design with respect for these characteristics. How can in a certain situation what is unfixed, *unlimited*, changing carry specific needs, intentions, actions, functions? Figal finds it astonishing that even "a building as functional as the conference pavilion on the Vitra campus is done in a way that you simply enjoy spending time there, regardless of whether you have something to do or not."[10] Part of the experience of this space is the way to the conference room itself: it is explicitly so narrow that everyone must enter it alone, that no small talk is possible between two people going toward it, as a moment of shared silence before the discussion, the presentation. Inspired by Japanese garden architecture, Ando designs paths as experiences of their own, in walking, not just as direct ways between point A and point B, but again: without fighting functionality, either. Distances are bridged, yet the bridges are never negligible—they are characterized by detours, by proportions of steps which shift from standards, and so on. A building that rests in itself like a landscape must be clear and evident in its appearance as well as in its function.[11] Movement has to be facilitated, but not encouraged for the sake of itself, as change demands a balance of movement and standing, sitting, lying still. And it is the immobile that marks a place, not only formally, but as a liberation of one's own physical and mental

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[9] In "The Question Concerning Technology," Martin Heidegger characterizes *pre-modern* technology as being built into the landscape, in contrast with *modern* technology, which addresses the landscape via its own conditions. This might be a question worth reflecting in addition to this aspect, thinking of a possible intercultural comparison between his differentiation in this case and the tradition of "*shakkei*," including the difference of a historical break as marked by Heidegger versus historical continuation as emphasized by Figal regarding the mentioned aspect of the Japanese tradition (cf. M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Garland, New York/London, 1977, pp. 14–15).

[10] "*Selbst ein erklärter Zweckbau wie der Konferenzpavillon auf dem Vitra-Campus ist so, dass man sich einfach gern in ihm aufhält, unabhängig davon, ob man dort etwas zu tun hat oder nicht*," translated by the author. G. Figal, *Tadao Ando: Raum Architektur Moderne*, modo, Freiburg/Breisgau, 2017, p. 90.

[11] Here, a comparison of Figal's position and the one of Heidegger in his text "The Origin of the Work of Art" could lead to the very nuanced reflection of Fabian Heubel in analyzing East-Asian philosophies with regard to fundamental ontology (see F. Heubel, *Schlucht und Atemwandel*, Matthes & Seitz, Berlin, spring 2025) — especially in addressing the section "The work and truth," where Heidegger states that a Greek temple "portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley." (M. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row, New York, 1971, p. 88.)

movements, so that *finally*, as Figal states, a place allows oneself *just to be*—which might be a definition for home, recognizing evidence within yourself in correspondence with the space you inhabit.

In this section, I contrasted the teleological approach mentioned at the end of the first part, with a very different tradition, as one example of possible intercultural comparisons. It led to the concept of "*shakkei*," and how it is cultivated still in the practice of contemporary architecture. Figal does not mention anything about its conceptual horizon, in order to understand better the principles he recognizes in the examples described. Therefore, I turn to a study by the Japanese philosopher Yamauchi Tokuryū, not only to recognize different traditions, but also to reflect on possibly comparable logical premises in Western and East-Asian conceptualizations, to find transcultural bridges in the context of our reflection on "the end" in architectural practice and theory.

To End, and Not to End, that is the Question: Yamauchi Tokuryū

In 1974, Yamauchi Tokuryū published his study *Rogosu to renma* ロゴスとレンマ, for the first time translated into a Western language in 2020, by the philosopher and orientalist Augustin Berque into French, under the title *Logos et lemme* (*Logos and Lemma*).[12] It is an exemplary analysis of logical principles in Western thinking compared to equivalent assumptions in traditions from India and China which have strongly influenced Eastern thought in general. This intercultural perspective on the basis of logical understanding is developed further by Yamauchi into a transcultural, contemporary conceptualization. It is this transcultural dimension which offers a promising model for a bridge regarding these different backgrounds.

Let me briefly summarize the main ideas of this voluminous and complex book. Central to Western philosophy, Yamauchi outlines the following elements:

4. The idea of *identity*, that A is A, beginning with Parmenides' concept of the being.
5. The idea of *contradiction*, that A is not A, departing from Zenon's reflection on movement regarding the being.
6. The idea of an *excluded third*, that identity and contradiction cannot exist at the same time, as formulated by Aristotle.

[12] T. Yamauchi, *Logos et lemme: pensée occidentale, pensée orientale*, CNRS, Paris, 2020.

The Japanese philosopher then analyzes in detail the relation of these premises with their modern reflection since the Enlightenment. Here, I will concentrate on the most telltale change, according to Yamauchi, namely, that Hegel put the second principle in the first place, to think via *contradiction* the development toward *identity*, with the dialectical modus operandi of the *excluded third*. So, in Western thinking, *identity* seems to be something to begin or to end with, in a metaphysical or historical dimension of development. Having studied with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in Freiburg/Breisgau, Germany, in 1920-21, the question of *identity*, linked to beginning and end, remained foremost in Yamauchi's retrospective view, reflecting a Western perspective.

The logical instruments in India and China, per Yamauchi, operate with comparable elements, but in different ways. He denotes their comparability with the Greek word *lemma* (λῆμμα, *lêmma*). It can be translated as premise, assumption, deriving from λαμβάνω, *lambánō*, "I take." In the West, the notion of the dilemma is familiar, as two parallel options excluding each other. We are less familiar with another notion, the tetralemma. The dilemma is a typical form of Taoist reflections in ancient China since the sixth century BC, while the tetralemma was developed by Indian thinkers like Nāgārjuna, who lived around 150-250 AD. Let us begin with the more familiar concept, the dilemma.

Yamauchi gives the example of Taoist thinker Zhuangzi (莊子 / 庄子) who quotes Confucius (孔夫子) in his response to Yanhui: "*La mère de Mengsun mourut. Or lui, sans pleur ni larme, restait équanime. Aux funérailles, il n'était pas triste.*"[13] (In the English translation: "Mengsun's mother died. But he, without weeping or tears, remained equanimous. At the funeral, he was not sad.") Mengsun, one might say, went beyond knowing, that he became sad without being sad, that he reached the bottom of sadness, that he even surpassed it. Departing from the dilemma, Taoist thinking accentuates movement not by contradiction, like Hegel did, but by emptying out, by changing movement, beyond direct, confrontative relations, toward regenerating mindsets. The difference between both positions lies in the fact that in the dilemma a third level of sublation is not included. Mediation, then, is understood as shifting

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 442–443. Cf. my reflection on a similar story collected in *Taoist Teachings from the Book of Lieh-Tzü*, London, 1912, pp. 102f., in V. Mühleis, *Girl with Dead Bird: Intercultural Observations*, Leuven University Press, Leuven/Cornell University Press, New York, 2018 pp. 127–128.

via dilemmas, not as a process directed by dialectical synthesis (cf. Figure 1 and 2):

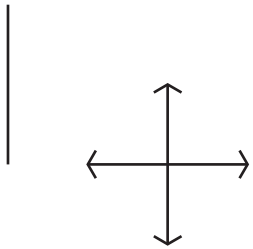

Figure 1. Dilemma

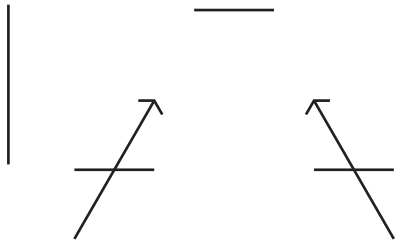

Figure 2. Dialectics

The nuance between the ancient Chinese and the ancient Indian tradition, in Yamauchi's terms, lies in the shift between a thinking of dilemma to tetralemma, as Nāgārjuna conceptualized it. A tetralemma includes four options. And these four options, with which Yamauchi focuses on his thinking, contain all three Western principles of dialectic thought, as well as the Chinese structuring of reflecting in multiple dilemmas. The four options are:

1. Something is what it is (A is A, *identity*).
2. Something is not what it is (A is not A, *contradiction*).
3. Something is what it is as well as not what it is (A is A and A is not A, the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).
4. Something is neither what it is nor what it is not (the *denial of the complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

The third option is the one which defines the dynamic of the four levels: the tetralemma. Now, the excluded third is overruled by stating a possible *complementarity of identity and contradiction*. Regarding the example of Zhuangzi, Yanhui was irritated by the behavior of Mengsun, because he did not seem to be sad when facing his mother's death. First, he was not identical with the state he was expected to be in; second, he was neither contradicting it, nor was he happy, either. Moreover, third, (the important step of the tetralemma), he lived through the complementarity of being sad and experiencing its changing—not toward happiness, but toward surpassing even this complementarity, by reaching a state beyond just argumentation and knowing, a state of incorporation.

In both ways, the paradox is not overruled by harmonization via the excluded third—it is accepted as complementarity. Nāgārjuna systematizes what is addressed via the strategy of articulating phenomena in dilemmas. Indirectness remains a premise for thinking in dilemmas and the tetralemma. The process is basically a shifting movement, not a willfully directed one. It is more a spatial operation than a focus in time (cf. Figure 3):

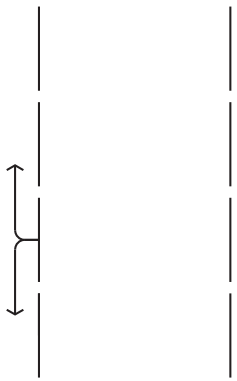

Figure 3. Tetralemma

This has fundamental consequences for thinking "the end" and for understanding practice. The spiritual link between India and Japan is Buddhism, via China, and with Buddhism previous traditions were partially combined in these regions, like Taoism in China or polytheistic forms of faith in Japan. One of the most striking counterexamples of a Western understanding of building in terms of means to an end is the famous Japanese temple Ise Jingū, 伊勢神宮, in the city of Ise, Mie prefecture.[14] It is the most sacred Shintō shrine (a religion that combines ancient forms of Japanese worship for gods with Buddhist ideas). For 1,300 years, the main shrine on the site has been replaced every twenty years; the next reconstruction will take place in October 2033. Therefore, an identical copy with the same materials and techniques is built over an eight-year period next to the predecessor. It takes four years to prepare the wood, and only hinoki 檜 cypress trees are used (some of them must be 200 years old for the correct height; the one for the entrance of the building as many as 400 years). Since the fourteenth century, the trees have been

[14] See: https://www.isejingu.or.jp/, (accessed 24 October 2024).

cultivated in other Japanese regions, too, to supply the continuous need. Every phase during the process is marked by ritual ceremonies. When the new version is finished, the materials from the old construction will be recycled in other shrines all over Japan.

In this conceptualization a tradition of perpetual rebuilding the same is started, by shifting periodically between two copies of previous versions. This process enforces the continuation of manufactural knowledge in service of a building that forms a medium for spiritual pilgrimage, the organization of materials over periods of even 400 years, the circulation of these materials in a network of sacred places all over the country. The *identity* of the copy does not depend on contradiction, but on shifting within parallels, in being next to each other, like a dilemma. Yet this in-between movement stimulates ritual practices, technical ones, such as planning, organizing, and distributing activities, involving whole communities and the country. The *complementarity* of being (*identity*) and not being (as *contradiction*) is developed through shifts within this parallelism.

The next dimension that Nāgārjuna addresses—the negation of this complementarity, in reaching emptiness—cannot be carried by a materialized building, as it signifies the dimension beyond birth and death, nirvana. Perhaps, however, it can be evoked via architecture, just as Figal mentioned was the principal characteristic of Ando's buildings and sites in his approach of emptiness as in-between space on its own, not as a distance to cross efficiently. While attention for beginning and end mark a room, it does not define the feeling of being in it. Something else must come into place: nothing. If we ask ourselves what Western architecture might learn from this approach, then it is the complete *complementary* dimension of action, namely: non-action—to what extent can I avoid intention, will, direct comprehension, in favor of non-defined in-between spaces, transitional spaces, responsibilities of others, invitations for co-creation, not only to overrule innovation by innovation, but rather by including sustainable "exnovation" too, for example. I have emphasized the complementarity of this aspect with action. Again, it is not a question of either/or, but of a subtle balance. This balance is not evident: not in the competence-driven curricula of architectural studies, the utilitarian demands of the professional field, or the competitive economic needs for production.

So far, then, the intercultural perspective. In transcultural terms, Yamauchi proposes a change of order in the logic of the tetralemma. In Buddhism, the main purpose is to liberate yourself from both *identity*

and its *contradiction* via the passage of their *complementarity* toward emptying out in the dimension of neither/nor. For transcultural communication, the Japanese philosopher aims for an integration of all four elements, instead of seeing them in a hierarchy toward emptiness. Therefore, he proposes to switch the third and the fourth elements, so that his proposal offers the following scheme:

1. Something is what it is (A is A, *identity*).
2. Something is not what it is (A is not A, *contradiction*).
3. Something is neither what it is nor what it is not (the *denial of the complementarity of identity and contradiction*).
4. Something is what it is as well as not what it is (A is A and A is not A, the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

This outline looks strange—how can one deny something before it is established? Remember, though, Yamauchi's emphasis on Hegel's modern switch of the first and second principle, to start with *contradiction* with regard to *identity*. With this in mind, the scheme is already different:

1. Something is not what it is (A is not A, *contradiction*).
2. Something is what it is (A is A, *identity*).
3. Something is neither what it is nor what it is not (the *denial of the complementarity of identity and contradiction*).
4. Something is what it is as well as not what it is (A is A and A is not A, the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

Now, the order of the first and second principle are echoed in the order of the third and fourth, in each case placing *contradiction* and *denial* in front of *identity* and *complementarity*. While *contradiction* is formed by two opposing sides and their mediation results in the unity of *identity*, the *denial* of *complementarity* opens the in-between space for the establishment of a parallel existence of what is there and what is not. To Hegel, mediation is a synthesizing process, depending on the third level of sublation (cf. fig. 2)—to Yamauchi, the medium of emptiness (neither/nor) allows for the viewpoint of the parallelism of *identity* and its *contradiction* in the same space (as well as [cf. fig. 1 and 3]). As such, he opens the logic up to genuine spatial thinking. This counts for architectural practice and theory in both ways. Figal points to the question of emptiness in Ando's work—Yamauchi shows how to think it.

4. Transcultural Potential Within Traditional European Thought

In his intercultural comparison, Yamauchi focuses on representative Western positions that differ conspicuously from Eastern thinking, with Aristotle and Hegel in the foreground. Both philosophers can be regarded as advocates of the maxim "knowledge for the sake of knowledge," grounded in the development of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, too. Their Japanese colleague taught us that this thinking lacks a spatial understanding in the core of its dialectical logic. That seems paradoxical, as this logic was established via Euclidian geometrical thinking, which is seen as a basis for spatial measurements. The main difference consists of whether we think existing space—as Yamauchi proposes it—or we construct in space via non-spatial units, points? In the West, the premise of being traditionally demands an introduction of defined elements in space—points, lines, surfaces, three-dimensional volumes, and so forth—to fill space with filled units.[15]

In the Western tradition, a critique of the aforementioned maxim started with Romanticism, with thinkers like Friedrich Schlegel in Germany and Søren Kierkegaard in Denmark. The bottom line of this criticism is the demand for existential meaning of conceptualizations that highly influence our lives. The phenomenologist Rudolf Boehm analyzed in detail the problematic differentiation of the maxim "knowledge for the sake of knowledge" in modern times, when the philosophical premise became one for the natural sciences and in the derivate form of "production for the sake of production" one for an industrialized, capitalistic society.[16]

Especially in Eastern Europe, this existential criticism of the Enlightenment was well received, in the context of also different Christian traditions in the Orthodox churches compared to the West. In his study *Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy* (1936),[17] the Russian philosopher Lev Shestov addresses the lack of a spatial understanding within Western logic, too, in comparison with the spiritual dimension in Kierkegaard's thinking:

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[15] Cf. the understanding of the point as smallest entity, unity in L. B. Alberti, *On Painting*, Penguin Classics, London, 1991, paragraph 2, p. 37: "The first thing to know is that a point is a sign which one might say is not divisible into parts."

[16] R. Boehm, *Ökonomie und Metaphysik*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2004.

[17] Cf. L. Shestov, *Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Oh., 1969, p. 29.

> When all possibilities come to an end for man's thinking, new possibilities are "revealed" for faith. An example from elementary geometry can serve to make somewhat clearer to us [...] the way in which Kierkegaard perceived faith. It is impossible to draw more than one perpendicular to a straight line from a point on a two-dimensional plane. And if any line occupies the place of the perpendicular, that privileged position is forever unattainable by all the other innumerable straight lines at large in the universe; the laws of contradiction, of the excluded third, etc., keep that fortunate and privileged line safe [...]. But what is impossible on a two-dimensional plane suddenly becomes possible when we pass from plane to solid geometry; when, enriched by a new dimension, we transform a flat surface into three-dimensional space: an infinite number of perpendiculars can be drawn to a line from one and the same point [...]. Every kind of understanding, every kind of knowledge, every *intelligere* takes place on a plane surface, is by its very nature in conflict with the new dimension and tries with all its might to compress and flatten the human—all too human, in its estimation—*ridere, lugere et detestari* into this plane. And conversely, the latter break away from the plane where *intelligere* has pressed them down, toward a freedom [...].[18]

At this juncture, Shestov makes use of a distinction formulated by Baruch de Spinoza that one ought not laugh (*ridere*) about the actions of humanity, nor cry (*lugere*) over them, nor detest (*detestari*) them, yet understand *(intelligere*) them instead.[19] Friedrich Nietzsche's critical commentary on that point, in the fourth book of his *Gay Science*, is somewhere in the background of Shestov's reading, when he designates cognition as two-dimensional and exclusive, opposing what is all too human to it, to the benefit of space and freedom.[20]

The step from two to three dimensions is evident for all spatial exploration. That is not the point. The difference that Shestov emphasizes is the question of how to reach three dimensions. From Aristotle to George Spencer-Brown, to draw a line marks the beginning of logical

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[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 223f.

[19] The quote comes from the first chapter of Spinoza's *Tractatus Politicus* (Introduction, Section 4): "*Sedulo curavi humanas actiones non ridere, non lugere neque detestari sed intelligere.*" (Cf. Benedict de Spinoza, *The Political Works*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, p. 262.)

[20] Cf. F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Random House, New York, 1974, Book 4, No. 333 ("The meaning of knowing"), pp. 261f.

and spatial operations in the West.[21] Here, the third dimension follows the second. Shestov instead claims the second within the third. The consequence for designing and constructing is that a harmonization of the third dimension ruled by only the first two dimensions is excluded for the sake of spatial freedom. This means, the flat plan is not the main reference, it is mere support. Again, this seems evident. Yet the fundamental difference becomes visible in the conceptualization of systemized linear perspective since the Renaissance in the West, compared to Orthodox icon paintings with a non-harmonized, multi-perspectival coherence and buildings designed with respect to purpose of those paintings. That purposeful design not only concerns churches, but also pertains to regular households in Russia, where a niche is reserved—called "krasnii ugol" (*красный уголь*), "the red" or "the beautiful corner"—for an icon. Is the plan a matrix for harmonization in service of an in-itself-not spatial thinking, operating via always already filled-in elements? Or is it embedded in a genuine spatial operation of constructing?[22]

With Yamauchi we understand that the answer to this question can be logically thought beyond dialectical limits, in framing the decisive factor of the excluded third by the enlarging operations of "neither/nor" and "as well as." The principal question is: how do plan and space correspond? And the answer was already suggested in the paraphrase from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the title of section three of this article: "to end, and not to end." The possibilities are the following:

1. The harmonization of plan and space—this approach demands the identification of both via one logic, as in dialectics, Euclidean geometry. The copy established in space confirms the logical assumptions and marks the *end* of the process (*identity*).
2. The response of plan to space—as in the idea of a "borrowed" scenery, how to participate with one's own needs in an already existing, durable, regenerative situation. In the most consequent

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[21] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1979, book V, 1022a, part 17 on the notion of limit as beginning, and G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form*, Allen & Unwin, Portland, 1969.

[22] For a nuanced analysis of the comparison between perspectival thinking of a systemized coherence – as in the design and depiction of space established since the Italian Renaissance – with theologically inspired concepts for spatial design and depiction in the Russian Orthodox tradition see C. Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God*, Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, 2010, and W. Goes, V. Mühleis, *Reverse Perspective*, Grafische Cel, Ghent, 2020.

way, the renewal of this involvement leads to an *ongoing process* of reconstruction, as with the example of Ise Jingū (*neither identity nor its contradiction*).

3. The understanding of plan within space—as an open carrier for communicating principal decisions which in detail can be fine-tuned during the working processes in space themselves, as an integration of crafts in executing architectural design. In this sense, an end is foreseen that from the beginning allows reparation, restauration, bricolage, change. So, a *partial end* to the means (the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

In practice we know that aspects of these three basic assumptions may overlap in all regions, in building in the countryside, for example, away from rigid urban systematizations. Nevertheless, Shestov reminds us of a problem in departing from and focusing on linear, binary, two-dimensional conceptualizations. It is the basis for digitalization, too, the codification via 0 and 1, which structures representations today in communication, design, planning, and executing by way of technological devices. Every practice involves and inscribes a certain way of thinking, which was the thesis of Hannah Arendt I started with (giving the example of the practice of working in relation to utilitarian thinking). By in-forming analogue, material elements, one transforms something repairable into something which cannot be repaired anymore, just exchanged: you can replace a codification, but you cannot repair it, as the phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels puts it.[23] A digital structure has no force of its own, while materiality always embodies physical forces which allow responses like, for example, reparation. Software, animated by electricity, works via the exchange of elements—hardware by reparation, restauration too.

The digital shift, manifested by the global breakthrough of the internet in the 1990s, employed the logic of filled elements without spatial openness within itself on an unseen, international level. It allows for directness in transformation and communication, of an effectiveness that matches perfectly with the calculable needs of capitalism as well as forms of calculable domination, given its use in repressive regimes today, like Russia, Egypt, China, and so on. We stuff reality with controllable shortcuts, for better or worse. The lack of freedom which Shestov pointed to is part of its intrinsic logic, as Yamauchi explained.

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[23] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Sinne und Künste im Wechselspiel: Modi ästhetischer Erfahrung*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2010, pp. 352–354.

The End as Motivation for Thinking Infinity

The ramification of the preceding section is paradoxical: on the one hand, striving for being and *identity* is carried by mathematical, geometrical, calculable, defined (filled-in) elements, in-formed today digitally—that is, carried by the only way to regard a positive notion of infinity, in endless numbers and combinations. On the other hand, this approach lacks positive emptiness, the promising potentiality of in-between space as cultivated, for example, by archipelagic thinking in the whole Pacific region, from Hawaii via Japan to Aotearoa (New Zealand).[24] Following the logic of the lemma, as di- or tetralemma, the notion of infinity is always contrasted by finitude, as the complement or the negation of it. The absolute infinity which mathematics offer is no part of this relationality—again, because of the premise of livable experience and thinking.

Rather than to be real, the notion of positively absolute infinity could be understood in a livable sense as a *formal* possibility of thinking, which still needs to be integrated in the relational complexity of situated, organic embodiment. This complexity confronts us with finitude in multiple aspects: existentially as death, in terms of perception with the limits of our sensual awareness (we cannot see or hear endlessly, not even with tele- or stethoscopes), in experiencing the limits of our imagination (being bound to three-dimensional impressions, with no images for abstract notions like freedom or eternity) or of our cognition (to be puzzled by unsolvable, logical dilemmas as in: "I cannot think my own end, nor can I think my own infinity, how could I argue for one of both options?").

Against a thinking defined by personal ending(s), Arendt showed how acting as shifts toward others allows for surpassing these limitations—in giving meaning to birth by taking initiatives, in sharing different perspectives in perception, communicating the possibilities of imagination, discussing philosophically crucial ideas. Our own limits provoke a search to overcome them. In this sense, endings are genealogical motivations for their counterparts. From this point of view, an end is embedded in differentiations—in contrast to overcoming limits or even to thinking formally the possibility of absolute infinity. Being genealogically integrated, the idea of absolute infinity can play a productive role in mathematical

[24] Cf. for Hawaii: https://www.manoaheritagecenter.org/moolelo/kuka%CA%BBo%-CA%BBo-heiau/what-is-mana/, for Japan: https://www.columbia.edu/itc/ealac/V3613/ma/ and https://kyotojournal.org/culture-arts/ma-place-space-void/, and for Aotearoa: https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/3424, (accessed 5 November 2024).

conceptualization. Yet this integration only works if one accepts the limits of it within the lived complexity mentioned above, instead of seeing it as an autonomous quality, to establish an artificial world of so-called endless possibilities, just to enforce a power play of calculable domination.

Because of the limits that constitute our human condition, one will never completely overcome the motivation to overcome limits—it might be that one gets tired, exhausted, and therefore we invent carriers which help us to carry ourselves, immobile as buildings or mobile as vehicles, for example. It is tempting to strive for lasting smoothness in our lives, to design and to build for it. Yet we should stay in contact with the real motivation for it, one which only is tangible if it is not fully neglected via a harmonized immanence. And the question in line with this argumentation is, if spatial thinking of emptiness can help us as inhabitants, users, and creators of architecture to maintain contact with this real motivation for ourselves as well as for other people, generations. Conceptually speaking, where and how is the tetralemma functioning within genealogical differentiation?

Differentiation and the Tetralemma

Logos and Lemma by Yamauchi was published in 1974. The most contemporary philosophers he refers to are Jean-Paul Sartre and Theodor W. Adorno, both representatives of negative dialectics.[25] In highlighting Hegel as the last decisive game-changer in Western philosophy, he declares negative dialectics indirectly to be derivative of the original innovation. Yamauchi studied with Husserl and Heidegger. Obviously, in his view, phenomenology did not seem to have enriched the logical canon as much as modern dialectics did. Neither in his book nor in available sources online have I found any information to indicate that he was aware of a critical logical discussion within phenomenology, taking as its point of departure the comparison of principles of Gestalt psychology with phenomenological ones, as initiated by Husserl himself and then developed further by Aron Gurwitsch and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[26]

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[25] In the case of Adorno, Yamauchi explicitly mentions the book *Negative Dialectics*, published by his colleague in German in 1966 (cf. Yamauchi, T., *Logos et lemme*, p. 63 for Sartre and p. 280 for Adorno).

[26] Cf. E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, trans. from the German by J. N. Findlay, Routledge, London, 1970, A 231 on Christian von Ehrenfels' notion of Gestalt, as well as A. Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1964, and M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London, 2013 (the

Via Merleau-Ponty, this discussion is also closely linked to the rise of structuralism in France. And it is the younger generation of thinkers like Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, who criticized phenomenology as well as structuralism sharply, addressing in their own way the general philosophical "linguistic turn" in this context, by claiming the premise of language in these fields, in service of what is subsequently called post-structuralism.[27] Differentiation as process beyond *identity* became the key issue, exemplarily analyzed in studies like *Difference and Repetition* by Gilles Deleuze or *Of Grammatology* by Jacques Derrida, in initiating his concept of permanent deconstruction as "*différance*."[28] Together with analytical philosophy in the Anglo-American world, they embraced the "linguistic turn" against metaphysical speculation. Phenomenology seemed to be ambivalent in this case—even if Heidegger tried to surpass traditional metaphysics via his idea of a fundamental ontology, his poetic and speculative approach to language was harshly opposed to analytical or critical theory, as developed by the Vienna Circle, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and his followers in Cambridge, and so forth. It thus required a very nuanced examination of post-structuralist and analytical criticism in order to revisit phenomenology from the 1960s forward. Bernhard Waldenfels, who studied with Merleau-Ponty in Paris, has carried out this work in his publications since the 1970s in the most consistent and coherent way.[29] It is his thinking that I would finally like to compare with the lesson I have taken from Yamauchi, so as to answer the question if and how emptiness and differentiation can be logically thought, including what kind of result this has for the topic of "the end," also in practical connotations. I do this because we cannot think space without our bodies, and we cannot think our bodies without the experience of them. For this complexity, post-structuralist and analytical approaches fall short in delivering adequate answers, as this question is not centered around language and metaphysics, but experience and physics.

translator of Yamauchi, the philosopher Augustin Berque, mentions a possible link with Merleau-Ponty in footnote 2 on p. 178 in *Logos et lemme*).

[27] Cf. J.-F. Lyotard, *Phenomenology*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1991, and J. Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL, 2010.

[28] Cf. G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, and J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2016.

[29] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Antwortregister*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, regarding analytical philosophy, in addition to his *Idiome des Denkens*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2005, about main positions in post-structuralism, for example.

The main phenomenological concern of Waldenfels is not the philosophy of mind (Husserl) or fundamental ontology (Heidegger), but the support for the ability to stay motivated in orientating oneself in the world. Therefore, he adapts a notion by Kurt Goldstein from the theory of medicine for this ability: responsivity.[30] Agency in this case is part of the following differentiation: that someone can take initiative—as Arendt referred to it—is the result of a shifting process, which presupposes *being affected*, via the longing for responding to this affection, with the help of conscious elements to do so. These three phases are characterized by passivity, passion, activity, striving for owning up, regarding possible disorientation, alienation. An overwhelming affection—negatively as a trauma, positively in ecstasy–can block the turn from passivity to activity, by getting stuck psychologically. It is in the psyche, if agency is found or not, carried by helpful conscious elements, which are always established and shared socially, in terms of language, behavior, and so on. There is no private language, in which case Waldenfels would agree with Wittgenstein, and consciousness is not master in its own house, as Waldenfels refers to psychoanalytical insights from Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and others.[31] Agency is nothing of our own intention—it is a dynamic in the process of trying to respond to affection, something we cannot avoid as living, sensitive beings. Amorphous affection motivates us to find forms as responses, as well as to move via found forms on to different ones. We can create from what exists by derivates, variations, associations, dissociations, yet the motivation to create has a background in our fragile, human condition. Even so, we can forget or neglect this background in our functioning within a systemized world. How, then, do we avoid the psychological cost of going empty, losing our joy to create, to do something that matters? Only if we keep in touch with this motivating background.

In his reflections on space and its design through architecture, Waldenfels starts with an analysis of "place"—how can it be defined? Place is generally a relational notion. The question is, in what kind of aspects, references? If I speak of a place, I have to recognize the differences between addressing place in a communicative system, regarding my pointing to a place as appropriated embodiment—*I am here*—related to this place as being given in the objective, physical reality, for example.

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[30] Cf. K. Goldstein, *The Organism: A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man*, Zone MIT, Cambridge, Mass., 2000.

[31] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Erfahrung, die zur Sprache drängt: Studien zur Psychoanalyse und Psychotherapie aus phänomenologischer Sicht*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2019.

Three levels must *here* coincide. The motivation to do so arises from stimulation or provocation *to appropriate*, because of an affection which demands a response (again, a three-fold process of being affected, longing for responding, and finding a response or not). What affects place are movement and space. Both are experienced in the phenomenon of depth. Referring to Gestalt psychology and its reception by Merleau-Ponty, Waldenfels thinks of depth as the simultaneous contrasting of back- and foreground, figure and ground, as the basic shift of differentiation, which establishes patterns of chiasmatic crossovers, a *relievo* we perceive in.[32] The basic shifted contrast of back and forth, figure and ground, allows spatially no strict parallelism of its two elements. This is a major difference to the thinking of Yamauchi, where the di- and tetralemma places elements next to each other. Shifting as establishing the experience of space differs here from a parallelism which includes spatial emptiness as crucial, non-specified element (Figure 4 and 3):

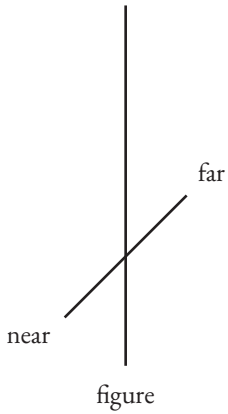

Figure 4. Figure-ground contrast

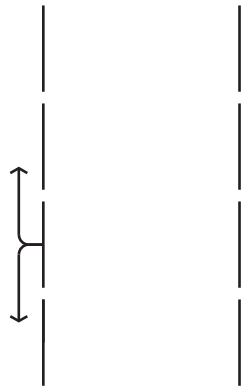

Figure 3. Tetralemma

How, then, does Waldenfels think emptiness? In his most recent study from 2022, *Globalität, Lokalität, Digitalität (Globality, Locality, Digitality)*, he addresses emptiness in contrast to plenitude in the sense of a structurally operating emptiness, not as something of its own.[33] Fol-

[32] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen: Modi leibhaftiger Erfahrung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2009, p. 55.

[33] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Globalität, Lokalität, Digitalität: Herausforderungen der Phänomenologie*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2022, p. 73.

lowing his logic of differentiation, the modus of this operation between emptiness and plenitude is a spatial shifting, which might only stop if we enter spatial orders where we cannot bodily appropriate places, as in technically codified networks of in-formed marks to associate with or not. We can then speak of a place and mark it, but we cannot own it up and live it (a fundamental condition since Aristotle for living beings in the world to find *their* places).[34] This profound human need is confronted with possible identifications of the communicative topology of speaking of places and the systemized topology of encoding places. A resistance supporting the need mentioned can be seen in heterotopical places as Michel Foucault defined them—places that break with daily life routines (like graveyards, gardens, museums, etc.), thus questioning places as such[35]—or in atopical spaces, a situation of mist or darkness, for example. It is this last aspect, I think, where a connection between Yamauchi and Waldenfels is possible, by including an atopical phenomenon in differential thinking compared to the logic of the di- and/or tetra-lemma. In thinking nonplace and emptiness, connected to movement as shifting contrast or spatial parallelism, one attains the starting point for a possible transcultural exchange in this case, addressed from either a *differentiating viewpoint, dominated by time*, or a *spatial relation to an equally existing polarity*. Movement and rest can themselves be understood as contrast as well as polarity. Coming from different sides, the conceptualizations of Waldenfels and Yamauchi accentuate different preferences—movement or rest—yet *these aspects do not exclude each other*.

The End and the Tetralemma

In this article I compared four logical principles in the context of architectural practice and theory: dialectics, the dilemma, the tetralemma, and the figure-ground contrast. The difference between dialectics and the figure-ground contrast on one side and the dilemma and tetralemma on the other can be understood as follows: while dialectics addresses space via elements of modelling, the figure-ground contrast generates a relational, spatial shift—as an explicitly temporary move; the dilemma and the tetralemma instead stimulate thinking spatially via a single or even four modes of parallelism. Yamauchi stated that the four modes of the tetralemma allow for an inclusion of both dialectical operations and those of

[34] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen*, p. 119.
[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 113–115.

the dilemma. His emphasis on the Western accentuation of identity must be seen, I think, in the context of his writing during the 1970s. Therefore, I set his approach against the critique of the metaphysical background with regard to identity, referring to Deleuze and Derrida among others, focusing on the differential thinking of Waldenfels and the modus of the figure-ground contrast. This contrast opens a relation from within—together with something near, something far appears. This *opening from within*, again, is not genuinely thought spatially; it creates a spatial difference *as its effect*—space follows from this modus, and as different as the logic of contrasting is, it shares with dialectics the process *toward space*, however and wherever it opens up. In turn, the dilemma and tetralemma start with the condition of an always already existing spatial difference. Their limits are never defined by one side—as an end of a teleological process, for example—but function by definition as parallels of following parallel structures. An epistemological question, resulting from this comparison, might be to which extent *contrasting* can be understood as a genealogical impulse for establishing these parallel structures, even before dialectics come into play. Then the end of its effect—as marked by a process in establishing space—might play a constitutive role in the logic of the dilemma and the tetralemma as well. Where both sides start to shift conceptually, the transcultural dialogue begins.

Edited by John R. J. Eyck.

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