With-In

Towards an aesth/ethics of prepositions

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"Der Mensch kennt nur sich selbst, insofern er die Welt kennt, die er nur in sich und sich nur in ihr gewahr wird."

[The human being only knows herself as far as she knows the world, which she only becomes aware of in herself, and only in the world she becomes aware of herself].[1]

Goethe's programmatic statement was formulated against the classical imperative "Know yourself!" which he accused of being designed to confuse and to produce a false introspectiveness that leads the senses away from the environment. Today it seems what beckons is not the Oracle of Delphi's wisdom to know oneself, but the late modern one-dimensional man characterised by autocracy, egocentrism, and anthropocentrism. In a culture of self-mirroring and self-measurement, Goethe's formulation makes us aware of the significance of our surrounding world, nature, and the environment. Only by perceiving the environment within ourselves can one gain knowledge about oneself. The world and the self are indissolubly interweaved.

Art making me aware of the world as space within

One way to promote and foster such a reciprocal perception of the self in the world and the world in the self takes place through art, whether through the production or the reception of art. In this view, art receives not simply the capacity to educate and sharpen our senses with regard to our surroundings, but also occurs as a practice that affects the world as well as me. To stay in Goethe's words, art makes me aware about the world around and within me, and it makes nature aware about the human within itself.

What I have circumscribed as nature, environment, and world should in the first place be interpreted as space and place. While modernity has continued the legacy of Western thinking where time and history has been given a priority in our understanding of reality, spatiality appears for me nevertheless as the foundational category of living. Without denying time as an existential of being, the German word *Raum* expresses both dimensions of the English notions of space and place, and represents the fundamental quality of being alive.

Space is hereby understood as an essential all-embracing quality of life, where a phenomenological understanding of atmospheres assists to overcome dichotomist modes of perceiving, thinking, and acting.[2] In such a view, time is not homologous to space but rather integrated in an overarching way. Inspired by Wagner's vision of time turned into space[3] and alluding to a poetic Sami formulation[4]—so far away the close, so present the past—I regard art as a skill of encountering the future by compressing the past. Art becomes in such a perspective a place where time turns into space. It creates a location where lived space, that is the synthesis of physical and mental space, becomes perceivable and memorable. It helps to experience the memorability of nature within and around us and it allows us to perceive

ourselves in the mirror of nature. Art does something to me as the space where I am, and it does something to me as the spirit which I am.

Orientational knowledge

1 George J. Steinmann, *Kaitajärvi, Lemi, Finland*, July 26, 2001. Black and white print, 24 x 36 cm (http://www.george-steinmann.ch/13margins.html, March 26, 2014).

George Steinmann's photograph of a primal forest in Finland, in his project "In the Midst on the Margins," visualizes what I have in mind. The artist has visited "places that no longer have any clear visual, spatial, or social coding" and without any "perspectival orientation." Steinmann approaches the forest as a place to look "for categories that point towards the future." In his eye, "forests provide a wealth of information relating to the future viability of society."[5]

Even if I emotionally approach such a place with a painful uncomfortableness that might mirror my background of being born and raised in open flat lands in northern Germany, it also strongly engages both intuition and reason. Is it difficult and nearly impossible to orient oneself properly at such a place? Or is it the overwhelming wealth of the vegetation's morphology that gives birth to both discomfort and curiosity? The photograph itself will not offer any answer, and neither will the artist. The key to understand oneself within the world will rather be revealed by the forest itself. Rather than formulating an answer it is the question and the process of seeking that draws imagination into a tempting and transforming process. The forest can then both embrace and reject. It can either allow or refuse me

entrance. The photo does something to me as it challenges and changes the space where I am. It accurately establishes a relation between its own and my place. How does it point to the future? How are our futures connected? Maybe by growth? What can the long timeline of growth of vegetation in such a place teach about social growth and our limited narrow understandings of economic growth? Can it encourage prioritising orientational knowledge (*Orientierungswissen*) over power driven instrumental knowledge (*machtförmiges Verfügungswissen*)?[6] If art serves as a place where the skill to compress the past for the future can emerge and where we learn to know ourselves within nature, it sometimes seems necessary to let art move us into "the midst on the margins," where the experience of non-locatedness, disorientation, and overwhelming diversity serves as a necessary presupposition to leave this world behind and become able to perceive, think, and act anew.

In such a view, art offers a deeply critical practice—or should we say a "critical place" —as it radically challenges the foundations of our self-understanding and the understanding of the world. Environmentally conscious artwork questions and transforms conventional ontologies and epistemologies, and even if it cannot necessarily immediately replace these it can cultivate the ground and fertilize the soil wherein new seeds can grow and new fruits can be harvested. If I am "the space where I am," to express it in the words of Noel Arnaud,[7] external and internal space, the inner and the outer world, represent a common continuum where imagination and remembrance, experience and reflection grow together. Artwork enters "the space where I am" and provokes it by establishing a place from where "the space where I am" is seen anew. Even if art has historically developed many powerful, illuminating, decorating, prettifying and obscuring practices, my understanding of environmentally conscious art implies a necessary critical moment.

Environmental art as critical place of manifested utopia

An environmental artwork can also be characterised as a place creating process; to be more specific, as an artistic creation of "critical place."[8] Similar to the reflections about "critical place-based pedagogy" in the field of environmental education,[9] where one acknowledges a specific intrinsic value in places for the enhancement of critical awareness and empathy, such an understanding of environmental art as critical places creates rooms, lands, and territories where and wherewith human critical skills can grow and flourish. At such critical places, nature can serve in the way that Goethe imagines in the introductory quote: Environmental art creates a critical place where it is nature that generates the self-awareness of men and women. At such critical places the human becomes aware of herself in and within the world. Exploring nature's texture would then focus the human who explores herself in the mirror of nature, but nature also explores the human as a living part of her own texture. The critical place of environmental art (and art critic) is to reveal the reciprocity and interaction of this double deep exploration: exploring oneself within the texture of nature and letting nature explore itself.

Critical places, enhanced by environmental art, further serve as ecological places of cosmic making-oneself-at-home (*Beheimatung*), and they offer places for the development and maturing of empathy and compassion for and with the strange. They offer places for remembrance as well as for experimentation with utopias, not yet seen but nevertheless sensible emerging places of the future.

Herbert Marcuse's interpretation of the performance of art can serve as a guiding principle here. For Marcuse, art's radical potential is partly found in the "political Eros" that rebels

against a repressing reality principle, and partly in the ability to retain "the promise of happiness together with the aims that has not yet been reached."[10] He also asserts that the individual's lack of freedom is reflected in the autonomy of art. Art makes a critical contribution to the struggle for liberation through its aesthetic form. For Marcuse, art is an authentic utopia based on reminiscence. For me, art therefore appears as a place of manifested utopia where the future and past encounter each other. It is a place, or convergence point, that transfigures the space where I am.[11]

In such a view, the task of art is to compress the past and the future in a way that the future ahead of us can again become open and our inner eye can find a path to see and slowly walk into it. In what sense this not-yet-seen but see-able quality in art represents an emancipated, liberated state of being that cannot possibly be decided by principles. Only by experimenting in the creative frame of artistic freedom may horizons widen and new shores become visible.

Theologically, one can find an analogy to this view in God's promise to Abraham to lead the people to "a land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). The Promised Land exists already; it becomes visual in the Creator's eye and can be shown. Similarly, art will gain some kind of divine power if we regard it, by following Marcuse, as holding the power to create an authentic utopia based on reminiscence. Art can arrange new utopias, it can show and visualise not-yet-seen lands and places.

Hereby art can nearly be circumscribed as erotic. In Plato's view the erotic desire for the attracted develops as an active power which draws the one to the other, and which enters the circle of reciprocal attraction of love and beauty. Early Christian theologians were deeply fascinated by platonic interpretations of the erotic and have revised and integrated them into

their belief system where God as the uttermost source of love draws the creatures into an on-going process of reciprocal attraction so that human beings advance on the path of deification, becoming godlike.

Alluding to such views today might allow us to describe even art as a mode of entering the process of reciprocal attraction where the imagination and bodily experience of anticipated utopias unfold a divine power to draw the creatures and the creation into a process of liberation. Art would, in such a perspective, serve as a divine tool to draw the creation closer toward the Creator. It would serve as a political Eros where seeing the land that God shows us encourages the first step to move closer towards it. Certainly such an interpretation of art would produce a couple of questions with regard to the historical context of late antiquity Eastern theology as well as to the link between Plato's Eros and Marcuse's utopia. Nevertheless the patristic vision of God's love that draws the created beings closer and closer towards the Creator and a liberated cosmos[12] might generate a new imaginative power for faith communities as well as for artistic commitment, and it might encourage and nurture new constructive interactions between churches and artists. Every sacred space is, by the way, following such a foundational code, where the uncreated divine and the created earthly and historical meet at a specifically designed built environment. Might we then also regard environmental art as a similar sacred space for experiments with our anticipated common sustainable future? Provokingly formulated, art as religion?

2 Joseph Anton Koch, *Das Opfer Noahs*, c. 1803. 86 x 116 cm,
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

Austrian artist Joseph Anton Koch was deeply impressed by Kant's philosophy and the ideas of enlightenment and liberation. In his famous paintings of the waterfall which increases its enormous force on the way downhill, Koch has used a strong metaphor from natural scenography to visualize the power of reason and the human strength to move towards his/her liberation.

In this scene Koch depicts the state of humanity after the flood (Genesis 8:20-22). Threatening cold grey and dark colours in the background are contrasted with warm green and yellow tones. The arch is stranded on a steep hill; it now belongs to the past. Dark clouds are driven out of the picture towards the upper left and a warm and sunny sky appears from the back. Greening leaves on the trees, some uprooted and still bearing the wounds from the storm and flood, clouds soaked in sun glitter, flourishing lands and animals now free and grazing fresh feed, all bathing in the light of a new given life.

While the peacock in the foreground represents the resurrected Christ, the whole of Creation is here in a state of resurrection, orientated towards its peaceful future. In the light of the rainbow, which according to the biblical story has been set up in the sky by the Creator as a promise to never again destroy the gift of life on Earth, the land enjoys its release after the flood. In a thanksgiving ceremony, Noah lights a ritual fire, also including the slaughter and sacrifice of animals. In the landscape, wild and tamed animals rest, and drink and play together in the vision of a peace that embraces the whole creation. The flow of water is also carefully designed, its power restricted to a graceful flowing downhill into the lake.

In a driven way Koch intertwines the remembrance of the violent past with the experience of a peaceful state of being and thanksgiving after the disastrous flood. His image breathes hope

and future; it opens new horizons for the new world to come and in this way it visualises an image that might illustrate what I intended with my reference to Marcuse's understanding of art as authentic utopia. Koch's artistic creation of landscape, weather, figures, animals, all-embracing colour, and sounds of harmony and peace express an image of a new life for all created. It leaves the viewer of the painting in an expectant attitude of gratitude and deep assurance.

Linking this back to Goethe's demand to entangle the self and the world, artworks develop the skill to locate, embed, and embrace the self *with-in* the world by anticipating the liberated future through compressing the past, and by offering unique spaces of being alive[13] within the lived spaces[14] of natural and built environments.

Following Goethe, the human only becomes aware of herself *in* nature, and s/he only becomes aware of nature in herself. Only by being alive with-in nature can awareness about oneself and nature take place. Even more exciting would be to expand such a view and depart from the statement that nature also can become aware of herself in the mirror of the human. Not far from the theology of late antiquity in the East one might continue and formulate that in the process of art the human (as a microcosm of the world) allows creation to become aware of itself. In turn, art work appears as a skill to mediate between Creator and creation and that mirroring oneself in the screen of the environment also implies a mirroring of nature within the human. In such a view, art is a skill to become aware of oneself with-in the world, and serves nature as way to become aware of herself with-in the human.

My title "with-in" tries to delineate how one lies in the other, the perceiving/knowing of oneself in the environment and how the environment becomes aware of itself within the

human. It further indicates how time turns into space and how the encountering of past and future takes place within spatiality. And it suggests locating art *in-between* and *with-in* the world as a creation and man/woman as its microcosm. Theologically regarded, the production of art and the reception of artefacts as a place-within-nature reveals the skill of humans to fabricate meaning and to experiment creatively with modes of existence which are able to manifest authentic utopia based on reminiscence.[15]

Following my earlier reflections about the Triune Spirit as a liberator of nature, saying that the notion of Spirit can be circumscribed as a "being-of-the-one-in-or-with-the-other."[16] In some kind of "a metaphysics of the prepositions" God's work in, with and for creation needs to be interpreted as a dynamic care which unites past and future (proto-eschatologically) and takes place within rather than from without.

Prepositional knowing—at home in, with and for the other

What is true for theology might also become true for environmental arts: Not propositional knowing but prepositional knowing is at the core of both. As God appears as the God of the Here and Now within lived spaces of creation, so also environmental art emerges as a skill to manifest in space how the one exists and lives *in*, *with* and *for* the other, and how the one emerges out of the past *into* the present and future. Art works might then be regarded as products from human skills to manifest how the one lives within and for the other[17] and how past and future encounter each other. They work as tools for establishing refuges where liberation can take place. Art is a mode of existence within a larger process of *Beheimatung* (making-oneself-at-home-on-Earth) and art offers an arena for nature to encounter the human in one common space and history.

As such, environmental artworks cannot be fetishized as objects for the establishing of a hierarchy of values for exchange processes. For example, money serves as a superior fetishized commodity which alienates humans, nature, and things in an economy of trade which is mainly steered by desire for the accumulation of capital. Artwork, in the sense that I have described here, seeks to re-establish our perception of what Marx called "the physical relation between physical things."[18]

If anyone is an artist, as Joseph Beuys rightly stated, artistic skills belong to the deeper spiritual skills of every human and if art is regarded as authentic utopia, it serves as a radical alternative to the process of fetishization by fabricating meaning within and for the human community and within and for the larger animated created community of all living beings. Environmental art, departing from the intrinsic value of nature and sometimes also from a neo-animistic understanding of its spiritual life, advocates empathy[19] and respect rather than commodification and utilitarian usage. Can art, in comparison with technology, assist in placing the artefact at the nexus between the material reproduction of our daily life,[20] our relationship to nature, our social relations, and our world view and belief, and serve as a critical and constructive mediator? Can its erotic beauty and its capacity for neo-animating produce a countervailing power that resists and overcomes commodification and alienation? How can believers experience art in such a view as part of the Spirit's inhabitation in creation and an on-going process of making-oneself-at-home? Can art establish places where humans can feel at home on Earth and where Earth can be at home within God?

From *either-or* to *and* and *within*

Prepositions are spatial and mobile acrobats in our language. With only a few letters they are able to interconnect elements and to locate these within a web of interrelations. Furthermore, they are able to indicate and shape patterns of motion. Complex nuances in spatial and mobile relations between things and persons can be expressed in some kind of a linguistic geography. *From* here *to* there, with-*in* or with-*out*, *for* or *with* the other. My plea above for prepositional rather than propositional thinking follows Wassily Kandinsky's encouragement to end the times of the "either-or" and instead to focus on the "and," which he demanded in his famous essay *und* from 1927.[21]

In his essay Kandinsky summarized the task for the new century: artists have to take the lead for all human beings to end nineteenth century conflicts, separations, and oppositions and to replace the "either-or" with the "and." According to Kandisky, the old way of thinking was connected to increasing specialisation which caused separation and split, for example, in the world of machines and employment. Kandinsky characterized his own time as a singular chaos where quick choices between this or that enforced a tragic and fatal outwardness. For him, the alternative to this was synthesis. The artist is encouraged to explore relations, harmonies, and soundings in the interplay of culture and life. In 1927 Kandinsky was already able to anticipate the social movement for sustainability, environment, and ecosophy would emerge in the 1970s.

3 Wassily Kandinsky, colored woodcut, 1912. *Klänge* (Munich: Piper, 1913).

Kandinsky's plea should, in my view, be widened to not only include the *and* but also focus on the *in*. Not only how the one *and* the other relate to each other, but also how the one dwells *within* the other needs to be investigated.

George Steinmann's *Art without an Object but with Impact* in the waterworks in Bern, presented in this book, exemplifies architectonically manifesting the power of the *with-in* as a deepening of Kandinsky's demand for the *and* that is at the core of this chapter. The building was constructed with concrete that had been infused with water from medieval wells the Engadin Alpine region. Although nothing of the water can be seen in the structure, its energy and information permeate the whole. Art, though without a work, unfolds its impact. The border between the inside and the outside is radically permeated, and a space of resonance appears within this built environment. The unseen but efficient water turns the building into a critical place for the permanent enhancement of the deeply sustainable. In Steinmann's building water does what the Spirit has been believed to do in Jewish and Christian faiths; that is, it dwells within the created and unfolds his/her life-giving energy for the best of creation. It also connects with animistic modes of belief where matter and life forms always are animated with and inspirited by unseen forces.

One might fruitfully connect my definition of the Spirit as one's being with, in and for the other to another of Kandinsky's central ideas, the understanding of culture as a triangular movement. The cultural process appears for Kandinsky as a triangle which has to be set into motion by art and which artists in this way can move forward and upward. The spiritual task of the arts in his view is to set the cultural triangle into motion. Consequently, Kandinsky's paintings also explore the mysteries of synaestethics and mobility. Colors enter a subtle interplay which leads to emergence of sounds, which the observer can approach visually as

well as—somehow—acoustically. Patterns of motion run through a canvas, where synergies appear in what strikingly might be circumscribed as symphonies in motion.

In his famous work *The Spiritual in Art* Kandinsky explained the method of art which has to strive to reveal "the inner necessity" of life by reducing and removing what only refers to externalities. In this way, art successfully visualises the life force that animates things and "that, since it animates us too, allows us to join with them and experience their affectivities and pulsations from within."[22]

Art, technology, fetishization, integration

Art and religion move close to each other in such a view, insofar as both approach reality in a non-instrumental way that departs from an attitude of gratitude where life appears as a gift rather than as a commodity. The world appears as a lived and animated space which one can only approach with respect and dignity. Aesthetics represents a deeply ethical mode of being ali ve in this context. It appears as a prepositional *aesth/ethics*, where the perception and awareness of being alive within a complex texture of interrelations demands self-critical and careful dealing with the gifts of life. In this sense, art should be regarded as a radically alternative model for engineering and technology, rather than to uncritically follow the instrumentalistic and reductionistic paths of contemporary science and technology.

Long before the machines took power over modern daily life, Karl Marx acknowledged the power of technology as a central force in the emerging capitalism of his time. In the commodified relations between humans and things, such as the worker and his products, technical artefacts played an important role. Technology, he observed, "discloses man's mode

of dealing with Nature, and the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them."[23]

In such a context, art has a deeply critical task to revise the alienation of things and persons. For Marx, the process of commodification and alienation of the relations between humans and things became understandable as a process of fetishization. As he has clearly shown, modernity builds on the commodified relations between humans and things, including the alienating split of human workers and the products of their labour. According to Marx, the shift from the perception of the "physical relation between physical things" to fetishization has its roots in the accelerated trading system. How can art and religion today challenge the contemporary power constellation and seek and offer alternative paths? How can art anticipate a utopia beyond the power of the machines?

One way, which most certainly would have received Kandinsky's sympathy, is to deepen the framework of so-called "integral theory" and to let artistic creativity move from the margins to the centre of knowledge production. Practical wisdom—about why we should do what[24]—would then be at core, rather than knowledge of imperial colonialization and domination of nature.

According to integral theory, environmental problems should be approached in a multifaceted way.[25] Geographer Karen O'Brian formulates six reasons why integral theory is necessary for climate change responses:

1) Both interior and exterior dimensions of climate change must be better recognized.

2) Integral theory emphasizes all four quadrants of social life (I, we, it, its) and thus interconnects four perspectives (subjective, intersubjective, objective, and interobjective) in a way that makes it possible to perceive and interpret phenomena in different ways: from an inside or an outside perspective and from a singular or plural perspective.[26]

3) Integral theory acknowledges the diversity of different lines of the development of human beings.

4) It recognizes that worldviews and values are changing.

5) It further recognizes the diversity of needs and motivations, and hence responses to climate adaptation.

6) Finally, integral theory encourages integral methodological pluralism.

While O'Brian is discussing climate change, these six points also offer a guide for why and how environmental art might contribute to the demand to reflect the *and* and *within*. Integral theory here replaces ordinary understandings of eclectic science, where interplays of different spheres of life constantly and structurally are neglected. Such neglect consequently leads to a violent separation of life worlds along the classical imperial rule of *divide et impera*. Integral theory claims to develop an epistemology for the *and* and *within* rather than upholding the epistemology and biopolitics of the *either-or*.

Aboriginal art of the inside

Looking for an artwork that can follow such a path indicated by integral theory takes me directly back to a visit in Australia, where I tried to come a bit closer to the expressions and contexts of Aboriginal art. While Kandinsky's reflection about the spiritual in art remains embedded in a dichotomist thinking where the material and the spiritual form each other's

opposites, Aboriginal culture anchors reality, and especially spatiality and materiality, in the spiritual. Life and spirituality belong to each other. Art represents not just one more sector in the differentiated society, but art is—similar to most other indigenous cultures—a substantial part of ordinary life. In human ecology it serves as a tool for survival, physically as artefact, and spiritually as a carrier of meaning and as a bridge to the animating forces. In Aboriginal Australia, one can even claim: "Art *is* religion."[27]

The natural environment has a central significance in Aboriginal arts and religion. The land has been created by the mythical animals in the dreamtime. The walking ancestors have shaped it, and visual arts offer a space where one can continuously hand over, reconstruct, and transcontextualize the spiritual continuum. Many Aboriginal pictures offer a kind of spiritual map referring to existing places, sites, and regions while also expressing and manifesting mythical stories about the totemic animals and the ancestors' history—then and now. Dreamtime takes place in the image. The production of art is in itself a personal religious experience, and at the same time, it is a public practice.[28]

Howard Morphy summarizes the spiritual content of the image: "Aboriginal art contains a fourth dimension—the 'inside.' Aboriginal art is as conceptual as it is perceptual. It is concerned with ideas and processes more than with appearances, and the perspective that it illuminates is that from the inside."[29] A bit paradoxically, one might formulate that the outside is the inside, and the inside expresses the outside. The physical landscape reveals its inner essence by art shaping form and colour in the picture. The pictorial figuration creates a space where, using a classical Christian expression, the Spirit gives life to the then and now of the dreamtime. The arts of the Aboriginals express in the same picture a spiritual interpretation of life and a concrete perception; it is, in Morphy's words, "as conceptual as it

is perceptual." What I formulate as art encountering the past and compressing it for the future is taking place in Aboriginal art, where the understanding of time—rather as a spatial continuum than a continuous flow of change—is different from our Western concepts. The dreaming does not aim at an event that is closed and limited in space and time. Dreamtime must be understood "as an everywhen."[30]

4 Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri and Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri, *Warlugulong*, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 168.5 x 170.5 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

What characterizes an Aboriginal landscape painting is its narrative dimension. The image offers—by applying established standards of scales, proportions, signs and perspectives—a map over a terrain and its natural geography as well as a cultural map with historical, mythical, and social narration. The narration takes place in the painted space and can explain the form and design of the landscape. The image offers a spiritual geography, it grounds spirituality and embeds it in the land.

Warlugulong was created in 1976 when the artists presented dreamtime walkings through large parts of Australia. The title references a forest fire that was taking place in the dreamtime at a place with the same name. It was initiated by the bluetooth reptile Lungkata who wanted to punish his sons because they had not shared the meat of a kangaroo which they had hunted. In the upper part of the painting one can follow the traces of the escaping sons; and the traces of a mythical snake are also visible. The artists have turned the image up and down several times, which makes it necessary to change perspective when observing it. The mythical animals' creative movements are depicted, as well as natural topographies and

historical events. Such an image never intends to show how it really was, but serves as an interpretation of a dynamic tradition where the past and present are entangled.

5 Norma MacDonald, *What Value Life*, 1997, acrylic, fibre on handmade paper, 50 x 30 cm.

Norma MacDonald has throughout her whole life struggled with the wounds of colonisation and sought reconciliation with her family's violent history. Her image uses elements from the landscape and its vegetation, which offers a substance and material space where she can shape the narration of colonial violence and where she can overcome it. In other words, nature offers both the place and the healing material for spiritual growth and intercultural reconciliation.

Pictures like these are of course dependent on a specific cultural context and they cannot simply be copied or transferred easily into our own late modern world. Creative cooperation in Australia nevertheless shows that a transformation of what usually and a bit mistakenly is called traditional painting can smoothly interact with modern modes of painting. Pictures where Aboriginal painters together with non-Aboriginal artists produce common images reveal an impressive and fascinating capacity of transcultural exchange.

Aboriginal art, which in its richness can never be fully grasped by others, here serves to visualize another integrated expression of what land, environment, nature, and world are *within* and *for* us, what is possible, and that the demands of integral theory to science can without doubt meet their counterparts in artistic work. For Christian theology, Aboriginal art

offers a wonderfully provocative expression of the spiritual *in* the natural and a vital injection for the catalyzation of reflecting how the Spirit is "taking place" within environments.

Regarding my plea for a prepositional *aesth/ethics*, Aboriginal art can provide us with a further substantial challenge as it lets the present and future emerge from within the past. The past never ends but materializes itself as the present. The eternal life forces are animating our present and our future life. Concepts such as sustainability appear in such a perspective as rather poor and one-sided even if they manage to do well in our contexts. The rich embeddedness of the present in the past, which the Aboriginal together with many other indigenous cultures can teach us, appears as a necessary reminder of our timely and spatial fragility which is anchored deeply in the prehistory of our lands and ancestors, and which we constantly repress and violate in a collective cultural narcissism of a self *without* rather than *within* the world.

At the mercy—weather changing art, science and religion

Remembering the wisdom from Aboriginal art about the continuum of time in space, I can approach the environment within me in a new way by approximating weather. Even if weather belongs to the essential conditions of our bodily life it seems to be rather a non-issue than a theme that keeps us busy. Certainly weather forecasts are regarded as so important that they are located directly after the political news in media reports. And certainly many people listen carefully to the meteorologists' prognosis about what awaits us for tomorrow. Even if our built environments and our mostly indoor activities are rarely dependent on weather conditions, as was the case for most people working in the fields 150 years ago, weather continues to fascinate and enchant us.

Ordinary language about good or bad weather creates an illusion of a relation between the human and the weather. Of course, weather is neither good nor bad; weather simply is. It does not care about humans. It can neither be controlled nor mastered, even if geoengineering cherishes hopes to achieve such a power and we have awakened a desire for total control over our environment.[31] Weather simply does not take humans into account.

In a similar way as human life is dependent on light which surrounds us and makes it possible to see and perceive, to orient and to move and act, weather also simply surrounds and embraces us. It is "the very temperament of being."[32] According to Tim Ingold, the flux of wind and weather remind us that we are alive in an open world: "In this mingling, as we live and breathe, the wind, light and moisture of the sky bind with the substances of the earth in the continual forging of a way through the tangle of lifelines that comprise the land."[33] In such a perspective, weather is not just a surrounding physical element; it is fundamental for every living being which takes air into the organism by breathing. Living in the world of weather, every being is destined to combine the elements of weather in the continuation of existence.

To be alive in such a sense means to exist within the weather, to be exposed to sun that shines, to rain that falls, to wind that blows. According to Karolina Sobecka in her chapter in this book we are "thinking *with* air as well as thinking *about* air." Many humans, although protected from direct exposure to wind and weather are still deeply affected by weather changes. Weather conditions impact on our well-being and our mental as well as our physical sensitivities. Being under the weather is expressed in German with the appropriate adjective *wetterfühlig*, to be emotionally connected to the weather. Alluding to Goethe again: Do we

only know ourselves as far as we know the weather, which we only become aware of in ourselves, and only in the weather we become aware of ourselves? Is weather something that takes place as much within the human as around her?

Our modern understanding of weather in the lens of science is relatively brief. This started with the technical inventions and use of instruments for measuring temperature and air pressure in the seventeenth century, but our modern view of weather seems to be rooted mainly in the systematic observation of clouds in the sky which Luke Howard, inspired by Carl von Linné's systematization of plants, pioneered in 1802. In a famous poem, Goethe honoured Howard for his heroic feats and in re-reading it we can still sense how dramatically our ancestors must have experienced this approach to turning the uncertainty and unpredictability of weather into a rationalised system. Meteorology was certainly established by Aristotle in his work with the same title, but he only loosely collects a couple of observations without really systematizing them, and without any intention to create a safe predictability. For Aristotle, weather remains embedded in the movement of the stars, which he regarded as divinities, and his meteorology elaborates the existence of weather within the divine configuration rather than dissipates it as modern meteorology does. Aristotle refers to his older philosophical forefathers, the pre-Socratic thinkers, and he is mostly busy with inscribing weather into the scheme of the four elements, fire, air, water, and earth, and to locate it in his overarching view of movement.[34] Weather change therefore represents for Aristotle a natural part of the world's bodily space (*Weltenkörper*) and as such is an outspring of the first movement which again is anchored in the unmoveable origin of all. It is interesting that Aristotle is emphasizing clearly life as taking place in the space between earth and sky even if he regards this as a consequence of the divine movements in the upper world sphere. Meteorology, in its classical as well as in its modern version, is capable of

maintaining the old wisdom of being alive in the fragile zone of being in between earth and sky. I am reminded of Percy Bysshe Shelley's well known words:

> I am the daughter of Earth and Water, and the nursling of the Sky;
> I pass through the pores, of the ocean and shores;
> I change, but I cannot die --
> ("The Cloud," 1820)

As weather reveals one of the most open, unpredictable and uncontrollable conditions of life, its uncertainty has been interpreted as an elementary screen for interaction between creation and Creator. As such, although it certainly does not do anything else than weathering, weather has also served as a screen for the projection of God's presence and moral relation to his/her created beings. In one common view, weather has been understood as the most just and equal gift of God to all on Earth because sunshine, rain, and wind are given equally to all. Weather does not know any difference with regard to those which it nurtures. In such a view, weather is an expression of God's love for creation and his practice of sharing equally both the gifts and challenges of life without any consideration of the individual. As everyone can be struck by (good or bad) weather, everyone is equally valued and loved by the creator. On the one hand, In such a religious code the weather represented a respect for every person.

On the other hand, disasters and catastrophes are represented as punishment for sin, when humans do not fulfil their tasks as images of God, and when the relation between God and man/woman is broken. Injustice, lack of solidarity, oppression of the poor, and violence against each other result in God's reaction, which uses a dramatic weather change to reveal a pedagogical intention. Through the uncertainty of weather God stays in touch with his/her

created world. Weather serves—which we can clearly observe in Koch's painting, as a natural scene and screen for reading the Creator's relation and interaction with the creation. It offers a kind of moral barometer. The relationship of morality and weather is sometimes violently intimate so that the medievals blamed so-called "weather witchcraft" and specific "weather witches" for catastrophes such as rain and flooding, thunderstorms and bad harvests.

6 Hans Baldung, *Witches*, 1508. Woodcut (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/07/Baldung_Hexen_1508_kol.JPG).

While Tim Ingold has shown that modern empirical scientific meteorology mainly represents the inversion of knowledge, the religious interpretation is different: it meets God's eye and reads God's feelings and thoughts in the weathered book of nature. Today such a code is definitely fading, even if extreme weather can still be experienced emotionally as something that is connected to our social structures and sins. The increasing consciousness of anthropogenic climate change and our increasing vulnerability with regard to uncertain weather conditions have in some zones continued along the paths of the old religious codes, strikingly summarised in Michael Northcott's book title *A Moral Climate*. However, not many would regard global warming as God's punishment for an unjust and unsustainable distribution of resources on the planet. Rather we are looking for rational social and economic reasons in our own mismanagement.

Even if climate science again and again claims that weather is one thing and climate another, human beings as nurslings of earth and sky and bodily beings upheld by wind and weather need to experience the power of climate change in weather lands and contexts of dependence and empathy with the weather. Science seems to be unable to assist such a transformation of global scales into concrete bodily life worlds and lived spaces where weather empowers the living. Both art and religion seem to have better conditions to achieve such an adaptation to dramatic and dangerous environmental change. Art must thereby not only serve as an illustrator of rational climate science, but can follow its own traditions and foster the senses with regard to the perception of the environment and especially changes in weather. It contributes to the ongoing meteorological turn.[35] Religion must not necessarily only serve as a moral imperative that transforms normative conclusions from climate science into mobilising behaviours to establish what scientists would regard as more sustainable. Religion rather can mobilise its own skills for to interpret the God of the "Here and Now" and to explore the Spirit who gives life in manifold liberating patterns. For example, the richness of religious language emphasizing weather as a spiritual force would enrich our tools for interpreting change and creatively adapt it in a most constructive way.

One of my most fascinating teachers about the inner quality of weather and the respect for its changeability and impact on the whole of our life is William Turner, with whom I will round off my reflections about the significance of the *with-in* in environmental art and its prepositional *aesth/ethics*.

7 J. M. W. Turner, *Inverary Pier, Loch Fyne: Morning*, c. 1845. Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 121.9 cm. Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

Following German art historian Heinz Ohff, Turner should be acknowledged as the artist who "invented" weather.[36] While landscapes have been painted throughout the history of European art, it was a late Romantic landscape painting that explored the entanglement of weather conditions, such as light, humidity, air, and evaporation with our human inner sensitivities. First Masaccio and Bellini in the fifteenth century explored landscapes as spaces, and weather appeared later in the seventeenth century as a phenomenon in its own right when the Netherlandish painters depicted misty atmospheres, storm clouds over the sea, and dark grey skies. At that time, weather mostly appeared as a part of topography, as framing the land and surrounding it from above. It was William Turner who, in his later years, first established weather as a central visual theme for painting.

Ohff discusses why weather appeared so late in the history of art despite its central significance in the human ecology through the ages. Ohff's preliminary answer is that it might have been some kind of general discomfort to be completely at the mercy of this external power. He asks, does weather provoke an experience and consciousness about one's volatility which is threatening?[37] The strong and strange reactions to Turner's moving and arresting large paintings—where the powerfulness of weather in all its unavailability is overwhelming—the observer might support such an explanation. One can wonder if it still is the same feeling of being completely dependent on something that outside our power that creates both a sensitive attraction and a disturbing quality of human life that we would like to suppress rather than accept. Does weather remind us all too much of life's vulnerability and volatility? Does it disturb and question our identity as autocratic beings with the power of feasibility of all?

If there is some truth in this, and I think there is, Turner's paintings and other expressions of the embracing power of weather over our life worlds, are carrying an essential wisdom which is necessary to cultivate for our future. Living in weather lands then means accepting and not resisting life under uncertain conditions. It means respecting the dignity of change, resting in the givenness of life, and sharing each other's empathy rather than nourishing the illusion of autocracy. Safe shores are no longer in sight, only flowing light, misty uncertainty, and an atmosphere where the earth still being created. Turner is a master of such insight and his paintings create deep feelings.

In his dispute with John Ruskin, Turner appeared as a liberal person who held metaphysics at a distance. His skill in painting clouds and mist was respected by and honoured by Ruskin, who nevertheless interpreted it as a pantheistic mode of de-deification. Clouds and other weather elements were now achieving an intrinsic value; they were turned into symbols for human being, life and existence rather than referring to the divine. Ruskin complained about Turner's "faithlessness." In his view, weather lands turned into a surrogate for lost gods.

8 J. M. W. Turner, *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) – the Morning after the Deluge – Moses writing the Book of Genesis*, 1843. Oil on canvas, 78,7 x 78,7 cm. Tate Britain, London.

For us, Turner can serve as a master of a modern mode of existence where the danger and uncertainty of "life in turmoil", to use Rilke's striking expression, is exposed at its peak. Being alive now means to be exposed to a continuous flow of change[38] and to not command any certainties. Weather teaches us to accept to being at the mercy of something larger than

us. Turner and his colorful paintings therefore offer me an outstanding place where I can become aware of being within the world, and to discover and accept within me the world with all its power of change. Looking at these paintings makes me spiritually and bodily aware of the dramatic power of the gift of life in weather lands. They might be located in the context of an emerging and accelerating modernity but nevertheless they represent an encounter with the Spirit who gives life and vivifies volatile and vulnerable beings in unpredictably changing environments.

9 J. M. W. Turner, *The Deluge*, 1805. Oil on canvas, 142.9 x 235.6 cm. Tate Britain, London.

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[1] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Bedeutende Fördernis durch ein einziges geistreiches Wort," in *Zur Naturwissenschaft überhaupt, besonders zur Morphologie: Erfahrung, Betrachtung, Folgerung, durch Lebensereignisse verbunden* (Munich 1989 (1817-24), 306–309.
[2] Cf. S. Bergmann, *Religion, Space & the Environment*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction 2014.
[3] Richard Wagner, *Parsifal: Ein Bühnenweihfestspiel in drei Aufzügen*, 1883, second half of the first act: Du siehst, mein Sohn,/zum Raum wird hier die Zeit.(You see, my son,/here time turns into space.)
[4] Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, in: *Nu Guhkkin Dat Mii Lahka/Så Fjernt Det Nære*, Kautokeino: DAT 1994.
[5] <http://www.george-steinmann.ch/13margins.html>, 5 September 2016.
[6] Hildegard Kurt, "Growing Beyond Accumulation," in: *Komi: A Growing Sculpture by George Steinmann, 1997-2006,* Bern: Stämpfli 2007.
[7] Noel Arnaud, quoted in: Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston: Beacon Press 1969, 137.
[8] On the notion of "critical place" see: Sigurd Bergmann, "Der sakrale Ort als kritischer Ort: Skizzen zur befreienden Ästh/Ethik heiliger Räume und Atmosphären," in: Albert Gerhards and Kim de Wildt (eds.), *Wandel und Wertschätzung: Synergien für die Zukunft von Kirchenräumen*, Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner forthcoming.
[9] Cf. David A. Gruenewald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," *Educational Researcher* 32, 4, 2003, 3-12.
[10] Herbert Marcuse, *Die Permanenz der Kunst: Wider eine bestimmte marxistische Ästhetik,* 1975, 70f.
[11] Cf. Clingerman and Dixon on places as convergence points. Forrest Clingerman and Mark H. Dixon (eds.), *Placing Nature on the Borders of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics*, Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate 2011.
[12] Cf. Gregory of Nazianz, Oratio 2.76.
[13] Cf. Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Abingdon: Routledge 2011.
[14] Cf. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, and Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis*.
[15] Cf. Olaf Breidbach, *Radikale Historisierung: Kulturelle Selbstversicherung im Postdarwinismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1991, 241ff.

[16] Cf. Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, Grand Rapids MN: Eerdmans 2005, 9.
[17] Cf. Heike Strelow, "The Connective Power of Art," on George Steinmann and relationality.
[18] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, chapter 1, section 4.
[19] Cf. Goto Collins on empathy. Timothy Martin Collins and Reiko Goto Collins, "Freedom and Empathy in Art Practice," 2012.
[20] Cf. Arto Haapala's chapter on "everydayness".
[21] Wassily Kandinsky, "und", in Max Bill (ed.), *Essays über Kunst und Künstler*, Bern: Benteli 3. ed. 1973, (1955), 97–108.
[22] Tim Ingold, in: "Lines and the Weather," The Daphne Mayo Lecture, presented at the University of Queensland Art Museum on Wednesday 16th October, 2013.
[23] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1, New York 1976 (1867), 352.
[24] Cf. Nicholas Maxwell, *From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Revolution in the Aims and Methods of Science*, Oxford: Blackwell 1984.
[25] Karen O'Brien and Gail Hochachka, "Integral Adaptation to Climate Change," *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* 5, 1, 2010, 89–102. Cf. Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000.
[26] Cf. Ken Wilber *Integral Spirituality: A startling new role for religion in the modern and postmodern world*, Boston: Integral Books 2006.
[27] Tjalaminu Miu, in an interview in Perth, March 2003. Cf. Sigurd Bergmann, *Så främmande det lika: Samisk konst i ljuset av religion och globalisering*, Trondheim: Tapir 2009.
[28] Luke Taylor (ed.), *Painting the Land Story*, Canberra: National Museum of Australia 1999, 3.
[29] Howard Morphy, "Inner landscapes: The Fourth Dimension," in: Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, 129–136, 130.
[30] W. E. H. Stanner, "The Dreaming (1953)," in: *White Men Got No Dreaming*, Canberra: Australian National University Press 1979, 23-40, 29.
[31] Cf. Forrest Clingerman, "Geoengineering, Theology, and the Meaning of Being Human." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 49, no. 1 (March 2014): 6-21.
[32] Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, Abingdon: Routledge 2011, 130.
[33] Op. cit., 115.
[34] Aristotle, *Meteorology*, Book 1, chapter 2-3.
[35] Cf. Karolina Sobecka's chapter in this book.
[36] Heinz Ohff, *William Turner: Die Entdeckung des Wetters*, München: Piper 1987.
[37] Op. cit., 15.
[38] The concept of change is here, inspired by George Bataille, understood as alteration including both composition and decomposition.