

## Expanding the tradition

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### Sharing with others --the unconscious that set the margin

Making things does not necessarily related to creativity. For instance, it is often the case that the ultimate perfection of the technique (god hand) is considered as attaining an artistic element and the resultant work may be regarded as an artistic one. However, even if the work is the product of the highest technique, if it only gives its presence in a certain limited duration of time, claims the usefulness (not necessarily in the concrete sense) within the existing value system--often protected by the state--and lives its life within the existing socio-political value system (this is exemplified by "living treasure" in Japan), it has nothing to do with art. The truly creative art should be the personal expression of the artist's herself/himself, unbounded by any soft of existing value; it should be the communication towards unique individuals. The art, in this sense, is always unstable and should be aggressive, within the environment, both external and internal, in which the art is situated in. In the traditional Japanese view on art, the recognition of such tension and conflict is regarded as the singular spirit in the process of creating things, which will be shared with recipients (not necessarily human beings) or the others.

On the other hand, Chinese Han dynasty's saying "house in the pot," "heaven in the pot," or "heaven in a pot," indicates a small and self-sufficient world separated from the earthborn world. This "other world," "paradise" or "small universe" is correlated with the aesthetic sense of oriental crafts and arts that make full use of decorative technique within a limited space--a view of the world in the hand, which originally implies the negative aggressiveness in the sense of being "non-social." However, in this kind of artistic view, communication--the portage or the concept of sharing with others--is abandoned. The subject or the creator is the only thing that exists, and what values here is for the creator to enjoy herself/himself by distancing herself/himself from the earthborn world and enjoy the artistic world. This characteristic, which has wide influence on all over the far east (including Japan), has something in common with the occidental view on the art in which the making of the relationship with the recipients is postponed to the moment until the moment when the work is completed (the artist as a subject malty herself/himself to the completion of the work): in both, the recipients who share the art are absent.



On the other hand, with Sen-no Rikyu (1522-1591), who completed Sado art (the art of tea), everything was the performance art which had a strong sense of the recipient with whom the art is communicated. Rikyu--who was burned to death by his patron and the dictator--established every aspect of the art of tea as the communication with others, sharing with others. The entrance to the small world called the "tea room" or *nijiriguchi* (which is translated as "crawling-in entrance") is small (59cm in width and 68cm in height) and everyone, including the dictator, would crawl on his/her belly to get into the room. A non-violent attack to the power as the symbol of "the positive." An antithesis of the authority of the contemporary. The relation between the yin (the implicit) and yang (the explicit). So-called *sabi* and *wabi* are in fact also an expression of the dissident voice against the power or the decorated reality. Thus the execution of Rikyu was inevitable.

A trait of Japanese traditional craft--the relationships between the creator and the other--is not established on the basis of the art piece as a medium. Within the process of creation, the creator always and already knows the process of creation; what is important is the process of filtering the intervention of, or the tension and the conflict with the other. This implies that the ultimate state of mind in the creation of things is to make oneself empty. The setting of the margin-- line-drawing in the common area--manifest this. This obsessive sense of portage with the other--and the projection of this into the self, the unconscious as the establishment of self--is palpable in the traditional Japanese art.

## Communication as information or the intervention of the intellect

Creativity requires some preconditions. To make/create things does not necessarily mean creativity. I would like to sketch a few restrictive conditions that can be observed in the world of Japanese work (making goods) and by that describe the spirituality in Japanese work. Through that, I believe my position will manifest itself in the midst of the current information/knowledge society.

Japanese tradition is, in a sense, like the straight line. The tradition is projected as a straight line onto history as well; straight line or linearity means the active and easy-to-understand transmission of information. The straight line is simple, non-intelligent, fresh. It defies self-indulgence. This is an essential characteristic of much Japanese traditional handiwork and art, whose techniques are refined by means of repetition of simple things. Often, when instruments/tools are used in the process of discipline, they are seen as "personality" and come to be respected. It is ultimately hoped that the subject/artist herself/himself becomes fused to the instruments/tools. Instruments/tools thus transcend themselves. As a result, the subject/artist live with instruments/tools even if they become defective. Instruments/tools can obtain an aura of the sublime. The whole existence of the user comes to be dependent on instruments/tools. They become symbols. The same can be said about raw materials; work or making things is seen as a "dialogue" with raw materials as "personality."

To transcend form and look for the essence of spirituality does not mean to deny the form itself. Rather, the form is interpreted as a sublime symbol. Thus intellect is denied in the perception of spirituality; the consciousness of being unconscious is introduced. To obtain the formality or mode, the intellect which is denied is covered up and passive negation of self is introduced. Active denial of self-comes when the expresser/creator indulges in the emancipated world of the play. Obtaining form and mode leads to the truth of artistic activities for those with undeveloped logic or intellect. Respecting the instruments/tools and raw materials as symbols, respecting their "personality," makes sure that they also support the creator/expresser. Pragmatic intelligence becomes an obstacle. This leads to the understanding that it is wise for creators not to talk about themselves.

The intelligence in this real world blocks one from obtaining the peace of mind of the self. Linearity in tradition is related not only to artistic matters but also to religion. Both deny logic and try to grasp the truth intuitively. Whether the form as a symbol or the object of worship is denied or not is just the reverse side of the coin. Form and mode gain excessive effectiveness after the denial of logic and intellect. It is convenient to master form and mode in order to arrive at spirituality straightforwardly. If the essence resides in the spirituality-through-experience, it is possible for people who lack the intellect to grasp the essence by reliance on the handiwork and sense-by-repetition.

Japanese culture is symbolized by its traditional handiwork. The Japanese tradition which broadcasted tidy and neat sense of beauty denies intellect and project the information straightforwardly. Repeated "propaganda" for spirituality and religious-nature as an inherent essence of Japanese traditional culture--the consciousness of the limitation of everything that exists--Spirituality which stages modesty. What is required now is to explain this limited context of creativity underlying in Japanese artistic scene to the information society which functions logically and on the basis of knowledge; it is necessary to create "the present" in Japanese art by weaving the weft of intellect and logic into the warp of linearity.

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