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Anamnesis and Re-Orientation: A Discourse on Matter and Time

Yuk Hui

*The whole question is this: is the passage (anamnesis) possible, will it be possible with, or allowed by, the new mode of inscription and memoration [mémoration] that characterizes the new technologies? Do they not impose syntheses, and syntheses conceived still more intimately in the soul than any earlier technology has done?*¹

Lyotard's *Les Immatériaux* can be read as a profound discourse on matter and time, one that aims to go beyond the simple correlation between technics and memory, and toward the anamnesis of the unknown – or better, as I will explain below, the re-orientation of the Occident. Plato memorably described matter as the foster-mother in the *Timaeus*, where he proposes a third genre of being in addition to the two he had discussed previously – an eternal intelligible pattern and the imitation of such pattern. The third genre, explains Plato, “is the receptacle, and in a manner the foster-mother, of all generation”.² Matter is the receptacle, but also the medium of inscription. Hence in Lyotard's

1 Jean-François Lyotard, “Logos and *Techne*, or Telegraphy”, in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 57.

2 Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html; translation modified.

system of “mat-” we find maternity.³ Time stands for multiple senses: memory, history, repetition, anamnesis. The new theoretical rigour that Lyotard wanted to show throughout *Les Immatériaux* and beyond – especially as expressed in his essay collection *The Inhuman*, published after the exhibition – demonstrates a philosophical effort to transcend the totality anticipated by rapid technological development, seeking a new mode of determination of matter and indetermination of thought. *Les Immatériaux* serves as a critique of the Occidental tradition of philosophising. One can identify both an affinity to Heidegger yet also a desire to take a distance from him, since the question of the Other stands at the centre of Lyotard’s inquiry.

This article aims to elaborate on Lyotard’s anamnesis of the Other, and to introduce another question on rethinking the potential of new technologies. I suggest that these two questions are closely related to each other, and in the rest of the article I want to show how.

The Other stands for an addressee and an addresser, as well as the condition of a *différend*, which turns against itself and produces the *différend* as an opening of questions. Michel Olivier has rightly pointed out that the *différend* is not contingent – rather, it is already within the language. If we understand the *différend* here as the conflict between the different rules of two parties, how then can we think about the question of translation? To what extent can a translator be loyal to the *différend*? This will depend on another question: How sensitive is the translator toward the *différend*? This Other stands as the interlocutor of the anamnesis that Lyotard endeavoured to propose. To ask who this Other is, we first have to answer the question: Is the postmodern merely a European project? And if it is a European project, then would such a discourse be applicable to non-European cultures?

The Postmodern – Is it a European Project?

This question is ambivalent. Even though the debates were contextualised within European culture, including Lyotard’s critique of Habermas’s insistence on the Enlightenment project, its influence went far beyond Europe. The influence of his concept of the postmodern – through global technological expansion, including the translation, publication and circulation of Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* – has already betrayed its intention as a European project. On the occasion of the exhibition, Lyotard organized a teleconference to show how time and space are traversed by the new material (later we will see that it is the *immaterial*), with representatives from Japan and Brazil, as well as Canada, the USA, and France. One can postulate that Lyotard already had on his mind the technological globalisation which is the reason why

3 Lyotard analyses the etymological root *mât* in terms of referent (*matière*), hardware (*matériel*), support (*matériau*), matrix (*matrice*), maternity (*maternité*).

postmodern discourse is no longer limited to Europe but extends around the globe. If this is the case, then we have to consider: What does it mean when countries adopt the postmodern without having been modern, as for example in the case of China, which some French thinkers consider to be a country of modernisation but not modernity? After the postmodern of Lyotard, and further through Frederic Jameson, we can indeed see an intensive discourse on the postmodern question in China. However, in China at least, these debates have not gone beyond aesthetics and narrations in literature. It seems to me that, besides its aesthetic value, which presented a sort of *Zeitgeist*, the postmodern question has still not really been tackled, and that further inquiries are needed.

Lyotard often referred the concept of the Other (or one of these Others) to the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master, Dôgen, as a reference and mirror by which the *différend* within the European *logos* can be reflected. In fact, Dôgen was probably one of the key inspirations for the new metaphysics which Lyotard spoke of during the preparation of the *Les Immatériaux*, in order to articulate a new relation between matter and time, and hence anamnesis. The question of matter is firstly expressed in the original title of the exhibition project itself, which was *Les nouveaux matériaux et la création* [New Materials and Creation]. The “immatériaux” are not immaterial, but rather a new form of material brought about by telecommunication technologies. The new form of material turned against the modern project which produced it and created a rupture with it. It may not be appropriate to say that the postmodern was an epochal change that suddenly broke away from the modern; rather, the possibility of the postmodern was always already there *within* modern thought, as Lyotard himself wrote in *The Postmodern Condition*: “A work can become modern only if it is firstly postmodern, in the current state, and this state is constant.”⁴ For example, for Lyotard, Denis Diderot’s *grand salon* or Michel de Montaigne’s prose are already postmodern. The changes in the material condition due to technoscientific discoveries and inventions have amplified this mode of thinking and narration. Hence, we can say that the postmodern is the result of an amplification, and the theme that is at centre of Lyotard’s exhibition is both material and figurative.

This process of amplification has also brought about structural transformations across all domains concerning knowledge. In this new material condition, the meaning of creation has significantly changed. Lyotard prefers to understand the relation between humans and things not as creation, in the sense of a subject creating its world, “for the purposes of the provisions of this

4 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), p. 79.

world and enjoyment of this world, enjoyment of knowledge, power".⁵ On the contrary, this new materiality has put an end to this anthropocentrism.⁶ For this reason, Lyotard preferred to conceptualise the new matter as *interaction* rather than creation. This, I suspect, is also one of the reasons why the word "creation" was removed from the exhibition title. This reconceptualisation demands a new metaphysics which reconfigures the sense of being, and fundamentally transforms the concept of human existence. Lyotard says:

If you say creation, that means that you prohibit the other metaphysics that I evoked earlier: a metaphysics in which, precisely, man is not a subject facing the world of objects, but only – and this "only" seems to me to be very important – only a sort of synapse, a sort of interactive clicking together of the complicated interface between fields wherein flow the elements of particles via channels of waves.⁷

What does Lyotard mean by "interaction" here? He does not mean that the human interacts with objects rather than creating them like being in a dialogue – Lyotard went much further; interaction signifies an ontology of the transmission of a message without end, in which "man himself is not the origin of messages, but sometimes the receiver, sometimes the referent, sometimes a code, sometimes a support for the message; and where sometimes he himself is the message. This plasticity of humans means that this structure of communication today seems like something upon which identities can no longer be fixed."⁸ This metaphysics cannot be found in the thought of Descartes, said Lyotard, but it would be possible to think through Spinoza, or Zen Buddhism – though not, he added, Zen as understood in California, but rather the Zen of the Chinese tradition, as incarnated by a great Japanese philosopher living in China, who is called ...".⁹ Even though the name is missing in this report (*Après six mois de travail...*), we will see later that it is Dôgen.

In *Après six mois de travail...*, Lyotard only told half of the story about Dôgen, to explain the conceptualisation of being in terms of interaction instead of creation. Creation is the question that was posed at the beginning of the European tradition, and during medieval times; creation is the point where Christian theology and Aristotelian metaphysics merge, which in turn founds what Heidegger called "ontotheology". Lyotard told the second half of the story about Dôgen in a talk invited by Bernard Stiegler on the occasion of a

5 Jean-François Lyotard, *Après six mois de travail...*, 1984, Archive du Centre Pompidou, translated as "After Six Months of Work ...", in this volume, p. 36 ("à des fins de dispositions de ce monde et de jouissance de ce monde, jouissance de savoir, de pouvoir").

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 37.

9 Ibid.

colloquium at IRCAM of the Centre Pompidou in 1986, later published as “*Logos and Techne, or Telegraphy*”.

However, let us step back and ask: Why is the question of anamnesis so important for Lyotard, and how does it relate to the new technologies he witnessed in the 1980s?

On the Senses of Anamnesis

The question posed by Lyotard that was quoted at the beginning of this article was directed to Bernard Stiegler, the philosopher of anamnesis. Lyotard was the supervisor of Stiegler’s master’s degree thesis at that time, and thus understood very well the work of the young philosopher who later dedicated three volumes of *Technics and Time* to anamnesis. Although there is no record of this discussion, it seems intriguing that the question has still not yet been answered in a satisfactory manner, at least not in the contemporary literature that I can find. In order to understand the complexity of Lyotard’s question on anamnesis, and our ambition to understand the meaning of the *Les Imm-matériaux* outside of the European context, we will need to revisit the concept of anamnesis in Plato, Stiegler’s take on Plato, Freud, and Lyotard’s take on Freud.

The Platonic Concept of Anamnesis

Anamnesis plays an important role in the Platonic system of knowledge, understood as the path towards truth. Plato’s writing on this role of anamnesis is clearly expressed in both the *Phaedo* and the *Meno*, where he formulated the concept as a response to the challenge from the Sophists. Let us reformulate the Sophists’ challenge in this way: If you know what virtue is (in the *Meno*), or what being appropriate is (in the *Phaedo*), then you don’t really need to pursue it, since it is already in you; if you don’t know what it is, then you won’t be able to recognize it or conduct yourself according to it. This is a paradox which leads to the conclusion that one can never find the true knowledge or the ultimate good. Plato solved this paradox by saying: one does in fact know it, and indeed one does in fact know it, and indeed has always known it. The soul is immortal, said Plato, but in each incarnation, the soul forgets everything. However, forgetting doesn’t mean that one cannot recognize the virtue that one is after. Forgetting is the condition of recognizing, and recollection – anamnesis – the method. The relation between truth and anamnesis is thus established. Socrates and Plato are not teachers in the sense of giving knowledge to students, but rather, as Plato said, spiritual midwives who help the students to recollect what has been forgotten. Hence, in the *Meno*, with the help of Socrates, the slave-boy learns to solve some geometrical questions despite having no prior knowledge of the matter. Recollection is not

only about recollecting a certain fact or principle, but rather a process of recovering the wholeness of knowledge. In the *Meno* (81c-d), Plato stated:

Since all nature is akin (*συγγενής*), and the soul has learnt all things, there is nothing to prevent her, by recollecting one single thing, recovering all the rest.¹⁰

One can notice that there is a kind of logical inference in Plato's concept of the anamnesis, but how does it work? One interpretation is that it functions on the basis of the Platonic Idea, like a sort of *a priori* concept which allows such an inference to happen.¹¹ This *a priori*, however, is not what we understand in the Kantian sense of the term. The Platonic Idea follows rather Parmenides's the *One*, in which thinking (the intellect) and being find their unity. However, Plato detaches the Idea from the particulars through his concept of the *chōrismós*, or separation. This separation is also one that removes the Idea from matter, that is to say truth from any material condition. This concept of separation was reproached by Aristotle, since the Platonic doctrine disregards the reality of the particular. Aristotle wants to reintegrate matter into his doctrine of being. The Platonic Idea which corresponds to the Aristotelian concept of form (*eidós*) becomes the first of the four causalities that Aristotle outlined in his *Metaphysics* Book V: *causa formalis*, *causa materialis*, *causa efficiens*, and *causa finalis*.

The re-inscription of matter becomes an important philosophical task for the tradition of European philosophy, including in modern philosophy, where we find attempts to unify the body and the soul in the doctrines of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. To situate anamnesis in our discussion, I would like to refer to the reading of Plato by Bernard Stiegler. Stiegler has deconstructed the example given by Plato in *Meno*, since Plato has forgotten the tool that Socrates used to demonstrate these geometrical questions, which was drawing on the sand. For Stiegler, technics constitutes a crucial role in the concept of anamnesis, for anamnesis is not possible without a support that is outside the noetic soul. Stiegler hence proposes a retentional system that characterises the processes of anamnesis through a reading of Husserl's phenomenology of time-consciousness: primary retention (impression, association), secondary retention (memory, recognition) and tertiary retention (exteriorised memory). Within this system, the retentions constitute a cycle of mutual determination, meaning that the tertiary retentions condition the selection of the primary retention, which in turn conditions the recognition of the secondary retention, and so on. Later, I will show how this reading of technics and time, as a path towards truth (either in the sense of the Greek word *alētheia* or in contemporary senses), demonstrates a discrepancy

10 Reginald Edgar Allen, "Anamnesis in Plato's *Meno* and *Phaedo*", *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Sept. 1959), p. 167.

11 Ibid. I will argue against this assertion.

between the philosophical West and the philosophical East. The examination of this discrepancy will provide us with a new perspective from which to look at the postmodern turn.

The Freudian Concept of Anamnesis

The relations between matter and time, according to Lyotard, can be grasped in three different temporal syntheses: those of habit, remembrance and anamnesis. Habit is a synthesis that expresses itself bodily. Remembrance always searches for a narrative with an origin, or a beginning. Anamnesis, for Lyotard, means something rather different and must be carefully distinguished from remembrance. This distinction has its source in Freud, especially his 1914 essay *Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten*. In this essay Freud tried to show that there are two techniques of analysis, one through hypnosis, which helps the patient to reconstruct the unconsciousness in a simple form of remembering – simple in the sense that the patient is removed from the present, and what matters is the earlier situation. Freud added a second scenario in which “no memory can as a rule be recovered”.¹² This occurs, for example, with some experiences of childhood which we didn’t understand at the time, but which disclose themselves subsequently. The biggest difference between the technique of remembrance in hypnosis and the technique of uncovering repetition is that in the latter the patient “reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it”.¹³ The analyst’s task in this case is to help the patient to uncover the source of the resistance. However, as Freud identified, there are two difficulties here: the first is that the patient refuses to think there is a problem, that is to say, he or she refuses to remember; the second is that novice analysts often found that, even after revealing this resistance to the patient, there was no change. At this point, Freud introduces the third term, *Durcharbeiten* or “working-through”:

One must allow the patient time to become more conversant with this resistance with which he has now become acquainted, to *work through* it, to overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work according to the fundamental rule of analysis.¹⁴

In the lecture “*Logos, Techne, or Telegraphy*” (1986), Lyotard commented on Stiegler’s retentive model of memory by referring to three types of memories: namely, bleaching (*frayage*), scanning (*balayage*) and passing (*passage*), corresponding respectively to habit, remembrance and anamnesis.

12 Sigmund Freud, *Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through*, in vol. 12 of Standard Edition (1950), p. 149.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

Lyotard identifies Freud's *Durcharbeiten* with the third type of synthesis of time – anamnesis. Lyotard's reading of *Durcharbeiten* is, as we will see below, quite different from that of Freud.¹⁵ For Lyotard, this anamnesis has two different senses, the nuances of which have to be carefully distinguished. The first sense of *Durcharbeiten* takes a form of free association: as Lyotard says, the passing takes more energy than scanning and bleaching, precisely because it doesn't have rules.¹⁶ This sense is taken up on another occasion, in *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*, where he understands avant-gardism as a movement highly responsible for the presuppositions implied in modernity. The work of the modern painters from Manet to Duchamp or Barnett Newman, could be understood in terms of an anamnesis in the sense of psychoanalytic therapeutics:

Just as the patient tries to elaborate his present trouble by freely associating some apparently inconsistent elements with some past situation – allowing them to uncover hidden meanings in their lives and their behaviour – in the same way we can think of the work of Cézanne, Picasso, Delaunay, Kandinsky, Klee, Mondrian, Malevich, and finally Duchamp as a working through (*Durcharbeiten*) performed by modernity on its own meaning.¹⁷

For Lyotard, these artists, including the avant-gardes, didn't represent a rupture from the modern, but rather an anamnesis of the modern. Hence post-modern art is a liberation from rules and responsibility, and a passing beyond the rules of inscription, through anamnesis. What is more interesting, and seems to be highly puzzling in Lyotard's thought, is the demand for something which is not inscribed and hence cannot be limited by the rules of writing. This origin is not something remembered, and indeed it is a memory which is not inscribed, but cannot be forgotten. One example is Freud's notion of the experience of childhood as something that is not remembered but that has to be worked through. Hence Christopher Fynsk proposed to emphasize the role of infancy in Lyotard's concept of anamnesis, noting that Lyotard "understood himself to be writing *from* an infancy and *to* an infancy".¹⁸ It is not only that Lyotard has written two books, one *from* infancy (*Lectures d'Enfance*), the other *to* infancy (*Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*), but that deeply rooted in his

15 In the article by Scarfone Dominique, "À quoi œuvre l'analyse?", *Libres cahiers pour la psychanalyse* 1/2004 (N°9), 109–123, the author states that for Freud the *Durcharbeiten* is a task that comes back to the patient and the analyst can only wait to let things come along; for Lyotard, it is the contrary, meaning that it is the "third ear" (term taken from Nietzsche, *Ohren hinter den Ohren*) of the analyst, that should bring forth the *Durcharbeiten*, p. 116.

16 Lyotard, "Logos and Techne, or Telegraphy", p. 57.

17 Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern explained: correspondence, 1982–1985*, trans. Don Barry (Sydney: Power Publications, 1993), p. 79–80, translation modified.

18 Christopher Fynsk, "Lyotard's Infancy", in *Jean-Francois Lyotard: Time and Judgment*, *Yale French Studies*, No. 99, (2001), p. 48.

thought is, as Fynsk shows, the impulse of infancy becoming the condition of anamnesis, and hence of writing.

Clear Mirror and the Negation of the Logos

I have no objection to such an interpretation of Lyotard's anamnesis, but I would like to complicate it. I would argue that anamnesis is present in Lyotard's writings at once as a technique – as we have seen above – but also as a logic – as I will now elaborate. In the text that we have started to analyse, in the section on anamnesis in which Lyotard dramatically talks about an example from Dôgen, Lyotard uses Dôgen to explain what he means by “passing”, or anamnesis. Here we can observe a nuance that I proposed before, concerning the use of the word anamnesis as *Durcharbeiten*. As Fynsk writes, “I believe that the appeal to Dôgen, here, is not merely an instance of exoticism, however effective it might also be on that score. It is rather an implicit acknowledgment that what he seeks to think does not surrender to the concept or to any theoretical exposition – that if there is a passage from infancy to thought, it is not established by the concept”. I would like to take this reference to Dôgen more seriously than Fynsk does; indeed, references to Dôgen do not only appear once in Lyotard's writings, but also appear in various notes and interviews.

I want to propose that what Lyotard was thinking was much more intriguing, and even something more uncanny, than Fynsk describes. I call this logic the *negation of logos*. The word “negation” is perhaps not correct, or doesn't carry the right sense. The negation at stake here is not a total negation nor a partial privation (e.g. part, intensity). The difference between privation and negation has to be clarified first. Let us paraphrase Heidegger's funny example of skiing to clarify the difference between privation and negation as understood by the Greeks.¹⁹ When I am asked if I have time for skiing, I reply, “no, I don't have time”. In fact, I do have time, but I don't have time for *you*. The negation that I want to demonstrate here is not that being is negated in taking a reverse direction, but rather that it is “privated” in such a way that the direction is diverted. The first case is exemplified in the movement from modern to postmodern. The postmodern is the self-negation of the modern. It is not that, at a certain moment of modernity, something happened, and then we have the postmodern. It means rather that, at some moment of its development, the logic of modernity turned against itself and changed its direction. This negation as privation coming out of internal development is a neologism

19 Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols, Conversations, Letters*, ed. Medard Boss (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. 46–47. Heidegger writes: “It took Greek thinkers two hundred years to discover the idea of privation. Only Plato discovered this negation as privation and discussed it in his dialogue *The Sophist*.”

presented by Lyotard in his introduction to *Les Immatériaux*.²⁰ The reference to Dōgen seeks to demonstrate the same logic, but no longer limited to the case of modernity, but rather to the *logos* as a whole. I believe that here lies Lyotard's ultimate question on technics – which, however, remains ambiguous. Lyotard attempted to compare what he means by anamnesis with what Dōgen calls “a clear mirror” in *Shōbōgenzō*, the classic of Zen Buddhism. I will quote at length the comment from Lyotard, in order to make clear what he thinks about it. Let's look closely at Lyotard's discussion on Dōgen:

It makes sense to try to recall something (let's call it something) which has not been inscribed if the inscription of this something *broke* the support of the writing or the memory. I am borrowing this metaphor of the mirror from one of the treatises of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, the *Zenki*, there can be a presence that the mirror cannot reflect, but that breaks it into smithereens. A foreigner or a Chinese can come before the mirror and their image appears in it. But if what Dōgen calls “a clear mirror” faces the mirror, then “everything will break into smithereens”. And Dōgen goes on to make this clear: “Do not imagine that there is first the time in which the breaking has not yet happened, nor that there is then the time in which everything breaks. There is just the breaking.” So there is a breaking presence which is never inscribed nor memorable. It does not appear. It is not a forgotten inscription, it doesn't have its place and time on the support of inscriptions, in the reflecting mirror. It remains unknown to the breachings and scannings.²¹

This passage seems to me the most puzzling part of Lyotard's intervention. The mirror and clear mirror seem to have a lot of metaphorical connotations. As a kind of dialogue between a twentieth-century French philosopher and a thirteenth-century Japanese monk, it is very difficult for us to analyse this statement without going into any kind of exoticism. The clear mirror is not a mirror; rather, it is one possibility of the mind, before which nothing exists as what it is: things can exist or not exist. The clear mirror presents something almost opposite to any conceptualisation of substance, since it is mere emptiness. Firstly, the clear mirror negates the substance or essence (*ousia*) as *eidōs*. Hence, there hasn't been any event that breaks the mirror and marks the beginning. In front of a clear mirror, there is only constant breaking, which destroys the concept of the self (the self cannot be mirrored at all). So a Chinese person can see himself, since he still has *upādāna* (clinging, grasping, attachment), which is a desire towards representation. In contrast, a clear mirror sees everything broken, since in-itself it is empty. Lyotard further wrote that “I am not sure that the West – the philosophical West – has succeeded

20 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Deuxième état des immatériaux*, Mars 1984, Archive du Centre Pompidou.

21 Lyotard, “*Logos and Techne, or Telegraphy*”, p. 55.

in thinking this, by the very fact of its technological vocation."²² Plato didn't succeed with his concept of *agathon*, or "being beyond essence"; Freud tried with his concept of "originary repression" (*Urverdrängung*); and Heidegger tried with his metaphor of "the clearing" (*die Lichtung*), but he ignored the violence of it.

Liotard transforms the "clear mirror" into a question of writing, that is also a question of the *logos*. Here we come across another meaning of substance, which is the support, the *hypokeimenon*. The question is: can being [*ens*] be without being carried in the *hypokeimenon*? Or, as Lyotard asked in the first article of the *Inhuman*, "can thought go on without a body?" Can *logos* facilitate an anamnesis that is not inscribed by it? In other words, can *logos* – and, here, *techno-logos* – instead of determining the anamnesis, rather allow it to arrive in a non-deterministic way? This question is very speculative, and far too difficult to be answered in one article (indeed, it may take several generations to make it clear whether or not this question in itself is a valid one). Lyotard hopes to *move away from the logos through the logos*, such as was demonstrated in the postmodern turn. In the teaching of Dôgen, there is another similar passage that demonstrates this logic. The Zen master teaches "*Think of not-thinking*. How do you think of not-thinking? Non-thinking. This is the essential art of zazen."²³ *Zazen* or *tso-ch'an*, literally means "sitting Zen", and is a technique of meditation. The opposition that Dôgen created is thinking and not-thinking. This is a pure negation, since thinking cannot be not-thinking, and not-thinking cannot be thinking. But between thinking (*shiryô*) and not-thinking (*fushiryô*), there is a third way which is non-thinking (*hishiryô*); it negates both thinking and not-thinking, through the privation of thinking. The *non-* is the Other. This negation of the *logos* diverts itself towards something else, and there Lyotard finds in Dôgen the Other which is not inscribed in the *logos*. Lyotard was in favour of this logic. In a talk given at a colloquium on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition of the work of artist Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, later published as *Anamnesis of the Visible*, Lyotard described her work as "*I remember that I no longer remember*".²⁴ We can probably say that this double-bind is the logic of anamnesis: Is the non-*logos* possible through the negation of *logos* within *logos*? In the last paragraph of the article, Lyotard raised the question that we cited at the beginning of this text:

The whole question is this: is the passage possible, *will it be possible with, or allowed by*, the new mode of inscription and memoration that characterizes the new technologies? Do they not impose syntheses, and

22 Ibid., p. 55.

23 Carl Olson, *Zen and the Art of Postmodern Philosophy: Two Paths of Liberation From the Representational Mode of Thinking* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 68.

24 Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Anamnesis: Of the Visible", in *Theory Culture and Society* 2004, No. 21, p. 118.

syntheses conceived still more intimately in the soul than any earlier technology has done?²⁵

Lyotard asked what kinds of new possibilities could be opened up by this new technology, towards the unknown. Or, in contrast, he asked whether the new technology is only in favour of a synthesis which is even more efficient and hegemonic, e.g. automation. I believe that this is Lyotard's central question, and it was present throughout his preparation for *Les Immatériaux*. The question was posed to the philosophers of writing, or of *mnemotechnics*. The task of this article, in its most ambitious sense, is to question whether it is a valid question. The *logos* is confronted with the clear mirror, in order to think whether it is possible to realize the clear mirror with the *techno-logos*. If we only think from this perspective, the postmodern will remain only a European project, and hence the discourse of globalisation, of the "common time",²⁶ is no more than a pretext. There is no easy way to evaluate this question without going back to the Other, from where the clear mirror comes, and where the *différend* happens. It needs courage to bring in something exotic, and I think Lyotard did it, with best intentions, to think with the *différend*, a space opened up between European culture and Japanese Zen Buddhism. But in order to understand the *différend*, one has to analyse the regime of phrases (which defines the intentions, descriptive, prescriptive or interrogative) and the genre of discourses (which defines the rules) of the Other. Unfortunately, this analysis is yet to be elaborated.

Clear Mirror Confronts the Logos

Lyotard was right to relate the clear mirror to Heidegger's "clearing" or *Lichtung*, but I think it is not *Lichtung per se*, but rather *Gelassenheit* which prepares for the coming of the clearing. *Gelassenheit*, for Heidegger, is the question of privation. However, there is a fundamental difference between the system of *Gelassenheit* and the system of the *clear mirror*. The Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han, in his book *Shanzhai: Dekonstruktion auf Chinesisch*, makes an interesting observation in which he shows that the "path", or the *tao*, is different from the *Weg* of Heidegger, since for the former there is no creation but only de-creation (*Ent-schöpfung*), regardless of its origin;²⁷ while for the latter, it is always a search of an origin, since this search is the condition under which the forgetting brought about by ontotheology might be recognised as such, and thereby overcome. It would be too quick to equate *tao* with *clear mirror*, since Taoism and Buddhism stand as two distinct traditions within China. However, it is not a distortion to show that the *Ent-schöpfung* sets up a common ground for cultures that unite different religious

25 Lyotard, "Logos and *Techne*, or Telegraphy", p. 57 (italics added).

26 Ibid., p. 47.

27 Byung-Chul Han, *Shanzhai: Dekonstruktion auf Chinesisch* (Berlin: Merve, 2011).

thoughts. Again, the *Ent-schöpfung* that I borrow from Han is not opposed to creation (*Schöpfung*) as destruction; *ent-* stands not for negation but rather *privation*.

When we deal with two forms of knowledge (let's follow Lyotard in speaking of the philosophical "West" and the philosophical "East"), we always risk simplifying them, but in order to have a dialogue (if this is possible at all), it is hard not to simplify them as two systems. A dialogue needs a common ground, and the search for a common ground is always a privation. I can here only give a quick sketch of the reflections of two major Chinese and Japanese thinkers, and I will have to find another occasion to give a detailed account. For now, I will allow myself some shortcuts by placing it within the Kantian framework, as was already proposed by the Chinese philosopher Mou Zongsan. Mou is one of the most important figures of the new Confucianism, and arguably the only one in the twentieth century who understood both Western and Chinese philosophy. A specialist in Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, as well as the translator of the three *Critiques* of Immanuel Kant, Mou understands the difference between the West and the East within Kant's framework: in a rather simplified sense, one concerns a knowledge that, constrained by the receptivity of sensible intuition and the categories of the understanding, is confined to phenomena; the other concerns an *intellectual intuition* that concerns the experience which goes beyond the phenomenon towards what Kant calls the noumenon. Mou writes:

According to Kant, intellectual intuition belongs only to God, but not to humans. I think this is really astonishing. I reflect on Chinese philosophy, and if one follows the thought of Kant, I think that Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism all confirm that humans have intellectual intuition; otherwise it wouldn't be possible to become a saint, buddha, or *Zhenren*.²⁸

Indeed, the intellectual intuition conceptualized by Mou is one that looks neither for scientific knowledge nor history (an origin qua difference), but to a sensibility in which everything reflects a non-phenomenal world: entering the thing-in-itself (no matter what it is, but probably not yet possible with a computer). The desire to enter the noumenon is characterised by distancing from substance as both *hypokeimenon* and *eidos*, from physics to metaphysics. This line of thought is further pursued by the Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani, who studied under Heidegger, and was also a successor of Kitarō Nishida, an important figure of the Kyoto School. During the 1980s, Nishitani held several discourses in different temples in Japan, discussing modernisation and Buddhism, and later published them as a book with the title *On Buddhism*. Astonishingly, Nishitani claimed that the concept of the historical

28 Mou Zongsan, *Phenomenon and the Thing-in-itself* (《現象與物自身》) (Taiwan: Student Book, 1975), p. 5 (my translation). *Zhenren* is the Taoist spiritual master, who has become free and immortal.

does not exist in Asian culture. What he meant by historical is the awareness of situating oneself as a historical being, and the anamnesis of historical events that reconstruct a historicity, or *Geschichtlichkeit*:

I am sure that Buddhism falls short of such historical consciousness, at least to some extent. Generally speaking, something called “historical” exists no less in China than in India and Japan. But I have the impression that in these countries there has been no trace of seeing the world as history in the true sense of the word ... This way of thinking is somewhat different from an historical one, at least of the sort prevalent in the modern world.²⁹

Nishitani further commented that such a concept of historicity is neglected in the mode of thinking proper to East Asia – that is, the search of the intellectual intuition, under different titles. I am not sure if we can understand the clear mirror as a kind of anamnesis, since it totally undermines the chronological notion of time. Nishitani, however, attributes the concept of historicity to the Christian tradition, without asking the question of anamnesis. A dialogue could be made between Nishitani and Bernard Stiegler. This historicity has to be retrieved through the anamnesis of writing, or technics, which Stiegler calls “the epochal double redoubling”, that is “(re)constituting a who, and thus historicity – if not History”.³⁰ Writing, as Stiegler further showed in the third volume of *Technics and Time: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, is the “spatialisation of the time of consciousness past and passing as *Weltgeschichtlichkeit*”.³¹ Historicity is only possible through anamnesis with mnemotechnics, and for it to happen it demands an origin of some sort (or the default of origin). This line of thought on time and matter is not present in Asian cultures, as Nishitani explains:

the other aspect – namely, that it is historical and that being is time – is comparatively neglected. Or rather I should say, if the term “neglect” is a bit of an exaggeration, it is not sufficiently developed. This is attributable to the fact that Buddhism places emphasis on the negative inherent in the contention that time is somewhat transient and that this is a world of suffering. Buddhism seems to have failed to grasp that the world of time is a field in which something new emerges without interruption.³²

29 Keiji Nishitani, *On Buddhism* (NewYork: SUNY, 2006), p. 40.

30 Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, vol. 2 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 77.

31 Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time* vol. 3 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 56.

32 Keiji Nishitani, *On Buddhism*, p. 49–50.

“Time is transient.”³³ However, this transient time has to be overcome in order to attain a status whereby being is constant.³⁴ In this status, time no longer has any meaning. Hence, following the Heideggerian motif, Nishitani observes that being has never been understood as time, and hence that a world history is not fully grasped in Asian culture. A question may be posed immediately: Isn't there also writing in East Asia; and indeed, weren't the Chinese the first to invent paper? The question can be answered in two ways. Firstly, there was a privation of the anamnesis of history in favour of an anamnesis of the clear mirror, meaning that there is a tendency in Eastern thought which ignores the question of support. Secondly, the technics of anamnesis of the West is not limited to history as records of events, but rather a mode of thinking which searches for an origin, no matter which one. The anamnesis of the clear mirror designates another conception of time and matter (support). We will see later how this contributed to the fact that the Orient was not able to resist the mnemotechnics of the Occident.

Disorientation and Dis-orientation

It is only within the analysis of the discourse of the Other that one can define the *différend*. The postmodern for Lyotard is a disorientation that challenges the authority to announce something childish. A typical example of the modern gaze is when Descartes criticised the city building in Paris, arguing that it was not well planned and hence seemed like a children's game. This disorientation has a double sense, as a liberation from the modern, from the responsibility and projects intrinsic to the modern; yet it is also a melancholia, since the *post-* is the search for an anamnesis which has not yet arrived, and hence constitutes its very questioning. But before this question can be reposed and reformulated, it is necessary to see another type of dis-orientation, in which the clear mirror confronts the *techno-logos* in material terms and substantial forms in what was once called *colonisation* and *imperialism*, and now *globalisation*.

I allow myself to briefly summarise a historical moment after the Opium Wars. When China realised its incompetence in warfare, it immediately adopted Western technology, science and democracy, which totally rewrote the conception of time. After the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860), China recognized that it would be impossible to win any war without developing Western technologies. The serious defeats it suffered led to the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861–1895), which extensively modernized the

33 Ibid., p. 49.

34 I use the word “constant” by making allusion to François Jullien's distinction between eternal (Christian theological perception) and constant (Chinese perception) as the coordinate system of time; see Jullien, *Du temps – éléments d'une philosophie de vivre* (Paris: Livre de poche, 2012).

military, industrialized production, and reformed the education system. Two slogans came out of the movement which fully characterize the spirit of the time. The first one is, “learning from the West to overcome the West” (师夷长技以制夷); the second one bears a more cultural and nationalist spirit: “Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical application” (中学为体, 西学为用). Western technology produced hype in China, but more fundamentally, it produced fear. We can recall the example of the first railway in China, from Shanghai to Woosung, built by the English company Jardine, Matheson & Co. around 1876-1877. The railway led to so much fear (in terms of security and potential accidents), that the Ching Dynasty paid 285,000 taels of silver to buy the railway and destroy it.³⁵ Such moments of the transformation of cultures, which some Asian scholars tend to ambiguously call “modernisation” or “a different modernity”, is indeed very modern, since it is absolutely Cartesian, in the sense that one holds that the core philosophical thought can sustain and transform the material condition.

The second reflection on technoscience as well as democracy came after the 1911 revolution in China, when those who had been sent abroad as children later became such intellectuals.. One of the most important intellectual movements, now known as the *May Fourth Movement*, erupted in 1919. During the 1920s and 30s, Western philosophy started to flourish in China. Three names are closely related to the contemporary intellectual history of China: William James, Henri Bergson and Bertrand Russell (note that in fact none of these philosophers are specialists in technics). The intellectual debates of the period concerned whether or not China should be fully Westernised and fully adopt Western science, technologies and democracy, as supported by intellectuals such as Hu Shi (a student of John Dewey), and (on the opposite side) criticised by Carsun Chang Chia-sen (a student of Rudolf Eucken), Chang Tung-sun (the Chinese translator of Bergson in the 1920s) and others. These debates, however, led to unresolved questions and uncompromising propositions. Some intellectuals started to realise the mistake of the Cartesian binary opposition between the mind and the instrument, expressed in the earlier conception of the relation between Chinese and Western cultures. These debates ultimately did not go beyond either the affirmation of a modernized China (which included the alphabetisation of Chinese writing), or the insistence upon the values of life in traditional thought that resonate with the metaphysics of Eucken and Bergson.

China was unable to go further because of a lack of understanding of technics. The intellectuals of the generation of Mou Zhongsan saw their ultimate task as one of absorbing Christianity into Chinese culture. Technics has never constituted the core question of Chinese philosophy or Chinese culture. One

35 Sun, Kuang-Teh, *Late Ching Tradition and Debates around Westernisation* (Taiwan: Commercial Press, 1982) 孫廣德, *晚清傳統與西化的爭論* (台灣: 商務印書館, 1982) .

can also say like Stiegler that, in the West, the question of prosthesis – that is also the question of technics as anamnesis – didn't come to light until recent centuries. But the *techno-logos* is always there, acting like the unconscious, or the *Nachträglichkeit* of Freud, which designates at once a deferred action and also a supplement (*Nachtrag*). The effectuation of technics depends largely on the adoption and adaptation which is limited by culture. An ethnic group adopts technics from another to internalise it (such as China has done to the peripheral countries), or adapts itself to others' technics and becomes subordinated to them. Culture here acts as a stabiliser of technics, either limiting it or promoting it. However, following the sixteenth century Chinese culture did not have the tendency to advance its own technics, which did not happen until the nineteenth century, when it was forced to adopt Western science and democracy. The situation is different in Japan, which had the consciousness of "overcoming modernity" before China started on the path to modernisation. We can speculate that this may be the reason why Nishitani had the *sensibility* to discover the problem of time in Asian culture. In comparison with the disorientation of the postmodern, what we have seen above is a disorientation in a double sense, which is not only the loss of direction, but also the ability of identification. What is left would only be a politics of identity – the Orient is no longer oriented, but dis-oriented.

The *Nachträglichkeit* of *Les Immatériaux*

Now we see the *différend*, but it remains virtual, since a dialogue – rather than a set of speculations – is yet to be initiated. The distance of 30 years since *Les Immatériaux* provides the occasion for posing this question again, or for questioning the question. The initiative of organising an event on Lyotard's *Les Immatériaux* was itself a *Nachträglichkeit*. Firstly, there was the shock that I experienced when I came across the work of Nishitani and Bernard Stiegler's *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation* in 2009, when it seemed to me that the question of a dialogue between the West and the East based on the question of technics had remained unanswered, and indeed almost untouched, for a century. Secondly, Lyotard's question was deferred, and hence has to be added, *nachgetragen*. It is deferred in the sense that his question was not intelligible to his contemporaries – or at least, in his own words, remained "too dialectical to take seriously".³⁶ It is these two *Nachträglichkeiten* that urge us to go back to some questions posed by Lyotard both during the preparation (including his treatise on Kant and Wittgenstein *Le Différend*) and right after the exhibition (including *L'inhumain* and *Le postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*), questions which concerns the radical opening brought by modern technologies and the speculation on their new possibilities for both the philosophical "West" and "East". I tried to approach this intersection of the

36 Lyotard, "Logos and *Techne*, or Telegraphy", p. 57.

Nachträglichkeiten with the question that I posed at the very beginning of this article: namely, whether the postmodern is a European project. It may be a European project, but it shouldn't be a European project; and indeed, it should serve the occasion for a profound and speculative reflection. No matter how speculative is the question that Lyotard posed, which we cited at the opening of this article, it proposes to radically reflect upon both technological progress and the need to transform it by first reconceptualising it (as we have seen in terms of a new metaphysics of interaction). Lyotard's speculation places its hope in the new materiality that one nowadays calls "digital". How serious is this hope, and in what way can one continue to hope?

Qu'arrive-t-il?

Lyotard was very much aware of the dangers brought by telecommunication culture; as he wrote, "the question of a hegemonic teleculture is already posed",³⁷ and he endeavoured to contemplate this new condition and to search for a metaphysics which is both material and political. What lies behind the dis-orientation of the postmodern is a desire of a re-orientation, not only for the Orient, but also for the Occident, since the Occident exists in relation to the Orient, *le différent*. *Arrive-t-il?* Lyotard asked, "what does 'here' mean on the phone, on television, at the receiver of an electronic telescope? And the now? Does not the 'tele' element necessarily obscure the presence, the 'here-and-now' of the forms and their 'carnal' reception? What is a place, a moment, not anchored in the immediate 'suffer' of what happens [*arrive*]. Is a computer in any way here and now? Can anything happen [*arriver*] with it? Can anything happen to it?"³⁸ Lyotard recalls Heidegger's *Ereignis*, and the sublime of Kant, which manifests itself in this new material condition as a sort of philosophical resistance. The *arrive-t-il*, without subject, without content, is however always haunted by the question *qu'arrive-t-il?*

In Beijing in 2000, there was an exhibition entitled *Post-Material Interpretations of Everyday Life by Contemporary Chinese Artists*, which is said to have been influenced by Lyotard's *Les Immatériaux*.³⁹ The "post-material" in the title was not meant to indicate something spiritual, but rather, following Lyotard, a new form of materiality, for example genetic engineering, or artificial intelligence. At the end of the exhibition's curatorial statement, the curator Wang Zu wrote:

We know, due to the advancement of technology, that we are confronting the possibility of developing a new moral, and we will need to build a new structure of such a moral. Post-material, instead of saying that it

37 Ibid., p. 50.

38 Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Quelque chose comme: communication... sans communication," in *L'Inhumain: causeries sur le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), p. 129.

39 Personal correspondence with Professor WangMingAn of the Beijing Capital Normal University.

describes the expansion of material and the decline of the human spirit, represents their opposition... We will have to create a new moral visuality, which redefines art, as well as life.⁴⁰

The logic of this exhibition resembles Lyotard's. However, one will notice two *puncta* in this curatorial statement. Firstly, what is presented is an affirmation of the disorientation, which no longer distinguishes the West and the East. Technology becomes a global phenomenon and fundamental to everyday life. Should this not also be regarded as the problem of historicity that Nishitani lamented in the 1980s? Secondly, the statement refers to an opposition between the decline of spirit and the expansion of material, and hence calls for a new moral, which is fundamentally also a new logic.

In November 2002, the French philosopher Paul Virilio curated an exhibition entitled *Ce qui arrive* at the Fondation Cartier in Paris. In this exhibition, Virilio wanted to draw attention to catastrophes caused by technological development in the previous decades, and announced that a reversal of what Aristotle distinguished as substance and accidents had taken place. In light of the anticipation of the normalisation of catastrophes in the twenty-first century, Virilio hoped to go back to the question of responsibility and reflect on the problem of industrialisation, which becomes destructive to both corporal and spiritual beings. Virilio points out that, for Aristotle, accidents serve to reveal substance; in other words, substance is always accidental; hence what follows from accidents are new inventions. Accidents are somewhat necessary, since without them there can be no technological development. But the great discoveries, according to Virilio, also create the great catastrophes. Globalisation, through *techno-logos* (and through philosophy), is also a process of the production of a catastrophe at the scale of nature:

and so it is merely high time that ecological approaches to the various forms of pollution of the biosphere are finally supplemented by an eschatological approach to technical progress, to this finiteness without which dear old globalisation itself risks becoming a life-size catastrophe.⁴¹

Virilio condemned the Enlightenment's notion of progress, and the idea that the Orient cannot escape from the progress of the Occident. He quoted the French-Iranian philosopher Daryush Shayegan, who claimed that one cannot imagine cultures as separate blocks without interpenetration, and that hence *we are all Occidents*.⁴² Virilio mocked Shayegan, claiming that to talk about "light coming from the Occident" and "a world which cannot escape progress" is ironic. It is here we see the value of talking about *le différend*, and the

40 后物质：当代中国艺术家解读日常生活，北京红门画廊 (21 Oct-30 Nov, 2000), <http://www.xu-ruotao.com/exhibitions/group-2/post-material-interpretation-of-everyday-life-by-contem-35> (my translation).

41 Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident*, trans. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 24.

42 Paul Virilio, *Ce qui arrive* (Paris: Galilée, 2002), p. 89.

resistance to progress and the universalisation of the teleculture. Indeed, if it does not take the question of technics and anamnesis seriously, I am not sure whether the philosophical East can inspire the West any further than what Lyotard took from Dôgen.

Re-orientation: an Anamnesic Resistance?

As the question of disorientation takes the new shape of a global disorientation, Heidegger's critique of technology seems to echo from time to time. In the dawn of the digital age, didn't we already see the return of the Californian Zen, which was once called Californian Ideology? What will be the difference that is to be shaped? I feel that after modernisation in Asia, these questions are no longer asked. Today if we take up the question by Lyotard, the task will be to look into the materiality of the digital and the new technological condition accompanied with it, in order to find a possibility that may preserve the *différend*, or even multiply the *différend*.

Lyotard was very brave to raise this question, which demands a new logic of thinking about technology, and a turning against technology in order to explore its possibility. It is no longer the logic that functions within machines, but rather a logic that liberates beings from such a strictly formalized thinking. Or maybe we can refer to what Socrates reveals in his challenge in the *Protagoras*, the *techné* of all *technai*, a thinking that governs all practical technics. Socrates has chosen reason, and set a beginning of Western philosophy separated from the pre-Socratic metaphysical thinking. But this reason, as we have seen in Lyotard's thinking, has to be problematized by introducing the Other, both a mirror and a clear mirror. The interaction model, for Lyotard, is the possibility of dismantling the constant *upādāna* of creation. If here the new materiality allows us to rethink the tradition of the philosophical West, it is equally significant for the philosophical East to rethink the question of anamnesis from another direction. In this sense, we may understand why Heidegger refuses to seek any solution in the East, as he says in the famous *Der Spiegel* interview "Only a god can save us":

my conviction is that only in the same place where the modern technical world took its origin can we also prepare a conversion [*Umkehr*] of it. In other words, this cannot happen by taking over Zen Buddhism or other Eastern experiences of the world. For this conversion of thought we need the help of the European tradition and a new appropriation of it. Thought will be transformed only through thought that has the same origin and determination.⁴³

43 Martin Heidegger, "Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten", *Der Spiegel* 30 (Mai, 1976): 193–219. Trans. by W. Richardson as "Only a God Can Save Us" in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* (1981), ed. T. Sheehan, p. 45–67.

Here lies both the affinity and difference between Lyotard and Heidegger. Lyotard is more open to dialogue, to the radical possibility of the *différend*. Indeed, the reason to look for the *différend* is not to destroy the differences, but rather to recognize the “inevitable and inescapable possibility of heterogeneity”.⁴⁴ But how is this possible in the case of Lyotard, with his insistence on the Other? Lyotard gave a response to this question, and I think this will perhaps be the starting point for reflecting on a possible project of re-orientation through the practice of an anamnestic resistance. I summarise this response in terms of three points: *writing*, *origin* and *system*, though we have to bear in mind that such a summary may not really reflect the systematic thinking of Lyotard.

WRITING. Lyotard had difficulty providing an example of the new technology that he imagined, which can realize the potential of such anamnestic resistance. He writes: “The only thing I can see that can bear comparison with this a-technical or a-technological rule is writing”.⁴⁵ Writing also distinguishes the anamnesis of Lyotard from that of Freud, since Freud’s anamnesis is limited to free association, while for Lyotard it is the production of work. Anamnesis is originally an interminable process; however, in the case of psychoanalysis it is brought to an end when the treatment is complete; while in the case of artistic creation (including writing), the artists stop since labour is no longer indispensable. What marks the difference between these two ends is the work of the artists – which is also the mnemotechnics. Lyotard speculates on a passing which is not psychoanalytical, but rather a form of resistance against the *techno-logos*:

We envisage this writing as passing or anamnesis in both writers and artists (it’s clearly Cezanne’s working-through) as a resistance (in what I think is a non-psychoanalytical sense, more like that of Winston in Orwell’s *1984*) to the syntheses of breaching and scanning. A resistance to clever programmes and fat telegrams.⁴⁶

Winston is further mentioned in the chapter entitled *Glose sur la résistance in Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*. We recall that Winston decides to write a diary to express what he thinks and feels, as an act of rebellion. It will be interesting to ask: a rebellion against what, when the law doesn’t exist any more? Winston has no idea of the exact date. It is not the anamnesis of an historical event, but rather an act of resistance to the systematic stupidity of the Party. Lyotard turned to the examples of Benjamin’s micrology named by Adorno. In *One Way Street* and *Berlin Childhood*, what is presented is not the story of childhood, but rather the childhood of events; to put it in another way, what

44 Michel Olivier, “Le différent, ou la question de l’enchaînement”, in *Les Transformateurs Lyotard* (Paris: Édition Hermann, 2008), p. 211.

45 Lyotard, “Logos and Techne, or Telegraphy”, p. 56

46 Ibid.

is inscribed is the potential of infinitization instead of the completion of a history. The stories only inscribe their ungraspability.

The question of writing enabled by the new technology was one of the central themes of *Les Immatériaux*. Together with Thierry Chaput, Lyotard set up an experiment entitled *Épreuve d'écriture*, which was what one today calls collaborative writing, with Bruno Latour, Jacques Derrida, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Isabelle Stengers and others, creating entries of keywords and commenting on each other's entries. Even though today, with the digital networks, we can write through blogging, social networking, audio-visual creation, coding and so on, a systematic programme on writing as resistance, aside from its journalistic value, still has to be thought through; not only a task for the intellectuals, as demonstrated in the *Épreuve d'écriture*, but also for the public.

Origin. The origin is the ungraspable. The philosophical East paid little attention to the relation between the origin and the support. The anamnesis of the origin for Lyotard is not a return to the origin that designates a place and date of an event, but rather the unknowable, which cannot be inscribed. Such an origin, however, has its support in writing; that is to say, the anamnesis can take place through writing, but also escapes being written. If anamnesis is like language, moving from one phrase to another, it needs chains (*enchaînement*) in order for it to reach the referent. The principle of the anamnesis, according to Lyotard, emphasises the fact that "'reason' for the chain is never presentable in terms of a past event (originary scene). It is immemorial".⁴⁷ The unknowable presents itself in the thing and the voice, which serve as calls, or rather as motifs, for the reconstruction of the lost origin.

In a lecture entitled *Philosophie et Origine* given to first year undergraduates at the Sorbonne in 1964, Lyotard started with a reflection on Hegel's first major philosophical work, the which marked his separation with Schelling and Fichte, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy* (1801). Hegel described the birth of philosophy as a response to the loss of the force of unification of human communities: "When the might of union vanishes from the life of men and the antitheses lose their living connection and reciprocity and gain independence, the need of philosophy arises."⁴⁸ Philosophy was born in order to retrieve the lost unity (this became even clearer in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, 1837). Philosophy is not history per se, which traces the happening of this event, but rather seeks to recover it from the present moment, writes Lyotard, "*the origin of philosophy is today*".⁴⁹ The origin escapes both writing and philosophy and serves as the condition of philosophizing,

47 Lyotard, "Anamnesis of the Visible", p. 109.

48 G. W. F. Hegel, *The difference between Fichte's and Schelling's system of philosophy*, trans. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 91.

49 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Pourquoi philosophe?* (Paris: PUF, 2012), p. 61.

while the possibility of philosophizing resides in the act of writing and searching; on the other hand, the origin without support and its practice of anamnesis is also the source of the dis-orientation that we have described above.

System. Although Lyotard adopted Hegel's conception of the task of philosophy as the restoration of original unity, he moved away from Hegel's tendency towards systematisation (let us recall that Hegel stands as the most systematic of the German Idealists). The act of anamnesis is one of resistance against systematisation. Lyotard spoke of the system as what survived the ruins of the bourgeois world after the crisis of capitalism, two World Wars, and the extermination of European Jews.⁵⁰ Systematization, according to Lyotard, is the domination of humans and nature by reason. The politics of anamnesis is a politics that seeks the incalculable, something both of this reason and against it. Thirty years after *Les Immatériaux*, the new materiality described by Lyotard has not taken the direction that he envisaged, but rather has led to a new mode of reification and control, which Bernard Stiegler calls "hypermaterial". In China, the rapid adoption of technologies has led to a misery of pollution in all aspects: water, food, soil, and blood. Economic and technological progress today enjoys the speed of moving into the impossibility of anamnesis, of both the unknown and historicity. This consists in the necessity of resisting the smart programmes or fat telegrams. I hope that the elaboration of the *différend* concerning anamnesis in the two genres of discourse of the philosophical West and East, however, can become a supplement (*Nachtrag*) to each other. There is probably no better way to end this article than by citing the last sentence of Lyotard's "*Logos, Techne* or Telegraphy":

I'll stop on this vague hope, which is too dialectical to take seriously. All this remains to be thought out, tried out.⁵¹

50 Lyotard, "*Anamnesis of the Visible*", p. 117.

51 Lyotard, "*Logos and Techne, or Telegraphy*", p. 57.