Letter to René Devisch

Kata Nomon[1]

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- *νομος, place of pasturage, herbage, habitation.*
- *νομος, what is a habitual practice, custom, of the laws of Gods, law.*
- *κατα νομον, according to custom, or law.*

What a paradox is this discourse of the honorary degree that you received from the University of Kinshasa! It identifies with, and comments on an interrogation about the future of a discipline from its external conditions. These, while contributing to a definition of anthropology, mark also the relevance of a space that allows a healthy exercise that the discourse seems to disqualify. Supported by an orthodox academic career and a commanding authority in social sciences, in annexing the plausibility of a plea between North–South radical politics of solidarity and the demands of a scientific practice, does not the discourse confuse domains? At the least, these problems should be distinguished. In any case, it muddles competing duties and privileges of dissimilar fellowships. But, should we suppose and admit the pertinence of an ethical generosity, and possibly its efficient administration, does it matter whether the discourse is validated by the degree of credibility of the scholar, of the humanitarian, or both? Let me continue with the supposition. If we accept this as perhaps a legitimate way of engaging the apparently divergent responsibilities of the same person, can the valuation of interacting credibilities ignore the pillars that support them? These are two almost incomparable powers: on one side, the authority of a scientific practice issued forth from the empirical verifiability of its explanation; and, on the other side, the authority of a moral commitment that is warranted by a spirit of finality.

In its own right, you say, the discourse manifests a language you inhabit. Translating its disconnecting past, it would signify its own purpose for tomorrow's anthropology. Awareness and act of speaking, it anticipates something in your claim for instituting a beyond of histories and geographies, cultures and their idioms. On that account, depending on viewpoints, its expression would be, through and through, a metaphor and a metonymy. Within such an order, you are right, fascination may well be the other name of anthropology, for instance; and, a matter of vision, nothing, absolutely nothing, would prevent anyone who masters its etiquette, from interchanging the designation of "Kwango Yitaanda villages" with your concept of an "*espace-de-bord intercivilisationnel*." From an ordinary understanding of figures, this system will be allowing a word to be used for something it does not denote. In the same manner, the signifier of one word could apply, without consequence, to another thing in virtue of their association. How could such a language correspond to the task of being an "inter-memory space" between "yesterday and tomorrow's societies" without being constraining as are those it would bypass?

In all, and for sure, a well-defended argument can, in principle, provide for the best of outcomes; but, it cannot ever guarantee its truth, since each one of its premises might be problematic.

Let us "walk" together while reflecting on the common idioms we use in order to clarify both what brings us together, and what may explain divergences on ways of interpreting crucial issues in ethics for

intercultural cooperation. Here is a metaphor. A postulant to the Benedictine life begins the formation period by relearning how to walk; and, progressively, how to make the body a site of *The Rule*. The requisite of such a conversion does not erase dissimilarities of individual steps. Yet, and assuredly, the poetics of an individual's effort, in according one's singularity to the horizon of an ideal, testifies to diverse procedures, somehow conflictual. As in the case of any discipleship, the effort means a double inscription for any difference in kind: vertically, to become a process of engraving oneself in the spirit aimed at by the letter; horizontally, to identify with the process through which one can invent a self from a common vernacular issued forth by this very letter. In this ascetic train, the basic idea of diversity coincides with the notion of a limit to be surpassed. An elsewhere of harmonization echoes this perpetually recommenced inscription in negotiations about the truth of an imperative letter and its symbolic figurations in time, and in the patience of the indefinite exegesis it weaves.

Inspired by his Catholic background, Louis Althusser adapted this very course into a Marxist grid in order to get the drift of the overtaxing tension between the requisition of a language, the petitioning of an ideology, and the construction of a history; in sum, the transformation of social totalities. Attentive students of Jacques Lacan would agree that it is in, and from a deviation that, after de Saussure's lesson, one qualifies procedures of a *parole* actuating a *langue*; precisely, the *parole* as the concrete actualization of the abstraction that is the *langue*. By the same mode, one describes the structuring of a subject in the intersubjective space of a language; in fact, in an ever-changing abstract, a conventional social institution.

Now, René, allow me to read your "walk," your Kinshasa discourse, from the particularity of my own steps, but within the cultural language we are supposed to share. My steps are my own steps, as yours are yours, but within a conventional system we are supposed to share. It is ours without being totally ours. They are possibly still marked by demands of a cloister, whatever it may be, and the genealogy of its requirements about how, in the diversity of our personal differences, to disentangle the inside and the outside of anthropology, the word and the concept.

Legĕre

- *Practice: to read.*

  (a) to bring together, observe, survey, catch up.

  (b) to pick out, extract, elect, select, to find.

  (c) recite.

- *Signs: the letter.*

- *Activity: to perceive* (lectio)

- *Function: reading and understanding the given.*

I am biased in favor of the fundamental spirit of your discourse. Its testimony sustains its drive from a personal whole unfolding a personal sense of duty to human solidarity, while maintaining faith in the primacy of a scientific inquiry. But, I am equally partial in my surmise of the superiority of scientific explanation over unscientific constructions, especially those decided in politics of desire.

For more than three months, your affirmations have accompanied me over three continents. Counter-text and pretext, at the same time, they served as an argument, I mean a series of reasons for an attentive skepticism in a number of public stations that I was transforming into obligations for meditation.

Three entries, three lines of questions. Your address implicates them. Seeing them from other angles, they clearly represent the ambiguity of interculturality by the way they have been, for me, competing meanings of the lowest, and of the highest degree in "believing."

1. a. How to face questions on thinking globally from cultural hypotheses that intend to revisit foundational concepts in today's practice of social sciences?

   b.Early October 2007 – "Re-contextualizing Self/Other Issues. Toward a 'Humanics' in Africa," a Joint Symposium: Makerere University (Uganda), Kyoto University, and Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

2. a. How to test, evaluate and apply explanations (scientific and unscientific) in conjunction with sociopolitical arguments of "desire."

   b. Early December 2007 – Bogota (Colombia), an academic conversation for "Una ropuesta de Maestria en Interculturidad." Conceived by a group of professors, the colloquium's objective was to debate on interculturality in the education of teachers; in sum, to define pedagogy.

3. How to appraise intercultural agendas from a good usage of ethical and scientific agreements and disagreements:

   a. Mid-December 2007, Durban (South Africa), CODESRIA Annual Social Sciences Campus, on Contemporary African Cultural Productions. Confirming individual research to CODESRIA's principles, the seminar's aim was to authenticate perspectives within scientifically valid boundaries.

   b. Early February 2008, Vancouver (Canada), Africa Awareness Conference on Hope, Innovation, Vision: The Past, Present and Future of Agency in Africa.

Here, one faces a classical attitude in politics against prejudiced representations of Africa, a student's organization opposes a one-week celebration.

Consequently, three posts, three different engagements, three types of directions. They are exemplary by their explicit purpose. They are significant by the way they make interculturality one with extended academic or scientific institutions, objects of desire and intended possession. In such a command, as you seem to suggest in your intervention, does interculturality correspond to an extrinsic call in cultural differentiation, and could it be said to relate primarily to an intrinsic structure of its reality?

A role (expert, convener, keynote speaker) has determined a function that is a question: how to walk with "seers," to be a companion of the road, and remain a voice which, within the liberty of a critical indifference, can rate the improbability, or the perils of what may not have a precedent in the politics of knowledge, vis-à-vis the respectability of the politics of cultural rights; and, at the same time, inhabit the very quest as it formulates a desire for a more ethical order?

Within specific frameworks profiling rules that would promote "interculturality," I came to focus on propositions, and a few precautions in handling them. Between empirical and allegorical lines, in order to reconceive the "interculturality" concept, it was easy to suggest in, and against plays of perspectives, questions on how to grasp your word, formulate its volume, and its connections to other standpoints in theories of difference. A first precaution was, point of personal integrity, the usefulness of a detachment from Aquinas' principle according to which "the primary object of faith is not a proposition but the reality it designates." A reflection testing itself from a culturally religious background can accommodate several sorts of interacting lines. In my disposition, there is no disapproval and no rejection of the definition of faith as a belief in doctrines of religion and observance of obligations it entails. On the other hand, faith has been assented for what conveys trust, in confidence and reliance. In this sense, faith analogizes Herbert Feigl's what is not always perceptible, what can be valued from a *justificatio cognitionis*, the coherence of propositions; or, easier to handle, from the *justificatio actionis*, through commonsense criteria of efficiency and morality. The cause of a scientist would belong to the same order of faith as a sound discourse of political allegiance within a democratic tradition.

A second methodological precaution concerned a deliberate prudence, about the very process of conceiving an intercultural discourse as a matter of faith. In a first approximation, I have been acknowledging it from an equation that integrates a subject and a statement about transactions marked by the value of two prefixes *inter-* and *trans-*. The first actualizes two types of ideas, that of incorporation, or integration (*inter-* as "amid," "between" or "among"); and that of mutuality, or reciprocity (*inter-* as "correlation" or "cooperation"). This prefix, of a Latin origin, fully specifies its value when situated vis-à-vis proximates such as *trans-*, whose semantic field is dominated by the idea of motion, from one place to another. Its denotation, from Latin to today's usages, include significations of "over," "across," "through and through," "beyond."

Finally, here I am now reading a silence as something, and this would indicate meanings such as "between," "betwixt," and, indeed, "over." From this angle, one can guess some of the reasons of excitement in "inventing," with the support of J. Allary, your Africanist library within the Kimwenza Scholasticate. In fact, you would like a challenge to the normative Colonial Library. For the Canisius linguistic minority you were, to access the African experience through empirical studies of ethnographers, Lilyan Kesteloot's thematization of the Négritude literature, and appraise the 1960s' speculative debate on African philosophy, meant, also and possibly to front a startling "ethnic vindication": "*Flandria nostra*," strange, is it not? I am borrowing the expression, and its value in cultural shock from Jan Vansina's *Living with Africa* (University of Wisconsin Press 1994). Vansina uses it in introducing his return to Leuven, precisely to your Faculty. And, here, I am diverting the design, and imagining the moment you discovered the overwhelming Flemish contribution to the Central African knowledge. Since the mid-1960s, the successive bibliographies of "African" philosophy by the indefatigable Alfons J. Smet have made this fact even more visible.

In 1982, with the accent of bad faith that always masks all good intentions, I decided to correct a bit the excessive Flemish–Germanic presence and counterbalance its scale by publishing in Paris (France) a *Répertoire chronologique des oeuvres de langue française* (*Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture* 9/56: 68–73). Twenty years later, reflecting on the question of periodizing themes in philosophy, I felt the need for a concept that could signify the configuration within which to think and rethink new conditions of possibility for an African practice of philosophy. The effect of such a viewpoint may or may not correspond to what could be expected in teaching the history of ideas, but would surely make a difference in the perspective that my friend Lucien Braun, the Strasbourg philosopher, had opened during this period with his massive treatise on a history of histories of philosophy. Thus, a question of genealogy, and a question about the idea of a German crisis of African philosophy, that came out in a personal testimony. My confession was released simultaneously by *Quest* (XIX, 1–2) in Leiden, Holland; and *Africa e Mediterraneo* (2005) in Rome, Italy.

The expression was inspired by a book of Claude Digeon on "*La Crise allemande de la pensée française*" that analyzed a fin-de-siècle cultural phenomenon in Franco-German relations.

"A German crisis of African philosophy," why German? Back to your initiative. Solid and omnipresent, the Flemish and Germanic presence was there in your library. You had the references to Frobenius, the successful *Muntu* of Janheinz Jahn. The original German was issued in 1958; the English version translated in 1960 had ten reprintings, that same year. Its sources and scope test a refusal of the anthropological task for exoticism.

There is, also in the picture, Senghor's curious intervention on "Négritude and Germanity." In time, you came to understand, I guess, that the history of Central African anthropology is not detachable from a Herderian conception of philosophy. First, ethnographic programs for explanation through questionnaires (art, custom, language, law, religion etc.) have been transcribing faithfully a Herderian grid. Secondly, despite a Freemason intervention in the Congo at the beginning of the twentieth century, the colonial cultural "impression" is constructed by two extreme, but complementary axes: to accommodate assimilation (the French), or to adjust separation (the British) and, in between, the Belgians. Missionizing and ethnographic mapping articulate the same basic principles in social engineering determined by a convergence idea. Thirdly, by the 1920s, diffusionist hypotheses from the Vienna school of W. Schmidt, with *Anthropos* for scholarly debates, inform ethnographic research everywhere in the world. A man of the cloth, Schmidt, moreover, is directing one of the most ambitious projects to date on "*Ursprung der Gottesidee*."

In brief, and in clear, your interrogations are of a perspective. Is it excessive to frame them within the configuration that devises both your cultural identity, your vocation, and the duty you are conceiving for yourself?

- Between British and French imperial theories, the Germanic-style practicality in Flemish publications of the "colonial sciences," from what became the Koninklijke Academie voor Overzeese Wetenschappen.

- Within and over trendy schools, historicist versus functionalist, you can observe the leadership in social sciences and in comparative linguistics, and notice the Tervuren team's role in the reconstruction of the proto-Bantu.

- Finally, you cannot miss the unmistakable charisma of some individuals in the field of your new cultural "devotion": a Hulstaert, a Tempels, a Van Bulck, and a Van Wing, for instance.

Anyway the Congolese popular imagination has turned the term "Flemish" into an onomastic generality: Flemish incorporates Belgian.

Complexity of a silence. Recognition of your ethnicity; and, at the same time, extreme prudence in avoiding the unscientific notion of "race" so well-manipulated by cultural militants and theorists of essentialist doctrines.

To the essentially integrative consideration of *inter*-, the amid and the betwixt, *trans*- adds or opposes, depending on one's reading, the idea of a going beyond, what expresses a transcendence. At this level, again from the original Latin meaning, the English prefixes, prepositions in Latin, initiate a dynamic that translates and reflects the challenging, and basically perverse ideal of our concrete relations with other people. In the practice of our ordinary language, the *inter*- and the *trans*- plus *culturality* echo each other. Fundamentally, that is the theme of the Kinshasa address. To any intercultural argument (convenience and correlation between words, or between statements) corresponds another one, always latent and always problematic, that of a position for going beyond, affirming the motion, or negating it, a trans-cultural argument. Referring to Jean Wahl, Jean-Paul Sartre could, in *Being and Nothingness* (Washington Square Press 1956), in order to designate the original sin (– what is signified in our always antagonistic human relations – any *ego* facing its *alter* as a subject, or that other perceived object, faces her or him in a perpetually reversible tension –), elicit its character by cracking the very concept of transcendence.

> … we are – in relation to the Other – sometimes in a state of *trans-descendence* (when we apprehend him as an object and integrate him with the world), and sometimes in a state of *trans-ascendence* (when we experience him as a transcendence which transcends us). But neither of these two states is sufficient in itself, and we shall never place ourselves concretely on a plane of equality; that is on the plane where the recognition of the Other's freedom would involve the Other's recognition of our freedom (Sartre 1956: 529).

Now, let me add a third precaution, a reference to my agreement with points from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. To the acknowledgement of an inapprehensibility of the *alter*, there is, at least, one necessity, contraposing the instability of any ego-identity as what induces its transcendence through the forces of permanence and change. One of the forces is a major "extasis": any consciousness, in affirming itself, cannot negate the evidence of its being-for-others. In this manner, we agree to conceive the intersubjective space of correlations between *ego* and *alter* as a locus in which *inter*- and *trans*-culturality structure their quivering *being-with* within a paradoxical context: the we subject or object of any discourse of cooperation, or of antagonism, being, fundamentally, a sociologization of an ego's awareness. In other words, we must give thought to notions of "doing" and "having," that means to desire, since as Sartre puts it well: "desire is the being of human reality." This is a question of method and a question of ethics: how does one face this issue without "racializing" the interrogation? Operating by implication, do we promote a parenthesis prone to fallacies within the discourse on the intersubjective space? Two perspectives to consider from choices I would make – circumventing, or opening clear the parenthesis: on the one hand, to consider an argument on whose "desire" is being alienated or recognized, and according to which principles; on the other, implication being by definition a weak procedure, to estimate if we mind the content of the parenthesis in the manner we handle the functions of language in relation to laws of evidence?

Concurring, one can contemplate the claim about an "*espace-bordure partageable*" from the prudence of the three noted precautions. Is not this learned expression, the equivalent of Husserl's *Lebenswelt*? In any case, a fabulous concept in what it allows, a fantastic concept by what it displays. In *The Prose of the World* (Northwestern University Press 1973), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, one of the reflectors you invoke, has the following declaration in a chapter on the principle of a "dialogue and the perception of the Other." The reference has served my reading, in both an overestimation and underestimation, of your "*espace-bordure*."

Right, at the beginning, the fact of a meeting, and a concern, Merleau-Ponty writes. First step, the discovery of:

> A singular existence, *between* I who think and that body, or rather near me, by my side. The other's body is a kind of replica of myself, a wandering double which haunts my surroundings more than it appears in them. The other's body is the unexpected response I get from elsewhere, as if by a miracle things began to tell my thoughts, or as though they would be thinking and speaking always for me, since they are things and I am myself (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 134).

After this quotation, a number of things could be used to sanction my use of the adjectives "fabulous" and "fantastic." They signify a bending into legends. One imagines an extension of the usual into the unbelievable, in lexical terms. But it is the basic ordinary that stands there, visible, qualifiable by what it reveals. Three remarks: there is, first, the evidence of a body in its unexpectedness, the senses; second, there is the fact of an elsewhereness, that is a locus of one's revelation, that of being in a context; finally, there is the oddity of a process affirming shifts and reversals that leads to a metaphor about the thinking activity: *one invents what invents her, him*. And, a second step, the text continues:

> The other, in my eyes, is thus always on the margin of what I see and hear, he is this side of me, he is beside or behind me, but he is not in that place which my look flattens and empties of any "interior." Every other is a self like myself. He is like that double which the sick man feels always at his side, who resembles him like a brother, upon whom he could never fix without making him disappear, and who is visibly only the outside prolongation of himself, since a little attention suffices to extinguish him. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 134).

Three other remarks, essential for what interculturality represents. First, the power of the thinking subject, a thinking machine, identified in the singularity of a perception. Thus, comes to mind, from Jean-Paul Sartre's diaries: "I think with my eyes." Indeed, an excellent rendering of Descartes' *videre videor* in *Meditations Two*. The *Cogito* is a machine, quasi literally, that is very Cartesian. Secondly, marginality is issued from the limits of one's self-apprehension; and, thematized, it would state the visibility of the other's otherness. Thirdly, perception as an acting *Verstehen* (to know, and understand) actualizes the Husserlian *Lebenswelt*, by what it brings about, the gift of life. This third step synthesizes wonderfully a quasi mystical spirit. One thinks of David Hume's declaration that the pretense of any essentially permanent self-identity are a fiction; and one accesses this fiction with a definite, sweeping belief about how real such a reason is, in derivation.

> Myself and the other are like two *nearly* concentric circles which can be distinguished only by a slight and mysterious slippage. This alliance is perhaps what will enable us to understand the relation to the other that is inconceivable if I try to approach him directly, like a sheer cliff.
>
> Nevertheless, the other is not I and on that account differences must arise. I make the other in my own image, but how *can there be for me an image of myself*? (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 134).

Is this the emigration of the *Cogito* into the other's otherness? In an exalting procedure, the madness of solipsism has been erased. As a matter of fact, a number of things are declared by this implicated motion. And your Kinshasa discourse assumes them: the negation of the verifiability criterion, the work on the self-affirmation of *Verstehen*, as in Heidegger's perspective, should now proceed from an interaction of ontology and hermeneutics. In addition, your Kinshasa discourse assumes an epistemology activating its process in the Acteon complex (alimentary, or military metaphors and metonymies of wars and conquests, violation and destruction), against this poetics of force, and after Gaston Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty advances figures which, in Romance languages, are charged by verbs (e.g. Italian, *cognoscere*; French, *connaître*; Spanish, *conocer*, etc.) expressing the knowing process as a coming together to life. You substantiate this line in the chapter on the Khita fertility cult of your *Weaving the Threads of Life* (University of Chicago Press 1993). Your sentiments echo those of Merleau-Ponty, such as this one.

> … Am I not, by myself, coextensive with everything I can see, hear, understand, or feign? How could there be an outside view upon this totality which I am? From where could it be had? Yet that is just what happens when the other appears to me. To the infinity that was me something else still adds itself; a sprout shoots forth, I grow; I give birth, this other is made from my flesh, and blood and yet is no longer me. How is that possible? How can the *cogito* emigrate beyond me, since it is me? (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 134).

The time of this brief passage in the life of Merleau-Ponty – the late 1940s and early 1950s, Claude Lefort tells us in his preface to *The Prose of the World* – corresponds to that of a step in your intelligence of the world around you. In the mid-1960s, in Kinshasa, at Canisius Institute, you can ascribe principles to a real confusion, your galaxy and its prose. Did you really distinguish that clearly what, now, you can name so distinctly?

a. the world of a political generation, was exploring the idea of sovereignty, in theory and in practice, with a Mabika Kalanda's "mental decolonization," Fanon's politics, Camara Laye and Sembene Ousmane, the "Black Orpheus" effect;

b. the world of concepts, with its buzzing interrogations, was opening quarrels with the idea of regional ontology (Bachelard), Bantu ontology (Tempels, Kagame, etc.), conversing in rapports with militant symbols of theories of alterity (Négritude, Black personality etc.);

c. the world of systems, around an emblem (– Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*, dedicated to Maurice Merleau-Ponty –), in an exponential dialogue between phenomenology and structuralism, was raising, and explaining new challenges about the credibility of Natural Law, the meaning of history, the validity of a dialectical reason.

For sure, you knew about the explosion of the notion of literature. Like most of us, you could not measure the full impact of its happening. The epoch was also being marked by an apparently minor exercise in words. The sacred proclamation, *In principio erat verbum*, had been expanded in new demands. Did the analogous expression, *in the beginning was incorporation*, desacralize an approach to the problem signified by the correlation between three symbolic notions (– ἀρχη, *principium*, "genesis"; λογος *verbum*, "the word"; θεος *Deus*, "God" –), and the Absolute they represent?

Disciplines were to focus on the issue. Psychoanalytical practice, in time (– as a matter of fact, your time, today), has proved, pragmatically, the precise signification of the "incorporation" phrase. In any context, interpersonal, intercultural, even when an alienation is highly visible, convincing work has been demonstrating that, incorporation, more prevalent than separation, is a marker in the process that comprises identification, integration, occasional falling outs.

In actuality, the passage from Merleau-Ponty qualifies the question, and significantly. It may explain also the way I am trying to treat your text. We are speaking about an ordinary way of relating to anyone, and anything, in their capacity of having an infinite number of appearances. In the abstract, three positions, three propositions from what you were reading in the early 1960s. (a) We do not reduce being to phenomenon, (b) we believe that the being of consciousness is not identical with the object it perceives, (c) from the preceding, we affirm also that the being of the perceived is not identical with its appearances.

Back to your speech and its echoes. A focus, you insist upon: interpersonal relation, sensoriality, a living body. Thus, on 4 April 2007, addressing your Kinshasa audience, the relation of your incorporation into a discipline was an account of constructed physical maps. Each, a narrative in its own right, was reflecting or deflecting other diagrams that you could date, their lines transcribing your stories. Kimwenza, not far away from the place where you are making your speech, did let you, you say, invent new outlines. More than simple added dots, in 1968, creating a library of Africanist

literature in a Scholasticate was an event. Possibly, more so for you than for anyone else. Basking in it while learning Kikongo, studying Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon, was to magnify its signification, and could not but transform it into the experience of a consciousness vis-à-vis the massivity of the Colonial Library.

And now, back to Merleau-Ponty's passage on interconnection.

This is a puzzlingly complex passage in three tempos. The first, an expressive interrogation, recites in the positive an ancient line that situates the subject in a sphere of belonging, depicted from the negative exteriority of the plurality of other people. The succession of verbs repeats the intellectual sequence of Psalm 113: (…) *oculos habent et non vident*; *aures habent, et non audiunt*, etc. The second movement, against the reef of solipsism, posits the subject's reality *in the world* as *being with* another person, with other persons. Finally, the concluding two questions are there to ground the subject, its fragmented self in its relation to others, to the world. To give birth, a gift of life, and a gift of knowing.

This quotation asserts the priority of life over the *ego* of the *Cogito*, pointing to what is the condition or, more exactly that "gesture which makes the universal out of singulars and meaning out of our life." In fact, a unique genesis germinates when anyone who is "the world to himself," and "the world to the social," that you refer to by the concept of a "universal human," this is an uncertain one for a dynamics. The measure you brought to your listener, and then to your reader, magnified throughout the confession of symbols and of a fidelity assuming ruptures, illumines the complexity of a love story through a definition of interest. In the "*Espace-bordure*," you write: "we are here to bring about a new social reality." The history of a life can be thematized from discontinuities that stipulate a continuous search in meaning, you show: emotional co-implication, mutual education, marriage or therapy.

The explicit dwells also on the unsaid. Stations of silence, and indirect hints, serve well your way of appreciation in the *Yaka land a nation*, real and imaginary. You have become a master translator and etymologist. "*Thunaha muyidika maambu*" equals the French "*connaissance*," you note. And you insist that *popular etymology* means "to be born together." It is Gaston Bachelard's favorite, and acquiescingly your Latin *cum-nasci*.

Indeed, *popular* is to be understood as *unscientific*. Yet, we can state that the conceptual value is a highly sensible derivation from the homonymy of the roots of the two verbs. Etymologists of Indo-European languages posit the reconstructed *g'enY* as the origin of both (1) *nôscô* (ancient *gnôscô*) "I begin to learn," and (2) *nâscor* (ancient *gnâscor*) "I am born." This is to say that the value we are contemplating witnesses to a very consequential and skilled extrapolation. It calls to mind – shall we suggest? – a definition of the semantic inference.

From dictionaries:

extrapolate (īk-străp'ə-lāt') *v.* **–lated**, **-(lat·ing**, **-lates.** îk-străp'Y-lât') *v.* **–l**

–tr. **1.** To infer or estimate by extending or projecting known information. **2.** *Mathematics*. To estimate (a value of a variable outside a known range) from values within a known range by assuming that the estimated value follows logically from the known values. *–intr.* To engage in the process of extrapolating.

You are right. "*Popular*" is the technical term for the type of etymology you are referring to. It is *unscientific*, they say. *Nascientia*, from the homonymia means "what comes to life, and is known as such."

What you say, and often imply, are neutral and softening events and reinstitutes the past in a moderate context. Indeed, the idea of a missionary vocation does not necessarily belong to colonial motivations; the anthropologist's manner of identifying with a culture might likewise be a manner of atoning for the unspeakable mistakes of his predecessors; and, equally, the planetary vision in solidarity must also have its conditions of probability elsewhere than in the generosity of a farmer's well-educated boy. The stories presume successive challenges in the measure of a man. They construct hypotheses for interpreting passages. Thus, from a Franco-Belgian frontier to the Canisius Institute of Kimwenza in the Congo; from an initiation into anthropology to its practice in Yitaanda, Kwango; and, then a career at the University of Leuven, now accompanied by a psychoanalytical practice. A self affects discontinuities, legitimates ways of becoming, of reflecting maneuvers relating to others, and so on. Exemplarity of R.D. Laing's concept of a divided-self that you frame rigorously: a self in, and out of, his own processes for temporalizing itself; in, and out, of its modalities of reflecting on its reflected being and apprehending its existence as what its own stories reveal, a being for other people. Each one of these marks a rite, instituting itself in its own procedures, thus instructing them. As a matter of fact, they are statements of an ontological insecurity, as well as an appropriation of something, a way of investing spaces in the time of the world you project from a conceptuality. Possibly, interculturality. The obvious seems that they are given to us in a path of voices erupting from a series of genitives, in attachment, or in deviation. *Ainsi*, *amor patris*, *amor patriae*. And, then, you say: "one is not born an anthropologist, but…" A conjunction problematizes the entry to an existentialist tenet entailing a possible doubt on its completion: "… one becomes one."

In the process, I may annotate the fringy of the manner you fuse the logic of scientific practice with that of the political, that of a belief; and in the way of doing so, interrogate the moral signification of the vocation you are invoking by erasing the Pascalian distinction between the *esprit de géométrie* and the *esprit de finesse*. But do you really efface it?

Reading your "Qu'est-ce qu'un anthropologue?" has been like reading a lesson from a witness.

Three tasks imposed themselves upon me, three ways for accessing your testimony. First, to consider the "making of an anthropologist," to refer to Claude Lévi-Strauss's canonical chapter of *Tristes Tropiques*: that is a narrative disclosing step-by-step the practice of a discipline, its origin and its meaning. In the ordinariness of the Greek etymology, ἀνθροπου (*anthropou*, human being), and λογος (logos), thus a genitive, what is given tests itself against what it formalizes. Secondly, to design what is in presence: two values are intimately linked. Subjective, the discourse of a subject qualifying himself and justifying the qualification throughout an acting out represented in a statement about a commitment. There is also an objective value, a *logos*, word and meaning, that

expresses an abstraction, the discourse that contains the speaker. The awkwardness of any approximation of the genitive is there, in the form, sign and proof of the genitive as its grounds. Does its rendering qualify an agreement with a classical model that it calls to mind, the θεου άγαπη, the *amor Dei* paradigm in Latin, with all its possible variations? Thirdly, to observe the celebration of the Yaka poetics of life asserting its will to an essence, which strikes me as the ability "to admit others into (a) deepest singularity," to use Merleau-Ponty. One sees a horizon, he insists, the horizon of humanity, a style of being human that makes *Einfühlung* possible; and, indeed, this horizon, he adds, is humanity, *Mitmenscheit*, as an extensional concept and as a historic reality.

Meditari

- *Practice: to ruminate.*
  - (a) to act, reflect upon, muse, consider, meditate upon
  - (b) to design, intend, purpose
  - (c) transf.: to meditate, study, exercise
- *Sign: the source.*
- *Activity: to remember.*
- *Function: approaching and framing orders of significations.*

Reprendre your discourse as if it were someone else, situate myself in its own movement in order to approximate a possible meaning of what could be the visage of tomorrow's anthropologist. It is a meditation on your meditation, your covenant with a mandate.

Reflecting on a vocation, Devisch summons up the conditions of its possibility. To locate traces and paths in the very act of remembering what could bring to light, and contextualize both their origin and explanation. Does not the process reactualize another one, foundational, Descartes "*at certe videre videor*," of the *Second Meditation* in which the passive charges its own active form, and brings to light the best signs of a reflection meditating on itself: and it seems that I perceive, I see that I perceive, I see that I am seeing. The habitual translation "I think that I see" justifies Jean-Paul Sartre's often quoted "I think with my eyes." Sartre's formula somehow ruins Descartes' expression in which *videor* exposes the *cogito*, and *videre* stands for the Husserlian *cogitatum*. In the economy of arranging a reconvened space, Devisch's perception of himself brings together what, on 4 April 2007, in an explanatory way, he intended to suggest to the audience. What conflux to expect from exerting silent arguments about cultural paradoxes in the postcolonial history of a Belgian Congo? The demarcation that would singularize a this against a that, serves the efficiency of disjunctions and conjunctions in real life. They should be apprehended in the polysemic value of their function. An overemphasis of a disjunction often serves the cause of the discourse, as an invitation to a transcendence of opposites. As in the most accented binarisms, in the opposition Africa or the West, the disjunction can be, as an intellectual exercise, turned into a hypothetical conjunction that tests also implications for a logical task. Did Devisch mean such a freewheeling game à propos of his discourse? In the second part of his intervention, and quite convincingly in its conclusive remarks, he emphatically charges the two logical operations with the meaning of his own life and its cultural symbols. As markers, they cannot be detached from the puff of gratuitous, and not so gratuitous intellectual games. The meditation signifies an order that emerges out of the ordinary intersection it represents: speech within its own language, speech on its own form and meaning, it is a *parole* commenting on its own performance within a discipline. To use an expression from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Devisch's meditation stylizes a perception of his own act.

Let me use the Latin *meditari*, and designate an activity that witnesses to a distance between this reflection and underlayers of Devisch's meditation. The etymological organization of *meditari* would clarify the "question," the idea of Devisch's intervention. A question, in its own vicissitude – it sets out "a request" addressed to someone, to oneself, an interrogation pressing out an exigency; "a recognition of a lack," the fact of "a partial knowledge" seeking "a resolution" – and enduring its own indecisiveness. *Meditari*, a deponent, has a passive form with an active meaning. It expresses a relation between a me and a me in a context, acting and acted upon subject; a Devisch structuring himself as "the question" of the meditation I am recomposing from its plural backgrounds.

Taken for granted, the complexity of the conceptual field of *meditari* and its semantic transferences in translation rely on subtle irregularities of Latin deponents. The economy of forms does not exist really any longer in our language, that of meanings still does; and, basically, accorded to the etymological value of the word.

From a Latin Grammar, the rules of exception are:

(a) deponents have a present participle (*meditans*), which actualizes an active value in *form* and *meaning*;

(b) deponents have a perfect *active* participle (*meditatus*), whereas other verbs have only a perfect *passive* participle;

(c) deponents have *both*, a future *active* and a future *passive* participle, in *form* and in meaning (*meditaturus*).

Let us focus on the verb, then assent its function, and contextualize what it allows in Devisch's meditation.

One, *meditor*, formally an iterative of another verb, *medeor*, which translates the idea of "exercising," and "healing"; and from the stem *med-*, there is the derived *medicus*, "doctor"; and also related: *medicari*, *medicamentum*. The series "exercise" signifies an acting on one's mind and body. It affirms also in its own signified an effect, "to heal." Thus, to meditate as a healing procedure.

Dynamics of two values since the classical period, in Cicero's language, for instance: (a) *meditari*, used in the physical sense, is the synonym of *exercĕre*, "to exercise physically"; it indicates a correlation between medical practice and gymnastics; (b) *meditari*, used in the domain of spiritual and intellectual activities, attestations in Cicero's texts, is the synonym of *cogitare*, "to think."

Two, Emile Benveniste insists, in *Indo-European Language and Society* (University of Miami Press 1973), on translating the Greek equivalent, μέδομαι by "to take care of," noting that "the present active is hardly attested."

This angle of the conceptual field summarizes the essence of a *lectio divina* in which the subject submits to an inspiration and the inspiration to the subject. It signals also the main articulation of *The Spiritual Exercises* of Iñigo of Loyola, including the points of meditation structuring the manual. A glaring example of its visibility in Devisch's argumentation could be the coherence of the seminar on the body he has been directing at Leuven Universiteit.

Three, *Meditor*, "to consider and to think," "to reflect and design," attests to transferred values that essentially engage one's mind. The spiritual activity does not detach itself from the senses, thus an exercise in contemplation, even in these days of ours, suggests the two ancient lines: in the active, "to have an intention, a purpose, an object of study"; in the passive, "to access a spiritual axis of communion."

In reflecting on Devisch's intervention, and meditating on his mode of reflecting on his object, one may choose to valorize competing keys to master the conflicts of interpretation: the fluidity of cultural borders, or the rigor of logical analysis. Emphasizing the first in the name of surpassing confrontations, and opposing it in supposing the latter as strictly proper to a scientific practice, any option seems to weaken what Devisch advances à propos interconnections between three areas: first, anthropology and interculturality; second, regional practices; and, third, the intercultural "poly-logos." An overestimation of logical operations may confuse demands and criteria for evaluating explanations. À propos social sciences, the main entries to the issue constitute a basic code for any inquiry: first, a question of a critical attitude, an estimation scientific or unscientific? Second, a question about an explanation: relevant or prejudice? Third, a fact: the scientific is social. And this means something simple: a critical attitude is not the preserve of the scientist since, in theory, anyone can observe phenomena, construct a reasonable explanation from the observation; that is, in principle, infer a hypothesis which is relevant, testable and exploitable. It is also a fact, and Devisch's critique of privileges of rationality correctly notes that a relevant hypothesis may not be testable, and another hypothesis could lack a capacity for applicability. At any rate, who could assure that, despite their relevance, most arguments on interculturality are not *ad hoc* hypotheses?

Would a focus on the genitive that signifies anthropology be an underestimation of the word anthropology as a statement and a paradigm? Let me sum up the case, rephrase my bias about Devisch's vision, and substantiate a perception.

Thus, the genitive:

- In words (substantives and adjectives) that express attitudes (physical or spiritual, sentiment and engagement), one faces generally a verbal ideation. The substantive which is the object of this ideation, is known as an *objective genitive.* E.g. René Devisch's love of *Belgium,* compared to his celebration of the *Yaka culture*, is X.

  Belgium and the Yaka culture are the objects of the verbal ideation present in love, objective genitive.

- The substantive which is the subject of the ideation, is known as a *subjective genitive*.E.g., according to Devisch, the interest of the *Catholic Church* in the case of the anti-colonial prophetic movement of Bamwungi seems Y.

  The Catholic Church is the subject of the ideation present in the interest, subjective genitive.

- Two, a noun is called a *predicate genitive*, when it is in the genitive with or without an adjective, and denotes a socially commonsensical attribute. E.g. an *Anthropologist's fieldwork* of several weeks every year for a decade sounds like Z.

Biased, and not prejudiced, I would tend to favor, beside the functional efficacy of the genitive in cooling clashes, well-defined and highly limited privileges as instrumental tools in conversations on interculturality. There is, first of all, the necessity of meta-codes from which lines of agreements and disagreements can be engaged. Two major meta-codes, propaedeutic to preliminaries, are (a) an ethical position, that would accord itself to a common grid of principles, the table of commandments in Abrahamic traditions as an *exemplum*; and, another, though controversial, (b) an epistemological position, the practicality of the ancient Greek's conceptual grids being another one, although often controverted; which, discussed or rejected in its own terms, paradoxically, ends up substantiating its usefulness this way.

The genitive to be encouraged in propositions is not a panacea. Of a highly limited efficiency, it may prove to be an effective instrument in conflictual exchanges. A well-perceived difference between a subjective and an objective genitive can clarify a situation, and contribute to the conversation. The genitive is among the less known of technical facilitations that can be of good use in coordinating group discussions.

Ethical pronouncements in intercultural contexts are ambiguous in essence and almost always potentially divisive. They can be restrained in the name of the very reason that justifies them. They could also be constrained by instrumentalizing simple distinctions between subjective and objective statements.

More concretely, my bias is an effect of the already mentioned three precautions. In the dialogic rapport between the ethics of the Kinshasa discourse and the "principles" of my own ongoing engagements in interculturality, I came to recognize three basic references from the preceding lines, and the genitive in anthropo-logy, a good case in point. My three references are delineated in Devisch's meditation.

- A *verb* coincides with an *attitude*, it signifies a meaning, and determines the logic of the discourse: to be fond, to prize something.

- An *adjective*, a moral one, it contributes to a substantiation of the attitude, which is a *burden*; and this adjective belongs in ethics, especially the grid-field of what is "just" and "virtuous."

- A *substantive* designates what is the concern of the activity, and one possible way of expressing it; by thinking about a *relation*, thus the idea of what is familiar, a fellowship; and then, comprehension, knowledge.

These keys – a verb (defines), an adjective (qualifies), a substantive (grounds) – are conceptualities in Greek philosophy. They perfectly correspond to the following terms. For the verb:ἀγαπάω (agapaô) and φιλεω (phileô) "to show affection, prefer, love"; for the adjective, δικαιος (dikaios) "observant of the rule, observant of duty, righteous, just"; for the substantive, δοξα

(doksa) "opinion, judgment," and ἐπιστημη (epistêmê) "acquaintance, understanding, knowledge."

Central in the Abrahamic traditions, these keys – an attitude of closeness and love, the burden of duty, and a knowing process – are at the heart of their κοινωνια (koinonia), or fellowship; with ἀγαπη (agapê) "love" being the all-encompassing virtue transcending all precepts. Exegesis says, in θεου ἀγαπη (Theou agapê) – its Latin equivalent is the genitive *amor Dei* –, and in this genitive, a judicial statement manifests its full declarative power. By the declaration, a redemption would reflect divine righteousness meeting human un-righteousness.

Anthropology and ethics are mobilized in the transitivity of δικαιοω (dikaiow) "to hold guiltless." The genealogy of this justification is a story in ethics. Its interference with ancient Greek assumptions on justice and (in-) equality is another fact whose history haunts any discourse on human rights. Our contemporary debates on intercultures are effects, in the patience of an infinite exegesis on the semantics of few Greek classes of concepts that, almost by necessity, include *agape* and *dikaios*, *doxa* and *epistêmê*. That is the real thing in the Kinshasa discourse. *L'espace-bordure partageable* clarifies its aspects. The postcolonial anthropologist is a person who assumes a transcultural identity, symbolic or real, it does not really matter. He is Flemish, Belgian and something else. He comments on manners of identifying with a Congolese culture. The *lectio magistralis* unsettles the irreality of an identity; in sum, the idea of an essentialist identity. Of the order of symbols, Devisch's conversions reflect possible forms by combining adjectives and substantives as to signify what is being sought. There is, on the one hand, a diagram: the subjective is to the relative what the objective is to an absolute. On the other hand, an intellectual exercise in mental agility can multiply avenues for interpreting equations that can be constructed from the following statements.

a. The Flemish-Belgian is to the Yaka-Congolese…
b. The Congolese-Yaka is to the Belgian-Flemish…
c. The Yaka-Congolese is to the Flemish-Belgian…
d. The Belgian-Flemish is to the Congolese-Yaka…

These four lines create situations, and can speak to any imagination. They can also serve for a rational game on the identity of Devisch, and introduce fallacies. Simply, (a) arrange an argument using one term as essential, and make it appear at least twice; (b) qualify the term with an everyday adjective that would fit the situation – e.g. "eccentric," "good," "normal" etc. – and (c) and we shall be on our way to promoting fallacies on Devisch's identity from the instructions of the *lectio*.

Indeed, the challenge of the *lectio* was to witness to a dynamic manner of presenting oneself in accordance with truthful statements about the complexity of one's commitment. Did the *lectio* support really such a reason?

Devisch is a modern whose practice is motivated by a Greek notion: *diaphorein*, he remarks (– I shall come back to this Greek intervention, à propos its conceptual ambivalence), that he dubs a transferential sign. Figure may be a better designation for what he considers the norm of an overreaching, and overrunning animation. In sum, in clearer words, it would represent the perfect, interpersonal, and intercultural mediation that can exceed verbalization and overdo translation, being in any one-to-one encounter, what is beyond what can be said and what can be conquered. These are, just about all of them, Devisch's words. The redisposition, my responsibility, underlines the obvious: in the acclaimed, a Greek verb construes an intense mystical accord within the framework of an intercultural representation.

Now, in my imagination, indistinct forms are lining up as if they could symbolize an active role, contributing to an understanding of what all this is about. Two old ghosts, someone called the Giver, and its double are steering at each other. On the straight line, in my imagery, a moment in time, one of the two is facing the *ad vallem*; and the other, the *ad montem*. The problem is that, in the space they occupy, there is not a point from which to decide where the valley, or the mountain, might be; and thus, the arbitrariness of linking a cardinal or temporal point to the two characters. The Giver may well be an ancestor, or a descendant of the other. A "thinking eye," I can envision the area to be a moving sphere and, in this sense, gain a sense of reality by observing any tension that would rely on firm opposites. However, in this illusory construct, variations might well be just extrapolations of my perception. I do not doubt the shifting elements that constitute the Giver and his friend. They are of my mind. Above all, they are feeding real spectacles; running the show by arranging sceneries, regulating a formless order, correcting its excesses. In brief, they are recording and setting up a climate, sometimes disfiguring the ghosts but, let us hope, they will never erase them. These are, in effect, the question and an explanation of both the struggle of lines and the truth of my perception.

One of the ghosts is in fact an image from a book, *The Giver* (Houghton Mifflin 1993), a children's story by Lois Lowry. The Giver is part of a course in predictability, which has come to an end in the life of a young boy, Jonas. A rupture made up another universe, another time. Selected and elected, Jonas has been inhabiting new memories, and he has just discovered a reality he is trying to comprehend: what "elsewhere" is called a family, the puzzling existence of old people, etc. He asks the Giver: what is an old person? Call them grandparents, says the Giver.

> "Grand parents?"
>
> "Grandparents. It meant parents-of-the-parents, long ago."
>
> "Back and back and back?" Jonas began to laugh. "So actually, there could be parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents-of-the-parents?"
>
> The Giver laughed, too. "That's right. It's a little like looking at yourself in a mirror looking at yourself looking in a mirror" (Lowry 1993: 124).

This is an exemplary experience of a cultural border-limit that is pregnant with the three disciplinary varieties that, in *Aporias* (Stanford University Press 1993), Jacques Derrida separates à propos Heidegger's approach to death, the crossing of borders: one, languages, object of politico-anthropological disciplines; two, discourse and knowledge, which are the object of research-disciplines, or discourses on discourses; and, three, the zone of demarcation between one and two. These

types, disciplinary systems, define themselves within two symbolic extreme limits, a beginning or birth and an end or death, their own and those of the objects. They are symbolic in the sense that, being passages, they state the continuity of what they represent: in the positive, through birth; and, in the negative, through death. Both, in actuality, affirm the unique anticipation of life. Here comes in now the generality of the Giver and Jonas. A currency, the Giver can decode passages, thematize them from a mirror-image, instruct an innocent; and by teaching, the Giver can initiate a new way in a will to truth. A master, he introduces Jonas into a different culture in which to exist is to make oneself both finite and mortal; finite, as a singularity and a project of existing; mortal, as a being now knowledgeable in the genealogy of beings of death. Jonas's education by the Giver is a gift of life and a gift of fear. On the one hand, Jonas has been exposed to the object of politico-anthropological disciplinary passages, all of them symbols of mortality. On the other hand, doubling the first line of initiation, the lesson on mirrors has exposed to the boy another object, that of disciplines on and about discourses, and its relation to his finiteness. As looking at himself in a mirror, his consciousness will be, from now on, aware of its own wrenching away from itself, the intrinsic division of its reflection; and, that it has a self-for-other-people, the dead and the living.

And "the Giver is laughing…" A conversion happened, body and mind have been marked, an "exoticization or alterization," actualized by what Devisch calls an "inversion" in his *anthroplogie réciproque*. Here are two designations, *conversion* and *inversion*. At the root, the Latin *cum* plus *uerto* (-is, -ti, -sum, -ere) for conversion; *in* plus *uerto*, for inversion. From A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la langue latine* (Klincksieck 1932), their conceptual field is a picture dominated by two ideas: creation and re-constitution, on the one hand; composition, moderation, and legislation, on the other hand. In both, the proper and figurative significations, stands the idea of shaping the physical and the moral. In the practice of everyday language, one observes a conceptual tension within the signifieds. *Convertìre*, "to turn around, in any direction"; and when transferred: "to alter, to modify." *Invertìre*, "to turn about, over"; transferred: "to alter, to pervert, to transpose."

From what the conceptual field delivers, one can imagine what Jonas's transcultural conversion would represent in a conversation. Interculturally, the capacity for a correct reasoning (method and principles), along with an investment in multiplying the usage of genitives in fundamental functions of inter-communication (expressive, informative, directive), generally, prove efficient in constraining excessive subjective statements. On the other hand, from the conceptual atmosphere of a *con-* or *in-version*, reformulating Maurice Merleau-Ponty's lesson in a reading of Husserl's *Stiftung*, one conceives the richness of every moment, any individuality, all communities in the call for the possibility of recommencements. Why not admit what we have learned from Husserl, the necessity for all of us, individually and collectively, to accept "*the power to forget origins* and to give to the past not a survival (*une survie*), which is the hypocritical form of forgetfulness, but a new life, which is the noble form of memory."

There is more. The whole process of Devisch's meditation testifies to something else that may problematize these preceding lines. In effect, from the swaggering symbolic background unclasped by a Greek verb, a vague figure slowly rises, every now and then, from Devisch's circumlocutions. It could resemble Devisch himself, his twin perhaps. After all, he is well the first person pronoun of the texts. The Westerner's blurred features in the visage of Taanda N-leengi's ghost may be, simply, reconfiguring the reflection of one of its transcultural conditions of possibility, a Greek phantom for example. Transcending time and geographies, intransitivity and transitivity, a Tiresias would be a sound exponent. Blind, he could see; man, he has been a woman; human, he is consulted by Gods; including the highest ones, Zeus and Hera, and even on a most intimate question that puzzles the divine couple. A prophet, and a visionary of all-seasons in the Theban charter (compared to Alcmene and Amphitryon, Oedipus and Jocasta etc.), this personage is also an ill-known, shadowy man.

One easily imagines an African Tiresias and a Greek Taanda-N-leengi. From James George Frazer to Claude Lévi-Strauss in the field of comparative mythology, as well as in the African ethnology of Marcel Griaule and Luc de Heusch, prophets and seers parallel sorcerers and wizards. They are of all times and cultures. Of the day and of the night, by the negative and the positive, in the ambiguity of their very nature (-not being only this or that, but instead "and this and that" –), and the ambivalence of proprieties that bring them together and, at the same time, distinguish them, according to the privilege they stress and account for, they are, all of them, of the same transcultural "race."

One may introduce here the reality of a terror, a classificatory attitude inherited from the Greeks, and that we still conceptualize in Aristotelian categories, the obliteration of difference: *aphanisis* – one must be this or that, one or the other, Lacan says. It is the supreme male terror –, and it would represent the erasure of "an identity." Cultures are individualities. And anthropology, scientific anthropology, and a fortiori African Studies have been the sciences par excellence of classification. The approach to human and cultural varieties reflect structurations organized from the operativity of the *vel*, from symbolic logic, that is a systematic usage of alternations reproducing a disjunctive rapport between a *same* and its *others*.

Devisch's Kinshasa discourse and its sequel on "*l'espace-bordure partageable*" seem to project a Tiresias in the figuration of tomorrow's anthropologist. A symbol, it signifies a need represented by other levels of both the reality of everyday life and the fables about genesis. Eccentric, Tiresias is the very meaning of a burden, that of compensating for limits, their constraints within the tradition, and the laws they have been erecting. Master of connotations and denotations, Tiresias incarnates a quest that relies on symbols, a divine capacity for perceiving, and designing the world as another world.

Does Tiresias need an ethics? Actuating breaks, he represents a perpetual and self-contradictory impulse within shifting instants and equivocations. Speaking of the anthropologist's image in *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss underlines this ambiguity. Specifying a moral unsteadiness, he remarks that, by vocation, the anthropologist is a trouble-maker at home, and a conservative in the culture and time of an elsewhere. In the

transcultural economy that this "manner of being" circumnavigates, this student and scholar in human variations lives a science by the anguish that comes forth, from contrasts substantiated in two verbs: the Greek *emein* (to vomit) and *antropophagein* (to eat human flesh, physically or spiritually). That is an importunate terror. How can a science modify what its practice allegorizes? One, to reject, or the duty to alterization; two, to incorporate, or the duty to assimilation? The anguish consecrates a fear about one's normative ethics, and the grid to invoke in order to respond to a "what is good and bad." Implied demands of the question transform it into an exacting interrogation on the meaning of the words "good and bad," what they carry, what they relate to. And, indeed, the issue emerges of the relation between moral judgment and action, and the "is there a universal moral value of acts?" Burden and duty, the questions transform the anthropologist into a philosopher. In effect, the ethics of any anthropological practice cannot but refer to the meta-ethical. The guidelines for inquiry in textbooks tend to ignore that they belong to a conceptual field, and no longer to a scientific domain. Moreover, a new space of desire has been projected from the intersection of the anthropologist's "elsewhereness" and a real "elsewhere."

By a sheer accident of thematic ordering, *The Giver* of Lois Lowry stands on a shelf in my study next to René Devisch and Claude Brodeur's *The Law of the Lifegivers. The Domestication of Desire* (Harwood 1999). Quasi identical title and very similar interrogation, they call for a need to understand the intelligence of "desire" in the articulation of interculturality, and through its symbolic trust.

Devisch's texts index a personal itinerary to the conditions of their definition. This is the position I am looking at, and which claims to reveal a law signified in the canon of the Giver, symbolized by Tiresias, the seer and the knower. Why and how to read Devisch's questions within the mythical universe of a youth estranged from the memory of a past? On what kind of scale does one evaluate the hypothesis of a science, and appraise its effectiveness in a culture by what is being willed in naming a feature like – what is a grandparent? A discourse able to do the job correctly must be of the order of explanation. Notwithstanding the precariousness of such an outlook, Devisch faces his personal commentary and its precepts, and consciously names conversions, how they have been and are still leading him. He collects scientific feats and feeds the flux of his statements of solidarity, in their materiality. Describing himself in the image of a master of explanation, he would combine the virtues of the Giver with those of the good old Tiresias.

Indicative and implicative, Devisch's proficient code constructs a universe by deconstructing two worlds in a prophetic vision. Looking at ruptures that explicate conversions, can one gauge this intellectual maneuver by simply marking off its most visible sign, the inclination to overvalue weak systems and undervalue stronger ones? The preference induces a judgment that sets an impression, and surely an ethical activity. They can be appraised. Independently from a valuation of criteria for a valid comparability of systems, the reason moves the very notion of explanation, scientific and unscientific, to another, a too often ignored problem: to be scientific, an explanation must not be a function of a scientific discipline in the restricted sense of usual definitions. Devisch makes a good point in invoking the dynamics of a Greek verb that he singles out, and attaches to it a practice and its reconditioning. The inspiration, he thinks, could accommodate features of tomorrow's anthropologists; in sum, the mythical body of the Giver, or a lifegiver, who, incorporating his Greek double, would transcend the conflicting versions of Tiresias' story.

A last sign of terror comes in. An explanation, Tiresias corresponds to accounts, from which what should be explicated could be inferred rationally and that is not to say logically. After all, prophets may have, as it is often the case, a terrifying spirit of consequences. Generally, however, most of them, as if it were a necessity, would rather problematize any correct reasoning. Any possible inference from the symbolics of the Giver, in Lois Lowry's novel, may be very closely related to the explanation of the book, in the sense that, contingent upon the information procured, the conclusion estimated in a subjective reading, can improve itself in terms of probability, instead of deductively. This is to say, bracketing its impeccable ethics in politics of solidarity, from propositions of Devisch's Kinshasa meditation and its extension, "*l'espace bordure partageable*," in the clarity of their affirmation about the future of a practice – an attitude in relation to an explanation, and the grounds for agreeing with it – one reads the exigency of balancing two full measures against each other: on the one hand, that of the routine criteria for rating hypotheses supporting an explanation (relevance and testability, explanatory capacity and compatibility with other theories); and, on the other hand, that of creative impulses influencing hypotheses, the part of political engagement which, for better and worse, has sometimes conditioned the rules and mechanics of the sciences in general, and the social sciences in particular.

Notwithstanding, perplexed and wondering, one comes to respect a spirit and its ability in articulating axes for action at the intersection of slippery presuppositions surrounding two conceivably conflicting explanations, that of a science to be invested, and that of an ethics. From the stability of such a perspective, one sometimes dreads over how real is the enemy Devisch is combating?

Orare

- *Practice: To celebrate.*
  - (a) to argue, plead, treat.
  - (b) to beg, beseech, entreat, to request, ask assistance.
  - (c) to supplicate.
- *Sign: an absolute*
- *Activity: to comprehend.*
- *Function: actualizing meaning.*

An *orant*, from the Latin *orare*, by its etymological meaning, is an envoy and a spokesperson engaging another person, a community, a cause. Male or female, he is an advocate, an intercessor pleading for, or on behalf of another. The feminine *oratrix*, accenting the dimension of a respectful petition, that of a humble prayer, has tended to designate specifically a female supplicant. In the unmarked *orator*, as well as in *oratrix*, one finds the values they share with the semantic field of *oro* (*-aui*, *--atum*, *-are*): that is, on the one hand, with strong juridical connotations,

"to appeal, to petition, pledge, urge"; on the other hand, with an essentially religious value, words related to the conceptual field that includes "to ask, implore, request, pray, supplicate." If, already in Latin, the two semantic orientations are equally manifest in words derived from *oro* (e.g. *oratio*, *adoratio*, *exoratio*, *peroratio*, and the verbs actualizing them), the religious one is, according to all lexicographic and etymological sources consulted, the most dominant throughout the Latin history. It is also the one that is still testified to in Romance languages. *Orant*, from Latin *orans* (present active participle of *orare*), is a word attested today almost uniquely in lexicons of religious affairs and their historical dimensions in disciplines.

If I am introducing this part of my meditation in this way, and progressively extending it, from a Latin background to a classical Greek, it is for a number of reasons. There is, first, a set of methodological motives. First of all, the *oratio*, an integral part of the *lectio divina* whose articulation includes four phases – *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *contemplatio* – constitutes a normal step in a reading inspired by this plan. Secondly, since the constitution of universities in the Middle Ages, the word *oratio*, which has always maintained its two Latin systems of values, juridical and religious, corresponds to "discourse"; and is, in the general intellectual culture, the correct Latin term for your lecture, whose technical designation is *lectio magistralis*, a public lesson by a university professor. The definition is an academic transfer of the monastic *lectio* which historically initiated it. Thirdly, in a classroom or an amphitheater, the *lectio magistralis*, contested during the 1960's student uprisings, but still a prestigious institution, is an opportunity for a scholar to address a special topic in a programmatic manner that may include, as you did, a personal statement with ethical considerations.

There is a second set of reasons, more culturally determined. First, one may consider the titular of a *lectio magistralis*, within the context of a celebratory function, a person transcending the medieval particularization of charismas that differentiates a *lector* from an *auctor*, a distinction that Pierre Bourdieu reactualized in his sociological research of the French intellectual life. Succinctly, the *lector* analogizes a "priestly" function. A teacher, whose expected role is to transmit a knowledge and a *savoir-faire*, would be its best representation. The *auctor* (and its proximate *auctoritas* that gave our "authority") – and I am referring to Emile Benveniste's *Indo-European Language and Society* – represents a status meant to increase the power of an institution or a rank, to make bigger and more important what existed before. Technically, one has to refer to the ideology of the Latin Church in order to decode the two functions. A *lector* – a step (a minor order) towards the priesthood – is habilitated to read, comment, and interpret in public the Scriptures; and, in so doing, transmit the orthodoxy of a tradition. The *auctor*, on the other hand, has the power and responsibility of managing the tradition, and guiding it into the future.

In contemporary secularized terms, from this ancient specialization, Pierre Bourdieu suggested two functional classes of intellectuals: a first one, of those who, like any regular teacher, through a social habilitation, are expected to serve the culture according to its exclusive directives, in fidelity to truth, a "sacerdotal" function; and a second class, that of those who, well or ill-inspired, take upon themselves the daring task of exploring the margins of a culture and the unimaginable, a "prophetic function." A professional elected to deliver a *lectio magistralis*, in accord with the *in medio virtus* principle, would generally tend to situate the pronouncement between a *lector*'s prudently innovative argument and an *auctor*'s judiciously deliberate exploration. By the type of interest it has induced internationally, your *oratio* seems to have been an exemplar of such a measure.

One needs the Latin background of an *orant* – a word sometimes seen as a synonym for *orator* – in order to appraise correctly the symbolism of your *lectio magistralis* at the University of Kinshasa. Your *oratio*, dignified, has the double axis of *oro*, semantically and conceptually. On the one hand, the *orant* speaks as an ambassador, juridical axis. He argues and pleads a cause (*si causa oranda esset*; of Livius 39, 40, 12), and speaks to equals, to friends. On the other hand, the *orant* speaks as a client, addressing an authority, asking assistance, beseeching, praying. In the two angles, the Master of the day speaks with conviction, *kata nomon*, following the custom and the law; and, request or prayer, his address is made according to regulations and expectations; but, also, according to a conventional institution, and its practice. Accordingly, for an *oratio*, the *orant* follows rules and directives from a probable *ars orandi* (art) and *ars scientiae* (science).

At the intersection of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian representations, thematically opposed to the *orant* who makes his *oratio* standing, sitting or on his knees, there is another face, that of the *gisant*.

Thus, a logos, the word of an *orant*, in its double functions and movements, subjective and objective. Singling the caesura in the plurality of possible genitives, qualifying your message (love or desire, action or faith etc.) – can we assess what it ratifies à propos the deflections of meanings it construes and diffuses in the speech? Yours was about a "discipline" and its "politics."

Invisible, the interstice between the subjective and the objective is itself a letter. A break and a quiet internal period within an expression (form, locution, verse), it joins two unequally accented elements that it consummates and might dissociate. To read it, that is to detect the way it relates to the making of an anthropologist, means a task: to reformulate the creative process of an idiosyncratic topography by modulating some of the axes that articulate it. Here are, at least, three possible keys. One, an observation of the activity of the caesura, by surveying and connecting some of the rings it allows; two, a tracking of symbols that it involves by skirting and finding signs that, one and at the same time, it implies and masks, suggests and disguises; three, assessing some of your questions about an anthropologist's vocation, by reinterpreting what the caesura in the word *anthropou-logos* testifies to, in a manner of recovering the path of the *oratio*, in sum the configuration of its meaning.

In praising your attitude and its testimony, one perceives a paradox as well as a psychological dilemma. I read the text as a riddle on justification. The narration of a progressive education in manners on how to relate to other people, the recording of how a vocation came to be inscribed on a body, your statement

supplies additional information, in relation to how its own impetus and momentum, which have been discontinuous, by no means certain, may or may not explicate the style of celebrating the Yaka culture. At any rate, traces are there. In an honest caution, rather than a full disclosure, your critique of the excesses of globalization could not ignore the Yaka desire in modernization. To celebrate the Yaka tradition with or without restrictions, à propos its internal counterpoints, engages your individual credibility and moral standing, as well as those of the scholar who is also a Yaka elder. As to the effects of the discourse, it will certainly have this outcome: with restrictions, any declaration may divide your own class of Yaka elders, and cast doubts about your integration in the culture; without restrictions, any declaration might inconvenience your deontological integrity. Moreover, the "postcolonial" person you are knows pretty well that the anthropology of Yaka-land in the Colonial Library includes an exemplarily immense work by militant missionaries. To question their methods would not necessarily signify charging their good faith, as it would not à propos contending views of fellow anthropologists born Yaka. But is it absolutely unavoidable?

The explicit in the anthropologist's achievement (what has been done and said), states above all what has been lost. Ruptures in human journeys, the reorientations they govern, always comprise a measure of breakaway and renewal. Ephemeral or not, the disaffection or the loss of walls inform, as for instance, from the life on a familial farm to a Jesuit training, from philosophy to anthropology, from Belgium to the Congo. And of course, the constraints of an academic discourse also are to be considered. They comment on slips and lapses in one's intellectual confession. The explicitness of a reason in a disciplinary practice makes the best of itself by necessity; not only from crises and habitual professional trials, but equally from what conscience and memory can choose to weaken, ruin, or simply erase and forget.

Certainly, the declarative memory of a *parole* circumscribes its own density. A case in point could be your rendering of a transformation: one day, Devisch becomes Taanda-N-leengi. Does the symbolic metamorphosis merit a significant attention in the anthropologist's consciousness? The text circles it in "*le hasard de la petite histoire*." The adjective *petite* mismatches an event. In the name of privileges unknown to the audience, the *orant* has chosen to misplay what founds his *lectio*. In intent, as well as in its reception, it is a sort of stylistic drama.

Unfortunate, this adjective "petite," for what it half-opens and closes instantly. In actuality, it also invests a memory with its secret. Really charming this adjective, by the interrogation it summons forth: "petite?" It can be exhorted in variations that could include implications like these two: one, "Am I not a situation that the character may not grasp?" or, an emulating banality in the act of remembering, "I mean a 'play' for the audience, for I am simply a figure of a new immanence." Here, with you, an adjective; elsewhere, in my recent experiences, a declaration that inevitably shields something like an evidence. Many would agree that anthropologists undergo an initiation that bestows upon them some kind of esoteric knowledge; and, with it, a power linking them to local spiritual masters.

This opinion nurtures a doctrine. Does the anthropologist believe in what often smacks of mystification? If not by conviction, at least as a mode of protecting a good professional standing, the choice of a style of engagement, backed by a solid reasoning can, in principle, safeguard the anthropologist's moral integrity. The entailment thesis would exonerate the necessary ambiguity of a satisfactory reason. After all, consider the frequent issue of paranormal activities. If in a field, for example, people claim that they are certain that such and such is what qualifies an instance, and is the citation; surely, they have a belief, and possibly the conviction, that such and such qualifies an instance, and is the citation. The reasoning is not bulletproof. Yet, nothing prevents the anthropologist from using it, from describing a paranormal construct that may, or may not, incorporate morally controversial statements. From the outset, an anthropologist must have been a believer. I must not. And, one day, with or without an explicit consent your authority could support a controversial puberty ritual as a possible entry to a textbook for a high school intercultural history class.

Concerning *la petite histoire*, if it were essential to address the naming from what is called a reproductive memory, you could have mobilized it differently, *n'est-ce pas*? In fact, remembering one's life, autobiographical memory, defines its own boundaries, since the act sets useful and objective restrictions on it; and subjective too, by and in the manner to interpret. At the same time, such a problem can be managed by its commonsense specification, and should not restrain us from using the concept of memory without concern. It means what any dictionary plainly defines as the mental capacity of recalling or recognizing previous experiences, real or imaginary. Arthur S. Reber and Emily S. Reber in *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (2001) dub it a "virtual blizzard of specialized terms."

The precaution is expedient. In effect, the chasm between your *oratio* assumed as a discourse *pro domo* which exposes urgencies, and the ambient air of the anthropological "nation" reflects other courts. A carefully constructed miniature mirror, the *oratio* and its sequel summon up paths unwinding classes of particulars about the Yaka in relation to your inscriptions in a number of intellectual streams; and this, in relation to the history of a discipline. Indeed, invoking only the "caesuras" in genitives and the contextual signification of their statements (e.g. anthropologists' valuation of strange things, the Africanist's sentiment for moderation, the why of the Yaka's distinction in hunting the best interpreter' friendship etc.), it is easy to characterize how they are engrossed in other conceptual grids. Among a number of references, I think of *The Law of the Lifegivers: The Domestication of Desire* (Harwood 1999), co-authored with Claude Brodeur, to which I referred in the process of collapsing two myths – the Giver and Tiresias – on to a third one, tomorrow's anthropologist.

In your dialogue between anthropology and psychoanalysis, as a matter of fact between two psychoanalysts, the empirical information relied all but uniquely on your research and questions; thus on the Yaka as a foundational argument. This means – to use the mathematical definition of "argument" – that the Yaka culture stands as the parameter on which the value of all universal functions depends. First, reaction: really? Then, an afterthought:

why not? You are there in good company, with a number of distinguished savants, including Victor Turner to whom you have been compared by Jean Comaroff, of the University of Chicago, and Bruce Kapferer of the University College London. At present, I have also in mind something else, a bit strange. In December 1987, Claude Lévi-Strauss, of the Académie Française, speaking about himself to the American journalist James M. Markham, says this: "one does not try to be a giant, one tries to be a good artisan." And, later on in the conversation, he warns: "All over the world, one is seeking more than one is finding." The report of the meeting was published in *The New York Times* of 21 December 1987. Are you concerned with this exercise in modesty? There is a counter-measure to this. Back in time, in 1955, *Tristes Tropiques* is published by Plon. Claude Lévi-Strauss compares the anthropologist to "an astronomer." Only a metaphor? The figure is used again in the Finale of *L'Homme nu*, twenty-six years later. This time it is a comparison: the self, he writes: "is a point in space and a moment in time, relative to each other" (*The Naked Man*, Harper 1981: 625).

In any case, your conversation with Brodeur *begins where it ends*, with a question of mediation. And which one? In which code does one translate "the shock of a profound awareness that a people's culture, including its unconscious dimensions, is what both deeply links and differentiates human beings." And, here, I am connecting pre-meditated lines on the body of the "discourse," and an apperception, constructing another space from a body of "letters," which is this book of yours. As a matter of fact, *à livre ouvert*, Devisch's liturgy at the University of Kinshasa – "What is an anthropologist?" – and its ethical extension stands in an intercommunication effect, intermingling graphic signs and their histories. You are an "astronomer," in your own manner.

The signs of your *oratio* seem to be variations of a thought, always the same, and à propos the idea of a body. I should be willing to let two models unmask a hunt and its risks. There is, on the one hand, omnipresent and somehow mute, but overflowing, an obsession with the idea of a *homo faber*. On the other hand, loquacious, the Yaka argument, as it has been constructed by years of anthropological studies that have deconstructed a reality, a phenomenon in its details. For hours, I looked at the photos reproduced in *The Law of the Lifegivers*. In a first approach, well, one thinks about regrouping presentations of objects, of things in one group, and those of people in another. On one side, worked objects and on the other, reified humans. It should be easy, and it is not. Things? The *Khosi* figurine (plate 1), the *Binwaanunu* (plate 2), or the *Mbwoolu* statuary (plate 9)?

An intention, a practice fuses with its own meaning and becomes an act of faith. In other words, two horizons face each other: one, life remembers, the activity of the letter and the signs of an origin; two, life does work, comments on a will to truth. The horizons can be approached and have been, from a series of concepts issued by disciplines (anthropology, history, religion, etc.), individual voices (native or foreign, colonial or missionary, etc.), the intrinsic or extrinsic operators (e.g. schools, churches, social institutions etc.). Whatever angle one takes, the most influential agents in the history of the Yaka-land are the Christian missionaries who, in tandem with the Belgian colonial administration, have been evangelizing the region since the nineteenth century. Possibly a wave over an order marked since the sixteenth century. Such is the Yaka domain from which one may test your *terra firma* against points of dissent, points of orthodoxy in a normative trans-disciplinary practice.

Did everyone perceive Devisch saying something like "I may know one of my knots, it is a situation vis-à-vis these horizons? How could I say that you must know how I think you see me thinking about the Yaka?" The style, Laing's, is recognizable. And Claude Brodeur upholds Devisch's quest in discipline and faith. But, in which field to perceive the "more" of a guiding practice, the anthropological or the psychoanalytical? Let me insist on two limits. The first, a question in the European practice of philosophy, most clearly since the Renaissance, structures the Brodeur and Devisch dialogue. It concerns the will to truth itself, the conditions of its normative functions, in concordance with thematics that came to oblige hypotheses about a line which, transcending cultural dissimilarities, would validate a convergence theory. In this perspective, your model, Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, is emblematic. Paul Ricoeur termed it "a Kantism without a transcendental subject" – and, in the overture to *The Raw and the Cooked* (University of Chicago Press 1983; Harper & Row 1969), Lévi-Strauss accepted the label. In this celebration of your outlook, to know whether you would agree with the implications of such a concept, is here of no importance. You still share something like a principle that submits a method to the primacy of human solidarity. It infixes the invisibility of a culture in what is settled as a prerogative from which to apprehend any alterity in its strangeness, that is its visibility. Oddly, opposite to such an awareness, that you tend to express in a Rousseauist vision sometimes, you think your stances in essentially political terms. I read your memoir on Lévi-Strauss at Lovanium, thirty-seven years ago. It was an inscription in a persuasiveness that linked you to what could be termed an ethics of structuralism. Is what you are teaching us today a deepening, or by the force of circumstances, a going beyond, another one of your conversions? In any case, you may be less pessimistic than Lévi-Strauss. He horrified the American James M. Markham. I referred to their conversation. Here is how it ends, Lévi-Strauss saying: "History is whimsical and unpredictable, 'progress' is uneven at best and certainly relative (…) I try to understand, I am not a moralist at all."

The anti-Cartesian *I is an Other*, from Rousseau to Lévi-Strauss, can allegorize – why not? – the marginality of a Rimbaud. Exactly, Rimbaud as a metaphor of marginality, a striking one, allows flawless conceptual equations. Sure enough, existentially, the following platitudes will do: marginality is to the visibility of the *alter* (the exotic, the marked) what normativity is to the invisibility of the *ego* (the referent, the unmarked). No more entries that favor anyone. Everyone being the *alter* of someone else, the problem seems settled. You have magnified the truism in an *oratio* demonstrating that, for sure, the truism works in the abstract, not in the actuality of our shared human condition.

A tradition and a reason still house their own constructs. Is it wrong to hypothesize that their triumph could be indicative of your alertness to casualties, to consequences. The austerity of your

terrifying secret, of Devisch's position on alterity. Its unsaid hunts anthropological systems for approximating an old interrogation on the body: the body, whose body? In the negative or in the positive, the body, any body, as the singularity that can equate the immediacy of a consciousness and the visibility of an object. You refer to two telling stories: at the University of Antwerpen, under "therapeutic cults of Kwango," the sessions directed for physicians on "the body and the world." At Leuven, for decades – correct? – a popular seminar on "anthropology of the body," the "exotic Yaka culture" and its "unusual way of perceiving." Any student of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (Washington Square Press 1956), after a careful examination of the section under the heading "being-for-others," could connect the success of the seminars, at least partially, to the phenomenon of fascination. The reality of fascination, Sartre was convinced, is possibly the measure for identifying with a permanently emerging alterity, that body I can relate to, and which is me without being mine. Thus, always in the same movement, fascination, that other name for the corporeal capacity of horror.

The brief reference to your seminars imposed itself upon me, at a moment I was involved in the work of a Chinese scholar on the "doctor's body" in the traditional Chinese healing system. To conceptualize the difference between the Western medical practice that reads the patient's signs from the abstract constituted by a taxonomic table of symptoms and, on the other hand, the Chinese that moves the other way around (– about impulse sensing for instance, the doctor's body, in its contact with the patient's, initiates both reading and analysis –), Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenology of the body granted us a basic code for a dialogic semiology. In three ways, three successive steps, to stamp the body.

First, to apprehend *the body as what we exist in*, through senses; that is, the frame of our individual history. And, reflecting on it, we make it more than the contingent thing it is, we turn it into this psychological machine which is aware of its limits and of its transcendence. Secondly, close to the Chinese pulse reading, we face an apprehension of the body as what it is in any social context, a body for other people; in clear, the body *as something we assume in the revelation of others' existence*; in fact, the reality of others' bodies. Finally, we come to see and understand our body as a frame, as *a very concrete locus* from which we think, sense and organize all our relations with others; absolutely, all our connections with other people, and with things, our language, as well as our feelings.

The Kinshasa lecture has been an opportunity to revisit your work, and appreciate your phenomenological bent. Despite the technicality of the "relational body," in publications before the mid-1990s, due to your sense of details, what one gets (e.g. on listening, questions of adults to children, speech etc.) does not disconnect the perception from the three ways of conversation in a dialogic semiology. However, the concordance raises at least two issues: the first, on the measure of a cultural loss which is pivotal in intercultural explorations, on the one hand; and, the second, on the mismeasurement of scientific loss in intercultural narratives.

To acknowledge what is presupposed in your *oratio*, about this, there are, one might suggest, two main lines of objections in the Western discourse on the human body. One in English, represented by a classic, Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (University of Pennsylvania Press 1971). Her treatise analyzes the prescientific representations of human families, focusing on the discourse which, through internal transformations, specialized into biological and cultural anthropology. There is another classic, by Anthony Padgen, *The Fall of Natural Man. The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge University Press 1982). Specifically sequencing narratives on Africa, more militant also in its purpose, is the book by Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, *The Myth of Africa* (Library of Social Sciences 1977). On the other line, two excellent contributions in philosophical anthropology: Bernard Groethuysen, *Anthropologie philosophique* (Gallimard 1950) and Michèle Duchet's deconstruction of the Enlightenment's anthropology in *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières* (Maspero 1971). Paduans' old maxim, *I am* human, I *am a borderer*, is not detachable from today's essentialist and anti-essentialist debates on the body in its socio-cultural generations. The simple divergent chronology of "race thinking" and "racism" in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianisms* (Harcourt 1968) and Michel Foucault's *Il faut défendre la société* (Seuil 1997) addresses what, with circumlocutions, you work painfully: race may not be a scientific problem, it is a cultural one. The problem, if it is one, might even be elsewhere, in the unsuspected question of racism as a philosophical conceptuality entailed in classificatory grids. Such an angle may probably permit a much more healthy reading of Kant's *Anthropology*, for instance.

From the texts of the late 1970s and early 1980s on bodily space-time, death, marginality and liminality to this discourse of your honorary doctorate, one is stricken by a quaint feature. As to offset an annoying poverty of strong reflectors in today's philosophical anthropology, the awareness you promote privileges a hardy critique of taxonomic economies against the background of ambiguous strategies for encounters. Sometimes, with the faith of an interculturalist, you go so far as to identify with processes that would transcend usual distinctions, as in the following passage from your letter of 20 November 1994 to Brodeur.

> After so much simplification and ethnocentric disfigurement has already occurred in the discourse developed by the North about the South, and in a context of massive asymmetry in terms of the balance of powers, undoubtedly only friendship and very lucid and self-critical expertise might be able to offer "the foreigner," in the postcolonial world, a legitimate forum for a critical study of cultural and communitarian practices and ideals.
>
> Would you not agree that the formation of a collective unconscious, ever renewing itself at the ancestral foundations, is far more complex than the development of the individual's psychic life? It appears to me that only a profound anthropological knowledge of other cultures, when examined from the inside, that is, from the point of view of the structuring logic, and founding axioms and values which undergird a culture's practices and institutions, might provide an adequate basis for intercultural

> dialogues or even for the development of a critical regard towards ourselves. Anthropology is not a neutral form of scientific knowledge: it arises from the situated experience both of cultural creativity and the lucid encounter between cultures. Your continued interest has inspired me to dig even more deeply in the analysis of Yaka culture (…)
>
> My ethnographic passion resonates with the theme of "homecoming" or the "oiko-logical" turn that many minority groups are making back to themselves and their cultures (op. cit.: 232).

This advocacy of *Einfühlung*, more than it, and rather on the side of not only a disposition in solidarity, but also a disciplinary practice, accumulates elements for a programmatic vision. First, a cause: the psychological note in the quotation has been preceded by an invocation of a transcultural psychoanalytic approach. Listening to the other, precisely the "Yaka unconscious," would shun "the negativity of difference and hierarchization." In your parlance, four figures – the sorcerer, the diviner, the chief, and the healer – each one, an ambivalent entity, would be an adequate key to the Yaka unconscious. Secondly, there is the style of your intervention. Borne upon an intercultural motivation, the principle of a North–South solidarity coincides with that of an alliance determined by a situational discipline. Their conjunction, depending on deontological angles, might raise questions of method for any discourse that would submit its precepts unconditionally to psychoanalytical instructions. At any rate, to soften your precisionist grids, Claude Brodeur, in a letter of 12 December 1992, had already insisted on an "indubitable": "As soon as we pose the question of the possibility of this culture (the Yaka) evolving in a new direction, it will be useful to refer to models of different societies in order to understand these historic transformations" (op. cit. 230). And the titanic oeuvre of Claude Lévi-Strauss comes to mind, especially the volumes of "*mythologiques*." Thirdly, one can remark on the singularity of your voice in the quotation from the letter of 20 November 1994 (op. cit. 231ff.). This voice is articulating itself simultaneously with a "priestly" and "prophetic" accent. Does it not expect its credibility to be validated within a scientific community and, at the same time, connote an interaction aimed at modifying the very space that made it credible?

The ambition of your commitment seems tempered in the *lectio* which essentially states a matter of faith at heart. The intervention, at the end, of companions of the road, those who departed and those who are still alive, gives to the arbitration a symbolic and existential importance, that of being a *speculum*. This reflector functions in a manner of cohering two aspects of a practical philosophy. On one side, a looking glass (the good old approach of Varro: *quod in eo specimus imaginem*); and, on the other, a banner (again, an ancient approximation: *opus speculum formatum est*). This key, the entries to dictionaries (Freund, Gaffiot, etc.), is not original. Its usage helps to "speculate" on the coherence of your conversions as moments in a dynamics.

From your exchange with Claude Brodeur, three lessons in the capacity of a *speculum*: to look and to behold, to gaze and to test; and about (1) an anthropological position, (2) the oiko-logical milieu, (3) the activity of a Greek verb.

1. The anthropological position, in a reflection submitted to the psychoanalytical, presents a strategy. It sounds militaristic, is scary, and combines in the same will to knowledge and power most of the Sartrean images against representations of an epistemology of force.

   Here are three lines you enumerate (I am using phrases from your text), (1) The first strategy: "analyze the relations of force," "demonstrate the process of 'assimilation-accommodation,'" "be like a scientist in chemistry or physics." (2) The second: "participate in a cultural practice"; two tactics: one, "create and define a role in interlocution," espousing "a discursive strategy for those for whom 'to speak is to make the world'"; two, be attending "to the daily practices of the family or household." (3) The third, "be attentive to the manifestations of meaning that emerge from both encounter and confrontation."

   One would like to be convinced, on good faith, that this sort of prescription is well intentioned. To inscribe them in the symbolics of the activity of a *cum* plus *nasci* might be an illusion. And, good heavens, what is the business of a projected book facing: "(…) All this, as well as the contumacy and violence of Kinois in the public realm and in the informal economy, aims to set an end to the postcolony, and reverse the 'whitening' of the African" (op. cit.: 255).

   Finally, a last interrogation. It might be an important one, but the least appropriate; significant and, at the same time, uncertain. Why would the collaboration between anthropology and psychoanalysis now appear that imperious to you? Is it due to the supposition of "what" exactly is a science? This problem was summed up well by George Johnson, a *New York Times* science journalist, in his intellectual biography of Murray Gell-Mann, Nobel Prize of physics (– *Strange Beauty. Murray Gell-Mann and the Revolution in Twentieth-Century Physics*, Random 1999):

   > The issue that interested (Gell-Mann) was not how to bring psychoanalysis into the domain of science, but just the opposite: how to explain psychoanalytically why scientists are driven to understand the world through the formulation and testing of hypotheses (op. cit.: 228).

2. And, here, how not to acknowledge your sense of grace and its risks? The *gyn-eco-logical* milieu you reclaim in the quotation just referred to – and which is the object of your acclaimed *Weaving the Threads of Life* (University of Chicago Press 1993) – is not only from Yaka-land, but speaks also to a Greek imaginary. By its etymology, of course it is feminine, and doubly so in the values it states semantically, and denotes conceptually. In effect, *gune* means woman. By definition, the *eco-* from *oikos-* designates that which, opposite to the *politikon* (the *ager publicus* of Romans), indicates a dwelling place and infers ideas of generation, domesticity, and inheritance. You knew what you were unleashing by constructing a hyphenated *gune-oiko-logical*; and, with the composition, advancing a declaration, a logos on domesticity.

It calls up feminine and maternal thematics prompted by other symbolic exercises. Might Tiresias come in? Not good enough, too much on the side of a universe regulated by a grand dichotomy principle. Why, then, not imagine a going beyond, say, of themes opposing "a good mother" to "a bad mother?" The terminology raises difficulties. This is what you say to Brodeur about a model.

(…) breakup or subordination of the universe of the Mother? Instead of situating the investiture of the chief within the order of the Father, as you do, I demonstrate, with considerable ethnographic data in my support, how the (Yaka) chief concurrently emerges in both his (re)generative function (as the supreme provider of life) and in his political function (as sovereign ruler of order) (op. cit.: 242).

The ethnographic data might prove one interpretation correct. In comparative studies, it could correspond to a variation in concordance with others, attested to in neighboring cultures and past the Congolese basin. Certainly, the data permits a debate that transcends cultural areas and disciplines. Does it not presume a tradition marked by lessons from giants – a James George Frazer, a Georges Dumézil, a Claude Lévi-Strauss, a Victor Turner – who explored new ways of reading and interpreting transculturally the very practice of anthropology. Only experimentalism? There is, from 1984, *Se recréer femme* (Berlin: Reimer); 1993, the just-mentioned *Weaving the Threads of Life*, whose subtitle is *the Khita gyn-eco-logical healing cult* (University of Chicago Press); 1985, in collaboration with A. Gailly, a study on a self-help group of Turkish women; and, released in 1986, a video on a Yaka female diviner you made with D. Dumon.

Your reference to the international feminist inspiration, and its insistence on the contribution of a "Black feminism," grasps a real world. Thus, to your authority, here is a question of principles: it should be possible, using every opportunity, to oblige at least matters of concern related to the *oiko*-interest. Since the *gune-oiko-logical* space is, and principally, about and for women, why not raise our conscience about urgent issues? Here are recent examples which deserve reflection.

One, according to the World Bank 2006 development indicators, in 2000, the maternal mortality rates per 100,000 live births, was: 10, in Europe; 194, in Latin America; 921, in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Two, Mary Kimani, a writer for *African Renewal*, a division of the UN Department of Information, has distressing observations in its recent number (vol. 21/4, 2008). From the chart, she highlights what is at stake. The World Bank's injunctions on cost-sharing in public services, for example, have indefensible effects morally. To get treatment at maternity clinics, women must make a deposit, a symbolic amount, but high for, say, a Kenyan patient living on $2 a day. No money, no service. Dr Shadrack Ojwang, a gynecologist at Kenya Pumwani Maternity Hospital, in Nairobi, says: "We are asking people to die because they can't (afford to) be treated."

Three, putting priorities (– which ones? and defined by whom?) in perspective, should an anthropologist be concerned by all this? In other words: can the author of publications on the body in African contexts ignore the controverted ethics of the World Bank, and its consequences on human bodies? Does it not make sense to recognize that assessing the perverse by-products of today's intersecting universes should not derail attention from pricing concurrently the highest standards for the gift of life?

3. One recognizes in your texts the clarity of an intention and its politics, but in the complexity of a voice. Its sovereignty claims an ordinary right, its own. Is it not one of the measures in building an intersubjective locality? In any case, it can hardly be detached from the discourse speaking in, and from the experience of an identification. Lines that support such a journey have been assumed in what a Greek genitive expresses, the indefinite work of anthropology, in its etymological exigency. Does it translate what you tell Claude Brodeur to be an "intercultural sensitivity typified in bifocal thinking and reciprocal exchange?"

In the Kinshasa *lectio*, we are invited to understand your activity, from a figure, what a Greek verb allegorizes. I touched on this already, briefly. Let me now clarify the point.

You write *diaphorein*, instead of *diapherein*, as translating literally "to transport," "carry through," "open to one another." Indeed, *diaphorein* is possibly the word one would think of, in any approach to concrete relations. Here is what you say, and entries

(…) plus l'affinité et les sentiments de complicité affectueuse grandissent entre l'anthropologue et les réseaux-hôtes, plus la rencontre anthropologique est transférentielle. Et un tel transfert est mieux compris dans le sens littéral de *diaphorein*, transporter, porter à travers, au-delà, transmettre, s'ouvrir l'un à l'autre. En outre, la signifiance et les forces qui sont nées et continuent à naître dans la rencontre de sujet à sujet dépassent ce que l'on peut dire ou maîtriser; elles excèdent la verbalisation ou la traduction. Cette rencontre, interpersonnelle et interculturelle, peut devenir une authentique entreprise humaine de co-implication à plusieurs voix, demeurant mutuellement enrichissante.

Diaphorein, effectively, belongs to the lexical field of words that refer to social interchanges such as *diaphoria* and *diaphoron*. They imply the idea of difference. *The Oxford Greek–English Lexicon* (1985), indicates *diaphoreô* = *diaphereô* (419a). The entry is distinct (structuration and semantic ordering) from that of *diapherein* (417b), the one you intended. Here is a summary of the two entries

- *Diaphorein* (variant, *diapherein*) has two main semantic lines. The first attests (1) "to disperse," (2) "carry away"; but also (3) "to plunder," (4) "tear in pieces," (5) "break up." The second line: *diapherô*. (1) to carry across from one place to another. There is a third line, with medical applications, of no interest here.

- *Diapherein* is the reference that fits your philosophy. Here are the semantic values you were referring to. A first area, attesting intersecting lines: (1) "to carry over, through"; "to carry from one

to another"; (2) of time; (3) "to move," "to bear to the end"; (4) "to go through with, endure, support." And, indeed, as expected, the passive attests to the idea of separation and distraction: "to be drawn apart, separated, disrupted." In fact, the passive of *diapherein* meaning "to disjoin" and "distract" translates a disjunction. For instance, in Aristotle (e.g. *Politica* 1451a34). This second line includes "to carry different ways." And then the just-mentioned passive.

To repeat myself, *Diaphorein* reads as "to dispense," "carry away," "tear in pieces," "break up" etc., the contrary of your attitude. Basically, its meanings actualize acts of distinction, everything that goes against your principle of "sympathy," *Einfühlung*. This explicit question of meanings, my interpretative reading, is also an acknowledgement of a remarkable Greek *homonymia*. A similarity of the letter explains the entry *diaphoreô* = *diapherein* in its quasi identical spelling. This equivalence translates a conjunction to which one can relate the ambiguous disjunctive value present in the meanings of the two words. The letter exposes its own alteration.

Amazing that a *lapsus calami* would synthesize so well a question of attitude. The verb *diaphorein* "to separate" instead of *diapherein* "to go through with," the difference between an omicron (-o-) and an epsilon (-e-), might symbolically coalesce so dramatically the dilemmas of tomorrow's anthropologist.

– One, it is possible for an anthropologist speaking in the voice of a Yaka elder to debate his Africa-discipline in Greek terms, in any idiom, and still be relevant in tomorrow's intercultural space.

– Two, one of the challenges may still be in an old question of method: are there, concerning this very practice, ways of thinking of it outside of the negative socio-historical contingencies that have been determining it, and that are symbolized in controversial usages of subjective and objective genitives, the two intrinsic dimensions of the discipline?

– Three, slip of the pen or slip of memory, in the fluctuation of variants, the words testify to the story of the two vowels, and the impact they might have more on symbolic than real tasks.

An anthropological encounter is transferential, you say. You are right. My emphasis on a possibly punctilious small problem, but in the very activity of verbs, can be superseded in what semantic interferences induce. A zone of partial inclusion of signifieds can be accessed. In effect, *diaphorein* and *diapherein* can be approached as two manifestations of the essential predicament of any discourse on what can be said on being human, that is to say any anthropological project. Occasionally, *diaphorein* means: "to go backwards and forwards," "to distinguish by dislocation," "exhaust oneself by dissipation." And, on the other hand, one can read in texts *diapherein* with close significations: "to bear through, to the end"; "carry different ways," "put in motion." Finally, I should emphasize that in the passive, ideas of "disjoining and drawing apart" are attested frequently, and they animate an axis of synonymous areas (separation, disruption, distinction). They mark zones of conceptual interferences (between the two verbs). The best reference may be Aristotle's usage. In a number of texts, *diapherein*, in the passive (e.g. *Politica*, 1451a34), attests values of what is sectioned. *Diaphorein*, along with its kin (e.g. *diaphoria* "unlike" and *diaphoron* "difference") functions in the semantic proximity of *diaphora*, the technical equivalent of *differentia* for the designation of any alterity in kind, as in *Politica* (e.g. 1285a and 1289a20). That is one of the best entries to the Aristotelian notion of difference in *Metaphysics*.

In sum, we may say that within the genitive *anthropou-logos*, the *diaphora* is in the dislocation between the subject and the object of the logos. It corresponds to Plato's notion of variance and disagreement. And one could bring in the Aristotelian *differentia* of species in logic; recommence the conversation about the Kinshasa discourse, and accent the other dimension of the idea you intended: to face each other, *diapherein*, and affirm our diversity in "to be a different person" (e.g. Plato, *Apologia*: 35b), and "it makes a difference" to me, as in Plato's *Gorgias* (517b).

Coda

Despite everything, recollecting is a negation of the meaning it claims to contextualize. In the same motion, it sanctions it as a future oriented affirmation. There is no incongruity in the arrogance of the opening statement: "on ne devient pas anthropologue par naissance … *mais tout de même*." The underlined words canalize everything. Staging the sense of a *how* and a *why*, it holds their impulses. It prefaces an *oratio* that has the form of a dissertation. Should one hypothesize on its undisclosed pillars? They state a humanist manner of elaborating the ambiguous dynamics of a *Mitgefül*. Is it not an attitude that inspires exhortations, reiterations, repetitions, of what is fundamentally a love story entailing a justification?

Let me celebrate three steps on a scale of metaphors, or of metonyms.

First, a recognition. Conversion accommodates a temperament, and comes to be the sign expressing itself as an activity. To convert is the verb that animates an attitude in its complexity, "to be fond of" and face the price of inflections. Such a verb would invest the mind of the reader who goes along with the legitimacy of its quest for an inter-subjective and intercultural dialogue. The presuppositions do not necessitate demonstration. The Cartesian observation linking reason and human condition extends itself pretty well to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* and Yaka elders: to study oneself is the best bridge with others. One's mental activity can be correlated to others' attitudes and expectations. Reading Devisch, one concurs with a process aimed at a "mieux vivre ensemble." To be fond, in this sense, renews the patience of existentialist phenomenology. We can reread, otherwise, R.D. Laing's anticipation at the beginning of *The Politics of Experience* (Vintage 1967): "my behavior is an experience of the other. The task of social phenomenology is *to relate my experience of the other's behavior to the other's experience of my behavior*. Its study is the relation between experience and experience: its true field is *inter*-experience" (17). That is the attitude of a verb.

Secondly, a reckoning. We have a challenging *lectio magistralis* which unfolds other stories as if they were adjectives. It qualifies beings and

things, attributes virtues and duties. Its structuration shows also an unaccustomed feature as if to demonstrate that what it narrates, the punctual scattering of codings within a construction regulated by internal and external requirements, could be consistent with a highly emotional testimony strictly framed in an austere grid. The techniques analogize clearly the way a beam of particles or a wave can be diffused when interacting with other particles within the same surrounding. An accident? Not sure at all. At any rate, Devisch's narrative can be read, at least, according to three straight lines, each with its own chronological order, having neat tempos, marked by a symbolic light neatly delineated or implied from the fluctuation of a flash in the negative and positive. Here is, a first axis, the most visible one, chronicling the life of Devisch. To what is represented here– a childhood, an education, the maturity age – correspond, almost term by term and step after step, three courses: first, the story of a talented boy on a farm; second, layers are assumed in a number of successive communities (Kimwenza, Lovanium, a return); three, the calling, the invention of a Yaka elder and a Leuven intellectual. Parallel to these sequences, one can bring together two other axes, similar (structurally) and divergent (thematic-ally), and connect them in what cannot be any longer a sheer accident: a personal psychological story followed by the intellectual line that one might, easy temptation, entitle "the making of an anthropologist on his way to becoming a psycho-analyst." Three headings, three steps, and the maturity: one, the family's novel, and the alliance with war traumas; two, the Jesuit Institute of Kimwenza, the postcolonial imperatives; and, three, the "initiated" as ambassador (fieldwork, marriage, career), researcher and teacher, election and effects, in the Congo and in Belgium.

The description pictures a life. It addresses its own organization a question of method and a question about a vocation. A scholar, Devisch declares using a knowledge borne on a practical knowledge of intercultural frontiers, and motivated by a question about his discipline, today and tomorrow. From interpersonal to intercultural face-to-face, experiential authority may tend to obscure the privilege of its own being as a lack. Devisch shows that the challenge of any commitment states its own activity by subordinating its lack to what it can unveil and affirm about itself.

Finally, a celebration. From what is given in this manner, there is, for sure, a good reason to believe in what it justifies. Throughout Devisch's texts, there seems to be something like a silent rhetoric supporting an enactment. Along with my biases, I came to accept a preconception I had from the beginning. One can always confirm anything expected. In this case, the structuration of axes, from what I can now name, does assert what supports it, a subterranean work. What we are given to meditate on authenticates an ascetic reflection which, in a proven tradition, under the guidance of reason, can deploy itself through exercises on thematics such as the topography of meanings, the obsession and indeterminacy of ways of desire, our responsibility in this world's affairs; and, in our time, the North–South agendas within a problematic political economy.

The rendition of a wrenching away from, paradoxically, an experiential authority, gives to Devisch's texts a shifty fluctuation of what is remembered in a transitive activity. But, it is to be spoken about in an intransitive recollection. In what the axes stipulate, a silent source doubles all possible interpretations. An avowed rupture in one axis proves to be a foundational rock for highly rational choices, and vice versa. Ambiguity of the memory in what it activates.

Does not the main preoccupation of Devisch, discerning the grounds of principles, pertain to ethics, more exactly to meta-ethics, and not science?

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