

CHRISTODOULOS PANAYIOTOU
THE CYPRUS PAVILION
BIENNALE ARTE 2015

TWO DAYS
AFTER
FOREVER

A READER
ON THE
CHOREOGRAPHY
OF TIME

TWO DAYS AFTER FOREVER

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The following reflections were prompted by a conversation with Omar Kholeif on Christodoulos Panayiotou's preliminary ideas of his work for the next Venice Biennale. The scenario I had in mind from the start was the archaeology of the Argentine Northwest. The Argentine Northwest is not an island, like Cyprus, but continental. More specifically, the Northwest region of Argentina is a sector of the Andean region. The north of Chile and the Argentine Northwest are the extreme territories of the Inca Empire, *Tawantinsuyu* (the world divided in four sections—*tawa* in Quechua is four, *nin* indicates a group of four, and *suyus* is the organization of each part). The center of Tawantinsuyu was Cusco (today Peru), whose meaning approximates the belly of the world. Like many other civilizations of the time, the cosmology was organized around a center, be it Beijing, Jerusalem, Mecca, Medina, or many others.

The first source of inspiration was a sentence in Omar's invitation to participate in a publication in which the intention is: "Adopting a variety of different modes of address, this book will act as a kind of theater exploring the question, how does one choreograph a history that is constantly being re-imagined?" My reflections start from the assumption

that if history is constantly being reimagined, then we are part and actors of that reimagination. History is not something independent from us that happened in some elsewhere and that some elsewhere is reimagining. How one choreographs a history that is being constantly reimagined is by jumping into the swimming pool where history is reimagined. There is nothing else. There is no history independent of some one, and some many, who are reimagining it. History emerges from storytelling, and storytelling comes in different guises. Mine, here, is one where I tell a story of art and archaeology. Which brings me to the second source of inspiration, Omar's curatorial statement:

"Two Days After Forever" is a proposal of sorts, an *open-ended cartography that explores the limits of art and its territory*. At the heart of this new project is a solo presentation by the artist Christodoulos Panayiotou that takes as its starting point the invention of archaeology and its instrumental role in forging the master narrative of history. *Principally, the exhibition considers how the formal structure of archaeology can be fundamentally interrogated, enabling new spaces of imagination to emerge*. Adopting a diversity of strategies, Panayiotou questions how tradition is formed and authorship and authenticity governed. Through an act of meticulous staging, the artist critiques modernity's hyperbolic and aspirational fabric and its inconsistent notion of progress [italics mine].

Territories are imagined; they do not come ready-made as a territory. In nineteenth-century Europe, territories were imagined as communities and communities as nations within the border of a given state. Be it the modern nation-state or communal organizations from several centuries BC, territories are imagined and in this is the imagination of the territory

I

To start with archaeology, the *Online Etymological Dictionary* tells us the following:

archaeology (n.)
 c.1600, "ancient history," from French *archéologie* (16c.) or directly from Greek *archaiologia* "the study of ancient things"; see *archaeo-* + *-ology*. Meaning "scientific study of ancient peoples" recorded by 1825. Related: *Archaeological*; *archaeologically*.¹

Since one of the official languages of Cyprus is Greek (the other being Turkish), it is fitting to start with the etymology of a Greek word that refers to Omar Kholeif's statement to frame "Two Days After Forever", the solo presentation by artist Christodoulos Panayiotou.

Now if we look at the etymology of *art*, whose limits Panayiotou explores, we find this in the same dictionary:

art (n.)
 early 13c., "skill as a result of learning or practice," from Old French *art* (10c.), from Latin *artem* (nominative *ars*) "work of art; practical skill; a business, craft," from PIE **ar-ti-* (cognates: Sanskrit *ṛtib* "manner, mode"; Greek *arti* "just," *artios* "complete, suitable," *artizein* "to prepare"; Latin *artus* "joint"; Armenian *arram* "make"; German *art* "manner, mode"), from root **ar-* "fit together, join" (see *arm* (n.1)).²

One could ask why *poiesis* is not mentioned in the etymology of art, since art and poetics are somehow, although ambiguously, related. Greek tragedy was not a form of art? And also, conversely, why poetics became restricted to poetry while Horace's famous dictum, *ut pictura poesis* (*as is painting*

that binds a community together—or allows them to fight against other communities that invade their territories. Carl Schmitt had a name for that: *nomos*, another Greek word. Incas in the South American Andes had their own: *Tawantinsuyu*. And we can go around the planet from several centuries BC and find out that there was not only a center in any communal organization (be it Persian Sharate, Roman Empire, or Muslim Caliphates), where there was a center and an imagined confine of the territory. When we take a cursory look at the cursory "history" of Cyprus, or of the Argentine Northeast and Tawantinsuyu, what we find is a mount of information (*data*).

The second point of the curatorial statement proposes an interrogation of archaeology by other means—through art and its doing and the norms for doing archaeology. I enter in the conversation with general ideas an educated person holds about both art and archaeology. Such ideas, or common sense if you wish, are grounded some place, in some basic beliefs, and such beliefs are grounded on the discipline although they go beyond it. Art and archaeology are spheres in which many activities take place, and different conceptions of art and archaeology are constantly debated among practitioners as well as philosophers who reflect on what art and archaeology are. My observations are intended to confuse by means of philological and philosophical elucidation.

so is poetry), was forgotten once painting became an artistic expression and poetry became a literary genre?

If we then look at *poiesis*, many dictionaries will tell us that *Poiesis* (in ancient Greek, ποιησις) is etymologically derived from the ancient term ποιέω, "to make."

So then, "art" is the skill necessary to "make" something. But the something that is made through a given skill could be many things, not necessarily a work of art. It was the same for Aristotle: *poiesis* meant to make something. Now for a narrative like Homer's, or a drama like Sophocles's, to be *poetics* it needed to conform to certain principles determined by Aristotle, like *minesis* and *calharsis*. Which he laid out in his *Poetics*. *Poetics* and *poiesis* need each other—the former provides the frame and the latter the doing that makes it possible to create a frame for a particular kind of doing.

Which prompts the question of when and under what conditions a given skill (art) is the skill that "makes" a work of art? Asking such a question is one way to bring forward the intent of exploring the limits of "art" through "archaeology." Art (skill) in the European enlightenment needed aesthetics to be a skill that produces a work of art. This is the same with archaeology: not every dig is considered archaeological. Archaeological digging needs the rule of the discipline and the larger frame that we recognize as "human sciences."

According to the etymology, archaeology doesn't refer to a given skill to make something but to *study* something. When you "study" something you do not "make" something in the same way as when with your skill you make something that is called "art." And here it is also notable how "art" refers to a skill to do whatever but also refers to a particular kind of making; the making of the work of art. So *poiesis* was to *poiesis* in ancient Greece as *art* was to *aesthetics* in the European Enlightenment. For the rest of the world, these were issues that were not of concern until imperial European expansion (which includes Britain and later the US) and its academy reached a

wider world where these issues were irrelevant—that is, not an issue. Consequently, I began to consider that perhaps Panayiotou's project is to enact a certain skill to produce something with a given material: archaeological objects, with the addendum that the history of Cyprus is closely entangled with the history of Greece through the language. But there is an interference—the Turkish language. It would be a question of asking if and when for Muslim Turkish Aristotle poetics and the European Enlightenment aesthetics became relevant. Perhaps with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938). Perhaps, I do not know—just a hypothesis.

If, according to the etymology, archaeology is the study of ancient people, but not of objects, then objects are excavated to understand the people who lived there and when. But since ancient people are no longer alive, archaeologists have to study people through archaeological objects. Now the question is, what kind of objects are archaeological objects? The conditions for an object to be an archaeological object need the sanctions of an archaeologist, someone who studies ancient people. But not just anyone could be an archaeologist. An archaeologist is someone who studied in order to be authorized to study ancient people. Art is a skill that makes and creates objects; archaeology is a skill that "studies" (understands?) people through objects.

Consider that not every work of art consists of producing objects, but in doing something. When you dance you do not make anything, you do something. You move your body according to certain patterns. The "making" of Greek tragedies was not the same as the making of *La Gioconda*. Tragedies are not objects but actions during a certain period of time, one or two hours, even if the time of the tragedy is a century. And *The Iliad* is not properly an object, even when it is inscribed in *papyrus*.

Consequently, *art* (as work, be it making a painting or making a tragedy) could be of two kinds: one is the body memory for certain types of movements that are not invented in the present but come from ancient people (acting or dancing), while the other consists in producing material objects (sculpture, painting, installation). If an archaeologist studied ancient people, he or she would study what ancient people made (buildings, utensils, human and animal figures sculpted of stone, etc.), but would also imagine what they did with their bodies as well as their voices, or instruments, to make sounds. We call a series of patterned sounds "music," but for music to be art it needs to conform to certain rules.

According to the *Online Etymological Dictionary*, "music" refers to:

mid-13c., *musike*, from Old French *musique* (12c.) and directly from Latin *musica* "the art of music," also including poetry (also source of Spanish *musica*, Italian *musica*, Old High German *mosica*, German *Musik*, Dutch *muziek*, Danish *musik*), from Greek *mousiké (techné)* (art) of the "Muses," from fem. of *mousikos* "pertaining to the Muses," from *Mousa* "Muse" (see *musé* (n.)). Modern spelling from 1630s. In classical Greece, any art in which the Muses presided, but especially music and lyric poetry.³

It is interesting that the etymology doesn't refer to "sounds." It refers to "muse." But let's leave this issue for another occasion.

II

It is interesting to note that the words and etymologies (except *poiesis*) date back to the thirteenth century, and from there the etymology may go way back to ancient

Greece and ancient Rome. No references are made to ancient Persia, ancient China, ancient India, ancient Africa, ancient Tawantinsuyu, or ancient Anahuac, etc., many of which are way older than Greece, Rome, and, of course, medieval and Renaissance Europe. The point is that we are caught in the cage of Western epistemology—its vocabulary, its principles, its assumptions. But what do I mean by Western and by epistemology? We have two problems here. Let's start by the West.

II.1

Some time ago I attended a lecture by a philosopher and postmodern scholar. The title was "To the West of What?" The intention was to advance a playful critique, postmodern of course, of the many references to the West without specifying what the West is. If you say "to the West" then you have to specify to the West of what, but, according to his argument, that is nonsense because there is no specific reference point to locate the West in relation to that point of reference. It depends on the universe of meaning presupposed in your own discourse. For me it does make sense to talk about the West. More so, it is unavoidable and necessary. Which doesn't mean that the planet earth and the universe we know came with ready-made cardinal points, as we call them today.

For me, the West is shorthand for Western civilization. The idea of Western civilization was invented not by someone located in the Eastern Hemisphere but by someone (actors and institutions) that located themselves in the West. I understand that it is a self-referential denotation: people and institutions that located themselves in the West, presupposing some kind of planetary partition. But the question remains: to the West of what?

If we agree to conceive China as a civilization, it was never self-referenced as Eastern civilization. If we conceive Aztecs and Incas, in Anahuac and Tawantinsuyu, as civilizations, they never referred to themselves as a Western or Eastern or Central civilization, for it could have been any of the three. In their time there was no grounding, and no need to locate themselves in one of the four cardinal points. They were at the center—Beijing, Cusco, Tenochtitlan, Jerusalem, and Mecca were all points at the *center* of specific territorialities, specific *nomos*.⁴

It so happens that what Europe is today was a territory inhabited by Christians, who, after the Crusades, lost their center, Jerusalem, and were relocated to the West. To the West of what? Of Jerusalem of course. The West was already flagged in biblical narratives as the *West of Jerusalem*: it was the land of Japheth, the privileged son of Noah, the promise and the breath pointing toward the future. Shem was located in Asia, the East of Jerusalem; and in Africa was Ham, the reprehensible, located at the South of Jerusalem. With time, Western Christendom became Europe and, in Kant's and Hegel's narratives, the heart of Europe. The heart of Europe became the center—not of a given region—of the world. Not all Europe was the center, only Europe's heart: Germany, England, and France. And that was the *second nomos of the earth*, according to Schmitt. While before the advent of the second *nomos* (the sixteenth century, Europe's expansion to the New World and then to Africa and Asia) the planet was inhabited by many civilizations, each with its own center (first *nomos* of the earth). The second *nomos* brought a novelty: it proposed itself as a planet with one center; a mono-polar world that lasted 500 years (1500–2000).

Hegel's heart of Europe was surrounded by the South of Europe (the Catholicic and Latin countries: Italy, Spain, and Portugal). By the eighteenth century Greece began to also be displaced to the South. There were then two Greek nations: Greece one was the cradle of Western civilization, while Greece

two was the South of Europe, warm weather, people of color, some Mediterranean exoticism adored by people of the North who were diminishing the place of Greece in Western civilization. And it continues to be diminished today.

It is clear, following the first attempt of negotiations between the new Greek government and the Troika, that the EU is interested not in the well-being of Greek people but in their money and in ancient Greece's symbolic fountain of Western civilization. But the cradle of Greece became part of the South of Europe in the late eighteenth century, and mixed with the Ottomans from the sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries. We know that one can admire the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas (the Greeks and Romans of America), but indigenous people today have become a burden for progress and development. The logic is the same. It is called Eurocentrism, and some people would say Euro-American-centrism, which is in the same family.

Greece and Spain were not only located in the downgraded South of Europe—not in its core—but have also had the mixture of Muslims from the North of Africa and from the West of Asia. They are two suspicious European borders but at the same time very convenient buffer zones, which is why perhaps both Spain and Greece quickly became members of the European Union.

Cyprus was a province of the Ottoman Sultanate (note that the Ottoman was not an empire; it was a sultanate—do you see the difference?) in 1571 and joined the European Union in 2004. In 1821 independent Greece was able to take Cyprus out of the hands of the Ottomans but not for a long time, for shortly after that the sultanate in decay was replaced, in 1878, by the British Empire on the rise. From then on Cyprus was caught in a crossfire between the sultanate, the Western empire and a Greece that wanted to become independent from both: under the control of the Ottomans since the sixteenth century, an attempted independence from the Ottoman

Sultanate opened the doors to the attentive British Empire and an always interested Greece.

My short narrative's purpose is to flag three undercurrents in Cyprus history since the sixteenth century: the Ottoman, Greek, and British replacement (or displacement) when Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004. Cyprus's archaeological history cannot be understood without going through Greece, Turkey, and one of the three disciplinary languages of modernity: English, German, and French. And this takes me to the second point: Western epistemology.

III

The previous section was devoted to the "West." Remember that section II opened with a statement about Western epistemology that demanded elucidation. Epistemology proper refers to the foundation and the reflections on scientific principles of knowledge. In this sense, and since the nineteenth century, the counterpart of epistemology has been hermeneutics. Epistemology in such distribution of knowledge became fused with the philosophy of sciences and with the principles of knowing and explaining the laws of nature, while hermeneutics was fused with the philosophy of the "sciences humaines" (in the US, social sciences and the humanities). Before this division, whose seeds were planted by the Enlightenment, there was another word—gnosis and its discourse, called *gnosiology*. Gnosis and *gnosiology* were displaced and replaced by epistemology and hermeneutics; we have therefore been made to believe that knowledge and understanding can be divided.

It is no exaggeration, as I mentioned before, to say we are all hooked on the Western vocabulary for knowledge and understanding, for sensing and believing. This doesn't

mean that the hundreds of languages spoken in the world, and particularly languages that are entrenched in great civilizations—be it ancient China or India, Arabic Islam or Malaysian Islam, Wolof or Bambara, Aymara or Nahuatl, Bengali or Japanese, etc.—do not have their own vocabulary to think about their own experiences, life, desires, knowledge, etc. It means that such vocabulary, if used, either remains within the community or must be articulated with the global (not universal) imperial language of Western modernity since the Renaissance, with its foundation in ancient Greece and ancient Rome.

The term *gnosiology* (*γνωσιολογία*) is more common in Eastern Orthodox theology than in Western Christian theology. Theology, in Western Christianity, replaced *gnosiology* to the extent that, before the Enlightenment, theology stood for both epistemology and hermeneutics. In fact, they became two key concepts in the secular theory of knowledge. *Gnosiology*, in its origination in ancient Greece, was a word referring to both the intellect and the senses (emotions, perception). In the eighteenth century they mutated into epistemology for the intellect and hermeneutics for the senses and perceptions. In fact, when Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762) introduced the word "*gnosiology*" to the secular cosmology of the Enlightenment, he introduced in it the domain of aesthetics—understanding the secondary qualities, as Enlightenment philosophers classified and relegated the sphere of the senses. From there to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), there is just one step. The problem was in the air: Schleiermacher revamped the Greek word *hermeneutic* (*hermeneutikós*), rescued it from the traditions of Talmudic, Vedic, and biblical interpretations, and re-launched it in the secular roads of the Spirit (the character that Hegel memorialized) into the Western European conversation of the eighteenth century.

The cage in which the concepts of art, archaeology, and aesthetic were trapped was built by and in Western epistemology/Hermeneutics/aesthetics. The cage is still there and many of us are still trapped. Decolonial aesthetics is contributing to make (*poiesis*) visible the walls of the cage and to point toward the cracks through which it is possible to scape.⁵ In decolonial thinking, what we call “delinking” consists in epistemic, hermeneutic, and aesthetic disobedience to Western epistemology.⁶ Arguably, as I have suggested, Westernepistemology is the iron cage that regulates knowledge, and regulating knowledge means regulating sensing and being.

Changing the terms and not only the content of the conversation in politics and economics presupposes epistemic, hermeneutic, and aesthetic disobedience. Otherwise you can only change the content. You cannot change understanding and sensing if you start from the state or the market. Disobedience and sensing otherwise is the necessary and sufficient condition for political and economic change. I would even venture to say that in the conversations between Syriza and the Trojka, the point I am trying to make becomes evident. The Trojka operates on the canon of Western understanding, knowledge, and sensibilities. Syriza is enacting a polite and diplomatic disobedience. At this level it could not be otherwise. However, politeness and diplomacy shall not misguide us. There is a change of direction at work, in understanding, knowing, sensing, and wanting. Whether or not it will be sustained we cannot say today. If it is, it shall not be taken as a model. There is no model or single place for delinking. It should happen and is happening in many spheres of the social and in many parts of the world.

III

Archaeology and art were located in the cage of Western cosmology on different shelves—the epistemic and hermeneutical shelves. Archaeology was placed on the shelves of the human sciences. If for Wilhelm Dilthey, (1833–1911), walking in the steps of Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915), the natural sciences where nomothetic and the human sciences (both the social sciences and humanities) were idiographic, the first dealing with law and explanation, the second with meaning and interpretation. Archaeology falls squarely in the sphere of idiographic “sciences.” Science here stands for a gnosiological enterprise dealing with meaning (Hermes, interpreter) more than with laws (*nomos*).

If doing *archaeology* presupposes the domain of hermeneutics, then art belongs to the domain of aesthetics. Which means that hermeneutics and aesthetics are two philosophical discourses that “account for”—one for research on meaning of people of ancient pasts, the other for meaning of certain types of creativity that, since the European Enlightenment, has been framed, understood, and taught as *art*. Both propositions mean that any digging of the past to understand people and forms of life no longer existing can be considered archaeology if that digging responds not only to disciplinary rules of archaeology but also to philosophical principles of the human sciences. In this fashion, not any doing or creative making could be considered art; it must respond not only to the disciplinary regulations of artistic doing (which presupposes schooling, galleries, museums), but also to the philosophical principles of aesthetics. Who regulates and frames the principles and boundaries of archaeological and artistic doings (e.g., making), if not Western epistemology/Hermeneutics since the Enlightenment, which continued and secularized Western Christian theology?

To engage in decolonial archaeology and decolonial aesthetics means to enact the skill that takes us to making (doing, poesis) in two complementary directions: a philosophical discourse that delinks from the canonical and regulatory discourse of the philosophy of the human sciences as well as philosophical aesthetics. My goal in this essay was both to walk away from the philosophical of the human sciences and philosophical aesthetics (modern, postmodern, and altermodern). In both cases, delinking is crucial—it means working (doing, making, laboring) on epistemic delinking in order to walk away from the prison house of the sciences of all kind, human and natural. Delinking means to decolonize epistemology and hermeneutics, or to work at the edges, at the border, accepting epistemology and hermeneutics to subvert them and show their imperial underpinnings. This is a task across the board—not interdisciplinary but un-disciplinary.

Aesthetic delinking means to decolonize aesthetics to liberate aesthesis. Once we understand the terms and principles supporting the division between natural and human sciences, between art and science, between literature and art, we realize that there is an entire world that was blocked from us; a world—a universe of explorations, transformations, creativity—that cannot be controlled and regulated by epistemic and hermeneutic gatekeepers and artistic and aesthetics police.

Nonetheless, the global lines—the frontiers that have been traced since the European renaissance in all spheres of life, not only in art and archaeology, but in politics and economics, in ethics and religion, and, more generally, in knowing, sensing, and believing—cannot be avoided while at the same time that

they are not respected. That is why epistemic, hermeneutic, and aesthetic disobedience is necessary. The move toward global futures is to dwell in the borders, to feel in the borders, to know in the borders. Epistemic and aesthetic disobedience is and will be the unavoidable consequence of dwelling in the borders once we realize and assume that *border gnosis* (border epistemology, border hermeneutic, border aesthetic, border religion, border sexuality, border ethnicities, etc.) can lead us to different paths of disobedience and liberation.

ENDNOTES

1 *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. "archaeology," accessed 1 January, 2015, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=archaeology&allowed_in_frame=0.

2 *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. "art," accessed 1 January, 2015, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=art&allowed_in_frame=0.

3 *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. "music," accessed on 1 January, 2015 http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=music&searchmode=none.

4 Marsha H G S. Hodgson, "In the Center of the Map: Nations See Themselves as the Hub of History," in *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 29–34.

5 Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez (Eds.), "Decolonial Aesthesis: Colonial (Re)ounds, Decolonial Healings," *Social Topical Perspective*: July 15, 2013, http://ciatextjournal.org/perspective_topic/decolonial_aesthesis/.

6 Walter Mignolo, "Delinking: The Poetics of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of Decoloniality," in *Cultural Studies*, 21:2 (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 441–514.