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### How do we count a language? Translation and discontinuity

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## How do we count a language? Translation and discontinuity

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Can translation be regarded merely as a bridging of a gap between national languages? Is it not an act with which to produce difference, inscribe borders and thereby identify the unity of a language? This article proposes that translation is anterior to the organic unity of language and that this unity is posited through the specific representation of translation. Accordingly, a regime for the modern representation of translation is construed in terms of the schema of co-figuration. Here translation is understood not only as the bridging of a gap or distance between two language communities. It is also an ambiguous act of creating continuity out of discontinuity; it pertains to a political labour which generates social relations. Translation is investigated with a view to *bordering*.

**Keywords:** bordering; schema of co-figuration; phonography; regime of translation; continuity in discontinuity; subject in transit

What we are urged to acknowledge in knowledge production in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities today is the increasing significance of the problematic of “bordering”. The problematic has to be specifically marked as one not of “border” but of “bordering”, because what is at issue is not an old problem of boundary, discrimination and classification. At the same time that it recognizes the presence of borders, discriminatory regimes and the paradigms of classification, the problematic sheds light on the processes of drawing a border, of instituting the terms of distinction in discrimination, and inscribing grids in the striated space of the social. What is required in the “analytic of bordering” is to take into account simultaneously both the presence of border and the drawing or inscription of it. In parallel with the linguistic turn or a variety of other turns which Doris Bachmann-Medick touches on in the introduction to this special issue, one might call this focus on “bordering” the new “bordering turn” as it has been most rigorously pursued in the works of such scholars as Étienne Balibar (1992, 1997) and Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2008).

At this stage, I do not know whether or not a focus on “bordering” has gathered momentum across different disciplines contemporaneously. However, it is important to note that the “bordering turn” must theoretically be accompanied by the “translational turn”; bordering and translation share much in common because both are problematics projected by the same theoretical perspective. Just as bordering is not solely about the demarcation of land, translation here is not merely about “language”.

What I am going to pursue is a preliminary investigation concerning the discussion of translation beyond the conventional domain of the linguistic. Interestingly enough, though, the first issue that must be tackled is how to comprehend language from the viewpoint of translation, that is, how to reverse the conventional comprehension of translation that always presumes the unity of a language.

It is almost always the case that translation involves a different language or at least a difference in or of language. But what difference, what sort of differentiation, is at issue? How does this difference demand that we broaden our comprehension of translation? From the outset, we have to guard against the static view of translation in which difference is substantialized; we ought not to yield to the reification of translation that denies translation its deterritorializing potentiality. It is therefore important to introduce difference in and of language in such a way that we can comprehend translation not in terms of the communication model of equivalence and exchange, but as a form of political labour to create continuity at the elusive point of discontinuity in the social.

One may presume that it is possible to distinguish the type of translation according to the type of difference in or of language to which translation is a response. To follow Roman Jakobson's famous typology of translation, one may refer to a project of overcoming incommensurability as a type of translation – interlingual translation – from one natural language to another. Or, one may talk about an act of retelling or interpreting from one style or genre to another within the same language as an instance of translation – intralingual translation. Furthermore, one may cite an act of mapping from one semiotic system to another system as a distinctive type of translation – intersemiotic translation. In this typology of translation, however, what has to be unproblematically presupposed is the unity of a language. Were it not for the supposition of the unity of a language or language as one, it would be hard to discuss either a *different* language, different from the original language, or *inter*-lingual translation that takes place between languages that are external to one another; neither would it be possible to designate the inside of a language or to refer to a language as the same in *intra*-lingual translation. Thus, we are forced to return to the initial question of “what difference?”

In due course, our inquiry will move from the question of what is different *in* or *of* language on to another one of what is different *from* the language. This is to say we will be forced to entertain the question of what the language is, and how the linguistic is different from the extra-linguistic. Within the scope of difference in and of language, however, we are still caught in the mode of questioning where the unity of a language is a predominant presupposition. By difference, then, do we still understand that one term is distinguished from another term in particularity against the background of the same generality, just as a white horse is different from a black horse? Do we have to understand difference necessarily as a *specific* difference? Is it possible to presume that the sort of difference at stake in translation can appropriately be discussed in terms of the *species* and *genus* of classical logic?

### Many in one

It is implicitly assumed – and rarely thematized – that, while there is one common world, there are many languages. The world accommodates many languages. Even though humanity is one, it contains the plurality of languages. It is generally upheld that, precisely because of this plurality of languages, we are never able to evade translation. Thus, our conception of translation is almost always premised upon a specific way of conceiving of the plurality of languages. Not surprisingly, we are often obliged to resort to a certain interpretation of the fable of Babel when we try to think through the issues of the unity of humanity and translation. But can we take this assumption of a unity in plurality of humanity for granted trans-historically? That is, can we possibly conceive of discourses in which the thought of language is not captured in the formula of “many in one”? Are we

able to entertain some epistemic possibilities in which language is conceived of in an alternative way?

How do we recognize the identity of each language, or to put it more broadly, how do we justify presuming that the diversity of language or languages can be categorized in terms of one and many? Appealing to our familiar grammatical category, I can pose the question this way: Is language a countable, just like an apple and an orange and unlike water? Is it not possible to think of language, for example, in terms of those grammars in which the distinction of the singular and the plural is irrelevant? What I am calling into question is the unity of language, a certain “positivity of discourse” or “historical *a priori*” in the terms of which we understand what is at issue whenever a different language or difference in language is at stake. My question is: how do we allow ourselves to tell one language from others? What allows us to represent language as a unity?

I gave my answer to this question some twenty years ago, and I still believe that it is valid (Sakai 1992). My answer is: the unity of language is like a *regulative idea*. It organizes knowledge, but it is not empirically verifiable. Immanuel Kant introduced the term “regulative idea” in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1929). The regulative idea does not concern itself with the possibility of experience; it is no more than a rule according to which a search in the series of empirical data is prescribed. What it guarantees is not the empirically verifiable truth but, on the contrary, “forbidding [the search for truth] to bring it[self] to a close by treating anything at which it may arrive as absolutely unconditioned” (Kant 1929, 450 [A 509; B 537]). Therefore, the regulative idea gives only an *object in idea*; it only means “a *schema* for which no object, not even a hypothetical one, is directly given” (ibid., 550 [A 670; B 698]; emphasis added). The unity of language cannot be given in experience because it is nothing but a regulative idea, so that it enables us to comprehend other related data about languages “in an indirect manner, in their systematic unity, by means of their relation to this idea” (ibid.). It is not possible to know whether a particular language as a unity exists or not. It is the other way around: by subscribing to the idea of the unity of language, it becomes possible for us to systematically organize knowledge about languages in a modern, scientific manner.

To the extent that the unity of national language ultimately serves as a *schema* for *nationality*<sup>1</sup> and offers the sense of national integration, the idea of the unity of language opens up a discourse to discuss not only the naturalized origin of an ethnic community but also the entire imaginary associated with “national” language and culture. A language may be pure, authentic, hybridized, polluted or corrupt, yet regardless of a particular assessment about that language, the very possibility of praising, authenticating, complaining about or deploring it is offered by the unity of that language as a regulative idea.

However, the institution of the nation-state is, we all know, a relatively recent invention. We are led to suspect that the idea of the unity of language as the *schema* for ethnic and national communality must also be a recent invention.

How should we historically understand the formula of “many in one”, the plurality of languages in one humanity, when the unity of language has to be understood as a regulative idea or *schema* for an object in idea? For Kant, a regulative idea is, as I mentioned, explicated with regard to the production of scientific knowledge; it ensures that the empirical inquiry of some scientific discipline will never reach any absolute truth and is, therefore, endless. Every scientific truth changes as more empirical data are accumulated. Furthermore, let us note that Kant also qualifies the regulative idea as a *schema*, that is, image, design, outline or figure that is not exclusively in the order of idea but also in the order of the sensational.

By now this much is evident: from the postulate that the unity of national language is a regulative idea, it follows that we do not and cannot know whether a national language such as English and Japanese exists as an empirical object. The unity of national language enables us to organize various empirical data in such a systematic manner that we can continue to seek knowledge about the language. At the same time, moreover, it offers not an object in experience but an *objective* in praxis, towards which we aspire to regulate our uses of language. It is not only an epistemic principle but also a strategic one. Hence, it works in double registers: on the one hand, determining epistemologically what is included or excluded in the very database of a language, what is linguistic or extra-linguistic, and what is proper to a particular language or not; on the other, indicating and projecting what we must seek as our proper language, what we must avoid as heterogeneous to our language and reject as improper to it. The unity of a national language as a schema guides us as to what is just or wrong for our language, what is in accord or discord with the propriety of the language.

Some may know of a weekly column in the *New York Times* by William Safire, whose job is to amusingly complain about the hybridization, contamination and corruption going on in the current English language. This columnist is the kind of writer whose judgment is dogmatic and reasoning erratic. I am sure one can find in every country with well-established mass media equivalents to William Safire, whose task is to warn the public that the proper English – or French, German, Chinese, Italian or whatever else – is always being corrupted and bastardized. Apparently such rhetoric is designed to appeal to the sense of cultural insecurity shared by an amazingly large number of readers with a certain authoritarian orientation. Not surprisingly, never does he give any coherent explanation, let alone a comprehensible definition, of what he means by “good English” while he illustrates so many instances of “irregular English”. He seems to be exempt from the demands of scientific objectivity thanks to the prosaic drollery of his writing. There is no point in labouring to show how whimsical his complaints are since, from the outset, he does not care to ground his argument in scientific linguistics. Undoubtedly this sort of popular writing on language has to be dealt with in terms of the hegemonic configuration of culture and the dynamics of collective fantasy, yet even in such journalistic chitchat there is a connection with the discursive formation of modern linguistic knowledge in general.

It is rarely called into question that the English language is a national matter, and that the soundness of the language is intimately related to the welfare of the nation. Moreover, by focusing exclusively on the language of the majority, it seems that little attention is paid to the fact that many other languages, which are heterogeneous or even foreign to what is assumed to be “good English”, are spoken in the population coextensive with the territory of the United States of America.

However unscientifically and capriciously his argument may be composed, a William Safire rarely betrays the strategic principle of national language. It is precisely because of this strategic aspect of the *schema* of national language that the discussion of good and proper language has never failed to be oppressive towards minorities who are perceived to deviate from the “standard”, thereby rendering it possible to mark the authentic from the inauthentic in terms of nationality. Nationality is a matter not simply of the inside and outside of the national community, but also of prescription and manipulation. It indicates prescriptively how one should conduct oneself in order to participate in the feeling of nationality,<sup>2</sup> rather than in a merely descriptive way whether one is or is not in the national community. One is offered the choice of national inclusion and exclusion in the conditional: if you conduct yourself in such and such a manner, then you will be entitled

to belong to the nation or ethnicity; but if you do not, you will deserve to be discriminated against. It is a threat, but it is given as a modality of conduct.

So far we have dealt with the unity of language in its singularity, but how can we accommodate this epistemic and strategic principle in the broader framework of “many in one”?

In this respect, it is worth noting that invariably the modern discussion of national language assumes itself to be situated “after Babel”, so to speak, whenever the “many in one” is at issue. In the modern era, an inquiry into language begins with an acknowledgment that universal language has been lost, so that humanity is inevitably fragmented into many languages. None of us can occupy the position of totality from which the oneness of humanity is immediately apprehended. Every one of us is necessarily situated within one or a few languages; our apprehension of humanity is destined to be partial because it is no longer possible for any of us to have access to an aerial view from which the entirety can be grasped instantaneously. The apprehension of oneness requires tedious processes that take place in the interstices of many incongruous fragments, and I want to tentatively call these processes translations, as they are represented according to the regime of translation.

Of course, translation is a term with much broader connotations than an operation of transferring meaning from one national or ethnic language into another, but in this context I am specifically concerned with the delimitation of translation according to “the regime of translation”, by means of which the idea of the national language is put into practice. What I want to suggest is that the representation of translation in terms of “the regime of translation” serves as a *schema of co-figuration*: only when translation is represented by the schematism of co-figuration does the putative unity of a national language as a regulative idea ensue. The schema of co-figuration is an apparatus that allows us to *imagine* or *represent* what goes on in translation; it allows us to give to ourselves an *image* or *representation* of translation. Thus imagined, the representation of translation is no longer a movement in potentiality. And this image or representation always contains two figures, and, in due course, is necessarily accompanied by spatial division in terms of “border”. Hence, the image of translation is given by the schematism (the putting into practice of schema) of co-figuration in the regime of translation. In other words, the unity of a national or ethnic language as a schema is already accompanied by another schema for the unity of a different language. This is why the unity of a language is possible only in the element of “many in one”.

### The schema of co-figuration

Translation may well take various processes and forms insofar as it is a political labour to overcome the points of incommensurability in the social. It need not be confined to the specific regime of translation; it may well be outside the modern regime of translation. In the context of our discussion of translation, the “modern” is marked by the introduction of the schema of co-figuration, without which it is difficult to *imagine* a nation or ethnicity as a homogeneous sphere. As Antoine Berman taught us about the intellectual history of translation and Romanticism in Germany (Berman 1984), the economy of the foreign, that is, how the foreign must be allocated in the production of the domestic language, has played the decisive role in the *poietic* – and poetic – identification of the national language. Without exception, the formation of modern national language involves certain institutionalizations of translation according to what we have referred to as the regime of translation.

Most conspicuously manifest in eighteenth-century movements such as Romanticism in Western Europe and *Kokugaku* (National Studies) in Japan, intellectual and literary manoeuvres to invent a national language mythically and poetically were closely associated with a spiritual construction of new identity, in terms of which national sovereignty was later naturalized. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, it makes

the *relation* of sovereignty into a *thing* (often by naturalizing it) and thus weed[s] out every residue of social antagonism. The nation is a kind of ideological shortcut that attempts to free the concepts of sovereignty and modernity from the antagonism and crisis that define them. (Hardt and Negri 2000, 95)

This natural foundation for the legitimation of national and popular sovereignty was put forward as a “natural” language specific to the “people”, which ordinary people supposedly spoke in everyday life. This historical development is generally referred to by literary historians as the emergence of the vernacular. Let us keep in mind that this emphasis on ordinary and colloquial languages correlated with the re-conception of translation and the schematism of co-figuration.

In the regions of the Japanese archipelago, a small number of intellectuals, usually grouped under the heading of *Kokugakusha* (National Studies scholars) by present-day historians, began to talk about something like “a people” in the eighteenth century. It is important to note that the National Studies scholars claimed the worth of their learning only inside the restricted context of Japanese national history – a claim itself rather astonishing. In general education as it was taught in village tutoring schools in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (a long time before the introduction of universal national education in the 1870s), for example, the canonical texts regarded as classics were primarily the classics of Confucian and Buddhist traditions, and an acknowledged need hardly existed to distinguish Japanese texts from Chinese ones or to teach Japanese children Japanese classics. Just as we do not insist upon finding the features of national character in the texts of the Qur’an and the Bible or in the textbooks of mathematics and biology today, likewise most people in East Asia did not seek the conspicuous traits of national history in the classics. Instead, the trope of lineage was much more decisive in the succession of religious pontificates, poetic schools, and dynastic heirs. Social formations were not organized on the basis of a desire for national or ethnic identity; people lived free from the tenets of nationhood, and accordingly the classics they worshipped stood indifferent to national identification.

We thus cannot help noticing something extremely novel and eccentric in the National Studies’ insistence upon a distinction between the Chinese orientation of the canonical texts of the day and the Japaneseness inherent in a few selected ones such as the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*, an imperial mytho-history compiled by the Japanese court in the eighth century), *Manyōshū* (*Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*, an eighth-century poetic anthology) and *Genji Monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*, a novelistic narrative privately written in the Japanese court in the eleventh century). While the *Kojiki* was a historiographical attempt by the Ancient Japanese Imperial Court to construct the histories of the Yamato dynasties and the imperial lineage, Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801),<sup>3</sup> the leading scholar of the eighteenth century in the National Studies movement, reconstructed the entire *Kojiki*, more than a thousand years after its initial compilation, on the assumption that Japanese *national or ethnic* language existed when it was originally transcribed; he thereby “translated” the *Kojiki* into a self-consciously Japanese text (Sakai 1992, ch. 7 and 8). Thus, Motoori insisted on reading the text of the *Record of Ancient*

*Matters (Kojiki)* on the explicitly declared premise that it was written in the Japanese language.

According to the Jakobsonian taxonomy, this would be an intralingual as well as intersemiotic translation project, but never a “translation proper” precisely because of Motoori’s insistence upon the trans-historical existence of the Japanese language. In a sense, he attempted to institute the very distinguishability of the intralingual translation from the translation proper, by translating the *Kojiki* into the forty-four volumes of *Kojiki-den* in essentially phonographic notation. What is the nature of the drastic displacement Motoori brought about to the regimes of interpretation and/or translation?

This much can be said: prior to the massive disruption initiated by the new discourse of the eighteenth century, a formation had existed in which what Jakobson calls “translation proper” was not an archetype to which all the other types of translation – intralingual and intersemiotic translations included – were subordinated.

How, then, should we assess the significance of Motoori’s insistence on the Japanese language? Is it fair to take for granted that statements in *The Tale of Genji*, for instance, were mainly written in Japanese characters of *kana* as opposed to many contemporary documents, which were composed in Chinese logography of *mana* or sometimes in literary Chinese? There could hardly be a clear distinction between intralingual and interlingual translations prior to the eighteenth century.

What was at issue in Motoori’s project of the *Kojiki-den*, of translating the *Kojiki* and writing an extensively annotated revision of an ancient mytho-historiography, taking some thirty-five years, was an ongoing epistemic change in the ways in which people apprehended what was meant by speaking, hearing, writing, reading and translating. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that this change involved plural eruptions of the new regimes of narrating, reciting, listening, writing, reading and translating, and that it occurred not homogeneously throughout the imagined whole of Japan’s contemporary society, but dispersedly and sporadically in eighteenth-century social formations in the central regions of the Japanese islands. Even though I highlight Motoori’s contribution, I would not attribute the irruptive emergence of these new regimes to any single genius or personality, scholarly group, school or a *Zeitgeist*. Yet undeniably, around that time some people began to see various forms of inscription and textuality differently and to engage in textual production in ways hitherto unknown.

What we have found in the case of National Studies, and which applies as well to treatises by some Confucian scholars of the *Kogaku* (Ancient Studies) affiliation, was not merely an introduction of one more commentary of the ancient text, but in fact the creation of a new set of regimes whereby the classic text was read anew, rewritten and recreated. Therefore, it is impossible to understand the works of National Studies simply in terms of Motoori’s discovery of the ancient Japanese language, Japanese grammar, phonetics and syntax, and so on, that is, in those terms which are believed to have existed before the *Kokugaku* and *Kogaku* scholars’ interventions. What Motoori achieved by “reading” the *Kojiki* was to establish the conditions of possibility for knowledge of the Japanese language to emerge. In other words, Motoori and others invented the Japanese language as “an object in idea” of systematic knowledge in the eighteenth century. The previous canonical works clearly lacked a sense of national affiliation in comparison with his “translation” of the *Kojiki*, and, even though some of them were in what were called “Japanese notational systems”, they were not thought to belong to the tradition of particularly Japanese literature. There are a few other well-known texts of the eighteenth century which can be seen as testimonies to these epistemic changes, but they do not highlight the new enunciative possibility which was generated along with these changes as

dramatically as Motoori's intralingual and intersemiotic translation of the *Kojiki*. This is to say, the intellectual and literary manoeuvres by the *Kokugakusha* inaugurated the "modern" prescription of the national imaginary. We cannot fail to recognize the aura of modernity in the National Studies precisely because, generally speaking and even beyond the context of Japan's history, the imaginary affiliation with nation and national culture and tradition is specifically modern.

How did the *Kojiki-den* rearticulate or newly invent the senses of reading, writing, reciting, narrating and translating? In this connection, the problem of *kana*, *mana*, and phonography and logography is crucial. However, care must be taken to avoid the culturalist scheme – prevalent in academia in Japan and elsewhere until recently – in which the unities of Japanese culture and the Japanese language are supposed to exist trans-historically throughout Japanese history. It is important to keep in mind that today's readers, regardless of whether they are resident in North America, East Asia or European countries, inhabit social and discursive formations that are markedly modern. To the extent that they take the modern regimes of reading, writing, reciting, translating and so forth for granted, they tend to assume the *modus operandi* sustained by these regimes to be universally valid, and they can become incapable of imagining the possibilities of regimes other than that of national monolingualism; to that extent, they are still operating within the formula of "many in one".

And, as far as those regimes are concerned, there seems to be a certain commensurability among many "modernized" societies in the world despite different historical developments and geopolitical conditions. The sense of this commensurability was aptly expressed by Benedict Anderson's well-known phrases "modules of the nation-state" and "print culture" (1983), both of which strongly suggest the transferability of modernity and its essential uprootedness and which implicitly contradict the evolutionary and linear model of modernization, even though I do not agree with Anderson's summary representation of modernity by print culture.

Here I want to stress the transferability or transplantability of modernity for two main reasons. First, the modern regimes of reading, writing, reciting, narrating, translating and so forth can be practiced even if regimes in other behavioural spheres remain non-modern. In our case of eighteenth-century epistemic changes, there is no doubt that the polity, i.e., the Tokugawa shogunate-domainal system,<sup>4</sup> was antithetical to the idea of a national sovereignty, but these modern regimes could inhabit, so to say, or coexist with rather "feudal" politico-social formations. Although I have no intention of claiming that the epistemic regimes emerging in the eighteenth century would seamlessly grow into the post-Meiji ones, it is possible to see a certain commensurability between those regimes which underwrote the translation of the *Kojiki* and the ones which sustained the production of knowledge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in disciplines such as national history and national literature.

Secondly, the transferability and uprootedness of modernity simultaneously creates two contrasting but complementary conditions: one that allows for comparing many areas in the world in the translational relationship of *equi-valence*, and the contrary one which calls for an obsessive emphasis on the historical authenticity and irreplaceability of a particular area and its inhabitant population. Just as in representations of the trade balance, two contrasting areas are presented as differing but being in the commensurate *e-valuation*, yet on the other hand each area is supposed to be recognized as unique and exceptional so that it constitutes itself as an organic unity. This somewhat predicts the economy of species difference or specific difference in which the particularity is identified in the generality.

Bilateral co-figuration, facilitated by the schematism of co-figuration, eventually accumulates to form the multilateral system of mutual recognition.

The insistence on the historical uniqueness of Chinese antiquity by Ogyû Sorai (1666–1728) and that of Japanese antiquity by Kamo Mabuchi (1697–1769), an insistence which Motoori emphatically repeats in favour of Japanese uniqueness over Chinese empty generality in the *Kojiki-den* and his other writings, unambiguously testifies to the necessity of these two conditions by which the distinctive unity of the Japanese linguistic and cultural sphere could be “figured out” within an international configuration. In this sense, Motoori’s obsessive emphasis on the particularly Japanese nature of the *Kojiki*, and his evaluation of the superiority of Japanese traditions over other ethnic or national ones, may be viewed as an indication of the prototypical *international* consciousness, somewhat on a parallel with the development of internationalism and nationalism in European diplomacy since the Treaty of Westphalia.

Here, let me note that the transferability of modernity is an issue that had nothing to do with the factual transfer or importation of cultural and social artifacts and institutions from one area to another. Ever since antiquity there has always been a transfer of that nature between areas in East Asia. Instead, I suggest that as the distinction of the domestic and the foreign played an increasingly important role in organizing the representations of various social relations, certain cultural and social institutions began to be evaluated in terms of this distinction.

It is important to note that the classification of semiotic functions in Japanese notations underwent transformation in the eighteenth century. The distinction of the domestic and the foreign became effectual only when the semiotic functions of graphic signs were reconfigured.

Today, it is generally assumed that mainly three different genres of characters are used in Japan, *kanji* (or Chinese characters that used to be called *mana*), *hiragana* and *katakana*. *Hiragana* and *katakana* are two sorts of *kana*, which are regarded as phonographic signs representing phonetic units. Just like alphabetical letters, *kana* do not express determined concepts by themselves. In contrast, *kanji* are characters initially brought from China that are comprehended as logographic signs representing both phonetic units and conceptual semes. In Japanese notations, except for a fairly small number of Chinese characters or *kanji*, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the identity of a *kanji* and phonetic value. In other words, a single *kanji* can be pronounced in multiple ways. In modern standard Japanese, established in the late nineteenth century by the modern national state, both *kana* and *kanji* are used, and what is found in printed or handwritten texts today is the mixture of these three different genres of graphic signs; it is generally recognized that, while *kanji* inscribe statements logographically as well as phonographically, *kana* is a purely phonetic medium. Thus, the semiotic functions of *kana* and *kanji* (or *mana*) are believed to correspond to the two different principles of notational systems. This is a distinction according to which National Studies scholars tried to differentiate the domestic (*kana* expressing sound or voice) and the foreign (*mana* expressing voiceless concepts and meanings).

However, these three genres of characters historically developed independently of such attributions. In fact, people in the Japanese archipelago knew nothing of such a configuration of graphic signs. First, during the period between the first or second century and the seventh century, Chinese characters or *kanji* were brought in to the Japanese islands and became the only notation system used by the elites. And from the ninth century on, *hiragana* and *katakana* were developed following entirely different rules. Both were developed for the sake of simplification, since it takes many strokes – up to

twenty-five or even thirty – to draw a single *kanji*. Essentially both *hiragana* and *katakana* were *kanji* written in simplified or abbreviated forms. *Hiragana* is *kanji* drawn in the “grass style” or in cursive, while *katakana* is formed by omitting components of a *kanji*. The authentic form of a *kanji* was given in the square style whereas a *kanji* drawn cursorily in the grass style or drawn squarely but abbreviated of its graphic components was called *hiragana* or *katakana*. Both are abbreviations of a *kanji*, but increasingly these simplified or abbreviated *kanji* were used to indicate only the phonetic aspects of Chinese characters. Thus, originally *mana* meant “an authentic or true character” and *kana* including both *hiragana* and *katakana* meant “an ad hoc or temporary character”. This economy of semiotic ascriptions to *mana* and *kana* had nothing to do with ethnic difference between Chinese and Japanese.

Until the eighteenth century, therefore, there were no established traditions to assign aurality and conceptuality to *kana* and *kanji* respectively. In other words, *kana* and *kanji* were not distributed according to the configuration of the domestic and the foreign. The configuration of the notational genres was free from ethnicity or nationality. Now, one can see the significance of Motoori’s attempt to transcribe the text of the *Kojiki* into *kana*. By translating the text from the *kanji* notation into the *hiragana* notation, he wanted to confirm the Japanese origin of the text, and thereby establish the distinction of the Japanese language from the Chinese language.

What Motoori’s rewriting of the *Kojiki* declares unambiguously is the inauguration of a completely different way of relating the agent/subject of writing and reading to those graphic signs; I have elsewhere (Sakai 1992) collectively called these newly emerging regimes of relating oneself imaginarily to inscription “phonocentrism”. By retranscribing the original text of the *Kojiki*, in which neither *hiragana* nor *katakana* characters were used at all, into a new text of the *Kojiki* which is mainly in *hiragana* characters, Motoori Norinaga destroyed the previous regimes of reading, writing, reciting, narrating and so forth, which were comparatively tolerant of the over-determinacy of graphic signs, and replaced them with ones in which different inscriptional ideologies – ideologies in each of which a particular imaginary relationship to inscription is invested – such as logography, hieroglyphy, phonography and so on were discriminated from one another. A puritanism of the voice was thus vehemently imposed.

In the regimes of my hypothetical pre-modernity, characters were permitted to shift their ideological register fairly freely and could float, so to say, from the status of phonographic signifier to that of logographic signifier, and to that of illustrative symbol. Perhaps the best example of this ideological over-determinacy can be found in calligraphy, in which each character is not immediately determined with respect to its ideological register. Is a calligraphic piece of Tang poetry, for instance, a text to read, to look at, or to recite? To determine a calligraphic text solely as a voiceless text for visuality or as a text embodying speech is, in fact, tantamount to denying its essential character as calligraphy.

Nevertheless, what Motoori attempted to do in his translation of the *Kojiki* was to determine the text of the *Kojiki* unitarily as a text to recite,<sup>5</sup> and to prove that it should be possible to exclude other imaginary relationships to this text. Of course, to exclude other inscriptional relationships to this text and to determine this text unitarily as one to recite was to recover the original recitational voice and gesture of ancient Japan. All his aspiration to recitation notwithstanding, I do not believe that Motoori could successfully repress the excess of textual materiality. What is impressive about his accomplishment is that he unwittingly demonstrated the irreducibility of voice to its phonetic aural/orality.

It is as a consequence of this “phonocentric” transformation that the co-presence of two heterogeneous inscriptional principles in Japanese writing began to be perceived as a

marker of the “peculiarity” of the Japanese language and, by extension, of Japanese culture in general. In other words, the National Studies scholars could detect the heterogeneous constitution of graphic signs as an abnormality of their contemporary social and cultural formations, thanks to their adherence to phonocentrism, and they began to allocate these inscriptional ideologies according to the schematism of co-figuration, phonography for Japan and logography for China. The distinction of Japan and China was brought about by phonocentrism’s insistence upon the distinguishability of speech from writing. Consequently it was made possible to construe the aberration and corruption of their contemporary formations as a trait of contamination by alien influence, represented as coming from a geographic outside. Even today this type of assessment of Japanese uniqueness still dominates culturalist literature on Japan, whether produced by American Japan experts, European journalists or Japanese writers of cultural nationalism.

At this juncture, I should point out that the phonocentrism I refer to here is not so much an insistence on the superiority of alphabetical phonetic writing over non-phonetic writing as the belief that these different ideologies can be distinguished from one another without trace. In this I closely follow Jacques Derrida in his discussion of phonocentrism.

The phonocentric reorganization of regimes also created the possibility of discovering the spoken language of the native illiterate people, which could not be recorded in logographic *kanji* characters but which on rare occasions manifested itself in spite of logographic oppression. Thus, through phonocentrism, a group of writers in the eighteenth century could project into antiquity an archetypal unity of the Chinese or Japanese language of which they could only find remnants in their contemporary world. Ogyū Sorai, Kamo Mabuchi, Hattori Nankaku and Motoori Norinaga among others posited the archetypal unity of the Chinese or Japanese language in the past and thereby rendered it possible to talk about the loss or fragmentation of the social whole in eighteenth-century social formations on the Japanese islands. In this sense, the unity of the Japanese language and the Japanese as an ethnos were invented out of the phonocentric reorganization of discourse as two absences, two figures that should be fulfilled by corresponding existent referents but that could not find their respective referents in reality: the Japanese language and ethnos were thus stillborn in this discourse in the eighteenth century through the schematism of co-figuration.

The unity of national language is, then, given in relation to another language co-figuratively. The unity of the Japanese language became conceivable when that of the ancient Chinese language was “figured out” or configured. But we should not forget that, until then, the Chinese language had not been predicated in terms of an ethnic or national index. While the task of historicizing the concept of language is still to be done, *mana* was a set of authentic characters *not* associated with either the Chinese ethnicity or a geographic area; the *kanji* characters were associated with the dynasty of China that was supposedly the symbolic centre of universal civilization. They were simply true or authentic characters, whose nationality remained undetermined. Or, to put it differently, it was pointless to talk about the ethnicity of *mana* just as it is futile to determine the ethnicity of today’s mathematical symbols and chemical formulae. Although one cannot help noting some incongruity in attributing “language” to *mana* as an assembly of some tens of thousands of characters, I claim that *mana* was just the universal language.<sup>6</sup> It had yet to be caught in the formulaic framework of “many in one”. Accordingly, translation was differently understood. Historically there can be many ways of conceiving translation, but the regime of translation came to dominate our comprehension of translation, and to condition the manner in which translation is represented.

### Translation as continuity in discontinuity

When talking about the history of modernity, it is essential to keep in mind that the modern is neither a property particular to a certain civilization, society, culture, ethnos, race, social class or nation, nor a heritage that can be monopolized by any exclusive social group. The narration of modernity can start anywhere in the world. For more than a century, however, the modern was often associated with the spectral figure called the West, and it has often been presumed that modernity was to emanate out of the West. For too long, it has been taken for granted that the historical narrative of a European social formation could serve as a preliminary to the history of modernization in general. No doubt this assumption is misleading, yet there are historical reasons for the misconception. I do not have enough space here to develop a historical analysis of the Eurocentric narrativization of the “modern” or to discuss the aspects of modernity which are closely associated with the emergence of the West. Tentatively at least, let me organize my argument by moving from a particular history of phonography in the Far East to a general discussion of modernity in translation, in view of the strategies of “provincializing Europe” (Chakrabarty 2000) and “the dislocation of the West” (Sakai 2001), as if the centre of modernity had already been dislocated.

I will then return to the question of the relationship between the issues of translation and discontinuity. This is to say that I will probe how our commonsensical notion of translation is delimited by the schematism of the world (i.e., our operation of representing the world according to the schema of co-figuration) and conversely how the modern figure of the world as the “inter-national” world (i.e., the world consisting of the basic units of the nations) is prescribed by our representation of translation as a communicative and international transfer of the message between a pair of ethno-linguistic unities.

An inquiry into translation invokes a seemingly endless series of questions as soon as some formulaic response to that inquiry is postulated. Retracing the network of affinity in translational equivalence – to take *fanyi* in Chinese, *Übersetzung* in German, *honyaku* in Japanese, for instances strictly within the economy of the modern international world – you may well find the sense of transferring, of conveying or skipping from one place to another, of linking or mapping one word, phrase, or text to or on another. Comparing the lexicographical and etymological explications of the word “to translate” or its cognates in many languages, one may feel vindicated in offering this definition: translation is a transfer of the message from one language to another.

Even before specifying what sort of transfer this can be, it is hard to refrain from asking some initial questions about the message. Is what is referred to as the message in this definition not a product or consequence of the transfer called translation rather than something whose being precedes the action of transfer, or something that remains invariant in the process of translation? Is the message that is supposedly transferred in this process determinable in and of itself without first being operated on or affected by something? Is the sense of translation determinable prior to its being translated? Does this future-anteriority of the message in translation not suggest that what remains invariant does not belong in the worldly time of past–present–future? It belongs neither to the present of the past, the present of the present, nor the present of the future. Is it because the message is never present that it can be said to remain invariant in the translation?

And then language. What is the status of the language from which or into which what is called the message is transferred? How can you assume that the source language in which the source text originally makes sense is different and distinct from the target language in which the translated text is made to convey the original sense or its closest approximation?

Are these languages countable in the sense that you may isolate and juxtapose them as individual units like apples, and unlike water? By what measures can you distinguish one from another, and endow each with a unity or body? Do we not have to suppose the organic unity of language rather than a random assemblage of words, phrases and utterances, in order to talk about “translation proper” in this way?

Accordingly, the message that is transferred in translation is, above all else, a supposition of the transmitted invariant that is confirmed, retroactively, after the fact of translation. In this case, what kind of definition is it that includes the term that ought to be explained by what the very definition aims to determine? Does it not constitute an emblematic circular definition? Likewise, the unities of languages are also suppositions in the absence of which the above definition would hardly make sense. And are we not required to examine what translation could be when languages are not countable or when one language cannot be so easily distinguished from another?

In the first section of this essay I have already provided my answer to this question. The languages from and into which a text is translated are like regulative ideas; they serve as schemata in our representation of translation. As to the empirical existence of these languages, therefore, we cannot know except through the way we retrospectively represent our operation of translation.

The measure by means of which we are able to assess a language as a unity – let me stress again that I am not talking about either phonetic systems, various morphological units, even syntactical rules of a language but the whole of a language as a *langue* – is given to us only at the locale where the limit of a language is marked, at the “border” where we come across a non-sense that forces us to do something in order to make sense of the non-sense. It goes without saying that this occasion of making sense out of non-sense, of doing something socially – acting toward foreigners, soliciting their response, seeking their confirmation and so forth – is generally called translation, provided that I am allowed to suspend the conventional distinction between translation and interpretation. This means to say that the unity of a language is represented always in relation to another unity. It is never given in and of itself, but in relation to another, transferentially, so to say. One can hardly evade dialogic duality when determining the unity of a language; language as a unity almost always conjures up the co-presence of another language precisely because translation is not only a border crossing but also and preliminarily an act of drawing a border, of *bordering*. Hence, I have to introduce the schematism of co-figuration in analysing how translation is represented.

Already we are concerned with a range of problems difficult to evade when attempting to comprehend the terms “meaning” and “language”. At the very least we can now say that, logically, translation is not derivative or secondary to meaning or language; it is just as fundamental or originary in our attempts to elucidate those two concepts. To the extent that translation suggests our contact and encounter with the incomprehensible, unknowable or unfamiliar, that is, with the foreign, we must insist that nothing starts until we come across the foreign.

If the foreign is unambiguously incomprehensible, unknowable and unfamiliar, it is impossible to talk about translation because translation simply cannot be done. If, on the other hand, the foreign is comprehensible, knowable and familiar, it is unnecessary to call for translation. Thus, the status of the foreign must always be ambiguous in translation. It is alien, but it is already *in transition* to something familiar. The foreign is at the same time incomprehensible and comprehensible, unknowable and knowable, and unfamiliar and familiar, and this foundational ambiguity of translation derives from the ambiguity of the positionality generally indexed by the peculiar presence of the translator. For the translator is summoned only when two kinds of audiences are postulated with regard to the source text,

one for whom the text is comprehensible, at least to some degree, and the other for whom it is incomprehensible. Apparently the translator's work consists in dealing with difference between the two kinds of audience. This situation may be rephrased as follows: for the first kind of audience, the source "language" is comprehensible while for the second it is incomprehensible. Only insofar as the distinction between the two kinds of audience exists can someone be summoned to be a translator.

Yet it is important to note that the "language" in this instance is figurative, in the sense that it need not refer to any "natural" language of an ethnic or national community such as German or Tagalog, for it is equally possible to have two kinds of audiences when the source text is a heavily technical document or an avant-garde literary piece. Here "language" may well refer to such a set of vocabulary and expressions associated with a professional field or discipline, such as "legal language"; it may imply the style of graphic inscription or an unusual perceptual setting in which an artwork is installed. One may argue that these are exemplary of intralingual and intersemiotic translations respectively. But these two types of translation can be postulated only when they are in contradistinction to "translation proper". Let us not forget, however, that the propriety of translation presupposes the unity of a language; its propriety is impossible unless one unity of language is posited as external to another unity of language as if, already, languages were given as countable, like apples. Thus, these figurative uses of the term "translation" illustrate how extremely difficult it is to construe the locale of translation as a linking or bridging of two languages, two spatially marked domains. Here I want to stress once again: translation is not only a border crossing but also and preliminarily an act of drawing a border, of bordering.

Let me note that the term "figure" always means something of an image and connotes a spatial order in which one image can be juxtaposed with another image. What is disclosed here is a certain cartography in the representation of translation. This cartography is, however, not about mapping from one striated space onto another; it is concerned with a mapping of something alien or anterior to spatial coordination onto a coordinated space; it is a mapping of the incomprehensible onto a distance between two figures in a striated space. Precisely because the unities of languages are no more than "objects in idea" or schemata with no corresponding objects in experience, the schematism of co-figuration projects figures of language at the locale of translation. In this respect, the schematism of co-figuration is an art of spatialization, some technology that one might call "a primordial cartography", without the aid of which the externality of one language to another would be inconceivable. As I argued above with regard to Motoori Norinaga's intervention in eighteenth-century Japan, there used to be discursive formations – destroyed or replaced by Motoori's intervention – in which the schematism of co-figuration was not dominant, so that "translation proper" was not a rule for other translations.

For the sake of brevity, allow me to skip the many steps necessary in order to move from this primordial cartography to the global configuration of modernity in which the dichotomy of the West and the Rest serves as a ruling trope of the imagination of the international world.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, this conception of translation according to the schematism of co-figuration is a schematization of the globally shared commonsensical vision of the *international* world, consisting of basic units of nations and segmented by national borders into territories. In this schematization, the propriety of "translation proper" does not only claim to be a description or representation of what happens in the process of translation; it also prescribes and directs how to represent and apprehend what one does in translation. In this respect and in line with Michel Foucault's use of the word "discourse", the

propriety of “translation proper” is a rule of discursive formation: it is part and parcel of the *discursive* regime of translation, an institutionalized assemblage of protocols, rules of conduct, canons of accuracy and manners of viewing. In other words, the discursive regime of translation is *poietic* or productive in bringing out what speech act theorists call the “perlocutionary” effect, repeatedly discerning the domestic language co-figuratively as if the two unities were already present in actuality.

As long as one is captive to the regime of translation, one can only construe the ambiguity inherent in the positionality of translator as the duality of the position a translator occupies between the native and the foreign languages. One either speaks one’s own mother tongue or a foreigner’s. The task of translator would then be to figure out differences discernible between the two languages. In each language one’s position is discernibly determined, so that the difference one deals with in translation is figured out always as that of two linguistic communities external to one another. Despite innumerable loci of potential difference within one linguistic community, the regime of translation obliges one to speak so as to address oneself according to the binary opposition of speaking either to the same or the other. I call this attitude of address “monolingual address”, an attitude of relating to others in enunciation whereby the addresser adopts the position representative of a putatively homogeneous language community and relates to the general addressees who are also representative of an equally homogeneous language community. However, I hasten to add a disclaimer: by monolingual address I do not imply the social condition of conversation in which both the addresser and the addressee supposedly belong to the same language; they believe themselves to belong to different languages yet could still address themselves monolingually.

Ineluctably, translation introduces a disjunctive instability into the putatively *personal* relations among the agents of speech, writing, listening and reading. In respect to personal relationality as well as to the addresser/addressee structure, the translator must be internally split and multiple, and devoid of a stable positionality. At best, she can be a *subject in transit*. This is firstly because the translator cannot be an “individual” in the sense of *individuum* in order to perform translation, and secondly because she is a *singular* that marks an elusive locale of discontinuity in the social, while translation is the practice of creating continuity at that singular point of discontinuity. The place she occupies, therefore, belongs to a space anterior to one striated with coordinates rather than an extensive one in which the relationship of externality is possibly predicative. Translation is an instance of *continuity in discontinuity*<sup>8</sup> and a *poietic* social practice – bordering – which institutes a relation at the site of incommensurability. This is why the aspect of discontinuity inherent in translation would be completely repressed if we determined translation according to the model of communication. And this is what I have referred to above as the ambiguity inherent in the positionality of the translator.

To elucidate what is implied by continuity in discontinuity, it is necessary to elaborate upon the concepts of continuity and discontinuity. As is the case in the mathematical conception of continuity – classically expressed in the “Dedekind cut” – continuity is primarily concerned with cutting and divisibility. The possibility of infinite cutting defines continuity at, for instance, point A in the neighbourhood of that point. In order to recognize a boundary or cut at A, therefore, that point must be continuous. Routinely we represent difference inciting the act of translation in terms of a gap or crevice, but despite such a habit of making sense by means of a spatialized figure, the incommensurability that we want to understand as difference cannot be represented as such. The difference at issue is a radical one that is *non-sense*, for it is prior to the act of translation which is a process of sense-making; translation is an act of making sense out of non-sense. Yet this difference

cannot be determined in and of itself. We cannot think of the past, the present or the future in which this difference presents itself. In other words, just like what Plato called *khora*, it is never present or in the present. The representation of incommensurability as a cut or boundary, therefore, is bound to betray what it is supposed to represent. In other words, incommensurability is unrepresentable because it is discontinuous. What is suggested by discontinuity is the impossibility of cutting or of comprehending in terms of a boundary. It is non-sense precisely because it is anterior to continuity. The difference in or of language to which translation is a response must be distinguished from measurable difference that is representable as a gap, crevice or boundary, for such a representation is possible only when difference is conceived of in the measure of continuity. What we refer to as incommensurability is radical difference that lacks common measure. It is for this impossibility of finding common measure that this difference is called incommensurability. This is why difference in or of language that incites the act of translation comes as a representation only after the process of translation. Involved in translation is a paradox of temporality that cannot be accommodated in the worldly time of the past, the present and the future; it calls for the positing of an invariant that is never present.<sup>9</sup> Translation is not only a process of overcoming incommensurability; it is also a process in which difference is rendered representable.

Thus, translation pertains to two dimensions of difference that must not be confused: radical difference of discontinuity that does not render itself to spatialized representation, and measured difference in continuity that is imagined in terms of a border, gap or crevice between two spatially enclosed territories or entities, figuratively projected as a distance between two figures accompanying one another. And the transition from the first to the second we often call “translation”.

Undoubtedly, the locale of translation as the ambiguous point of difference is also the state of exception in the sense that Carl Schmitt talked about the sovereign (Schmitt 1988). Here, the positionality of translator is comparable to that of the sovereign who, “although he stands outside the normally valid legal system, [...] nonetheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution must be suspended in its entirety” (ibid., 6). Referring to Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben argues: “Through the state of exception, the sovereign ‘creates and guarantees the situation’ that the law needs for its own validity” (Agamben 1998). By overlooking the moment of discontinuity, one could easily be oblivious to the fact that the locale of translation is the state of exception and the place of the sovereign; but it is also a site of transformative *labour*. It is now possible to inquire into the social performance of labour in terms of translation (cf. Sakai and Solomon 2006).

Considering the positionality of the translator, we can now approach the problematic of subjectivity in an illuminating manner. The internal split within the translator, which reflects in a certain way the split between the translator and the addresser – or the addressee, and furthermore the actualizing split within the addresser and the addressee themselves<sup>10</sup> – demonstrates the way in which the subject constitutes itself. In a sense, this internal split within the translator is homologous to what is referred to as the fractured I, the temporality of “I speak” which necessarily introduces an irreparable distance between the speaking I and the I that is signified, between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciated. Yet, in the case of translation, the ambiguity in the personality of the translator marks the instability of the “we” as the subject rather than the “I”, suggesting a different attitude of address which I elsewhere call “heterolingual address” (Sakai 1997) and in which one addresses oneself as a foreigner to another foreigner. Heterolingual address is an event because translation never takes place in a smooth space; it is an addressing in discontinuity.

Captured in the regime of translation, however, the translator is supposed to assume the role of the arbitrator not only between the addresser and the addressee but also between the linguistic communities of the addresser and the addressee. And, in the attitude of monolingual address, translation as repetition is often comprehensively replaced by the representation of translation.

What is rejected in monolingual address is the very social character of translation, of an act performed at the locale of social transformation where new power relations are produced. The study of translation will thus provide us with insights into how cartography and the schematism of co-figuration contribute to our critical analysis of social relations, premised not only on nationality and ethnicity but also the differentialist identification of race or the colonial difference and discriminatory constitution of “the West”.

## Notes

1. Here, I rely upon the classical notion of “nationality” in British Liberalism. According to John Stuart Mill, nationality means that “a portion of mankind are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any others – which make them cooperate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively. This feeling of nationality may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past” (Mill 1861/1972, 391).
2. Fukuzawa Yukichi translated the English term “nationality” into *kokutai* (national body) in the early Meiji period, in the 1870s. Later *kokutai* was used to express the sovereignty of the Japanese Emperor System. In his *Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, Fukuzawa (1973) includes Mill’s explications of nationality and the feeling of nationality almost verbatim in his exposition of *kokutai*.
3. Following the convention of names in China, Korea and Japan, personal names are written in the order of family name first followed by the given name. Thus, Motoori Norinaga means Norinaga of the Motoori family.
4. *Tokugawa bakuhan taisei* in Japanese. The Japanese polity during the Tokugawa period (1600–1868) is often described as a feudal system of the central authority of the Tokugawa shogunate and the subordinate domains.
5. Let me underline that Motoori repeatedly referred to “gesture” (*miburi*) as the trope for the original enunciation. In order to recite the original voice of the *Kojiki*, he argued, one had to learn the original “gesture” with which the voice was enunciated.
6. Of course, language in the sense of a general abstraction of particular ethnic or national languages was also a historical construct.
7. The logic of “imbrications” among different registers – transferential identification of social positions, colonial and colonized discriminatory hierarchy, racial classification, border formation in terms of nationality and so forth – are explored in my work in progress, *Dislocation of the West*. I should also underline that I have skipped an analysis on the transition from bilateral schematization (the schema of co-figuration) to multilateral schematization (the system of the international world).
8. This phrase, with its apparent resonance with modern mathematics, is from Nishida Kitarô (1870–1945). In conceptualizing social praxis and self-awareness (*jikaku*), Nishida appealed to the mathematical formulation of discontinuity. Following the tradition of modern philosophy since Leibnitz and Kant, he conceived of the formation of the practical subject after the model of differential calculus but at the singular point of discontinuity. Therefore, for Nishida (1934/1965; 1935/1965) as his later formulation clearly shows, the constitution of the subject in ethical action is also the making of the social formation; “*hirenzoku no renzoku*” (or continuity of discontinuity) thus suggests the possibility of conceptualizing the constitution of the subject at the site of the incommensurate in the social.

9. Concerning translation and *khora*, I owe much to Morinaka Takaaki's paper of 2007.
10. The split cannot be limited to the cases of translation. For, as Briankle Chang suggests, the putative unities of the addresser and the addressee can hardly be sustained because the addresser himself is split and multiplies, as is figuratively illustrated by the Plato–Socrates doublet in Derrida's "Envois" (Derrida 1987, 1–256). With regard to communication in general, Chang argues that "Because both delivery and signing are haunted by the same structural threat of the message's nonarrival or a destination, the paradox of the signature also invades communication. Communication occurs only insofar as the delivery of the message *may* fail; that is, communication takes place only to the extent that there is a separation between the sender and receiver, and this separation, this distance, this *spacing*, creates the possibility for the message *not* to arrive" (Chang 1996, 216).

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