

Full Length Research Paper

The being of culture: Beyond representation

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This work begins with the general question of whether it is possible to think of the idea of culture beyond the confines of representationalism, and discusses Heidegger's 'matter' of Ereignis as the 'misappropriability' of cultures and cultural objects. In the second section, it moves on to the question of the ontological difference and its significance for a non-representationalist version of culture as 'poiesis'. This leads to a radical notion of (transcendental) empiricity beyond the ordinary sense of 'the empirical' and, in light of this, a questioning of cultural relativism and the invisibility of the ontological difference to the cultural sciences. The third section of the paper briefly addresses the ethics of cultural research and the possible deconceptualisation of (the idea) culture. The final section summarises the paper by offering a (counter) definition of culture as such.

Key words: Culture, representation, Ereignis, 'appropriability', 'poiesis', transcendental empiricism, cultural relativism, research ethics.

INTRODUCTION

'The image must cease to be second in relation to a supposedly prior object and must demand a certain primacy, just as the original and then the origin will lose its initial privileges.... There is no longer any original but an eternal twinkling in which the absence of any origin is dispersed in the flash of detour and return' (Maurice Blanchot, 'Le rire des dieux' quoted in Deleuze, 1994).

This paper relates to a larger project that has been engaged in over several years under the working title of 'Culture and Representation'.¹ Somewhat obviously, that project turns on a question about what appears, on the face of it, to be two 'concepts', culture and representation and their inter-connections. Beginning with the sceptical question 'why representation?', it goes on to show that almost all hitherto existing theories of culture have started out from representationalist premises. That is, they treat cultures, cultural objects and events as remorselessly representation of something else; as re-presenting something more fundamentally present than themselves, something outside themselves, something more primary still: the 'real' phenomena that make culture, by contrast, always epiphenomenal.² Naturally, 'nature' is always the main contender in these stakes, though 'economy', 'science' and 'society' are not far behind. But after looking at Foucault's (1970) narrower historical sense of an 'age of representation' and then at Heidegger's (1975) much broader version of representation as a form of thinking that has continually deflected philosophy from its path towards Being and then ploughing this back into cultural

theories from Hobbes to the present day, the project goes on to its second main question, the one that faces us here: the being of culture itself, beyond representation.

Another stage along the way was a piece called 'Ordinary Heterodoxies' (1997b). There, it was argued — against representationalist views of culture — that culture might be more akin to a kind of owning. But it was soon found that this 'owning' was far from pure and that it can operate via a kind of doubling: that whatever secures cultural 'knowledge' as something owned by a cohort (Sharrock, 1974) also secures its capacity to be used by another; to be begged, stolen, borrowed, and so on. At that point, the exact term for that 'undecidable' double was eluded. But, on later reflection, the ugly, but accurate term, '(ap) propriability' was decided on.

The word is close to, and derives from, the term that inhabits most of Heidegger's later work on language and art. In German, it is Ereignis and different translators tellingly render it in almost opposite ways, sometimes as 'appropriation' (Heidegger, 1971b), sometimes as 'propriation' (Heidegger, 1993). To move away from representational(ist) versions of culture, that is, we might begin to insist instead on the necessity of this (mis)ownability as the double that secures the cultural object as 'coming to presence', as 'bethinging', as never quite settling down to a finished and final ontic status.

Our thesis will be: since what comes to count as a cultural object is, ontologically speaking, always flickering or hovering and never settling between two states (of finally being owned-propriated and of finally being misowned-

appropriated), it is never quite an object as such but is, rather, a movement. And this movement can be called its event-ness or eventality, since, as we shall see, Ereignis also marks the idea of an event.

Ereignis, according to Heidegger, comes before speaking, writing, art, before even Being itself, as a way of thinking its 'essential origin'. He writes:

The matter [of Ereignis], while simple in itself, still remains difficult to think, because thinking must first overcome the habit of yielding to that view that we are thinking here of 'Being' as appropriation. But appropriation is different in nature, because it is richer than any conceivable definition of Being. Being, however, in respect of its essential origin, can be thought of in terms of appropriation (1971b).

If Ereignis has this function, then it is obvious that it is far from a settled and easily definable matter in Heidegger's thinking; yet it is also obvious that, in stumbling upon the idea of (mis)owning, this work was at least beginning to approach the being of culture outside representational thought. To appropriate is, as such, to seize, adopt, confiscate, allocate, secure, take away, expropriate, usurp. And, by the same token, 'proprietation', is to retain something as one's own: to guard it against seizure, adoption, confiscation, allocation, removal, expropriation and usurpation. Ereignis, then, is the double that means both of these apparently exclusive motions, towards and away. It has roughly the following etymology.

Although Heidegger (1971b) warns us against taking it this simply, Ereignis is literally, in ordinary German: event, happening, occurrence, and incident. And this means not just an odd or peculiar incident but also an everyday occurrence. It is related in another way, however, to 'peculiar' as in 'particular' or 'idiosyncratic', as we shall see shortly. It might also be thought of as referring to a singularity, an event which is utterly an event rather than, say, a mere instance of an ideal category of events. Ereignis, in this sense, and among its other senses, points us in the direction of event-ness or eventality. It is also connected with *Auge*, and so refers to "that which becomes visible, real" ("Das Unzulängliche, Hier wird's Ereignis", Goethe, *Faust II*) (Farrell, 1977).

The related verb is *ereignen*: to happen, to occur, to take place, to come about, to come to pass. Here, Ereignis is the coming about, perhaps even the coming to presence, of the object-event. It is the event-ness or eventality of the event: its 'eventing'. And this marks an instability in terms of settled, completed and finished matters or affairs. In fact, it may mark as much a 'calling' — from a possible, conditional, or future state of completedness — of the object-event.

Heidegger's translators move, naturally, following Heidegger's own glosses on the term, in the direction of 'owning' and '(ap)propriation'. How is this? Strictly, to appropriate is *aneignen* (which is also to acquire). The related nouns are *Aneignen* and *Aneignung*: adoption, (mis)appropriation, usurpation, seizure and even assimilation (in the physiological sense). But the root to which

both belong, allowing their functional similarity, is *eigen*, the adjective meaning 'own' as in 'one's own' — a marker of what is not shared, a peculiarity or a characteristic feature (*Eigenart*); and here we re-intersect with the idea of the peculiarity or singularity of eventness. Hence: *Eigenschaft*, a particular quality or characteristic, and also the verb, *eigenen*, to belong.³

With so much room for manoeuvre, Heidegger's usage is not straightforward. Rather it works and plays with Ereignis to get the effect of what is peculiar to a person, to a group or, indeed, to all people — their 'ownness' or 'authenticity' perhaps — but all of these can only be 'in the event', in the coming (about) of the event, in its eventing, eventness or eventality. 'Cultural' specificity, then, is never quite settled, always open, hovering between its completion (as a fixed 'cultural trait', for example, or as a definition of culture) and the impossibility of that completion.

And it is in this respect that we can see why something akin to 'hybridity' is never quite off the agenda, even in the most seemingly settled of cultural matters. When something's nature is to be unsettled (even when a 'settlement' might be the first mark of a culture), it is nomadic, in flight. And we mistake that nature as soon as we think of culture, a culture, or a cultural object (a component of a culture) as something which has taken root. Even in settling, we are always settling in another's place — as they, too, are settling in ours. Eventality points to this unsettlement of the event, even in its most apparently settled forms.

And, at the same time, because this 'process' is not fixed, neither is the full sense of property, being proper, being utterly of one's own and not shared. It comes, in and through the hovering event-to-come, also to contain and require contamination, appropriation, misappropriation, seizure, adoption and assimilation. Ereignis is what (as a general quality) in any event, the singularity of any event, is its coming about, its coming to be visible as one's own but which never reaches the final destination of complete property or propriety since it is always made 'impure' and improper along the way (essentially) with what is not one's own, with what is appropriated. Or else: it is the appropriability's coming to pass.

If we were still in the business of looking for definitions, this would be about as good a definition of culture as we could wish for. And the name of the approach that puts this first, prior to any 'subject', representation or conceptualisation, would be 'empiricism' in a radical sense, or, better still, 'eventalism'.

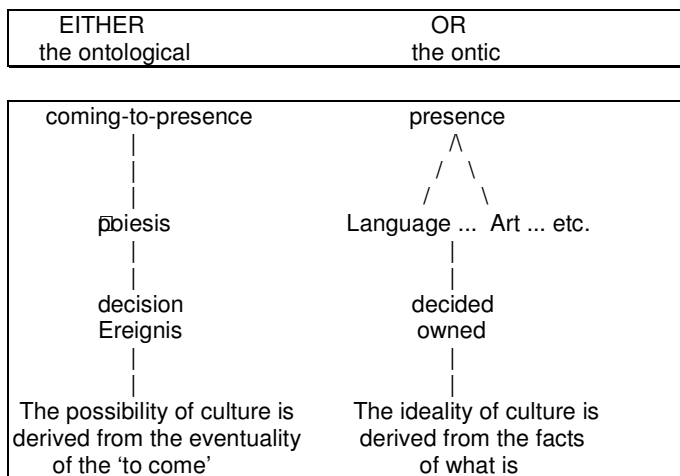
As we start away from representational thinking and towards eventalistic experiencing, then, the critical feature, if such it is, of the cultural, is its fragility.

So we could think of non-representational thinking as starting from the ontological fragility of the ontic. Here, the 'ontological' would point to the domain of coming-to-presence while the 'ontic' would point to the merely existent (the domain of simple empiricity); in fact, the latter would point to what is only apparently completed as an object (Hence one definition of the ontological difference is: the difference between the ontological and the ontic.).

At the same time, this ontological fragility of culture is its artifactuality, marking the essential becoming-ness or incompleteness of an artifact (cultural object) but also offering this fragile ontological status as its being, its (f) actuality beyond the mere facts.

This is another kind of thinking about culture, then, which does not begin from the sheer givenness of any cultural artifact. Rather, fragility-eventuality (fragimentality?) suggests insubstantiality to all definite substances.⁴ In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida (1994) writes of this capacity of the unfixed, of the to-come, as its spectrality. The ghost of the undecidable haunts this other kind of thinking. But 'fragimentality' is also coming-to-presence — which is not a coming-before (in the sense of a determinate narrative history of origins) — rather it is a counter-ontological claim against the sheer ontic presence of what is (or its absence). In Deleuze's (1991) terms, it is an insistence on a transversal axis of historical contingency, of an irreversible arrow of accidental time with no further determination 'behind' it and allowing no possibility of prediction or calculation (cf. Baugh, 1993).

Although several terms will remain tendentious, we can begin to express this diagrammatically, beginning with the ontological difference and ending with two distinct propositions concerning the cultural domain and its being — for even the most overtly empirico-scientific versions of culture (such as ethnography or content analysis) must be predicated on a general description of its being. They cannot be outside metaphysics in this respect. Indeed, as the diagram shows, their grounding version of culture (as derivation from facts) is much more problematically metaphysical than the non-representationalist alternative to the left.



If, according to the ontological description, culture is only possible as a derivation from what Derrida calls the 'to-come', then it is still always already coming about. Heidegger's and Derrida's common mentor, Nietzsche, puts it this way: 'a kind of becoming must itself create the illusion of being' (1968). But this 'illusion' does not say that what is (the empirical, the actual) is a mere construction of ideality. Rather it says that the empirical-actual is,

itself, illusive when looked at in terms of its ontological status. It turns out that, it is a creation (of becoming or eventality). And that creation or making is poiesis (in a quite different sense from, for example, Vico's notion of the 'poetic' which is civic and empirical human making).

The seemingly solid givenness of the ontic is, ontologically speaking, its com-position — its position with or alongside another which is not 'properly' part of it. What comes about is composed. And so becoming in the ontological sense is not, strictly, empirical (ontic) becoming (as was the 'poetic' for Vico). It is the coming-about of the ontic, yet it is separate and distinct from those empirical 'production' processes that are the descriptive objects of, for example, ethnography when it asks: How are TV programs 'read' by their audiences? or How do people actually work in order to generate conversations? When the cultural disciplines turn to 'processes of production', they stop the radical ontological sense of poetic becoming in its tracks. They assume the presence of cultural objects (as ontic matter(s)) and then assume an equally ontic 'process' behind it, in the form of crudely empirical histories. This (history) is where cultural objects come from, on this story and sheer immediate presence is where they go to and stop in their completion. They then become merely instances of a cultural ideal pre-existing them, in their 'histories'.

To move away from this picture, empiricity has first to be freed from the representationalist distinction between the empirical event (datum or instance) and the ideal event (principle or law). One way is to think empiricity not as a property of the ontic but, instead, as eventality: coming-about, derivation from the 'to come', passing through the 'ordeal' of the decision (as Derrida puts it), poiesis, composition. This takes us to the groundless but grounding eventuality of the 'to come' — which in the sphere of 'culture' (and no doubt, now, elsewhere) is Ereignis. What is to come, is to come through acts and deeds in their eventuality, as 'what happens'.

Elsewhere 'what happens' has been taken as definitional of community (Nancy, 1993) or, perhaps, of 'social order'. But now we must, along with Nancy, remind ourselves that, this is not a subject or a substance in the ontic sense. Rather, what comes about does so through and as 'community', in the sense of a history of decisions made and decisions still to come. So a community — a 'cohort' in Sharrock's (1974) terms — is not an empirical presence (a substance or a subject) but rather an eventness — a call or calling towards. And this call always comes from what it is possible for a 'culture' to be. Culture, then, can not be 'empirical' in the sense of a shared, given/fixed substance. Its empiricity is its event-like-ness — its evented character. It is, in and through its dependence on passing through the 'ordeal' of the decision, given to undecidability. And this distinguishes radical eventalism from the empiricism of facts. Such an eventalism, then, partly rejoins (although it differs from) Hume-Deleuze's transcendental empiricism — precisely because of its insistence on the essentiality of the undecidable, the 'to come', the coming-about as the ground of presence itself (or indeed of absence) (Deleuze, 1991).

If eventuality is undecidable empiricity — the passage through the 'ordeal' of the undecidable, the condition of the decision, the poetic — then culture does not derive in any strict sense. What could it derive from? Rather it revolves; it constitutes a revolution. It revolves, or — less perfectly, perhaps — wobbles, unpredictably around the axis of (ap)propriation. It is in this important sense only that Ereignis is a revolutionary concept.⁵

If we had, then, to reorient Deleuze's position in line with the Heideggerian movement away from representationalism (and thereby, incidentally, bringing it closer to Derrida's ethics of decision), we should have to say that the becoming-empirical (reaching to empirical presence) is the transcendental-empiricity of culture. And this is another way of speaking of its eventality. Any cultural instance (what we have previously called a 'cultural object') is a call-event which is never fully answered and so never fully settles into that which is present in the ontic sense (the empirically finished). It would not matter where we went to look, we would never find this condition, as it were, lurking 'inside' a work of art, a fragment of dance or a TV program. And yet, on the other hand, every time we look at such things, we cannot fail to be close to that condition. But our proximity cannot be rendered by analysis, only by hinting, by alluding, by an openness to the spectral. It is not a question of whether or not it is experience that brings knowledge (the traditional question of empiricism) — rather it is a question of how we experience and according to what differences. And this too is a decision. How it is made has to do with the ethics of what the author of this work used to call 'analysis' (1996).

The empiricity (that is, eventality) of culture is, in this sense, of a different kind from that of the finished (the perfect) object which is the 'proper' object of the cultural disciplines (from anthropology to cultural and literary studies and including the 'arts'). And in beginning to think this way, we move to a realisation very similar to Heidegger's realisation about language. Where the 'sciences' of language begin is with the ontically complete state of a language. If, instead, we turn to its Ereignis, Heidegger found, we begin to see how it is that language itself — that is, our (ap)propriation of language and its (ap)propriation of us — is the bearer of a message; we see how it, in its being, calls attention to becoming-ness or 'bethinging' (die Bedingnis) (Heidegger, 1971b). Then we see that it is this call of language itself which has brought about the change in our thinking. By the same token, if we move away from the representational thinking of the cultural 'sciences', we see that culture is whatever calls us perpetually to rethink our (and indeed anything's) objectness as empirical becoming. We find that it is the spectral aspect of culture itself (outside representational thinking) that calls us to change our thinking.

Hence, the 'essence' of culture cannot be found in the ideality that derives from the inspection of empirical objects, cultural facts. Rather its nature is not to have an 'essence' as such, but rather what we might, perversely perhaps, call an 'origin' — or, in Derrida's (1978: 203) terms, a 'non-origin which is originary' — in the space or

possibility of eventality. And this is related to, but still quite different from, Foucault's (1981) insistence upon positivity as essential facticity, and thus upon the method of 'eventalisation'. If cultural objects have an 'objectness' (origin), it lies in the radical incompleteness of their objectness, their empirico-evental becoming. The search for the defining characteristic of cultural objects ends up — once the word for 'characteristic' has become Ereignis — as an insistence on their incompleteness. And this incompleteness is not an imperfection — except perhaps in the grammatical sense of the imperfect — but rather an opening to eventness.

Cultural hermeneutics could, henceforth, be the doing of this opening (of oneself) to eventness. Then hermeneutics would not be 'analysis' in any strict sense. Rather it would be a kind of experiencing as opposed to traditional empiricism's derivation from experience. What this hermeneutics would experience is the event as empirical; not in the sense of the empirical vs the ideal (which is a division within representational thinking) — but rather in the sense of stemming from eventality, from an openness to becoming whose finished form cannot be known in advance.

By contrast with this indefinitely open picture, the cultural disciplines consist in the fixing of the other in (or as) definiteness — which denies any other yet to come. This is so a fortiori when those disciplines are 'relativistic' or 'empathetic' towards the other; for then they do not intend and cannot see the violence of their appropriation, believing themselves just and fair to the other, when in fact their justice and fairness are certainly their own but not necessarily the other's. In this sense, it may be true to say that only Western cultural sciences are culturally relativistic — or at least that cases outside the West are either accidentally similar to it or else effects of assimilation.

Cultural relativism, then, denies the singularity (Ereignis) of the other by its (unseeingly violent) imposition of its own rule (as law and right, as legislation). Any rule (as law and right or legislation) must be both in excess of and less than any possible singularity. Any case of an other which is not, in itself, culturally relativistic defeats or falsifies the rule and is done an injustice or violence by it; and yet the first rule of cultural relativism is also 'do no violence to the other'. So while there may be, as we have noted, empirical cases of culturally relative non-Westerners, cultural relativism remains intrinsically Western by virtue of its demand for its own universality. It appears to be a kind of judgment which runs from the particular case to the general rule, but underlying this 'methodology' is a still more general rule that stipulates the universality of 'culture' as presence.⁶

What the cultural 'sciences' cannot see is the ontological difference. Therefore they have no sense of what may come (to presence). And what comes (to presence) is called (forth) by the undecidable which is, in terms of its tense perhaps, the imperfect conditional (what might be in the process of coming about). Cultural relativism, then, cannot hear this call, since it 'respects' all cultures only as perfect (finished) instances effected or perfected by their

pasts (their histories, in the narrow sense). It runs out, for example, in cases where cultures turn against their previous 'traditional' characters — for example, where the synthetic ('foreground') Japan of microprocessors and artificial intelligence displaces the authentic ('background') Japan of kimonos and rice-paper walls (Heidegger, 1971).

By contrast, we would have to hold that 'coming to be' is always in principle contestable. Hence my experience is of 'what I own' (eigenen). And my experience of the other is of what 'I have appropriated' (ereignen, aneignen) from it. And the reverse also holds. Either way, this is a distinction between the author's Dasein and theirs — a distinction unavailable to the cultural disciplines. And so no amount of ethnographic training will get us to the fundamental nature of the relation to the other: that it is only ever a possibility — and so cannot be stabilised as a rule or accessed by a method. The fact of it being only ever possible is essential (but not 'an essence'). It is necessary (unequivocal — un-equivocal). The equivocal (for example, the ideal speech situation) is only ever still to come because what we now call 'culture' is only ever (ap)propriation: never a final 'property' or 'properness'. Nor does it reside entirely in the domain of the other.

Culture itself, therefore, is still to come (as the unknowable 'hybrids' of appropriability). It is itself an example of (just one case of) another and not the 'key' to the analysis, experience or understanding of all others. For it to be such a key, the cultural disciplines would have to (as they probably do) share Kant's aim: to close the gap between the actual and the ideal. But no singularity is ever either. It is, itself, an instance of a possible closure — but never an 'ideal' one. And so the Kantian closure of the actual-ideal distinction is itself, then, an ideal; it is always distant — away — missing the singular. It remains in the hinter-land of the singular (hinter: 'behind' and also 'beyond').

The mistaken way of starting to look at culture is to say: 'culture is already here, now analyse it'. Then — for the cultural disciplines — culture is only ever dead on arrival, corpse not corp(u)s. Instead we might begin by thinking 'culture may never be — but, if it comes, how does it come?' This alternative might, again, be thought of in terms of the virtuality of culture — it is still coming to actuality. And this takes work.⁷ Or else we could think of (ap)propriability as possession in Derrida's spectral sense. Then we might speak of culture as the virtual/spectral. What this would mean would be that every cultural thing would be open to its own exteriority — to that which is not its own, its property. The openness is (ap)propriability.

As a sheer matter of ethics, we must attempt an outline, if not a definition, of culture. But such an outline remains — strictly — impossible while we are still using the term 'culture' as a proxy for a traditional concept as such. For, as we have seen, it is impossible to shake that concept from its foundation in representational thinking. And we must do this for the following reason. To date, the cultural disciplines have done one thing only; they have tried to unveil what cannot be unveiled — and they have done so

in the name of speaking the 'truth' of either culture-in-general or else of a culture (for example, its 'insiders' experiences) — when the truth of either is to remain veiled or, more precisely, to flicker between veiling and unveiling. Cultural 'science' insists on disclosure; while cultures as such must retain their secrets (their future conditionals not even experienced yet by 'insiders') in order to endure, to have life. So the patient has to be anaesthetised before the cultural disciplines can operate. In place of the always unspecifiable grounds of cultures, the cultural disciplines invent proxies — 'conventions', 'customs', 'rituals' and so on. This is domestication, grand appropriation, colonisation: even if the surface politics of the analysis (as in 'postcolonial' theory) appears otherwise. The ethical demand for an alternative is the demand for an end to this colonisation. If the worst confession of the professional anthropologist is 'I do not understand them' or 'I cannot analyse them', then it is also the point of departure for cross-cultural thinking in a more radical sense.⁸

So to get to (what we must still call) culture, we must let it go as a concept in the representationalist sense. It is to be deconceptualised. And the first step (again following Deleuze's transcendental empiricism) is to insist that the event come utterly before the concept(ion). This is only the beginning. But it does point us in the direction of an experience of Ereignis — which could be called an 'eventalism' always-open-in-and-to-becoming. And this would be different from any straightforward empiricism. Straightforward empiricism affirms usage as use — a single kind of use; such as the transformation of nature into commodities. By contrast, eventalism affirms usage as non-predictable usability in the event (should it happen to come about); for what is proper or improper to a culture is not decidable in advance of that event. Rather this (ap)propriability suggests or hints at a gap — which is ethical in the sense that it has to do with decision. The gap between propriability and appropriability is, as such, the ordeal of the decision.

A final and very hypothetical thought, then, which is also just a beginning, just the first glimmering of a thinking of culture outside representation. Would it be possible to think this: that it would be wrong to think that, by moving away from the nature/culture distinction — or away from any distinction between culture and its 'outside', as we have (to some extent) in this investigation — must we logically, reach an impasse in the form of a concept without an outside? Perhaps not. For if culture is, in its being, not a concept at all, the impasse may never come about. In that case culture would bear a very different (non-binary, non-oppositional) relation to what we think of as 'nature'. So might it be possible, instead, to say that the term 'culture' could itself be a gloss for coming-to-presence in and through undecidability (Deleuze's transversal axis of contingent history, Derrida's ordeal of the decision, Heidegger's flickering Ereignis)? If this were possible then — again finally but also as another way of starting — culture would be this: the contingent and accidental lines of usage whereby whatever is brought into (and so comes to) order for a while by tending and

caring — with this always poised on the necessary contingency, the possibility of the accident, that it may not come. If so, even nature could be said to culture itself.

Endnotes

1. My thanks to Horst Ruthrof, Murdoch University, for encouraging this version of the paper via his helpful comments on an earlier draft.

2. In particular, I am trying to address here the representationalism of the 'cultural sciences' (sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and the rest). Accordingly, I am referring to representationalism particularly in its realist, simple empiricist, positivist and naturalistic manifestations. Whether the position I advance on the basis of Ereignis (Heidegger), the spectral (Derrida) and transcendental empiricism (Deleuze) is representationalist in another sense is another and more difficult, question that will have to be dealt with elsewhere. Crucial to this question is whether the 'flickering' of Ereignis between propriety and impropriety might mean that culture still remains secondary to some more primary domain. I suspect not and assume that Ereignis as such is the bottom line: but the proof still remains to be worked through.

3. Since it's fairly customary to associate culture with belonging, one way of referring to the double of (ap)propriability would be to imagine English having a word that was the opposite of 'belonging' (such as 'unbelonging' or 'disbelonging'). Then we could reconfigure culture as (ap)propriability by imagining a constant movement — an unsettling, flickering, hovering, haunting — between belonging and disbelonging. Ereignis, then, is all of these shades of events and ownings and their opposites, as well as the unstable movements between them.

4. In light of the questionability or uncertainty (Fraglichkeit) of this coming-about, we might also speak of 'Frage-ventality'.

5. This, incidentally, is why culture cannot easily be legislated or made subject to policy — since legislation (like ethnography) begins with accomplished facts, the ontically-empirically completed. This is why it works in the perfect tense to try to calculate and secure the future. We are clearly reminded here of the essential fallibility of governance (Malpas and Wickham, 1995).

6. Mindful no doubt of the distinction between determining and reflective judgment in the third Critique, Lyotard (1987: 35) writes (after Kant) of two 'movements within the realm of critical agitation'. The first uses given universal rules to understand particular cases; the second works in the opposite direction, taking cases as given and deriving rules from them. The 'empirical' cultural disciplines such as ethnography, then, appear to operate with the second kind of methodology (a variation on induction) but in fact, through their insistence on the universality of culture as presence, operate primarily according to the first kind (a variety of deduction). By contrast, the project of a new empiricism would be that of reconstructing induction purely, as an experiencing her-

meneutics oriented towards the openness of culture, cultures and cultural objects.

7. As an indicator of the kind of work involved here, we must note the complexities of the idea of the virtual. In *Difference and Repetition*, for example, Deleuze (1994: 211) separates the possible (which becomes 'real') from the virtual (which becomes 'actual'). No doubt, this serves to undercut the simplistic equation of the virtual with the possible. But, at the same time, it elides the sheer possibility of the virtual. Elsewhere (1997a), I have examined cyber-technologies in terms of their virtuality through the following equation:

$$V = f \text{ (as/as-if).}$$

Here the function (f) refers to the Ereignis-like 'flickering' or un-settling of the virtual between Heidegger's 'as-structure' of actual understanding and a putative 'as-if-structure' on the side of the possible and the imaginary. In this way, my sense of the virtual is that it contains possibility (among other things) without being reducible to it. In another context, Phil Roe (1998) has shown how the Deleuzian version of the virtual is on all fours with spectrality and the 'to come' in Derrida.

8. Cf. Georges Perec's (1988: 105-112) tale of the misunderstood anthropologist — a man with just this problem. In his case, the realisation of the cause of his problem turns out to be too much for him to bear. To invoke another instance, one of my students, during a long stay in Japan, was told by a Japanese friend: The anthropologists keep coming here to try to understand us.

This makes no sense. We don't understand ourselves!

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