January 9, 2009

Mary Bauermeister

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Dear Paik,

you know my good old friend, I am sitting here proofreading a text I was asked to write about you. Only you and I know this is an impossible task...we never wrote or spoke about each other. We spoke, talked, wrote, thought with each other, together,even when physically 7000 miles apart. Has that ever changed? Have the boundaries of the atomic world ever stood between us? No, of course not, but how can I tell that to curators of a museum or art critics, not to speak of the thousands of young Korean country fellowmen and women who want to know all about you?

Our correspondance, all the letters we wrote were small punctuation marks, the full stops, exclamation marks, commas, question marks and hyphens of a soul kinship few will understand. I shared this tie with you, with Stockhausen, Cage and few others. As if creation took us and speckeled us on the face of the earth – our task being to search for and show the facets of what happens when the creative perfection of spirit shines through the prism of a material universe. As if once having been part of one soul we were scattered all over the earth, never having forgotten the dream we brought with us.

My dear dear friend, we found each other – we inspired each other, we learned from each other, we helped each other and shared what we had. However our pathways crossed, however far apart they might have seemed at times...you in USA me back in Germany ...Korea...we never missed each other because we are part of one another.

Our philosophical exchange fuelled the creative process,for our art was always an expression of what we gleaned, the fragments of answers we discovered and exchanged, all contributing to the process of redemption of the puzzle and its grand masterplan, the search for the answer to the riddle of the meaning of life and creation itself.

Yes, you remember, how we helped each other to get shows, living in small huddles, meeting at Hotel Fourteen, often not knowing how to pay for food, heating, rent not to speak of the materials we needed to express ourselves in the objects, sculptures and writings documenting what we had gleaned and seen.
I see time has moved on – now I stand in an art center bearing your name! We both know: A prophet is never known in his own country but alas, again Korea has prooved this saying wrong. Korea has been given a son for the nation who will give hope, courage and great inspiration for your brothers and sisters for all times to come.

I will have you show me through the center the next time I visit Korea, then we will continue our mind dazzling inspiring conversations and you can maybe share a few glimpses with me on all you have gleaned on the other side meeting all our ancestors and sharing in their wisdom.
May the young ones coming to YOUR MUSEUM be led by you to find their answers and interpretations to the essential questions in life: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?
We will speak again soon. Now I have to get this letter to the post –

For now my friend I say
Meet you soon. All my love Mary.

Transcribed from the presentation

Mary Bauermeister

As I was listening to this morning's talks, I decided to make comments on the wonderful lectures we've heard today in lieu of my prepared speech. I felt there were many important points made today which deserve a bit more attention. Also, there was a lot of information put forth that may have been taken as given knowledge by the speakers, but I felt was unfamiliar to the audience. So I made a few notes as I was listening and wanted to go back over them with you now. I'll begin with the last lecture as it is still fresh in our minds, and go backwards from there.

Let me begin with Professor Kim's last sentence: Losing your homeland is probably a condition which leads us to find new thoughts and create something which was previously unknown. So to be in an unknown environment and to enter an unknown environment also gives you the permission to think unthinkable thoughts or to start anew in any field. Now, at that time in Europe leftism and the avant-garde were inseparable. But Kim talked about Marxism and the intellectual and posited the nationalistic left. At that time in Europe, a nationalistic left was unthinkable. One was either leftist and then was an internationalist, or one was a nationalist and then was also a rightist. So this was new knowledge which Kim brought about – that anything can be combined. That one might be a communist and a monarchist at the same time. You can combine anything if you first break through your thinking barriers.

So when Paik came to Europe, he immediately immersed himself in the European background of Marxist thought. But although Marx may have been right

in many ways, he still could not predict the product of work today. Now we've reached the end of capitalism and it has been a painful and new experience. It is especially painful for us artists because we, too, depend upon the financial system.

In our youth we were so poor and money had basically no meaning in our lives because we didn't have any. Artists didn't have it. Even intellectuals didn't have it. In Korea you can be both a rich and a cultivated family. This is different from Europe. In Europe you are an intellectual and a poor professor. You have your house full of books; you have culture, you pass on culture, and you educate. But to engage in business as an intellectual is to spoil your hand.

Now Paik came and he played the bohemian, but at the same time you often felt that he came from a very noble background. He enjoyed immersing himself in the leftist and the bohemian scene, but did so without losing his integrity and the responsibility of traditional culture. I, too, similarly broke away from tradition. I come from a scientific family that was, fortunately, more artistic than religious. Although, in truth, you can never withdraw completely from the dominant religion of your culture, the freedom of being brought up atheist allowed me to study religions from all over the world in all their many aspects. I was not bound to Christianity. One of the many talks I had with Paik was about the difference between Eastern and Christian religion. Particularly interesting was the symbol of St. Mary crying for her tortured son Christ versus the ever smiling Buddha.

So these were really opposite ways in which to perceive life or what to cherish, and on this topic Paik and I had many long discussions. Paik laughed at the Christian concept of God. He was a Buddhist and in Buddhism there is no God. So the German-Christian concept of lieber *Gott fascinated* him; *lieber Gott* means 'dear God.' To me, and I explained this to him, there was no 'dear God.' If God existed at all, it was as a principle – a principle of creation. We had long discussions on the topic of God, which eventually led Paik to create the phrase, "When too perfect liebe Gott böse." Bazon, mentioned this yesterday as one of

Paik's many cryptic remarks.

It was a word game on the concept of *lieber Gott*. How can a dear God be angry? Either God is neutral and is, therefore, beyond polarities of good or evil, or if he is good, if he is dear, then he is never angry. So how do anger and evil enter the scene?

Before Paik created such a cryptic remark like *lieber Gott böse* we had many long discussions. We were alike in our thinking and this was because of our common experience of growing up during a time of war. We both experienced war first-hand. I was a child of the war and I experienced bombings night after night, shelters, and the death of family members.

In Paik's early tape recordings, he used the screams of people dying in war – screams that were familiar to both of us. No matter how different we may have seemed superficially, we grew out of the common background of human suffering in war. We identified deeply with each other on that level.

The reason we first became apolitical and later very political was because we wanted to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past; we wanted to avoid another war. We did not want, ever again, to have human beings put their energy into war and destruction. When I was young, war was still a very dignified act. Soldiers went away to protect their country with pride and with honor, and when they came home after the war disillusioned and rotten it was not the same soldier who had left. But our disillusionment came after the war had ended when we saw the concentration camp photos. We didn't know about that while the war was ongoing. We knew later in the name of what criminal we had lived and served.

I lived for one year in Austria before returning to my home and it was there, in Austria, that I witnessed the end of the war and saw the enemy. I remembered meeting for the first time a black man; he was laughing and throwing candies at us children. My whole concept of war and foe dissolved then and there. At first we were told that the candies were poisoned, but I ventured out and tried one. They were not poisoned.

Soon, each of us children had an American soldier as a friend who would give us his leftovers. For us, this was a huge turning point. We began to doubt everything that our government, our teachers, even our beloved parents had told us. We couldn't believe anything anymore. We felt we needed to see the truth for ourselves. This was a completely new approach that only children who have lived through such horror can comprehend. I remember during Christmas, for three days the war suddenly had ended. I remember thinking, why after these three days are over, do they begin again? Paik was two years older than me, but he was similar enough in age to have also had his childhood spoiled by the experience of the horrors adults are capable of doing to one another.

To become an artist is already one way of getting out of society, of escaping and beginning anew. We had an unspoiled canvas to start with because we were not political. We were not interested in money or science – just art.

Nowadays art seems to be too closely connected to objects with pictures to be sold, auctions and high prices. Art in the beginning was not about objects to be sold. Art was a different approach to understanding life, and a different approach to contributing to life. To me, artists are like an early warning system. They can only follow their intuition. They follow no dogmas so they can intuitively feel what's wrong with society. Then they can reflect it, either as a mirror of the misery or as a visionary for a kind of change in society. Nevertheless, they are early warning systems, so I think we should really listen to them and to each other, which was what we did in Cologne.

When Paik arrived in Germany, we listened to each other. We contributed to each other. He brought to me the whole richness of the Asian world. Professor Kim talked about reading. He had already studied Hegel and German philosophy in Japan, and he came with all that knowledge plus the whole Buddhist approach. This we were not very aware of since Germany did not have books as they were forbidden during the Third Reich, as was art. So we had to rediscover knowledge.

Paik brought one book I distinctly remember named *Bi Yan Lu*, a Buddhist book that is made up only of questions. It never gives any answers. It never makes a statement. It is only questions. But in those questions it is complete. You must contribute your own thoughts to understand the book.

I, at the time, was inspired by Gotthard Günther and his book, *Idea and Logic*. It was about non Aristotelian logic. Aristotelians, dualists, and the antique Aristotelians inspired me to take as my personal motto, "one and one is three." This means that there is always a third solution that is absurd or beyond rational explanation.

We exchanged these books, and he translated for me his *Bi Yan Lu* as I translated for him my Gotthard Günther. The art we made at the time was a sort of byproduct of our exchange. We did not produce for galleries or collectors, but for ourselves. That was why the pieces were so fragile and why many no longer exist. We did not make them to withstand centuries. Instead they were witnesses to our thinking processes.

Everything I thought at that time, I would put into a certain box or object and simply leave it there. To me, it was like a diary. Later, people would call it art. But it was not necessarily made to be art. It was more as if I was researching. Researching through processes and our medium of research was music, poetry, it didn't matter. And, of course, in Europe we had the added benefit of starting anew, of being young and not having participated in the war. None of us had ever killed an enemy soldier and our conscience was, in that sense, pure. However, we had been witnesses to enough of the war to understand its cruelty.

Now if I may go back to my notes. One of the problems when East and West Germany were reunited was that the intellectuals in the West were left without a foundation. Western intellectuals had, until then, secretly driven to East Berlin and sympathized with the Marxists. But once the wall was torn down, they lost their intellectual foundation. It was a very strange and empty situation.

When Professor Kim mentioned the emancipation of sound, he meant the inclusion of any sound into music. There were no longer distinct lines between street noise, background noise, pop music or classic music. Any sound could be part of a musical scale. There was only one scale from silence to loudness, from noise to harmony, from rhythm to de-rhythm. Schoenberg took that and used it in his music and this made him a bit of an outcast. He was accepted in Vienna and by his own colleagues, but he was not accepted in most of Europe. Even today, Schoenberg is not easy.

After indulging in Beethoven and Mozart and the old masters, hearing Schoenberg was very difficult, and for the musicians it was very hard to play. Each tone was given a similar value, there were no major intervals. The next generation, Paik and Stockhausen, then took that and not only wiped out the harmonious scale, they wiped out all scales. The scales of rhythm no longer followed any pattern and the music became more and more complex.

Instruments could be made from anything. Bamboo, metal string, and some boxes of metal could easily be fashioned into an instrument. And it could be played in any way. You could make noise with it. You could throw it on the floor. There was no longer any need for rehearsal time, or even for musicians. You could just scream into a box and express yourself. So we built instruments that in no way resembled traditional instruments.

Even the sacred piano was thrown on the floor because it made a beautiful sound. Imagine all the strings of a piano sounding at once, an incredible, melodious mixture of sounds, or the resonance when you throw a piano against a metal object. All of these noises, we did not think of as piano music, but as piano sound. Any object can make a noise, and any noise can be integrated into a composition, as long as you keep an open mind. Perhaps it is better not to be a musician, to be a composer because then you are able to be freer in your thinking. As Paik said, he was not a visual performer. He was not an artist who made objects so he was free to reach out to anything and make it into an artwork because he did not have

the limitations of his profession.

That was the real fruit of the times for us artists. We got together from all fields: architects, engineers, writers and translated what we had found in our own media into another media. How could I do this in writing? Until then, writing had been connected to meaning – to words you could understand.

James Joyce started to change that trend, but in his writing there was still language. Words you could recognize and a story you could follow. The next milestone was a poet who spoke thirty languages and combined all of these into a poem. I can't remember it exactly, but it is translatable. However, rather than translation, the act was more one of deciphering.

So we would meet together with this poet and take each page at a time and discuss what it meant to us. It was the richness of association, which can only come from something that is unintelligible that was so profound. In these moments, your mind becomes free and open to new ideas, especially if you call that which is unintelligible art.

You are usually unaware of noises you hear on the street. But if you go to a concert of John Cage's silence piece, then you become aware. Cage's piece was four and a half minutes of silence. A pianist came out, sat at the piano, opened the lid, and sat in silence for four and a half minutes. And we concentrated, expecting to hear something. In that moment, we heard. We heard our own heartbeats, our neighbors. We heard! Noises we would usually ignore. So in that piece Cage taught us to really listen, attentively. Once, when we were rehearsing the piece in my studio a bird came and sang at the open window. It couldn't have been better.

Now of course you cannot do this everyday, but it is an ear opener. If you open your ears and your mind, if you open all your senses, then something unknown may come to you. Or maybe you will see something known in a different light. And that is something very important in art and for art. If you simply repeat what is known, then it is not art. Picasso once refused to sign a print, saying it is

not mine. It is not an original. And his lover replied, but I saw you make it. He said, “But I copied myself. It is not an original.” He was honest enough to admit that he had repeated himself.

Real art is discovery and invention and has to be on the spot all the time. Of course, sometimes repetition is inevitable because artists need to sell work in order to live, but that art is then a copy. It is no longer the result or testimony of an original thinking or creative process. I often tell collectors to look at the pieces an artist does not draw attention to when visiting his or her studio. The pieces he or she did as a sketch or a joke. They are usually the most interesting.

Early pieces of Paik are exactly like this because he was not an artist. He came to Germany as a musician. It was only because my studio and the materials in it were open to him that he began to play with objects. He made his first funny little boxes. The material was all from my garbage – at that time I had been collecting garbage that I believed was beautiful and calling it ‘ready trouvés.’ So Paik would help himself to anything he found useful. And slowly, long before he arrived at media and television art, he began to make objects. He broadened his consciousness and freed himself from the slavery of what musicians used to call fascist notation.

The over complexity of written music at that time was such that it took good pianists numerous weeks to make it sound even remotely like music. This was not only a problem of harmony. It was also one of rhythm and all other parameters because of the freedom musicians discovered in tone, harmony, and all other aspects of music. Of course this could not be done spontaneously. Xenakis is a good example. He is a mathematician who composed on paper creating his own scales and rows – one for rhythm, one for intensity, etc.

In the end, Paik broke away from all that in a very beautiful way: by revolutionizing! By starting at the beginning of musical history and going through Schoenberg and modern knowledge. He could recreate it because he knew it. You can only destroy what you know. You can only reflect on something if you are

a master of it. If somebody who doesn't know how to play the violin breaks a violin, it has no meaning. But when somebody who is a musician smashes a piano, how much more richness is in that instrument? That is mastership.

Some would say, I am an artist too, I can smash a piano. This is often a common misunderstanding about simple abstract art or nonfigurative art. I can do this too. My cleaning woman can do this. A monkey can do this. That is not the point. The point is who did what first, or who did what at what time. And you cannot repeat it. The artist himself cannot repeat it, and the following generation can't repeat it either. In the same vein, when you see a reproduction of a Dürer, a Rembrandt, or the Van Gogh flower, it is not more art – it is just the memory of something which has already been done.

In any case, we are fortunate enough to still have some of Paik's early works in one piece. In those works, he was examining the lack of aesthetics. He did not want to make an aesthetically pleasing object at that time. Later, he could not resist the urge, but in his early work, he was not after beauty. He wanted the opposite: to show scenes in an artistic context, to make you think about them. Like Schwitters. Schwitters would always carry a small frame with him and would look at garbage or other objects through his frame and say to others, "Look – here is art." It was not an aesthetic of beauty. Paik saw all this and was influenced by it.

To go back to art as an early warning system, I showed Paik a wonderful book of mine on John Heartfield. Heartfield did photo montages that showed the Hitler regime for what it was before Hitler came to power. When I showed these to Paik, it was an eye-opener for him. He realized that art could be a litmus test for politics and maybe even prevent future horrors.

To return to a big-picture view, then, let us discuss what art is and how we can expand on that? For example the Vienna School's use of blood was seen as cruel. It was not simply cruel. It was also a commentary on Christianity. Having Christ's blood in every church and Saint Mary with tears of blood. Of course artists wanted to comment on that as soon as they were able to. In the Middle Ages,

these kinds of comments would have been seen as blasphemous and the artists labeled as heretics.

The freedom of being able to comment on our own sacred religion is what the Vienna School was all about. You need to understand the context of the religion. The religion in whose name so many cruelties have been done. So many wars have been fought in the name of Christianity.

There is a beautiful saying: “The monopoly to kill should not be in the hands of the state.” You hear this one sentence and you begin to ask yourself, why do we kill? Why do we imprison other human beings and kill? All of this which seems to be so easily understood has to be questioned. If we want to shape a new society we must question all our prejudices.

We have to be open to views that are the opposite of our so-called best versions of ourselves. Otherwise we will not be able to tolerate or to help one another. What was wonderful about Paik was that he brought the wisdom of Buddhism into our terrorist nests, so to speak. When I say terrorism, I do not mean a physically destructive type of terrorism, but more a terrorism of philosophy. It was a way of questioning.

To bring a kind of quietness was a kind of terror to our philosophies. After a feverish performance, Paik would be able to be completely still and just smile. And you would wonder if he had acted all the emotion? That was not it. He was able to detach himself once the show was over in order to show that is was just a piece that should make you think and wake you up. But once it is over, it is over. He wasted little time in destructive emotions or discussions.

Sometimes philosophers or debaters can be horrid. They can be extremely destructive. During these sorts of discussions, Paik would fall asleep. When panelists would begin to fight, he would slowly begin to nod his head and fall asleep. People would look at each other and whisper, “Is he asleep? Is he really asleep?” But this was a kind of wisdom. Not to fight, but to listen; to make your comments not as a statement of truth, but as an opinion – a suggestion of a new

way of thinking.

Andy Warhol once said something wonderful at a panel discussion where all the art critics were fighting. When they asked him something he said, “Ask something better to somebody else.” To resist even the politeness of an answer. When Paik didn’t want to answer he didn’t answer, he smiled. It cut the energy out of the attack. He just smiled and quietly said, ask somebody else.

On the topic of fascism or being pro-Japanese, we had this in Germany, too. Finland, Japan, and Italy all misused Wagner for their fascistic ends. Even today, I cannot hear Wagner without being reminded of fascistic propaganda. Fascists often misused art or music, even ancient runes. Fascist leaders knew how to draw from the power of culture and use that for their own purposes. Unfortunately, we were unable to see this until it was too late.

Poetry disentangled itself from language. Language even detached itself from having meaning. It became phonetic, anagram-like. We produced poetry which was nonfigurative. But this did not appear from nothing. First there was nonfigurative painting. Malevich’s “White Square,” a predecessor of the Rauschenberg “White Canvas,” was in a way the end of non-figurative art. You could not do anything else afterwards.

Nevertheless our urge to create compels us to start again. But we should always bear tradition in mind to prevent us from reinventing the White Square. We must stay informed about what has been done in art, and for this reason it is important to attend university. Not to learn to be an artist – to learn what artists have already done so you do not waste your energy repeating old projects.

Do not go to art school to become an artist, but go, instead, to the world. Listen to foreign music. Visit new countries. Work for six weeks as an artist’s assistant helping to cook or do chores. Just be around a creative person. Then you can learn about the difference of being conditioned and being free.

I remember when I lived with Stockhausen. He was incapable of writing one note or of conceiving anything creative if there was someone in the house

who gave off vibrations, whatever the vibration was. He could feel those subconscious thoughts.

At first I ridiculed him for this. But then I moved out with our children and would only come by at night because I respected his need for space. He was not capable of thoughts where there were children, or a nurse, or a cleaning woman nearby. Artists must, like him, create a space where they can be untouched and clear, no matter how small the space is. It is like a meditation space. And in this space of independence, try to detach themselves from any hopes, memories, expectations, or dogmas, from right and wrong. Then they can be free to allow a future spirit to inspire them instead of continuing stuck repeating the old.

In America, musicians resisted the over complexity of European avant-garde music by creating minimal music. This movement was started by Terry Riley and La Monte Young in 1963. They performed a piece that lasted twenty-four hours – twelve hours at a time – in a darkened space, and was played with only four strings.

This was the reaction against the over complexity of over written European music. It needed a composer to write it and weeks to be rehearsed. There was a room where the audience was lying on the floor, listening to the same string sounds over and over and participating very closely with the artist. Later, *Einstein on the Beach* by Philip Glass became something we as human beings want to hear again. It has to do with us as human beings and with our natural rhythms, and it was the answer of America to Schoenberg.

Strangely enough, Schoenberg was a Jew from Vienna who had to immigrate to America. And although he was against Hitler, he was pro-Germany. He still thought of Germany as his country and said he would have liked Germany to have won the war and then disposed of Hitler. He was very divided. We visited him in LA while he was still alive and even then he was very divided, as were many other German immigrants. Wangler also went to LA and all the immigrants there would meet and continue to discuss their Vienna thinking in the early years. It was

out of this spirit that the whole school of Frankfurt leftists came. It was mentioned that Shostakovich was forced by Stalin to do the propaganda music for the state. He had no choice. His early pieces were his pieces, but later, he would have been executed if he had not followed orders.

Artists can serve fascism, or they can be extremely dangerous to fascism. Because they are not directly political, they can express political ideas disguised as art that once it is interpreted, clearly stands against fascism. There was a lot of that going on in Germany at that time.

I also wanted to say something about the Oriental culture which was also an eye-opener for us. When I first went to Japan it was in 1966. I went to a theatre where the musicians were all sitting to one side with one master in the first row and the students all behind him. They had no sheet music, but they played for over two hours. Then at one point, the master stood up, bent backwards, and gave his instrument to his student. The student then came to the front and continued playing where the master had left off. I did not understand what it meant at the time, but later had it explained to me at the consulate. The student will sit behind the master for years memorizing the instrument and the music. He is so attentive in his studies that if he is asked to go forward, he can go on at any moment and continue where the master has stopped. The consul also told me the last time the student went on was three years ago, so the student will listen quietly, attentively, for years before being given the opportunity to play.

It is this kind of samurai-like attentiveness that is the strong point of the East. This kind of concentration, I think it is something Easterners can really contribute when we all mix one day. And one day we will all be mixed. I suppose in that sense I am a nationalist. I believe every people should hold on to their strengths. Don't try to compose like Schoenberg; rather try to compose like yourself and show your own strengths.

That is the one point I find difficult about globalization. We have a big mish-mash of cultures. I would like there to be a media mish-mash because I

want to know everything and have everyone know everything. The Internet, for example, is a truly wonderful tool. But, with culture, you can bring nationalism in again there. With culture it is very important to preserve each one because that then brings about a better mankind and not a worldwide mish-mash.

To me, in Asia, the inner strength is breadth. Asia is bigger and yet smaller – louder and more silent. Everything is more extended. In Europe, we are in the middle, but in Asia, and Paik brought this to us, it is different. He was the gentlest person and in the same minute he was cruel. He could be very silent and he could be very loud. He extended our senses.

I originally wanted to say something completely different, but I think this is better. Kim talked about him visiting the first time. That is something that I also experienced when I first met Paik. He had the energy of a shaman – a shaman priest. He had an incredible charisma.

It was mentioned that one of Paik's more disturbing comments was, "Art is fraud." You have to understand the philosophy of Hegel and the thinking process Paik went through to understand such a sentence: art is fraud. Only an artist, someone on the inside, can make such a statement. From the outside it looks like a judgment, which nobody is allowed to do. But if an artist says that about himself, it is an honest admission that we do not know ourselves. It is a searching process, and declarations of truth do not exist. To anyone making claims of truth, Paik responded, "No." Art is a fraud that can only be exposed by an artist after he has gone through a long process of being an artist. I understand that as a student this can be irritating.

When he was 37, Paik said, "I only want to be famous to one day become a politician so I can bring change to the world."

To become famous was, for Paik, not a means to become a famous artist, but a means to have his voice heard politically. And we had really radical ideas on how to build a different society.

The man who wrote the most on this subject was Beuys. He came after

we had already gone to America, but in the early sixties and late fifties we really sat down and invented a different society. It was a kind of atmosphere. I remember there was one artist who drew maps of the earth. Unknown countries that he named, and beautiful islands, all of which he lay down in a new world map. And there was another who sold parts of the sky. You could mark a star map and claim, "This is mine," and he would make a gesture and say, "This is yours." You can call this an absurd action, but it was also a criticism on ownership. It may be absurd to own a piece of the sky, but it is as absurd to own a piece of the earth. It is a misunderstanding of what the earth is all about. These were our thoughts at that time.

Paik also wanted to study Keynes. Keynes warned against what has happened now as a result of the neo-liberalist Chicago school. If the economists had listened to Keynes, the world would be very different today. Keynes was against a free market, but in a socialized way. He believed that anybody and everybody could profit, so he was better than Marx. However, Marx couldn't have known what would happen.

Professor Kim mentioned that art was taken so lightly, almost irresponsibly. But it only seemed that way. Before any end product there was an incredible process of thinking, of doubting, questioning, and reforming ideas. We did all this together and when later we were faced with our end product, we thought of it as a byproduct only. It was not taken lightly. It only looked that way. A pianist who absolutely masters the instrument seems to play lightly, but he can only do so because of his skill.

Paik also thought art should be as boring as possible. Since art usually has to be interesting, he thought that it should be as boring as possible.

The whole world of the magnetophone, of machines, was unknown in our early years because artists did not have the money for machines. The electronic studio had magnetophone machines where tapes could be made, but you had to be invited to the studio to work there.

Paik was the first one who had his own magnetophone because his family had money. He was even able to eventually purchase two machines so he could do his work in his own studio, but he would still visit artists invited to the electronic studio and pick up the scraps of music. When you work on a piece of electronic music you have to cut and paste the tape. Therefore there is always a lot of garbage noise and sounds that are thrown onto the floor.

Paik used to come visit his composer friends and pick up the garbage from the floor and then put it together at home. He created a really random type of music in the best Cage sense: sound that happened not through composition but through chance.

You can call chance the law that travels incognito. Chance is a wonderful entrance for the unforeseeable and the unthinkable. When you listen to his tape recordings, there will be a break, and then there will be a melody, then another break. Another sound. Very interesting. You really have to listen carefully to follow it.

One day we rehearsed a Cage piano piece in the evening in my studio – this huge studio on the fifth floor of a building on the Rhine River. We shut all the curtains to blacken the room and feel the atmosphere of the evening. Piene was performing his light ballet so we also closed the door.

Everything was dark and Paik had his two magnetophone machines which were, until then, unknown to most people. Now we go out to the street and everybody has a phone or a loud radio, but at that time these types of machines did not exist. Sounds came from nature, from traffic or maybe from a singer, but not from machines.

Paik had his two machines and he tested out how loud he could play them without shattering anything. On one tape there was the screaming of women in war and it sounded incredibly cruel, like a slaughterhouse. It sounded inhuman. On the other machine were bits and pieces of symphonic and traditional music mixed in with some scraps he had found on the floor. We tested out how loud they

could go.

Then there came a knock on the door. I opened the door and there were three policemen standing outside. They had come to arrest us. When they asked, what's going on in here? We responded: we are rehearsing music.
Music? You say? You're rehearsing music? Then Paik showed his two machines to the policemen and turned up the volume. The policemen stared in disbelief and said, the neighbors thought there was a massacre going on. And before they excused themselves, they asked if they could listen a little longer. So they stayed as Paik rehearsed his music.

Today when somebody hears screaming, they assume that it could be coming from a machine. At that time we did not have these machines. Paik was the first one who could afford a machine.

Paik refused to spend money on himself. He spent everything on his machines. He said, he wanted to live as poor as any other artist. "Even though my family continues to wire me money, I will put all my money into my art."

I remember one time his brother came to visit to see how Paik was doing. His brother was, of course, from a very cultivated and wealthy family and Paik was a messy artist. He always wore a black suit and a tie and was always covered in food. He always wore slippers because they were easier to put on than shoes. When his brother came to visit, we all put our money together to buy him a fresh shirt and tie. His brother came and took us all out to dinner, by the end of which Paik had already ruined his new clothes. Before he left, Paik's brother bought three of my paintings, which we used to finance our next concert.

Although we didn't have any money we continued to put on concerts. Nobody was ever paid. I went from house to house to collect money for our concerts because we needed to rent a piano and print out invitations. When people would visit our festivals, or counter-festivals as we called them, they said, you must have had millions. But in truth, we had nothing. We had holes in our shoes. We had traded art for clothes with a fashion designer we knew so we were all well-

dressed, but we had holes in our shoes and never anything to eat.

Anyway, I wanted to share these stories to show you what a beautiful being Paik was.

Intellectuals were all artists at that time. You could come from wealth and knowledge and still be incorruptible because there was a tradition of honor. I rarely see this today. Money is no longer connected with elegance. Now, money is a very dirty business. I hope that this will change. Money is a good media of exchange, but it can be used as a weapon if we are not careful.

Now I would like to comment on Midori's talk.

Heidegger and Wagner are both good examples of people who were misused. Wagner and Heidegger were misunderstood and they understood too late how fascistic Germany was. Nevertheless Paik studied their thoughts. Their connection to fascism does not mean that their thoughts should be ignored. There is also something to be said against neutral thought.

Otto Piene was part of the zero group and his influence on Paik's early development was very important and completely underestimated. He would put on light ballets. He would use a round bulb with holes in it which he slowly moved and projected on the walls.

My studio had slanted walls and unparallel walls so the light points created really wonderful shapes in my studio. Even Piene was astonished. Suddenly, instead of dots, we had elongated ovals. This was a kind of visual representation of an electronic piece by Stockhausen.

The piece begins with a sound which is then fragmented, then becomes rhythm, which then changes once again into a flat plane. It's continuous from one state to the next. Stockhausen did this in music, and Piene when he projected the lights, which was for Stockhausen an eye-opener as well as for Paik. Paik said, "This is it." We had to combine light and movement, and it was abstract. We know light as daylight, or a tool for illumination, but to use light as a brush had a very important impact on Paik's early work that then led to his video and television art.

Paik's anti-colonialism, of course, is not new. All intellectuals have been anti-colonialists. You cannot really be for democracy or human rights if you still believe in colonialism. And this is one of the biggest crimes of Western culture, that we colonized the whole world and thought we had the right to do so. So, in the name of the white race I excuse myself for that. It's horrible.

If you remember your history, when Pennsylvania was bought, it was for the English king for the yearly rent of two beaver furs, for two animal skins. It's absolutely ridiculous. But this is our history – the history of the white man.

However, destruction always goes together with construction. It's very well articulated in Hinduism. There you have the god, the creator, or Shiva the destroyer, and god the conserver. It is a much better trinity than in Christianity. It really represents the three aspects of eternal creation.

When I was little, my father made a wonderful thing which I later showed Paik. When I was young we did not have movies. We only had films that showed how the war was progressing, all in black-and-white. My father made a short home movie where he turned a house being bombed backwards. The movie begins with the destroyed house, then the house suddenly rising again, the bomb flying out of the house and going back into the plane, and the plane flying away backwards.

I showed this movie to Paik. He enjoyed it immensely and we decided that we had to try the same technique with music. We were able to use the magnetophone machine to reverse music. Before the use of machines, this could not have been done. If you try to say your name backwards, it is very difficult. When you play a piece of music backwards, it is truly amazing what it does. It is the same as reversing your mind or changing your standpoint. We tried this with his scraps and with classical music.

Tie-cutting is also an interesting story. In October, 1960, John Cage came to visit my studio. This was after Paik had smashed the piano. Paik sat Cage and David Tudor down and shampooed and washed their hair and then he took out

a pair of scissors. I could see Cage begin to sweat – he was really afraid. Paik would be so intense in such moments that you could not read his mind. He went towards Cage and instead of cutting his shirt, he cut his tie.

In Cologne they have a festival called Fastelovend, which is a typical Catholic festival. Everybody is allowed to sin for three days. Afterwards, you go to confession and life goes on until the next year. The whole carnival starts with one day called the Women's Carnival. On that day women rule the town and are allowed to cut men's ties as a symbol of female independence.

Paik found this festival extremely amusing and wanted to channel this when he cut Cage's tie. He also knew the tie was a present from Suzuki, so the message was two-fold. It was a kind of homage to Cologne's folk art. During all of this, Cage did not flinch. Cage is a teacher of anarchy. He stood there and would have even accepted being killed. He was determined. He later told me: "I thought Paik would kill me." Adorno was also a teacher of anarchy but did not stand to fulfill his own lessons. He was not as courageous as Paik or Cage although he was also a teacher of anarchy.

Teaching anarchy, in Cage's case, came completely too early. In the Middle Ages all musicians knew how to play the free parts that were written into music called ad libitum. The musician could play in the sense of the notation and invent something new to add to the original piece. Over time, though, European composition stifled that inventiveness so much so that even a trained musician was no longer capable of creating new music in the moment. Instead they would do nonsense. Cage's intention was to free the musician, but he failed because they were not ready.

I remember during the first performance of Cage's *Atlas*, he tried to give the orchestra freedom, but it was a catastrophe. The audience revolted and the musicians revolted. Later I saw Cage sobbing on Stockhausen's shoulder, crying, "I gave them freedom and they could not handle it," and Stockhausen said, "You cannot give people freedom; you have to give them structure. And within structure

a little bit of freedom otherwise they are lost."

So there was a concept of structure. The best example of this was *Originale*. During a performance of a very strict piece of electronic music, Stockhausen gave 18 people short intermissions for small improvised pieces. All of these 18 were members of my studio. In a sense, *Originale* was an example of structured music that embodied all of our anarchistic, and somewhat terrorist, new artistic research.

In that piece Paik was a master. He was really inventive spiritually, intellectually, and comically. It was unbelievable. His shamanism, his energy transcended the performance into the audience. Some audience members were screaming in revolt, others in joy.

Unfortunately we were forbidden to continue because Paik had thrown food into the audience, rice and beans. Germany was still in the midst of a food crisis at that time so we were forbidden from going on again. The government took away our funds, but we managed to collect the money for ourselves later. However, this is another example of misunderstanding.

In Japan, I saw a sumo fight where the master of ceremonies threw rice on the stage before the match as a way of clearing the floor. In order to understand any action, you must think of it in its cultural and historical context. This is precisely why we must learn all we can from foreign countries and cultures, to enlarge our concept of what is and what may be. Paik guaranteed excitement because he was from a different culture.

Pain is a physical condition. I met Paik in his later years after he had already had his stroke. At that time, he was in utter pain. He was not particularly heroic about his pain, but in the end when he was in a wheelchair, he would still go down the street once a week to give talks to his friends. I was telling Bazon this morning about the last time I saw him. He handed me a slip of paper with the telephone number of my studio from forty years ago. It was his way of saying, "I remember." He wanted to give me a sign that he remembered even though he

could not speak. It was very moving.

On the topic of humanized technologies: the robot was very, very beautiful. The robot was first used in 63/64 in New York. We all helped him to do his first robot piece. The robot at that time was not exactly science fiction, but neither was it as commonplace as today. Our robot was this metal frame walking around New York on 77th street in full traffic. Nobody saw Paik because he hid around the corner with his remote control. The funniest part was that the robot had these rubber breasts, and it was flapping its breasts the whole time while walking around and shitting peas onto the street. It was so absurd and so beautiful. And nobody tried to destroy it. It shook people. They would stand there and then begin to talk, to discuss. People discussed humanized technology and the computer.

Now I would like to discuss Hannah's talk and gravity. The whole concept of gravity and black holes has to do with Einstein. I had a discussion once with Paik about the tyranny of natural law. We were talking about tyranny and fascism in politics and then we realized the most tyrannical body was natural law. It is inescapable. Furthermore, we became very much aware of that tyranny over our physical body, and through our discussions we both intuitively felt that there was something wrong about Einstein's theory. We could not put our finger on it, but we were both convinced that there was something wrong. Maybe some scientist one day will find out.

The indeterminism of Cage and chance operations: It is very difficult to think indeterminately. Already once you begin thinking, it becomes a contradiction. Crystallography is a very interesting field in this sense. Mathematicians say you need to find proof in nature, but the physicists cannot. So neither the physicists nor the mathematicians can explain crystallographic growth. That is the most fascinating field – the in between. That is where art comes from, from the intuition of artists.

Jackson was an ideal believer of many, but he was a very silent and modest man. Very withdrawn, and again, one of those people in art who are not known

but are idea givers, it was then that people like them were better understood. Sometimes this was because they were more banal, others because they were too sophisticated. The public was too banal and the artists too sophisticated.

The big bang and the steady state: That is not a contradiction. Our conclusion was that every burst, every conception is a big bang, where energy enters matter. It is not always the beginning of the universe, but it happens all the time. We meditated together. When we didn't find answers, we sat as Buddha sits in front of the TV. We sat together in silence and thought, "Let's find a solution, in silence."