Charlotte Perriand’s formation of the notion of the “vacuum” through a reading of The Book of Tea by Kakuzo Okakura

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to clarify Charlotte Perriand’s (1903–1999) formation of the notion of the “vacuum” through a reading of The Book of Tea written by Kakuzo Okakura in 1906, using the French version of The Book of Tea, which Perriand possessed, and her articles that quoted this book. It is certain that her multifaceted and ethnological interests in other cultures allowed her to accept the unfamiliar notion of the “vacuum”. However, Perriand’s interpretation of the “vacuum” was characteristic. Her main interest concerning Okakura’s notion of the “vacuum” was the question of the human “gesture”, and she developed this throughout her direct experience of Japan. The metaphysics of the “vacuum” as before “space”, as defined by Okakura, was examined by Perriand using the question of the possibility of the unknown “gesture” in a physical “space”.

1. Introduction
This paper aims to clarify Charlotte Perriand’s (1903–1999) formation of the notion of the “vacuum” from the viewpoint of architectural theory. As a French architect and interior designer, Perriand was not only influenced by Le Corbusier with whom she collaborated temporarily (Sendai 2019), but also through her direct experience of living in Japan. Concerning Japanese philosophy, The Book of Tea written by Kakuzo Okakura in 1906, had a very deep impact on Perriand (Barsac 2008, 22–23). The Book of Tea was gifted to Perriand in 1932 by Junzo Sakakura who had also been engaged at Atelier Le Corbusier and was cited in her most significant article, “The Art to Live in”, in 1950 (Figure 1).

Accordingly, this study analyses Perriand’s formation of the “vacuum”, using her conserved copy of The Book of Tea,1 which she filled with several notes and her articles that used quotations from this book.2

It is certain that the notion of “the vacuum” in English, which Okakura discussed, and « le vide » in French, which Perriand interpreted, were not the same. This is neither simple acceptance nor a misunderstanding of the philosophy. In this hypothesis, the formation of her notion of the “vacuum” can be dealt with using cross-cultural architectural modernism.

However, almost all of the studies on Perriand are an analysis of her interior design and furniture arising from her collaboration with Le Corbusier (McLeod 1987; Ruegg 2012; Piotit 2015), or historiographies on relations with Japan (Barsac 2008; Barsac 2015). Compared with analyses on the influence that modern architects such as Bruno Taut or Frank Lloyd Wright had on Japan (Meech 2001; Speidel 2003), discussions on Perriand lose this wide span view of architectural theory because her work was limited to the context of being a ‘furniture designer or “Le Corbusier’s disciple”’. Hence, this paper attempts to focus on the architectural theory that Perriand developed, paying attention to the notion of the “vacuum”.

2. Before The Book of Tea
Perriand’s knowledge of Japanese architecture did not begin with The Book of Tea given to her by Junzo Sakakura in 1932. When determining when her acquisition of information on Japanese architecture began, various deductions are possible. In 1927, she began her collaborations with Le Corbusier, a young Japanese architect, Kunio Mayekawa, joined the Atelier in 1928, and then in 1931, Junzo Sakakura also joined the Atelier. It is easy to imagine that they provided her with information about Japanese architecture
and, additionally, Le Corbusier studied Japanese architecture (Le Corbusier and Jeanneret 1929, 21). However, according to Masami Makino who also belonged to Atelier Le Corbusier at that time, Le Corbusier did not know about the Japanese tatami, a module system with a standard mat of approximately 900 mm × 1800 mm.

He [Le-Corbusier] establishes all standards for the size of windows, height of the ceiling, the size of the entrance, etc., and he adopts them for any buildings. Full-size drawings, detailed drawings of doors, and window are common in any sort of building. This spirit of mass production must come from his own theories, but as it happens, it coincides with the reality of Japan for the last 300 years. When I explained the tatami mat or the Japanese inner measurement system, it is natural that he admired them because, for more than 300 years, Japanese people have already done what the European modernist Le Corbusier proposes as his newest theory. He responded: ‘Japan is an amazing nation’ (Makino 1929, 68).

Figure 1. The Book of Tea conserved by Perriand.

Makino’s testimony suggests that up until then Japanese architecture was not talked about very much in the Atelier. However, in 1929, Perriand studied the prototype housing project, Maisons Loucheur after being inspired by a book on Japanese architecture gifted by Mayekawa to Le Corbusier (Barsac 2015, 18–19). It appears that the placement of sanitary facilities, lavatories and kitchens, and the unitised furniture

We may discover the sliding doors of the Maisons Loucheur are similar to the shoji systems of traditional Japanese houses.4 However, Perriand’s interests were not only in Japanese architecture. According to one staff from Atelier Le Corbusier, she was interested in vernacular buildings in various regions and re-evaluated them in the modern context (Sert 1956). In her 1935 article, “Family Housing”, she analysed the physical conditions of the ‘human plan’5 in various anonymous spaces of the traditional family life in the world and intended to learn from them (Perriand 1935, 25). It is certain that in this article, a section drawing of a Japanese farmhouse with a caption was based on the knowledge that she had received from Sakakura about unknown Japan. However, Japan was only one of the examples she used for the consideration of the fundamental “human plan”, and at the time she did not have experience of the Japanese architectural space on site.6

3. Reading of The Book of Tea (1932–1939)

Sakakura, who introduced Perriand to Japanese architecture, was very influential on Perriand. In 1932, Sakakura gave her The Book of Tea by Kakuuo Okakura,7 which first edition was written in English in 1906, published as the Iwanami Publishers library in 1929 and became known to many Japanese. It is likely that, apart from collections of drawings and photographs, she read The Book of Tea more than other books about Japan before her first trip to Japan in 1940.8 In 1940, she wrote a letter to Sakakura to request his private consent for temporary work in Japan as an adviser as follows:

“I had just reread my Book of Tea…. finally, I realize that after so many years with you, I have learned nothing of ‘material’ [real Japanese life]”.9

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4 Perriand noted the measurement in the book of the Fifty-three Stages of the Tokaido (Tokaido-chu-Goyusantugi) presented by Mayekawa to Le Corbusier (conserved in Foundation Le Corbusier). Her interest was the module system in Japanese space.
5 cf., FLC23134; FLC18253. Maisons Loucheur adopted sliding doors, which Le Corbusier did not use until then. An analysis presumes that this adoption was because of the influence of Kayekawa’s idea. cf., Barsac (2014, 122).
6 ‘un plan humain’. It might be influenced by the Le Corbusier’s folklore lessons, “a plan proceeds from the inside out” « un plan procède du dedans au dehors » (Le Corbusier 1923, 146–150).
7 On the other hand, Perriand sketched, photographed, filed, and collated information about anonymous buildings in various places such as the Spanish island Ibiza in 1932, the French farm village Bessans in 1934, and Bandol in 1935. Several of these documents are published in Barsac (2014, 294–297).
8 The first edition of The Book of Tea was published in English in 1906. The Book of Tea that Perriand possessed was the French version. cf., Okakura (1927).
9 Perriand might have read an article about Japan written by the architect Bruno Taut who had already visited Japan in 1933. It can be supposed that she read Taut’s essay on his Villa Hyuga in Japan and Katsura’s article on an imperial villa in the French Magazine, L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui. cf., Taut (1937).
10 cf., ARCHP, letter from Charlotte Perriand to Junzô Sakakura, 1940.2.24:
   « Je venais justement de relire mon Livre du thé… enfin, je m’aperçois qu’après tant d’années auprès de toi, je n’ai rien appris de “matériel”. »
As we shall see, just before her visit to Japan in August 1940, Perriand attempted to understand various Japanese manners and customs as a result of reading The Book of Tea again. She felt that she had no knowledge of the reality of Japan and this means that intuitively, she understood the importance of The Book of Tea as a document representing something essential of Japan.

Most of her annotations in the book (Table 1) were vertical lines to highlight an important paragraph or sentence, and multiplex lines for more important points. As she read the book many times, time gaps exist in her annotations. However, the method and handwriting of her annotations were in order, starting from when she first received it from Sakakura. By organizing them, we can extract some key words that overlap with the citations in the articles she will write later. That is, “harmony”, “gesture”, and “vacuum”, and most of these handwritings occupied from chapter one “The Cup of Humanity”, chapter two “The School of Tea”, Chapter three “Taoism and Zenivism” and Chapter four “The Tea-Room” in The Book of Tea. After chapter four, the fifth chapter, “Art Appreciation”, the sixth chapter, “Flowers”, and the seventh chapter, “Tea-Masters”, were all detailed explanations or supplements of the discussions in the first four chapters. In fact, Perriand’s vertical lines were also a repetition of the themes in the fourth chapter.

4. Appearance of “ambiance” by “harmony”

4.1. Interest in “harmony”

The Book of Tea was Okakura’s final book before he died, and it was the consideration of a universal “beauty” rather than a search for the specificity of the Oriental compared with the West. The first chapter as an introduction to this book, “The Cup of Humanity”, was the most important part of the book (Wakamatsu 2013, 33–34, 75). Perriand noted the opening of this chapter using a red line and these sentences formed the basis of her interest

“The Philosophy of Tea is not mere aestheticism in the ordinary acceptance of the term, for it expresses conjointly with ethics and religion our whole point of view about man and nature. It is hygienic, for it enforces cleanliness; it is economics, for it shows comfort in simplicity rather than in the complex and costly; it is moral geometry, inasmuch as it defines our sense of proportion to the universe. It represents the true spirit of Eastern democracy by making all its votaries aristocrats in taste.”

Okakura explained that tea exalted ordinary life, and denied the conventional thoughts on the tea ceremony. As a factor that introduced beauty, he cited the “moral geometry” or the “sense of proportion”, which was easy to understand as a Western philosophical concept. However, “Teaism” represented the unique relationship between “man and nature” in the Orient at the same time. He explained this using the word “harmony” in the last chapter of his book, but the question of the world generation was difficult logic (Okakura 1927, 155–156). In later texts by Perriand, “harmony”, “harmony with a thing and a man”, or “harmony with man and nature” appeared quite frequently (Perriand 1950, 85).

4.2. “Ambience”

Perriand referred to “harmony” in the last section “ambiance” in the above mentioned “The Art to Live in”.

“Even if this habitat is the city or in the countryside, its architecture having resolved all material needs, must go beyond and unconsciously give a feeling of calm and a fullness, make rhythm, the determination of the light of day and night, color, harmonic relations of its volumes, its fullness, of its vacuum, of the game of its materials. The harmony is a whole, the elements have their own value, but side by side, they react, the one and the other, in agreement or in opposition: walls, floor, furniture, objects, colors, volume, and materials.” (Perriand 1950, 85)

10 This is another interpretation, focusing on the chapter “Flowers”, as Okakura’s personal aesthetics (Arata Isezaki, “Space as Vacuum”, in Watari-um Art Museum 2007, 52).

11 Kinoshita interpreted the core essence of Okakura’s “beauty” as a state of perfect selflessness away from all thoughts (Kinoshita 2015, 282–286). It was natural that Perriand as a Westerner could not understand Okakura’s contemplation based on Oriental aesthetics easily.

12 La philosophie du thé n’est pas une simple esthétique dans l’acceptation ordinaire du terme, car elle nous aide à exprimer, conjointement avec l’éthique et avec la religion, notre conception intégrale de l’homme et de la nature. C’est une hygiène, car elle oblige à la propreté; c’est une économie, car elle démontre que le bien-être réside beaucoup plus dans la simplicité que dans la complexité et la dépense; c’est géométrie morale, car elle définit le sens de notre proportion par rapport à l’univers. Elle représente enfin le véritable esprit démocratique de l’Extrême-Orient en ce qu’elle fait de tous ses adeptes des aristocrates du goût.»

13 Okakura’s aesthetic originality was based on Hegelian idealism through Ernest Fenollosa. For example, Okakura said that the subject of the “proportion” was the universe as transcendent existence, by adapting the logic of European ontology (Oikubo 1987, 247–248).

14 The single vertical line by Perriand: « Celui-là seul qui a vécu avec la beauté mour en beauté. Les derniers moments des maîtres de thé étaient aussi pleins de raffinement et s’exquitos que l’avait été leur vie. Cherchant toujours à se tenir en harmonie avec le grand rythme de l’univers, ils étaient toujours prêts à entrer dans l’inconnu. »

15 Que cet habitat soit à la ville ou à la campagne, son architecture ayant résolu tous les besoins matériels, doit aller au-delà et donner inconsciemment une sensation de calme et une plénitude, faite de rythme, du dosage de la lumière de jour et de nuit, de couleur, de rapports harmoniques de ses volumes, de ses pleins, de ses vides, du jeu de ses matériaux. L’harmonie est un tout, les éléments ont leur valeur propre, mais, cote à cote, ils réagissent les uns et les autres, en accord ou en opposition: murs, sol, meubles, objets, couleurs, volume, matériaux.»
Perriand’s interest, like Okakura, was not in the constant characteristics of a certain space. She described the spatial variability or the possibility of the spatial generation using the interactive “agreement and opposition”. Whether the physical “vacuum” can come out, finally, was not a question for her. In using clothes as an example, the comfort was not due to the clothes themselves, but from wearing clothes (Perriand 1950, 85). Moreover, people do not wear the same clothes all the time. Therefore, the “fullness (clothes)” and the “vacuum (body)” were not alternative problems. The “harmony of the fullness and the vacuum”, in other words, the phantasmagoric “ambience” was her goal concerning “utility walls” (Perriand 1950, 33).

5. Potential of “gesture”

5.1. Interest in “gesture”

Perriand’s vertical lines that marked the following chapter show traces of how a Westerner was learning about the historical facts and knowledge behind the tea ceremony. She drew a single vertical line and added a bookmark in the last part of the second chapter, “The School of Tea”:

“The tea with us became more than an idealisation of the form of drinking; it is a religion of the art of life.”(Okakura 1927, 57)

“The art of life” by Okakura evokes “the art to live in”, which later became Perriand’s keywords. The art of life” was not simply a technique for humanity to control

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Footnotes:
15 In fact, in her article Perriand did not quote the “Abode of Vacancy” paragraph by Okakura, inasmuch as it is devoid of ornamentation.
16 Perriand’s single vertical line: “Le thé devint chez nous plus qu’une idéalisation de la forme de boire: une religion de l’art de la vie.”
17 Cf. Perriand (1998, 248):
18 Corbu had replaced the words ‘decorative art’ with ‘housing equipment’, I have replaced them with ‘art to live in’, which later became ‘art to be alive’, the title of my exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in 1985. At the beginning of this review in 1950, I used my definition of the ‘art to live in.”
the environment unilaterally, but rather it is for humanity to reform by corresponding with its surroundings and establishing an interactive relationship with them (Okakura 1927, 70). Okakura pointed out that such a physical behaviour “movement” embodied the naturalness of the human body corresponding with the naturalness of the environment. Perriand paid attention to this assertion and drew a double vertical line:

“Not a color to disturb the tone of the room, not a sound to mar the rhythm of things, not a gesture to obtrude on the harmony, not a word to break the unity of the surroundings, all movements to be performed simply and naturally . . .” (Okakura 1927, 58)

Okakura’s “movement” or “gesture” was the word to explain the relationship of the pre-established “harmony” with humanity and nature, from the side of humanity.

5.2. Quotation of “gesture”

Another important article where Perriand quoted The Book of Tea was “An Alive Tradition” published in L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui in 1956 (Figure 2). It was a short essay, where she wrote about Japanese houses from the same period, but it was an important article for the fact that the publication medium was a well-known architectural magazine with an extensive readership.

All the sections of The Book of Tea where Perriand had drawn a vertical line were quoted without omission, and the text below is from the same article:

“There is always a vacuum that can be filled according to the moment, the mood, and his fantasy, always changing, subtly felt during the course of the seasons of life. One could also talk about a great sweetness of the things of this world, which are visible and invisible. All the gestures express this philosophy. The architecture is designed to immerse man in this euphoria” (Perriand 1956, 15).

Perriand’s interest in the “vacuum” moved away from the spatial aspect of “The Art to Live in” from 1950 more and more and approached the question of the “gesture” that she read about in The Book of Tea. Moreover, the “gesture” could be neither predicted nor created, as far as it related to the changes in nature. Perriand’s “vacuum” contained the unknown variability of the “gesture” more than the pre-established harmony of the “gesture” in Okakura’s aesthetics.

After she left Japan, Perriand explained the use of the tatami mat to help improve the flexibility of space, making reference to Le Corbusier’s “standard” (Perriand 1942, s.p.). However, in this article in 1956, she used the tatami mat as the cardinal point of this variability of the “gesture” (Perriand 1956, 15). She considered that the tatami mat was not only a module for creating material variableness according to circumstances or natural season but also the device of the “vacuum” to accept the ever-changing “gesture”.

6. “Vacuum” and “wall”

6.1. Interest in “vacuum”

The “movement” or the “gesture” by Okakura was the word to explain the relation of the preestablished “harmony” with man and nature from the side of man. Conversely, the “vacuum” was the indication of its relation from the side of nature, which was the central theme of Perriand’s interpretation in the third
chapter entitled “Taoism and Zennism”. In the following sentences from the third chapter, she drew four vertical lines and added a bookmark with the word “Zero” on it, which had a relatively philosophical tone (Figure 3):

“... The conception of totality must never be lost in that of the individual. This Laotse illustrates by his favourite metaphor of the vacuum. He claimed that only in the vacuum lay the truly essential. The reality of a room, for instance, was to be found in the vacant space enclosed by the roof and walls, not in the roof and walls, not on the roofs and walls themselves.”

(Okakura 1927, 71–72)

According to Okakura, the “vacuum” was the possibility of gestures, not material emptiness. Okakura’s “vacant space” was the notion before physical “space” surrounded by the walls, and the “space” and the “vacuum” were in different dimensions theoretically.

Perriand’s degree of interpretation cannot be measured using only these vertical lines, but at least, she did not attach an annotation to the metaphysical theories, in which Okakura argued that humanity was the “vacuum” (Okakura 1927, 72–73).

In the fourth chapter, “The Tea-Room”, with specific examples of the “vacuum” Okakura describes the aesthetics of tea masters and the form of “the abode of vacancy (Sukiya)”, and because of the physical theme, Perriand added many annotations to this chapter. She paid the most attention to the following sentences in this chapter, and she drew four vertical lines and left a bookmark with the word “tea”:

“It is an Abode of Vacancy inasmuch as it is devoid of ornamentation except for what may be placed in it to satisfy some aesthetic need of the moment. It is an Abode of the Unsymmetrical inasmuch as it is consecrated to the worship of the Imperfect, purposely leaving something unfinished for the play of the imagination to complete. The ideals of Teaism have since the sixteenth century influenced our architecture to such degree that the ordinary Japanese interior of the present day, on account of the extreme simplicity and chasteness of its scheme of decoration, appears to foreigners almost barren.”

(Okakura 1927, 82–83)

Okakura might have argued that space without decoration was the “vacuum” through a formal example. However, he did not deny the decoration. He argued that the method of decoration, or the concept itself of decoration, was different from the Western notion. It was the simplicity of ornamentation and frequent change of decorative method (Okakura 1927, 100–101), ‘everything else is selected and arranged to enhance the beauty of the principal theme’ (Okakura 1927, 61). That is why he did not mention the tea service sets themselves, which were indispensable for tea ceremonies (Kumakura 2007, 104–105).

Perriand did not show any interest in the formal characteristics of the space without decoration, and there is no indication that she paid attention to Okakura’s general explanation of the non-symmetry of the tea ceremony room. Rather, she turned her eyes to “the principal theme”, as the driver of the decoration according to circumstances: “the freedom that lay in the expanse beyond” (Okakura 1927, 56). However, in Perriand, it was “freedom” as physical

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23. “... la conception de la totalité ne doit jamais se perdre dans celle de l’individualité. Et Laotse le démontre par sa métaphore favorite du vide. Ce n’est que dans le vide, prétendait-il, que réside ce qui est vraiment essentiel. L’on trouvera, par exemple, la réalité d’une chambre dans l’espace libre clos par le toit et les murs, non dans le toit et les murs eux-mêmes.”

24. “The vacant space” in the original text was translated as “the free space (« l’espace libre »)” in French.

25. Frank Lloyd Wright understood the “vacuum” in *The Book of Tea* as a sort of “space” in his “organic architecture” (Wright 1955, 80–81). On the other hand, Bruno Taut read the metaphysical “large form” beyond the formal emptiness (Taut 1923, 128). In fact, he found the “vacuum” as the high order in Japanese houses, especially in the alcoves where sacred art and ordinary life coexist. His dialectic understanding of art and ordinary life was opposed to Perriand’s understanding that both were impartible in life (Taut 2007).

26. C’est aussi la Maison du Vide en ce qu’elle est dénuée d’ornementation et que l’on peut, par suite, d’autant plus librement, n’y placer que de quoi satisfaire un caprice esthétique passager. C’est, enfin, la Maison de l’Asymétrique en ce qu’elle est consacrée au culte de l’Imparfait, quelque chose d’inachévé que les jeux de l’imagination achèvent à leur gré. Les idées du Théâtre ont exercé sur notre architecture, depuis le seizième siècle, une si grande influence que les intérieurs ordinaires japonais d’aujourd’hui font l’effet aux étrangers d’être presque vides, à cause de la simplicité extrême et de la pureté de leur système de décoration.”

27. Perriand’s double vertical line:

« la simplicité ornementale et aux changements de décor fréquents »

28. Perriand’s single vertical line (partial underline):

« L’on y apporte, à l’occasion, un objet d’art particulier et l’on y choisit et dispose tout en vue de faire valoir la beauté du thème principal. »

29. In contrast, Bruno Taut discovered the formal non-decorativeness in Japanese traditional residences (Taut 1924, 19).

30. Perriand’s single vertical line:

« la liberté qu’elle sent habiter hors d’elle-même, au delà. »
6.2. “Utility walls”

It was the 1950 “The Art to Live in” where Perriand first mentioned Okakura in a published article. This was the most important of her articles that described her own theories on creation systematically, and she proposed the main themes from its beginning:

“It must here take a position. Are we going to make the fullness or the vacuum? This question, apparently ridiculous, has its importance. For someone, the vacuum is the nil or the indigence, for others the possibility to think and move.” (Perriand 1950, 33)

Perriand’s consistent theme in this article was the modern “harmony of the habitat”, and her article did not discuss the tea-ceremony rooms or Sukiya buildings that she had learned about from Okakura and experienced in Japan. Nevertheless, the logical frame of the “fullness” and the “vacuum” reflected her understanding of the architectural space based on Okakura’s theory of “vacuum”.

In addition, Perriand quoted one paragraph from The Book of Tea as a reference for Okakura’s theory on “vacuum”. The following text is a part where Perriand drew four vertical lines (partially dotted lines) in The Book of Tea that she conserved from 1932 and the underline by the author is the quotation from her article in 1950:

‘…The conception of totality must never be lost in that of the individual. This Laotse illustrates by his favourite metaphor of the Vacuum. He claimed that only in vacuum lay the truly essential. The reality of a room, for instance, was to be found in the vacant space enclosed by the roof and walls, not in the roof and walls, not on the roofs and walls themselves. … Vacuum is all potent because it is all containing. In vacuum alone motion becomes possible. One who could make of himself a vacuum into which others might freely enter would become master of all situations. The whole can always dominate the part.

These Taoists’ ideas have greatly influenced all our theories of action, even to those of fencing and wrestling. Jiu-jitsu, the Japanese art of self-defence, owes its name to a passage in the Tao-teking. In jiu-jitsu, one seeks to draw out and exhaust the enemy’s strength by non-resistance, vacuum, while conserving one’s own strength for victory in the final struggle. In art, the importance of the same principle is illustrated by the value of the suggestion. In leaving something unsaid, the beholder is given a chance to complete the idea, and thus a great masterpiece irresistibly rivets your attention until you seem to become actually a part of it. A vacuum is there for you to enter and fill up to the full measure of your aesthetic emotion.’ (Okakura 1927, 71–73)

Perriand’s quotation from The Book of Tea was an essential part of the notion of the “vacuum”, namely the possibility of the human gesture. It can be said that her quotation was the precise extract of Okakura’s interpretation of Taoism.

Nevertheless, in her article, the text following the quotation from The Book of Tea is a return back to the first question of the “fullness” and the “vacuum” in the physical space in order to create modern habitation. That is, through “a widely open façade” (Perriand 1950, 33) and “inside, equipment creating the vacuum” (Perriand 1950, 33), she tried to grasp the question of the “vacuum” that of the “utility walls” (Perriand 1950, 33). This was not necessarily the same as philosophical aspect of Okakura’s theory on “vacuum”: “not in the roof and walls, not on the roofs and walls themselves” and she deleted this sentence by Okakura in “The Art to Live in”.

51 L’extrême normalisation des maisons japonaises, qui ne provoque pas pour autant l’uniformité, intégrant totalement les corps de rangement à l’architecture, créant l’ordre et le vide dans le logis, m’obsédaît. Pourquoi l’industrialisation de nos casiers normalisés en 1928 n’avait-elle jamais vu le jour? Pourquoi, même à l’intérieur de l’atelier Le Corbusier, ne furent-ils jamais retenus, à l’exception d’un projet en Argentine, la maison de Victória Ocampo en 1930? Il y avait certainement des raisons: chaque architecte préférerait-il marquer son œuvre par sa propre création, virus à l’occidentale communiqués depuis lors au Japon? Mais Corbu? Le module du rangement était-il trop grand? Ou bien ne laissait-il pas suffisamment de liberté dans la plasticité, dans la plasticité, dans le renouvellement des programmes? »

52 “The extreme normalization of Japanese houses, which does not provoke uniformity, totally integrating storage units with architecture, creating order and vacuum in the house, obsessed me. Why did the industrialization of our standardized cabinets in 1928 never come into realization? Why, even in the interior of the atelier Le Corbusier, were they never selected, with the exception of a project in Argentina, Victoria Ocampo’s house in 1930? There were certainly reasons: each architect preferred to mark his own creation, a Western virus communicated since then in Japan? But Corbu? Was the storage module too large? Or did he not leave enough freedom in the plasticity, in the renewal of the programs?”

53 Je lui fait ici prendre position. Allons-nous faire du plein ou du vide ? Cette question, apparentement ridicule, a son importance. Pour certains, le vide c’est le néant ou l’indigence ; pour d’autres, la possibilité de penser et de se mouvoir. »

54 …la conception de la totalité ne doit jamais se perdre dans celle de l’individualité. Et Laotse le démontre par sa métaphore favorite du vide. Ce n’est que dans le vide, prétendait-il, que réside ce qui est vraiment essentiel. L’on trouvera, par exemple, la réalité d’une chambre dans l’espace libre clos par le toit et les murs, non dans le toit et les murs eux-mêmes. … Le vide est tout-puissant parce qu’il peut tout contenir. Dans le vide seul le mouvement devient possible. Celui qui pourrait faire de soi-même un vide où les autres pourraient librement pénétrer deviendrait maître de toutes les situations. Le tout peut toujours dominer la partie.

55 Ces idées taoistes ont eu une très grande influence sur nos théories de l’action, même sur l’escrime et la lutte. Le jiu-jitsu, l’art japonais de la défense personnelle, doit son nom à un passage du Tao-teking. Dans le jiu-jitsu, l’on s’efforce d’attirer et d’aspirer la force de l’adversaire par la non-résistance, c’est-à-dire le vide, tout en conservant sa propre force pour la lutte finale. Appliqué à l’art, ce principe essentiel se démontre par la valeur de la suggestion. En ne disant pas tout, l’artiste laisse au spectateur l’occasion de compléter son idée et c’est ainsi qu’un grand chef-d’œuvre retient irrésistiblement notre attention jusqu’à ce que nous croyions momentanément faire partie de lui. Il y a là un vide où nous pouvons pénétrer et que nous pouvons remplir de la mesure entière de notre émotion artistique. »

56 Une façade largement ouverte. »

57 A l’intérieur, un équipement créant le vide. »

58 Murs utilitaires. »
However, she not only understood the “vacuum” as metaphysics but also interpreted it as a creative idea and a question on the phenomenon of the “vacuum” is the conclusion to the question on the creation of the “fullness” in the “vacuum” and its variable relationship. It is certain that for Perriand, the “vacuum” was a physical notion and this is not the same as Okakura’s theory, and Okakura himself did not discuss the Japanese kanwari measurement system, which is on of the primary concepts in tea rooms and Teasim.

Perriand’s coherent interest in the “vacuum” was the subject of “harmony” between humans and nature presented by Okakura. In such a harmonious environment, the “gesture” that captured her was open to variable and unknown movements\textsuperscript{38} the metaphysics of the “vacuum” defined by Okakura has been opened to the question of the possibility of the unknown “gesture” in a physical “space”. This is the very denial of the “gesture” as pre-established harmony. Perriand did not believe in the ideal harmony she should aim for, nor did he stick to Japan alone.

The “utilities walls” is an architectural hypothesis and a vehicle of “vacuum”. After returning to France, according to her comprehension of this concept of “vacuum”, she has studied as cabinets named “cloud” (Figure 5). The “cloud” that could be hung on the wall was first exhibited in the “Proposal for the Integration of Art” exhibition organized by Perriand in 1955, and since then, she has studied various variations and adapted them to residential and office buildings (Barsac 2017, 38–75). The “cloud” does not partition the space like the box-shaped “cabinet” of Le Corbusier (Figure 6). She has prepared a variation that allows us to move furniture around the space more freely and gives the space openness as “vacuum”.

The idea of such furniture, whose contours are not defined, was to be studied in the low wooden table series named “free form tables” (Barsac 2014, 422–437) as “free form which gives rhythm to a space and highlights objects” (Perriand 1998, 294). In this way, Perriand inspired by Okakura, she developed a new “gesture” on both the vertical and horizontal axes of space.

In reading The Book of Tea, Perriand may have developed a superficial understanding or even misunderstanding. However, the essential notion of Okakura’s “vacuum” stimulated the interest of Perriand in Paris, and deepened as a creative theory through her experience in Japan. The process of the

\textsuperscript{37} However, on the other hand, Perriand denied the constant stability of such a “wall”.

“Car le mur japonais, comme la feuille de l’arbre est éphémère. Pleins et vides se remplacent les uns les autres en quelques instants, au gré des panneaux coulissants, qui s’ajoutent ou se retirent selon les caprices des nuages et les hasards de la température.” (ACHP, Charlotte Perriand, L’habitation japonaise, 1949)

“Because the Japanese wall, as the sheet of the shaft is ephemeral. Fullness and vacuum replace each other in a few moments, by the sliding panels, which add to or withdraw according to the whims of the clouds and the hazards of the temperature.”

\textsuperscript{38} However, Perriand could not capture the “type” of the Japanese gesture in Teasim, which introduced the achievement of spiritual freedom or “mindlessness” (Minamoto 1989) because Okakura himself did not discuss it. In contrast, Le Corbusier prescribed the gesture as “type” (Le Corbusier 1930, 113).
reading and Perriand’s interpretation of The Book of Tea shows that her receptivity of the other was a creative “question” itself.

Disclosure statement

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