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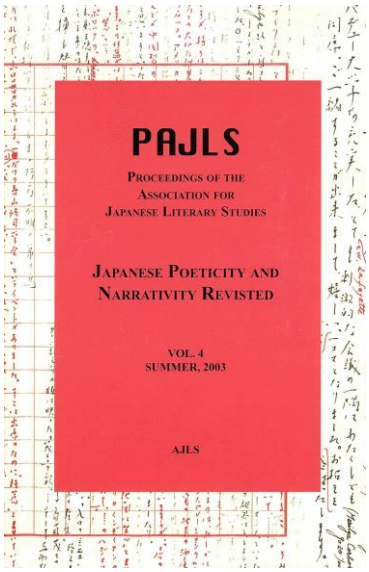

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POETRY AND POETICS IN TENSION: KUKI SHŪZŌ'S FRENCH AND GERMAN CONNECTIONS

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Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941), one of Japan's most original thinkers of the twentieth century, has been the object of divided critical evaluations since the time he published a work that was destined to make him a truly popular philosopher, rather than simply an academic one: *Iki no Kōzō* (*The Structure of Iki*, 1930).[1] As Kuki himself noticed in a short essay entitled "Dentō to Shinshu" (Tradition and Progressivism, 1936),[2] as soon as *The Structure of Iki* appeared, first in the pages of the journal *Shisō* (*Thought*), and then as a monograph eight months later,[3] he was immediately attacked by Marxist critics as a "fervent traditionalist." Kuki accepted the charges, but only after qualifying his position towards tradition. He would hardly have spent eight years in Europe and dedicated most of his life to the study of Western philosophy—he argued—if he wanted simply to promote the maintenance of "the old customs of tradition" in his land. The simple mentioning of the issue was, in his opinion, "obvious, banal, ands almost ludicrous." If, by "traditionalism," on the other hand, one meant the realization of the role played by traditions in the formation of one's "Being," then the charge of traditionalism was not only justified but actually welcome. Kuki's commitment to an understanding of language—a topic that is central to the articulation of *Sein* (Being)—was reduced by Marxist critics to an avowal of nationalism, particularly in light of the changed political circumstances that were silencing all opposition in name of military expansionism.

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[1] Two versions of this work are currently available in English: John Clark's *Reflections on Japanese Taste: The Structure of Iki* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1997), and Hiroshi Nara's *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Visions of Kuki Shūzō* (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, forthcoming).

[2] The essay appears in the section on "Unpublished Essays" (*Mihappyō Zuihitsu*) of *Kuki Shūzō Zenshū* [hereafter abbreviated as *KSZ*], 5 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980), pp. 207–208. I am indebted to the editors of Kuki's *Collected Works* for providing the date of the composition of this essay. See "Kaidai" (Explanatory Notes) in *KSZ*, 5, p. 477.

[3] *Iki no Kōzō* appeared in the January and February 1930 issues of *Shisō* (Numbers 92 and 93). The book was published by Iwanami in October 1930.

This charge has haunted Kuki's reputation to this day, threatening to obfuscate the originality of a truly cosmopolitan philosopher whose "guilt" has been established chiefly by association. In Japan no one dared to talk about Kuki after the war because of his association with the so-called "Kyōto School" that was accused of providing the government with the intellectual justification for nationalistic and expansionistic policies. This argument is based on the premise that Kuki worked in the department of philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University, together with Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962), and other members of the School whose thought was deeply affected by Nishida's system. We must wait until the 1980s before we see Kuki become the focus of scholarly attention in Japan and the West, at the same time as a reevaluation of the alleged war responsibilities of members of the Kyoto School.[4] It is ironic, however, to notice that, while Kuki's association with the School hurt him to a considerable degree, he is seldom included in discussions of the Kyoto School, and appropriately so, since he was intellectually rooted in the philosophy department of Tokyo Imperial University, and he very seldom took a public stand on the issue of imperialism.[5]

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[4] The journal *Shisō* dedicated half of its February 1980 issue to "Kuki Shūzō: Poetry and Philosophy." See, *Shisō* 2 (1980), pp. 65–140. The two major monographs on Kuki in Japanese, Sakabe Megumi's *Fuzai no Uta: Kuki Shūzō no Sekai* (*Songs of Absence: The World of Kuki Shūzō*) and Tanaka Kyūbun's *Kuki Shūzō: Gūzen to Shizen* (*Kuki Shūzō: Chance and Nature*), were published in 1990 and 1992 respectively. Daitō Shun'ichi's *Kuki Shūzō to Nihon Bunkaron* (*Kuki Shūzō and Japan's Culturalism*) appeared in 1996.

[5] Several English translations of works by the major members of the Kyoto School, such as Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, and Nishitani Keiji appeared between 1970 and the present. David A. Dilworth has been writing on Nishida since the late 1960s. However, evaluations of the School as a whole have taken place only during the past two decades. See Thomas P. Kasulis's review article, "The Kyoto School and the West: Review and Evaluation," *The Eastern Buddhist* 15:2 (Autumn 1982), pp. 125–144. The major accounts of issues related to the Kyoto School and nationalism are the articles included in James W. Heisig and John Maraldo, eds*., Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994). In this book the only reference to Kuki Shūzō comes in the article by Andrew Feenberg (p. 151), who mentions Kuki together with Tanabe Hajime and Watsuji Tetsurō as one of Japan's major thinkers who "defended Japanese imperialism." Feenberg's authority for this statement is Peter Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986). For a more recent account of the School, see James W. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).The only relevant reference to Kuki in Heisig's book comes in a note on p. 276, in which the author

Furthermore, Kuki's association with the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), with whom he studied in the fall of 1927 and the spring of 1928, has led several critics to see a commonality of aims between the two philosophers who are, thus, presented as "typical ideologues of nineteenth-century imperialism." This is the position taken by Karatani Kōjin, who has had a particular influence on historians and literary critics writing on Kuki in the West. Karatani sees Kuki's and Heidegger's speculations on Being as developments of nineteenth century discourses on "spirit," which led both thinkers to arrive "respectively, at the 'Great East Asian Coprosperity Sphere' and the 'Third Reich.'"[6] Karatani's "hermeneutics of national being" are a rehearsal of the Marxist critiques which Kuki himself talked about in "Tradition and Progressivism." Karatani follows an argument made by Marxist critic Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) in *Nihon Ideorogīron* (*An Essay on Japanese Ideology,* 1935), in which Tosaka highlighted the parallelism between the aesthetic practices of German Romanticism and the aesthetic ideologies of Japan's ultranationalism.

Tosaka's and Karatani's arguments are fully at work in Leslie Pincus' *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan*, the most extensive work on Kuki in English, published in 1996. In this monograph, Kuki is accused of following a methodology—the hermeneutical method—that, allegedly, "has lent itself to conservative, even reactionary, perspectives on history."[7] The reference is, of course, to Heidegger,[8] who provided Kuki with a "cultural hermeneutic," "a national ontology,"[9] and a "logic

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mentions the entry on the Kyoto School in the 1998 version of the Iwanami *Dictionary of Philosophy and Ideas*: "Watsuji Tetsurō and Kuki Shūzō, both of whom had taught philosophy and ethics at Kyoto for a time during the period of Nishida and Tanabe, are properly listed as peripheral." For an account of the postcolonial critique of Nishida Kitarō, although Kuki is not mentioned, see Yoko Arisaka, "Beyond 'East and West': Nishida's Universalism and Postcolonial Critique," in Fred Dallymayr, ed., *Border Crossings: Towards a Comparative Political Theory* (Lanhman: Lexington Books, 1999), pp. 236–252.

[6] See Karatani Kōjin, "One Spirit, Two Nineteenth Centuries," translated by Alan Wolfe, in Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian, eds., *Postmodernism and Japan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 267.

[7] Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 142.

[8] "But it was only after the encounter with hermeneutics, particularly in its Heideggerian form, that Kuki was able to pull this diverse assortment of lists and notes into the tight symbolic weave of collective meaning and value." Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan*, p. 53.

[9] *Ibidem,* p. 121.

of organicism," that made Kuki intellectually responsible for the government's expansionistic policies in China.[10] Pincus reads Kuki's philosophy in light of Marxist interpretations of Heidegger, especially interpretations by one of Heidegger's most severe French critics, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, who created the term "national aestheticism" to define Heidegger's views of cultural organicism, and from whom Pincus derived the subtitle of her book, *Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics*.[11] Karatani's and Pincus's interpretations of Kuki have become quite authoritative among scholars of literature in the West, who tend to rely on their assessments when referring to Kuki's thought.[12]

Realizing that inattentively conceived links between the philosophies of Heidegger and Kuki have significantly distorted the latter, some critics have attempted to detach Kuki's thought from Heidegger's philosophy of Being, pointing out Kuki's predominant use of French thought, in which he specialized and lectured extensively at the University of Kyoto.[13]

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[10] "In the final analysis, the logic of organicism—a logic that Kuki first articulated in *'Iki' no kōzō* and simply presumed in the later essays—underwrote the Japanese invasion of China in particular, and the excesses of national aestheticism in general." Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Cuilture in Imperial Japan*, p. 231. The philosopher Graham Parkes has written a brilliant critique of the conspiracy theory of which Kuki has become a target. See his article, "The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy," in *Philosophy East and West* 47:3 (July 1997), pp. 305–336, in which he writes: "One must again protest this practice of condemning a Japanese thinker, even at second hand, on the basis of his association with Heidegger. When evaluating philosophical ideas or the integrity of philosophers, assigning "guilt by association" is as questionable a tactic as it is in the real world of law." (p. 325). See, also, Parkes's review of *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan*, in *Chanoyu Quarterly* 86 (1997), pp. 63–69, in which he writes: "Since Kuki's writings provide so little in the way of evidence for his alleged fascist proclivities, Pincus tries to establish some guilt by association through invoking his relations with Heidegger, whose credentials in the area of political incorrectness apparently need no establishing." (p. 66).

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 210.

[12] See, for example, the following statement: "This concept of Asia as a unified field of culture or spirit reflects, of course, the various political discourses mobilized to justify Japan's military expansion throughout Asia and Southeast Asia, including the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,' or 'East Asian Cooperative Community,' which was advocated by intellectuals such as Kuki Shūzō and Rōyama Masamichi." Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 226.

[13] We find this trend in the essays by Hiroshi Nara, J. Thomas Rimer, and J. Mark Mikkelsen, in Hiroshi Nara, *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shūzō*. In "Capturing the Shudders and Palpitations: Kuki's Quest for a Philosophy of Life," Nara states: "Ultimately, Kuki's thinking about *iki* aligned

Research in this direction has contributed powerful analyses of the differences between Kuki's and Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology.[14] The answer to the question of relationships ultimately lies with Kuki himself who, in the essay "Tōkyō to Kyōto" (Tokyo and Kyoto),[15] compared his links to Henri Bergson (1859–1941) and Martin Heidegger to the relationship he had with the two cities most dear to him, the city where he was born and raised (Tokyo), and the city where he spent the second half of his life (Kyoto). If, as Goethe had pointed out, talent was built in quietness while character developed in the midst of activity, then Kuki could argue that his personal experience was a fertile ground for the development of both. Raised in the modernity of Japan's capital, the city of Bergsonian and Parisian vitalism, he was developing his philosophy in the stillness of the ancient capital Kyoto, which afforded him the quietness of Heidegger's Black Forest. The names of the two philosophers can hardly be separated in Kuki's thought. His cosmopolitanism was the result of fortunate circumstances that brought

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itself with Bergson's thinking. Like his mentor, he thought that conceptual analysis—the mainstay of Neo-Kantian—failed to connect its findings… In general, one might say that Kuki's debt to Bergson was real and warm and human. The same cannot be said about his debt to Heidegger. " (pp. 139–140). He also points out that, "As Tom Rimer shows elsewhere in this volume, Kuki's colleagues at Kyoto thought of him as a Francophile. That can't have done his standing much good in a department committed to German idealism, a school of thought he had turned away from in the late 1920s. His chronology (in this volume) shows how often he lectured on French philosophy. Though he divided his time fairly equally between German and French schools of thought, Kuki's lecture schedule attests to special interests in, for example, Bergsonian vitalism. In fact, his contemporary Amano Teiyū characterizes Kuki as a scholar working in French philosophy." (pp. 163–164). On Kuki's French connections, see also the excellent book by Stephen Light, *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Early History of Existential Phenomenolgy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

[14] See, for example, Mikkelsen's article "Reading Kuki Shūzō's *The Structure of 'Iki'* in the Shadow of *Le Affaire Heidegger*," in Hiroshi Nara's *The Structure of Detachment*, pp. 206–237. Mikkelsen states: "I suggest that this linkage [between Heidegger and Kuki] should not be taken for granted, that the common practice of highlighting Kuki's relationship to Heidgger has not generally served Kuki well, and that the practice of linking the name of Kuki with that of Heidegger has actually distorted efforts to appreciate fully Kuki's work and its significance. To suggest that the names of Kuki and Heidegger should, in effect, be de-linked is not, however, the same as claiming that there are no grounds for linking them." (p. 206). This statement is followed by an analysis of problems related to attempts to "make Kuki into a Heidegger."

[15] *KSZ* 5, pp. 190–194.

him into the world as a member of one of Japan's most distinguished and culturally/politically influential families and that allowed him an unusually lengthy stay in Europe [16] where he could engage in conversation with the major philosophical figures active in France and Germany.

In this paper I will address Kuki's connections with French and German philosophies in relation to his poetry and his essays on poetry. I will try to point out how the tension between poetry and poetics in Kuki's production and discussion of poetry is related to his eclectic attempt to create a philosophy which incorporates philosophical elements that, far from being integrated in a cohesive unity, stand in striking opposition to each other, bringing each other into sets of mutual contradictions.

Kuki's poetry challenges all the major themes of metaphysics sustaining Western thought: necessity, causality, the primacy of identity, sameness, and completion. While writing his poetry during his stay in Paris from October 1925 to March 1927, Kuki was meeting with Henri Bergson and Émile Bréhier (1876–1952), then professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne, who apparently introduced him to a young Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980).[17] In Paris Kuki read the books of Émile Boutroux (1845–1921) extensively, especially Boutroux's work on the challenges that contingency continuously poses to the realm of necessity. Sartre later developed this topic into a philosophy of action, freedom, and responsibility.[18] In his lectures Kuki introduces the work of Boutroux's student, Bergson, on the relationship between temporality (of which contingency is a major element) and freedom (*liberté*).[19] Kuki discusses

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[16] Japanese scholars would usually spend a couple of years in Europe, sponsored by the Japanese government to study Western learning in European universities. However, Kuki's independent wealth afforded him the privilege of spending eight years in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, from 1921 to 1928, while engaging in conversation with Nobel-prize winners, diplomats, and the leading intellectual voices of Europe.

[17] See, Stephen Light, *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Early History of Existential Phenomenology*, pp. 99–141, in which the author includes a notebook by Kuki titled "Monsieur Sartre."

[18] Kuki was familiar with Boutroux's *La Nature et l'Esprit* (*Nature and the Spirit*) and *De la Contingence des Lois de la Nature* (*The Contingency of the Laws of Nature*). Of the latter we find the French, English, and German versions in Kuki's library. See *Kuki Shūzō Bunko Mokuroku* (Kōbe: Kōnan Daigaku Tetsugaku Kenkyūshitsu, 1976), pp. 30–31. For Sartre's development of the notion of contingency, see his *L'Être et le Neant* (*Being and Nothingness*), especially Part Four on "Having, Doing, and Being."

[19] See Kuki's explanation of Bergson's philosophy in his *Gendai Furansu Tetsugaku*

the topic of contingency in one of his poems, which challenges attempts to explain human life in terms of the inflexible rules of necessity. He included this poem, appropriately titled "Contingency" (*Gūzensei*), in a collection known as "Fragments from Paris" (*Hahen, Parī yori*).[20]

Contingency

Could you bring to prove the signs
Of the parallel straight lines?
That was your aim:
Did you withdraw your fundamental claim?
Did the central issue become
That to the angles of a triangle's sum
Two right angles are equal?
Or, was it less that a 180 degrees sequel?
In Alexandria the old book was found,
Principles of Geometry two thousand years ago bound,
No matter whether the worms ate it or not,
Euclid is a great man, never forgot,
Who with lines and points the shape of the universe how to make and change knew!
You and I, I and you
The secret of a chance encounter I saw,
Of love the anti-law.
This is the geometry of life's retribution,
Won't you bring it for me to some solution?
At the straight line of cause and effect A we look!
The straight line of cause and effect B we took!
The principle that two parallel lines do not intersect,
To the intersection of parallel lines don't you object?
With this, contingency is fulfilled,
With chaos Venus is filled,
Two people picked up of pearls a string
That the waves of cause and effect to them bring.

In this poem Kuki concentrates on what he called, "hypothetical contingency," the chance encounter between a man and a woman that

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Kōgi (*Course on Contemporary French Philosophy*) in *KSZ* 8 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), pp. 294–354, especially the section on "freedom," pp. 319–322.

[20] *KSZ* 1, pp. 131–133.

breaks the law of cause and effect, introducing the element of fortuitousness which challenges the rationality of Euclid's geometry and disrupts the notion that parallel lines theoretically do not come together. They do come together in practice, however, when two people who are unknown to each other and who, although they travel towards the same destination (death), and do it on separate, parallel paths, meet by chance and their paths come to intersect. The event is unforeseeable and geometry has a hard time conceptualizing it. On the other hand, poetry seems to be a more appropriate tool for bringing life to contingency by giving it form. Borrowing an expression from Paul Valéry (1871–1945), Kuki calls poetry "the pure system of the chances of language." For Kuki the success of poetry was found in its ability to express contingency (meaninglessness, nonsense, the unconscious, dreams, etc.) in a world of necessity known as the world of meaning. Rhyme was "the awakening of *logos* as *melos* (song)," a *melos* that provided an opening to a more authentic perception of reality. "Language as content of meaning" pointed at necessity and the self-sameness of a subject, whereas "language as sound" referred to contingency and to the continuous disruption of a solid, unified subject. Kuki argued that rhyme was the chance encounter of two sounds, "the twin smiles" of Paul Valéry who had called rhymes "philosophical beauty." The fact that rhyme, besides bringing to life a chance encounter of sounds, was also the medium for the repetition of the same sound, indicated to Kuki that rhymes contain at the same time necessity and contingency (same sound, different words), sameness and difference. Thus, rhyming poetry was "freedom following reason" based on "objective rules," while free poetry was an "arbitrariness following drive." The chance encounter of rhyming sounds was a good symbol for the recurring cycles of necessity and contingency.[21]

Far from being limited to the sphere of rhetoric, contingency for Kuki had profound consequences in the areas of ethics and morality. Because of contingency, human existence is something in which man is thrown by chance, whose only law is that it could have been totally different. One cannot consider other people's existence to be alien to

[21] Kuki developed these themes in the lecture course that he gave at the University of Kyoto in 1933 (published as *Bungaku no Gairon* or *An Outline of Literature*). See, especially, the section on contingency and poetry. *KSZ* 11, pp. 86–124. See also Kuki's long essay "Nihon Shi no Ōin" (Rhymes in Japanese Poetry), an essay published in 1931 which appeared in an extensively revised version in his later *Bungeiron* (*Essays on the Literary Arts*, 1941). *KSZ* 4, pp. 223–513.

oneself, since others bear the destiny that could have been one's own. By understanding that one's own existence could be exchanged—that one might have lived someone else's existence--one realizes the wondrous nature of the meeting with others. According to Kuki, one should respect one's own destiny, as well as others', as something to "be grateful for" (*arigatai*) in the literal sense of the word, "difficult to be." This should be an encouragement to develop a sympathy for the existence of others. At the same time, understanding the nature of contingency should enable the conduct of a free and flexible life which is continuously open to what may occur and to those whom one has the chance of meeting.

Let me give you a further example of Kuki's resistance against another major element of the metaphysics of presence, the dialectical method that becomes the target of Kuki's critique in a poem titled "Dialectical Method" (*Benshōronteki Hōhō*), in which Kuki disparagingly compares the Hegelian logic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis to the three rhythmic measures of a waltz: [22]

The Dialectical Method

Spirit!
Hell, paradise
Sobbing out a counterpoint.
Glaring at each other are clouds of rain,
Not even a canon
Is born!

Living in a field at dawn
Hornets and red starlilies
Entwine to make honey,
Who can explain this,
God and witch,
Plight their promise and give birth to humanity.

These are the rules of life
Thesis, antithesis, synthesis,
The tone of logos
The singer is a priest,
How good, a triple time
Dance the waltz.

[22] *KSZ* 1, pp. 133–135.

In this poem Kuki challenges the complacent geometricity of a dialectical method that arrogantly pretends to reduce the rules of life to a pre-established order, which he sarcastically compares to the triple pattern of a waltz. Here Kuki followed Henri Bergson who in *La Pensée et le Mouvant* argued as follows: "Hence a thesis and an antithesis which it would be vain for us to try logically to reconcile, for the simple reason that never, with concepts or points of view, will you make a thing."[23] Being shaped by the ungeometric paradigm of contingency (the destiny of suddenness and unexpectedness), human nature was much too complex to be reduced to a law, a method, whether Hegelian dialectics or Kantian categories. We see Kuki express this hesitation to entrust the vitality of human life to philosophical laws in one of his short poems (*tanka*) from the collection *Sonnets from Paris (Parī Shōkyoku)*:

Hanchū ni	How many years have I gone through
Toraegatakaru	Lamenting as myself
Onogami wo	This body of mine
Ware to nagekite	That is as difficult to grasp
Hetsuru ikutose	As a category?[24]

Kuki's attack on the laws of contradiction, another major moment of Western logic, takes place in the poem opening Kuki's Parisian *Fragments*, which he entitled "The Negative Dimension" (*Fugōryō*, the Japanese translation of Kant's "*der negativen Grössen*"). In this poem, a real opposition between two equally positive substances succeeds in explaining what a logical negation does not. Thus, Kuki stresses the positive value of privative nothing (*nihil privativum*), the blessing that can be found in a shadow, the glory of the female, negative, moon-like image of yin which stood in Chinese philosophy as the equally powerful pair of the solar, male, positive yang. As Kuki's poem says, "plus and minus are both affirmations second to none."[25]

The Negative Dimension

In a shadow there is the blessing of a shadow,

[23] Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), pp. 207–217.
[24] *KSZ* 1, p. 190, n. 128.
[25] *KSZ* 1, pp. 130–131.

It is not just that the shadow is not exposed to sunlight.
Ice has the taste of ice,
It is not of the same type as cooled hot water.
You can pull out your white hair,
Black hair does not grow.
A eunuch
Cannot become a lady-in-waiting.
Plus and minus, both extremes
Are affirmations second to none.
The law of contradiction regrettably
Is an odd pair, a one-eyed man, a man with one arm.
Glory to *yin*.
Glory to *yang*.
Good,
Smell the fragrance!
Evil,
The flower bloom!

Even when it comes to the question of temporality, Kuki's poetry is profoundly critical of traditional notions of time. He acknowledges openly his debts to the thought of Henri Bergson. According to Bergson, the world of human sensations and consciousness can only be caught in the inner experience of real time, which he called "pure duration" (*durée pure*)—a time which is qualitative (*temps-qualité*), heterogeneous, dynamic, and creative. The time of pure duration provides an explanation for the heterogeneity of life. It is the time of contingency and the space of difference. In the real time of duration, the states of consciousness permeate one another. Pure duration is the flowing of inner life (*fluidité même de notre vie intérieure*), the notes of a tune "melting, so to speak, into one another,"[26] "the effect of a musical phrase which is constantly on the point of ending and constantly altered in its totality by the addition of some new note."[27]

On the other hand, man lives in "quantitative time" (*temps-quantité*), the homogeneous time of the watch that can be measured easily, the time of sameness, a spatialized time, a time made into space. It is an emptying of the content of time into "a space of four dimensions in which past,

[26] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness,* transl. by F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971; 1st ed., 1910), p. 100.
[27] *Ibidem,* p. 106.

present, and future are juxtaposed or superimposed for all eternity."[28] Quantitative time is a mathematical replacement of duration with a series of simultaneities which can be counted, instantaneities which do not endure. By indicating "a numerical multiplicity" (*multiplicité numérique*), homogeneous time is the time of the clock. In other words, quantitative time is "the ghost of space," the space of science in which real change is eliminated and human beings are made into machines, rather than being analyzed as free individuals. Real time has no time to count itself, although man does it all the time, living outside himself, hardly perceiving anything but his own ghost, a colorless shadow, thus living for the external world rather than for himself; thus speaking rather than thinking.

We find in Kuki's collection of poetic *Fragments* a song dedicated to Bergson's idea of "durée pure," titled "Pure Duration" (*Junsui Jizoku*), in which Kuki attacks the measurable inauthentic time of quantity as "the shabby natural child" of space, the cause of daily worries that makes people regret their decisions. To be imprisoned in quantitative time means to bemoan one's own destiny and to grieve over missed opportunities, a continuous lament in the name of compromise and at the cost of enjoying the value of one's own decisions, irrespective of their final outcome.[29]

Pure Duration

Falling in love with space
Time, what a shabby natural child!
To give birth was a mistake in the first place,
To repent for it, a good-for-nothing goblin,
The cause of your worries night in and night out.
Hello turtle, dear turtle!
To lose to a rabbit in a race, isn't that a victory?
A gull floating on the water says, I will not be outrun by a duck!
You are thirty-something,
Still studying thirty-one syllable poems as always?
You say it is a five/seven/five/seven/seven syllable poem?
That two stanzas seventeen/fourteen is the normative?

[28] Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity: Bergson and the Einsteinian Universe*, transl. by Robin Durie (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 1999), p. 42.
[29] *KSZ* 1, pp. 135–37.

That three stanzas twelve/twelve/seven is the poem's original form?
Aren't you rewriting the poem since the caesura between verses is bad?
Do not mistake "line" for "nine"![30]
A stanza is not made out of numbers.
After all, homogeneity is the foundation of compromise,
Respect the tune of pure heterogeneity!
Recollection of the past also
Depends on time,
To curl your fingers[31] around moldy possibilities
Is the habit of the loser.[32]
Shout in your heart!
A meteor
A flash of lightning
A melody
A color.

The reference in the poem to the rabbit addressing the turtle ("moshi moshi kame yo kame san yo") is not simply the echo of an Aesopian fable praising the determination of a steadily advancing turtle who wins the race with a rabbit because of the latter's overconfidence and sluggishness—a fable which became a popular song during the Meiji period.[33] Kuki had also in mind the paradox of the Eleatic philosopher Zeno (c.495–c.430 B.C.), according to which Achilles will never reach the turtle in a race if the turtle is given a proper advantage since, by the time Achilles reaches the point where the turtle started the race, the turtle has already moved ahead beyond that point. Zeno had challenged appearance, reducing movement to absurdity.

The problem of Zeno's paradox lies in the illusion that a series of indivisible acts can be identified with homogeneous space. Bergson argued that Achilles, after all, was not a turtle chasing after another turtle. Achilles' movement was irreducibly individuated by its character as an action. We cannot reduce action to a spatialized present for all of time. Therefore, for a turtle, to lose to a rabbit in a race can only be a victory, if

[30] "Line" in Japanese is *ku*, while "nine" is *kū*.
[31] It means "to count."
[32] It refers to the regrets that a person has once he starts thinking, 'Oh, if only I had done this, or if only I had done that.' Such a regret is an indication that the person is still imprisoned in quantitative time.
[33] The song by Ishihara Wasaburō appears in Horiuchi Keizō, Inoue Takeshi, eds., *Nihon Shōkashū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958), p. 106.

the event is seen from the perspective of the turtle's authenticity, for the sake of the nature of the turtle itself, and not for the sake of the nature of speed. Likewise, Kuki argued, poetry rejects any compromise with measurability—the strict form of a *tanka* made of 31 syllables in 5 verses distributed according to the pattern of five/seven/five/seven/seven syllables, unless the "tune of pure heterogeneity" is able to spring forth from such a pattern. The elements of contingency must be accounted for if we want to grasp life and poetry in their ultimate nature of fortuitousness, suddenness, unexpectedness, duration, change, and heterogeneity—a meteor, a flash of lightning, a melody, a color.[34]

When we examine Kuki's essays on poetry, the notion of temporality undergoes profound changes. In "Bungaku no Keijijōgaku" (The Metaphysics of Literature, 1940)[35] Kuki introduces three types of temporalities based on past, future, and present. In the first type, time originates from the past, flowing from the past towards the future; it is the temporality of history. Calling this view of time "biological," Kuki linked it to the genres of novels and *monogatari* (tales) in which the author "tells" (*noberu*) a story or, playing on an homophonous word, "stretches" (*noberu*) the story in time while unrolling the scroll in space,

[34] In the lecture course *Bungaku no Gairon* Kuki discussed the relationship that poetry has with quantitative and qualitative time. On the quantitative side Kuki singled out the measurability of Japan's poetic rhythm—12 syllables divided in the 5/7 or 7/5 pattern. According to Kuki, poetic rhythm was related to human breathing: a poetic verse comes into being on condition that it can be sung in a breath. The French Alexandrine line is also made of twelve sounds (hexameter); the Italian hendecasyllable is made of eleven sounds; the English iambic pentameter is made of ten sounds; the German tetrameter and pentameter Iamb are made of eight or ten sounds. However, the temporality of poetry is not quantitative; it is qualitative. Kuki argued that the temporality of poetry is duration (*durée*), and that the rhythmic patterns actually underscore the tensions of duration characterizing the flow of poetry. For example, the accent in Italian poetry always falls on the tenth sound (qualitative time), independently from whether the verse is a hendecasyllable (11 sounds), a dactylic (twelve sounds), or a trochee (ten sounds)—the so-called quantitative time. The accent endows quantitative time with quality. The same result is brought about by the length of the vowels, whether short or long, as we can see in Greek and Latin poetry. Modern poetry has replaced the length of the vowels with the accent. The more attention to sound a poem discloses, the more the poem is caught in its qualitative time of duration. *KSZ* 11, pp. 148–54.

[35] This essay was originally part of a course, *Bungaku no Gairon* (*An Outline of Literature*), which Kuki delivered at Kyoto Imperial University in 1940. Kuki included this essay in his last book, *Bungeiron* (*Essays on the Literary Arts*), which was published posthumously in 1941. See *KSZ* 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), pp. 7–59.

thus presenting "a past present" (*kakoteki genzai*).[36] The privileging of the past was directly related to the philosophy of Bergson who had raised the past to ontological status, by considering it being-in-itself.[37] The present cannot be considered Being since it no longer exists; it has already ceased to be. Paradoxically, the past is contemporaneous with the present that it has been. Past and present coexist: "one is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass."[38] Bergson's notion of "duration" is grounded in the authority of the past, since "duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances."[39]

The second type of temporality emphasizes the future, and makes the future its starting point. According to this view, the difference between time and everything else is found in the fact that only time has a future. Kuki calls this view "ethical," since within this temporality, man struggles after a moral purpose located in the future by having his consciousness anticipate a goal in the realm of the future. He associates this temporality with drama, a genre that develops from the future, since it is premised on a crisis preceding the tragic conclusion of a tragedy, or on a joyful resolution coming before the final act of a comedy. Kuki defined the temporality of drama as a "futural present" (*miraiteki genzai*).[40] Kuki's source for this future-oriented temporality was Heidegger, for whom man exists in the etymological sense of the word (*ek-sists*): he "stands out" into future possibilities, into a past heritage, and into a present world. Heidegger stressed the futural aspect of man's *Da-sein*. Human life begins with the future since authentic existence involves facing up to mortality and accepting the finitude of one's possibilities. The key to Heidegger's temporality was "anticipatory resoluteness," which indicates one's responsibility to take a stance and making an authentic choice of a way to be.[41]

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[36] Kuki Shūzō, "Bungaku no Keijijōgaku," in *KSZ* 4, pp. 31–40

[37] Here I am using Heideggerian language to explain Bergson's temporality.

[38] Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, transl. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberiam (New York: Zone Books, 1988; original French ed., 1966), p. 59.

[39] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, transl. by Arthur Mitchell (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1998; 1st ed., 1911), p. 4.

[40] Kuki Shūzō, "Bungaku no Keijijōgaku," in *KSZ* 4, pp. 40–45.

[41] "The primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, transl. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996; 1st German ed., 1927), p. 303.

Kuki's third model of temporality is the one privileging the present. This view is based on the consideration that neither past nor future actually exist: while the past is already gone, the future has not yet come; only the present exists. In the past and the future, only the memory of the former and the anticipation of the latter exist. Kuki called this temporality "psychological," "since it is based on the original impression within the present of the phenomenon of time."[42] This is the general temporality of art. In the lecture course *Bungaku no Gairon*, Kuki indicated his indebtedness to Augustine (354–430) and Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) in formulating this theory of time centered around the present.[43]

Kuki found in the work of Augustine and Husserl inspiration for the development of a fourth type of temporality, a temporality which he fully embraced and made into the structural pillar of his essays on poetics: time as a circle, a "recurrent time" (*kaikiteki jikan*), an "infinite present" (*mugen no genzai*), the "eternal now" (*eien no ima*).

> We can add a fourth theory of time. The past is not simply something that has already gone. The future is not simply something that has not yet come. The past comes again in the future; the future has already come in the past. If we follow the past far enough, we return to the future; if we follow the future far enough, we return to the past. Time forms a circle; it is recurrent. If we locate time in the present, we can say that this present possesses as present an infinite past and an infinite future, and also that it is identical with a limitless present. The present is the eternal present with an infinite depth; in short, time is nothing but the infinite present, the eternal now.[44]

Kuki did not agree with Heidegger who approached time as "human time," "finite time," the time between birth and death, the time whose being makes itself visible, "is out there" (*Da-sein*). In "Der Begriff der Zeit" (The Concept of Time), a lecture delivered to the Marburg Theological Society in July 1924, Heidegger had challenged the notion of eternal time whose explanation required an act of faith, a belief in an eternal God. Quoting from Einstein's theory of relativity, Heidegger argued that absolute space and absolute time do not exist in themselves,

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[42] Kuki Shūzō, "Bungaku no Keijijōgaku," in *KSZ* 4, p. 34.
[43] Kuki discusses these issues in the section "Time and Literature" of *Bungaku no Gairon*, in *KSZ* 11, pp. 137-161.
[44] Kuki Shūzō, "Bungaku no Keijijōgaku," in *KSZ* 4, p. 33.

since space exists only "by way of the bodies and energies contained in it," and time "persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it." Accordingly, Heidegger defined time as "that within which events take place." The clock loses the futuricity of time or, as Heidegger put it, "only if I say that time authentically has no time to calculate time is this an appropriate assertion." Rather than reducing time to a continuous present—in which the past is interpreted as a no-longer present and the future as indeterminate not-yet present—Heidegger reminded his audience that "the possibility of access to history is grounded in the possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural. This is the first principle of all hermeneutics."[45]

Kuki was not ready to accept Heidegger's notion of "horizontal time," or time seen as an integral unity of its ecstasies. Kuki never fully integrated in his philosophy Heidegger's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence. The safety net of metaphysics was one that Kuki never agreed to give up. As he confessed in the poem "An Autumn Day" ("Aki no Ichinichi"):

> After all, I am lonesome,
> The loneliness of the one who follows darkness, the grief of the one who pursues an invisible shadow,
> A philosophy without metaphysics is lonesome,
> I wish for a metaphysics that problematizes human existence and death.[46]

Kuki associated metaphysical time, the time of Kuki's temporality, with poetry, by which he meant lyrical poetry. For Kuki, poetry was the intuition (*chokkan*) and the emotion (*kandō*) of the present instant. By singing the "eternal present," the rhythm of poetry was an indication of the "eternal return of the present." Rhymes, repetitions, and other rhetorical devices were means for the reader to stop at the place of the same present and concentrate on the unending instant of the eternal present. Kuki called the temporal structure of poetry "the present present" (*genzaiteki genzai*), the same structure found in all arts.[47]

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[45] Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, transl. by William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 20E.
[46] *KSZ* 1, pp. 128–129.
[47] Kuki Shūzō, "Bungaku no Keijijōgaku," in *KSZ* 4, pp. 45–52. Kuki noticed a similarity between the arts and religion since both were concerned with the notion of "eternity." The difference was that while religion dealt with the potentiality of the infinite (*sempiternitas*) and, therefore, its temporal nature was

In the first lecture that he gave at Pontigny, in the outskirts of Paris, on his way back to Japan, "La Notion du Temps et la Reprise sur le Temps en Orient" (The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time, August 11, 1928), Kuki articulated a notion of time that he hoped would bring the depth of metaphysics back to time.[48] Instead of Heidegger's "horizontal time," he introduced the view of a "self-escaping perpendicular time," a mystical time seen as an eternal present. This was a critique of modern time as a time "alienated towards the future," in which the present is always meaningless, time being always directed towards a future purpose—a straight, infinite, abstract line. Kuki presented what he felt to be the structure of Eastern time, a returning/recurring time, the cyclical time of transmigration (*rinne*), in which what he called the "great cosmic year" (*daiuchū nen*) repeats itself infinitely. The same instant that takes place in the present is found in the infinite "great cosmic year" of past and present; as a result, every instant is "the eternal present" (*eien no genzai*). Kuki called the awakening to the truth that each instant actually is "the eternal present," "the vertical casting off the self" (*suichokuteki datsuga*), i.e. the experience of mystical time.

In the second Pontigny lecture, "L'Expression de l'Infini dans l'Art Japonais" (The Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art, August 17, 1928), Kuki connected "vertical time" to art by arguing that "vertical time" is the time of art, especially the time experienced in poetry. Poetry (*tanka* and *haiku*) liberates the infinite from time. The infinite realizes itself "in an asymmetric and fluid form" (the 5–7–5–7–7 pattern is not symmetric). In such an asymmetrical form, "the idea of liberation from measurable time is realized." In the circular time of Japanese poetry, time past is brought back to the present so that ordinary time is broken. The "infinite present" of poetry gives concreteness to Kuki's notion of the "great cosmic year": poetry brings vertical time (ecstatic time/ the outside of time/ past/ the eternal present) into the present, inauthentic, spatial, horizontal time.

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a metaphysical present (*keijijōgaku genzai*), art was centered around the notion of the present power of eternity (*aeternitas*) and, therefore, its temporal structure was phenomenological (*genshōgakuteki genzai*).

[48] There are two English translations of Kuki's Pontigny Lectures. See, Stephen Light, *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Eraly History of Existential Phenomenology*, pp. 43–67, and David A. Dilworth and Valdo H. Viglielmo, with Augustin Jacinto Zavala, eds*., Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), pp. 199–219.

In conclusion, Kuki used the notion of the "the eternal present" as he talked about poetry and the arts, but his poetry foregrounded the very different idea of "duration." Kuki's circle of eternal time does not present the characteristics of Bergson's expanding circle, a circle that by expanding shows openness, but by remaining at any instant a circle affirms that it is still closed. Kuki's circle is closed at all times, marking the boundaries of a circumscribed space in which time is frozen in an a-historical eternity, the eternity of the "reigns of the gods" (*kami no yo*) of mythical memory. Kuki's fourth type of temporality presents all the characteristics of imperial time, the Japanese emperor being a reminder of his sacred ancestors, all living in the eternal present. Before drawing a hasty conclusion, however, we should not forget that Kuki was deeply imbued with the education of the Meiji period, a time when the emperor stood as the symbol that had crushed the feudalism of the shōgunal regime, rather than as the symbol justifying the atrocities of the contemporary military regime. If I am allowed to borrow the language that Bergson developed in *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion* (*The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 1932),[49] a book with which Kuki was familiar, Kuki's spatialized temporality is ambiguously located between the closed society of moral obligation and the open society of moral aspiration. His philosophy of contingency was a centrifugal movement involving open sociability and dynamic spirituality. Its potential was somehow silenced by his philosophy of necessity (recurring time and eternal present) which was a centripetal movement of closure. In the philosophy of necessity, the in-group of family, nation, and race excludes the differences of the out-group. Once again, space (the space that Kuki had portrayed brilliantly in his poetry as the world of quantity, homogeneity, sameness) was privileged over time—the world of Bergson's "pure duration," heterogeneity, difference.

[49] See Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, transl. by R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).