

The Individual in Kuki's Philosophy

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Traditionally Japanese culture has not supported a strong concept of the “self” or “individual.” Watsuji Tetsurō, in speaking of this characteristic as an element of Japanese ethical thought from ancient times, observes that to speak of things like “my intention” would have been considered an act unintelligible to other persons and therefore taken as the sign of an “impure heart.”¹ For in taking only one’s own intentions and feelings into account, one would in effect be creating a division between self and other, and consequently disrupting amicable relations and interpersonal harmony. Conversely, individuals who discarded the “I” and gave themselves over entirely to the social totality would have been thought of as possessing a “clean heart.” For joining in the social fabric without concealing or holding back anything promotes a life of harmony.

This insistence on a clean or pure heart—without separation between self and other—forms the basis of Japanese ethics and is what Watsuji has called a “tradition of integrity.”² In this sense, prior to the Meiji Era the

1. WATSUJI Tetsurō 和辻哲郎『日本倫理思想史』[History of ethical thought in Japan], in『和辻哲郎全集』[The collected works of Watsuji Tetsurō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1962), vol. XII: 82.

2. SHIMIZU Masayuki 清水正之,『国学の他者像』[The image of the “other” in national studies] (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2005).

Japanese did not use concepts like “self” and “individual” in their thinking because neither of them was capable of capturing the sense of the “I within the totality” or dissolving the self within the whole. This way of thinking differs markedly from the concept of the self or individual in traditional European philosophy, especially as articulated in Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* and the “I” who thinks by itself alone.

Nevertheless, as Western ideas began to be introduced into Japan during the Meiji Era, many philosophers began to think in terms of an idea of the “individual.” Even so, the power of traditional thought remained strong. Given that no philosophical thought develops completely divorced from its cultural milieu, many thinkers continued unconsciously to reflect and be influenced by tradition and convention concerning the “individual.” Examples of this continued influence can be found in Watsuji’s ethics of the “between”³ and Tanabe Hajime’s “logic of the species.”⁴ Both Watsuji and Tanabe clearly thought of each person as an original individual and from there went on to articulate the problems that arise through estrangement from the totality, contingent existence, and the possibility of evil. Still, their final goal remains a return to a totality that transcends the individual, an abandonment of the ego-centered viewpoint. In short, Watsuji and Tanabe embrace the concept of the individual only as a stepping stone en route to a greater “whole.”

In contrast to this established tradition, Nishida Kitarō speaks of a kind of “true self,” the determination of which takes place as a “self-determination of absolute nothingness” and is necessarily realized through a process of “mutual determinations of and between individuals.”⁵ In this way, it is possible for individuals to determine the universal and in turn to deepen their own singular individuality.

At the same time, Nishida articulates this relationship between the individual and the universal not as a linear relationship but as a circle in which the determined universal in turn determines the universal. This

3. WATSUJI Tetsurō 和辻哲郎,『倫理学』[Ethics], *Collected Works*, vols. x and xi.

4. TANABE Hajime 田辺元,『田辺元全集』[The collected works of Tanabe Hajime] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963), vols. VI and VII.

5. NISHIDA Kitarō 西田幾多郎「私と世界」[I and the world], in『西田幾多郎全集』[The collected works of Nishida Kitarō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1949), vol. VII.

circular motion of “inter-self-determination” takes place in the dialectic universal, which is then determined by the circular motion itself. Here there are two totalities: the first constituted by the circular act of an individual, and a second which is the “dialectic universal” determined by this circular act. The individual, as part of a wider mutual determination of individuals based on the self-determination of absolute nothingness, is absorbed into a dialectic circular totality when the two totalities overlap. In a word, the individual moves toward the transcendent totality of the dialectic universal by itself becoming the whole of existence.

Obviously Nishida is not simply dissolving the individual into the totality as Watsuji or Tanabe do. In Nishida’s philosophy, we might say, the individual, by itself becoming the totality, aims at a transcendent totality. In the end, however, whether the individual becomes the totality or is absorbed into it, in the thought of all three philosophers the individual is oriented toward the totality. Perhaps we might even say that it is a fundamental characteristic of the individual always to pursue the greater whole. Setting aside the question of whether or not this tendency is a vestige of traditional Japanese thought, the larger question remains of whether the singularity of an individual is realized only insofar as that individual is directed towards the totality, and thus towards assimilation or integration into the whole. Or is the unique meaning of the “individual” rather realized precisely at the that which *separates* it from the totality?

To pursue this question of “true individuality” we need to look more closely at the relationship between the “totality” and the “individual.” In this paper, I present some thoughts on the philosophy of Kuki Shūzō, who devoted himself intensively to just this problem. Kuki approaches the problem of the relationship between the individual and the whole from two directions.

The first concerns the relationship between transcendent totality (as a concrete universal) and the individual in the sense in which Nishida and Tanabe approached it—namely, as the clarification of a concrete universal that nevertheless preserves the integrity of the individual. The second direction Kuki takes is a critical analysis of the idea that the meaning of the individual can be located in its process of becoming one with the totality (as in the individual’s reduction to the totality or its process of

self-determination). Ultimately, Kuki locates “true individuality “ at the point where these two directions meet, and defines this individuality as a relationship not to the totality but to others.

THE METAPHYSICAL ABSOLUTE AND THE INDIVIDUAL:
THE TRANSCENDENT TOTALITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

In *The Problem of Contingency*⁶ Kuki divides the concept of “contingency” into three levels—logical, hypothetical, and disjunctive. To begin with, logical contingency is an attribute belonging to substance, that is, a contingent characteristic of a general conception. Because contingent characteristics gives meaning to an individual, an individual may be regarded, on the level of logic, as a contingent being. At the same time the individual appears to be determined by causality and various events that take place on an empirical level. For instance, I was born because my parents met. But was the reason for their meeting necessary or inevitable?

In such cases we see a conjunction of two different causalities, a “chance meeting of two independent units.” If we retrace the steps of this causality, of course, there is always the possibility that we would come to the reason behind such a chance meeting. Even so, that cause would require the pursuit of another, and so on ad infinitum. Ultimately, the end of this infinite retracing lies in a “point x” that simply exists, an original contingency, this is to say, that exists in spite of its potential for *not* existing. As such, the problem of contingency on an empirical level moves us to a metaphysical, disjunctive level at which the very origin of the world comes into question.

Original contingency is thus simultaneously the beginning of the world, the oldest origin. To grasp the substance of this original contingency would allow us to name it the “metaphysical absolute.” In metaphysics parlance, this is the absolute whose very necessity arises only out

6. KUKI Shūzō 九鬼周造『偶然性の問題』[The problem of contingency], in 『九鬼周造 全集』[The collected works of Kuki Shūzō, Ksz] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980), vol. II.

of itself and which exists as the origin of the world, completely independent of all other beings. From the viewpoint of this absolute, there can never be found a reason for the existence of a given individual or event (on an empirical level), even if the chain of causality were pursued into infinity. For this reason, Kuki considers the empirical existence of individuals and events to be a matter of simple metaphysical contingency without any absolute *raison d'être*.

This being the case, in what way does the metaphysical absolute as the only truly necessary “oneness” relate to the individual and to various events? In a word, how does the metaphysical absolute as transcendent totality create individuals, and how does it make possible variety and difference? Does the transcendent totality simply separate the individual from itself, thus rendering the individual a singular and groundless contingency? Or does it deprive individuals of their originality, leaving them with nothing more than the “shadow of an idea”? In chapter 3, section 13, “The Metaphysical Absolute,” Kuki attempts to resolve the question of the relationship between transcendent totality and individual by thinking through the ground of the relationship between “original contingency and absolute metaphysical necessity, as well as empirical necessity and metaphysical contingency”;⁷ In other words, he examines the relationship between necessity and contingency in the Absolute, and necessity and contingency in the individual. We begin with the former.

In the attempt to uncover the reason for the existence of individuals and events arising in the phenomenal world through the pursuit of an infinite chain of causality, all we can ever uncover is this original contingency. This original contingency is not only the end point of causality, but also the starting point of the world and hence that which contains, potentially, all the events that will unfold in the future. As such, original contingency is not the final point of a merely linear trajectory but in fact a circle that contains all possibilities (as parts of the whole). Kuki understands this circle as the absolute: “Although original contingency and metaphysical necessity exist as one within the Absolute, they nevertheless form two centers.”⁸ If the absolute were characterized only by

7. KSZ II: 238

8. KSZ II: 240

necessity, it could not engender difference and concreteness in that, as a single unity, the absolute necessarily excludes change and negation. But if the absolute is seen to hold original contingency within itself, then the necessity of the absolute is destroyed, and original contingency falls from the realm of the metaphysical into the world—thus becoming the origin and ground of the world and the source of multiplicity and difference. Thus “metaphysical necessity is the static side of the absolute and original contingency its dynamic side.”⁹

Insofar as the absolute is not an empty abstract totality but a substantial and concrete totality, it cannot be reduced to either mere necessity or mere contingency. It must rather be understood as an intertwining of necessity and contingency or, as Kuki says, a “necessary-contingency.”¹⁰ The absolute is completed only by the existence of the relative and finite (concrete individuals and events). That is to say, the absolute as a whole does not acquire concrete meaning until it recognizes contingency as part of itself. This absolute *qua* “necessary-contingency” can thus be said to mark the dialectical stage of the “in-itself and for-itself.” Original contingency is a dynamic that disrupts the necessity of the absolute and begins the world, but it is only individuals and events that actually appear. Such a view reminds us of the relationship between the “self-determination of absolute nothingness” and the “self-determination of the individual” in Nishida’s thought. In relation to our first problem—the problem of the relationship between the transcendent totality and the individual—it seems that Kuki is in fact assuming a position close to that of Nishida and Tanabe.

Next we come to the “relationship between empirical necessity and metaphysical contingency,” that is to say, the question of whether or not there is any ground or reason behind the existence of the individual. In Nishida’s case, the assumption that individuals always exist only in relation to the dialectical universal renders such a question meaningless and irrelevant. Tanabe, on the other hand, a thinker as interested in the contingency of individuals as Kuki, argues that the contingency of the individual must be overcome by a purposive act aimed at the transcen-

9.KSZ II: 240

10.KSZ II: 241

dent totality, thus rendering the individual a necessity. For his part, Kuki takes an original approach to the relationship between the necessity and contingency of individuals in a unique and original way:

Every individual, as a link in the system of causality, reflects the character of an absolute origin insofar as it is determined by this absolute origin; insofar as every part is a part of the totality, the character of the totality is projected upon each part.

In other words, the individual's way of being and the absolute's way of being are the same. Kuki goes on to say:

The character of the absolute as “necessary-contingency” takes the appearance of fate as “necessary and contingent being” in each of its parts.... The character of the absolute as “necessary-contingency” manifests as the destiny of each of its individual members and parts as “necessary-contingency.”¹¹

In this way Kuki understands the individual's correspondence with the absolute as the manifestation of destiny. What character does the individual as a “necessary-contingency” take? Why is this character defined as the moment of “destiny”? To answer this question, we must clarify the sense in which the reality of the life of the individual constitutes a chance event.

EXISTENCE AS CONTINGENCY

The original contingency that tears open metaphysical necessity gives birth to a multiplicity of individuals in the world. Accepting their lives as individuals, human beings must have their own names, and act and live as unique and singular “I”s. Although the birth of any human being is contingent, every person maintains its identity as a unique individual, each regarding itself as a singular “I,” willing and acting and making decisions resulting in a myriad of different possibilities. According to Kuki this kind of “existence” or way of being is the real meaning

of the “true individual.” Accordingly, the problem he comes up against next is how to uncover the fundamental construction of existence, given the two realities of the facticity of contingent birth and the individual’s identity as a volitional “I.” He begins with a critical review of the reality of the individual, focusing on Heidegger’s thought, and then proceeds on to frame his own novel concept of existence.¹²

Heidegger’s existential analysis and Kuki’s critique

Heidegger defines human being as a “being-in-the-world” of *Dasein* (being-there). *Dasein*, in turn, consists of “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*) and “possibility” (*Möglichkeit*). This thrownness reveals facticity as that which is thrown into the world by chance.¹³ Conversely, insofar as *Dasein* is itself being *as* being-possible, it can disclose the world by projecting its own possibilities. However, because *Dasein* is always bound by “thrownness,” such possibilities are necessarily “thrown possibilities.”¹⁴ Heidegger therefore explains the existential construction of *Dasein* as “thrown projection.” The implicit ambivalence of *Dasein*, as both a “thrownness” and as a “projection of possibilities,” corresponds to Kuki’s concept of existence.

When *Dasein* as “thrown projection” is driven to anxiety by the sting of conscience, it finds nothingness at its ground. The possibilities of *Dasein* are not produced by *Dasein* itself, since *Dasein* is thrown into the world (“brought into *there* not of its own accord.”¹⁵). Furthermore when one possibility is chosen, this means that other possibilities are left behind. Hence, insofar as *Dasein* “always stands in one possibility or another, it is constantly *not* other possibilities.” Such a “not” is the same as the nothingness of *Dasein*’s ground. However, when *Dasein* accepts the nothingness of “thrownness” through an anticipatory determination and projects this nullity as its own possibility into the future, it becomes a grounded existence. According to Heidegger this grounded existence

12. Kuki, 「ハイデッガーの現象学的存在論」[Heidegger’s ontological phenomenology], KSZ x.

13. M., Heidegger *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972), 135.

14. *Ibid.*, 144.

15. *Ibid.*, 284.

is truly authentic. But what happens to the dual aspects of existence as “thrownness” and “possibility” in the context of such “authenticity?”

“Thrownness” has the characteristic of nothingness insofar as *Dasein* cannot come into being by itself. In this way the original contingency of *Dasein*’s own ground is exposed. But if *Dasein* must confront throughout existence the nothingness of this “thrownness,” is it not possible for *Dasein* to accept nothingness and become a grounded existence? Does *Dasein* slip away as well? Perhaps it would help to paraphrase the problem this way: When we confront the nothingness of “thrownness,” we stand motionless in front of this nothingness and recognize the groundlessness and contingency of our own life. Groundless “thrownness” is separated from the projection of possibilities toward groundedness by a definitive abyss. And yet, the duality of which the existential construction of *Dasein* consists is based on this very abyss. Thus when *Dasein* attempts to accept thrownness as a “projection of possibility,” it covers over and conceals both the abyss itself and *Dasein*’s original groundlessness and contingency. At the same time, it is through this acceptance of the “projection of possibilities” that the duality of “thrownness” and “possibility” is unified and overcome.

Kuki criticizes this unification for being based on concealment. Kuki’s goal is to take on the full reality of “being a thrownness” by confronting nothingness and searching for a construction of the concept of existence that takes into account the presence of this duality of “thrownness” and “possibility.”

Contingency as the fundamental construction of existence

Although Kuki admires Heidegger’s articulation of a “thrown project” grounded in the duality of “thrownness” and “possibility,” he takes issue with the concealment of this duality in Heidegger’s proposed schema of unification. In his essay on “Heidegger’s Phenomenological Ontology,” Kuki attempts to modify the concept of “thrown projection” in the following manner:

“Thrownness” is what *Dasein* has already encountered; it is a contingency. A project is never a purposeless project. In order to project, we must understand “thrownness” as a springboard to be projected

from. What is projected falls down, and then we encounter it. That is contingency.”¹⁶

Heidegger's standpoint is not one of contingency. Kuki pauses before his own encounter with “thrownness” and reassigns it a new role as contingency. Heidegger's articulation of the “thrown project” is best understood as a single, continuous motion from “thrownness” to “possibility.” However, if we understand the encounter with “thrownness” as a contingency, we find ourselves face to face with the fundamental groundlessness of our existence and cannot help but stop. It is from this contingency, then, that we begin to project our possibilities. That is to say, “thrownness” is not unified into a projection of possibilities by a “thrown project”; rather, contingency functions as a point of conversion and diversion at which “thrownness” and the “projection of possibilities” are simultaneously cut off from one another and bound together. Through this articulation of contingency, Kuki attempts to avoid the dangers of unification via concealment, and thereby to move beyond the domination of possibility and the future in Heidegger's philosophy.

Kuki, however, explains this contingency not as original contingency but as “existence.” What does he mean by describing this contingency as “existence”? Contingency, he explains, refers to the present, while possibility refers to the future. The contingency of the present in turn designates the moment in which “possibility encounters reality.”¹⁷ Although there are many possibilities in the world, only one is ever actually realized. As long as each possibility contains more or less uncertain elements, the realization of any possibility is contingent. Therefore any realization in the present moment involves contingency. In such a contingent reality we come to understand our “thrownness” and “groundlessness,” and to realize that we cannot, through our own personal strength and power, control reality. Kuki articulates this groundless yet *existent* contingency as the point of contact between being and nothingness:

Although contingency is only an infinitesimal impossibility, seizing this infinitesimal impossibility by its tip, gives “you” to “me” and

16. KSZ X: 87.

17. KSZ II: 209.

allows “me” to receive “you,” gives rise to possibility after possibility, and, in the end, finally corresponds to necessity.¹⁸

As the point of contact between being and nothingness, contingency is the moment at which we encounter the groundlessness of “thrownness” and the starting point from which we orient ourselves toward possibility. As a turning point, this articulation of contingency at the interface of “thrownness” and “possibility” preserves their dual natures without reducing them to one and the same thing. Contingency thus describes the abyss between the two terms and accordingly clarifies the true nature of “thrown projection.”

Such an understanding of contingency may serve to clarify the duality of thrown projection, but, as we have seen, when we are made to stop short at our encounter with thrownness, we are confronted with the fundamental groundlessness of our own existence. How can we project possibility in the face of such groundlessness? How does contingency allow us to move from groundlessness toward possibility? In the final chapter of *The Problem of Contingency* Kuki explains what it means to live in the face of contingency:

The most infinitesimal possibility in the impossibility is realized on and through contingency. By grasping contingency we engender new possibilities. In turn, possibility attains necessity. In this very development lies both the true promise of the Buddha and human salvation understood as destiny.¹⁹

Contingency is groundless and entails innumerable choices. Consequently, our present reality might have followed a different trajectory from the one it in fact did. Even though reality might not have been exactly as it is, still it does exist and this miraculous grace gives us the uniqueness of our individual lives. We recognize the uniqueness of “thrownness” when we take our “thrownness” as a contingency. By truly understanding this uniqueness, we are able to take up our own “thrownness” and begin to project possibilities. For Heidegger’s,

18.KSZ II: 188.

19.KSZ II: 259–60.

Dasein's own possibility is grounded in its "most authentic target" as determined by an anticipatory determination. However a possibility cannot belong to a target that destroys or covers over the contingency within *Dasein*. Instead, we can come to understand our own possibilities and act toward our future only by grasping the contingency of "thrownness." For Kuki, contingency is not only the abyss between the duality of "thrownness" and "possibility," but also the energy we draw on in order to move ahead with our own lives and—as detailed above—the very origin of reality.

A MOMENT OF CHANCE ENCOUNTER:
INDIVIDUALITY AND FUNDAMENTAL SOCIALITY

What is Individuality?

Kuki understands the individual as the contingency that is created when the original contingency of the absolute tears necessity open. Accordingly, the individual in Kuki's philosophy lives life as a contingent existence. Because existence as such is thrown into the world, these two forms of contingency—original and existential—do not result in a static state. Where *original* contingency tears apart and divides necessity in a movement that founds the contingent individual, *existential* contingency moves into the space opened up between "thrownness" and "possibility," "bearing with it 'passion' as the principle or life energy of the production of reality."²⁰ In this way, Kuki's philosophy invariably articulates the concept of the individual as the energy, motion, or force that rends unity in two so that the uniqueness or singularity of the individual is realized neither in a unified totality nor in the integration of the individual, but rather in the moment in and dynamic through which contingency renders necessity a duality. As we saw above, Kuki insists that this sort of "individual" and the absolute share a common structure. Lacking an absolute ground of existence, the individual *as* individual necessarily leaves behind or negates given possibilities in favor of others.

In this way at least, the individual clearly resembles the absolute inso-

far as the absolute holds within it a moment of self-negation (as original contingency). Even so, while it is clear that the absolute reveals its necessity as the singular ground or foundation of the world, where can we locate the necessity of the individual? Certainly, we cannot limit the necessity of the individual—a singular “I”—to the mere facticity of birth. The individual as such lacks any absolute reason for existing, and indeed the individual’s contingency stems from this very lack. Individuals, as opposed to the absolute, must take contingency as their point of departure, projecting themselves toward multiple possibilities and thereby existing in reality. By acting as a self-aware individual from the moment of birth, one begins to carve out one’s own world—or place in the world—and with it one’s own time, the unique time of a single life between birth and death.

The piling up of time and memories becomes, in turn, the individual’s personal history which increasingly comes to determine the very being of their “I.” Existence itself carries a particular history and, from this perspective, holds and maintains the self-identity of the “I.” At the same time, history itself appears as the force of the past that has determined the present being of the “I” and given rise to the very necessity for the “I” to exist in the present. Accordingly, the necessity of the individual lies in that individual’s self-history as determined by his or her projection of possibilities. Regardless of the accumulation of a unique personal history, we cannot resolve the contingency of our own origin or answer the question, “Why was I born?” Because we invariably inherit this fundamental contingency alongside our own personal history (and development of a self-identity), we are fundamentally “necessary-contingent beings.”

Even so, the more history an individual accumulates, the more that person is bound by the necessity of the past and gradually becomes estranged from his or her own existential contingency. This estrangement should not, however, be understood as an overcoming of contingency but rather as a lapse of memory. By forgetting their own contingency, one can come to believe that one’s past was something necessary or inevitable and then to approach the future from this perspective. Such an individual can no longer be thought of as a “necessary-contingent being.” Yet even in such cases, a moment of what Kuki calls

“destiny” can shatter the individual’s “deadlock” and break through the hard shell of a sense of identity built up out of their history and past, thereby revealing the long forgotten duality of “necessary-contingent being” and allowing the individual to rediscover the “true meaning of individuality.” But what is this “destiny”?

The chance encounter with others

Practically speaking, we do not encounter only the groundless, fundamental contingency of our existence in our lives. Our lives also contain choices and chance encounters; at every turn we are tossed about by the contingencies of changing situations and contexts. “When one (of many possible) contingencies has a central and personal meaning for an individual,” Kuki writes, “we call this contingency “destiny”.”²¹ In contrast to the fundamental contingency of existence, “destiny” designates the contingencies that we encounter in our actual lives, especially those so significant as to change the course of our life. How should we live with respect to encounters with such contingencies? Kuki explains:

An “encounter” is the contingency of a chance meeting between “you” and me in the present. The Buddha has said that “no chance encounter passes in vain.” Even though I may be restricted or delimited by my encounter with “you,” this encounter nevertheless opens up all the possibilities of my relationship to you in the future.²²

Such a chance meeting with others is further defined as follows:

The practical internalization of contingency is simply the self’s awareness of the interrelationships between innumerable separate parts. In the moment I encounter an other or others by chance, here or there, I internalize that other “you” in the depth of my own being, binding us together in both anguish and great joy.²³

The “destiny” of the chance encounter does not mark an encounter with my own contingency but rather the acceptance of the contingency

21.KSZ II: 224

22.KSZ II: 259

23.KSZ II: 258

of the other. While I can forget my own fundamental existential contingency and believe that my life is determined only by the necessity of my own history and historical identity, another's contingency remains a contingency: it cannot be assimilated into my identity (and hence historical necessity), and therefore persists as a contingency even in relation to me. Thus, when I face the contingency of another, my deadlocked sense of self with its apparently historically determined necessity is shaken. It is torn apart and a new dimension opens up. "I" become aware of a contingency that I cannot influence or control; I am made to see the existence of others and the existence of their contingency. These others do not appear as one side of the "I-you" pair, as an external transcendent, or as an absolute otherness. Rather self and other appear as the same part of a concrete totality and encounter each other as a contingent existence. I can imagine that I might have lived your life, as you can imagine having lived mine, and in this way we are brought to a profound sense of mutual understanding and commonality.

I am surprised by this chance encounter, and on the basis of a number of such unique encounters am gradually able to open up to the uniqueness of all others and all encounters, and thereby to the presence of contingency. Such encounters also break apart individuals' dead-locked sense of their own personal and historical necessity and thereby open them up to their own fundamental existential contingency. And it is this dynamic—of opening necessity up to contingency—that allows the individual to recover his or her "true individuality." True individuality is formed, that is, at precisely the moment in which my sense of (necessary) identity is torn open by a chance encounter with an other. At the same time, both self and other recognize one another as equally contingent parts and, in acknowledging this fact, relate and connect at the point of their exposed duality. Kuki concludes:

A chance encounter makes the self aware of the interrelationship of innumerable parts; at the same time, contingency *qua* "dual relativity" establishes a fundamental social sense through the disclosure of (real) intersubjectivity.²⁴

In sum, Kuki tries to think of individuality without favoring the totality or to the idea that individuality can only be fully realized in a totality. The individual as such, does not discover its own true individuality in relation to the totality but in the duality that tears the totality apart. And this duality, as we have seen, is accomplished at the point of a chance encounter with an other. In precisely that moment in which an individual's sense of identity and necessity is torn open by otherness, the relation between self and other opens up and true individuality comes to the fore.

This moment, in which we come to understand our own individuality, also marks the rupture of the perceived necessity of others and thereby open them up to their own individuality. Kuki therefore refers to the chance encounter between self and others as a “fundamental sociality.” In it, he believes, we can accept the enormous diversity of the world and of individuals such as they are. Without recognizing such diversity and difference among individuals, we cannot love others; without truly encountering others, we cannot empathize with them. Nor can we discuss the nature of the world without accepting its variety and range. For all these reasons, Kuki is deeply critical of systems of universal ethics like theories of natural law and urges us:

In order to prevent “morality” from becoming a mere fiction, and in order to empower our lives with a true sense of justice and right, contingency must be taken up as a stepping-board from which to move forward and face our inner selves.”²⁵

We might even call Kuki's final standpoint—the culmination of years of struggle—the “origin of ethics.”

25.KSZ II: 258