

The Contingencies of Kuki Shūzō

John C. MARALDO

Contingency is my topic, both the philosophical issue and its intersection with actual life. Now I would like to think that it is more than mere chance that got me invited to this occasion, yet, reading Kuki, I've been compelled to reflect on all the chance encounters that have defined my life and brought me to this moment. I wonder where I would have been without these coincidences and chances not of my own making; I wonder whether I would or could be myself without them, and what contributions are possibly due to me. It is customary in polite academic culture to recognize others for whatever positive things we imagine we have achieved, and to pretend self-responsibility for our shortcomings. But if chance occurrences so define our lives why not just reverse the customary conceit, blame circumstances for our shortcomings and give ourselves credit for what we and others like about ourselves? Why take responsibility at all if contingencies define our lives? This question, an ethical one, will reappear in a different form at the end of my talk today. For now I will begin by trying to recall some of the chance encounters that bring me to talk about Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941).

* This essay retains the informal lecture style of the keynote address delivered at the conference on which this book is based.

I suppose it was when I was a graduate student in Munich in the late 1960s that I read Heidegger's "Conversation on Language with a Japanese"¹ and first came across the name Kuki, in the midst of a series of mysterious pronouncements about something called *iki*, something that seems to have sent Heidegger into the thralls of rhapsodizing about the essence of East Asian art. That may also have been the first time I heard of Nishida, mentioned as Kuki's teacher who wrote the epitaph carved on his gravestone. I remember searching for that gravestone about ten years later, finding it after an hour's search in the damp, mossy cemetery beside Hōnen-in in Kyoto, looking again several years later and not finding it, and finding it again in 1998, this time with the help of a map the temple gave to visitors. It was probably not Heidegger's musings that sparked my interest in Japan, however, but my encounter in Munich with some American junior-year-abroad students who happened to meet me and tell me about the wonderful poetry of Bashō and D.T. Suzuki's Zen. So I became enthralled with Zen and haiku and things Japanese and—by many fortuitous circumstances and the possibilities afforded me—ended up in Tokyo in the early 1970s.

Kuki had gone from Tokyo to Germany fifty years earlier, in 1921, after studying with Raphael von Koeber at Tokyo Imperial University and learning of the philosophical rage in Germany at the time, Neo-Kantianism. After two years studying with Heinrich Rickert in the rather staid environment of Heidelberg, he found the allure of Paris too powerful to pass up and spent a year and a half there, and after another year or so in Freiburg with Husserl and in Marburg with Heidegger, he returned to Paris. The story of how Kuki happened to hire a 23 year-old student by

1. "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache, zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden" (1953–1954), in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Gesamtausgabe I, vol.12), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann 1985); translated by Peter D. Hertz as "A Dialogue on Language" (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). The comments of the "Japanese" in Heidegger's text were embellished from what Tezuka Tomio told Heidegger in an actual conversation in March 1954. For a critical discussion of the exchange, see Reinhard May's *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East-Asian Influences on His Work*, translated with a complementary essay by Graham Parkes (New York: Routledge, 1996), 11–20; Tezuka's version is translated therein as "An Hour with Heidegger," 59–64.

the name of Jean-Paul Sartre to tutor him about philosophical currents in France is well known, thanks to Stephen Light and Satō Akio. It is possible the young Sartre learned more of consequence from Kuki than the other way 'round.

It is not entirely clear to me how Kuki came to be so intrigued with the problem of contingency. Was it his encounter with Heidegger's themes of facticity and thrownness (that it seems he also introduced to Sartre)?² Did Sartre happen to know of Émile Boutroux's 1895 work on the contingency of natural laws³ or Émile Borel's *Le Hasard* of 1913? Or more likely, was it Sartre's discussions with Kuki about freedom, time and contingency in Bergson? Or had Kuki already come across the Neo-Kantian Wilhelm Windelband's *Die Lehren von Zufall* (1870) or Rickert's distinctions between essential, causal, and rule-oriented contingency? Perhaps it was not so much the books Kuki was reading as the circumstances of his life that turned his attention to contingency. His daily encounters must have imbued him with a strong sense of contrasts between European, "Western" civilization and Japanese, "Oriental" culture, between the artificial European split of body from spirit⁴ and the Japanese sensibility known as *iki*, between women and men as defined by two cultures, and—seemingly so obvious to nearly everyone he met—between the "white" and the "yellow" race. Perhaps Kuki began to live in a space of contrast as an aristocratic, wealthy, tall and slender man of forty impeccably dressed in the best-tailored three-piece suits who was still somehow unmistakably oriental to jaundiced European eyes. Michael Marra notes that when Kuki asked, "Why was I born Japanese," his answer was "Because of the rolling of the dice" (MARRA 2004, 15). In a poem from his time in Paris he contrasts the necessary world of geometry with the lived world of chance encounters, and so anticipates his effort to resolve

2. As Stephen Light points out, Sartre titled a draft of his 1938 novel *La Nausée*, "Factum sur la contingence" (LIGHT 1987, 20).

3. *De la contingence des lois de la nature*, first published as a doctoral dissertation in 1874 (BOUTROUX 1895).

4. Kuki himself lamented the artificial split between body and spirit he found so prevalent in the European world, and sought to recapture their unity in his poems, his poetics, and many of his philosophical essays. See TANAKA 2001, 320.

the problem of contingency. As wonderfully translated by Marra, Kuki writes,

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? (MARRA 2004, 52)

It was in Paris in 1926 that his thoughts on *iki* germinated, and we can connect his later work on this untranslatable term to the problem of contingency by noticing several crisscrossing lines. In both *Iki no kōzō* 「いき」の構造 [The Structure of Iki, 1930] and *Gūzensei no mondai* 偶然性の問題 [The Problem of Contingency, 1935] we find a logical, structural classification crossed with something that resists conceptualization and subsumption under general concepts—something betrayed by the concept of individuality—*iki* in the first work and contingency in the second.

We also see a hermeneutical analysis of conditions of concrete existence like temporality crossed with a palpable sense of the transience of life, one's infirm life here and now. We can also note the crisscrossing themes of duality and possibility. In *The Structure of Iki*, Kuki writes, “the main concern of allure [*bitai* 媚態, one of the principal factors of *iki*]... is maintaining a dualistic relationship, that is to say, preserving the possibility as a possibility.”⁵ In his treatise *Gūzensei* 偶然性 [Contingency, 1932], he writes, “The core meaning of contingency is the chance encounter of A and B...; it is the contact between two different things” which in the end of *The Problem of Contingency* becomes “the chance encounter between you and me” (KSZ 2: 302, 258).

Eventually emerging from his encounters in the sharply contrasting cities Edo and Paris, Kuki went to Kyoto in 1929. He secured a position at the university thanks to Professor Emeritus Nishida (SAKABE 2000:340), and as something of a black sheep among the faculty there

5. Cited in MARRA 2004, 7; translation adapted from Hiroshi Nara's in his book, *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shūzō, with a translation of Iki no kōzō* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004). The original is in *Kuki Shūzō Zenshū* (hereafter KSZ), 1: 17.

he began to teach French philosophy. In 1932 he submitted the treatise titled simply *Contingency* as a doctoral dissertation, with Tanabe Hajime as a reader. Miyano Makiko has recently pointed out that Tanabe criticized Kuki's treatise for its insufficient account of teleology as a constitutive part of metaphysics, not merely a subjective regulative idea leaving too much up for grabs (MIYANO 2006, 227–28). Kuki vastly expanded his analysis, slightly emended it in a way we shall see, and published *The Problem of Contingency*, a work five times as long, in 1935. But just as his struggles with this problem did not begin with an academic dissertation, they did not end with this book; contingency is a focus in numerous poems and essays, many translated by Marra, and it is the theme of several systematic treatises and lectures collected in Volume Two of the Complete Works, including a 20-page piece called “A Logic Informed by Contingencies” (偶然化の論理 *Gūzenka no ronri*).

To my mind there are four features of Kuki's academic work on contingency that distinguish it from other treatments and distinguish him from other Kyoto School philosophers. First, Kuki gives probably the most systematic treatment of contingency, as a concept and a problem, in the entire history of philosophy (though he limited his treatment mostly to Western philosophy); and his systematic style of analysis differs greatly from the more meandering kind of writing we find in Nishida, Tanabe, Nishitani and others. Second, his evaluation of contingency as a reality to be appreciated, not overcome, contrasts with its traditional devaluation relative to the search for necessity, laws, regularity, invariance, and predictability in nature and life. Kuki's evaluation also contrasts with the emphasis on transcendence in existentialist philosophy, and with Nishida's and Tanabe's self-determining absolute. Third, Kuki regards metaphysics as the only discipline that thematizes contingency as such, and he regards contingency as the primary problem of metaphysics, because it ultimately poses the problem of why being at all, why not rather nothing. Of course by posing this problem he echoes Heidegger, Leibniz and many others; and by making the connection to nothingness he fits loosely into the Kyoto School. But again he differs from the absolute nothingness of the School by insisting on the relativity of nothingness, a non-being as opposed to being. Contingency, Kuki writes, “arises when some existence is intrinsically and inextricably related to non-existence.

It names the condition wherein being has its roots in nothingness, the specter of nothingness transgressing being” (KSZ 2: 69). Finally, as we shall see, Kuki connects in a kind of triangulation the contingency of the absolute, the contingency of the natural world, and the contingency of individuals and their fortuitous encounters.

Two other features characterize Kuki’s work on contingency. His dissertation and book both begin with a general, abstract and logical analysis but end with an appeal to a concrete, immediate and individualized imperative about the encounter of one and another, you and me. And Kuki is aware of the great irony in a general analysis and classification of contingency. A theory of contingency would be self-negating, in a sense: it would generalize the phenomenon and attempt to describe its nature or its general kinds, and would try to contain it under general rules or principles. The contingent features of contingency, as it were, would escape the theory. By its “nature” contingency refers to the factors that do not fall under the general plan or rule or law.⁶ For Kuki, contingency tests the limits not only of knowledge but of our power to conceive (KSZ 2: 316).

I would now like to present some details of Kuki’s theory by way of examples and issues different from the ones he chose. And I am aware of just how arbitrary the examples I’ve chosen are. Their general direction is to suggest how any appeal to a necessity generates a contingency. My intent is to have us discover on our own the pervasive reality of contingency that Kuki would have us see.

THE PLACE OF EMPIRICAL CONTINGENCIES

Where those necessities and contingencies are causal in nature, Kuki calls them empirical (or hypothetical in the later book). Empirical contingency is a central issue in a form of intelligent design theory

6. Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, citing Pierre Aubenque on Aristotle, has also noticed this irony, and writes “any ontology of contingency must, strictly speaking, negate itself as ontology as soon as it accepts the contingent character of being” (BOTZ-BORNSTEIN 1997, 493).

today.⁷ In short, this is the theory that evolution leading to human beings like ourselves cannot be explained by Darwinian natural selection which leaves far too much to chance and accident, that is, to contingencies. To explain the evolution of living beings, we must have recourse to a force or being beyond the natural world which purposefully directed or designed its development. The interesting point is that debates about the contingency of evolutionary life add a third concept to the standard pair, necessity and contingency. The debates distinguish contingency not only from the necessity of natural laws but also from the purported design behind natural evolution. So the three assumed possibilities are chance, law, and design. Michael Ruse, a leading scholar of the debate, writes that “we distinguish design from something produced naturally by law or something we would put down to chance.... Design has to be something which is not contingent” (RUSE 2003). Of course, these are not mutually exclusive possibilities for life; all three or only two could be at work in evolution. (We might also note that linear time is assumed, versus the cyclical or circular time that Kuki finds characteristic of the Orient.⁸) Natural laws necessitate what will happen once certain initial conditions are given, but whether a certain set of conditions obtains or not is a matter of chance. Evolutionary theory proposes that life forms evolve by natural selection: those that by chance are better adapted to environmental conditions will survive and reproduce; others will die out. The general idea in intelligent design theory is that the life forms we know on earth are much too complex and specified to be the result of such chance occurrences.⁹ I do not intend to evaluate the arguments here, only to indicate how both sides of this debate, and related debates as well, end up with contingencies—ultimately with primal contingency.

7. I discuss here the form that sees intelligent design as compatible with evolution, although the contrasting creationist form of intelligent design theory would likewise imply contingencies in its explanation of God's special creation of humans and other species.

8. In his lecture at Pontigny, France: “The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time,” in *LIGHT* 1987, 43–50.

9. Ruse examines the argument of William Demski, who tell us what specificity means here: “Events that are both highly complex and specified (that is, that match an independently given pattern) indicate design” (RUSE 2003).

Let us take a look at how this happens. Evolutionary theory says that life forms have evolved by chance alongside natural laws. The intelligent design side argues that evolution proceeds by divine design guiding natural laws, with chance occurrences accounting only for some aberrations. We can show how empirical contingency is a defining factor not only in cases that involve chance but also in cases that require the necessity of natural laws, especially those that have recourse to intelligent design. In the case where something occurs by chance, of course, contingency is by definition the defining factor. But even in the realm of natural laws contingency is at work, and in two ways. First, if something occurs as the necessary result of a sequence of events that act as causes, then this sequence can lead back to an original or primal contingency. For example, the evolution and dominance of mammals probably has a lot to do with the collision of the earth and an asteroid some 65 million years ago which extinguished the then-dominant dinosaurs and set earthly life forms on a different course. The asteroid and the earth were following orbits necessitated by the law of gravity, and evolution was following whatever conditions prevailed, however necessary. It was the fortuitous encounter of asteroid and earth that, even if not a matter of pure chance, opened up myriad new possibilities for life. That life forms had existed at all was due either to design and divine choice, or to myriad chance factors, or to natural laws that happen to be as they are. Any of these disjunct possibilities leads to prior contingency, even if the singular collision of earth and asteroid does not define ultimate, primal contingency.

The second way contingency is at work in natural laws is that contingent, unforeseeable factors can affect a causal sequence; such factors may be unpredictable in principle and not merely unforeseeable due to a lack of possible knowledge. An example (one that intelligent design theory would probably consider aberrant contingency) is a mutation in DNA caused by random radiation. Radiation in the environment can cause chemical alterations in DNA that in some unusual cases are not corrected but result in mutations and even disease. Once the radiation is emitted and has entered the cells, we could in principle predict the outcome if we knew of all the other contributing factors. That there might be a near infinity of such factors that happen to come together in

just the right moment would make it practically impossible to predict the result, but still not impossible in principle. What renders the result impossible to know in principle is the fact that the radiating particles are emitted at random, without determinate causes. The origin and thus the occurrence of the mutation are ultimately contingent. This is a kind of microcosmic version of primal, cosmic contingency: determinate causes eventually lead back to something that just happens to happen. In this case though we don't have to go back very far. Either on a cosmic or a microcosmic scale, contingency can and does play a significant role in naturalistic explanations of the world.

There are two other variations, which I mention in passing. Some physicists and philosophers regard natural laws as inductive generalizations with probable, not necessary outcomes. Contingency would play an even stronger role in that case. On the other hand, some physicists now question the reigning view that on a quantum level probability is all we have; they challenge the view that certain events occur randomly, without determinate causes. They suspect there are hidden variables that determine the course of any natural event (SMOLIN 2006, 316–26). Suppose that were true. Then the contingency would arise as the chance of happening to know all the relevant variables. And this case would define not only the contingency of our knowledge but also the contingency of nature: the more variables the more room for the contingency of any particular natural event or coincidence of events.

This discussion has devolved far from the debate about how nature works on the level of life. So let us return to that issue, and recall the argument of intelligent design theorists. The rather anthropomorphic notion of intelligent design implies an intention by a knowing, planning, perhaps scheming mind. The theory of course places the mind in question outside the natural universe so as to confine the universe to occurrences that necessarily follow the divine plan (except for things that happen as a result of free human choices). So, according to intelligent design theory, necessity reigns in the world of natural evolution (absent the aberrant contingencies that do not affect evolution on a large scale), and outside that world we have an intention, a plan of how life will evolve. Modeled after commonsense notions of human plans, the divine plan is thought to be the free intention of a divine power. But divine

design usually assumes divine freedom which entails choice and contingency. So contingency is merely deferred, set outside the natural world. After all, the divine designer could have created a different design, could have acted otherwise. In other words, the evolution of intelligent life may be designed rather than occurring by chance, but which design it follows is up to the intelligent designer who could have produced a very different plan. If God designs freely, then God's particular plan is contingent upon what God happens to choose. Further, if God creates freely, then it is God's choice whether to create any world at all; creation is entirely gratuitous, free, and contingent (a view that for some philosophers represents "the Christian distinction" from other views of creation (HART 2003)). Precisely when one accepts the intelligent design hypothesis, one is compelled to embrace ultimate contingency.

Suppose we imagine a designer that had to create just as it in fact did. Suppose we imagine a necessitated design as Leibniz implied in arguing that God necessarily had to make this the best of all possible worlds. If Leibniz's God is to create a world at all, then God is constrained by his nature to make this world the best of all possible worlds. Not only is God's existence necessary, but also, Leibniz says, the kind of world God can create. (It is not entirely clear whether Leibniz thinks that God must create a world.) So far, then, in this view, there is no contingency in God's existence and no contingency in how the world happens to be. Is there room for contingency in God's nature? Given a certain nature by definition, God has to be. God's necessary existence is a feature of God's essence. How necessary is that essence? There are two questions here: First, if it is necessary that God be perfect, does it follow that it is necessary that God create a world? Does a necessarily existent and perfect being have to create a contingent being? (Of course, the terms necessary and contingent imply one another, but that is not to say God has to create.) If a perfect, necessary being does not have to create a world at all, then the fact of creation is contingent. Second, how necessary is this definition of God? The history of religions provides a great variety of definitions of divinity, and even the Christian history that Leibniz shares does not compel us to settle on his definition. But more to the point, is this definition necessary for intelligent design theory? Does an intelligent designer have to be a perfect, necessary being? As far as I know,

the arguments of intelligent design theorists do not employ this notion at all. Even the supposition of a necessary design leaves room for the ultimate contingency of the designer's choice and perhaps the designer's nature. (Leibniz may not be thinking in terms of "design." But does that matter?)

An interesting alternative to classical Western notions of God is Spinoza's view, which allows for no contingency in God or nature at all, including human beings.¹⁰ Kuki notes that the kind of contingency recognized by Spinoza is a seeming contingency due to a lack in human knowledge (KSZ 2: 302). Humans may not perfectly know the causes of things, and so mistakenly think that some things and events are contingent. While Spinoza would argue that humans cannot have been otherwise than to have imperfect knowledge, Kuki might think this imperfection introduces a genuine contingency in two ways: first, given that imperfection might be a necessary feature of humans, the possibility of any human knowing more or less than s/he happens to know would introduce a contingency. Secondly, the very difference between the two modalities, God's perfect knowledge and human imperfect knowledge, implies the possibility of an other to each. (Spinoza explicitly equates possibility with contingency; he writes *vel contingens vel possibilis* (*Ethica* I, 33, Schol. I, cited in KSZ 2: 307).) As we shall see, for Kuki it is a duality that generates contingency; in this case, the duality of infinite divine knowledge versus finite human knowledge, as opposed to the monism better reflected in Spinoza's formula, *Deus sive Natura*. Ironically, it is no accident that the idea of contingency or possibility plays a role in Spinoza's discussions.

Another interesting alternative is the notion of God and creation that we find in process theology. Charles Hartshorne for example argues that for a necessarily existing God to know a contingent world, God must have contingent aspects. God's actuality, the manner in which God

10. But Kuki also notes that Spinoza contrasts the notion of God as self-cause (*aseitas*) with the notion of individual things that are caused by something else (*abaleitas*), and writes, "to the extent that the existence of things is not found to be necessarily specified or necessarily excluded, I call such individual things contingent" (*Ethica* IV, def. 3).

exists, interacts with the contingencies of the world and thus is in process rather than necessarily fixed for all time or in eternity. The activity of God's creatures continually changes God's experience of them.

Here I will not go into the intricacies of process theology, or its connection to evolutionary theory. Nor do I wish to evaluate the arguments for and against intelligent design theory, or Leibniz's or Spinoza's views, or those of process theology. What I do wish to emphasize is the central role of contingency in all these proposals. They all would exemplify what Kuki took to be the inevitability of contingency in our world as well as the inextricable link between the two problems of contingency and necessity. Kuki tried to capture this link in a phrase he borrowed from Novalis: "primal contingency as absolute necessity" (KSZ 2: 304). Primal contingency (Kuki alludes to the *Urzufall* of Friedrich Schelling) refers to the metaphysical contingency that ultimately can trump any actualities that appear as necessary from a more restricted perspective, or that appear as necessities which happen to encounter one another. Let us return to our example of living beings to see how that works.

We began by speaking of the issue of empirical contingency in the debates over intelligent design. This kind of contingency is expressed in hypothetical judgments (Kuki uses Kant's classification) such as, "if p then q "; "if living beings evolved, then by design." The contingency comes in when the possibility is introduced that p may not entail q , evolution may not entail design. But the same initial situation can be expressed in logically simpler, categorical judgments, such as "living beings are designed beings." Logical or categorical contingency lies in the non-identity of p and q , living beings and designed beings, that is, in the possibility that being designed is not essential to being a living thing. Finally, we can regard a given categorical judgment or a given hypothetical judgment as just one distinctive case of a disjunctive judgment, such as, "either living beings are designed, or they are accidentally and naturally selected, or both in part." Here we reach the level of metaphysical contingency, the baseline possibility that things could be otherwise than they are and that any particular thing might not be at all.

In his doctoral dissertation Kuki proposes, then, that the same event or thing can be considered from the perspective of the three different kinds of judgment, categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive, yielding

the three types of contingency, logical, empirical and metaphysical. He suggests, moreover, that a seeming necessity might be a mere contingency from the metaphysical perspective. For example, the purported necessity that evolved living beings be purposely designed might be a mere contingency: they might have been created all at once, they might not have been created at all, they might not have been. Primal contingency names the possibility of this nothingness.

Kuki also stresses that the three types of contingency are interrelated in a specific and hierarchical way. Each not only has a core meaning, but those core meanings are rooted in one another. The core meaning of logical contingency lies in individuality, which is rooted in chance encounter, the core meaning of empirical contingency. Empirical contingency in turn is rooted in the possibility of not being, that is, in metaphysical contingency. Furthermore, all three types require plurality as opposed to monistic necessity. Let me expand on Kuki's sparse comments (KSZ 2: 315–16) to try to make sense of this order. Individual things are at the heart of the idea of logical or categorical contingency. When we make categorical judgments like “Ps are Qs” we obviously categorize individual things; we place them under general concepts. But the general concept does not make individual things identical to one another. To recall the case of evolutionary theory again, this living being is not that living being, whether or not they both count as beings that evolve according to designed laws of nature. They are defined by difference as much as commonality, and that means each is different from the other and each could be otherwise. Further, the evolution occurs, in Kuki's terms, through a series of events that encounters another series of events and so forth, in a pattern, designed or not, that is variable. The particular encounters or interactions that occur could be otherwise, and other individuals could arise and perish. Kuki implies that chance encounter is a principle of individuation. And since it is possible that particular chance encounters not take place, it is possible that something not be (and thus “deviates from the absolute necessity of the Absolute,” Kuki writes).

Together the three types of contingency presuppose a plurality rather than a monism. To be precise, Kuki first writes of duality rather than plurality, but I think the meaning there is ambiguous. Let us first sup-

pose Kuki means simply more than one. “The possibility that something not be is fundamentally a rebellion against unity,” he says (KSZ 2: 316). Kuki’s avoidance of a term like non-duality may well be deliberate; Sakabe Megumi has suggested that his philosophy of contingency hints at a rebellion against the totalitarian or totalizing tendencies he found in Nishida’s predicate logic at the time, as well as in Watsuji’s notion of a greater whole that subsumes individual relations.¹¹ But how exactly do the three types of contingency presuppose plurality? Again we need to fill in Kuki’s thesis here. On the logical or categorical level, a singular term or subject as it functions in judgments is necessarily self-identical and carries no possibility of being different. Possibility and differentiation arise when one term is opposed to another or predicated by different general concepts. Logical contingency requires the existence of more than one term. On the empirical level of hypothetical judgments, Kuki himself gives us an example: “In tracing the origin of individuals we posit a duality as opposed to a unity. A chance encounter requires two people or things” (KSZ 2: 316). On the metaphysical level, a strict (and probably inexpressible) monism requires necessity and excludes possibility; plurality on the other hand allows for the possibility of being otherwise that is expressed explicitly in disjunctive judgments. In sum, you have to have two (or more) to have contingency and, as Kuki will suggest, you have to have contingency to have two (or more).

ETHICS AND THE PLACE OF CONTINGENT SELVES

In the end Kuki’s book, *The Problem of Contingency*, clarifies the ambiguity about the meaning of duality. The book makes it clearer that the crux of contingency is the difference between self and other. This theme in turn introduces the connection between contingency and ethics, a theme barely broached by Kuki. Although this fragile connection is explicit only in the conclusions of the dissertation and the book—much more prominently in the book’s conclusion—it is facilitated by a some-

11. In a discussion of his paper, “Kuki Shūzō on Contingency,” read at a workshop on Japanese philosophy, Lake Forest College, Illinois, April 23, 1990.

what surprising conjunction between Kuki's analyses of contingency in the natural world and his examples from the human social world. I see this as a conjunction between a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of selfhood; and I use the word conjunction to suggest the contingent quality of the connections. Kuki's philosophy of nature is implicit in the rather abstract analysis of the three types of contingency modeled after Kant's three types of relations in judgments: categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive. Kuki's philosophy of selfhood is implicit in the kind of concrete examples he chooses which are often existentialist in tone. A four-leaf clover is one of Kuki's examples of contingency in the natural world, as are my examples from the intelligent design debate. A chance encounter of two people is an example of contingency in the social world. The existentialist examples take on a greater role as Kuki's work progresses, and we can see this both from their frequency and from a revealing shift in some of his terms. He shifts from the more generic term *kobutsu* 個物, individual things, to *kotai* 固体 in the sense of the individuality of persons (*kojin* 個人), and he begins to speak of "I and Thou," *ware* 我 and *nanji* 汝, and of self or the one (*isssha* 一者) and the other (*tasha* 他者). He replaces the example of the chance encounter between two series of events, with that of the chance encounter between two people. Despite these shifts, however, Kuki retains his classification of the types of contingency throughout, another reason that I regard his analysis, in both the dissertation and the book, to conclude in a conjunction between two distinct philosophical approaches, philosophy of nature and existentialist philosophy of self, rather than a replacement of one by the other. Occasionally Kuki's examples fit into both approaches: that he happens to be of "the yellow race," as he writes, is both a natural contingency and a social, existentialist contingency that Kuki no doubt abruptly encountered in his sojourn in Europe.

Earlier I briefly mentioned Heidegger's and Sartre's treatment of contingency in terms of facticity, and I drew a contrast with Kuki who does not overcome contingency by transcendence but maintains its ultimacy. There seems here to be a conjunction with Richard Rorty's recent work on contingency and selfhood, and I would like to mention this as another indication of the abiding relevance of Kuki's work, unknown as it was to Rorty and still is to most other philosophers outside Japan.

Rorty opposed all attempts to discover or construe a universal human nature in the form of a rationality or moral conscience, an imperishable truth with which one could identify himself and perhaps overcome personal death and the fear of it. He argued for the recognition of the particular contingencies that “make each of us ‘I’ rather than a copy or replica of somebody else.” Contingency allows self-creation, as opposed to self-knowledge, and is in tension with “the effort to achieve universality by the transcendence of contingency.” Whereas traditional philosophy before Nietzsche downplayed particular contingencies as accidental appearances, Rorty says, Heidegger and Wittgenstein “write philosophy in order to exhibit the universality and necessity of the individual and contingent” (RORTY 1989, 25–26). This seems in line with Kuki’s project, except that in comparison, I would say, Kuki asks in a way more radical than Heidegger and Wittgenstein, what if contingency is the universal condition of our lives?

Our lives as individuals resist comprehension as particular cases of a universal category like “human being.” However we might categorize our individual lives, there is always something essential left over. As Nishida also says, an individual is not explained by attaching general attributes to a subject, no matter how many attributes we predicate of it. In a sense, individual selves cannot be “explained” at all if explanation requires categorization. For every categorical statement about me there is a contrary, and together they form a disjunctive contingency. Although individuals cannot be explained, however, we can situate them in an interplay between self and other, I and thou. I do not know whether Kuki chanced upon these terms in Nishida, who wrote his essay *Watashi to nanji* 私と汝 in 1932, the same year as Kuki’s dissertation, or in Jacobi, the critic of Kant that Kuki cites. In any case, Kuki seems to bypass Nishida’s and Jacobi’s recourse to an absolute as a third: the absolute other in me (and me in the absolute other) that Nishida proposes, or the transcendent, personal God of Jacobi that allows the I and thou to recognize and respect one another. Instead, Kuki proposes that I “interiorize” the thou that conditions me and that we interiorize contingency. “The interiorization of contingency on the level of practice,” Kuki writes, “must be what ties together the pains and joys of every existence, ties them together as the interiorization of the exterior thou

into the depths of the I, in the very moment of chance encounter with the other..." (KSZ 2: 258). If I understand Kuki right, this concrete interiorizing is not a case of making the other the same as self or of reducing them both to some abstract, universal sameness.

These remarks lead to the link with ethics. It is clear that Kuki opposes Kant's ethics, modeled as it is on natural science and the universal laws of nature. There is no place for contingency in such an ethics, Kuki says (KSZ 2: 317ff.); such an ethics will not be able to appreciate humans in their concrete existence. Now many philosophers, not only Kantians, would counter that the abstraction from contingencies is precisely the point of ethics. The point of ethics is not to make a special case of oneself, but to bind people under moral laws or imperatives that apply equally to all. What can an ethics based on contingency offer? I will not try to answer this question in any depth (I refer the reader to Graham Mayeda's essay in this volume), but I will try to draw together some finishing thoughts on Kuki's alternative. Most people would recognize two features of ethics in Kuki's proposal: first, ethics arises only when there is a plurality of us, many I's and thou's, you's and me's. Second, ethics arises from a recognition that things can be otherwise, that I can act differently or be different. Of course in ethics this possibility of being otherwise is not the contingency of pure chance or simple indeterminism. It is rather the freedom to be and to do otherwise, a form of self-determination. Rorty notes that many moderns see freedom as a recognition of contingency, but, we might add, not of just any chance contingency.

Kuki also seems to have a restricted kind of contingency in mind when he makes the connection to ethics. He writes (this is the conclusion to the doctoral dissertation copied in part in the later book):

If morality is not an empty idea and if we are to actualize it and give it some force, then we must esteem contingency as our springboard. The wonder with respect to contingent things is not something we must base solely on the present. We can also base it, contrary to ordinary reasoning, on the future. In creating a purpose for the future we can elicit wonder in the moment of a chance encounter. It must become a task for us finite humans to reinforce the wonder of contingency by invoking the future, that is, to truly accept contingency itself. Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land Sūtra* indicates as

much when it says, “Once one has seen the vow and power of salvation of the Buddha, the encounter never occurs in vain [観佛本願力、遇無空過者].” (KSZ 2: 317; see also KSZ 2: 259 for the passage in *The Problem of Contingency*)

Kuki’s ethical contingency is not that of happenstance, of how things happen to be or to have occurred. It is the contingency of a future we can value as giving life to the present moment of encounter. But where in Kuki’s alternative is there room for the guidance that ethics can give us? Kuki invokes the guiding hand of ethics when he goes on to transform the conditional statement of the Pure Land Sūtra into an imperative:

In order to give eternal meaning to the contingency that harbors nothingness and holds only the destiny of perishing, we must give life to the present moment by calling on the future. In the domain of theory, no one can give a perfectly adequate answer to Milinda’s question, “why [is it that all men are not alike]?” But if we shift the problem to the realm of practice, then we can give ourselves the imperative, “Let not your encounters occur in vain [遇うて空しく過ぐる勿れ].” (KSZ 2: 317; see also KSZ 2: 260 for the passage in *The Problem of Contingency*)

Here Kuki transforms the Kantian categorical imperative into an imperative of a different nature. It is not the hypothetical imperative that Kant dismisses; Kuki’s is not conditional and does not exactly involve willing an end: creating a purpose for the future is not necessarily willing a specific purpose. And unlike Kant’s categorical imperative, Kuki’s imperative is inclusive of contingencies. To adapt his own terms, it is a metaphysical imperative that, for Kuki, means an imperative to accept nothingness. Kuki defines metaphysical contingency as the possibility of not being, and so we might say that contingencies are the variable but inevitable places where nothingness is manifest in the world. If one nothing can differ from another, Kuki’s nothingness as non-being differs from the absolute nothingness of Nishida and Tanabe, and places him at the fringe of their School. If we take their philosophies to define the center, or the two foci, of the Kyoto School, then figures like Kuki at

the outer bounds might better reveal some overlaps with philosophers foreign to the School.

I suspect that many problems lie concealed, or perhaps not so hidden, in my attempt to clarify Kuki, explain contingency, and connect it to ethics. I have at least the consolation that Kuki offers when he writes that, when we expose hidden problems and carry thought to the limits of conceptual knowledge, a wonder springs up that defines the freedom and prerogative of philosophy (paraphrased from KSZ 2: 316). Let our philosophical encounters at this wonderful gathering not be in vain.

REFERENCES

Abbreviation

KSZ *Kuki Shūzō zenshū* 九鬼周造全集 [The Complete Works of Kuki Shūzō].
Kuki Shūzō 九鬼周造. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980.

Other Sources

BOTZ-BORNSTEIN, Thorsten

1997 *Iki*, style, trace: Shūzō Kuki and the spirit of hermeneutics. *Philosophy East and West* 50(4): 554–80.

BOUTROUX, Émile

1895 *De la contingence des lois de la nature*. Paris: Félix Alcan.

HART, James G.

2003 Aspects of intentionality within the Christian distinction. In *Ethics and Theological Disclosure: The Thought of Robert Sokolowski*, eds. Guy Mansini and James G. Hart, 69–101. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.

LIGHT, Stephen

1987 *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in The Early History of Existential Phenomenology*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

MARRA, Michael F.

2004 *Kuki Shūzō: A Philosopher's Poetry and Poetics*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

MIYANO Makiko 宮野真生子

2006 *Kotaisei to kaikō no ronri: Tanabe Hajime, Kuki Shūzō ōfuku shokan kara mieru mono* 個性と邂逅の倫理—田辺元・九鬼周造往復書簡から見える

もの [Individuality and the Logic of the Chance Encounter: What Can be Seen in the Correspondence of Tanabe Hajime and Kuki Shūzō]. *Nenpō* 55.

NARA Hiroshi

2004 *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shūzō, with a Translation of Iki no kōzō*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

RUSE, Michael

2003 Creationism. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2003/entries/creationism/>

SAKABE Megumi 坂部恵

2000 *Kaisetsu* 解説 [Commentary]. In Kuki Shūzō, *Gūzensei no mondai, Bungeiron* 九鬼周造,偶然性の問題・文芸論 [The Problem of Contingency, Essays on the Literary Arts], ed. Sakabe Megumi. Kyoto: Tōeisha, 2000.

SMOLIN, Lee

2006 *The Trouble with Physics*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

TANAKA Kyūbun

2001 Kuki Shūzō and the phenomenology of *iki*. In *A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Michael F. Marra, 318–44. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.