

Naming and Contingency in Kuki Shūzō

From Philosophy to Literary Theory

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The nature of names is an old and familiar question in the Western tradition of philosophy and linguistics. To put it generally, a name is defined as “a linguistic sign relevant to the stability of external reality” such as “things, objects, and substances” (EPU, 1752). The question of the nature of names engages metaphysics insofar as the naming or fixing of a permanent aspect of reality is involved. Given how the arguments over common nouns and proper nouns in philosophy of language continue to move forward in relation to concepts like “meaning,” “index,” “individual” and “classification,” there is little room for doubt about the complexity of the relationship between names and reality.

I come to the question of the nature of names and naming here by way of my interest in the thought of Kuki Shūzō. In a 1938 essay entitled “My Family Name” (自分の苗字), Kuki set out to examine the meanings of his own family name. The name is indeed a most peculiar one, composed of two sinographs that combine to mean “nine devils.” As Kuki himself comments, it may even be considered somewhat “strange” (KSZ 5: 58). In any case, the question of the nature of proper nouns does not form an important part of Kuki’s philosophical system. Indeed, in my opinion, it should never have been taken up as a philosophical subject in Kuki’s

thought at all, which may help explain why the essay has never been analyzed, or even referred to, by Kuki scholars.¹

That said, there is a sense in which this short piece on Kuki's family name, contributed to the magazine *Bungei shunjū* just three years before his sudden and premature death, may be regarded as part of the final stage of his thoughts on the idea of contingency. Kuki's philosophy of contingency, it should be noted, developed into a literary theory by focusing expressly on the art of rhyme for *tanka* and modern poetry. As the reader follows Kuki's free analysis of his name with the aid of literary theory, one sees the sound "Kuki" woven into a world of contingency through its encounter with other names sharing the same sound.

At the same time, it is important to note that the analysis of his family name is also an attempt by Kuki at self-analysis. As we shall see at the end of his essay, the name takes on the character of "prehistory, myth, destiny" (KSZ 5: 71). I would like to take this threefold significance of the name and connect them to Kuki's main philosophical notion of contingency. We shall begin with a brief account of how he viewed contingency and show how his other principal interest, literary theory, was an unfolding of that idea. Next, we will take up the essay "My Family Name" directly, noting how he took delight in playing with the sound of his name. This in turn will give us an opportunity to return to reread his philosophy systematically as a theoretical basis for an idea "contingency" oriented towards "literary theory."

NAMING: LITERARY THEORY AS A DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONTINGENCY

Philosophy of Contingency

We begin, then, with an overview of Kuki's idea of contingency. In a 1935 essay, *The Problem of Contingency*, Kuki asserts that contingency is "a problem touching on the core of the existence." The Japanese term *jitsuzo* 実存 literally means "real existence," a translation, in

1. Note that Michael F. Marra includes "My Family Name" in his selection of Kuki's light essays (KUKI 2004).

fact, that Kuki himself proposed. This “real existence” or *jitsuzon* is not an abstract one but the actual lived existence of each human being who “has his own way of being” (KSZ 3: 76). In other words, contingency is a metaphysical issue aimed at comprehending this sense of existence. Here “real existence” may be replaced by “world,” not in a static, abstract sense, but as a dynamic fact to be taken just as it is. Nevertheless, Kuki acknowledged that the real world “is not the sole possible “world” but one of innumerable possible worlds” (KSZ 2: 354).

It is a common, everyday experience to think that something might have happened other than it did. Visiting someone in hospital, you run into a friend. But for a few minutes difference in your schedules, this might not have happened. Or again, I happen to be Japanese, but I might just as well have been born Spanish or French. Simply put, things that happen outside of our control are a matter of “contingency” (KSZ 5: 29, 33).

As the above examples suggest, “contingency is a negation of necessity.” The contingency—*gūzen* 偶然 in Sino-Japanese—indicates “it happens to be so” (偶々然有る); in contrast, necessity—*hitsuzen* 必然—indicates “it has to be so” (必ず然有る). Put another way, if existence implies its own basis in and of itself, then it is considered necessary, and if it does not, then it is considered contingent. Contingency is thus an “extreme existence which lies in the interface where being and non-being come into contact” (KSZ 2: 9).

Kuki’s philosophy is characterized by a rigorous and systematic attempt to ground reality in contingency and categorize modalities of the way things are. We may therefore summarize the main lines of his thinking by taking necessity and contingency as “expressions of how we view the way things are.”

Kuki’s idea of necessity displays three modes: “categorical” (*teigen* 定言), “hypothetical” (*kasetsu* 仮説), and “disjunctive” (*risetsu* 離接). Necessity, in contrast, is founded on self-sameness (同一性), or the fact that something “is necessarily as it is,” and it is in these terms that the three defining aspects are considered. In *categorical* necessity, a relation “A is A” is constructed between a concept and a sign (*Merkmal* 徴表). Where cause and effect are one and the same, this aspect may carry over to *hypothetical* necessity, which may be formulated as “if it is A, it is A.” More-

over, hypothetical necessity can open up into *disjunctive* necessity in the form “A is A₁ or A₂,” where A is taken to be the totality of the disjunctive parts A₁ and A₂, so that a self-sameness is seen in the totality as well as in the sum of parts (KSZ 3: 122–3).

Kuki assigns these same three modes to contingency. *Categorical* contingency is known only at the level of a conceptual structure in logic. The corresponding formulation is “A is B,” where the relation between A and B is contingent. In *hypothetical* contingency, which has to do with phenomena as they appear in the experiential world, we have a series of causes and effects, that is to say “if it is A, it is A” and “if it is B, it is B.” Here the relation between A and B is contingent. The final mode, the *disjunctive*, is expressed in the form “A is A₁ or A₂” and is realized on the metaphysical plane. Here contingency has to do with the possibility of stating that A₁ or A₂ could also be another part, B. The relation between B as a part and A as the totality is contingent. In addition, the complete totality A implies self-sameness and is thus accompanied by necessity (KSZ 3: 149). This is the aim of Kuki’s philosophy of contingency, but just how does he explain the idea of contingency accompanied by necessity?

According to Kuki, we can probe the realm of experience for the causes of contingent phenomena. In this experiential world, the concrete and real world, contingency is “the fact that two phenomena, holding respectively different series of cause and effect, are set in an active relation” (KSZ 3: 134). Tracing a series of causes by hypothesizing a necessity that is at the same time close to a contingency—like two sides of the same coin—we can see how one series intersects with another at a common cause. We can trace the causal series back as far as we wish in search of a final necessity, but in the end we must come to a “primordial contingency”—*genshi gūsen* 原始偶然— or principal, as it were. This “primordial contingency” is the source of the “necessary” chain of causes that stretches backwards indefinitely. It is at this moment that the “experiential realm” shifts to the “metaphysical realm” of disjunctive contingency, in other words to “primordial contingency” as a fundamental “principle” (KSZ 3: 137).

In the example given above, being born Japanese implies a clear and undeniable contingency, while being born a human being is a primordial contingency. From the viewpoint of the hypothetical mode, primordial contingency corresponds to an unlimited whole containing all the

parts of experiential necessity that make up a causal series, while from the viewpoint of the disjunctive mode, it corresponds to an unlimited whole containing all the parts of potential contingency (KSZ 2: 146–7). In a word, Kuki proposed a contradictory structure of “necessity-contingency” (*gūzen-hitsuzensha* 必然-偶然者) which he took to be the equivalent of “destiny” (*unmei* 運命).

It is worth pausing a moment on the idea of destiny, since it will be taken up later as one of the meanings of the name “Kuki.” The philosophy of contingency is marked by the dynamic interplay of contingency and necessity as they conflict and harmonize with each other. I cite a passage from Kuki’s 1935 work, *The Problem of Contingency* :

Insofar as the absolute does not represent an empty abstract totality but a full concrete totality, it is not simply “necessity,” nor simply “contingency,” but rather a “necessity-contingency” that becomes meaningful through the mutual relation of necessity and contingency. (KSZ 2: 241)

The term “absolute” here seems to refer to the “metaphysical absolute” that Kuki mentions in general terms elsewhere. His allusion to “an empty abstract totality” points to the determinism of natural science that comes to term ideally in an absolute necessity achieved through a relationship between cause and effect. This was precisely the standpoint that Kuki sought to overcome. As a philosopher, his aim was rather to realize the philosophy of “real existence,” of individuals enjoying “their own way of being.” He therefore speaks of a “full concrete totality” that embraces the possibility of “chance encounters” 邂逅 at the same time as it respects the scientific approach. In other words, Kuki thought in terms of a whole capable of generating “meaning.”

Meaning can never be elucidated once and for all in universal terms but is always in some sense rooted in the concrete, where it takes shape always in accord with time and circumstances. Artistic creativity is an example to the point. Thus we may speak, on the one hand, of a *static* meaning that remains “empty” and, on the other, of a *dynamic* structure of meaning that is the origin of infinite possibilities of meaning in a “full concrete totality.”

Seen in terms of the contradictory structure of “necessity-contin-

gency,” destiny may be considered in the same way. Kuki summarizes his position:

When contingency acquires the entirety of personal meaning central to the real existentiality of human being, it is called destiny. (KSZ 2: 224)

The “meaning” Kuki alludes to affects the whole personality of the individual, but there is more: the awareness of things of crucial significance that can determine the whole of human existence results from an “internalization” of contingency (KSZ 5: 32). Thus being born Japanese and being born a human being are both matters of “destiny.” Kuki invokes Nietzsche to pursue the question further. Zarathustra, he recalls, preached to the humpback a way of deliverance. Even if he was born humpbacked, he could alter his destiny by willing it, by internalizing “desire to be born humpbacked of his own accord” (KSZ 5: 33–4).

Kuki follows Nietzsche in opposing the view that destiny removes freedom of choice, proposing that one “love one’s destiny deeply and become one with it” as if it had been freely chosen after careful reflection. It is here that he sees the “first step of life” (KSZ 5: 34–5), the ground of real existence. A life that has become one with destiny is the way to give meaning and value to destiny. In this way human persons come to express their own unique meaning, not as a universal class of existence but as thoroughly individual existences. Mere individual existence, we might say, deepens into “real existence” by grappling with one’s destiny and “becoming one with it.” Destiny is situated on the metaphysical plane of life, touches life at its limits,² and is able to transform one’s view of life completely. In this sense, it breaks away from the general possibil-

2. The idea of “limits” or “bounds” of the self is to be found in Nishida Kitarō, who also cites Nietzsche to explain what a “human being” is. According to Nishida, where the human being comes up against insurmountable difficulties, a real human being appears (NKZ 8: 55–6). Kuki’s argument regarding *amor fati* is a motivating force in his philosophy with its reliance on the necessity-contingency relationship to account for actual existence. Nonetheless, there seems to be a lacuna in his argument, as it fails to treat cases in which even the wise and courageous are met with serious difficulties. For instance, in the case of a political prisoner who has been submitted to torture and imprisonment, can one speak of a positive *amor fati*? Kuki’s idea of contingency is incomplete insofar as it fails to treat these instances.

ity of human existence and opens up into a “real existence” that only individuals can realize.

The foregoing has been a sketchy outline of Kuki’s philosophy of contingency. We may now consider the turn from philosophy to literary theory in his thought.

Literary Theory

Kuki gives two interpretations of the Sino-Japanese term for “literature,” *bungaku* 文学: in a broad sense, it means a “document” (*bunken* 文献), and in a narrow sense, the “art that takes language as its way of expression (or, makes language the path of intuition).” Similarly, he expands the meaning of “art” in the narrow sense to refer to “linguistic art” (*gengo geijutsu* 言語芸術) Japanese and “literary art” (*bunsei* 文芸) (KSZ II, 8).

Literature as *bunsei* is defined by Kuki as

artwork that considers the ultimate ground of realization to be the fact that existence is expressed (or intuited) purely in language without ever being controlled by other aims (or is known intuitively through language. (KSZ II, 6)

Here we see concrete existence, which Kuki considers the proper concern of philosophy, spill over into his definition of literature. As one delves into the essence of literature in search of clarity, one draws ever nearer to the problem of existence itself. Kuki conceived of a hierarchical structure among the human disciplines, according to which literature is categorized under art, and art under history (or human being, since in the final analysis, existence subsumes history) (KSZ II, 13). Scholarly study (*gakumon* 学問) is placed on a par with art, whereas philosophy is placed under the category of scholarship.

The place of literature in this rough scheme of Kuki’s depends on the narrow definition given above. But at the same time, he places literature under the category of scholarly study. In such cases, literature is far removed from “intuitively expressing existence” and focuses rather on “literary knowledge or the systematic knowledge of literature” (KSZ II, 13). In contrast with literature as a scholarly study, philosophy is referred to as a “fundamental comprehension of existence in general,” and the

originality of philosophy, as compared to morality, art, and religion, consists in the “comprehension of existence by judgment” (KSZ 3: 106). The differences between philosophy, morality, art, and religion are determined by modes of human being. Judgment is, for Kuki, something artificial, something added on to intuition. Put the other way around, intuition is more fundamental than judgment. Taken all together, Kuki’s schematics imply that art is best equipped to get a solid “grasp” on existence.

As we have seen, Kuki saw contingency as a question that touches the very core of real existence and can be traced back to a primordial form that harbors within itself the unlimited potential for contingency and necessity. Since “primordial contingency” manifests itself in intuition rather than in scientific method, it follows that the transition from philosophy to literature as the art of language is to be sought in primordial contingency.

Literature as *bungei* is grounded in contingent existence. Kuki describes two defining traits of art (under which, we will recall, he classifies literature): (1) “the nature of artistic structure is itself contingent” and (2) “art prefers to locate contingency in the content of objects.” The first trait implies that while scholarly study and morality are aimed at discovering “the necessity in the whole,” even as they imply a certain level of contingency as a “dynamism” that moves the whole, artistic work is “an intuitive and independent form of knowing” particularized in the “achievement of a certain state.” Thus, contingency is the final form of art. The second trait has to do with the way literature is subsumed into art, where art—and thus, literature as well—is seen as a contingency realized through the manifestation of “the play of life’s dissoluteness and arbitrariness” (KSZ 2: 221–2).

What is more, the origins and essence of literature are profoundly tied up with the question of temporality, since it is temporality that underlies the ontology of contingency. In describing literature as the “temporal art of language” (KSZ 4: 7), however, what concerned Kuki most of all were “rhyme” (*ōin* 押韻) and sound. The play of sounds is most apparent where contingency is in the fore, and this is nowhere more the case than in the present moment. Contingency emerges more distinctly in traditional poetic verses like *tanka* 短歌, *waka* 和歌, and *haiku* 俳句 than

in novels and dramas. Kuki felt a “beauty of contingency” in the kind of “passing wink exchanged between sounds and words” that this poetry discloses. A coincidence of sounds that “is “sharply pointed and permanently fragile” is better suited to “symbolize... the throbbing of life into poetry” (KSZ 2: 220).

KUKI'S NAMING

The Encounter of Sounds

We may now turn to the essay “My Family Name,” beginning with the short concluding paragraphs:

Although, of course, I love quiet mountains, I cannot stay my affections for the blue sea. Then, too, an inveterate fondness for the whole gamut of adventure and the bizarre courses in my veins. To this day, I cannot break the habit. Perhaps, when all is said and done, the ties of blood to pirates are too strong to break.

From ancient times my house has followed the custom of saying, “Good fortune in, Demons in” as we toss beans at the beginning of the year. It is an invitation to good fortune and demons to come together. Hiraga Gennai called for “Good fortune in, demons out,” but nature prohibited me from going along. Faust’s lamentation, “Oh, two spirits live in my heart,” never leaves me. My wish is to dance with the Nine Muses in a golden haze, but nine devils tie my hands and feet to the ground of hell. Nine devils! A name is not always just “voice and smoke.” It is inseparable from the body, it is one’s very nature (*myōtai furi* 名体不離 and *myōsen jishō* 名詮自性). To me my name may be my prehistory, my myth, my destiny. (KSZ 5: 70–1; MARRA 2004, 227, trans. adjusted)

This passage is preceded by remarks on the art of sound-play and word-play. Are the various sinographic homonyms for “Kuki” related to one another contingently? Kuki provides his own examples of such homonyms in sinographs like 久木 (red oak), 久喜 (long-lasting gladness). 久城 (eternal castle), 苦喜 (bitter joy), 久貴 (eternally precious), 莖 (stalk), 豉 (fermented soybeans) (see MARRA 2004, 222–3), as well as connect-

ing it to the French word *quequi* and the English word *cookie*. He then recalls a curious remark by Heinrich Rickert, the German neo-Kantian philosopher, concerning the universal phenomenon of the sound *kī* きー or *ki* き appearing as the final syllable of Russian and Japanese surnames: Gorky and Kandinsky, Miki and Kuki.

All of this may seem no more than a lighthearted toying with words, but it is not unlike the phenomenon of rhymes generated by chance. Kuki acknowledges the contingency manifest in rhyming as a form of the sound-relationships present in certain some homonyms. As for connections between words that share the sound “Kuki” but are written with different linguistic signs, and the connection between the way two different cultures use the sounds *kī* and *ki* as final syllable of names, we might ask whether this is all a matter of contingency or if there is not something more behind it. Could there not lie some kind of a logical relation, such as cause and effect, between sounds shared in this way (KSZ 2: 56–7)?

Kuki gives examples of the mistakes people have made in transcribing his name sinographically. 久喜 (long-lasting gladness) brought Beethoven to mind, and 久城 (eternal castle) suggested Wagner to him. To give more examples: Kuki sees his complex personality with its contradictory faces reflected in 苦喜 (bitter joy). Although blessed with great fortune, the grace of nobility, handsome features, and a talent for poetry, Kuki was not blessed with happiness, as his bosom friend, Amano Teiyū testifies. His life was both happy and unhappy, which his “contradictory personality” of excessive rationality and excessive sensibility may have had something to do with.³ The word 久貴 with the meaning of “eternally precious” might have been read as an allusion to Kuki’s background, though he himself makes no mention of the fact in his essay. Kuki, it should be noted, came from a distinguished family said to be descendants of a Kuki clan from in medieval Japan.⁴

Given all of this, the claim could be made that some of the words pro-

3. As for the relation between Kuki’s thought and the psychological insecurities of his childhood brought about by the love triangle involving his parents and Okakura Tenshin, see SAKABE and TANAKA.

4. The ancestors of the Kukis are known to have been a marine troop (*Kuki suigun* 九鬼水軍), a powerful clan, in the Middle Ages. The name is based on the actual town of Kuki in the Owase metropolitan area (Mie prefecture).

nounced “Kuki” are connected by necessity. The sinographs that persons unfamiliar with how he wrote his name chose to write it were quite a matter of chance, and it seems altogether fortuitous that in several cases they reflected his actual temperament. At the same time, there is a sense in which these homonyms cross one another to generate synonyms, sinographs (*kanji* 漢字) being an excellent source of synonyms. Thus the meanings of each particular transcription of the name Kuki can combine to elucidate the various aspects of a single, self-same individual.

Kuki’s interests extended to the custom of fortune-telling on the basis of the sinographs in one’s name (*seimei bandan* 姓名判断), and he makes several remarks in this regard. Such fortune-telling rests on the fact that there is no *logical* connection between names with the same number of strokes but only a contingent one. However, first names like Yukio 行雄, Tsugio 次雄, and Mitsuo 光雄 indicate that the “reason certain names are composed lies in their meaning.” A name with *o* 雄 is most likely used because of the meaning of the sinograph: “manly” (*otoko-rashii* 男らしい). Thus we have a semantic relation, or “a logically necessary relation” among names with *o*. In Kuki’s view, the relation of *o* sounds in different names is *necessary*, since it presupposes that a “logical relation lies between the meaning which the name expresses and the name itself” (KSZ 2: 55–6).

What, then, is the logical relation between a name and its meaning? Part of the answer may lay in what Kuki tried to express in the terms *myōtai furi* 名体不離 and *myōsen jishō* 名詮自性 mentioned in the above quotation, which signify the “inseparability of name from body” and the idea that “one’s name is one’s nature.” This seems to be the actual point of Kuki’s argument, though he leaves it concealed throughout the essay.

Let us look further at chance connection in the meanings of the homonym “Kuki.” Kuki the philosopher reflects on the etymology of the name of a rare fish called *kuki*. This in turn is associated with the classical term *kuki* 岫, designating a mountain grotto. The *kuki* is a river fish that lives in the water flowing in the recesses of *kuki* and it passes through the clefts in the rocks—or so Kuki surmises on the bases of a verbal locution: “to pass through” (*kuku* 漏く) is a classical verb of which the noun form becomes *kuki* written again as 漏き to designate the fact of passing through (MARRA 2004, 223–4; KSZ 5: 64–5). This association in turn

leads him to seek his own origins by tracing a causal relationship, ending up in a fishing village called Kuki 九鬼 or “nine devils,” which is located deep in a bay and has the look of a grotto (*kuki* 岫). The substitution of meanings with a common sound gives Kuki occasion once again to make connections. The geographical conditions of *kuki* would have attracted pirates and bandits, and these thieves, as a matter of historical fact, were regarded as devils. Thus the village came to be called Kuki and a particular man there was given the village name as a surname. This etymology of the name Kuki is fairly certain. The fluctuation of meaning between “grotto” and “nine devils,” it seems to me, assumes both necessity and contingency. In any case, we may now take the further step of looking into the relation between the existing person Kuki and his family name.

Real Existing Beings and Names

I would like to suggest that the three faces of the association between Kuki and his name—prehistory, myth, and destiny—that are mentioned in the essay’s conclusion, without being developed explicitly, can be interpreted in terms of Kuki’s own philosophy of contingency.

The *prehistory* of the name Kuki in effect led him back to a primordial contingency. That is, it resulted in the discovery of the meaning of *kuki* as indicating the geographical setting of a “grotto,” and the fact that a fishing village named Kuki was founded in a place where several forbidding caves stood lined up on the edge of the sea. This historical beginning was followed by a countless series of events, an interweaving of causes and effects, which culminated in a certain man happening to be given the name Kuki. This chance “naming” may be likened directly to the birth of a human existence.

The *mythical* dimension of the name might also refer to primordial contingency and give us further insight into the nature of naming. It is likely that what Kuki had in mind was the origin of the world symbolized by the name “Onokoro” (an island mentioned in the *Kojiki* 『古事記』, *Records of Ancient Matters*). He makes no mention of the island in “My Family Name,” but he does take it up in another essay, “Contingency and Surprise” 偶然と驚き, KSZ 5). I begin by citing from a passage of some interest from that essay:

We see that in the beginning there was movement, and from that movement primordial contingency was born. The expression “the time when the land drifted like a jellyfish” that we find in the *Kojiki*... symbolizes movement. Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto’s act of standing on the Heavenly Floating Bridge and stirring the sea water with the jeweled spear is another image of movement. Moreover the “churning-churning sound” (*korokoro*) resulting from the stirring of the sea is actually the same as the sound of the rolling (*korogasu*) die. The coming into being of Onokoro Island (Onokoro-jima⁵) from the piling up of the brine dripping from the tip of the spear symbolizes the same contingency we see in the appearance of one of the die’s sides. The name “Onokoro-jima” indicates the primordial contingency that has already come into being. The *ono* part of the word *Onokoro* is usually interpreted to mean “by itself” (*onozukara* 自ら); *koro* is thought to be *koru* 凝る, that is, “coagulate.” If we look for the etymology of *koru*, however, the word is probably a variation of *korokoro*. The island was called “Onokoro” because it tumbled down (*korobu*) by itself, coming into being by chance.... The word “Onokoro-jima” means that reality came into being fortuitously from within the movement of infinite possibilities. (MARRA 269; KSZ 5: 132–3)⁶

As we can see from this passage, Kuki’s invocation of the *Kojiki* entails a question of the relationship between naming and contingency. Kuki draws attention to “movement” before the genesis of the world, claiming that ancient Japanese myth saw it as a symbol of the contingency that accompanies the birth of all phenomena, that is, as the actualization of one out of a teeming abundance of possibilities. As Kuki notes in a comment on the passage, this movement testifies to a “dynamic viewpoint” or “mode of thought.” Drawing attention to this dynamism increases the pool of possibilities, both stimulating the search for causal relations and enhancing the role of play and encounters with contingency. The idea of movement may also be seen as conforming to the idea of “recurrent time” (*kaikiteki jikan* 回帰的時間) that we saw underlying the structure of Kuki’s philosophy of contingency.

5. Marra’s phonetic transcription has been adjusted here.

6. I have adjusted Marra’s use of “primeval contingency” to translate 原始偶然.

The attention to “movement” highlights a sense of contingency that we might call a “will to dynamism.” I see this as closely related to the act of naming. Why not interpret the movement as an act of naming, or in other words, an act of seizing on one from among countless possible names? I ask the question only to leave it aside for now in order to focus on the mythical aspects of the name Kuki.

The sinograph *ki* 鬼 in Kuki’s name can also be pronounced *oni* in Japanese. The word, which means “devil” or “demon,” is part of the name of the existing being called Kuki. In the mythical reading of the name, the fact that devils, which do not really exist, are mixed with reality only enhances the name’s significance. As we saw in an earlier quote, Kuki was aware of his inner demons, and the awareness of the mythical ingredient in his name gave him occasion to realize the devils as part of his destiny.

This brings us to the aspect of *destiny*. The link from primordial contingency to the actually existing being named Kuki is realized as a “necessity-contingency.” If Kuki’s complex background comes to the fore as a chance encounter of contingencies, so does the distance he feels from happiness in life as a result of his own contradictory nature. Yet all of this may be considered part of “destiny” if one accept it as one’s own reality. For Kuki, recognition of one’s destiny did not mean dispossessing oneself of possibilities stemming from one’s prehistory. If anything, it meant rather having the will to orient destiny towards the future. Normally one receives a name only once in a lifetime. This “once-and-for-all-ness” is something it shares with life itself. Unless one radically seize on the “infinitely recurring moments” latent in the oneness of the “eternal present” (永遠の現在), the meaningfulness of the fact of actually existing cannot deepen (KSZ 3: 195–7). For the particular existence called Kuki, the name serves to deepen its meaning.

CONCLUSION AND BEYOND

On the one hand, a name is a distinct sound—like the sound “Kuki.” On the other, a name has its meaning—in Kuki’s case, “nine devils.” Set in a broader perspective, the meaning is enveloped in a time

that includes the entire prehistory of the name, all the way back to its primordial contingency.

Here we may reintroduce the Buddhist terms that Kuki cites in his essay. *Myōtai furi* means that the name of Buddha we recite aloud is the very body of the Buddha who appears in response to our call. The expression describes the inseparability of body and name. *Myōsen jishō* asserts that the name of a thing expresses its own nature, or in other words, that it is endowed with its own nature.

For Kuki, body, or substance, represents the actual existence of the human being “Kuki,” and the nature of the body can be known as the nature of this reality. The logical relation between a name and its meaning may thus be seen to refer to a conception of logic as destiny. Following Kuki, we would speak of a logic of “necessity-contingency,” or in other words, a “logic” that implies an “illogic,” or more precisely, a “non-logic.” In this sense, the meaning of a name indicates not only a body or substance, but also the entirety of a prehistory beginning from primordial contingency. This is the real existing being itself, named as such, who is permanently living in an “eternal present” and seeking to make sense of its own destiny. It is the real existing being who reads the name “Kuki” 九鬼 and allows it to reverberate with a wide range of meanings associated with that sound.

The conception of naming that Kuki offers us, as expressed by *myōtai furi* and *myōsen jishō*, prompts us to take a second look at the notion of language he developed in *The Structure of ‘Iki’* (「いき」の構造, 1930). This suggests a new line of research into Kuki’s thinking, namely, a reflecting on naming and nominalism set in the context of the philosophy of language. Accordingly, I conclude with a brief remark on Kuki’s linguistic standpoint.

The name “Kuki” was a personal name—more particularly, a proper noun—while some of the homonyms we considered were common nouns. Philosophy and linguistics are generally agreed in distinguishing proper nouns from common nouns. Not so with Kuki. To underscore the difference, we need to focus on the nominalist approach he takes to the “concept” in *The Structure of ‘Iki’*.

Kuki’s nominalism is the foundation of his “hermeneutical” method, as witnessed in his examination of the word *iki* in its peculiarly Japa-

nese cultural environment, a word that seemed to him without precise equivalent in any other language he was familiar with. He adopts the term “nominalism” to refer to the idea that “universals” are not realities, but only names. The aim of his analysis of *iki* is not to seek a universal or abstract concept by extracting a general trait common to specific concepts (KUKI 2005, 24), but rather to understand a “concrete, factual, and particular” existence of *iki*, to approach *iki* as an “experience of meaning” (意味体験).

In the conclusion of his work, Kuki admits that certain unavoidable limitations of his thinking kept him from employing the method to understand the experiences of meaning concretely, and that in the end he had to rely on conceptual analysis (KUKI 2005, 146). But if *iki* is indeed a “self-manifestation” (自己開示) of a particular culture with its own distinctive history, then the sum of parts analyzed can never perfectly capture the existential reality of *iki*. That is to say, there is an unbridgeable gap between *iki* as an experience of meaning and the *iki* expressed in language. For Kuki these two approaches to *iki* need to be combined if one is to understand *iki* in conceptual terms (KUKI 2005, 150). Such was his scholarly method and his idea of language.

This leaves us with the question of how to explain Kuki’s “naming,” which is founded on contingency, from a nominalist standpoint. Linguistic expressions, which can be considered universal, are not reality but only names. How, then, are we to define a personal name if “a name is not always just voice and smoke,” but is also “inseparable from the body and is one’s own nature.” We might say that “voice and smoke” point to “sound and notation” as a *signifiant*, which thus implies a nominalistic stance. But Kuki seems to adopt *both* linguistic standpoints regarding personal names, and thus to land himself in a contradiction.

Is this contradiction in line with his overall philosophy of contingency? How are we to clarify the connection between the common noun and the personal name in light of Kuki’s contingency? “A name is not always a mere sound,” he insisted, and yet he was deeply moved by the beauty of sounds and was struck by the echoes that chance encounters between sounds produced, in other words, by the creativity of a chance encounter between sounds as opposed to what was scientifically demonstrable. Since Kuki was still developing his philosophy and applying it to literary

theory when he was struck down by an untimely death, it is left to us to pursue the further potentials of his theory of contingency in the light of advances in the philosophy of language.

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Abbreviation

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 NKZ 『新版 西田幾多郎全集』 [Complete works of Nishida Kitarō, New edition] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003-2009), 24 volumes.

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