

The Flower Blossoms 'Without Why'

Beyond the Heidegger-Kuki Dialogue on Contemplative Language

STEVEN HEINE

Introduction: The Japanese Dialogue with a German

Martin Heidegger's apparent fascination and affinity with Japanese Buddhist thought is demonstrated in several ways. For example, he is said to have remarked upon reading D. T. Suzuki's modern exposition of Zen, "If I understand this man correctly, this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings."¹ Heidegger also is reported to have responded when shown the Ten Oxherding Pictures by Tsujimura Koichi by pointing out the correspondence between the Zen saying in picture nine, "The flowers blossom just as they blossom," and the mystical poem of Angelus Silesius he discussed extensively in *Der Satz vom Grund*, "The rose is without why/it blossoms/because it blossoms."² As Ueda Shizuteru comments, Heidegger's concern, like that of Zen, is to express reality from a contemplative standpoint as a "simple, pure emergence out of itself" or an "infinite openness of nothingness." Reality is thereby directly experienced as it is "without why" in a way prior to the abstraction, speculation, and rationaliza-

¹ Reported by William Barrett in "Zen for the West," an *Introduction to Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki*, ed. William Barrett (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956): xi.

² Noted by Ueda Shizuteru, "The Zen Buddhist Experience of the Truly Beautiful," *The Eastern Buddhist*, xxii/1: 4. As Ueda points out, Heidegger reads "because" (*weil*) as "while." Also, as indicated in the conclusions below, Ueda argues that from the Zen perspective Heidegger never fully abandons his search for the reason or ground of why.

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

tion of conceptual thinking so that "(t)here is nothing between reality and the words."³

In the 1920's Heidegger had close contact with and exerted a tremendous philosophical influence on a number of intellectuals who went on to become the leading thinkers of twentieth-century Japan. Several figures associated with the Kyoto-school, including Watsuji Tetsurō, Tanabe Hajime, Nishitani Keiji, and Kuki Shūzō, studied with Heidegger in Germany and later acknowledged their indebtedness to him even as they criticized his method of hermeneutic phenomenology.⁴ Yet, despite his personal familiarity with Japanese thinkers and ideas, Heidegger was very cautious and reluctant about overstating the connections between Eastern and Western thought. Rather, in "A Dialogue on Language, between a Japanese and an Inquirer," he stresses to the Japanese participant the "danger" inherent in East-West dialogue which is based on limitations in language itself. That is, fundamental structural differences in language, though at times inconspicuous, create an insurmountable impasse to any attempt at genuine encounter between two modes of human existence. Heidegger has referred to language as the "house of Being" and notes regretfully, "we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely different house than Eastasian man. . . . And so, a dialogue from house to house remains nearly impossible."⁵ On the one hand, Heidegger's reluctance is due to his commitment to overcoming Western onto-theological thinking on its own terms without resorting to answers superficially gleaned from another tradition. At the same time, he is mindful of the tendency, to which Japanese themselves fall prey, to corrupt Eastasian thought by reducing it to seemingly handy Western metaphysical categories.

Thus Heidegger's attitude is a mixture of approach and avoidance. What is the attraction of Eastasian thought for Heidegger, and what

³ Ibid: 12-15.

⁴ In particular Watsuji is known for his critique of what he considers Heidegger's overemphasis on temporality while overlooking the function of spatiality including geography and climate, in *Fudō ningengakuteki kōsatsu* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939).

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, tr. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971): 3. In another context Heidegger uses the term "danger" in a different sense to refer to the deficiencies of the technological era of "enframing" (*Gestell*).

are the factors underlying the danger he considers implicit in dialogue? Does this danger outweigh any benefit of philosophical exchange, or can it be overcome? Aside from a few references to the Chinese notion of Tao, Heidegger's only sustained discussion concerning the East remains "A Dialogue on Language," based on a 1953/54 conversation he held with Tezuka Tomio, noted translator of German literature including Holderlin and Rilke as well as some of Heidegger's works.⁶ Heidegger met with Tezuka to commemorate the death of Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941), best known for his monograph *'Iki' no kōzō* (The Structure of 'Iki'), a modern hermeneutic presentation of the Tokugawa era literary ideal of *iki*, generally translated as "chic" or "style," as the key to understanding the true nature of Japanese aesthetics and culture.⁷ Kuki was one of the Japanese scholars with whom Heidegger had the most intimate personal association, and he was also a teacher of Tezuka.⁸ It seems that Kuki's focus on aesthetics may have been a factor helping inspire Heidegger's famous "turn" (*Kehre*) from his existentialist concerns in *Being and Time* to the interpretations in his later writings of poetry and art as conducive to a naturalist disclosure of Being.

The discussion between Heidegger and Tezuka begins with an attempt to uncover the meaning of *iki*, about which Heidegger confesses he "never had more than a distant inkling"⁹ from Kuki's own explanations. From this starting point the goal of the dialogue is ultimately directed toward discerning the point of convergence between the non-metaphysical tradition of Japanese thought, which Heidegger assumes was never plagued by the presuppositions of Western substantive on-

⁶ A list of Tezuka's works appears in *Tezuka Tomio zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1981), volume 7: 435–57. Tezuka discusses his conversation with Heidegger in "Haideggaa tonō ichijikan" as part of his translation of the dialogue, *Kotoba ni tsuite no taiwa* (Tokyo: Risōsha, 1968): 159–66.

⁷ Kuki's monograph appears as the first work in volume I of *Kuki Shūzō zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1981): 7–85.

⁸ For a detailed discussion of Kuki's travels and studies in Europe in the 1920's including his meetings with Heidegger, Sartre, and others, see Stephen Light, *Shūzō Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Early History of Existential Phenomenology* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987). Light examines the "legend" that it was Kuki who first introduced Sartre to Heidegger.

⁹ Heidegger: 2.

tology, and modern post-metaphysical philosophy, still struggling to overcome the legacy of the Platonic-Christian onto-theological tradition. But the participants are the first to admit that the dialogue seems to fail in reaching its aims. The Japanese's description of *iki* as the "sensuous radiance through whose lively delight there breaks the radiance of something suprasensuous"¹⁰ remains unsatisfying to the Inquirer. Heidegger suspects that Kuki and Tezuka have succumbed to the danger by allowing Western metaphysical bifurcations of sensuous (*aistheton*) and nonsensuous (*noeton*), real and ideal, material and spiritual reflecting "the complete Europeanization of the earth and of man" to distort the presentation of Eastasian art so that it "is obscured and shunted into a realm that is inappropriate to it."¹¹ Tezuka attempts to introduce Heidegger to Noh drama, with which the Inquirer is unfamiliar, and Heidegger presses Tezuka to step outside the context of *iki* and explore the implications of the Japanese understanding of language (*kotoba*) in philosophy and aesthetics, but this also ends on a tentative and inconclusive note. In this case Heidegger, despite his sensitivity to the problem of violating Eastern thought, may distort the genuine Japanese view when he uses some of his trademark terminology to define *koto* (words) as "the appropriating occurrence of the lightening message of grace."¹²

For Heidegger, the dialogue must fail because it is undermined at its root by the danger, so that in stepping out of one's own house of being to reach an empathetic appreciation of the other's house, the original viewpoint is lost and yet the new one is not satisfactorily gained. That is, "The language of the dialogue constantly destroy[s] the possibility of saying what the dialogue [is] about."¹³ However, Heidegger's conclusion may be somewhat too drastic and misleading because it is based largely on his inability to fathom the meaning of *iki*, and this in turn is due not so much to inherent limitations or discrepancies in language as the inappropriate representation and use of *iki* in the dialogue. Kuki argues that *iki* cannot be translated by a single word into any European language. "Therefore, it is justifiable," he writes, "to consider '*iki*' a

¹⁰ Ibid: 14.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid: 45.

¹³ Ibid: 5.

remarkable self-expression of Eastern culture, indeed, of the distinctive experience of the Japanese people (*yamato minzoku*).¹⁴ Kuki's analysis is no doubt perceptive, but it is also the case that *iki* is very much rooted in a particular social-historical context, that is, the Tokugawa "floating world" (*ukiyo*) which determined literary and artistic values. The ideal of *iki* is an artistic sensibility with some spiritual overtones incorporated from Buddhism and *bushidō*. But it is based on the duality or polarity of intersexual relations in a way closely resembling French dandyism, and is derived from the desire to find fulfillment in the demi-monde on the part of rising merchants and fallen samurai in class-conscious Edo society.

Thus Heidegger, though not fully aware of the reasons, is on target in his misgivings concerning the appropriateness of *iki* and his interest in stressing poetic language as a basis for dialogue. Heidegger feels that *kotoba* "is a wondrous word, and therefore inexhaustible to our thinking,"¹⁵ because it seems to approximate his view of primordial Saying as the essential nature of contemplative language attuned to the relation of Being and beings without why. But the key point that does not emerge in the dialogue is that in Japanese contemplative aesthetics—that is, literature and literary criticism based on some form of Buddhist meditation, including *shikan*, *zazen* and *nembutsu* in Shunzei, Teika, Dōgen, Chōmei, Kenkō, Zeami and others—the role of *kotoba* as creative expression is invariably intimately connected to *kokoro* (mind or heart/mind) as authenticated spiritual intentionality. The inseparability of *kotoba* and *kokoro* is particularly stressed in the *yūgen* style of waka poetry and Noh theater (despite important differences in the literary forms). For example, Teika writes of the *yūgen* style of poetry that "*kokoro* and *kotoba* [function] like the two wings of a bird."¹⁶

Therefore, Buddhist-influenced *yūgen* poetics may be a more ap-

¹⁴ Kuki: 12. Peter N. Dale argues that Kuki's philosophy reflecting *nihonjinron* ("Japanese-ism") theory betrays a nationalistic tendency parallel to and influenced by Heidegger's nationalist mysticism, in *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986): 70–73.

¹⁵ Heidegger: 47.

¹⁶ Fujiwara Teika, "Maigetsushō," in *Nihon kagaku taikei*, ed. N. Sasaki (Tokyo: 1935 and reprinted), volume III: 349.

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

appropriate starting point for the dialogue with Heidegger than “floating world” stylishness. In that case, the problematics of dialogue are at once less dire and more serious than Heidegger assumes. The obstacle is less severe because once the misunderstandings about *iki* are sorted out and deconstructed the possibility of communication between languages is opened up. But the dialogue is more demanding because for Heidegger an appreciation of *kotoba* to express “the flower blossoms because it blossoms” must involve coming to terms with its inseparability with *kokoro*, and the need from the Japanese standpoint for spiritual realization through contemplative discipline as the basis for poetic discourse. I will argue that it is this requirement of spiritual training and attainment implicit in Japanese aesthetics that generates the obstacle and danger for Heidegger and not the supposed separation of houses of being. To demonstrate this contention, I will examine the reasons for Heidegger’s fascination with Eastasia and the drawbacks in Kuki’s study of *iki* as a starting point for dialogue. Then, I will explain the merits of the contemplative *yūgen* ideal as a substitute basis for genuine philosophical encounter by discussing the relation between word, thing, and mind in Buddhist-oriented aesthetics and Heidegger’s thought.

Heidegger Turning East

Heidegger’s interest in Japanese Zen and poetry seems connected to the double meaning of English term “turn” in Heidegger’s thought. First, Heidegger’s own turn (*Kehre*) from his early existential to later naturalist approach to Being heightens his affinity with the holistic view of the unity of humans and nature prior to the subject-object dichotomy reflected in much of Japanese thought and literature. In this sense Heidegger’s concern with Eastasia is an extension of his preoccupation with the pre-Socratics as well as art, poetry, mysticism and Nietzschean philosophy as Western alternatives to the onto-theological mainstream. Heidegger particularly appreciates aesthetics because he views the poet and thinker as “neighbors” who occupy parallel though independent summits in the pursuit of Being by sharing meditative thinking or releasement which is receptive of the disclosure of Being. “Poetry that thinks,” he writes, “is in truth the topology of Being” in disclosing the “whereabouts of its actual presence” or

the "splendor of the simple."¹⁷ Second, Heidegger values Eastasian thought because the modern turn (*Wendung*) in the history of Western metaphysics has led to planetary Europeanization and the hegemony of the calculative or representational thinking of technology. Traditional Japanese thinking cannot escape being threatened with extinction, but this grave challenge and danger may also awaken the East to the need to reevaluate its role as a vital source for overcoming the very forces that are corrupting it.

What specifically does Heidegger hope to find in the Eastasian house of Being that will guide him on his woodpath (*Holzwege*) into exploring and "cutting furrows into the soil of Being"? Heidegger seems to feel that Japanese language and thought, untainted by the history of metaphysical categorization, may provide a more direct and immediate example of primordial Saying than is available in the errancy of the oblivion of Being that characterizes Western thought. True language as "Saying" (*die Sage, Sagen*) is not a matter of exposition, critique, definition, or explanation but of disclosing the "nearness" (*Nahheit*) and "stillness" that constitute the "relation of all relations" or the appropriating event of the belonging-together of Being and humans.¹⁸ Thus genuine thinking is intimately connected to poetry because neither endeavor is concerned merely with gaining knowledge or exchanging information. Indeed, poetry may have priority since it captures with unclouded confidence the "wellspring of language" and occupies the "mysterious landscape [which] borders on the fateful source of speech."¹⁹ Furthermore, the subtle and suggestive expressions of poetry seem to come closer than thinking, which may lapse into metaphysical conceptualization or suprasensuous abstraction, to reaching Heidegger's avowed aim of speaking not "about" but "from out of [or within] the nature of language."²⁰

The key to authentic Saying is a language of beckoning hints and verbal gestures which convey the stillness of silence and attentive listening.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971): 7-12.

¹⁸ See Ronald Bruzina, "Heidegger on the Metaphor and Philosophy," in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy: Critical Essays*, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978): 198.

¹⁹ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*: 67.

²⁰ *Ibid*: 51 and 85.

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

True language as a product of meditative thinking allows beings to come into their unconcealedness or openness while preserving the tendency of Being itself to remain hidden or concealed as the disclosure takes place. It avoids the onto-theological pitfalls of perceiving beings alone clearly while overlooking the withdrawnness of Being as the veiled source of their coming to presence (realism), or of bypassing beings to gaze upon the speculated realm of the suprasensuous (idealism). Thus, genuine Saying consists of understated words that trail off in an explanation or description [as in George's poem, "Where word breaks off . . ."]²¹ because they are unable to adequately express the depths of experience, and yet they evoke and capture the experience all the more fully since in acknowledging their shortcoming they suggest a hidden dimension beyond the overt and concrete. Saying depicts the splendor of the simple without why. This view of language seems to approach closely the ideal of *yūgen* which reflects an overabundance or plenitude of meaning (*yōjō*) contained in sparse, suggestive words (*kotoba tarazu*) conveying a mysterious depth expressed in and through yet hovering over and above the actual diction. *Yūgen* often offers a simple, seemingly realistic depiction of a veiled, shadowy scene (for example, "autumn dusk descends," *aki no yūgure*) whose mystery and beauty is preferable to dazzling clarity. Heidegger writes that poetry "sings of the mysterious nearness of the far-tarrying power of the word," and that "Saying is the gathering that joins all appearance of the in itself manifold showing which everywhere lets all that is shown abide within itself."²² In what appears to be a parallel vein, Shunzei asserts that in a poem of "mystery and depth" (*yūgen*), "The atmosphere hovers over the poem, as it were, like the haze that trails over the cherry blossoms in spring . . ."²³ And Chōmei argues that the "superiority . . . such poems have over mere ordinary prose . . . is only when many meanings are compressed into a single word, when the depths of feeling are exhausted yet not expressed, when an unseen world hovers in the atmosphere of the poem . . ."²⁴

²¹ Ibid: 57-108 ("The Nature of Language").

²² Ibid: 87 and 126.

²³ Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961): 266.

²⁴ Ibid: 269.

One way of understanding Heidegger's view that Saying at once allows for openness and preserves hiddenness is to consider the imagery of "gift" (*die Schenk*) and "giving" (*es gibt*) he frequently uses in reference to the relation between Being and Humans. For example, his notion of thinking as the gift of Being suggests that the bestowal that has been granted by Being must be received by thinkers and poets with a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving. How do they show their appreciation? The difficulty in creating an appropriate response is based on the structure of gift which invariably arrives wrapped in a package. That is, the item that represents the gift per se is contained in wrapping so as to be concealed in order to heighten the curiosity, excitement and mystery surrounding the gift-giving. If beings are portrayed in the analogy as the gift, Being is not symbolized merely by the ornamentation of the packaging. Rather Being signifies the entire process or belonging-together of decorating, sending, opening and responding to the present. Being is hidden in that it is not to be identified with any particular aspect of the event or confused with the way beings are wrapped up—such a view is the errancy into which the metaphysical tradition has consistently fallen—but encompasses the unity of modalities. For genuine Saying to be liberated from onto-theological fixations, it must develop alternative forms of expression that highlight the whole process without reducing Being to any one aspect. That is, Saying unravels the wrapping of the gift while preserving the decoration which at once reveals and conceals its source; or, it allows seeing things not only as they are but, as in the Buddhist notion of the "finger pointing to the moon," as more than that because they bring into view presencing or gift-giving/receiving itself.

How successful is Heidegger himself in accomplishing this? Heidegger's efforts in language are largely directed toward formulating neologisms, tautologies, *figura etymologica*, and creative (mis)translations that are flexible, openended, and multidimensional sayings essentially creative in a way prior to the onto-theological distinctions between abstract and concrete, literal and metaphorical, logical and mythical.²⁵ Heidegger's novel expressions including "temporality tem-

²⁵ Erasmus Schöfer, "Heidegger's Language: Metalogical Forms of Thought and Grammatical Specialities," in *On Heidegger and Language*, ed. and tr. Joseph J. Kockelmans (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 281-301.

poralizes," "nothingness nihilates," and "language of being: being of language" seem parallel to Suzuki's comment on Mahayana Buddhist writings on enlightenment: "... when language is forced to be used for things of this [transcendental] world, *lokottara*, it becomes warped and assumes all kinds of crookedness: oxymora, paradoxes, contradictions, contortions, absurdities, oddities, ambiguities, and irrationalities."²⁶ Heidegger's primordial Saying and Zen "language of samadhi"²⁷ both seem odd and distorted from the standpoint of conventional syntax because they consist of a polysemy playfully exercising a transcendental experience without why. Yet Ronald Bruzina argues—and Heidegger, who often admitted the circularity and incompleteness of his thought might agree—that the German philosopher remains trapped between two worldviews, one the burden carried from the past of metaphysical disdain for metaphor and myth and the other a goal of post-metaphysical poetic/mystical Saying glimpsed but never realized:

Heidegger's thinking, in its attempt to proceed otherwise, nonetheless always begins from within Western rationality, from within the distinction and performances he wishes to negate. Thus it is that Heidegger's writing is thinking and not poetry, while aiming to be simply 'Saying.' Thus it is that his words are to be taken literally in his rejections of the metaphysical schema he literally affirms as dominating Western mind, while those words work toward a worded thinking that offers nothing of literal explication."²⁸

It is the attempt to build a pathway bridging this gap or to find access to discourse on reality without why that compels Heidegger to turn East. But what is the point of departure of genuine dialogue?

Iki an Inappropriate Starting Point

The monograph '*Iki*' *no kōzō* was Kuki's first major work and is still

²⁶ D. T. Suzuki, *On Indian Mahayana Buddhism*, ed. Edward Conze (New York: Harper, 1968): 243.

²⁷ Sekida Katsuki, *Zen Training: Methods and Philosophy* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1975): 99.

²⁸ Bruzina: 199.

regarded as his classic. Begun in 1926 while he was studying in Paris, it was published in 1930 first in the journal *Shisō* and later that year in book form. It appears as the introductory piece in the first volume of his collected works, accompanied by an earlier draft, '*Iki*' no *Honshitsu* (The Essence of 'Iki'), and the notes used in preparation of these manuscripts are included in a supplementary volume. '*Iki*' no *kōzō* clearly shows Kuki's strong reaction to his studies in France and Germany during the 1920's in two ways: it reflects the influences he absorbs from European philosophers, including Bergson, Sartre, Husserl, and Heidegger, and it fulfills his desire to identify and explicate the essence of Japanese culture and thought to the West. Kuki maintains that each culture and language has its unique features and words so organically interconnected they cannot be transported or translated into any other one. "Therefore," he writes, "the concrete meanings of the language of a nation express national existence and reflect the distinctive atmosphere of national experience."²⁹ For example, the English words "spirit," "intelligence," and "wit" approach but do not fully capture the French "esprit." Similarly, though *iki* is the Japanese translation of "chic," its complete meaning is beyond that of related words such as *raffiné* or the English elegant and coquettish based on French terms. Distinctive national expressions such as *iki* are not abstract concepts but phenomena of consciousness (Husserl's influence) which require explication through hermeneutics rather than formalism (Heidegger) to disclose the priority of existence over essence (Sartre).

To understand Kuki's interpretation of *iki*, it is necessary to situate the term in its original cultural and literary context. *Iki* was a leading aesthetic ideal associated with the writings of *ninjōbon* (romances) and *sharebon* (realistic stories) of the *gesaku* (culture of play) literature of the late Edo floating world. It implies a "discreet elegance, combined with an urban polish in which coquetry is the dominant tone."³⁰ *Iki* is related to the ideal behavior of the *suijin* (man of taste or *sui*, another pronunciation of *iki*) or *tsūjin* (man of polish or *tsū*) who demon-

²⁹ Kuki: 8.

³⁰ Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, *The Vocabulary of Japanese Literary Aesthetics* (Tokyo: Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1964): 104. See also Donald Keene, *World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600-1867* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976): 398-437.

strates the “nonchalant, urban sophistication of one completely at home in the demi-monde,”³¹ or an ability to comport oneself properly in the geisha quarters by dealing objectively with human emotions. The background to the development of *iki* was the frequency in dramatic literature, particularly Chikamatsu’s works, as well as in Tokugawa society of the double-suicide (*shinjū*) resulting from the conflict between *giri* (social obligations) and *ninjō* (human passions). The typical pattern involved an aspiring townsman (*chōnin*) or unmoneyed samurai (*rōnin*) who fell in love with a geisha and had no way of reconciling his illicit emotion with his social duty; both parties were doomed and chose a redemptive voluntary death rather than suffer ostracism and other forms of social punishment.³² *Iki* to a large extent represented a middle path out of this conflict by allowing the male party in the relationship to remain detached from instead of overwhelmed by his feelings, content with an aloof flirtation and seductiveness not consummated and therefore not subject to scrutiny.³³

Kuki elaborates on this historical phenomenon by centering *iki* in a constellation of terms dealing with Japanese aesthetics and forms of behavior. His work consists of four parts: the first two lay the foundation by examining the intensive or connotative (*naihōteki*) and extensive or denotative (*gaienteki*) structure of *iki*, and the final sections discuss examples of physical and artistic expressions. The intensive structure consists of three aspects. The spiritual qualities of Buddhist resignation (*akirame*) or detachment from the world of evanescence and of noble spirit (*ikuji*) derived from *bushidō* loyalty and pluck reflect the two main influences on Japanese civilization and give *iki* a

³¹ Ibid: 109.

³² The redemptive dimension of *shinjū* is a combination of *nembutsu* Amidism and *bushidō* ethics. On the one hand, the lovers represent a protest and counterpoint to the oppressive dominance of the shogunate and samurai class (constituting *giri*). But their willingness to die for the sake of personal feelings (*ninjō*) displays an implicit acceptance of the *bushidō*’s self-sacrificing embracing of death (as in works like *Hagakure*) that is also based on the millenarian hope for a perfect, eternal union attained through rebirth in the Pure Land. See Minamoto Ryōen, *Giri to ninjō* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron-sha, 1969): 98–153.

³³ On the social-historical implications of *iki* in the context of individual freedom and democratic pursuit see Kawahara Hiroshi, *Tenkanki no shisō: Nihon kindai wo megutte* (Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppansha, 1963): 203–38.

lofty idealism transcending the mundane world. These factors in turn are based on the fundamental duality that characterizes coquetry (*bitai*): “[It] is a dualistic situation which forms the possibility of relation between oneself and the opposite sex whereby they mutually experience a sense of contrast with the other.”³⁴ The duality of coquetry necessarily involves a constant tension as it seeks to consummate union. “Coquetry has as its fate the fulfillment as well as the termination of the desired aim of conquest of the opposite sex.”³⁵ This paradigm of duality is also the key to the extensive structure of *iki*, which involves antinomies between the valued and unvalued, and positive and negative factors of general human nature and intersexual particularity. In a tightly argued discussion illustrated by the geometrical metaphor of a cube subdivided into numerous triangles and rectangles, Kuki offsets four oppositions: refinement (*jōhin*) and baseness (*gehin*), dapperness (*hade*) and subdued taste (*jimi*), stylishness (*iki*) and raffishness (*yabo*), and restraint (*shibumi*) and sentimentality (*amami*).³⁶ *Iki* in a narrow sense is one of the eight terms [used in this context in the sense of noble spirit] but its deeper and broader meaning is the self-regulating principle which keeps each aspect of the polarities from tending to the extreme. It seeks the middle ground between apathy and flamboyance, severity and vulgarity, and is thus related to medieval aesthetic ideals, especially gracefulness (*miyabi*) and purifying solitude and patina (*sabi*). One of the main artistic manifestations of *iki* is the architecture of the traditional teahouse (*chaya*) with its contrast between an exterior wood design and asymmetrical interior in addition to its festive atmosphere and somber, indirect lighting. Another example of duality in art is the discordant rhythms of Japanese song.

The aim of this paper is not to evaluate the significance of Kuki's work as an explanation of the uniqueness of Japanese culture³⁷ but to consider its relevance for philosophical dialogue with Heidegger, who suspects shortcomings. In that light, there seem to be two main reasons why *iki* is an inappropriate starting point for such an East-West ex-

³⁴ Kuki: 17.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid: 37.

³⁷ For example, Kuki is an important influence on Doi Takeo's psychological account of *amae* (dependence) as the basis of Japanese society, in *'Amae' no kōzō* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1971).

change. The first factor involves the historical background of the development of *iki*, which was originally intrinsically connected to Tokugawa society as a way of circumventing the shogunate's sumptuary laws aimed at restricting the fleeting pleasures of the floating world. In its broader sense, the kind of tastefulness *iki* represents helps explain the aesthetic of classical and medieval Japanese poetry and theater as well.³⁸ Still, its basic ambience is a far cry from Heidegger the *Schwarzwalder* whose later writings increasingly reflect a fascination with naturalism and a disinterest in human relations as an access to truth. Whereas Heidegger is preoccupied with the Greek impact on German thought and language, Kuki's influences are the *urbanitas* of Rome and especially the dandyism of early nineteenth century French writers Barbey and Baudelaire who sought through rebellious individuality, sexual ambiguity, and literary flair to escape *le spleen* of boredom and dejection.³⁹ A far closer parallel to Heidegger's approach in Japanese aesthetics is the medieval hermitage tradition of poets and monks who attained a contemplative awareness of nature frequently expressed in *yūgen*.

The second and more important limitation of *iki* is metaphysical. Kuki's philosophical methodology is similar to Heidegger's in its examination of concrete experience. But the leading question for Kuki is the character of the Japanese people whereas for Heidegger it is the disclosure of Being itself. More significantly, Kuki's approach is based on duality while Heidegger seeks to uncover what he calls the Same or belonging-together, that is, the splendor of the simple onefold (*Einfalt*) which unites the fourfold (*Geviert*) of earth, sky, mortals, and gods.

³⁸ See Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976): 19-21; and Kawakita Michiaki, "The World of *Shibui*," *Japan Quarterly*, 8: 33-42.

³⁹ Kuki acknowledges his indebtedness to the writings of Barbey d'Aureville who frequently commented on Baudelaire. For an account of the nineteenth-century literary/aesthetic phenomenon of dandyism beginning in England and migrating to France, see Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960). In his study of *ukiyo* literature, Howard Hibbett describes the *tsūjin*: "On a spring afternoon in Kyoto a dandy strolls along the river . . . his parasol tilted exquisitely; another at a Gion tea-house, lies propped on one elbow near a tobacco tray and a small lacquer table, in a cluster of attentive courtesans, and listens indifferently as one of them sings to the accompaniment of her samisen . . ." In *The Floating World in Japanese Fiction* (Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Tuttle, 1975): 32.

Kuki's notion is not a naive duality in that he highlights the creative tension and mutuality made possible by virtue of polarity, but this is not comparable to Heidegger's view of the dynamic, organic, and naturalist interplay of Being and beings, presencing and things present allowing the simultaneity of individuality and universality: "None of the four insists on its own separate particularity. Rather, each is expropriated, within their mutual appropriation, into its own being. This expropriative appropriating is the mirror-play of the fourfold. Out of the fourfold, the simple onefold of the four is ventured."⁴⁰ In the dialogue with Tezuka, Heidegger expresses misgivings about the way Kuki has presupposed Western metaphysical categories that falsely bifurcate reality. But when Tezuka explains *kotoba* with the lyrical image of a poet who "sings of the intermingling scent of cherry blossom and plum blossom on the same branch," Heidegger responds, "That's how I think of . . . unconcealment . . ."⁴¹

Yūgen and the Constellation of Thing-Word-Mind

Because of the participants' sensitivity to the danger of dialogue, the Tezuka-Heidegger conversation is marked more by hesitation, deliberation and disclaimer than by certainty or firm conclusions. In fact, the key turning point is delayed for over twenty pages when the Inquirer asks about the Japanese word for language and Tezuka after "long reflection" at first refuses to utter it. When he feels confident in the assurances that it will not be misrepresented, Tezuka says that the word hints toward the source or wellspring of language and is very near "to us Japanese." However, Tezuka's remark that *kotoba* is "a word to which so far no thought has been given . . ."⁴² is somewhat misleading. There may be no contemporary phenomenological analysis of the term along the lines of Kuki's interpretation of *iki*. But there is a considerable body of material from medieval literary criticism, which shows the link between language and mind in the creative process, as well as in modern scholarship on the relation of word and thing in early Japanese religion.

⁴⁰ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 179.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*: 53.

⁴² *Ibid*: 48.

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

The original meaning of language in Japanese culture is probably connected to agrarian animistic/shamanistic practices involving *kotodama*, or the belief in the soul or spirit (*tama*) of words (*koto*). According to R. A. Miller, the Old Japanese *koto* (words, speech, language) is related to the verb *katar* (tell, relate) in the same way the English "tale" is related to "tell." This seems comparable to the connection Heidegger draws between Saying and the traditional term *saga* as a mythopoeic mode of discourse prior to the distinction between *mythos* and *logos*. Like many ancient religions, from Biblical to tribal culture, the Japanese affirmed the power of the word or name to provide mastery over things. Miller shows that in the practice of early Japanese homeopathic magic there was a strong connection between the term *koto* meaning words and another homophonous term *koto* meaning affair, matter, or thing. According to Miller, "the idea that the 'thing' referred to by a given word is coeval as well as coextensive with the 'word' that refers to it is at the heart of the whole matter."⁴³ *Kotodama* is also connected to *kotoage* (literally "lifting up words"), a ritualistic, liturgical practice based on the metaphoric transference of the identification of word and thing from the terrestrial to the supernatural plane. Thus, it was believed that naming or calling upon a thing desired would cause the "thing" so "named" to materialize.

While animistic sources establish the affinity of word and thing, one of the earliest references to *kotoba* in the sense in which it is used by Tezuka as the "petals" (*ba*) of "words" (*koto*) demonstrates the inseparability of language and the mind as the perceptive organ for things. In his famous preface to the *Kokinshū* imperial poetry collection, Tsurayuki depicts mind (*kokoro*) as an undeniable impulse toward poetic creativity that inevitably flourishes like a natural force in response to the stimuli of the seasons and elements:⁴⁴

The poetry of Japan takes hold in the mind of man and springs forth in the innumerable petals of words. Because of man's intense involvement in the world, [it is poetry] that ex-

⁴³ R. A. Miller, "The 'Spirit' of the Japanese Language," in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 3/2: 264. See also the article on Japanese Religion in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), volume 7: 555-56.

⁴⁴ Ki no Tsurayuki, in *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Kogakukan, 1971), volume 7.

presses the inner attitude of his mind upon viewing [the sights of the world] and hearing [its sounds].

According to Tsurayuki, the mind represents the potential of consciousness to perceive phenomena and creatively describe them. When activated by sense impressions generated by external stimuli like the sights and sounds of nature, the *kokoro* responds by expressing *kotoba* that directly record its feelings about the event. Thus, *kotoba* is part of a constellation of thing-word-mind, whereby the mind is continually perceiving and responding to things (*koto*) through poetic speech. Nishitani Keiji comments on this connection: "In Japanese, the 'meaning' of a given *koto* (a term signifying either 'matter' or 'affair,' as well as 'word') can also be called its 'mind,' or *kokoro*. . . . the mind of the matter at hand (or the very reality become manifest in the *koto*) reflects into the mind of man, and the mind of man reflects itself onto the mind of the *koto*. This living transmission of minds being projected onto one another as they are, and the obtaining of mind that this effects, is the elemental mode of the understanding of meaning."⁴⁵

In late Heian/early Kamakura poetry of the *Shinkokinshū* era influenced by Buddhist meditation, *yūgen* designates the style of composition in which there is a dynamic integration of the key factors comprising this constellation revolving around a contemplative view of nature. *Yūgen*, in a manner similar to Heidegger's notion of bringing into unconcealment by preserving concealment, represents a paradoxical disclosure that illuminates precisely by seeming to conceal. Both parts of the compound term suggest indistinctness and inscrutability derived from early Chinese religion: *yū* (C. *yu*), which appears in *I Ching* and Taoist esoteric writings, is that which is hazy or unclear to the senses, a kind of veil which is a hint of loftier realms; and *gen* (C. *hsüan*), which appears in the opening chapter of the *Tao te ching*, is the calm repose of the unfathomable depths of ultimate darkness.⁴⁶ The compound, of uncertain origin, indicates that the vague and obscure reveal the

⁴⁵ Nishitani Keiji, *Religion and Nothingness*, tr. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California, 1982): 178.

⁴⁶ See Joseph Spae, *Japanese Religiosity* (Tokyo: Oriens Institute for Religious Research, 1971): 184; and Toshihiko and Toyo Izutsu, *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981): 27. Also Nose Asaji, *Yūgenron* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1944).

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

positive spiritual quality underlying the negative imagery and the profundity pervading the mundane. But this must not be mistaken for a formal reconciliation of opposites that takes place in a logical process. Rather, the implication of yūgen is to heighten the paradox in that the greater the supposed inability to penetrate a phenomenon, the more dramatic and fundamental the breakthrough that occurs on an intuitive level of awareness. This is exemplified in the following Teika verse, one of three famous waka ending with the image of autumn sunset:⁴⁷

Miwataseba	Gazing out,
Mana mo momiji mo	Past both the
Nakarikeri	Cherry blossoms and crimson leaves,
Ura no tomaya no	At the straw-thatched huts by the bay
Aki no yūgure	Clustered in the descending autumn dusk.

The most striking feature of *yūgen* is the deceptively simple description of nature that borders on realism. *Yūgen* poems contain landscape imagery frequently of a monochromatic type, such as bayside huts at autumn dusk, a bird flying into the sunset, a cloudy mist, or a forest of dark pines. Yet these scenes are uniquely and profoundly meaningful because they are observed from a distinct contemplative vantage point—as in the opening line above containing the verb *miwatasu* (lit. “to survey” or “to look out beyond”), or as often symbolized by a mountain retreat or hermitage. The settings are not merely external objects but represent an holistic perceptual field encompassing self and other. The images are selected to reflect mind and nature dwelling on the boundary line between day and night, fall and winter, and earth and sky. In highlighting the creative tension and experiential moment of transition between reality and dream, fact and imagination, they draw the reader into the mysterious depth simultaneously revealed and concealed by the purely descriptive phrase. Thus, “*yūgen* functions as a scrim, haze, or dream through which the numinal is vaguely sensed . . . point[ing] beyond itself to a sense of Reality veiled by, and not confined to, the phenomenal world.”⁴⁸ It indicates that the natural setting

⁴⁷ Teika in *Shinkokinshū* I, 38 in *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, volume 26. For the other poems by Saigyō and Jakuren see Donald Keene, ed. *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Tuttle, 1955): 195.

⁴⁸ Richard B. Pilgrim, “The artistic way and the religio-aesthetic tradition in

depicted is not a place outside the apprehending subject but the phenomenal locus of genuine subjectivity attained through Buddhist contemplation. As the poet Tamekane says of seasonal poetry, "In order to express the true nature of the natural scene, one must focus one's attention and concentrate deeply upon it. . . . Therefore, if you try to harmonize your feelings with the sight of cherry blossoms . . . your work will become one with the very spirit of heaven and earth."⁴⁹

Furthermore, the simplicity of the language used in *yūgen* poetry on the semantic level of concrete, linear articulation rests on a syntactic field of trans-temporal wordplay and associations "achieving a polyphonic plenitude of meanings, images and ideas."⁵⁰ The ideal of *yojō* implies that the brevity and simplicity of *yūgen* descriptions of nature is based on having too much to say or reveal about the mind, so that, as Chōmei writes, "many meanings are compressed into a single word, [and] the depths of feeling are exhausted yet not expressed . . ." According to Teika, the "poetic masterpiece must have . . . a profundity and sublimity of mind and creativity of expression allowing an eminently graceful poetic configuration to emerge with an aesthetic plenitude that overflows [or is outside] of words (*kotoba no hoka made amareru*)."⁵¹ The *kokoro* consists of two aspects: cogitations (*omoi*) which lead to semantic articulation; and more importantly in terms of poetic creativity emotions (the *jō* of *yo-jō*, also pronounced *nasake* or *kokoro*) which operate on a trans-linguistic or syntactic level of holistic experience.⁵² The formula for the function of *yojō* is, the less that is ac-

Japan," in *Philosophy East and West*, 27/3: 294.

⁴⁹ Cited in Earl Miner, *An Introduction to Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968): 127. For the influence of *shikan* (cessation-contemplation) on Shunzei in particular see Konishi Jin'ichi, "Shunzei no *yūgen-fu* to *shikan*," *Bungaku* 20/2: 108-16. For the ideological connection between Buddhist meditation and poetic inspiration see also the discussion by William R. LaFleur in the chapter, "Symbol and *Yūgen*," in *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983): 80-106.

⁵⁰ Izutsus: 4.

⁵¹ Teika, "Maigetsushō: 349.

⁵² There is an interesting parallel to Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's constitution in terms of state-of-mind or mood (*Befindlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstehen*) which "characterize the primordial disclosedness of Being-in-the-world. By way of having a mood Dasein 'sees' possibilities, in terms of which it is." In *Being and Time*, tr. John

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

tually verbalized in terms of *omoi* the more the composition discloses concerning *jō* by *not* saying it. This also seems to be the principle underlying typically terse Zen sayings conveying a contemplative stance, including “willows are green, flowers are red,” “the sun rises in the east, the moon sets in the west,” “the snow falling in a silver bowl,” and “learn of the pine tree from the pine tree,”³³ which are deceptively simple linguistic vehicles for spontaneously revealing the realization of suchness. The issue for both the poets and Zen is to find an expression which suggests the depths of the experience while enunciating the fewest words which might obfuscate the true vision. The expression must be a direct manifestation of the mind’s profundity, bypassing false objectification that reflects an inauthentic personal response to nature, thereby creating a language field of multiple nuances that manifests the contemplative field of authenticated subjectivity.

Comparison of Yūgen and Nearness

The *yūgen/yojō* style of composition appears very close to Heidegger’s view of Saying as an expression of the splendor of the simple without why. Heidegger seeks a polysemous language reflecting poetic, acquiescent thinking that allows the presence of Being to unfold without interference. One striking similarity with the Japanese approach involves the way that Heidegger, interpreting Holderlin’s poetry, depicts authentic language as the “flower of the mouth . . . [in which] the earth blossoms toward the bloom of the sky.”³⁴ If words are the flower, then the seed or root is what Heidegger calls meditative thinking or releasement (*Gelassenheit*) to the open realm or the fourfold. In this context, Heidegger suggests that the intimate connection between thing-word-thought is reflected in the original meaning of *logos* which in early Greek philosophy implied *both* Saying as showing and Being as the coming to presence of things present. True *logos* therefore cul-

Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1962): 188.

³³ The first example appears in the *Zenrin kushū* collection, the second in Dōgen’s Chinese poetry, the third in Zeami’s writings on Noh (and elsewhere), and the third in a Bashō haiku.

³⁴ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*: 99.

minates in poetic Saying: "All essential Saying hearkens back to this veiled mutual belonging of Saying and Being, word and thing. Both poetry and thinking are distinctive Saying in that they remain delivered over to the mystery of the word as that which is most worthy of their thinking . . ." ⁵⁵

For Heidegger the center of the constellation or the force exerting a gravitational pull that sustains the rotation of the various factors is "nearness." This notion does not refer to a spatial as opposed to a temporal dimension. Nor is it a matter of measuring parameters or the proximity of objectified entities for nearness preserves farness. Nearness, the "true fourth-dimension," represents a direct, "face-to-face" encounter with things without why which creates an atmosphere of neighborliness between Being and words, and thinking and poetry regardless of physical distance. Somewhat akin to *yūgen*, nearness straddles the line and highlights the creative tension between resemblance and remoteness, affinity and separation. It seems best conveyed by the image of a simple, concrete artifact, like a jug, a bridge, or Van Gogh's painting of worn peasant shoes, which harbor mysterious, unfathomable depths of meaning supporting and amplifying the thingness of the thing. The dynamic interplay of the fourfold functions by virtue of nearness as a playful dance which enables each aspect to come into its individual fulfillment. But amidst the intricacy and complexity simple presencing prevails: "In the gift of the outpouring dwells the simple singlefoldness of the four." ⁵⁶

Like the contemplative Japanese thinkers and poets, Heidegger in addition to interpreting the "origin (*Ursprung*) of the work of art" tries to speak from *out of* rather than about language by occasionally creating his own verse. Of these, the sample that comes closest to the naturalist spirit of *yūgen* appears to be a mere listing of natural images: ⁵⁷

Forests spread
Brooks plunge
Rocks persist
Mist diffuses

⁵⁵ Ibid: 155-156.

⁵⁶ Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 173.

⁵⁷ Ibid: 14.

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

Meadows wait
Springs well
Winds dwell
Blessing muses

The first and fourth lines especially convey the dark and solitary realm indicative of *yūgen* as experienced from the contemplative standpoint suggested by the final phrase, "blessing muses." The last line of the poem discloses the profound subjectivity at once revealed and concealed by the preceding simple, realistic description of nature.

But to what extent is genuine subjectivity attained in Heidegger's thought, and by what means? Here is the issue that seems to create a stumbling block for Heidegger in his attempted dialogue with the Eastasian house of Being. The main discrepancy is that while Heidegger emphasizes primordial Saying as the arrival of an event obediently received by the human subject, the Japanese contemplatives consistently stress the priority of mind as the creative force in the expression of authentic language. That is, the main writers/critics who theorize on the creative process of *yūgen*, especially Teika and Zeami, maintain that the cultivation of *kokoro* through spiritual discipline is the necessary basis of *kotoba*, and therefore that *kotoba* is the means to attaining authentic *kokoro* rather than vice-versa. Teika's "Maigetsushō" and other writings, for example, are largely derived from Tendai meditative practice of cessation-contemplation (*shikan*) coupled with an emphasis on seated posture resembling *zazen*. There, he asserts that the basis of composing poems that express *yūgen* must be the direct and unimpeded effusion from the true or original mind (*moto no kokoro*) of serene subjectivity (*an-shō*). He recommends that poetry should be composed only when "one is fully immersed in the unique realm of the serene composure and concentration of the mind."³⁸ He also warns against emotional miasmas or delusions, including trying to force either understanding or language in an arbitrary or deliberate way, that inauthentically conceal rather than spontaneously express the *kokoro* of poetic composition.

Thus, Teika articulates a view of the mind as the subjective basis of self-illuminative awareness, and he reinterprets Tsurayuki's *Kokinshū*

³⁸ Teika, "Maigetsushō: 347.

commentary on the mind as the root or seed of poetry and words as the blossoms from the standpoint of Buddhist contemplation. For Tsurayuki, the mind is a potentiality for creativity that is essentially receptive in its function. When activated by sense impressions generated by external stimuli like natural sights and sounds presented to the eyes and ears, the mind responds by expressing words that record its feelings about the event. Teika revises Tsurayuki's comments by eliminating any gap between potentiality and actuality, internal and external, and subjectivity and objectivity by virtue of the authentication and purification of the mind through meditative awareness. Therefore, language is not a mere expression or extension of a mind seen as distinct from and reacting to external phenomena. Rather, *kotoba* spontaneously emerges as an unblocked overflow (*yojō*) from the self-surpassing *kokoro* fully and dynamically engaged in creatively experiencing reality. "In the aesthetic configuration . . . of the poem created in this way," Teika writes, "the *kokoro* as well as the *kotoba* abide tranquilly. But you must not attempt to compose deliberately such a poem. When you attain the proper state of cultivation, it will issue forth effortlessly."⁵⁹

Nishio Minoru argues that Zeami's approach to *yūgen* is influenced by Dōgen's interpretation of *genjōkōan* as the spontaneous manifestation of the inseparability of enlightenment mind and reality.⁶⁰ In his view of *yūgen* aesthetics as the subjective attainment of purity and tranquility by both actor and audience engaged in the play's performance, Zeami seems to take the emphasis on *kokoro* a step further than Teika. Nishio shows that Zeami's saying, "The flower is the mind, the seed is the performance" (*hana wa kokoro, tane wa waza narubeshi*) represents the complete reversal of Tsurayuki's understanding. Now the realization of spiritual truth has priority as the goal of artistic training over the verbal demonstration of art as the means to achieving it. That is, Tsurayuki sees *kokoro* as the seed and *kotoba* as the blossom, but for Teika and especially Zeami whose views are based largely on Buddhist meditation the *kokoro* is the flower (*hana*).

The Japanese contemplative approach to mind stands in contrast to Heidegger who tends to view Saying as part of the appropriating event (*Ereignis*) or the historical unfolding of Being coming towards the

⁵⁹ Ibid: 349-50.

⁶⁰ Nishio Minoru, *Dōgen to Zeami* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965): 115f.

human subject. Humans respond or cor-respond to Saying by listening to its silent call and then speaking. "Saying grants the hearing, and thus the speaking, of language solely to those who belong within it."⁶¹ Thus, Saying not only has priority over thinking, but it represents a primordial presence and absence that is ontologically prior to and makes possible the authenticity or inauthenticity of human language. In Heidegger's metaphor of gift-giving discussed above, Being is the giver, humans the receiver, and Saying the gift—the gift of words to address that which bestows it. Based on an image used in Derrida's philosophy, John D. Caputo suggests that a postal principle underlies Heidegger's notion of hermeneutics as the method of interpreting the message sent by Being. "(I)n Heidegger," he argues, "an eschatological postal principle is at work: an original letter is sent out, filled with words of primordial power, but it is immediately lost. Only traces of it remain, torn-up fragments, until finally, just when we think it has fallen altogether into oblivion, we awaken to the postal principle, to the eschatological code which tells us about the way that metaphysics writes in reverse, circling back upon itself."⁶² Thus words are authentic in that they emulate the power of the original letter rather than because they reflect purified subjectivity. However, it is possible to see Heidegger's view as complementary instead of contradictory of Japanese aesthetics by borrowing terminology used by Kyoto-school thinkers including Takeuchi Yoshinori in his Jodō-shin oriented presentation of fundamental Buddhism. According to Takeuchi, Buddhist enlightenment involves not only a trans-cendence elevating the mind to experience liberation but a trans-descendence or advency (*Zu-kunft*) of the yonder shore to the hither shore.⁶³ Seen in this light, Japanese contemplation stresses transcendence or self-elevation of *kokoro* and Heidegger stresses transdescendence or the coming-toward humans of Saying. But there is also a transdescendent dimension in Zen practice in the sense that, as Abe Masao explains, "There is nothing outside the

⁶¹ Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*: 124.

⁶² John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987): 169.

⁶³ Takeuchi Yoshinori, *The Heart of Buddhism: In Search of the Timeless Spirit of Primitive Buddhism*, tr. James W. Heisig (New York: Crossroad, 1983). This terminology is also used in Nishitani: 174–75 especially.

Buddha-nature. Therefore, it is not that *I* awaken to the Buddha-nature, but that the *Buddha-nature* awakens to the Buddha-nature. And that it is manifested *in me* is the true meaning of *my* awakening to the Buddha-nature."⁶⁴

Even so, a subtle but important difference remains because Heidegger's "postal principle" implies that reflection, correction, and purification of thinking that responds to Saying is determined by Being alone and not by any human effort. To some extent, both Heidegger and Japanese contemplatives are wary of human willfulness or inauthentic intentionality which cannot help but distort the very understanding it tries to grasp. However, Heidegger may be satisfied with the *vertical* model of interpretation implied by the term transcendence as an arrival of the message from beyond whereas *yūgen* poetry involves a full and direct *horizontal* participation of subjectivity in the realm of nature. For the Japanese contemplative, nature is not an "other" more or less elevated than the human subject in any literal sense but the externalized form of interior subjective illumination, so that "he recognizes Nature as the external locus where he can get into the most immediate and intimate contact with his own inner Self (the non-articulated), [*yūgen*] is no other than a description of Nature as his contemplative 'field' . . ."⁶⁵

Therefore, the composition of the *yūgen* style is a "path" (*dō*, *michi*) of spiritual discipline (*shūgyō*) to realize the original essence (*hon'i*) of true mind (*ushin*). At the culminative point *yūgen* offers nothing more or less than pure, simple description of reality without why. Attaining this realization involves at least two main stages of inner development that can be illustrated by interpreting the Teika verse on the autumn sunset quoted above. The first three lines imply a contemplative flight beyond delimiting horizons that are historical and perceptual in character. The author seeks a path transcending both the

⁶⁴ Abe Masao, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Steven Heine (Albany: Suny Press, forthcoming).

⁶⁵ Izutsu: 22; for example, a waka bearing the subjectivist title, "At no time are delusory thoughts to arise in mind," paradoxically refers not to the mind but only to nature, "About the mountain crest/ A brush of cloud floating/ Wild geese fly in files passing/ As the moon is hiding behind/ a pine-tree on the ridge." See also Nishida Masayoshi, *Nihon bungaku no shizenkan* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1972).

THE FLOWER BLOSSOMS

poetic tradition, which has relied so heavily on the conventional seasonal images of blossoms and leaves to symbolize transiency, and the ordinary arena of perception, in which the colorful yet fading natural forms seem so irresistibly attractive. The poem juxtaposes spring flowers and autumn leaves which cannot possibly exist at the same time to show that the contemplative field is truly holistic in embracing and surpassing the opposites of seasonal rotation.

The final lines of the poem reflect an experiential structure consisting of a negation of the subject through an affirmation of the object of perception. The description of nature here and in other examples of *yūgen* appears as if striving for a vivid and realistic presentation of intriguing aspects of nature perceived by a distant subject. Yet the intended effect is nearly opposite to realism in that nature depicted in its primordial state completely mirrors the realization of the authentic subjectivity of *kokoro*. The aim of *yūgen* is to overcome the gap between poet or subject and poetic object or topic in order to encounter and capture the essentially unified experience of reality without why. As Konishi Jin'ichi suggests, "The contemplative expressive approach involves the bracketing of a poet's individual impressions and drawing near to the very essence of the subject. Once the essence has been regained, the poet will recommence grasping forms manifested on a more superficial level of awareness . . . [leaving the reader with] a sense of profound mystery and difficulty."⁶⁶ Thus, the less the *kotoba* stemming from an overflow of *kokoro* (or *yojō*) says about the the mind, the more profound the awakening for this indicates that the mind is bracketed because it is so fully and redemptively absorbed in the contemplative field of nature.

In conclusion, a dialogue between Heidegger and Buddhist-oriented aesthetics highlights the tension inherent in Heidegger's philosophical project. As indicated above, Bruzina argues that Heidegger is torn between metaphysical and post-metaphysical language, or between philosophy and poetry. However, the encounter with Japanese contemplatives locates this crossroads not in terms of the type of language used by Heidegger or the separation of different language-houses, but in terms of the relation between language and mind as the necessary

⁶⁶ Konishi, "Michi and Medieval Writing," in *Principles of Classical Japanese Literature*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985): 204.

foundation for discourse. That is not to suggest that Japanese poetry provides the solution to Heidegger's search for primordial Saying. Kuki's emphasis on the cultural determination of experiential truths shows that certain words and phrases probably cannot be transported between houses of being; perhaps "autumn dusk descending" would not have the resonance or ambience Heidegger seeks. On the other hand, the notion of spiritual cultivation underlying language that can speak directly of reality without why is universalizable, and it can also be found in the Western contemplative tradition. For example, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* counsels practitioners not to think of *how* or *what* existence is but simply *that* it is.⁶⁷ Ueda argues that while Heidegger attempts to speak of reality without why he still looks for the principle (*Satz*) of the ground or reason (*Grund*) of things. Thus passing from the "what" to the "that" is the impasse for Heidegger, the "gateless gate" (*mumonkan*) Bruzina tries to clarify that cannot be penetrated without authentication of *kokoro*.

But what is *that*? How is it disclosed without obstructing it? One path to revealing *that* (or thus as it is, *tathatā*, *nyo-nyo*) indirectly by concealing it is reflected in Bodhidharma's response to the question of his identity. According to the first case of *Hekiganroku*, Bodhidharma's answer is simply, "I don't know," which is not a matter of ignorance in the ordinary sense but a Cusanus-like *docta ignorantia* in which why and not-why, reason and no-reason have been abandoned altogether. Another approach expresses the myterious, solitary, monochromatic atmosphere of *yūgen* nature-description as conveyed by the apparent realism in Dōgen's Chinese verse:⁶⁸

Every morning, the sun rises in the east,
 Every night, the moon sets in the west;
 Clouds gathering over the foggy peaks,
 Rain passes through the surrounding hills and plains.

⁶⁷ In the second volume of William Johnston, ed. *The Cloud of Unknowing and The Book of Privy Counseling* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1973): 152. However, these works clearly have a theistic foundation as when the author says, "Yet a radical distinction remains: [God] alone is his own cause and his own being (152).

⁶⁸ Dōgen, first volume of *Eihei Koroku*, in *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, ed. Ōkubo Dōshū (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1970), volume II. This verse is also discussed in Nishida: 197; and in Nishitani: 188f (the translation here is somewhat different).