Collection UTCP-2

Transcendental Descent
Essays in Literature and Philosophy
TRANSCENDENTAL DESCENT
Essays in Literature and Philosophy

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The present volume is a collection of my essays written during the period between 1984 and 2006. I made my scholarly debut as a student of medieval and Renaissance English literature in the early 80s. Since then, however, I have never failed to take advantage of every possible occasion, whenever it presented itself, to expand my intellectual horizon both backward and forward, i.e., towards Classical Antiquity and Western modernity. Negatively do they say “Jack of all trades, and master of none,” and yet the delightful memory of the classical literature and philosophy to which I had been introduced during the process of my intellectual formation in my undergraduate days has never ceased to haunt me while the philosophical endeavours of European modernity have also continuously been my keen interest. In due course of time—and for reasons a little too complicated to state—the former extended concern came to find its axis in Cicero and the latter in the philospher émigré Karl Löwith. It is through Karl Löwith, a guest professor at one of the Imperial universities in pre-war Japan, that my intellectual concern has come to entertain a yet wider perspective, i.e., that of comparative culture and thought.

As a self-styled intellectual expansionist alias Jack of all trades, I have followed my interest as it has cropped up and with little regard to any systematic concerns. Much to my surprise and unexpected delight, however, I have come to find, in the process of selecting my essays for the present collection, a certain more or less consistent theme that cuts across what has so far appeared (even to the author himself) to be the outcomes of various concerns. That consistent theme made apparent on this occasion can be termed the matter of the transcendental. By this is meant the problematic that comprises the fate and traces in modern secularized societies of absolute transcendental power and the values associated with it. Concrete subject matters indeed vary from classical myth, through the medieval and Renaissance Troy legend, to the modern reception of Cicero.
or a comparative critique of the quest topos, but behind all these runs a consistent thematic undercurrent, which I name here “Transcendental Descent.”

The present volume would not come into being without the help and encouragement of my present and former colleagues. My particular thanks are due to Dr. Graham McMaster (of Tohoku University, now retired). Prof. George Hughes (of the University of Tokyo, Hongo, now retired), Prof. Paul Rossiter, Prof. Brendan Wilson and Mr. Thomas Gally.

January 2007

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Acknowledgements:

1. “Against the Grain of Tragedy: A Provocation” was given as a lecture at the British Council Seminar “Japan English Literature Seminar 1986: English Drama: Theory, Writing and Performance,” held at Hakone, Japan, 25-27 September and published with revision in the Proceedings of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, College of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo, vol. 39, no. 3, 1991.


3. “A Shakespearean Distance: Europe, Modernity and Traditional Values” was published in Shakespeare Studies, XLIII (2005).


5. “Supreme Emptiness and Temporal Fulfillment: Two Versions of Political Failure?” was given as an Inaugural Lecture at the Nissan Foundation, Georgetown University, Washington D.C. on 25th November, 2003, and has since been revised for Humanitas Asiatica: An International Journal of Philosophy (Philosophy and Praxis) but the publication has been delayed due to an editorial technical problem.

6. “Vulcan Cuckolded by Mars: Archetypal Adultery and Its Subsequent Undercurrents” was given as a lecture at the Harvard Seminar on Medieval Literature (at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass) held on 3 February 1986 and published in the Proceedings of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, College of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo, vol. 38. no. 3, 1990.

7. “‘Hevene’ in Criseyde: Dante’s ‘Festa’ and Chaucer’s ‘Feste’” was given as a paper at the Fifth International Congress of the New Chaucer Society held in Philadelphia, March 1986 and published in Philologia Anglica (Tokyo: Kenkyu-sha, 1988).

8. “Chaucer’s Use of Neoplatonic Traditions” was published as Chapter 5 of Platonism and the English Imagination, eds. A. Baldwin & S. Hutton (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

9. “From the House of Fame to Politico-Cultural Histories” was given as a paper at the Sixth International Congress of the New Chaucer Society, August 9–13, 1988, Vancouver and

10. “‘Common Profit’ and Libidinal Dissemination in Chaucer” was given as one of the J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures (The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature), Perugia, 21 April 1998 and published in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature*, eds. P. Boitani & A. Torti (D. S. Brewer, 1999).

11. “Leonardo Bruni’s *Cicero Novus*” was given as a paper at the Fourth Conference of the International Society for Classical Tradition held at the University of Tübingen on 30th July, 1998 and published in a revised form in *European Studies* (University of Tokyo), 1 (2002).


17. “Shuzo Kuki: or, A Sense of Being In-between” was given as a paper at the International Conference “Dialogo filosofico sul pensiero del XX secolo fra Europa e Giappone” at the Prada Foundation, Milano, 14 March 2006.