17

Shuzo Kuki:
or, A Sense of Being In-between

In talking about Shuzo Kuki in Italy, it is difficult not to refer to Karl Löwith, one of his close friends. Kuki, born in late 19th-century Japan, went to Europe in 1921, spending nearly 8 years there, mainly in Germany and France, learning philosophy from such personages as Heidegger and Bergson. He went back to Japan to become Lecturer at Kyoto Imperial University. Karl Löwith, born in late 19th-century Germany, studied philosophy under Husserl at Freiburg and under Heidegger at Marburg between 1919 and 1928. It was probably in this Marburg period in 1927 that Löwith and Kuki got acquainted with each other. The year 1927 was an *annus mirabilis* for Kuki: in February of that year Heidegger's epoch-making *Sein und Zeit* was published, and it was that year that Kuki visited Heidegger at his home, an occasion which was later to be recollected by Heidegger in his work *A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer* (1959). [1] Heidegger's influence came to the fore in the late 1920s, and it was largely through his intellectual attraction that Kuki and Löwith came to know each other. But their relationship apparently remained nothing special until 1936, when Löwith was brought to bay by the Nazi government and had no choice but to leave Europe. By then he had already been an exile in Rome since 1934, which he as a typical Italophile actually enjoyed. But now the Nazis were on his track and he had his back against the wall. It was under these desperate circumstances that Kuki found for him a post in one of the

1. "Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache (1953/54): Zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden" in *Gesameltausgabe* I. Band 12, pp. 79–146; translated into English as "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirere," in *On the Way to Language* (Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 1–54.

Imperial Universities in Japan (Tohoku). Löwith accepted it, if with some hesitation, and took ship from Naples to Japan. Tohoku Imperial University, where Löwith taught for over four years from November 1936 to March 1941, was situated in the northern part of Japan and at quite a distance from Kyoto, where Kuki lived, but their friendly relation was close and profound. When Löwith finally decided to leave Japan for the United States in early 1941 (the year toward the end of which Japan made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor), he went all the way to Kyoto to meet Kuki and take his leave. [2]

In talking about Shuzo Kuki in Italy, it is difficult not to refer to Karl Löwith because it is at once through and thanks to Löwith that both Italy and Japan have been given a unique connecting link for a philosophical dialogue. What I have in mind is the existence of a wonderful collection of Löwith essays on Japan, *Scritti sul Giappone* (Rubbettino, 1995), translated by Monica Ferrando, and with a fine introduction by Gianni Carchia. To tell you the truth, I came across this work during my brief visit to Rome in 1995 and its reading immediately changed the image of Löwith that I had harbored until then. It is true that Löwith's views on Japan may not be accepted without some reservations, but the fact that his essays on Japan have been translated into an Italian is remarkable since these essays have elsewhere been ignored or treated as negligible. Behind their extraordinary treatment in Italy, I know, is Italy's eminent tradition of Löwith studies, which boasts pride of place throughout the world. From 1991 to 2004, for instance, there are no less than 6 substantial monograph studies dedicated to Löwith: Maria Chiara Pievatolo's (1991), Giuseppe Guida's (1996), Alberto Caracchiolo's (1997), Orlando Franceschelli's (1997), Santo Coppolino's (1999), and, most recently Enrico Donaggio's (2004). [3] This astoundingly rich Italian contribution

2. For Löwith's biographical matters, see Karl Löwith, *My Life in Germany Before and After 1933*, trans. E. King (London: Athlone, 1994) and the recently discovered Karl Löwith, *Von Rom nach Sendai Von Japan nach Amerika: Reisetagebuch 1936–1941*, herausgegeben von Kkaus Stichweh und Ulrich von Buelow, Mit einem Essay von Adolf Muschg (Deutsche Schillergeselschaft Marbach, 2001).

3. Maria Chiara Pievatolo, *Senza Scienza Né Fede: La Scepsi Storiografica di Karl Löwith* (Scientifiche Italiane, 1991), Giuseppe Guida, *Filosofia e Storia della Filosofia in Karl Löwith* (Unicopli, 1996), Alberto Caracchiolo, *Karl Löwith* (Morcelliana, 1997), Orlando Franceschelli, *Karl Löwith: Le Sfide della Modernità trans. Dio e Nulla* (I Centauri, 1997), Santo Coppolino, *Saggi su Karl Löwith* (Falzea, 1999), and Enrico Donaggio, *Una Sobria Inquietudeine: Karl Löwith e La Filosofia* (Feltrinelli, 2004). The contrast presents itself as all the more conspicuous when we find only one sole instance of an introductory study on Karl Löwith in German, Wiebrecht Ries, *Karl Löwith* (Metzler, 1992).

stands in sharp contrast to those of other countries, including Germany, the United States, and Japan. It is perhaps a happy inevitability that the Italian Löwith studies have confirmed the passage of cultural intercourse that the German-Jewish émigré philosopher unwittingly opened between Italy and Japan. And it is a pleasure to remember that behind this curious relationship was Shuzo Kuki, who acted as a kind of academic go-between for these philosophical inter-relationships.

But in putting in juxtaposition these two philosophers, European and Japanese, there is of course more reason than the merely personal and historical. What I would like to argue is that these two philosophers, who were to meet both in Marburg and Kyoto in the twenties and thirties, saw fundamentally different principles, philosophical, cultural and otherwise, working in the other's culture. The ways in which each of them reacted to, and took advantage of, these different principles certainly differ and vary, but the fact remains that they took the difference seriously and took due philosophical measures to cope with it.

Löwith's Case

Löwith left two articles on Japan, which he wrote in English in the United States, where he arrived in 1941 after having left Japan: "Japan's Westernization and Moral Foundation" and "The Japanese Mind," [4] which he published in the United States in 1943. The former reads like an ethnographical essay, presenting Japan as a cultural antipode where everything is upside down according to Western standards, while the latter is broader in its perspective but very much provocative, as its full title indicates: "The Japanese Mind: A Picture of the Mentality That We Must Understand If We Are to Conquer." Probably because of its provocative and controversial tone and rather negative picture of the Japanese men-

4. "Japan's Westernization and Moral Foundation," *Religion in Life: A Christian Quarterly of Opinion and Discussion* (New York) no. 12 (1942–43), pp. 114–27; "The Japanese Mind: A Picture of the Mentality That We Must Understand If We Are to Conquer," *Fortune*, Vol. 28, no. 6, (New York, December 1943): 132-35; 230; 232, 234; 236; 239–40; 242, now included in *Sämtliche Schriften* 2 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983).

tality, the article has been long ignored in Japan whereas in Italy it was given due attention and included as one of the translated essays in the above-mentioned collection *Scritti sul Giappone*. Due allowances, of course, must be made for its role and function as wartime propaganda, but it seems to me Löwith said nothing that he thought was not the case about Japan and its culture.

According to Löwith, the Japanese mentality was poles apart from that of the modern West, and yet the Japanese believed they had successfully gone through modernization. The proof of the matter could be found, he claims, in their superb conceptual invention, "*wakon-yosai*," i.e., the ideal that the traditional Japanese Spirit could and should be made perfect by Western learning. This ambitious grafting of the East and the West, "the tradition of Oriental antiquity and Occidental modernity," was in fact not a creative mixture but, as Löwith critically and rightly points out, an entity defined by a means-to-an-end relationship. Western learning, which in this instance was the same as "Occidental modernity," was always bound to serve as a means to the Japanese Spirit, the ultimate end. One may well wonder what this Japanese spirit is. The answer, as might be expected, was sought in the semi-mysterious recognition of "nothingness." The genuine Japanese way of thinking, Löwith says, "has never been built up from logical concepts. Rather it has been a direct, intuitive grasping, expressed in paradoxical images." As an exemplary exponent of this manner of thinking Löwith took up Kitaro Nisida, with whom he got acquainted probably through Kuki's introduction. What is noteworthy here is the intuitiveness and emotionalism with which this recognition of "nothingness" is charged. Hardly discernible in it is the will to logical construction, be it dialectical development, or teleological progression, or positive ethics, since, in his view, "Japanese culture is inspired neither by Plato's '*eros*,' nor by the faith of the Jewish prophets, nor by the Chinese teaching of manners and habits." [5]

In this connection let me draw your attention to an anecdote of Zen Buddhism Löwith uses as an illustration of the intellectual process of the traditional Japanese way of thinking. It is the famous anecdote of "the cowherd in search of his lost cow, which represents his own soul." [6]

5. "The Japanese Mind," p. 242.
6. In what follows I partly repeat what I wrote in Chapter 5 above.

> After having overcome many obstacles he finds a trace of the cow. Then he sees its tail; then its body and head. He fights hard to get hold of the beast. Exhausted, but very cheerful, he rides home on its back. He plays his flute, unmindful of himself as well as of the beast. The meadow is again green, the blossoms are again red; things are restored to their "suchness." The moon illuminates the world and his mind with supreme emptiness. All earthly confusion, the sense of loss as well as of possession, has vanished. All things have changed and yet are the same. [7]

"It is this affirmation of the 'thusness' or 'suchness' of things that is the ultimate outcome of Zen meditation" which Löwith thought is the intellectual root of the Japanese way of thinking. Although he understands this intellectual process as "a pure experience beyond negation or affirmation," his overall judgment about its philosophical value must be seen as negative because it was after all intended to underpin his thesis that the Japanese mind is characterized by not logos but pathos, that it is full of paradoxes and contradictions.

The interesting thing is that in 1950, seven years after the publication of "The Japanese Mind," Löwith used again this anecdote of the cowherd, this time, though for a different purpose, in an article he contributed to the Festschrift for Martin Heidegger (in celebration of his 60th birthday). The article, entitled "World History and the Event of Salvation (*Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*)," is actually an ambitious attempt to show that the European way of thinking is at its base "possessed with the idea of history and historical destiny" through and through. It begins with a critical analysis of the fundamental underlying assumption of Western philosophy regarding the distinction between nature and history: "We usually take for granted that there are two worlds: the world of nature and the world of history. In the former, man finds himself more or less alienated because it exists on its own without him, whereas man finds himself familiar with the latter because it is man's world, the one produced by himself." Löwith traces the origins of this fundamental assumption back to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and sees its tenacious continuity and modified manifestations in modern Euro-

7. "The Japanese Mind," p. 236.

pean philosophical endeavours. Vico's idea of history as "*verum factum*" (what humans made can be verified by humans) is one of the representative cases in point, in which are also included Hegel, Dilthey, and Croce, forming the genealogy of *Geistesgeschichte*. In this genealogy stands equally Hedegger's philosophy of existential ontology. "Heidegger's existential-ontological construction of history, which was made from the finite temporality of an existing being [*Dasein*], tried to support and advance Dilthey's work and carried out the self-overcoming of historicism in which Dilthey had been caught up. This self-overcoming is accomplished by making historical relativity absolute; first, by essentially defining a (human) being [*Dasein*] as a historical existent, and finally, by essentially defining Being itself as a history of Being as well as a destiny of Being."

In a very compressed and laconic way Löwith situates Heidegger's thought in the grand European context of *Geistesgeschichte* as set apart from and against the world of nature. It is only the existence of this European tradition that makes possible Heidegger's strategy of sublimating historical relativities into absolute destiny. Significantly, Löwith confesses that what makes him see such fall-out from the European tradition is none other than his experience of the East. "It is necessary and useful," he says, "to distance oneself, if only once, from the European, so as to recognize oneself, from somewhere outside, in one's limited identity. For this the experience of the Orient will offer a good occasion." And it is precisely at this juncture that he brings forth that self-same story of the cowherd that he used in "The Japanese Mind" some years before. In both wartime and postwar essays the primary purpose which the story of the cowherd is made to serve is the same, i.e., an illustration of the intellectual process working in Zen in particular and hence in the Japanese mentality in general in subsequent eras. The secondary purpose, however, is different and even diametrically opposite: while in the wartime essay the cowherd story is employed in the service of a critical and negative assessment of the Japanese mentality, in the Heidegger-Festschrift essay advantage is taken of the same story to show the peculiarities and specific confines of European thinking, which is "possessed with the idea of history and historical destiny." The vector of end-oriented history and temporal destiny stands in sharp contrast to the static, a-temporal and endless "affirmation of the 'thusness' or 'suchness' of things" as they are.

Löwith's attitude to and judgment of Japanese culture and thought is, in the final analysis, ambivalent and cannot be dealt with in any straightforward fashion, but at least this can be said: that he encountered, by quirks of history, the Other, a cultural entity totally different from his own, and by which he came to see what would have otherwise been invisible of the fundamental cultural assumptions of his own tradition.

Kuki's case

While Löwith's encounter with Japan and the East was made by chance and by no choice of his own, Kuki's encounter with European culture was deliberate and deliberated. He came to Europe in 1921 when he was 33 years old, but by then he was already well versed in European cultural traditions: thanks to the rare presence of a German intellectual, Raphael Koeber (1848–1923), Kuki's teacher at Number 1 High School, who stressed the importance of the classical tradition (Greek and Latin languages and literature), Kuki learned at an early stage of his intellectual formation the classical languages as well as the major modern Western languages (German, French and English). The thesis he wrote during his graduate course at the University of Tokyo, "*Glauben und Wissen* (Beliefs and Knowledge) dealt with the problems of faith and knowledge in European medieval philosophy," and was written in German. Thus by the time he came to Europe he was more than sufficiently knowledgeable about its cultural heritages and backgrounds. During his long stay in Europe, mainly in Germany and France, which lasted nearly 8 years from 1921 to 1929, he met such leading philosophers as Husserl, Heidegger, Bergson and Sartre. His European stay is usually divided into four periods: the first German period (1922–24), which begins with his philosophical studies in Heidelberg with Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), representative of so-called neo-Kantianism; the first Paris period (1924–26), during which he met Sartre, receiving private lessons of French from him; the second German period (1927–28), in the course of which he met Husserl in Freiburg and visited Heidegger in Marburg; the second Paris period (1928, June-December), in which he delivered the prestigious Pontigny Lectures.

Although he did not state explicitly the aims of his study in Europe,

they are not far to seek. As a special scholar of the Japanese Ministry of Education, he was officially expected to carry out the mission of learning about the recent developments of philosophy in Europe, but at the same time he must have been personally determined to build a philosophy of his own that could compete with the European. As for the former mission, he did a perfect job in that by his acumen he rightly picked Heidegger and Bergson among others as the most significant contemporary thinkers, and it was as such that he was later to introduce them to the Japanese intellectual world. But it was in the second self-imposed mission of creating an original philosophy of his own that Kuki too was to a great extent successful: there are two accomplishments, the first of which is the first draft of the famous "Structure of Iki," and the other the Pontigny Lecture, "The Idea of Time and the Repossession of Time in the Orient (*La notion du temps et la reprise sur le temps en orient*)," which he gave at Pontigny, Paris in 1928. [8] On the face of it, these two projects may look different: one deals with a specific and yet typical instance of traditional Japanese taste, "iki," and the other with the nature and structure of time characteristic of the Orient. Despite such apparent difference, they are, as I understand it, of a piece in that both of them are an attempt to deconstruct what may be called the unitary principle that functions as an underlying assumption in European thought. The "iki" is defined, as we shall see later, as a kind of "inner tension" that can and must be created and appreciated in a binary relationship between different sexes. The fundamental principle on which personal identities are to be constructed here is characteristically that of duality and difference, which stands in sharp contrast to the European "unitary" idea of individual identity. The aesthetics of "iki," which Kuki deems essential to Japanese culture, crucially calls for a binary existential relation. The idea of identity, a cultural construct of Europe, which assumes not only the principles of unity but also the principle of self-sameness, or the principle of necessity (A is A), is not viable in the world of "iki." *The Structure of "Iki,"* is therefore not simply a work on cultural taste but a sophisticated philosophical work purporting to deconstruct European philosophical and cultural assumptions.

8. Together with another lecture ("L'expression de l'infini dans l'art japonais"), the lecture was published as *Propos sur le temps: deux communications faites à Pontigny pendant la décade 8-18 août 1928* (Paris: Philippe Renouard, 1928).

In a similar vein, the Pontigny Lecture is an attempt to deconstruct the unitary idea of time prevalent in the European tradition. Kuki knew that Europe had its cultural roots in two distinct traditions, the Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian, and that they stood in contrastive opposition in their conception of time. As is well known, the one is taken as a straight linear progression with a definite beginning and end, while the other is seen in terms of the eternal return. Kuki's strategy at the Pontigny lecture was to hold the eternal-return type in the Oriental camp while leaving the linear type in the opposite camp of Europe.

Briefly put, Kuki made a theoretical attempt to combine the essentially Buddhist idea of transmigration with the Greek conception of the cycle of the Great Year, according to which the world periodically reproduces itself exactly in the same details. The Buddhist idea of transmigration consists in the system of "karma," whereby one's actions receive moral retribution—a bad way of life one leads in the present world, for instance, will metamorphose one into some kind of lower animal, and vice versa—but Kuki carries this principle of cause and effect further, to the point of logical necessity of identity. If the previous life is the cause and the present its effect, then the effect (the present life), logically speaking, must be subsumed and assumed in the cause (the previous life), with the result that it is theoretically possible to imagine that humans retain their identity, if very much mystically, through or across the cycles of the Great Year. On each occasion of its recurrence, all human beings return periodically, identical in every detail.

Kuki then proceeds to compare the ecstatic moment that can manifest itself differently between the Oriental cyclic model of time and the European linear model of time. In the latter model, whose representative instance is provided by Heidegger's idea of the structure of time, time is explained as structured as "ecstasy (ecstasis)", i.e., standing outside oneself. Time is characterized as "the ecstatic unity (unité extatique)" of the three ecstatic moments of the future, the present and the past. Kuki calls this type of ecstasy "horizontal" and "irreversible" because in it the unitary "ecstasy" is made on the linear, progressive horizontal plane of human existence. In the former, Oriental, model of cyclic and recurring time, time is represented as a reversible "mystical ecstasy" in a vertical plane. Kuki is well aware of the fabulous nature of such a conception of time, and hence calls this vertical-mystical type "imaginary" as against "real,"

any yet if one takes seriously the myth of the cycles of the Great Year and the idea of transmigration, it is a good metaphysical possibility. My inference is that Kuki must have detected in Heidegger's "phenomenological ecstasy" in human existence another instance of the unitary principle of the European thinking that makes much of identity, necessity and temporal destiny. By conceiving "the mystical ecstasy," through which a human existence has the theoretical possibility of opening itself up to self-same but plural identities, Kuki was cunning enough to show the peculiarities of the idea of Heideggerian "phenomenological ecstasy," which is in the last analysis based on the underlying assumptions of the specifically European linear conception of time.

The last topic the Pontigny lecture deals with is concerned with the methods of liberation from time in the Oriental model since in the Buddhist world picture it is regarded as of utmost importance to attain the condition of "nirvana" or perfect liberation from secular affairs. Here Kuki classifies the methods into two types: the one he names "transcendental intellectual liberation" and the other "immanent voluntarist liberation." It is perhaps easier to understand them if I use the European concepts of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, and say that the former is tantamount to a spiritual sublimation in *vita contemplativa* and the latter a spiritual liberation in *vita activa*. But his distinction goes further:

> "Transcendental intellectual liberation" is a nirvana of Indian origin, and "immanent voluntarist liberation" is a Japanese moral ideal, arising from Bushido (the Way of the Samurai). The former consists in the negation of time by intellect in order to live, or rather to die, in timeless "liberation" or "eternal rest." The latter consists in a voluntary indifference toward time in order to truly live in the difficult task, repeated endlessly, of searching after the trilogy of truth, goodness and beauty. The former, it must be said, is rather a consequence of the epicurean way of life that tends to avoid misfortunes, whereas the latter is an expression of moral idealism that is courageously determined to fight unflaggingly to replace misfortune with good fortune in unswerving loyalty to one's inner god. (trans. mine)

Bushido, or "the immanent voluntarist liberation," does not transcend the temporal secular plane but enduringly remains in the world of flesh and blood. It does not make any easy use of intellect for disembodied liberation; all one can depend on is an act of will, which has, however, nothing to do with the Western concept of "free will." It is a form of moral idealism which draws for support on no transcendental, absolute divinity but on one's inner god, a divinity of relativity.

The world picture of this moral idealism of Bushido looks, as Kuki describes it, as if it were a world of sheer contingency. Intellect or some form of transcendental logos is deprived of its function. Will, though being a form of assertion, is invested with but little power to contribute to the formation of individual identity. And above all, there is no underlying absolute presence like the Judeo-Christian God, which will sum up, in the ultimate analysis, all phenomena on the unitary principle of identity and necessity. As it turns out, what was to become Kuki's life work, *The Problems of Contingency* (1933),[9] is a thorough investigation, after the model of Kantian critique, of the issues related to the nature and structure of contingency. It is a metaphysical investigation into the possibility of a world in which contingency is constitutive. In a word, it is a work of metaphysics that tries to articulate the structure of the world in terms of a characteristically dualist principle. This attempt must be conducted according to dualist principle because contingency, as Kuki rightly sees it, is an encounter of two different courses of necessity, i.e., a non-necessary coming together of two necessities and identities. Eventually, it turns out to be a philosophical description of the Buddhist world picture, but by the very same token it becomes a sophisticated critique of Judeo-Christian intellectual traditions. But for a fuller treatment of the matter of contingency, we need another occasion.

Let me conclude with a brief discussion of the work by which he is best known in both Italy and Japan, i.e., *The Structure of "Iki."*[10] Now, as we have seen, toward the end of his Pontigny lecture, "The Idea of Time and the Repossession of Time in the Orient," Kuki talked about the two methods for liberation from time: the "transcendental intellec-

9. The only available translation of the work at this moment is a French version: *Le problème de la contingence*, traduction par H. Omodaka (U. of Tokyo P., 1966).

10. *Reflections on Japanese Taste: the Structure of "Iki,"* trans. John Clark and edited by Sakuko Matsui & John Clark (Sydney: Power Publications, 1997). The following translations, however, are far better: *La struttura dell'Iki*, by Giovanna Baccini (Adelphi, 1992) and *La structure de l'iki*, by Camille Loivier (Libelles, 2004).

tual liberation" of Buddhism and the "immanent voluntarist liberation" of the Bushido. The former is other-worldly oriented and is of Indian origin while the latter is oriented toward the secular, and is a genuine Japanese product. While the distinction is important in the Pontigny lecture, the reader of *The Structure of "Iki"* will, however, soon recognize the significant role both these methods have to play in Kuki's ingenious attempt at a structuralist analysis of the idea of "iki." According to Kuki, "iki" is made up of three components, "coquetry," "brave composure," and "resignation" (« seduzione », « tensione ideale », e « renuncia »). Of the three, the latter two, "brave composure" (« tensione ideale ») and "resignation" («renuncia»), in fact correspond precisely to the two methods for liberation from time Kuki discussed in his Pontigny lecture, as is clear from the fact that "brave composure" (« tensione ideale ») is otherwise described as "the ethical ideal of Bushido" (« l'ideale etico del Bushido ») and likewise "resignation" (« renuncia ») is elsewhere explained as "the irreality of Buddhism" (l'Irrealità buddhista). In this trilogy of features of "iki," Kuki argues, the above two function as a formal cause, while "coquetry" plays the role of a material cause.

> To sum up, *iki* is that which coquetry, its material cause, completes in the realization of its own being, through the formal cause of the moral idealism and religious anti-realism characterizing the culture of our country. (…) May we not ultimately define *iki* in terms of these phenomena of consciousness, with their rich and distinctive colouring, and in terms of a coquetry which actualizes its being through ideality and unreality, and thus as amourousness (coquetry) which has pluck (brave composure) and its urbane (resignation). (*Reflections on Japanese Taste: The Structre of* Iki, trans. John Clark, 1997)

> Insomma, si può afffermare che l'*iki* è « seduzione »—causa materiale —che ha compiutamente realizzato il proprio essere grazie alle cause formali costituite dalla tenzione ideale e dall'Irrealtà buddhista, caratteri peculiari delle cultura del nostro paese. (…) Per concludere, se abbiamo definito l'*iki* come un fenomeno di coscienza ricco di qualità, come «seduzione» che si realizza ontologicamente grazie all'ideale etico del Bushido e all'Irrealità buddhista, non potremo forse dire che è « attrattiva erotica (seduzione) capace di sprezzatura (rinuncia) e dotata di tensione (energia spirituale) » ? (trans. Giovanna Baccini [Adelphi, 1992])

> [I include the Italian translation only to show how superb it is, which becomes particularly clear when compared with the inaccurate and clumsy English translation.]

Perhaps for a good understanding of Kuki's project it would be helpful to consider the philosophical background which provides one context for it. In talking about material and formal causes, Kuki certainly had in mind the Aristotelian modification of Plato's idea of Form, or "Idea." Following the Aristotelian model, Kuki stipulates that the "iki" is only realizable when the material cause of "coquetry" is informed by the formal causes of "the ethical ideal of Bushido" and "the irreality of Buddhism." There are two interesting points to note: (1) the formal causes, with their negativity and partial temporalization, are demoted from the Platonic height of positive and eternal presence, and (2) the material cause, with its characteristic eroticism and gendered embodiment, does not stand isolated in its neutrality and objectivity but is necessarily to be encountered in a gendered binary relationship. In such a world, where neither the Platonic Idea nor its Aristotelian modification has any relevance, where eroticism is materialized by virtue of negative formative moments, Kuki proposes to see a specific kind of "self" (which has nothing whatsoever to do with the European individual, self-sufficient in its own identity) coming into being. It is only then, when such a self presents itself in a sort of phenomenological epiphany (I know this is a sheer contradiction in terms), that "iki" is realized and experienced. Behind Kuki's unique philosophical reflection and construction runs the deep undercurrent of his erudition about and critique of European philosophy.

*

In the early twentieth century Kuki and Löwith changed places, one perhaps willingly, the other unwillingly. Löwith was forced to come to Japan and saw in it a totally different culture from his own. The experience made him aware of the peculiarities, otherwise unrecognized, of his own cultural tradition, one of which is the trait of being "possessed with

the idea of history and historical destiny" as distinct from the idea of nature. Kuki came to Europe of his own accord but almost inevitably found himself reflecting on the peculiarities of his own culture, which must have been brought home to him all the more for his being in Europe. Indeed, both cases may be just typical instances of cross-cultural experience and as such they do not look like anything remarkable, particularly in this day and age of globalization. But I am sure that, philosophically speaking, theirs remain among the profoundest of such experiences; and I am equally sure that the philosophical fruits of their differing senses of being "in-between" are hardly likely to be superseded with any case.

Note about the author:

Yasunari Takada is a professor in transcultural studies at the University of Tokyo, Komaba. His publications include *Cicero: An Intellectual Tradition in Europe* (1999), *Overcoming Post-modernism: "Overcoming Modernity" and Japan* (with Kevin Doak, 2002) and *Sing Muse!: An Invitation to Ancient Greek Literature* (with S. Kawashima, 2003).