

The Present of Difference and the Present of Identity Kuki's Conception of Time

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Abstract: *Kuki Shūzō's oeuvre is characterized by tensions between insistence on what is phenomenologically "given" to consciousness and the principle of identity, from which derives his speculative philosophy. The principle of identity is mainly represented by the metaphysics of the eternal return of the same, of which temporality is the "eternal present", i.e. the present of identity. The "given concrete" is embodied by the contingent encounter common to different individuals, of which temporality is the present of the encounter, i.e. the present of difference. This paper aims to show the originality of Kuki's phenomenology of the present, i.e. of the contingent encounter, which is his genuine first philosophy and which is prior to his speculative philosophy based on the principle of identity, from which derive the idea of the present of identity, the definition of contingency as "negation of necessity", and the "metaphysical point of view" on contingency as possibility. However, despite this primacy of his phenomenology and the ambivalence between the present of difference and the present of identity in his thought, Kuki eventually deepened the present of identity in his speculative and existential philosophy of destiny based on the idea of the "assimilation" of others towards the identity of the I. By explaining how Kuki implicitly systematizes the tension between these two presents, this paper thus also insists on the crucial importance of the principle of identity in Kuki's thought, on which the secondary literature in Japanese and European languages does not focus.*

Introduction

Kuki Shūzō's oeuvre is characterized by tensions between an insistence on the principle of identity and the "given concrete" (与えられた具体).¹ Deployed by

¹ 『九鬼周造全集』 [Collected works of Kuki Shūzō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1981–1982), 12 vols [KSZ for short]. KSZ 1, 7.

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Kuki against the idea of an abstract universal, the given concrete is phenomenologically embodied by the contingent encounter common to different individuals, of which temporality is the present of the encounter, i.e. the present of difference. The logic of identity is principally represented by the metaphysics of the eternal return of the same, of which temporality is the “eternal present”, i.e. the present of identity. Although the present of any particular encounter is always different from the present of another encounter, i.e. from what occurred in the past and from what will occur in the future, the idea of the eternal return of the same implies by definition the repetition of an identical thing. This idea of the eternal return is therefore a pure application of the principle of identity in the cosmological field, whereby a present thing has already existed identically in the past, and will also exist identically in the future: that is why it can be called the “eternal present”. Indeed, the idea of the eternal return is a characteristic of metaphysics which stands beyond what is given to consciousness, whereas the phenomenological consciousness, which examines, in contrast, what is given to itself as consciousness, cannot know whether what is currently given to itself is identical to what existed in a previous life or to what will exist in a future life.

The main concerns of this paper are to show two things: firstly, the originality of Kuki’s phenomenology of the present, and, secondly, the manner in which Kuki implicitly systematizes this tension between the present of difference and the present of identity.

The Present as Temporality of Contingency, i.e. of Encounter

According to Kuki, the “temporality of contingency is the *present*, of which the scheme is the ‘now’”,² because “the contingent is the encounter in the present”.³ More precisely, this encounter occurs “here and now”, *hic et nunc*:

Contingency in the most basic sense lies in the crossing between two or more than two causal series, and it is accomplished in the “here and now” (*hic et*

² KSZ 2, 209.

³ KSZ 2, 210.

nunc). It is determined by the spatial “here” and the temporal “now”.⁴ Contingency. . . refers to the individual and each individual event.⁵

The individual implies contingency, i.e. *hic et nunc* encounter, because the individual appears only by encounter with others. Phenomenologically, it is not the individual which is originary, but the encounter.⁶ The encounter between two individuals occurs in a present *moment*, but also in a particular place, because the simultaneity of the encounter implies space, in this case the spatiality of *this place*: it is only in a particular and concrete moment and place that an encounter occurs. Kuki calls this “simultaneous contingency”.⁷

The encounter is the moment of the now which breaks the horizontal continuity of time, i.e. the intentionality of consciousness aiming at the horizon of possibility, of future. The contingent strikes my consciousness which constitutes time: “what is hoped in the future is not the contingent. The contingent must be what is affected only in actuality [現在性に於いてのみ触発されるもの]”.⁸ There is no *constitution* of phenomenon by the subject, but a simple “affection”, a simple contact, a simple touch [触], between consciousness and a mere given: in short, it is a mere encounter. We also notice that the word “contact” has etymologically the same meaning as “contingency”: the Latin word *contactus* derives from *contingo*, composed by *con-*, “with”, and *tango*, “touch”. The contingent present that Kuki talks about is not an abstract mathematical point criticized by some philosophers of time, but the moment of “contact”, i.e. the moment of “encounter” between a given and consciousness. This is why, according to Kuki, “the contingent in general is what creates oneself [*sōzō sareru* 創造される] in actuality”.⁹ His point is that the contingent, which is not constituted by the subject, appears to consciousness by creating itself spontaneously as an encounter. Regarding the idea of the creation in the present, Kuki seems to be inspired by Husserlian idea of the “originary

⁴ KSZ 2, 135.

⁵ KSZ 2, 301.

⁶ See Simon Ebersolt シモン・エベルソルト, 「与えられるものとしての偶然—九鬼偶然論の現象学的解釈の試み」 [The Contingent as Given. An Essay of Phenomenological Interpretation of Kuki's Theory of Contingency], 『理想』 [The Ideal] 698 (March 2017): 116-28. We problematize the phenomenological significations of Kuki's idea of “phenomenon” and “given” as contingent encounter, on which the secondary literature in Japanese and European languages does not focus.

⁷ KSZ 2, 128.

⁸ KSZ 2, 210 (emphasis added).

⁹ Ibid.

impression” (*Urimpression*), which he presents in a lecture on phenomenology.¹⁰ The originary impression, defined as “new now” (*neue Jetzt*), “originary creation” (*Urschöpfung*, which Kuki translated by *gen-sōzō* 原創造), “is not born as something produced”, but rather is *genesis spontanea*, “originary generation” (*Urzeugung*).¹¹ It is “the absolute non-modified, the originary source of all consciousness and of all subsequent beings”.¹² Kuki adds that it “is not what has been produced in consciousness”, but “something completely new”.¹³ However, Husserl does not deal with contingency or encounter in those passages. It is Kuki who, by translating *genesis spontanea* as *gūzen hassei* 偶然発生 (contingent generation), discovered, within the creativity of the originary impression of the present, the phenomenon of contingency, i.e. of encounter. In Kuki’s thought, the originary impression necessarily implies the phenomenon of encounter (or “contact”, “affection”) between a mere given and consciousness. Let us also note that, in those passages, neither Kuki nor Husserl precisely define the concept of creation, but we can be sure that they do not consider it as a creation by the will of a subject (Abrahamic God’s *ex nihilo* creation, Platonician demiurge’s production, or Artist’s *poiesis*). Creation seems to be merely considered as something new, a new appearance. And, in Kuki’s thought, it is the phenomenon of encounter as such (and not an almighty subject) which is creative. In other words, it is not the one (the subject), but the two, i.e. the phenomenon of encounter between a mere given and consciousness, which is originary, creative.

Therefore, in *The Problem of Contingency*, Kuki asserts the following on the same page:

- 1) “[T]he *contingent* in general is what *creates* oneself in actuality”.
- 2) “[T]he contingent is the *encounter in the present*”.
- 3) “[W]hat makes the original contingent contingent lies in the actuality which appears as contingent at the moment of the *given* ‘now’ [原始偶然が偶然たる所以は与えられた「いま」の瞬間に偶然する現在性に存する]”.¹⁴

Even the “original contingent”, which is often considered a mere metaphysical idea by some researchers,¹⁵ is fundamentally a phenomenon which

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (Halle a.d.S.: Max Niemeyer, 1928), 451; quoted in KSZ 10, 160.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 423; KSZ 10, 159–160.

¹³ KSZ 10, 161.

¹⁴ KSZ 2, 210.

appears in the ‘now’. In “What is Anthropology?” (1938) and “The Emotion of Surprise and Contingency” (1939), Kuki asserts that “the fact itself actually given is nothing but the original contingent”¹⁶ and even talks about the “given original contingent”.¹⁷ The contingent, or the encounter, is “given” to consciousness as it “creates oneself” in the present, as it appears spontaneously as contingent. In other words, *the contingent gives itself*.

It is at this present moment that there is an intuition, *sōshiteki ni ataerareru chokkan* 創始的に与えられる直観 (“intuition originally giving itself”), which is Kuki’s translation of Husserlian *originär gebende Anschauung*.¹⁸ *Gebende*, which derives from the present participle of the verb *geben* (to give), was translated in an active sense by recent translators: *ataeru hataraki o suru* 与える働きをする¹⁹ or *ataeru* 与える.²⁰ Why did Kuki not translate *gebende* by *ataeru*, of which the active sense is more obvious than *ataerareru*? The ending *reru/rareru* れる/られる may signify possibility, passivity and spontaneity (in Japanese *jihatsusei* 自発性), but it is spontaneity which best expresses the tension between the intuitionist and transcendental aspects of Husserlian phenomenology.²¹ The characteristic *originär gebende* of intuition describes the reflexive aspect of what “offers itself” (*sich darbietet*) or “gives itself” (*sich gibt*)²² to consciousness which receives it *at the same time, hic et nunc*. Through the intuition of what gives itself, consciousness is

¹⁵ For example Hashimoto Takashi 橋本崇, 「シェリングと九鬼周造」 [Schelling and Kuki Shūzō], in Sakabe Megumi 坂部恵, Washida Kiyokazu 鷺田清一 and Fujita Masakatsu 藤田正勝, eds., 『九鬼周造の世界』 [Kuki Shūzō’s World] (Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō ミネルヴァ書房, 2002), 245–64.

¹⁶ KSZ 3, 48.

¹⁷ KSZ 3, 172.

¹⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie* (Halle a.d.S.: Max Niemeyer, 1913) [*Ideen I* for short], 43; Kuki’s translation in KSZ X, p. 13; KSZ III, p. 92.

¹⁹ Watanabe Jirō 渡辺二郎 in Husserl, 『イデー』 [*Ideen*] I-I (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō みすず書房, 1979), 117; Sakakibara Tetsuya 榎原哲也 in 『現象学事典』 [Dictionary of Phenomenology] (Tokyo: Kōbun-dō 弘文堂, 1994), 427.

²⁰ Sugimura Yasuhiko 杉村靖彦 in Jean Greisch, 『『存在と時間』講義』 [Lectures on *Being and Time*] (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku shuppan-kyoku 法政大学出版局, 2007), 60.

²¹ For more details, see Ebersolt, 「与えられるものとしての偶然—九鬼偶然論の現象学的解釈の試み」, 118–119. See also Paul Ricœur’s comments in Husserl, *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie et une philosophie phénoménologique pures* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), 78, n. 1; 14, n. 6–7.

²² Husserl, *Ideen I*, 43.

simultaneously passive and active: passive because it leaves what gives itself to give itself; active because it receives by giving it meaning.

As it is descriptive of the fact which does *itself* by itself, without a deliberate act of a subject-agent, spontaneity is close to the function of a reflexive verb which describes both the passivity and the activity of the grammatical subject. *Ataerareru* as spontaneity expresses *at the same time* the passivity and the activity of the intuition, whereas *ataeru*, for which recent translators opted, has no passive nuance. The spontaneity of the *-rareru* form allowed Kuki to describe a phenomenon which is neither the Kantian phenomenon, i.e. an object “constituted by the subject of knowledge”,²³ nor an object prior to a subject which would simply be submitted to it, but a phenomenon where a given and a consciousness encounter each other in intuition.

It is possible to understand Kuki’s translation of *originär* in the same way. Nowadays, this notion is translated by *genteki ni* 原的に²⁴ or *hongenteki ni* 本原的に,²⁵ i.e. by characters which mean “source”, “beginning”, “origin”. Kuki translates *originär* by the neologism of *sōshiteki ni* 創始的に, which implies the idea of “beginning” (創 and 始), but also the idea of “build for the first time” (創).²⁶ The originality of Kuki’s translation therefore lies in this idea of *creation* (in Japanese, *sōzō* 創造), which means that the intuition gives itself spontaneously like a first creation, when “what gives itself originally [*sōshiteki ni*]”,²⁷ “what creates oneself [*sōzō sareru*] in actuality”,²⁸ i.e. the given contingent, offers itself *hic et nunc* to consciousness like a first creation, at the beginning (without its constitution by the categories of the “subject of knowledge”).

Our interpretation of this translation of Husserlian intuition is not arbitrary and is not unrelated to Kuki’s phenomenology of the temporality of contingency. The originary character of the intuition of contingent phenomenon is clearly asserted by Kuki even in *The Problem of Contingency*:

²³ KSZ 10, 12.

²⁴ Watanabe in Husserl, 『イデー』 I-I, 117 ; Sugimura in Greisch, 『『存在と時間』講義』, 60.

²⁵ Sakakibara in 『現象学事典』, 427.

²⁶ 『新漢語林』 [The New Wood of *kango*] (Tokyo: Taishū-kan shoten 大修館書店, 2004–2008).

²⁷ Husserl, *Ideen I*, 43 ; Kuki’s translation in KSZ 10, 13.

²⁸ KSZ 2, 210.

If we intuit [直観する] things in the flesh and originary, it is not contingency as negation of necessity which is lived, neither is it contingency in relation to the possibility which is understood. The original radical and primary fact is the fact of seeing straightforwardly the contingent as real in the present. Then, secondarily, it can be thought the cases where we see obliquely the future possible [未来的な可能] as orientation towards the future, and the cases where we see obliquely the passed necessary [過去のな必然] as persistency from the past.²⁹

For Kuki, it is “intuition”, i.e. the fact of “seeing straightforwardly” the contingent in the present, “in the flesh and originary”, which is the “original radical and primary fact”. Contingency “as negation of necessity” and contingency “in relation to possibility” are only “secondary”. Using the ideas of *modus rectus* and *modus obliquus* in Franz Brentano and Oskar Becker,³⁰ Kuki asserts that it is from the position of the actual real, “straightforwardly” seen, that we “obliquely” see a possible future or a passed necessary: it is only after having intuited the contingent given, i.e. after having encountered the given *hic et nunc*, that we “obliquely” see contingency as the possibility and negation of necessity (which are traditional definitions of contingency in modal logic), or that we move towards a possible future or that we remain committed to a necessary past. It is only “in the field of logic, which has already left the immediacy of concrete experience [体験], that contingency is defined as negation of necessity, or the correlate of possibility”.³¹ These logical definitions are only (“oblique” and “secondary”) derivatives of “intuition”, i.e. of “immediacy of concrete experience” as (“straightforward” and “primary”) encounter.

Throughout Kuki’s entire philosophy of contingency there is an ambivalence between the phenomenological and logical aspects. Contingency as a given encounter and contingency as the *possibility* of *not* being are found to coexist. Yet, we see here that Kuki asserts explicitly the originary, primary character of the concretely given intuition in contrast to the idea of contingency as the logical negation of necessity or as a correlate of possibility. A phenomenology of the contingent encounter is clearly the *genuine first philosophy of Kuki*, i.e. prior to his

²⁹ KSZ 2, 211–12.

³⁰ Franz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, ed. Oskar Kraus (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1925), vol. 2, 225 ; Oskar Becker, « Zur Logik der Modalitäten », *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, no. 11 (1930): 539.

³¹ KSZ 2, 212.

“speculative philosophy”, which from he derives the definition of contingency as the “negation of necessity”³² and the “metaphysical point of view” on contingency as possibility. The contingent encounter in the present is the way by which all phenomena appear. It is the unconditioned principle of all phenomena, the phenomenality of all phenomena.³³

From the point of view of history of philosophy, the privilege of the present can also be found in Augustinian and Husserlian philosophies of time, to which Kuki makes reference.³⁴ Augustine explains that “neither the future, nor the past exist” *as such*, but that there is only the “present of the past” (i.e. memory, *memoria*), the “present of the present” (i.e. intuition, *contuitus*) and the “present of the future” (i.e. expectation, *expectatio*), which “exist in our spirit”³⁵ in the present. It is only by recalling in the present in our spirit that the past exists and it is only by expecting in the present in our spirit that the future exists. In Husserl, the “originary impression” happens in the “now”,³⁶ which expands itself in a depth ever more remote. “Retention” is an expanded present, which holds in the present the recent past as if the past still belonged to the present, and “protention” is a present expectation of a near future which is hence already present. The originality of Kuki consists in discovering the immediacy of the lived experience of the present in the phenomenon of the contingent encounter between two individuals, a topic that is absent from Augustine’s and Husserl’s works. According to Augustine, the object of the attention “elapses at one point” (*in puncto praeterit*), “but the attention stays” (*sed tamen perdurat attentio*).³⁷ Husserl seeks to ground the temporality of intentional experiences on what he calls the “absolute flow of consciousness, constitutive of time”.³⁸ The present in Kuki’s thought is not a present which stays, i.e. the present of consciousness which stays, but the moment of the “contact”, the moment of the

³² Contrary to Obama Yoshinobu’s interpretation, which insists on the centrality of this definition: Obama Yoshinobu 小浜善信, 『九鬼周造の哲学—漂泊の魂』 [Kuki Shūzō’s Philosophy: The Wandering Soul] (Kyoto: Shōwa-dō 昭和堂, 2006), 4.

³³ For more details, see Simon Ebersolt, *Contingence et communauté. Kuki Shūzō, philosophe japonais* (PhD diss., Inalco, 2017; forthcoming from Paris, Vrin), Part 3, Chapter 1. Concerning phenomenology and first philosophy, see Jean-Luc Marion, “Phénoménologie de la donation et philosophie première”, in *De surcroît. Études sur les phénomènes saturés* (Paris, PUF, 2010), 1–36.

³⁴ KSZ 10, 152–157; KSZ 11, 132–134; KSZ 4, 12.

³⁵ Augustine, *Confessiones*, Book 11, Chapter 20.

³⁶ Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, 451.

³⁷ Augustine, *Confessiones*, Book 11, Chapter 28.

³⁸ Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, 428.

“encounter” between the given and consciousness, which is neither sovereign nor merely passive.

Articulation between Contingency and the Eternal Return of the Same

In his paper titled “Metaphysical Time” (1931), Kuki articulates his ideas of contingency and the eternal return of the same. He writes: “the periodic metaphysical time is the temporal form of contingency”.³⁹ Kuki justifies this idea from two points of view; the theoretical and the practical.

Firstly, from a theoretical point of view, contingency can be interpreted as an eternal present. According to Kuki, the eternal present “has no relation neither with the future nor with the past”, i.e. it “has no horizon neither of the future nor of the past”.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is possible to phenomenologically interpret the “eternal present” as the moment of the contingent encounter insofar as it is the moment where the horizons of future and past are broken by the encounter. Like the moment of the contingent encounter, the phenomenon of the “eternal present”, i.e. the “present” of the eternal return of the same, is characterized by a “discontinuity between moments [契機]”.⁴¹

The phenomenological articulation between contingency and the eternal present can be seen in another passage (a lecture on Heidegger in 1931–1932), where Kuki refers to Nishida:

The new now dismembers relentlessly the old now. Therefore, by stressing what is new, we can talk about the death of each moment and the birth of each moment. Moreover, as the present is a point without extent and time endures [持続], we can say that the essence of time is the continuity of discontinuity [非連続の連続].⁴²

“Duration” embodies the “continuity” of time. The Japanese word *jizoku* 持続 is a reference to Bergson’s concept of duration. The “new now”, that Kuki also called “contingent generation” (*genesis spontanea*, 偶然発生) in the same passage,

³⁹ KSZ 3, 195.

⁴⁰ KSZ 3, 193.

⁴¹ KSZ 3, 192. Cf. *Propos sur le temps* [written in French], KSZ 1, 291: “*discontinuité des éléments*”.

⁴² KSZ 10, 161.

embodies the idea of “discontinuity”, because it is “without extent”, i.e. it neither has a horizon neither of the future or of the past; each birth of a moment and each death of a moment embodies “discontinuity”. Therefore, time as a whole is the intersection between continuity and discontinuity. In other words, time is the “continuity of discontinuity”, an idea which had earlier appeared in Nishida’s work, in particular in “The Temporal and the Intemporal” (1931), to which Kuki makes reference in the same passage. The “continuity of discontinuity”, according to Nishida, is a concept which synthesizes his theories of time and alterity, i.e. the “self-determination of the eternal now” (永遠の今の自己限定) and the “I and Thou” (私と汝).⁴³ The “I” as the place of absolute nothing is, from a temporal point of view, an “eternal now”, i.e. a present of consciousness which determines the past and the future as a unifying force which remains at the bottom of the relentless stream of the phenomena of consciousness. This now is called “eternal” not because it is supratemporal, but merely because it differs from the succession of ‘nows’ specific to spatialized time (t 0, t 1, t 2, etc.). The continuity of discontinuity points out each moment of breaks in the continuity of experience where the “I”, by the phenomenon of encounter, is “in contact” (接する)⁴⁴ with the “Thou” in the “eternal now”. The “Thou”, as an “absolute other” (絶対の他), appears immediately *in me* (私に於いて) as a field of consciousness, and therefore splits apart this I which forms himself continually. However, at the same time it makes the I anew, i.e. makes it reborn. The continuity of discontinuity is therefore a self which, in each moment, in front of multiple others, dismembers itself by conversing with the past and renews itself by projecting into the future.⁴⁵

However, the most explicit theoretical articulation between contingency and the eternal return can be found in the second part of *The Problem of Contingency* (1935):

We can think that periodic metaphysical time, like transmigration, is a successive contingent, i.e. a single [単一の] simultaneous contingent which

⁴³ See Kobayashi Toshiaki 小林敏明, 『西田哲学を開く－〈永遠の今〉をめぐる』 [Open up Nishida’s Philosophy: Around the Question of the “Eternal Now”] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2013), 97-142; Ōta Hironobu 太田裕信, 『西田幾多郎の行為の哲学』 [The Philosophy of Action in Nishida Kitarō] (PhD diss., Kyoto University, 2016), 53–54, 65.

⁴⁴ 『西田幾多郎全集』 [Collected works of Nishida Kitarō] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965–1966), 19 vols [NKZ for short]. NKZ 6, 433.

⁴⁵ NKZ VI, 236, 256–257. See also NKZ VI, 264–265, 268; NKZ VI, p. 343.

comes to existence according to identity [同一性をもって] by repeating itself an infinite number of times again and again (πάλιν καὶ πάλιν) (see Kuki, “Metaphysical time”). The successive contingent is in fact the periodic contingent [回帰的偶然].⁴⁶

As seen above, the “simultaneous contingent” is the phenomenon of the *hic et nunc* encounter between two individuals. The “successive contingent”, Kuki writes, “takes the form of a simple repetition of an identical [同一の] simultaneous contingent. And it is in the fact that the same simultaneous contingent is offered [提供される] by repetition that the contingency of the successive contingent makes a particular impression on us”.⁴⁷ Kuki thinks about events which recur in the linear time. For example, an individual leaves on a journey on the 4th of the month. He goes by train on the platform number 4. He gets in the number 4 carriage. There are 4 passengers in this carriage.⁴⁸ This succession of 4 is contingent. The successive contingency consists in the fact that an event, i.e. a unique encounter (here, between the traveller and the number 4), which negates the principle of identity whereby $A=A$, precisely recurs according to the principle of identity. Kuki applies this scheme to the idea of the eternal return of the same: the “periodic metaphysical time” would be a “successive contingent”, renamed on occasion “periodic contingent”.

However, is this application not purely formal, i.e. abstract from any content? Even if there is a symbolic repetition of the number 4, all the encounters are distinct from each other. Moreover, this symbolic identity is not reducible to the repetition of a strictly identical event from the point of view of content. Why did Kuki strive to reduce the eternal return of the same to contingency, in particular to a “periodic” contingency which “recurs” merely symbolically?

Actually, there is a practical background in Kuki’s thought which explicates this problematic theoretical reduction. From a practical point of view, it is in a development on what Kuki calls the “meaning of human life” that he articulates his phenomenology of contingency and his cosmology of the eternal return of the same: *it is the moment where the contingent given is considered as a destiny which articulates these two aspects of his philosophy.*

⁴⁶ KSZ 2, 132.

⁴⁷ KSZ 2, 129.

⁴⁸ KSZ 2, 130–131.

According to Kuki, the moral challenge is to forcefully assert the contingent given in the moment of the encounter. In *The Problem of Contingency*, Kuki uses the notion of “existentiality” (実存性) in a passage on the connection between the contingent and destiny: “When the contingent acquires a fundamental and completely personal meaning for human existentiality, the contingent is called destiny [運命]”.⁴⁹ But what does it mean to “acquire a fundamental and completely personal meaning”? A few pages further on, Kuki asserts that in “destiny in the most basic sense” “one engulfs oneself in contingency [自己を偶然生の中に沈没し] by awakening to oneself with fervour [情熱的自覚], and, hence fundamentally draws upon oneself” [自己を原始的に活かす]. It is not unusual, moreover, for the contingent as destiny to be understood as the eternal present of the periodic metaphysical time”.⁵⁰ As we can see from the above, there is a general connection between the existence of *amor fati* and the idea of the eternal present, and this demonstrates the ‘existential weight’ of the speculative theory of the eternal return of the same. By a “fervent self-awakening” specific to the existence of *amor fati*, I consider the contingency of the originary given, the moment of the encounter, as a destiny, an eternal return.

This existential “fervent self-awakening” which connects contingency, destiny, and the eternal return, is based on the logical principle of identity; that is of necessity. In other words, it is a *logicisation* of the contingent, as we can see in the conclusion of *The Problem of Contingency*, in a passage on the meaning of the “theoretical existentiality”. As it is a key moment of the connection between the existence of *amor fati* and speculative logic in Kuki’s philosophy, I will quote at length:

The radical meaning of a theoretical system, which gives order and unity to experience, lies in the fact that it seizes the contingency of others, assimilates [同化], and interiorizes [内面化] it in its concreteness towards the identity of the one [一者の同一性]. True judgment should have the task of the interiorization of the contingent on the basis of the contingency of facts in the correlation of the contingent-necessary. The principle of identity [同一律], which is the fundamental principle of thought, is nothing more than the principle of interiorization. “A is A” merely means “me, I am me” [我は我である]. The fundamental meaning of judgment should consist in the fact

⁴⁹ KSZ 2, 224.

⁵⁰ KSZ 2, 235.

that it deepens the “Thou” encountered in the “I”. It is the idea of judgment which concretely identifies [同一化] the external “Thou” towards the internal identity of the “I”. But this should not aim at an empty identity in an Eleatic abstract universality. The interiorization by the principle of identity should be a concrete interiorization limited by the contingency of the “Thou” encountered as a fact. . . . The mere identification, the mere necessitation, by denying any “Thou”, any contingency, guides to acosmism [無宇宙論]. The ideal that the theoretical knowledge should attain should not be the mere necessity. It should be the “necessary-contingent” which enjoys fully [満喫] the contingent and which is saturated [飽和] with contingency.⁵¹

Let us note that this general scheme of theoretical knowledge, i.e. the identification of others within the “I”, seems to be inspired by Émile Meyerson. In a lecture where Kuki presents the work of the French epistemologist, he says that “explaining” consists in “identifying” (同一化, *identifier*).⁵² Moreover, when “reason conquers the non-rationality [of the given real], the world will return into nothingness, because reason is the faculty which tends, by its very nature, “towards the pure unity, i.e. the vacuum (空虚), i.e. *acosmisme* (無宇宙論)”.⁵³ As is the case for the Eleatics, reason or thought which is based only on the principle of identity and therefore is limited to positing the identity of the one (i.e. its necessity) denies others, any encounter (i.e. any contingency). That is to say, it makes impossible the existence of a world. Such “mere identification”, “mere necessitation”, tends towards “acosmism”. As a philosopher of contingency, of encounter, Kuki rejects the “Eleatic abstract universality”. Nevertheless, the principle of identity remains significant in his speculative and existential thought. This is a characteristic of Kuki’s philosophy on which researchers have not focused upon to date. More broadly, the crucial importance of the principle of identity within his thought has been overlooked.⁵⁴

The existential affirmation of the contingent by necessitation goes hand in hand with the theoretical scheme of necessitation. In the last paragraph of the conclusion of the book, Kuki states that “the meaning of action in *praxis*” lies in the

⁵¹ KSZ 2, 256–257.

⁵² KSZ 8, 207 (in Japanese and French).

⁵³ KSZ 8, 210 (in French and Japanese).

⁵⁴ Even Furukawa Yūji 古川雄嗣, who dealt with the notion of destiny in Kuki’s philosophy: 『偶然と運命—九鬼周造の倫理学』 [Contingent and Destiny: Kuki Shūzō’s Ethics] (Kyoto: Nakanishiya shuppan ナカニシヤ出版, 2015).

“fact of assimilating and interiorizing the ‘thou’ of intersubjective sociality towards the concrete identity of the ‘I’ who exists”.⁵⁵ I assimilate others in the I. In other words, others become *similar* to me. When I interiorise or assimilate others in accordance with the principle of identity, i.e. of necessity, I and others become one. This signifies that the contingent becomes a “necessary-contingent”. Let us note that the notions of “assimilate” (from *similis*, “same”) and *dōka* 同化 (同 signifies “same”) have exactly the same meaning: “to make the same”.

The scheme of interiorisation, of assimilation, based on the principle of identity, can also be found in the connection between contingency, destiny, and the eternal return of the same. As Kuki says, “by identity of repetition, [the periodic contingent, i.e. the eternal return] takes the modality of the ‘necessity of contingency’, and has moreover the perspective of coming close to the concept of destiny”.⁵⁶ In other words, by a “fervent self-awakening” based on the principle of identity, I consider the contingent encounter as something *identical* to an event as it appeared in another life, i.e. as something predestined (destiny), a repetition of the same (eternal return of the same, eternal present). I “assimilate” the difference which appears in the present of encounter with others to an event I experienced in another life. It is a converted perspective due to the principle of identity. I convert the difference into the same, i.e. the present of difference into the present of identity. Therefore, the moment of *difference* between individuals becomes the moment of repetition of the same, where “the I recognizes himself with a trembling surprise”,⁵⁷ i.e. the moment of *identity*. It is not a matter of surprise at the difference given by the contingent encounter, but a surprise at the identity. There is a repetition of an identity by the “recognition” of the “I” of another life. By this assimilation, I and others become “one body” (一体) in destiny.⁵⁸ By this assimilation which ensures the conversion of the present of difference into the present of identity, Kuki implicitly systematizes the tension between these two presents.

⁵⁵ KSZ 2, 259.

⁵⁶ KSZ 2, 132.

⁵⁷ KSZ 1, 288.

⁵⁸ Kuki’s nostalgia for the identity of the body is also expressed along with the idea of destiny. In “Rhyme in Japanese Poetry” (KSZ 5, 280 ; KSZ 4, 231), Kuki mentions “the metaphysical demand of recollecting the figure where, in a previous life, one was *one body* when one is faced with the mysterious destiny of love in this fleeting world” (浮世の恋の不思議な運命に前世で一体であった姿を想起しようとする形而上的要求). In an essay entitled “Contingent and Destiny” (KSZ 5, 34), he asserts that “the human being must love his own destiny and become *one body* with destiny”.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can assert that, despite the ambivalence between the present of difference and the present of identity in his philosophy, Kuki eventually deepened the present of identity by way of the idea of the existential assimilation of others towards the identity of the I. In other words, Kuki eventually leans towards the present of identity.

However, it is also possible to deepen the way of the present of difference. This is in fact the approach Kuki takes in his genuine first philosophy, but did not deploy in his practical philosophy. This way would not be a *praxis* of an individual existence (of the “I”), but a *praxis* of *community*. As seen above, here, the present can be interpreted as an “eternal present” insofar as it is a break with the horizons of the past and of the future. However, we must not forget that this break occurs by way of the originary phenomenon of encounter, which is *common* to several individuals, but also *common* to individuals and to a more general context (milieu, people, society). Individuals and context have *memories*, i.e. a dimension of the past, but also *impetus* towards the future, and the break of the present occurs only with memory and impetus. A philosophy of present should not be a pure presentism of encounter between ephemeral individuals who merely assimilate others towards the identity of the “I”, but a *philosophy of memory and impetus of community*.

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