

Taming Contingency: Kuki Shūzō and Martin Heidegger in Dialogue

Yuta Okada¹ (Kyoto University)

Introduction

There has been a great discussion about the influences of Western philosophy on Kuki's philosophy. As many studies have shown, the influences of Heidegger should not be ignored among these influences. Kuki regards philosophy as "the original understanding of Being in general (存在一般の根源的会得)" (KSZ 3, 106) and in his famous work *The Structure of 'Iki'* (『「いき」の構造』, 1930) he argues that the understanding of *iki* must be concrete, factual and specific "Understanding of Being." (cf. KSZ 1, 13)

While many studies have focused on the influences of Heidegger in *The Structure of 'Iki'*, it seems that less attention has been given to those in his main work, *The Problem of Contingency* (『偶然性の問題』, 1935). "Contingency" is his prominent theme throughout his whole life. His philosophical motivation, which lies in *The Problem of Contingency*, is a criticism of Western philosophy in which necessity has a priority over contingency, and his investigation starts from reception and criticism of Heidegger's philosophy, as other Japanese philosophers like Watsuji.

In this presentation, I would like to consider the possibility of a dialogue between Kuki and Heidegger on "contingency." As well known, they discussed *iki* while Kuki was staying in Europe. In Heidegger's *A Dialogue on Language* (1953/54), based on a dialogue between Heidegger and Japanese Germanist Tezuka Tomio, Kuki and his understanding of *iki* were the discussion topics. However, as Mori points out, this dialogue is unfair because Heidegger reinterprets Kuki's idea in Heidegger's schema of thinking of Being (Mori 2008, 36). Since Kuki died in 1941 and could not know Heidegger's late thoughts, his criticism of Heidegger focuses mainly on the discussion in *Being and Time*. As we know, *Being and Time* is incomplete, and Heidegger's thought developed after publishing *Being and Time*.² In my opinion, his thought after *Being and Time* seems to sympathize with Kuki's philosophy of "contingency" based on his criticism of Western philosophy, though Heidegger does not

¹ nowhereman5811@yahoo.co.jp

² As of 1933, Kuki regretted that the second part of *Being and Time* was not published (cf. KSZ 3, 264).

use the word “contingency.”³This presentation explores how a dialogue between Kuki and Heidegger on “contingency” might be possible, accepting Kuki’s criticism and considering Heidegger’s late thoughts, which Kuki never knew.

Kuki’s Philosophy of Contingency and Influences of Heidegger

Kuki’s analysis of “contingency” starts from a logical dimension (“Categorical Contingency (定言的偶然)”) through an empirical dimension (“Hypothetical Contingency(仮説的偶然)”) to a metaphysical dimension (“Disjunctive Contingency (離接的偶然)”).⁴ The most essential point of Kuki’s thought of “contingency” seems to lie in the introduction of his work. He says, “Contingency is the negation of necessity” (KSZ 2, 9). As Obama argues, how we grasp this “negation” is the key to understanding Kuki’s philosophy of “contingency” (cf. Obama 2006, 4).

This “negation” (of necessity) does not mean a merely logical or privative negation, but negation in a positive sense, “together-belongingness of Being and Nothing (存在と無の共属).”⁵ Kuki defines “contingency” as “Being containing the negation (否定を含んだ存在)” or “Being possible not to exist (無いことの出来る存在).” Therefore, the crucial sense of “contingency” is “together-belongingness of Being and Nothing.”⁶ As we cannot think of light without shadow or shadow without light, it is impossible to think of Being without Nothing or Nothing without Being. In short, there is no “Being itself” or “Nothing itself”; Being and Nothing are opposites but simultaneously inseparable. He argues in *Existential Philosophy* (『実存哲学』) that even the absolute Nothing (絶対無) is nothing but the absolute Being (絶対有) (cf. KSZ 3, 57).

Kuki regards the problem of “contingency” as the problem of “metaphysics.” This point is crucial for us to compare his thoughts with Heidegger’s, so we shall have a look. For Kuki, metaphysics goes over Being toward Nothing (cf. KSZ 2, 9).⁷ Kuki’s metaphysics attempts to

³ Mine also suggests that Kuki’s thought of “contingency” sympathizes with Heidegger’s late thought of “enowning (*Ereignis*).”

⁴ In his dissertation *Contingency*, on which *The Problem of Contingency* is based, he names each contingency “Logical Contingency,” “Empirical Contingency,” and “Metaphysical Contingency” (cf. KSZ 2, 272).

⁵ The word “together-belongingness (*Zusammengehörigkeit*)” comes not from Kuki but from Heidegger.

⁶ Kuki also says in other words for “together-belongingness of Being and Nothing “Being enveloped by nothing (無に包まれた存在)” (KSZ 2, 10) or “that Being is eroding nothing (有が無の中にくひ入つてゐること)” (KSZ 11, 205).

⁷ Obama describes Kuki’s philosophy as a “Metaphysics of Light and Shadow” (Obama2006, 7).

confront Western metaphysics from the perspective of “contingency” (together-belongingness of Being and Nothing) while standing within the tradition of Western metaphysics at the same time. According to him, “contingency” as the together-belongingness of Being and Nothing is the source of metaphysics, i.e., philosophy. “Contingency” leads us to the question about the existential and individual (“Why am I, not the other?”) and, at the same time, the question about Being itself (“Why is there Beings (*Seiendes*) at all, and why not rather nothing?”) (cf. KSZ 2, 39/ KSZ 3, 114-5). The problem of “contingency” is not only “metaphysical” but also “existential.”

As Miyano suggests, Kuki’s project of philosophy of “contingency” as metaphysics is influenced by Heidegger’s *What is Metaphysics?* (1929) (cf. Miyano2019, 92 f.). In this work, Heidegger maintains that Being and Nothing belong together (cf. GA 9, 118 f.) and that metaphysics lies in the essence of human beings (cf. GA 9, 121 f.). According to him, “anxiety (*Angst*),” which reveals Nothing behind Being, leads us to ask the metaphysical question, i.e., why there is Beings at all, why not rather nothing (cf. GA 9, 111 f.).⁸ In Kuki’s lecture *Contingency* (1930) and *Heidegger’s Phenomenological Ontology* (1931/32, 『Heidegger の現象学的存在論』), he cites the definition of There Being (*Dasein*) from Heidegger’s *What is Metaphysics?*: There-being means: held out into Nothing (*Da-sein heißt: Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts*) (cf. KSZ 10, 132/ KSZ 11, 205/ GA 9, 115). As Miyano argues, Heidegger’s idea that Nothing runs through our existence motivates Kuki’s question of “contingency” (cf. Miyano 2019, 36 f.). That is why Kuki’s investigation of “contingency” is based on his reception of Heidegger’s philosophy.

While Kuki’s investigation is influenced by Heidegger, it is also based on his criticism of Heidegger. However, Kuki could only know Heidegger’s thoughts until 1929.⁹ So, in my view, there

According to him, Kuki’s “metaphysical investigation can be understood as “Onto-metaphysics,” “Meta-metaphysics,” or “Meta-ontology” against Western traditional metaphysics since Aristotle which ignores Nothing behind Being (cf. Obama2006, 40/163 ff.). Considering that Heidegger tried to reconstruct traditional metaphysics as “Metaphysics of Existence of There Being (*Dasein*)” (cf. Müller1964, 119), Kuki and Heidegger share the same interest. In my opinion, Heidegger’s project of “Metontology (*Metontologie*)” after publishing *Being and Time* (cf. GA 26, 196 ff.) can be compared with Kuki’s metaphysics of “contingency.” This point I will discuss further later.

⁸ Miyano argues that Kuki’s way of analyzing “contingency” is influenced by Heidegger’s analysis of There Being, in particular by his discussion of “attunement (*Stimmung*)” (cf. Miyano2019, 37). The discussion of attunement by Heidegger and Kuki is an essential perspective for us to explore the possibility of a dialogue between them. This point I will discuss later.

⁹ He stayed in Marburg until June 1928 and participated in Heidegger’s lecture until the summer semester of 1928. After going back to Japan, he read Heidegger’s *What is Metaphysics* (1929) and *On the Essence of Ground* (1929). However, Kuki could never know Heidegger’s thoughts after 1929, including important works, e.g., *On the Essence of Truth* (1930), *An Introduction to Metaphysics*

is a gap between Kuki and Heidegger. In order to show the possibility of a dialogue between them, an examination of Kuki's criticism is required.

Examination of Kuki's Criticisms of Heidegger

Kuki's criticism of Heidegger focuses mainly on *Being and Time*. As Miyano mentions, it is difficult to understand his critical reception of Heidegger because he criticizes Heidegger's thought in *Being and Time* retrospectively from the perspective of Heidegger's thought in the so-called metaphysical period (around 1929) (cf. Miyano2019, 181). For this reason, we should examine Kuki's criticism of Heidegger, distinguishing the thought in published *Being and Time* from the thought after *Being and Time*. After that, I will try to respond to Kuki's criticism, taking Heidegger's late thought (the thought of "enowning (*Ereignis*)"), which he could never know, into consideration.

The main points of Kuki's criticism of Heidegger can be summarized in the following two points: 1) the lack of investigation of space and community and 2) the negative role of the present.

A. The Lack of Investigation of Space and Community

His criticism of Heidegger can be already clearly seen in his essay *Heidegger's Philosophy* (「ハイデッガーの哲学」, 1933) (cf. KSZ 3, 268 f.). We encounter other Beings in a space. So, our community, i.e., our relationship with Beings, is spatial. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger tries to reduce spatiality to "temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*)" (cf. SZ, 367). For Heidegger, Being of other Beings and space has only a negative sense because of that reduction. Heidegger defines, of course, our existence as "Being-with (*Mitsein*)" (cf. SZ, 117 ff.) and discusses our encounter with other Beings mainly in his famous analysis of tools (cf. SZ, 66 ff.). In his discussion, however, encounter with other Beings is interpreted as our "falling (*Verfallen*)" in everyday (*alltäglich*) and so-called "inauthentic (*uneigentlich*)" dimension (cf. SZ, 126 ff.). At least in the discussion in *Being and Time*, encounter with other Beings, namely community, has only a negative role.¹⁰

In Kuki's philosophy of "contingency," encounters with others play a crucial role. He defines

(1935), and *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* (1936-38).

¹⁰ A similar criticism can be seen in Watsuji. In *Ethics as the Study of Humanity* (『人間の学としての倫理学』, 1934) and *Fūdo* (『風土』, 1935), for example, Watsuji criticizes Heidegger for insufficiency of investigation of spatiality and others from the standpoint of "Betweenness (間柄)" (cf. Watsuji2007, 223 ff./ Watsuji2010, 4).

in *The Problem of Contingency* “contingency” as “a chance encounter between two independents (独立なる二元の邂逅)” (cf. KSZ 2, 120).¹¹ For Kuki, the problem of “contingency” is the problem of “intersubjectivity.” “Contingency” as “a chance encounter between two independents” constructs our primordial community (cf. KSZ 2, 258 f.).

B. The Negative Role of the Present

We encounter Beings in “the present.” The temporality of “contingency,” in which we encounter Beings, is therefore “the present” (cf. KSZ 2, 209). In *Being and Time*, in which possibility stands higher than actuality (cf. SZ, 38), the temporality of “Future (*Zukunft*)” is the primal sense of our existence (cf. SZ, 327). While Kuki sees the temporality of “contingency” as “the present,” Heidegger thinks of it as “having-been (*Gewesenheit*)” (cf. SZ, 328) because he relates “contingency” with our “thrownness (*Geworfenheit*)” or “facticity (*Faktizität*)” (cf. SZ, 300). Although Heidegger also discusses “the present,” the definition of the “authentic (*eigentlich*)” present, which Heidegger calls “moment of vision (*Augenblick*),” seems to be insufficient.¹² What Kuki was dissatisfied with is that the temporality of “the present” has only a negative role as “falling” (cf. KSZ 2, 210).¹³

It might be possible for us to reconstruct Heidegger’s discussion of “contingency” from his analysis of “death” in *Being and Time*. He defines death as the “possibility of the impossibility of existence” (SZ, 262), which we cannot help but undertake as long as we exist. According to him, we are thrown into the possibility of death as soon as we exist (cf. SZ, 251), which means that it is always possible for us not to exist, namely die. The possibility of death (the possibility of impossibility of existence), therefore, can be interpreted as “contingency,” i.e., “Being possible not to exist.” This possibility of death may lead us to the question of our existence: Why do we exist, not dead? What Heidegger calls “anxiety” is provoked by thrownness into the possibility of death, which leads us to the question of our existence and “contingency.”

As we have seen, we can find the possibility of discussion about “contingency” in *Being and Time*. It is, however, difficult to persist that Heidegger’s discussion in *Being and Time* exhausts the

¹¹ “A chance encounter” also plays an important role in his analysis of the intensional structure of *iki* (cf. KSZ 1, 17 ff.).

¹² Mineo considers the definition of “moment of vision” empty (cf. Mineo2019, 59).

¹³ Heidegger does not think that “inauthenticity” has a negative sense from the moral and axiological perspective (cf. SZ, 43). However, as Mine points out, a particular value judgment by Heidegger is behind the difference between “authenticity” and “inauthenticity” (cf. Mine1991, 43).

ontological meaning of “contingency,” as Mine maintains (cf. Mine2017, 36). For in his discussion, “contingency” relates only to our thrownness, i.e., “having-been,” and our authentic encounter, which Kuki calls “a chance encounter,” is hardly explored.

That is because Heidegger prioritizes the possibility of death (cf. Mori2008, 82 f.). According to Heidegger, every contingent possibility is driven out through undertaking our thrownness into the possibility of death as our fate (cf. SZ, 394). As Mori points out, the possibility of death is more closely related to “necessity” rather than “contingency” (Mori 2008, 130). In “forerunning resoluteness (*Vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*)” (SZ, 305), as our authentic existence, there is no room for “contingency.” The point of Kuki’s criticism is that Heidegger grasps “contingency” as our fate of death, which determines our existence throughout (cf. Miyano2019, 173).

C. Examination of Kuki’s criticism

We must examine the roles of space, the present, and the community.

After the publishing of *Being and Time*, Heidegger revealed his project of “Metontology (*Metontologie*)” in his lecture in 1928 (cf. GA 26, 196 ff.). In this project, Heidegger focuses on “factual Beings,” which makes our understanding of Being and our existence possible. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger pays more attention to “project (*Entwurf*)” of the structure of our understanding than “thrownness,” though he understands this “project” as “thrown project” (SZ, 148). It is evident because he prioritizes possibility over actuality, as we have seen. In his “Metontology,” on the other hand, our facticity, namely thrownness, is thematized. This point is important for us to respond to Kuki’s criticism. As Mine mentions, Kuki’s criticism intends to revise Heidegger’s interpretation of our existence and his discussion of temporality, taking thrownness as more important than Heidegger’s (cf. Mine2002, 151). The fact that Heidegger thematized thrownness soon after publishing *Being and Time* shows that Heidegger also realized the importance of thrownness.

After *Being and Time*, Heidegger also pays more attention to space. In his lecture in 1928, he discusses the “dissemination (*Zerstreuung*)” of There Being, which means embodiment of There Being into individual human beings (cf. GA 26, 171 ff.). In this discussion, he relates our spatiality to “bodiedness (*Leiblichkeit*),” which he also ignores in *Being and Time*. Considering Heidegger’s late thought of “enowning (*Ereignis*),” which Kuki never knows, time and space are integrated and equiprimordial (*gleichursprünglich*), while spatiality is reduced to temporality in *Being and Time* (cf.

GA 65, 13/ Yamamoto2009, 212). As Yamamoto also says, time and space in Heidegger's late thought are equiprimordially developed in the "moment of vision" (cf. GA 65, 323/ Yamamoto2009 219 ff.).

Now, we can find in the discussion of "moment of vision" a positive role of the present. "Enowning," which Heidegger thinks of as a dynamic manifestation of Being itself by its own nature, is the starting point that opens up time and space in the "moment of vision" (cf. GA 65, 384). Kuki also regards "contingency" as "the point of production (生産点)," namely the source of every possibility (cf. KSZ 2, 187/ Miyano2019, 150). Therefore, Heidegger's late thought of "enowning" sympathizes with Kuki's thought of "contingency."¹⁴ A more in-depth comparison of them I will discuss later.

As we have already discussed, Kuki criticizes that our community and encounters with other Beings have only a negative role in *Being and Time*. In the investigation of *Being and Time*, the positive role of the authentic community can only be found in the discussion of "historicality (*Geschichtlichkeit*)" (cf. SZ, 384). In this discussion, Heidegger defines our authentic community as "folk (*Volk*)," which undertakes the possibility of death as fate. While Heidegger does not explain this "folk" further in *Being and Time*, he discusses explicitly it in the 1930s. As already shown, our "thrownness" is thematized after *Being and Time*. Because of the thematizing of "thrownness," our historically determined existence and community, into which we are contingently forced to be thrown, becomes more critical for Heidegger.¹⁵ So, we can find in this discussion the key to responding to Kuki's criticism of Heidegger for giving our community only a negative role.¹⁶

However, it still seems difficult to find the discussion of "a chance encounter with other Beings" in Heidegger's discussion. This point I will treat once more later.

Kuki and Heidegger in Dialogue on Contingency

Considering Heidegger's late thought, we have responded to Kuki's criticism of Heidegger. Our examination of Kuki's criticism shows that Kuki and Heidegger share philosophical interests and

¹⁴ Yamamoto also suggests the possibility of Heidegger's thought of "enowning" to respond to Kuki's criticism of *Being and Time* (cf. Yamamoto2006, 211).

¹⁵ For example, Heidegger focuses on "folk" in his lecture in 1934. In this lecture, Heidegger discusses "folk" intensively, relating it to his understanding of temporality and our historical determination (cf. GA 38 A, 124 ff./ 148 ff.).

¹⁶ Heidegger's discussion of our historical community as "folk" has been criticized for being related to his participation in the Nazis (cf. Farias1989).

methods and that their philosophy can sympathize with each other. Based on our previous discussion, I suggest the possibility of a dialogue between them briefly. I will refer to three perspectives: 1) mood (情緒), or “attunement (*Stimmung*),” 2) “artwork (*Kunstwerk*),” and 3) “primordial contingency (*Urzufall*, 原始偶然).”

As we have already seen, “contingency” as “together-belongingness of Being and Nothingness” leads us to the metaphysical question (Why is there Beings at all, why not rather nothing?). According to Heidegger, the mood of “anxiety,” which is provoked by our thrownness into the possibility of death, brings us to the question. Such mood, which determines our existence and philosophy, Heidegger calls “attunement (*Stimmung*)” (cf. GA 9, 110 ff.). Therefore, Heidegger’s philosophy in *Being and Time* is determined by “anxiety.” On the other hand, Kuki regards the mood of “contingency” as “wonder (驚異)” (cf. KSZ 2, 215/ KSZ 3, 115). “Wonder” is provoked by Nothing behind Being (cf. KSZ 2, 247). That is why “wonder” as the mood of “contingency” can also be defined as “attunement” in Heidegger’s philosophy.

Furthermore, we can compare Kuki’s “wonder” with “startled dismay (*Erschrecken*)” (cf. GA 65, 14 f.). “Startled dismay” is a mood that motivates us to “the other Beginning (*der andere Anfang*)” of philosophy. It is contrasted with “wonder (*thaumazein*),” which provokes “the first beginning (*der erste Anfang*)” of philosophy, i.e., the traditional Western metaphysics. According to Heidegger, “wonder (*thaumazein*)” causes us to focus only on Being and Beings. “Startled dismay,” on the other hand, leads us to focus on Being and Nothing behind Being, namely together-belongingness of them. Considering that Kuki’s “wonder” leads us to the question of Nothing behind Being, it may be possible to see Kuki’s “wonder” as Heidegger’s “startled dismay.”

In Heidegger’s late thought, together-belongingness of Being and Nothing is understood as “trueness of Being (*Wahrheit des Seins*),” which means strife between “concealment (*Verborgenheit*)” and “unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*)” of Being. Heidegger thinks that “trueness of Being” (strife between concealment and unconcealment of Being) appears in “artwork (*Kunstwerk*)” (cf. GA 5, 25 ff.). In *The Origin of Artwork* (1934/35), he contrasts artwork with tools (cf. GA 5, 13 ff.). According to him, artwork is self-standing, while tool depends on the whole context constructed with our teleological relationship with tools. In this discussion, I think Heidegger treats the authentic encounter with Beings, for he maintains that encounters with artworks bring us to our historically determined existence (cf. GA 5, 63).

Kuki suggests the relationships between “contingency” and “art” (cf. KSZ 2, 217 ff.). He says “artwork” is self-sufficient and isolated (cf. KSZ 2, 221). It means that artwork is separated from the whole relationships between Beings. Kuki maintains that this exceptionality of artwork shows that the structural character of artwork is “contingency.” This “contingency” might provoke our “wonder.” So, we can find in the two philosophers’ understanding of artwork the key to a possible dialogue on “contingency” between them.

As I mentioned, Kuki’s thought of “contingency” sympathizes with Heidegger’s late thought of “enowning.” It will be clearer if we consider Kuki’s discussion of “disjunctive contingency (離接的偶然)” (metaphysical contingency). In this discussion, Kuki focuses on “the absolute (絶対者).” According to him, the absolute has the contradictory character of the “necessary-contingent (必然—偶然)” (cf. KSZ 2, 229). He understands the contingent and dynamic side of the absolute as “primordial contingency (*Urzufall*, 原始偶然)” (cf. KSZ 2, 240). The concept of “primordial contingency” comes from Schelling. Kuki thinks highly of Schelling’s concept of “primordial contingency” (cf. KSZ 2, 227f.). Following Kuki’s understanding, “primordial contingency” is “primordial event (*Urereignis*, 原始事件)” and “the beginning of history (歴史の端初)” (cf. KSZ 2, 240). In the face of this contingency, we can “only say that it Is (*nur sagen, dass es Ist*, 在るとだけ云へる)” (KSZ 2, 213).

As we have seen, “contingency” for Kuki is “the point of production” of every possibility. Now, we can grasp this point of production as “primordial contingency” from which our history begins. “Enowning” in Heidegger’s thought, which opens up time and space in the “moment of vision,” leads us with “startled dismay” to “the other beginning” of history.¹⁷ Although Kuki’s thought seems to be still “metaphysical” from Heidegger’s perspective, we can see partly from our previous discussion the possibility of a dialogue on “contingency” between them.

¹⁷ Gabriel finds a similarity between Schelling’s and Heidegger’s late thought (cf. Gabriel2010). Although Heidegger does not refer to Schelling’s late thought, including the concept of “primordial contingency,” we can suggest the common philosophical interest between Kuki and Heidegger with “primordial contingency” as a starting point.

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