

IS TRANSLATION POSSIBLE?

1. A PRELIMINARY FORAY

We might begin a search for the possibility of translation with a search for a common moral foundation for both the Eastasian world and the Western world. Answers come easily with a qualified yes or no; for example, we might make a list or table comparing how East and West think about adultery. This is unsatisfying; we ourselves are often unclear what we think and feel about these issues. So, a few of the more circumspect might ask where our own sense of the moral arises. Perhaps we will seek the source of the OUGHT. Our friends from the Orient might ask us what these words *moral* or OUGHT mean. I do not think the West can as easily convey to the East what it means by *sense of obligation* as the West imparts technology. Try to translate our word *obligation* by the Japanese word *giri*; this translation is suspect since for the West, obligations are obligations only if they grate against the well ingrained inclinations of our being. The Kantian necessary test of authenticity of the true moral act will be if we act against the grain of our inclinations.

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The West is sometimes ranked, even by Westerners, as a psychological place that is locked into a rationality dominated by a law of “either-or”: that is, it is such or it is not such. As a result, so the argument would go, the paradoxical nature of life will seek to break the bonds of such strict “either-or”. Can people bound by such limitations to their mode of thinking ever understand the fragile and gossamer threads of Eastasian thinking?

Is it the failings of our mode of thinking? What means this phrase “mode of thinking” sometimes used to replace the loftier phrase “epistemology”?

Tempting it is to force a translation without all these complex reflections, since the West has its own tradition of a thinking beyond the thinking called Western rationality. Inspiration unfolds the meaning of *noumenous* texts; when inspiration shares something of the authority of the sciences, we say we have used *Hermeneutics*, this title gathering its name from the god of luck, Hermes.

How will we, whether abiding in good Buddhist or Christian tradition, tell the tale of the *ought*? We do not find easy antecedents for the burgeoning of so-called moral philosophy, even in the writings of the Pre-Socratics. Did the “ought” arise from something once vital, but now limp and inert, barely living in Western metaphysical traditions that think grandly about *Being*?

Without returning to place from whence my thinking has been forged, I do not feel I can give an honest reply to my Eastasian friends.

...he must consider also, and above all else, that every reflection upon that which now is can take its rise and thrive only if, through a dialogue with the Greek thinkers and their language, it strikes root into the ground of our historical existence. That dialogue still awaits its beginning. It is scarcely prepared for at all, and yet it itself remains for us the precondition of the inevitable dialogue with the Eastasian world. [3, page 158]*

(...sondern er muss auch und vor allem anderen bedenken, dass jede Besinnung auf das, was jetzt ist, nur aufgehen und gedeihen kann, wenn sie durch ein Gespräch mit den griechischen Denkern und deren Sprache

* See the relative numbered reference at the end of this article.

ihre Wurzeln in den Grund unseres geschichtlichen Daseins schlägt. Dies Gespräch wartet noch auf seinen Beginn. Es ist kaum erst vorbereitet und bleibt selbst wieder für uns die Vorbedingung für das unausweichliche Gespräch mit der ostasiatischen Welt. [4, page 39])

So, I must first look within the depths of my own house and appropriate those forgotten things, those things that will allow me to glimpse something of the sediment that has given me much, but about whose influence I remain obdurately unconscious.

Some would have us believe there are nearly irreconcilable differences between Eastasian culture and Western culture. Perhaps Kipling believed this when he said that the East is the East and the West is the West. If he managed to see this, he sees farther and deeper than us all. In the face of the global kneading now taking place, who would say such a thing? On the contrary, I think we strive for a place where we feel we have the possibility of sharing something. That common something can serve as a surrogate for friendship. Even in enmity we will find something in common, since the utterly unknown would be too frightening to fight. Or is the unknown itself the greatest terror? Probably not. The unknown could generate within us an expectation, an expectation of a gesture of friendliness. There are, after all, adventurers amongst us. These adventurers expect the unknown, yet they feel they are empowered to overcome this unknown. It is one of the ways we come to a definition of ourselves as if we are extending ourselves into distant realms, and the echoes from these distant realms assure us that we exist. So my task is to persuade you that

- concerning our mutual understanding where the waters become deep, and they become deep over those matters that concern religion, art, or philosophy, we are in the presence of the profoundly unknown
- and therefore, gripped by a mood of circumspection, we need not immediately find what we expect
- and so finally we will embark with a certain sense of adventure already touched by an anticipation of the presence of the unexpected.

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2. STRANGE THINGS COME FROM AFAR

The Strange is an encounter with the Other. The Other is not simply an intellectual affair. The meeting of Spaniard and Aztec, Japanese and Portuguese are all exemplars of the encounter with the Other. The significance of these encounters is that if they are precisely not seen as strange, but rather they are seen as familiar, they are all too familiar; even if they were Gods, as the Aztecs viewed the Spaniards, they were familiar Gods.

I often think that the Greeks enthrall us precisely because they abandon themselves to the unutterably strange. They seem ecstatic in the face of the unutterable, which continually calls from afar.

So, in thinking of the East, we are, as always, too easily given to our gift to see the familiar. The familiar is all that we can see. Really? Is there not something like a gradual broadening of ourselves into the presence of an unknown? Let us consider again the encounter of Mesoamerica with the West. Perhaps this might help us if Mesoamerica is fundamentally Eastasian. We might see, then, that there is an almost fateful recurrence of a problem we simply have not addressed.

We hear arguments that the Navajo language has structural relations to the Altaic group that includes Japanese. Is this also an example of an unknown which will never be unknown? If these are not problems for us, then we will never ask how it is that the *we* of ourselves, already before even we are there, has shaped these matters. Amidst this wonder, ghostly ride certain specters that haunt our sense of what it is to be, be it Eastasian or Western. The urgency to tell everyone what something really is overwhelms us. Soon, these threads stroke us with such softness that they are overlooked.

All that we have said is within our canon. We expect it. I think it strange we expect such safety. Expectation of safety is strange. Each of us has a way of expecting the Other. In this expectation is the unOther. We expect God. Of course. We expect Sunyata. We expect Samadhi. Of course. We also suspect such epiphanies can occur in the blink of an eye and so can be overlooked.

Harshly cast and without relief, happiness draws us inward away from those sudden happenings that Greek tragedy celebrat-

ed. These happenings were never the harbingers of our happiness.

Although this ancient paradigm of tragedy is no longer with us—pathos now replaces tragedy—the divine inspires us; the divine breath has engulfed us in an effulgence of sweetness and light whose glory and all-embracing message is the presence of the message. The word *hermeneutic* cannot carry more than this, that a text can be experienced, not just merely understood, and this experience is its own truth often joyful in the good news that it brings.

We have doubts of such experiences. Such experiences are not ordinary. We must be on the same level of celestial illuminations, no? In such high places we cannot stub our toe. Such illuminations must be distinguished from listening to music that dampens the palms. This is not a decisive turn in life. It is not a conversion.

Conversion is a problem, for it is not amongst the ordinary things of life. Surely this is so by definition, although we have no clear definition. What would be an Eastasian translation for *conversion*? Asking this just between ourselves, is it an experience? A thread in Western theology¹ would not have conversion as something that happens to a self, but rather an occasion between a self and God. Conversion carries commitment for the convert. Yet we know this commitment need not be forever; all the stories of Ananias² will not frighten the convert that turns from the conversion.

Books could be written about the apostasy of Saphira and Ananias. The ferocity of the search for the assurance that we are saved undermines salvation itself. This is not quite correct, since something else occurs, like a return to ordinary life and all of its concerns, as if a long and passionate courtship finally ends in marriage. Moral theology emerges in order to secure, in order to maintain, this commitment. This hand, however, does not stay the sudden ebb and flow of our commitments, of our institutions. Why are we not frightened? An adjunct question that illuminates our pervasive fear of dishonoring our commitments is this: *Why do we heap so much resentment on the apostate?* I am claiming

¹ For example, cf. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*.

² New Testament, *Acts* 5,1.

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this fear is an echo of language taking us unawares. Too long have we taken language simply as a tool which in the right hands can express whatever we feel or have in mind. This pervasive view of language we now take to task with the help of our meditation on an essay of Heidegger's called *A Dialogue on Language*[1]. The essay treads so quietly that I cannot say I am expressing Heidegger's thinking. If the dialogue manages to say something without expressing something, I might have succeeded by actual presentation then in a translation.

3. LOSING THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSLATING

Some have said Aristotle's metaphysics is a mere corollary of grammar, perhaps even of his grammar. Do we know what we are saying when we say such things? I am sure that many of us who have given thought to the problem of translation would say that the dialogue between East and West might reveal to us that there is a "single source" from whence our common pathos, our common needs, our commonality entunes our different utterances. We go farther and say we all have a common grammar? To ask about language is to ask about the relation between our thinking and language; this may suggest our thinking is as different as our languages.

Heidegger's essay [1] shows the fruit of reserve while approaching something foreign. Subtle differences vanish with benign indifference. Too easily, as we have said, do we establish the common ground; too easily our ease and comfort shape the solutions to the real terror of life on earth. For example,

Thus we wanted to know in fact only how European aesthetics might be suitable to give a higher clarity to what endows our art and poetry with their nature.

And that would be?

We have for it the name I mentioned earlier: *Iki*.

How often did I hear that word on Kuki's lips, yet without experiencing what is said in it.

Meanwhile, what you mean to say with hermeneutics must somehow have illuminated *Iki* more brightly for Count Kuki.

I sensed as much, but never could follow him in his thoughts. [1, page 13]

(J:³ So wollten wir in der Tat nur wissen, inwiefern die europäische Ästhetik geeignet sei, dasjenige in eine höhere Klarheit zu heben, woraus unsere Kunst und Dichtung ihr Wesen empfangen.

F: Und dies wäre?

J: Wir haben dafür den schon erwähnten Namen Iki.

F: Wie oft hörte ich dieses Wort aus Kukis Mund, ohne doch das darin Gesagte zu erfahren.

J: Indessen muss für Kuki durch das von Ihnen gemeinte Hermeneutische irgendwie das Iki in ein helleres Licht gelangt sein.

F: Dergleichen spürte ich wohl, konnte jedoch seine Einsichten nie nachvollziehen. [2, page 100])

The word *Iki* is not translated. We might leap without a sense of a needful hesitation and say “Oh, yes, that is just what we mean by our word Grace!” Our losses escape us when we so easily manage such immediate understandings of an Other. Reserve, I think, is one of the important lessons we could learn from this essay[1]. A second lesson we learn is that much fruit can come from such waiting. Can we say there is a deeper sense of what is appropriate than given by the merely immediate gratification of finding a warm bath of commonality? We see this when two strangers meet and they begin by asking each other do they know so-and-so. This tendency merits careful thought. I think it bears a message about our nothingness.

Count Kuki speaks of *Iki* in this way.

He spoke of sensuous radiance through whose lively delight there breaks the radiance of something supersensuous. [1, page 14]

(F: Er sprach vom sinnlichen Scheinen, durch dessen lebhaftes Entzücken Übersinnliches hindurchscheint. [2, page 101])

I think we sense a clear meaning and are delighted by a familiar description of common aesthetic experience; for this reason the danger arrives quickly, since we imagine we have a common ground here as the common experience. More could be said about what this common experience might be.

The *aistheton*, what can be perceived by the senses, lets *noeton* the non-sensuous, shine through. [1, page 14]

³ ‘J’ is the Japanese visitor and ‘F’ is the inquirer.

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(*Das αἰσθητόν, das wahrnehmbare Sinnliche, lässt das νοητόν, das Nicht-sinnliche, durchscheinen.* [2, page 102])

Let us step back. Our foreign friend sees Western ideas as a way to clarify his presumably muddled thinking about his own art, poetry and religion. Does he know that he also embraces the following: The distinction between a sensible realm and a super-sensible realm pervades all thinking about the real in the west.

At this juncture, an elusive thread unwinds, a thread entwining Western metaphysical thinking and Western technology. The dialogue presses upon us the tension within the Japanese film industry itself with the Eastasian world.⁴ Presumably, in matters of art, the Japanese would not have allowed Western technology to enter the delicate fabric of that quite Other world. A look at an example of Japanese art will help here. We will not consider cloth, pen, or pot, but rather the film, a region of contact between the presumably different worlds.

The text argues that the Japanese film attempts to capture the Eastasian world with the kind of objectivity and framing that must come with the technique of photography. This objectivity is lacking within the Eastasian world. Consider the *No*-stage. The *No*-stage is empty. The emptiness makes a claim upon us of utmost concentration. Therefore, the slightest movement can bring forth momentous things, such as mountain ranges. We call such movements gestures. A gesture *gathers a bearing* [1, page 18]. Step back and ask what is so revealing about the difference between a gesture in the midst of a *No*-stage and a gesture in the Japanese movie *Rashomon*.

The emptiness of the *No*-stage is a charged emptiness. It is unconfined. It awaits a direction to discharge and to renew its tension. The gesture can gather a focus and can bring forth our participation into that which the focus brings into being.

On the other hand, the technique of photography confines the gestures in the film. The director has focused on the gesture so that he can capture it on the screen. Perhaps we even have a close-

⁴ I will remind the reader the language here is provisional; we are, after all, asking whether the world is one or two!

up! Our pathos here is that we are subject to the objects made by the techniques involved in film-making.

And so must also be the case for any kind of thinking that is seized by methodology that paralyzes the gathering force that belongs to the gesture we call thinking.

Such methodologies are always mapped out from the beginning and they always yield what is within the framework of our expectations. The events of our lives that happen only once can never be the matter for the scientific study. This is true not simply because these events are so unique that they are indescribable; on the contrary, they may be the most universal of our occasions. We do fail to note the *nostra* in the opening line of *The Divine Comedy*:

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
che la diritta via era smarrita.*⁵

These events do not fall easily into the hands of our ready-made concepts or ideas. Heidegger states:

Even the phrase “House of Being” does not provide a concept of the nature of language, to the great sorrow of the philosophers who, in their disgruntlement, see in such phrases no more than a decay of thinking. [1, page 22]

(*F: Auch die Wendung “Haus des Seins” liefert keinen Begriff des Wesens der Sprache, zum Leidwesen der Philosophen, deren Unmut in solchen Wendungen nur noch einen Verfall des Denkens findet.* [2, page 112])

Excessive conceptualization undoes the things at hand. Information theory is a powerful way of speaking about language. It gives us a concept of information that quantifies information. We can then speak of the efficiency of information transmission. Perhaps we can tell you the quantity of entropy in the *Upaniṣads*. There is nothing obviously wrong with this. The harm lies in a less comical and less obvious scenario—the power of the metho-

⁵ In the middle of the path of our lives, I found myself lost in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost.

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dology sweeps us off our feet. We are impatient with difficult and allusive things. Either someone will explain what the phrase “House of Being” means and tell us how much room it has, or the phrase will soon be used everywhere without thought as if everyone knew what it meant or what it was supposed to suggest. Concepts entail a methodology. Thereby our weakened powers of thought are preshaped and our questions turn into questions that are merely answerable. We are the great heirs of the “do-it-yourself” religion that does not expect gifts, but does expect guarantees of the fruitfulness of our labors. We must work for everything, for only if we work for everything is it our own. We work even for our salvation. Only if it is our own do we know that it is true. Truth as trust is lost. *We are unable to remain silent in the presence of the difficult.*

This is a dark picture, as if translation were nearly impossible, as if when we do translate, we only overhear ourselves. Both East and West say our redemption can appear at our darkest moment. Maybe it *only* appears in our darkest moment.

4. THE GROUND REGAINED

Is patience an anti-intellectual virtue? Should we not test different concepts until we hit upon something adequate? If we ask these questions, Heidegger suggests we are in the presence of an important and decisive difference between Eastasian and Western thinking. Curiously we do not often ask what we mean by the adequacy of the adequate.

Our Japanese friend in the dialogue did some translating from the German.

...And while I was translating, I often felt as though I were wandering back and forth between two different language realities, such that at moments a radiance shone on me which let me sense that the wellspring of reality from which these two fundamentally different languages arise was the same. [1, page 24]

(J:... Und während des Übersetzens war mir oft, als wanderte ich zwischen verschiedenen Sprachwesen hin und her, jedoch so, dass mir bisweilen ein Schein zuleuchtete, der mich ahnen [liess], der Wesensquell der grundverschiedenen Sprachen sei derselbe. [2, page 115])

It is tempting at this point to invoke some rubric beneath which the two languages can hang. We should put this matter very strongly: OUR JAPANESE FRIEND ABJURES THIS TEMPTATION.

This restraint can move our thought. Let us think it again. Is there a restraint which is not the consequence of

- our love of obfuscation
- laziness
- a persistent inability to follow the thread of an argument?

The other side of restraint is freedom. The other side of freedom is risk. The risk here is that a tidy package will result—there may even be loose ends stringing out in every direction!

Turning back to where we were trying to listen to the way in which Being and Language belong together, we find that a restraint becomes quite natural for us. This restraint urges us on into a realm where thinking can be without concept. To be without concept is to be anxious in the face of the unresolved. To be in the face of the unresolved is to begin to learn what it means that our life can be a question mark. We therefore ask: can this question mark be straightened into an exclamation point?

I know some will sense a Zen-like thrust to this last remark, where there is an expectation that The Great Doubt becomes an affirmation of what is. I am claiming, on the contrary, that this formulation arrives too easily and perhaps too early—at least it seems so to me.

Perhaps, in the end, easy and early arrivals will be the truth. Once, truth was something transparent. Aristotle in Book Θ, Chapter 8 of *Metaphysics* asks us how we can tell if a class is working. He does not suggest we give an examination, since the working is never hidden. The reality here is that if the class is working, this working is manifest, apparent, and intelligible, for if the working of the real is not evident, then the real cannot be evident. So, if one believes in the possibility of the circular return of things, then, perhaps, once more truth will not be the complex and paradoxical thing it seems to us now, assuming we have it at all.

Our chief concern here is one of the premature advent, an advent that is born of the intensity of fevered expectations and their chorus of phantoms. The fever of our anticipation of advent will produce the very thing we do not wish, the false advent. Let me

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invoke the gesture of this little essay: have restraint in the face of nearly intolerable paradoxes and tensions. Restraint speaks to us in these terms: *So be it! Let us be on with it!*

We have lost a transparent mode for the presentation of the presence of present things. Emptiness, Nothingness, is not simply nothing. For the Westerner, on the other hand, something is something without its aura of the emptiness which, unbeknownst to us scientific thinkers, makes its articulation possible. We are in a circle that maintains itself as a simple present free from its presence. *We know nothing of the part played by the empty stage.*

There are some important consequences of this. We will believe whatever can be thought will have the status of a “something”. We will transform all present things into objects. A rather deep consequence of this is that quantity rules.

So, what is the greatest difficulty before us?

...because what matters is to see appearance as the reality of presence in its essential origin. [1, page 40]

(F: ...insofern es nur darauf ankommt, das Erscheinen als Wesen des Anwesens in seiner Wesensherkunft zu erblicken. [2, page 135])

At this moment, the dialogue takes a turn, and our friend from Japan suddenly states

...I sense deeply concealed kinship with our thinking, precisely because your path of thinking and its language are so wholly other. [1, pages 40-41]

(J: ...ahne ich eine tiefverborgene Verwandtschaft mit unserem Denken, gerade weil Ihr Denkweg und seine Sprache so ganz anders sind. [2, page 136])

The discussion before this point suggests that man is an entity mediating a tension; this tension is beyond man—it is cosmic in its scope, but we might sense it in the emptiness of things, for thinghood and its consequent fullness might only arrive with the presence of emptiness itself.

Once we begin to reach a place where we begin to understand the essence of man as he who traverses this boundary between

thinghood and emptiness and once we begin to see this boundary as weighing upon man in a way that language is born from thence, we can hazard a translation of *Iki*. The preliminaries through which we have passed have presumably purged the air of thoughts about the aesthetic experience or the relation between subject and object. Our stage is now empty.

5. THE TRANSLATION OF *Iki*

The first attempt to translate *Iki* is to speak of *Iki* as the *gracious* [1, page 44]. This would have been more or less adequate if we could hear the word *gracious* as *charis*, that is to say, if we could hear the word *gracious* in the manner that Sophocles heard it. This, however, is difficult, since the word has already become entangled in a labyrinth of Western aesthetics and Christianity. We wish to avoid these entanglements.

We seek words not already sealed in the book of Western metaphysics. We seek a way into language. We want to see language speak without awakening the dragon that seeks to make concepts for all that we say. The second attempt of translation is an offering from our Japanese friend in a direction that will not awaken the dragon.

Iki is the breath of the stillness of luminous delight.

You understand "delight" literally, then, as what ensnares, carries away—into stillness.

There is in it nothing anywhere of stimulus and impression.

The delight is of the same kind as the hint that beckons on, and beckons to and fro.

The hint, however, is the message of the veiling that opens up.

Then all presence would have its source in grace, in the sense of the pure delight of the beckoning stillness. [1, page 44]

J: Iki ist das Wehen der Stille des leuchtenden Entzückens.

F: Das Entzücken verstehen Sie dann wörtlich als Entziehen, Hinzücken—nämlich in die Stille.

J: Hier ist überall nichts von Reiz und Impression.

F: Das Entzücken ist von der Art des Fort- und Hin- und Herwinkens.

J: Der Wink aber ist die Botschaft des leuchtenden Verhüllens.

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F: So hätte alles Anwesen seine Herkunft in der Anmut im Sinne des reinen Entzückens der rufenden Stille. [2, page 141])

One wonders if anything has been said here. The above passage has its charm, but on rereading it, we would like clearer articulation. There is some vague feeling that nothing has been said. The ancient specter of the quarrel between poetry and philosophy troubles us. Let us try to move around this specter without falling into the abyss of an argument or the usual canards of two cultures.

Can we see *Iki* as not experienced? “Delight” is not pleasure. On the contrary, it is what ensnares, it is not the experience of being ensnared. Furthermore, it carries away; but what does it carry away? A metaphor is suggested: “it is like a hint that beckons on, and beckons to and fro.” It carries away precisely nothing. The empty stage in its stillness makes a way for the gesture. The empty stillness of the stage gives its gift of the gesture and then withdraws. This power to give the gift and then withdraw is sometimes called grace.

I hope this attempt to move around the huge conceptual frameworks of Western metaphysics and also not fall into the merely vague and sentimental will help us. Perhaps we have glimpsed new possibilities of what translation might mean. Translation is said to be a process where an expression in one language is found which is the *equivalent* of some expression in another language. Here, *equivalence* means conceptual equivalence, and translation consists of trying to find the concept that the Other is trying to convey; then, we try to find a way of saying that concept in our own language. The more ancient word, *metaphor*, does not have the sense of exchange, but rather of transport, a transport whose guiding hand is shaped by the “meta” that points towards a realm that surely grants the possibility of a word bearing something from another word. Analogy, *ana-logos* carries something of the same shape, where the *ana* invokes the bridge that can carry one *logos*, or ratio, or just plain meaning into another meaning. We hear the mediation of the *ratio* or *logos* in *meaning*. We can as well hear something lost in the word “another”.

6. THE ARRIVAL OF A WORD OF LANGUAGE

Hesitantly and with great fear for the worst possible misunderstandings, our Japanese friend offers what to him is an essential word for language. The word is “*Koto ba*”.

The dialogue that follows is not simple. It sometimes appears as if the Western friend is finding his real roots in the words of his Eastern friend. We may here be trapped in thinking the usual platitudes of how the East arrived in the sixties to save us from our linear Western thinking. The genius of this dialogue makes clear that both the East and the West are at risk. The East is enamored of the technology of the West as well as the power of Western metaphysical thinking. We recall Count Kuki had great hopes that Western metaphysical thinking, in particular certain theories of aesthetics, could illuminate the apparent vagaries of Japanese thinking. Nishida Kitaro is an eloquent witness to that encounter; he spent much of his life reading the books of the West, yet retained his Eastern roots with a force and clarity that remains unmatched. Allow me to give you a taste with the following excerpt taken from the first few lines of one of his works:

There is no one, confronted by a famous work of art or exquisite natural scenery? who is not struck by its beauty. We do not believe these things to be beautiful. However, beauty does not qualify a thing in the same sense that blue or red does; beauty is, rather, a quality endowed by human subjectivity. Aesthetic judgement, according to Kant, is a judgement of feeling; so should not the essence of the beautiful therefore be sought in the act of aesthetic appreciation? *But the artistic consciousness is not limited to appreciation.*⁶ [5, page 5]

I think the tension here is unmistakable.

With this caveat, let us return to the word for language *Koto ba* and try to glimpse the way in which it can reveal a root from whence not only all languages must spring in their diversity, but ultimately our humanity as those beings which move on the boundary between present things and presence itself.

Koto ba means

⁶ The italics are our own emphasis.

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...the petals that stem from Koto. [1, page 47]

(*J:...* Blütenblätter, die aus Koto stammen. [2, page 144])

Wonderful here to have this phrase with *Koto* somehow unexplained, whose meaning is only hinted by telling us that it is a root from whence stems come and these stems produce petals. We are in the presence of the working of metaphor. Everything will be destroyed here if we move in quickly and say that *Koto* means a gathering, and gathering is *logos*, and so forth. On the contrary, it is precisely this word *Koto* that might give us a pause to rethink *logos*.

If we are amply warned of the great misunderstandings that can happen when we use a word like grace, we might be able to hear the following spoken by our Japanese friend:

Koto, the happening of the lightning message of the graciousness that springs forth. [1, page 47]

(*J: ...Koto, das Ereignis der lichtenden Botschaft der hervorbringenden Huld.* [2, page 144])

Let me hopefully add a few words of illumination. A happening is a kind of advent; it moves across the current of the expected, yet it is not random or capricious. It often has a sense of celebration, not unlike the marriage feast at Canan. I think we must glimpse that this graciousness springs up and then vanishes, like a beckoning to and fro, rather than a constant urging. On the empty *No*-stage, just before the gesture comes to the fruition of its meaning as the mountain range, a flash of lightning announces the gift-giving power and as with all true gifts, it withdraws. In this way it is like lightning. We are then the ones that bear the gift because it is born towards us; this gift is the flowering of petals that are germinated out of that message.

7. SUMMARY

We have claimed that there is a profound difference between Eastasian thinking and Western metaphysical thinking and at the same time also claimed there is a common ground. This common

ground will not appear if language is transformed into an object; rather, it will only appear by our motion immediately into the nearness of the precinct where language abides. It is not possible that a theory of language should precede our understanding of what the Other is saying. I hope we have at least suggested that this precinct is not something vague or mystical. This precinct seems to be accessible in the presence of a guarded restraint, a restraint that does not yield to the most obvious, that does not yield to the apparent power of Western conceptual thinking.

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