

Kuki Shuzō's Thought and the World

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Kuki Shūzō 九鬼周造 (1888–1941) was the only philosopher among his Japanese contemporaries who spent upwards of seven years living in Germany and France. His representative works include *The Structure of “Iki”* (1930), *The Problem of Contingency* 『偶然性の問題』 (1935), *Human Beings and Existence* 『人間と実存』 (1939), *A Literary Theory* 『文藝論』 (1941) to name but a few. As we can see only from these titles, the philosophical interests that Kuki pursued in his life extends from the relation of experience and language, the notion of existence, contingency, destiny, metaphysical temporality, and to the nature of rhymes in poetry. In recent years, a number of scholarly publications have appeared on Kuki's representative ideas, some of them dealing with the problem of sociality and ethics in his philosophy, the problems that most Kuki scholars had failed to fully explore in the past.¹ In line with the ongoing discussions on the

1. So for in stance, Miyano Makiko points out that an encounter of two human beings as ungrounded/contingent existence opens up the possibility of ethics and Kuki did not fully discuss the choice pertaining to this possibility and the responsibility that come with it (MIYANO 2010). Through closely analyzing the *Problem of Contingency*, Furukawa Yūji develops an interesting argument concerning fundamental sociality that Kuki tried

possibility and the significance of drawing an ethical insight from the works of Kuki, this article will examine how the Japanese philosopher conceptualizes the relation of the world and cultural communities, and of the world to the single individual, while paying due attention to his main philosophical themes as contingency and existence.

We must keep in mind that these philosophical notions are not foreign to our life-problems today. We are living in the world where a large number of populations are crossing and crisscrossing from one sate to another; and regardless of the circumstances in which we move from one place to another, our dynamic interactions across state, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries are rapidly increasing in their numbers. Their qualitative impact on our ways of understanding ourselves and our interrelations is probably the most important element for achieving our self-understanding in today's world. As the current state of Europe clearly indicates, some of the ways in which we interact with each other can result in a series of catastrophes. Aristotle is right: Philosophy is needed especially at the time of peace. But we also feel the pressing need for recognizing the importance of providing a philosophical perspective at the time of war and conflicts. I am hoping to draw this kind of an ethical insight that helps us think about the situation in which we live today from the works of a philosopher who spent seven years in 1920s as a foreigner in different parts of Europe.

Kuki specifically deals with the relation of the world and the individual, and of the world and cultural communities in his article, "Japanese Characteristics" 「日本の性格」 (1937). He also extensively discusses the same problem in a lecture notes, entitled "On Japanese Characteristics" 「日本の性格について」 (1937). In this article, I will clarify how he understands his own country and then investigate his love of his country as a cultural community in reference to his philo-

to clarify of fundamental sociality (FURUKAWA 2015). Finally, in reference to the essay "Japanese Characteristics," FUJITA Masakatsu (2016) shows that Kuki's Japanism and Cosmopolitanism are not contradictory with each other but rather established in their relativity to each other.

sophical account of the relation between the individual and the universal. In light of these investigations, I will closely analyze the lecture note, “On Japanese Characteristics.”

THE CONTINGENT BIRTH OF A COUNTRY

In Section 3 of *The Problem of Contingency* (1935), Kuki explains the relationship between the whole and the part. He argues that while the whole is both complete and identical, each individual part within the whole lacks the self-identity of the whole because it is no more than a part. Each part is essentially contingent and, moreover, each part implies that there are other parts. The following passage provides an example of this point:

We could have been American, French, Ethiopian, Chinese, Indian, or of any other nationality. The fact that we are Japanese is contingent. We could even have been an insect, bird, or beast. The fact that we are human while not being an insect, bird, or beast is contingent. The *Samyukta Āgama* sutras (雜阿含經) wonderfully illustrates the contingent nature of human birth [vol. 15]. Imagine there is a blind turtle with extraordinary longevity. It is adrift at sea and surfaces once every hundred years. Now imagine a piece of wood with a hole floating in this vast sea. It is more likely for the turtle to accidentally poke its head through that hole than to be born a human being. (KSZ 2: 205-206)²

2. Kuki writes in another text:

Samsara is governed by the universal law of cause and effect. Cause and effect form a chain... It is by means of good deeds that one is born noble and wise, and it is by means of misdeeds that one is born a dog, pig, snake, or mosquito. At first glance there is change, but in reality, there is no change whatsoever.... In order for one of humble origins to change their course so as to be born into a noble life, they must already possess the dignity of the noble.... There is an identity necessarily entailed in the idea of karma. (KSZ 3: 181)

In this context, Kuki is searching for examples from many different books of the Upanishads. According to TSUJI Naoshirō, the *Kauṣītaki-* and *Brāhmaṇa-Upaniṣhads* contain examples of the reincarnation of insects, fish, birds, humans, and so forth through karmic good deeds and wisdom. Kuki owned two volumes of the French version of the Upanishads, and one volume of the German version (see 『九鬼文庫目録』 [Catalogue of

This passage can be divided into three sections.³ The first claims that one's birth in Japan as a Japanese is contingent, and that it is possible that she could have been born in any other country of the world. The countries mentioned in this passage are given as examples of "parts," which compose the world as a "whole." Kuki is claiming contingency of the fact that any Japanese person is born in Japan, and also that we cannot ensure its necessity, namely that this must have been the case. This point further signifies two things: (1) that all of the countries are to be thought of as elements having an equal value, and (2) that instead of thinking about humans in relation to nationality, "human being" must be the fundamental starting point from which further logic develops.⁴

In the second section of the quoted passage, Kuki further expands on his philosophical outlook regarding the nature of human existence. He claims that one's birth as a human being is itself contingent, that is to say, one could as well have been born as any other kinds of creature. Kuki takes this expression from the early Upanishads.⁵ In the context of the Upanishads, a human being can be reincarnated as an insect or beast based on her karmic deeds and it is also possible that one cannot be reborn as a human because of one's misdeeds. Kuki departs from the notion of karmic reincarnation when he claims that we do not simply bring about our own karmic destiny but, instead, that our birth

Kuki's library.) From 1922 to 1924, one hundred fifteen of the Upanishads were published in Japanese by Takakusu Junjirō (TSUJI 1990, 97, 136).

3. The first and second sentences form the first section, the third and fourth form the second section, and the turtle parable forms the third section.

4. Kuki's thought proceeds from Kant's idea of disjunctive judgment. Kant maintains that disjunctive judgment is not an alternative judgment, which says that, in regards to S, either statement P is true or statement Q is true, but rather a judgment which concerns both the whole and the parts which compose it. Kant: "Un jugement est disjonctif si les parties de la sphère d'un concept donné se déterminent l'une et l'autre dans le tout ou se complètent pour former un tout" (116); "Dans les jugements disjonctifs, x qui est contenu sous a est contenu ou bien sous b, ou bien sous c, etc.... Ici je pense plusieurs choses au moyen d'un concept" (118).

5. See section two of 「形而上学的时间」 [Metaphysical time] (KSZ 3: 181).

as humans is utterly contingent and, as seen in the final section of the turtle parable, extremely rare. He adds further emphasis on this point when he claims that such an event as one's birth as a human being that incidentally belongs to a certain nation is contingent.⁶

This passage with a series of examples concerning the notion of “parts,” “whole,” and their relation to each other is very interesting for several reasons: first, it allows an individual to eliminate the sole focus of his own nation and gradually adopt an outlook which includes other countries, thereby relativizing any one cultural community; second, it allows the existence of human beings to be considered equal to, rather than above, the existence of insects and birds; third, it claims that the birth of these human beings is both contingent and extremely rare. Therefore, this single (subsequently actualized) reality is formed not simply because it is the only possibility, but because it just exists as one amongst a multitude of possibilities.⁷

Kuki applies the logic of the Kantian disjunctive judgment to this idea through the following Figure 1:

	a
b	c
d	e

Figure 1: Kant, *Logique*, §29

If we understand “a” as a particular nation, we could determine “b,” “c,”

6. Kuki argues in a different text that the idea that one's afterlife is determined by one's good or evil conduct in this life is a servile notion, but also expresses his aspiration to Nietzsche's concept of “eternal recurrence,” in which the same life is infinitely repeated. That is because, as Kuki further explains, the latter notion means the same as “living one's life once” and maintains the dignity of the once-ness of one's life (see K SZ 3: 99).

7. Kuki writes: “The idea that we only know the one actualized reality is an abstract, incomplete way of thinking. The idea that the actualized reality appears as one single situation on the background of a multitude of possibilities is a more concrete, holistic way of thinking” (K SZ 3: 160).

“d,” and “e” as all the other nations, such as America, France, Ethiopia, Japan, and so forth. Using this formal judgment as conceptual basis, Kuki argues that the conditions of reality actualized in this world exist as one possibility amongst a multitude of possibilities, thereby making this world nothing but relative in its nature. The absolute, for Kuki, is to be defined as a whole, which includes not only the actualized situation of the here and now, but also the multitude possibilities which had been open to reality. He calls this sense of whole (including not only the actualized situation of the here and now but also the multitudes of possibilities which had been open to reality) a metaphysical absolute; and, then, draws on Aristotle to explain this contingency by stating that: “outside of that which is not moved by another, everything exists in such a way that it is moved by another.”

In this sense, contingency, i.e., everything that is obtained by means of another, is called metaphysical contingency.⁸ The whole in the sense of a metaphysical absolute is established as simultaneously the most penetrating and the most far-reaching ground in Kuki's philosophical thought. I would like to locate and explore, in the following section, his understanding of the individual cultural community as it fits within his overarching perspective based on this concept of the absolute.

8. For more information related to his concept of metaphysical absolute, see KSZ 2: 235–8 and KSZ 3: 119. In his 1935 work, *The Problem of Contingency*, Kuki references Aristotle and Leibniz in his discussion of the metaphysical absolute, but in “The Feeling of Surprise and Contingency” he examines arguments for pure contingency in fields of thought that were not developed within the horizons of Christianity, such as Greek and Eastern philosophy, which include contributions from Indian, Chinese, and Japanese sources (KSZ 3: 164). Also, in his 1934 work 「人生観」 [A view on life], he describes God as limitless love (無限の愛), limitless intellect (無限の知), and limitless power (無限の力) (KSZ 3: 102–3).

Furthermore, the excerpt found on page 1 that begins with “we could have been,” is included in the *Problem of Contingency* published in 1935, and a passage with almost identical content is found as early as a 1929 lecture that Kuki gave at Ōtani University. Passages like this are found in a number of additional texts that deal with the problem of contingency. The fact that Kuki used it repeatedly demonstrates his feeling that this passage held deep philosophical significance.

ATTACHMENT TO THE CULTURAL COMMUNITY

If, as Kuki believes, a cultural community such as Japan were, as one part, contingently obtained, then it would have no more than passive significance, or to put it differently, if it is contingently born, it subsequently has nothing but negative significance. Based on my examination of *The Structure of "Iki,"* "A Consideration of Refinement [風流]," and other works in which Kuki analyzes those cultural phenomena that are born out of the Japanese language, I argue that neither statement of this idea is correct. In such works we see both a strong attachment to Japanese aesthetic values and a strong passion for explaining these values through his philosophical investigation into the nature of language.

This emphasis on language in his discussion on the cultural community is first seen in "The Fundamental Characteristic of *Iki*," which was written in Paris and functioned as a preliminary draft for *The Structure of "Iki."* In this text, Kuki defines a cultural community (in his own words of the time, 民族) as a collection of individuals who share a common language. This is because he clearly thinks that the living, concrete, personal experiences of those within a community produce words that are endowed with specific cultural significance.⁹ In essence, the more particular the experiences of a given cultural community are, the more particularized the words that express those concrete experiences become. And as these words become more particular, their meanings become inexpressible in the language of other communities. Kuki provides the French word *esprit*, the German word *Sehnsucht*, and the Japanese word *iki*, as examples, and explains the nuances of each in an effort to argue the near impossibility of accurately translating them into other languages.

9. See Ksz 1: 89. Also, in 「いきの本質」[The essence of *iki*], Kuki references Tanabe Hajime's "New Directions in Phenomenology" (『思想』1924, October). Kuki's respect and impression for the direction of Heidegger's phenomenology is evident in his use of the Heideggerian term presented in Tanabe's work when formulating *The Essence of Iki*.

The Japanese philosopher maintains that there are many instances in which a person who has never had a concrete experience of *iki* is unable to grasp its fundamental essence, no matter how she conceptually analyzes or explains it.¹⁰ The Buddhist notion of “detached resignation” (諦め) and the concept of “courage” (意氣地) in the Edo period demonstrate this claim. Kuki does not deny, however, the possibility that Westerners who appreciate Japanese *ukiyo-e* and *haiku* may, in due course, be able to appreciate the worth of *iki*. This is to say that a given value within a particular cultural community can sometimes also be shared with individuals in a different cultural community.

Kuki further examines the various aspects that exist within a cultural community in “A Consideration of Refinement,” which he published in 1937. He proposes that 風流 (*fūryū*) is either a distancing from shared customs, the dissolution and subversion of common values that formulate themselves in day to day society, or a certain separation from fame and fortune.¹¹ It is through experiences of beauty, he continues to articulate, that we are able to create novel content, that is, the refined person who dissolves fixed form of experiencing reality and thereby distances herself from restrictions, creates novel beauty (KSZ4:62). Kuki is clearly aware of the close connection between the value of refinement and natural beauty; and perhaps that is why he himself composed both *tanka* and poetry, harboring an undeniably strong attachment to Japanese verbal arts like *haiku*, *tanka*, and poetry.

While art is grounded in history, intuition (*Anschaung*) is both a crucial and special characteristic; since intuition is immediate and direct, the present moment is what gives art its unique traits. In this line of argument, Kuki explains that history throws itself onto the

10. KSZ 1: 103. Kuki references Edmund Husserl's text, *Ideation aus den Versuchungen über Phänomenologische Psychologie* (1925), and writes: “The faculty of analysis can grasp fully εἶδος. [However,] when we consider the fundamental essence of experience as οὐσία, we can see it entirely. We must accept that we can grasp the fundamental essence of some concepts through only intuition.”

11. Kuki uses the word “morality” to refer to this distancing. See KSZ 4: 61.

plane of the present and thereby completes its form; and this perfect reflection of history is art. Art is what history matures and consummates in the plane of the present. This is because, he claims, history matures and consummates in the plane of the present (KSZ 11: 138). This manner of thinking, presented in the figure 2, serves as an important basis for our evaluation of the relationship between individuals and cultural communities throughout the following sections.

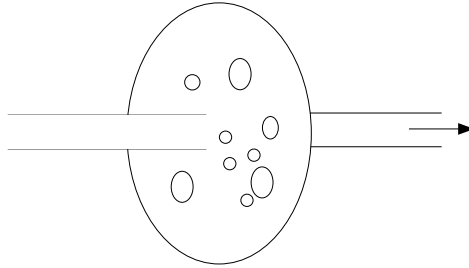


Figure 2: History and the Work of Art¹²

This model demonstrates a work of art. The small circles represent works of art and show microcosmic structure that is substantiated from within the interior. The larger enveloping circle is the present moment, and the elongated tube is history as it moves in a fixed direction.

INDIVIDUALS, CULTURAL COMMUNITIES, AND THE WORLD

How does Kuki understand the relationship between the individual and the cultural community in which they exist? How does he view the relationship between the individual, the cultural community in which they exist, and the whole world that envelops them all? Let us first examine his understanding of the relationship between the individual and the universal.

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In his essay, “Existential Philosophy” (「実存哲学」, 1933), Kuki argues that there are cases in which we judge something to be universal (which is treated as synonymous with essence) and this universal determines the individual, and also that there are cases where the universal is determined by the individual. In the instance of the universal determining the individual, the universal essence (*essentia*) is taken as a first-order and authentic existence while individual existence (*existentia*) is understood to be merely a reflection of the universal essence. Kuki uses some examples from Christian theology to further emphasize this point. Adam, for instance, is seen as the universal human being, and not as an individual in the truest sense of the word. That is why Adam's sin is not the sin of a single person, but the sin of humanity, or of general humanity, which is the foundation for the idea of original sin (each human being is born into a state of sin). Infants are baptized because all human beings are equally treated as reflections of Adam, the universal human being; by extension, this means that in baptism, infants are not treated as uniquely individual persons.¹³

Kuki, then, focuses on the instances in which individual existence determines essence, and continues his discussion of baptism with reference to Ōtomo Sōrin 大友宗麟, the sixteenth-century feudal lord (大名) who lived in present-day Ōita Prefecture:

The essence of humanity is crystallized into a concrete essence when it is determined by a human existence. Despite the fact that Ōtomo Sōrin existed as *existentia*, and so could just as well have done otherwise, he chose to get baptized and washed away his sins. It was in this instance that Ōtomo Sōrin achieved his crystallization into a concrete essence. As long as human essence is determined by human existence, the concrete human being achieves an “authentic being” that cannot be reduced to mere reflection or re-presentation. (KSZ 3: 81)

13. See KSZ 3:79. Kuki uses Husserl's vocabulary, writing that *die eidetische Singularität* is individualized in the openly infinite, and uses the example of the essence of triangles from § 5 of *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*.

Given that the term “human existence” refers to a person’s existence in the “here and now,” while the “essence of humanity” signifies the universal source of human existence as its reflection, this passage clearly shows that by means of existence in actuality, we can determine universal essence, and that universal essence can then be crystallized into concrete essence. (The fact that it is a resolute decision means that he could have done otherwise.) This historical figure is particularly important for Kuki since it enables him to define “authentic being” (實存) as the existential mode in which actual individual existence freely determines universal essence.

Just after the quoted passage, Kuki clearly differentiates between humans and animals, insects, and other living beings when he claims that humans are the only creatures that can attain this free and resolute determination of universal essence. He claims that this conception, in which a person’s individual existence freely determines the universal essence of humanity, does not assume that individual existence is passive, but rather that it forms itself into universal human essence by acting freely and making decisions for itself. In this way, a single individual human existence subjectively and freely determines the universal human essence. This is precisely what Kuki means by the term “freedom” 自由 (KSZ 3: 87). Kuki is one of a few thinkers among his Japanese contemporaries who clearly reserved a conceptual place for freedom in their philosophical systems.¹⁴

Now that we have answered the first question of how Kuki understands the relationship between the individual and the cultural community, we must respond to the second question: How does he view the relationship between the individual, the cultural community, and the whole world that envelops them all?

Kuki wrote about this in “On the Japanese Character,” a lecture

14. While one can use this notion to pursue problems of individual responsibility and other similar issues, I will leave these ideas untouched for now.

given at the Third Senior High School in May of 1937.¹⁵ Historically, it was towards the end of the interwar period, after the dissolution of the party cabinets and the concomitant rise in militarism in 1932, just before a state of total war was declared between China and Japan in 1937. It is in this political and socio-historical context that we should interpret his words. He begins this lecture by defining Japanism (日本主義) and Cosmopolitanism (世界主義). In Japanism, the world is brought into relief through one's self-awareness of, and emphasis upon, their own Japanese character. Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, has two meanings. First, it abandons the ethnocentric notion that one's own country functions as an absolute standard of value by recognizing and respecting the merits, features, and rights of other countries with the aim of peaceful co-existence. Second, it takes, for example, an international and humanist principle as its universal standard, and claims that each country has equal value, and a commonality between people that transcends national boundaries. Accordingly, Kuki explains that Cosmopolitanism can be referred to as a kind of internationalism where each nation exists in its equal status to the other, thereby maintaining an open communication of multiple nations. (KSZ 3: 367)

The text of the "On the Japanese Character" further explains that Japanism and Cosmopolitanism exist in terms of a particular-general relationship. The general does not express itself, but rather appears via the particular while the particular, by means of its particularity, reveals the general. Kuki discusses this relationship in the context of national cultures and therefore opposes the isolation of the cultural individual (文化的個体) and the whole world (世界存在). In this sense, he writes:

If we were to illustrate the whole world as a city, then the cultural

15. See KSZ 3: 367-399. Kuki also discusses this issue in 「日本の性格」[The Japanese character], which appeared in February of 1937 (KSZ 3: 272-2). I used the text from the lecture because I hoped that since this was an oral delivery, perhaps Kuki was more relatively free in his presentation of his opinions than in his essay.

individual of each country would be akin to the different styles gazed at within the city. In reality, the city is always being gazed at from a variety of standpoints; there is nothing like an appearance itself nor a feeling itself that can be isolated from the various, distinct appearances and feelings of the city. Something like the city itself is synthetically obtained in these different appearances and feelings. Therefore, each cultural individual [community] is historically and climactically determined in its own way, and world culture is obtained in the synthesis of the various cultural individuals. (KSZ 3: 368)

As we can see, each word in this passage is chosen with great care, and Kuki is especially attentive to the significance of distinctions between the singular and the plural, and to the question of whether or not a definite or indefinite article (which Japanese language does not have) is appropriately placed before a word in European languages. This is due to the fact that Kuki carefully makes distinctions between abstract concepts and concrete individuals. The above phrase “something like the city itself” (その都市そのものというようなもの) expresses that the whole world is an abstract, general concept. Kuki emphasizes three points. First, the whole world, as an abstract concept, does not exist in isolation from cultural individualities, but is realized by clarifying differences between cultural individuals. It is only through such a process of differentiation that we can gaze directly at the whole world itself.¹⁶ Third, each cultural individual is distinct insofar as they are historically and climactically determined.

In illustrating the whole world as a city, Kuki emphasizes that each cultural individual has its own characteristics, and claims that the whole world, and thus world culture, is established by a collection of such individuals. Perhaps it is worth noting that such a mutually respectful, inclusive view was no doubt valued by those in his contem-

16. The term “gaze” [眺める] is used here because, Kuki believes, we can catch a momentary glimpse of abstract concepts through intuition. Second, the whole world, as an abstract concept, is synthetically obtained through the sense and form of each cultural individual (i. e., an appropriate metaphor could be of multiple threads woven together on a loom).

porary political milieu. Kuki further explains that it is only by exhibiting the distinctive traits of the different national cultures that world culture can advance to its fruition. Stated otherwise, he claims that the general can shine forth only through stressing the particular: “Culture is historically and climactically individuated, and is established within these constraints. General world culture is born out of the collection and synthesis of these different cultures” (KSZ 3: 370).

Figure 2 demonstrates this concept: culture, expressed by small circles, is equivalent to a work of art, and world culture, the larger circle, encompasses these many small circles. This leaves us with the question of how Kuki understands the relationship between the individual person and individual cultural community. As is the case when examining the relationship between the individual cultural community and the whole world, the character of the cultural individual community is abstract, but appears in each individual in different ways and appears with the personal hue and sense of the individual. Kuki illustrates the relationship between the individual (個人), the national individual (国民), and the world individual (世界人) in Figure 3 below.

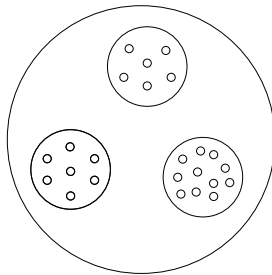


Figure 3: The Individual, the National Individual, and the World Individual

The smallest circle represents the individual, the circles that surround them are emblematic of national individuals or nations, and the largest circle expresses the world. These three circles represent the individual (個), species (種), and genus (類), respectively, and are to be under-

stood as three moments of the individual.¹⁷ Stated otherwise, these components correspond to the individual character, the Japanese character, and the world character, as three moments that are present within each individual. Just as the connection between the individual and the national individual is established without contradiction, there can be no contradiction between the national individual and the world individual (KSZ 3: 374). Kuki clearly sets forth his conception of the idea regarding the world individual (世界人), a concept not fully explored by his fellow Japanese philosophers, and one that no doubt deserves our esteem.

CONCLUSION

Kuki maintains dual attentiveness to, first, the idea that the country of one's birth is a matter of accident, and thus no more than a fact of contingency, and second, to the cultural phenomena that were produced in the cultural community in which he was born. Moreover, Kuki maintains that a person can, through its individual existence, determine the universal essence of humanity. This sense of free decision is characteristic of human beings. He further holds that culture is historically and climactically individuated, and that world culture is assembled and produced out of individual cultural communities in the same manner that a pattern emerges in the collection of threads in different colors. As such, the individual, the national individual, and the world individual, respectively, exist without contradiction as three respective moments present within any given person. How then, do Kuki's ideas relate to contemporary social and global issues?

Kuki's claims demonstrate that neither our nation nor our social environment should be understood as inevitable or absolute; instead,

17. This vocabulary of individual, species, and genus may have Tanabe Hajime's 1934–1937 "Logic of Species" in mind. Kuki develops his own thinking, however, and does not employ the Hegelian dialectic that is radically different from Nishida or Tanabe.

that actualized society should be relativized as a contingent manifestation, as one amidst a multitude of possibilities. Such a conception will allow for a spiritual freedom, or at least a logical conception of freedom, which is not strictly determined by the conditions of the actual world. Today we live and work with people who were born and raised in radically different environments than our own; applying Kuki's conceptions will allow us to imagine ourselves in their world, and thus will foster both understanding and cooperation with them. Respecting and cultivating individual cultures allows us to embrace world culture, and permits respect of other individuals and their cultures.

Concerning cosmopolitanism, the world individual abandons the ethnocentric notion that one's own country functions as an absolute standard of value. Here, one recognizes and respects the merits, features, and rights of other countries with the aim towards peaceful co-existence. Further, a group of such open-minded individuals recognize that a universal standard flows across national boundaries, and thus they equally respect their own country as well as the countries of others. In our rapidly globalizing world, this notion of the world individual seems to be becoming more and more important.

Despite the reasonable and applicable components of Kuki's claims, there are certain limitations. He presupposes that Japan is a unified, coherent cultural community, and this is evident via his conflation of the cultural community and the nation-state in his discussions of Japan. I put forth my critique that he makes a mistake in assuming that a collection of people who speak Japanese, or any one language, necessarily form "Japan," or any one cultural community. For example, during the age of Japanese colonization, both Chinese and Korean people were forced to speak Japanese, and when Kuki says "we," I do not believe it is these people that he had in mind. Similar incongruities are found in his discussion of *Iki*. While this may have indeed held value for one particular group in the Edo region, which in and of itself is restricted as both a geographic and historic concept, it can by no means be understood as a value shared by the whole of Japan.

One example is Kyoto, which harbored different aesthetic values than those found in the Edo. In his analysis of *iki*, Kuki mistakenly expands the value of the part to that of the whole.

For all his research and thorough evaluation, Kuki fails to ask the question of what one should do when taking the opposite stance to that of the State.¹⁸ In distinguishing the cultural community from the nation in distinct historical framework of thinking, though, Kuki's analysis should still be seen to provide us with a fresh standpoint. A cultural community is understood as a collection of people who share certain cultural values, and can exist beyond national borders. This concept must be distinguished from the state (Japanese, 国家; German, *der Staat*; French, *l'État*), which exists as a legally organized system.¹⁹ We can find countless examples of cultural communities if this concept is understood in a wider sense. Any group, for instance, that shares language or religious values is a cultural community, be it a sports club like Judo, a group of people who come together to enjoy cultural activities like classical European music and Japanese *haiku*, or even just those who come together to drink beer, wine, or *sake* in each other's company. All of these cultural communities can be established independent from, and without any regard to, national boundaries. This allows us to reformulate Figure 3 as shown in Figure 4 on the following page.

The smallest circle represents the individual, the circle composed of a solid line denotes the nation, the circle composed of broken lines is the cultural community, and the largest circle expresses the world. A single individual often simultaneously occupies a multitude of cultural communities. There is officially only one language in Japan, but dialects, as well as culture, can vary based on region. Many European

18. In his essay "A Reflection on Refinement," however, he does argue that the standpoint opposing common and general sense of taste with the intention of destroying it represents the attitude of the "refined person."

19. Note also that the words "state" and "nation" are not clearly distinguished in Japanese as they are in English, German, and French.

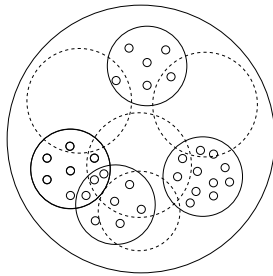


Figure 4: Individual, a Multitude of Cultural Communities, and the World

countries have a number of official languages, and while there are only a few countries that recognize dual citizenship, it is not considered strange for an individual to occupy many different cultural communities throughout time. It is by valuing the connections between these different cultural communities that exist within each individual that we can simultaneously respect both cultural communities and the world. I believe that, as an ideal, this style of thinking is extremely valuable. And furthermore, I believe that by taking up a viewpoint where we can recognize our world of actuality as the product of contingency, we are able to obtain an enlightened spirituality that does not mistake reality as necessary or absolute. We should be able to take a viewpoint where an individual can choose a nation in order to prioritize the cultural value of her existence.

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