

## Gathering Language.

### Heidegger's *Gespräch* with the Japanese

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Language is like imagination. If they are regarded in their most originary character, there appears to be even an inner affinity between them. It is as if each, apart from the other, lets happen something like what comes also to pass with the other.

Imagination is preeminently spectral. It lets an otherwise unseen spectacle be seen. In the classical formulation given in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, imagination is the power of making present something that is not itself present. Imagination enables an event in which something only vaguely intimated is brought to show itself as it determinately is or would be.<sup>1</sup>

It is likewise with language. One speaks or writes, and as one does so, something becomes manifest, something comes to be said in such fashion that it shows itself as what it is. It is not as though, as one begins speaking or writing, one would have in view in its essential determinateness what comes to show itself through the speaking or writing. Rather, it is only in and through the event of speech that it first comes openly into view; it is only as eventuated in and through language that it becomes determinately manifest. What happens in language—provided it does not slide toward mere *Gerede*—is therefore never a matter simply of expression.

Speaking can be compounded. We can speak with one another. We can do so, not just to communicate, to transport, a more or less determinate thought from one

speaker to another, but in such a way that the disclosiveness of the speaking is enhanced. From Plato to Gadamer it is ever again attested that in dialogue the manifestive power of language can come to exceed what would be possible for each speaker alone.

Yet, it is remarkable that Heidegger ventured to write dialogues. Not many in the history of philosophy have done so, no doubt because the Platonic dialogues loomed over that entire history as paradigms that none could hope to match. It has seemed that in the very first venture into philosophical dialogue the result proved so exemplary that all other efforts were completely overshadowed and appeared only as pale imitations of the Platonic dialogues.

And yet, at what he marks as the end of that history, Heidegger ventures to write dialogues. There are the three dialogues written in the winter of 1944-45 as the Second World War was coming to an end; the third of these dialogues is set in a prisoner of war camp in Russia and thus speaks from out of the extreme historical situation. These three dialogues, collected under the title *Feldweg-Gespräche* and published only in 1995, present invented conversation; it seems that Heidegger planned to extend them, since there are sketches for continuations of all three conversations.<sup>2</sup>

Heidegger's celebrated dialogue with the Japanese is quite different. The text of this dialogue was published in 1959 in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. It is the only such text that Heidegger himself published in its entirety; unlike the *Feldweg-Gespräche*, it is a text that he definitely regarded as completed. Heidegger reports that the text originated in 1953-54 and that it was occasioned (*veranlasst*) by a visit by Professor

Tezuka from the Imperial University, Tokyo. Heidegger does not describe the text as a transcription of his conversation with Tezuka; indeed, if one compares Heidegger's text with the account that Tezuka published of his conversation with Heidegger (which was included with his Japanese translation of Heidegger's text), it is evident that the actual conversation served only as an occasion for an exchange from which Heidegger extracted only some points. Though occasioned by Tezuka's visit and, most likely, by Heidegger's conversations with other Japanese scholars, the actual text is Heidegger's own composition.<sup>3</sup>

Yet Heidegger does not call these texts dialogues. As with the other three, Heidegger designates the dialogue with the Japanese as a *Gespräch*, deliberately avoiding the word *Dialog*. Although in this connection *Gespräch* is perhaps best rendered as *conversation*, it is imperative to observe that neither the composition nor the semantic range of these two words are perfectly congruent. There is consequently the danger that certain of the tones sounded in the word *Gespräch* will be silenced in the translation. The only way to be assured of avoiding this danger is to let the word remain untranslated. Reticence is also called for with regard to the title that Heidegger gives to his dialogue with the Japanese, the title "*Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache*"—not only on account of the word *Gespräch* but also because of the polysemy of the preposition *von*, which here can carry any one or more of several meanings, including *from*, *of*, and *on* (in the sense of *about* or *concerning*).

Heidegger's dialogue with the Japanese thus displays a certain singularity. And yet, it incorporates by reference various other dialogues. It begins with recollection of

Heidegger's earlier *Gespräche* with Count Shuzo Kuki, who is mentioned repeatedly in the initial exchanges between Heidegger (designated as an inquirer or questioner [*ein Fragender*]) and Tezuka (designated as a Japanese). Again and again Heidegger and his interlocutor refer to Kuki's *Gespräche* both with Heidegger and with his own students in Kyoto.<sup>4</sup> Thus, they launch the current *Gespräch* by weaving it together with a network of others that have occurred. Furthermore, in the course of the present *Gespräch* they arrange to speak again on the following day: Tezuka will defer his departure in order to visit Heidegger again the next day. A future *Gespräch* that we will not hear is thus protended. Thus, through these interweavings, this evocation and proliferation of other dialogues, the present *Gespräch* places itself within its own discursive temporality. Also, it thereby alludes to its own indefiniteness, its non-closure.

What is most prominently sounded from the outset of the present *Gespräch* is the danger that threatens every such *Gespräch* between East and West. This danger would have loomed over Kuki's attempts to understand Japanese art by way of European aesthetics as well as over his efforts to convey to Heidegger what is said in the word to which all his reflection was reportedly devoted, the word *iki*. The danger is first mentioned by the Japanese interlocutor in response to a series of critical questions that Heidegger poses regarding the appropriateness of applying European aesthetic concepts to Japanese art and thought. The Japanese speaks of his sense of the danger of being led astray by the wealth of European concepts to the point where everything genuinely Japanese—the no-play, for example—would be denigrated as indeterminate and amorphous. Heidegger—the Inquirer—responds by declaring that “a far greater danger

threatens.”<sup>5</sup> Referring back to his *Gespräche* with Count Kuki, he explains: “The danger arose from the *Gespräche* themselves insofar as they were *Gespräche*” (GS, 84). The Japanese, in turn, explains that danger threatened because “the language of the *Gespräch* shifted everything into *European*”—whereas, as Heidegger adds, “the *Gespräch* attempted to say the essential of *East Asian* art and poetry” (GS, 85).

Somewhat later the Japanese returns to this point. Again referring back to Heidegger’s earlier meetings with Count Kuki, he says: “The language of the *Gespräch* was European; but what was to be experienced and thought was the East Asian essence of Japanese art” (GS, 96). In still another formulation, now by Heidegger: “I now see *still* more clearly the danger that the language of our *Gespräch* constantly destroys the possibility of saying that of which we are speaking” (GS, 98). Thus, as the *Gespräch* progresses, the danger inherent in just such *Gespräch* comes more and more determinately into view: even greater than the danger of assimilating Japanese art and thought to European aesthetic concepts, in particular, is the danger of assimilating them to European language in general, and of doing so inadvertently in the very launching of a *Gespräch*. Yet, by exposing this danger rather than simply succumbing to it, the present *Gespräch* gains a certain critical edge.

The predicament in which Heidegger’s *Gespräche* with his Japanese interlocutors are caught is replicated—though in less extreme form—as we, now, venture a *Gespräch* with Heidegger’s German text. An analogous danger threatens as soon as we venture to say in our language what is said in the word *Gespräch*. The primary trait of the word *Gespräch* that prescribes Heidegger’s preference for it (rather than the word *Dialog*)

consists in its conjoining the prefix *Ge-*, which, as in *Gebirge*, bespeaks a gathering, with a variant form of the very word for language *Sprache*. Thus, the composition of the word calls up, along with its ordinary meaning as conversation, the sense of a gathering of language, even of a gathering of conversation to language. The words *conversation* and *dialogue* do not say what is thus said in the word *Gespräch*. We can elude somewhat the resulting danger by leaving the word untranslated, though it is likely that the danger will reemerge elsewhere on this semantic landscape, perhaps more indirectly and hence in still more dangerous form.

In any case, the danger that haunts—yet also is exposed in—Heidegger’s *Gespräch* with the Japanese lies in language. The Japanese gathers up in a few words the entire sounding of the danger: “We recognized that the danger lies in the concealed essence of language” (GS, 106). The danger is inseparable from the very power, the hidden power, that language possesses to say that which is addressed, that of which the interlocutors speak. For just as language is capable of saying, it is also capable of not saying, indeed of not-saying in the very event of saying. Thus, within the very disclosure that is accomplished when language lets what is addressed be said, there is—or at least can be—also a leaving unsaid that lets what is addressed remain also in certain respects concealed. In short, the power of language to say and hence to reveal is, at once, a power to withhold saying so as to conceal. Speaking of East Asian art in European language cannot but be exposed to the danger that, in the very disclosure accomplished, it may have concealed something essential. Furthermore, because the saying power of language is hidden, this not-saying can remain itself concealed; it may simply go

unannounced or it may appear in the deceptive disguise of saying. Then, when it conceals itself, concealment installs itself most obstinately and even to such an extent that the saying power of language can itself remain concealed. In the third of his 1949 Bremen lectures, entitled “The Danger,” Heidegger writes: “What is most dangerous in the danger consists in the danger concealing itself as the danger that it is.”<sup>6</sup> The danger that lies in the hidden essence of language becomes most dangerous when the essence of language remains itself concealedly concealed and it comes to be taken for granted that language consists of nothing more than signs available to humans for the expression of the meanings entertained by them.

Nonetheless, the danger, recognized as such, must be endured, yet in such a way that the *Gespräch* lets the concealed essence of language be openly operative. In other words, if it is not to remain oblivious to the essence of language, deluded by the concealment of the concealment, the *Gespräch* must proceed in such a way as to let the saying power of language come into play. Indeed at a certain point in the *Gespräch* the Inquirer says that the essence of language “is what is determining our *Gespräch*.” Yet, he cautions: “At the same time, however, we must not touch it” (GS, 107), that is, no attempt should be ventured either to submit it to concepts and so to represent it nor even to dispel the concealment that keeps it apart and shelters it from the glare of the demand that it submit to what is called reason.

Inasmuch as the *Gespräch* is determined by the essence of language—*essence* understood in a primarily verbal sense—it exceeds the mere circuit between the two speakers. This exceeding is made explicit in the course of the first of the *Feldweg-*

*Gespräche*. The Guide asks: “And what is the *Gespräch* itself, purely on its own?” He observes, presumably addressing the Scientist: “You evidently don’t consider just any mere speaking with one another to be a *Gespräch*.” Then he declares: “But it seems to me as though in a proper *Gespräch* an event takes place [*sich . . . ereigne*] wherein something comes to language.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, in a proper *Gespräch*—which is not just any speaking together—there eventuates a coming to language, a saying, that exceeds the mere speech of the interlocutors.

In the *Gespräch* between Heidegger and the Japanese, the interlocutors strive to sustain the reticence needed to hold their speaking open to an eventuation from the essence of language. And indeed they do eventually let be said something belonging uniquely to the Japanese world. It is something already long since said in Japanese, in the word to which Count Kuki had devoted his reflections, the word *iki*. Thus, what is now ventured is not a saying of something yet unsaid but rather a translation that would gather into a German word that which, uniquely Japanese, has long since been gathered in the word *iki*. What this word says is now said in German as *das Anmutende*, though various differentiations and qualifications are required to prevent the word from being reabsorbed into the language of European philosophy. Similar measures are needed for the English rendering, *the gracious*.<sup>8</sup>

Much earlier in the *Gespräch*, Heidegger asks the Japanese about the word in his language for what we call language. More precisely, he asks whether there is such a word; if there is not, then how, he asks, does the Japanese experience what we call language? The response by the Japanese hovers between these two alternatives. On

the one hand, he attests that he has never before been asked this question and that in the Japanese world no heed has been given to it. This suggests that the word may simply be lacking. And yet, on the other hand, after some moments of silent meditation, he announces that there is such a word. This scene, together with the fact that it is only much later that he actually reveals the word, serves to present dramatically this bringing of language to language. The enactment that is displayed is one of letting the Japanese experience of language be gathered into a word that, though not simply lacking, will only have been intimated as long as this experience has not been drawn into it. Even when Heidegger finally asks him directly about the word, the Japanese hesitates before then saying that it is *Koto ba*. Yet, what the word says, how it says the essence of what we call language, requires a kind of translation that opens onto and reveals its saying power. Drawing together what the Japanese says of *Koto*, Heidegger offers such a translation: *Koto* means “*das Ereignis der lichtenden Botschaft der Anmut*” (GS, 142). This translation borders on the untranslatable, but, with due reservations, let us render it as: the eventuation of a clearing for the arrival of graciousness. The other component, the word *ba*, means petals, as of flowers. The Japanese advises Heidegger to think of cherry blossoms or plum blossoms.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Japanese word *Koto ba*, which says the Japanese experience of what we call language, can be rendered as: the petals that stem from *Koto*—that is, the blossoming of a clearing in which can arrive the graciousness of what is lovely and luminous.

“That is a wondrous word,” exclaims Heidegger (GS, 136). The word can be called wondrous on two accounts. The first is linked to the character of the event in

which—as which—the word comes to be spoken in the *Gespräch*. It is an event in which the saying power of language is openly operative as it exceeds the capacities of mere speech. This exceeding is displayed in the *Gespräch* not only by the dramatic moments of meditation and hesitation but, above all, by the translation that commences once the word *Koto ba* has been uttered. Indeed, it is precisely through the translation that it becomes manifest what is said in the word, that is, how the word says what we call language. Even to the Japanese—as he is presented in Heidegger’s text—the saying power of the word seems to become more determinately manifest through the translation.

The word can be called wondrous on a second account, for, in the emergence of the word, the saying power of language is brought to bear on language itself, on the essence of language, which is nothing other than this saying power. In the word *Koto ba*, what we call language comes to say itself—that is, the German word *Sprache* comes to be translated as *Koto ba* in a kind of translation that, rather than merely substituting one word for another, is gathered to the saying power of language.

Thus the word *Koto ba* can be said to be wondrous. Here, too, in the word *wundersam* there is a translation, one especially audible to Western ears. The word says what in Greek is called θαυμαστόν. One cannot but wonder whether, in the saying in which language comes to say itself, one arrives at the beginning of philosophy, perhaps even in a sense that exceeds—that is anterior to—the philosophy that, according to Heidegger’s declaration, has come to an end.

To the Japanese saying of language as *Koto ba*, Heidegger adds a complementary saying. He remarks that he has himself become hesitant to continue using the word *Sprache* and that he believes he has found a more suitable word, namely, the word *Sage*, which, he explains, means saying in the sense of showing (*Zeigen*). In this saying of language as a saying that shows, it is the disclosiveness of language that becomes prominent, in contrast to the various Western designations, which refer to the act of speaking or to the organs of speech such as the tongue or the voice. Here, too, as with *Koto ba*, there is operative a distinctive translation, namely, *Sage* as *Zeigen*.

Toward the end of the *Gespräch*, the Japanese says: “It seems to me as though, instead of speaking about language, we have now attempted to take some steps along a course that entrusts itself to the essence of saying” (GS, 154). His point is that they have forgone speaking about language in a way that would succumb to the danger of turning it into an object. In speaking about language, they have let their speech be gathered to the saying power of language—indeed in such a way that this very saying power comes to be said. Proper speaking—that is, speaking that comes into its own by being gathered to the essence of language—is thus disclosed in the *Gespräch* both through what is said and through what is enacted, both in word and in deed. It is such speaking that is required for a proper *Gespräch*, for a *Ge-spräch*. To shift for a moment to another idiom: Heidegger’s dialogue is not only with the Japanese but also with language itself as it deploys its saying power. Heidegger’s dialogue is a dialogue with the essence of language.

One name for proper speaking about language is *Besinnung auf die Sprache*—let us say: reflection on language. When the Japanese introduces this phrase, Heidegger extends it by saying that his reflection is “on language in its relation to the essence of Being” (GS, 121). This extension serves to connect the discourse of language to the ontological discourse that in fact is woven into the *Gespräch*. Indeed, this connection between language and Being constitutes one of the primary moments taken up in the *Gespräch*.

In the ontological discourse Heidegger distinguishes, first of all, between two usages of the word *Sein*: it can designate either the Being of beings, that is, the metaphysical sense of Being, or Being in its proper sense, that is, the truth of Being, as said in the word *clearing* (*Lichtung*) (GS, 104). What Heidegger calls the overcoming of metaphysics and describes as a matter of bringing to light the essence of metaphysics so as to set it within its limits prepares the way for the transition from the Being of beings to the truth of Being. Indeed, Heidegger attests that from *Being and Time* on, his concern was to bring Being itself to shine forth. He proceeds to characterize Being itself, Being in its proper sense, as the presencing of what presences (*Anwesen des Anwesenden*) and hence as a twofold (*Zwiefalt*) that is yet a onefold (*Einfalt*). Then, finally and most decisively, he declares: “Accordingly, what prevails in and bears the relation of the human essence to the twofold is language” (GS, 116). In other words, it is language that sustains the essential relation of the human to Being itself. It is on the way to language—that is, from language—that humans are granted their relation to Being.

Heidegger's *Gespräch* with the Japanese offers no further elaboration concerning the way in which language sustains the human relation to Being. Yet, at the point in the *Gespräch* where the question arises as to whether, with the wondrous word *Koto ba*, their thinking has come near the source (*Quell*), Heidegger refers explicitly to his 1950 lecture entitled "Language," which, despite his expressed hesitation to let it appear in print, was published in 1959 in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* along with the *Gespräch* with the Japanese. The reference could not be more pertinent, for this essay, set within the same parameters as the *Gespräch*, addresses the question of the connection between language and Being in an exemplary way; that is, it engages a saying of this relation.

Were we to begin reading the lecture "Language"—here the hypothetical is necessary, since hardly even a beginning can be ventured without the risk of its entirely taking over the present discourse—we would be struck by its opening words: "Humans speak [*Der Mensch spricht*]"<sup>10</sup>—especially if we notice how at the end of the lecture, repeating these words, Heidegger then continues: "Humans speak only in that they respond [*entsprechen*] to language. Language speaks [*Die Sprache spricht*]" (S, 30). The lecture moves between these two sayings, displacing human speech in favor of the speaking of language, that is, disclosing human speaking as bound to the saying power of language, as a speaking *from* language. What such a move, such a venture, is said to require concurs entirely with what is prescribed in the *Gespräch* with the Japanese. In the words of the lecture: "To reflect on language thus demands that we enter into the speaking of language in order to take up our stay within language, that is, within *its*

speaking, not within ours” (S, 10). It is in the course of making this entry, of carrying out the displacement, that the lecture comes to address the relation between language and Being.

Yet where—Heidegger asks—is the speaking of language to be found? How is its saying power displayed? He answers: it is to be found displayed in *the spoken*, not as a mere residue of speaking but as that in which speaking is gathered and sheltered. Heidegger proposes to attend to something purely spoken, something that harbors an originary or proper speaking. The purely spoken he identifies as the poem. Thus, he turns to Trakl’s poem “Ein Winterabend” (“A Winter Evening”).

Were we to follow carefully Heidegger’s reading of this poem, then we could perhaps reenact the listening in which the appeal of these words could be heard, in which one could overhear them calling things forth, summoning things to come closer. Let us listen at least to the first stanza:

Wenn der Schnee ans Fenster fällt,  
 Lang die Abendglocke läutet,  
 Vielen ist der Tisch bereitet  
 Und das Haus ist wolbestellt.

In translation:

When the snow is falling by the window,  
 Long tolls the evening bell,

The table is for many laid  
 And the house is well provided.

By naming these familiar things that belong to the winter evening (window, snow, bell, house, table), the poem calls them forth. Yet, in calling them, it also calls the place of those things, the place in which they can have their bearing on the human. Thus, Heidegger writes: “The snowfall brings humans under the sky that is darkening into night. The tolling of the evening bell brings them, as mortals, before the godly. House and table bind mortals to the earth. The things that are named, thus called, gather to themselves sky and earth, the mortals and the godly. The four are originally united in being toward one another. The things let the fourfold of the four stay with them” (S, 19). These four, taken together, Heidegger terms the world. What the poem calls forth, what its saying power evokes, is the twofold of world and things. The speaking of language as harbored in the poem, the deployment of its saying power as sheltered in the poet’s words, calls forth the twofold of world and things in such a way as to sustain their bearing on the human. Thus, through this additional reflection, Heidegger reveals the power of language to sustain the human relation to this twofold, in which is thought concretely the twofold of Being itself.

This way of thinking Being itself cannot but prompt a number of questions that go largely unaddressed in the lecture and, it seems, in the few other texts that take up this way. In the composition of the fourfold, there is an evident pairing that serves to indicate a certain nonsymmetry among the four moments. There is the one pair, earth and sky. If these are taken in their bearing on the human and yet without metaphorical

elaboration, then they must be regarded as belonging to elemental nature; earth and sky are the elements that bound the space of nature, in which virtually all that concerns humans comes to pass. Insofar as Being is thought by way of this pair, it can be said to be thought elementally. But then, there is the other pair—if indeed it be a pair: the mortals and the godly. How are these—if at all—engaged in nature and hence suited for a relation of intimacy—or mirror-play—with earth and sky? Can the godly be understood otherwise than mythically? How, then, is the mythical related to elemental nature? And how is it that the mortals, the human, which was previously thought as being-in-the-world, is now regarded as one moment *of* the world? Finally and in much broader perspective, must such thinking of world and things be construed as a concrete way of thinking Being itself? Or is it perhaps a way of thinking that finally leaves behind all questions of Being?—that can, with impunity, abandon the preoccupation with Being?

It goes without saying that there is much more to be heard in Trakl's poem. Were we to follow carefully Heidegger's reading of the additional two stanzas, we might begin to hear the resonances that sound in the naming of the between (*das Zwischen*) of world and things, its naming as intimacy (*Innigkeit*) yet also as difference (*der Unterschied*). And then we might hear also how the call calls each—that is, world and things—to rest, to repose, in the other. To make something rest, to put it into repose, is to still (*das Stillen*). The call that calls the double stilling of world and things can itself then be called the tolling (*das Läuten*). Then, finally, with Heidegger's declaration that "*Language speaks as the tolling of stillness*" (S 27), the lecture reaches its apogee—in

the sense that Heidegger anticipated when, near the beginning, he said that in hovering over the abyss of language “we fall upward, to a height” (S, 11).

Whether, by entering further into the density of Heidegger’s reading of Trakl, we could secure a measure of such height, whether even a sense of the direction of such a fall could be engendered—these are questions that must be left open. In any case, in order to give some indication as to how the *Sache* is taken up beyond the limit of the *Gespräch* with the Japanese, we have in the meanwhile wandered far from this *Gespräch*. Let us now return to it in order—but now from another kind of distance—to introduce two final points.

The first concerns the distance that Heidegger appears to take from Plato as regards dialogue. Not only does he adhere to the word *Gespräch* in preference to the word most commonly used for the Platonic dialogues, but also, near the end of the *Gespräch* with the Japanese, he raises the question as to whether Plato’s dialogues (*Dialoge*) can be considered *Gespräche* in the proper sense. The context is one in which it has just been agreed that a *Gespräch* must take the form of “*ein entsprechendes Sagen von der Sprache*”—a responsive saying from language, that is, a saying that says in response what has been deployed through the saying power of language. Against the background of this agreement, the Japanese then says: “In this sense, then, even Plato’s dialogues [*Dialoge*] would not be *Gespräch*” (GS, 143). Heidegger’s response is cautious: “I would like to leave the question open and only point out that the kind of *Gespräch* is determined by that from which are addressed those who seemingly are the only speakers, the humans” (GS, 143).

But could it be that the Platonic dialogues are more closely akin to Heidegger's *Gespräch* than he might have been prepared to admit? To be sure, if the Platonic dialogues are construed as mere conversations between human speakers, then a thorough differentiation can be justified. And yet, it is by no means the case that only the sayings of human speakers enter into the dialogues. Indeed, it is a saying put forth not by humans but by a god, Apollo, that first sets Socrates on his way as the philosopher he becomes. Still more significantly, when—speaking to his friends on his last day—Socrates tells again about how he became the philosopher he is, he centers his account on what he calls his second sailing, which consisted precisely in having recourse to λόγος. What came to speech in Socratic discourse, what in that discourse was set out in response, what became—in Heidegger's phrase—that from which Socrates was addressed, was λόγος itself, the saying power that the Greeks named in the word λόγος. One could point to further features of the Platonic dialogues that demonstrate an affinity with Heidegger's *Gespräche*: that they exhibit a coherence of word and deed, enacting in certain ways what they say; and that in and through what is said and done, the dialogues accomplish a showing that exceeds what is simply said, making manifest something that no speech alone could reveal.

But what, then, finally, about imagination? The word *Einbildungskraft* occurs only once in the *Gespräch* with the Japanese. The passage comes near the end, at a point where Heidegger repeats something that the Japanese has already said: that the word *Koto ba* says "Petals that stem from *Koto*." What Heidegger then says hints at an affinity between the saying that issues in this word and the operation of imagination:

“Imagination would like to wander away into still unexperienced realms when this word begins its saying.” The Japanese responds: “It could wander only if it were let go into mere representing [*Vorstellen*]. But where it wells up as the source of thinking [*als Quell des Denkens*], it seems to me to gather rather than to wander. Kant already had an intimation of something of the sort, as you yourself have shown” (GS, 138). The reference is clearly to Heidegger’s *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, in which the Kantian schematism is taken as showing that imagination is the common root from which intuition and thought stem and by which they are gathered into the connectedness requisite for the possibility of experience.

In response to this passage, especially to what the Japanese says, we could say once again that language is like imagination: as imagination is the source that empowers thinking, so language deploys its saying power to human speech.

Heidegger does not respond to what the Japanese says about imagination. Yet if we were now to respond, then it would be with a question that is already hinted at in what he says. The question is whether it suffices to restrict the operation of imagination to gathering or whether something like a wandering, even a wandering away beyond, does not belong essentially to it. Already in Kant’s discourse on aesthetic ideas, one finds outlined a movement of imagination that not only gathers the aesthetic representation to a concept but also draws it beyond, bearing it beyond both word and concept. The case of translation also bears witness to a wandering or a least a hovering (*Schweben*) of imagination between two languages—as is manifestly displayed in the sayings carried out in the *Gespräch*. Even the thinking or poetizing of the between of

world and things would appear to draw on an operation in which imagination would not only trace a gathering of world and things but also would accord them their difference by its wandering trace of that difference, not only stilling them but also releasing them into discord, as when things are exposed to the elements, as in the howling fury of a storm. In this case, then, imagination would engage not only the tolling of stillness but also the roar of the tempest.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> While certain forms of imagination are primarily oriented to vision (one imagines seeing a certain spectacle, sees it in imagination), imagination as such is by no means restricted to visual modes. One can, for instance, imagine hearing a melody, even a melody that one might never actually have heard. For delimiting the most originary forms of imagination, the visual instance does not at all suffice (see *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000], chap. 5).

<sup>2</sup> See the Editor's Afterword in Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche*, vol. 77 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 246–49.

<sup>3</sup> Observing that Heidegger's text reproduces only very few points from the actual conversation, May concludes that it is "immediately clear that Heidegger has *invented* a challenging dialogue by utilizing a variety of relevant pieces of information and appropriate textual excerpts." He adds: "It is easy to see that the 'Conversation' can be read in large part as a monologue" (Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*, trans. Graham Parkes [London: Routledge, 1996], 13–15). For Tezuka's account of his conversation with Heidegger, see *ibid.*, 59–64.

<sup>4</sup> Though the Japanese speaks of Kuki at the very beginning of the *Gespräch* and often refers to him in the course of the discussion, it is known that in fact Tezuka was not personally acquainted with Kuki but was familiar only with his writings. See May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, “Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache,” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, vol. 12 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 84. Further references indicated by GS.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, vol. 79 of *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 54.

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche*, 56f.

<sup>8</sup> Judging from Tezuka’s report of his conversation with Heidegger, it seems that they did not speak about *iki* at all. The translation that is offered, *das Anmutende, the gracious*, has little or nothing to do with *iki*; the meaning of the word lies, rather, somewhere near the intersection of *elegance, coquetry, refinement, honor, taste*. See Hiroshi Nara, *The Structure of Detachment: The Aesthetic Vision of Kuki Shuzo*, with a translation of *Iki no kōzō* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004). It has been suggested that Heidegger actually confused the sense of *iki* with that of the word *yūgen*, which can legitimately be translated as *grace*. See May, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> May points out that in Tezuka’s report he refers to the word *ba* as meaning, not petals or blossoms, but leaves on a tree (*Heidegger’s Hidden Sources*, 19, 60).

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger, “Die Sprache,” in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 9. Further references indicated by S.