

# Japanese Literature Tradition of Grasping the Intangible Experience between Enlightenment and Romantic Legacy: Kato Shuichi's Unique Contribution on Linguistic Sensibility in Society

MATSUI Nobuyuki\*

## Abstract:

This article is an attempt to review the contribution of Kato Shuichi<sup>1</sup> (1919-2008), who was one of the prominent literary critics in post-war Japan. Today, his various works covering broad spheres such as literature, history, cultural comparison, politics and so on are regarded as representing the quite classic and enlightenment modes of an elitist intellectual. This article attempts to reevaluate his thought in terms of his thinking on human universality based on our *sensibility to the intangible* and linguistic expressions of it. *The intangible* means here trans-linguistic experiences or breaks of linguistically ordinary order, and for him *sensibility* to it means empathy or affection to these experiences, never illogical in the sense of anti-linguistic order. In post-war Japan, Kato continued to express this sense of *the intangible* as trans-linguistic experiences through his thinking on 'love, death, and beauty' which were, for him, the foundation of the ability to discern between truth and fallacy in the political landscapes in his time. In so doing, it is concluded that the importance of Kato's thinking is found in the fact that his way of criticism sought the way to universality in post-war Japan, where having a sense of *the intangible* based on the experience of the absurdity of the war was quite important. Human universality for Kato was not captured in rationalist or Enlightenment discourse, but it was *universality through sensibility* which is embedded and disembedded at the same time in particular situations. In Kato's thinking, solidarity based on cultural activities does not depend on cultural cohesion centered on a unifying symbol like the Emperor in Japan, rather, universal solidarity can be fully maintained by the diversification of ways to express *the intangible* and a common sense to the expressions which is opened to the future by the very nature of *the intangible*.

**Keywords:** *sensibility, the intangible, 'subtler language', Japanese Romanticism, universality*

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\* Research Fellow, Asia-Japan Research Institute, Ritsumeikan University

E-mail: matsuinobyy1988@gmail.com

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1 Japanese names in this article appear in the Japanese order (surname, given name).

## 1. Introduction

How are our language activities related with *universality*? Clarifying common sense with a *sensibility to the intangible* in a language community and its relations with *universality* by reexamining the thought of Kato Shuichi, a literary critic in post-war Japan, is the main theme of this article. In Japan, Kato is celebrated as an ‘intellectual giant’ in the post-war period, and is well known as a man of words<sup>2</sup>. His works covered a broad range of themes such as a literary criticism, Japanese history, cultural comparison between Japan, the West, and Asian countries, and political commentaries. What is more, during World War II (WWII), he majored in medical science (hematology) at the University of Tokyo, and his wartime experience as a student shaped a lifelong opposition to war and imperialism. He practiced as a doctor after graduation. Yet, during his studies, he continued to pay considerable attention to literature. He studied abroad in the Pasteur Institute of Paris University, and learned literary criticism in depth in Europe from 1951 to 1955. In a word, he is a man of the comprehensive humanities because of his deep and broad intellectual background rooted in his transnational and trans-disciplinary experiences. However, his words were always accessible to lay readers (he wrote a number of short reviews in newspapers), and he always tried to use, write, and speak simple and acute words, at the same time deeply informed by the intellectual backgrounds and sacrificing no academic rigor. Yet, while his literary activities have been evaluated autobiographically by many Japanese scholars in terms of their acuteness, thorough and beautiful logic, and straightforward words, the question ‘How can we comprehensively understand his thinking?’ is never asked. How can we regard Kato as a man of words in relation to universality?

We can put this question another way by asking how our language is related to the universality. According to Yi-Fu Tuan’s argument in *Morality and Imagination* (1989), modernizing processes consist of the idea of progress in moral consciousness and ‘imagination’ which often opposes to and erodes existing moral ideas because the ‘imagination’ which is reformed through technological innovations, deepening self-consciousness and forming a skeptical stance to the outside world, is a factor to doubt and criticize traditional moralities. Nonetheless, our moral consciousness can be accordingly reformed, not denied, in this contradictory movement. From the view of this movement, following Tuan, we can say that humans could steadily attain moral progress in the sense of a gradual mitigation of cruelty and an increase in caring for others, even though they couldn’t fully become subjects of reason and there remain a lot of moral problems to be resolved in the world. This view is close to Benedetto Croce’s: ‘everything is transforming and preserved’. History is movements contacting with the universal in the sense that our social processes are opened to ‘requirements’ in each moment [Croce 1988: 86-87].

In the above sense, the concept of universality can be understood in processes which include the dynamic relations between morality and ‘imagination’. Universalizable morality is, whether consciously or unconsciously, formed inside the processes. This theoretical perspective is quite fruitful, but it is still unclear how and when we can be opened to the moment of the universal. Admittedly, it is correct conceptually that we form our moral consciousness in historical processes and the consciousness is universalizable with the conceptual languages which are always adjacent to something universal as Croce said [Croce 1952: 80]. However, how can this perspective explain the

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2 In fact, we can refer to the collection of papers titled with the term. See Kanno, Masaaki (ed.) (2011) *Chi no Kyosyo Kato Shuichi (Intellectual Giant, Kato Shuichi)*, Iwanami Syoten.

fact that universality can be lost, and how can we re-access universality? We should and can discern the universality without experiencing catastrophes from the one who has experienced them. On this issue, Kato's universal thinking is worth noting because his thinking attempts to reformulate the relations between morality and imagination based on his individual experience of absurdity, the defeat of the war, which continues to be a trans-linguistic and *intangible* experience for him. In so doing, he tries to connect individual experiences with the universality.

In the first part of this article, I suggest Kato's thinking of *the intangible* and its importance to understanding his thinking from his writings. Second, his thinking on relations between literary works and universality is examined. I introduce the five categories such as *international context*, *authoritative structure*, *sub-belonging of authors*, *temporal and special imagination* and *sensibility* to capture what universality is for Kato, and also introduce the concept of the 'subtler language' [Wasserman 1959; Taylor 1991] to understand Kato's thinking of language and *universality through sensibility*. Thirdly, Kato's critique of Japanese Romanticism based on his argument on Mishima Yukio is examined. The importance of this problem is found in the fact that for Kato, an 'absurdity', which is an intangible experience like death, is crucial to understanding the power of language to go beyond a particular context and leave the uncertain horizon open to us. Through these arguments, this article shows that the importance of Kato Shuichi is found in his thinking of *universality through sensibility* which has its starting point in catastrophic experiences.

## 2. Kato's Thought on Language and Sensibility

Kato is often evaluated as an Enlightenment thinker. Washizu Tsutomu, an editor and publisher in Japan and one of those closest to Kato, states: 'Kato's sensibility is deeply rooted in modern rationalism' [Washizu 2011: 176]. In addition, Kato's rationalism has its roots in his rage against the irrationalism of the Japanese Empire and his experience of losing his friends during WWII. Furthermore, his rationalism is based on an encyclopedic spirit, which means 'his attempts to understand the whole world in a unified way' with 'interests and knowledges of any areas' [Washizu 2011: 243]. Meanwhile, Washizu also notes that Kato was a man of emotion at the same time (Washizu's book is sub-titled *a Man of Reason and Emotion* in Japanese). In fact, Kato participated in the Poetic Movement (Matinee Poétique) in 1942, and he often wrote on his individual experiences of love and the beauty of nature. This emotional dimension makes Kato's character quite intricate to explain. Thus, while his rational spirit was directed to social criticism, the sphere of intimate emotions is not less important than his rationalism. In addition, it doesn't mean that his criticisms were exerted to merely protect the private sphere. As we see below, his criticisms always relied on the view of individual sensible experiences as a basic factor for forming a language community opened to a universal horizon.

Before examining this view, we have to refer to the reason why Kato's literary criticisms have not been noticed internationally until today. His representative work, *A History of Japanese Literature* is well known internationally thanks to translations of it into many languages. However, the influence of his universal thinking has never been focused on. Outside Japan, he is just known as the author of an eminent introduction to the tradition of Japanese literary works. Until today, Kato's works have tended to be read only in Japan due to the context of language and Japanese publication. Actually, throughout the modern history of Japan, a large readership had been growing even in the period of WWII (Sato 2015). According to Takeuchi Yo (2003), who is a Japanese sociologist of the intellectual and

publishing culture in Japan, it is important to focus on the tide of the ‘Kyoyo-shugi’ (Bildung-ism in German) which means forming personality through reading and also represents an intellectual context in which people, especially young people from the Taisho period to the Showa period (until about the 1970s) consumed philosophical, and historical works and novels for their cultural value even if they were about Marxist theory, and not as a purely truth-oriented theory. Moreover, while the ‘Kyoyo-shugi’ was limited to the high intellectual society before WWII, this tide was expanded by the increasing number of university students after the war in association with the emerging new middle class who held up the ‘postwar mass Kyoyo-shugi’ [Takeuchi 2003: 202-3]. This was the domestic context in which Kato’s writings were also read, especially from the 1950s to 1960s.

However, from the late 1960s to 1970s, this condition was transformed through a further massification of Japanese universities and an anti-authoritative culture among students against the elite intellectuals such as Maruyama Masao, who is the most prominent figure of the ‘progressive intellectuals’ in Japan, and the term ‘progressive’ was almost the same as ‘authoritative’ in Japan at that time. (from 1969 to 1973, Kato belonged to the Berlin Free University as a professor and his lectures were boycotted by students who had judged Kato as an ‘authoritative professor’ [Washizu 2011: 161]) Thus, in this situation of the ‘fall of the Kyoyo-shugi’ [Takeuchi 2011], the possibility of inheriting his thinking was interrupted after the 1970s. Admittedly, Kato’s writings and statements on the issue of constitutional reform concerning Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution regained attention in the 1990s. However, this still doesn’t mean that Japanese readers are familiar with his thoughts on universality which were formed in the Japanese historical context. Rather, most readers regarded Kato as a typically well-enlightened and well-informed intellectual in the classical way<sup>3</sup>.

The insistence of this article is that his rationalism aspired for universality, and this rationalism was enabled by his distinct view of *sensibility*. Here, *sensibility* means a sense of something *intangible* which cannot be generalized in the social context. Kato was a thinker who adamantly continued to stress the importance of *the intangible* and *sensibility* to it. For Kato, *the intangible* is concerned with trans-linguistic experiences of ‘love, death, and beauty’ which call on us to express them.

‘Books are “language”, and language changes with the changing times. Authors are “human”, and humans have some aspects unchanged by time. For instance, the words of *Kyo-un-syu* (*The Crazy Cloud Anthology*) are exactly the words of a Zen monk in the Muromachi era. However, the experiential quality of ‘Akikaze Ichiya Hyakusen<sup>4</sup>’ by Ikkyu Sojun (1394-1481) is not limited

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3 It can be also said that his figure has faded since the arrival of so-called ‘new academism’ in Japan. This newly appeared academic phenomenon depicts the transformation of intellectual culture in the 1980s, which was represented by the young scholar Asada Akira. He introduced an alternative perspective for transforming Japanese society in which people were experiencing the demise of the modernization story based on the inextricable relationship between economic development and social emancipation, and universal intellectual and social progressiveness [Asada 1983]. Retrospectively, this momentum had already begun in 1968 when Yoshimoto Takaaki criticized materialist Marxism and transformed the theoretical framework to the cultural imagination of people as driving forces of every social and political activity [Yoshimoto 1968]. After 1968, a break between the classical intellectuals and the ‘new academism’ had been produced, and Asada declared the end of the intellectual tradition based on the ideal of ‘universal humanity’ [Asada 1983: 19].

4 This poetic phrase of Ikkyu was his ‘ultimate expression of love’ for a woman, Blind Mori whom Ikkyu loved in his last years [Kato 1997: 187]. The phrase can be translated as ‘You and me in the autumn breeze in this night, worthy of a hundred or a thousand years’.

to a certain time. When Confucius lamented the passing of Yan Hui, it went beyond the historical frame of ancient China. The architectural order of a Cistercian abbey is more trans-medieval than modern. Something inside love, death, and beauty directly calls on us from the distance of history. The human touches eternity through specific experiences of feelings, not through universal orders of reason' [Kato 1980: 259].

Here, Kato clearly transposes 'universal orders of reason' with 'love, death, and beauty'. At least, the latter is not universality beyond history.

Ozeki Motoaki (2017) focused these factors as a fundamental drive for Kato's universal thinking. According to Ozeki, Kato's universal thinking is based on his sense of strangeness in highly contextualized and quietly pervading pressures to obey the authoritative structures and also, based on experiences of sexual joys - which are inextricably bound up with horizons opened by poetic expressions - as the moment of opening to universality. As it were, Kato's universalist view was formed through *energies* detached from social pressures and of the irreducibility of sexual and poetic joy to conceptual logic. Thus, from Ozeki's thesis we can say that for Kato, universality is energetic universality which is and must be always opened by our *energies* to live our lives to the fullest. These energies cannot be reduced to a particular historical context and social structure, but they can be trans-historical and universal because a human being in history experiences these living energies and we can be connected with each other beyond history through experiencing this *energy*. Ozeki conceptualizes this kind of energy as "the certain".

We can restate "the certain" as "the tangible". Surely, the energetic explanation is adequate and persuasive in the aspect of individual lives. However, when we problematize the universality for social life, we should also cast light on the issue of how the horizon based on our energies is shared in our language activities. When it comes to the problem of shared energies and languages, we can reconceptualize *the tangible* to *the intangible* based on Ozeki's thesis.

Then, in what sense are 'love, death, and beauty' intangible? An explanation that they unexpectedly overwhelm our minds beyond description would be vague. In a short essay, Kato conceptualized the experience as the 'equality of absurdity' by focusing on death and saying: 'Death is a "global" phenomenon. [...] [D]eath would be the coercion of absurdity, and overcome everyone' [Kato 2016a: 359]. Here, the absurdity is a phenomenon in which we are required to touch the intangible in our lives. For Kato, this experience carries each of us into spaces of questions. In another essay, he interpreted the famous part of the *Analects* of Confucius, "if you do not know life, how on earth can you know about death?" in the following way: 'What we can narrate is not death, but life [Kato 2016b: 338]. Someone's death breaks living space and this experience brings us out from our 'quite-small' view to 'an unlimited world' with 'sadness and rancor', 'and this fact never changes despite becoming old' [Kato 2016b: 338]. In other words, our reality includes the moment which breaks the ordinary circumstances of language or brings out the liminal border of the circumstances, and this liminal experience of linguistic reality is equal *among us*. In this sense, 'love, death, and beauty' are *tangible* in individual experiences which bring us to the liminal and hence intangible horizon opened to the reality beyond an existing order.

Namely, these experiences of *the intangible* shake our linguistic activities which rely on unreflective and devitalized concepts. Hence although these experiences seem quite subjective, they can be regarded as the core of a universalizing movement, because they can vitalize our conceptual activities. In this sense, *sensibility to the intangible* can be the foundation of social solidarity. It might

be useful here to introduce Kato's criticism of the military intervention of the Warsaw Treaty Organization in the Prague Spring. 'Words cannot destroy even one tank, no matter how sharp the words are, and no matter how many hundreds and thousands of people's voices words become'. However, as he continues, 'in the summer of 1968, *overwhelming-but-powerless tanks* and *powerless-but-overwhelming words* confronted each other on the street with drizzling rain' [Kato 2009a: 123-124 (*italic: author*)]. What he says here, firstly, is concerned with political legitimacy. Forcible acts have no ability to justify themselves. Justification is ultimately persuasion, and words are absolutely necessary for justification.

However, secondly, in a deeper sense, the contrast is beyond the conflict over political legitimacy. Kato also said that a 'utopia' in which 'words managed to overcome tanks' was not an eternal reality for Prague. 'A dream passed away. However, [...] sharing the same dreams [with people in Prague] necessarily set young people and their fellowships again and again on historical or epical stages beyond normal circumstances' [Kato 2009a: 261]. In other words, if we can regard the 'utopia' as universality, 'powerless-but-overwhelming words' is the universal moment to break the existing linguistic order supported by the 'tanks'.

Relating to this, we should focus on Kato's strong attention to Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy and spirit of 'engagement'. We can see his analysis of the Prague Spring in Sartre's argument of 'praxis' and collective activity as a 'practical unity' [Sartre 1960: 377]. In *Critique of Dialectic Reason* (1960), Sartre defined 'dialectics' as overcoming the antinomy between the historical process and freedom of human activities in terms of an ambivalent status of a political subject who becomes conscious of his/her freedom in the situation of his/her material necessity and subordination. The person becomes aware of his freedom in his subordination under the politico-economic system which is made by accumulations of the unreflective behaviors of people including his/her own behavior. Here, while the form of mere collectiveness is not equivalent to the unity of an individual's consciousness of their own freedom, this form is a necessary condition to make it active. Before forming the active unity of people in a capitalist society, they must connect with each other in 'series' (*série*), as the passive and necessary connections between people [Sartre 1960: 307]. In this 'series', each person can be aware of their own society as produced by their own behaviors, and they can say that "I did not want to do it" and "I know this is what I did" and "I could never do anything else" [Sartre 1960: 285]. Here, one denies his/her desire and desires for another thing ('I did not want...'), recognizes objectively the result of what they did ("I know..."), and understands his/her own will to act ('I could never do anything else'). The person reflects his/her own freedom in the 'destiny in externality of freedom' [Sartre 1960: 285]. Each person must be aware of his freedom in the situation of the unreflective 'series', and this awareness makes individuals in the 'series' vitalized and urges people to liberate the social processes.

Kato surely noted that Sartre's philosophical insight which directly referred to the Hungarian Revolt of 1956 elucidated the similar nature of the Prague Spring in 1968 [Kato 2010: 141]. Moreover, we can find Sartre's *liminal* experience which enables his insight into ordinary circumstances. Just as Kato experienced absurdity in wartime Japan and the ruins of Hiroshima, the 'decisive experiences of writers in Sartre's generation were the occupation of Paris and torture by the Nazis [Kato 2010:103]. Engagement with the resistance to it was involved with the risks of being tortured and the resolute silences in them. 'In extreme situations, many people disavow their selves, and many people resolutely bring forth "person" in their silences' [Kato 2010:103]. In this sense, for Sartre, 'being human is not a natural status, but the results of determinations', and it formed his philosophy of 'engagement' for freedom [Kato 2010:103]. We can find here Sartre's and Kato's persistent attention to the liminal area

where linguistic order is broken<sup>5</sup>.

Also, in his article on Paul Valéry by whom Kato was also enormously influenced, Kato focused on the concept of *homo faber*. Linking the ‘utopia’ of Prague with *homo faber* which means being or re-creating ‘what we create’ [Kato 1979a: 429], we can imagine the reason why the Prague Spring was a utopian (universal) moment. It was the moment in which *homo faber*’s ‘will of creativity’, which is powerless under ‘normal circumstances’ or ‘series’, could collectively appear *overwhelmingly* and reveal the *powerlessness* of tanks under the liminal status of language. Kato sought for the possibility of ‘powerless-but-overwhelming words’ in postwar Japan, and his view of language cannot be separated from the creative spirit dormant in ‘normal circumstances’. It is obvious that this point of view does *not* merely mean ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’. Rather, we can say that he seeks the possibility of universal solidarity in the sense of ‘powerless-but-overwhelming words’ which are based on experiences of *the intangible* which bring the ‘normal circumstances’ into the liminal status as ‘love, death, and beauty’ strike us.

### 3. ‘Subtler Language’ and Universality of Sensibility

As discussed in the previous section, Kato rejects the definition of universality which is fulfilled by the language of political totality. However, this does not merely mean individualism against ideological interventions. Rather, as argued below, his view of a language community shows us that human nature as the linguistic being can be defined in terms of universality which can be accessed on the level of *sensibility*.

The concept of sensibility can be well defined through understanding the structure of his representative work, *A History of Japanese Literature* (1975=1979-1983). This work comprehensively analyzes the historical transformations of Japanese literature from the sixth century to the middle of the twentieth century. I cannot enter into details of this work, but it is important here to understand that Kato methodologically categorized each period to comprehend the value of the literary works. We can find five contextual categories: *international relations*, *authoritative structure*, *belonging to a sub-group*, *imagination*, and *sensibility*.

*International relations* means relations with external civilizations such as China and the West as the intellectual reference point. For example, in pre-modern Japan like the Heian period in which the earliest narrative work in the world the *Genjimonogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*, see *Genji* below) was written, Japanese culture became autonomous from the influences of Chinese culture. However, this was first enabled by contact with China because Chinese characters (kanji) were imported and their knowledge became an indispensable skill for the upper-class in Japan.

The *authoritative structure* is a certain governing structure. For example, in the Heian period, the dominance of the aristocratic regime based on the Fujiwara clan started to stumble and the *Insei*

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5 Otherwise, we might say that Kato’s enduring attention to Sartre is the opposite side of the outdated image of Kato in Japan, because the influence of Sartre’s philosophy in France was declining in the context of the growing influence of Levi-Strauss’s structuralism in the 1960s. The influence of Sartre’s existentialism endured relatively longer in Japan than France [Takeuchi 2015 (II): 129]. However, this fact never decreases the importance of Kato’s thinking. Rather, it shows the reason why Japanese readers didn’t scrutinize his thinking was because the intellectual environment of Japan after the 1960s seemed to rush into receiving and interpreting philosophical styles in Europe, especially French philosophies like structuralism and post-structuralism.

(ruling power of a retired Emperor) was being established. In addition, the authoritative structure includes coetaneous economic structures which were based on the way of distribution of benefits or lands among political powers.

The third, *belonging to a sub-group*, is related to the second. For example, Murasaki Shikibu, the author of the *Genji*, belonged to the female court society which was located far from the power politics of male clans. Her position enabled her to accomplish the *Genji* although the context of this tale was conspicuously limited to the court society [Kato 1979b: 182].

As for *imagination*, it is concerned with temporal, spatial and sometimes religious elements inherent in historical works. Again, picking up the example from the *Genji*, Kato says that this tale is not *religiously* rooted in the Buddhist view of the world, although several Buddhist episodes appear. More importantly, the long narrative of the *Genji* *temporally* unfolds against the background of ‘a sense of the reality of temporal flux’, in which ‘all human activities and emotions are destined to be relativized’ [Kato 1979b: 185]. In addition, the sense of time is *spatially* intertwined with the changes of the passing seasons. These imaginations are generated and restricted by traditional or religious views of the world, and there are interactions between traditional views of this-worldly benefit and religiously universalist views such as Buddhism.

Lastly, *sensibility* means what descriptive works say about experiences which are hard to express. The *Genji* is the story of a handsome nobleman, Hikaru Genji, who experiences a lot of sexual and romantic relationships with different women one after another, in which the women’s sentiments of losing and missing Genji, and the sentiments of Genji himself and their struggles with their inner conflicts are portrayed. According to Kato, this kind of expressive work could be circulated in a certain context (in the case of the *Genji*, it was the private sphere of women in the court society). Nonetheless, the inner sentiments are comprehensible to readers like us because the temporal and spatial fluxes disclose a strongly condensed meaning of their inner feelings in a moment. Namely, although expressions of *sensibility* are highly contextualized, sensible forms of expression *decontextualize* particular experiences of sensibility at the same time.

In these categories, *sensibility* is the crucial factor for literal history. For Kato, the term *literature* is ‘individual activities, directly opposed to “dominant values in the highly industrialized society in general” and “conformisme”’, and ‘it must be the place for acquiring different spheres from the “ruling/ruled relationship” and contribute to the “compartmentalization of a reality”’ [Kato 1979e: 41]. Resisting ‘conformism’ means that universality cannot be defined without *sensibility*. In this sense, *A History of Japanese Literature* was his attempt to clarify *sensibility* as something understandable only in the interstice of the existing social orders and imaginations as shown in the above categories. In this sense, the work has the “viewpoint of going across time and space” [Ozeki 2017: 145]. As Kato said that ‘standing for *non-conformisme* in a whole reality means reexamining [...] a cultural whole’ [Kato 1979e: 51, *italic: author*], we need a standpoint to reexamine ‘a cultural whole’, and the standpoint is *sensibility* which is contextualized and *decontextualized* at the same time.

Here, to *decontextualize* means to empathize with others’ confrontation with something *intangible* which generates our strangeness and enables us to ‘reexamine’ the social context. Why can we say that *sensibility* is the crucial core of literal expression and our living space? We can find two points about this question; one is related to Kato’s experience of WW II, and the other is the point which can be generalized in terms of critical philosophy against the problem of modernity.

Firstly, in Kato’s novel titled ‘Aru Hareta Hi ni’ (‘On a Sunny Day’), ordinary people in the war time became consonant with the Emperor-centered propagandas and dissolved into mutual



surveillance and distrust. Also, it was not only limited to the home-front people, but even scientists and intellectuals irrationally became proponents of the war. Hence, Kato asked: 'The same person is sometimes rational, but sometimes irrational. Why are people sometimes cautious and sometimes too hasty?' [Kato 2009b: 113]. This incoherence led to a rejection of autonomous thinking, and people rushed into 'conformism' to the authoritative dominance. The problem was the fragmentation of relations among people and cultural mobilization under the Emperor system.

Secondly, it is useful here to refer to the argument on the relations between linguistic expression and modernity which generated the social problem of 'malaises' as Charles Taylor shows in his *Ethics of Authenticity* (1991). Taylor describes modernity as process of social fragmentation and resulted angsts such as the 'loss of purpose' and higher values in public life, the penetration of 'instrumental reason' or efficacy into all domains of society, and the 'soft despotism' predicted by Alexis de Tocqueville [Taylor 1991: Chap.1]. These problems obviously resonate with the conformism in Kato's case.

However, according to Taylor, we cannot directly recover something higher without individual experiences through which people resonate with the higher horizon. Based on the argument of the 'subtler language' argued by Earl Wasserman (1959), Taylor argues that the 'subtler language' sheds light on the spiritual context after the late eighteenth century. In this period, the cosmological reality in the classical view based on the entity of the transcendental order was becoming discredited. Instead, an aesthetic common sense emerged and it affirms that the self can recover its relations with the horizon of the higher value beyond mere subjectivity through poetic and artistic expressions which deeply resonate with his/her inner depths. 'The modern poem must both formulate its own cosmic syntax and shape the autonomous poetic reality that the cosmic syntax permits', and through the way of expression, 'something is defined and created as well as manifested' [Taylor 1991: 85].

Moreover, Taylor distinguishes expressed 'matter or content' and the subjectivity necessarily accompanying forms of expression in the modern era as a 'manner' [Taylor 1991: 81-82]. It means that expressing something in modernity is under the imposed process of the individualization which formed the 'manner' of subjective expression, yet this fact doesn't necessarily result in the subjectivity of the expressed 'content'. Namely, modern forms of expression *still and newly* enable us to resonate with the world beyond the secular and modern order through deep sensibility.

Kato's definition of 'literature' is apparently similar to this argument, because the expressive language in modern society can be interpreted as the experience of *sensibility* which is not only a personal experience, but also *decontextualizable* as seen earlier. The 'subtler language' can be described as a form of expression which enables us to regard others' expression of sensible and intangible experiences as having a higher importance for each of us than the dominant social values. At the same time, when Kato wrote *A History of Japanese Literature*, he focused on the problem of a heavily administered society, commercialism under the American way of life, and the 'compartmentalization of writers' worlds' [Kato 1979c: 286-287]. In this sense, we can understand that Kato sought for the possibility of a society in which expressive language could open the meaning of individual experiences to others such as readers.

However, when it comes to the problem of overcoming the fragmentation of society, the consequential problem was the *existentialization* of intangible sensibility, as it were. One of the symbolical phenomena is the Romantic legacy in Japan. The following section will show Kato's critical thought on the issue of Japanese Romanticism, especially focusing on his argument against Yukio Mishima.

#### 4. Against the Romantic Legacy and Intangibility's Place: Kato's Criticism of Mishima Yukio

The relations between Kato's literary criticism and Japanese Romanticism has been less noticed than ever in the history of Japanese thought. However, although Kato did not comprehensively raise the theme of the Romantic legacy in Japan, we can find his strong attention and opposition to it. Nonetheless, we can find an exceptional work of Kataoka Daisuke (2015) on the issue of Romanticism in Kato's thought. Although Kataoka specifically pointed out that 'the time right before his study abroad in Paris in [19]51 was exactly the time of the rediscovering of Romanticism' [Kataoka 2015: 78], the main object of his research is limited to Romanticism in western literature from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. According to Kataoka, Kato's evaluation of western Romanticism shifted from the view of Romanticism as merely subjectivist sentimentalism to one that the Movement of Romanticism established 'literary multiplicity in the sense that there are national literatures and their traditions in Germany, Britain, and so on, as opposed to the idea that the Greco-Latin tradition is the sole literary tradition' [Kato 1979d: 278]. This shift in Kato's view of Romanticism was based on its important role to establish the value of novels, individual self-expression, 'direct interaction between an author and readers' and a generational renewal of expressive styles [Kato 1979d: 308].

Here, it is worth noting that Kato came to think that the Romantic movement not only lead to the 'construction of a "literary kingdom"' which is distinct from the secular world, but also 'prepared the adventure for the recovery of an earthly republic' through the active engagements of petit bourgeois and laborers against the restoration of Louis-Philippe I in the revolution of 1848 [Kataoka 2015: 84; Kato 1979d: 297-299]. In addition, Kato acutely compares the Romantic Movement in western society with Japanese Romanticism. According to him, the romantic climate in Japan since the Meiji period expressed the sense of the self, the interconnection of cosmology and feeling, worshipping nature, and humanism, which are in common nature with the legacy in the West [Kato 1979d: 306-307]. However, at the same time, 'Romanticism in the early Meiji period mis-birthed [...] due to the immaturity of the social conditions' [Kato 1979d: 308]. Consequently, the Romantic legacy in Japan faded into the '*Shi-Shosetsu*' (I-novel) which lacked tension between subjectivity and the social whole as in Rousseau's 'Confession' which is placed as the central source of western romanticism.

Kato made an argument on Mishima Yukio based on the above perspective. Let us consider his criticism of Japanese Romanticism mainly based on *Nihonjin no Shiseikan* (*Six Lives, Six Deaths*). Mishima was an existential romanticist at the same time as being a novelist. In the *Kamen no Kokuhaku* (*Confessions of a Mask*, 1949=1958), he portrays the intricate and divided inwardness of his existence in which his eroticism and yearning for death, his homosexuality, and masculine discipline as a man are revealed. He killed himself by committing seppuku in November 25, 1970 in the army post of Ichigaya (Tokyo) after trying to agitate members of the Self-Defense Force into action as warriors under the Emperor.

There are three points in Kato's criticism of Mishima. That is, (1) the universalization of a cultural symbol, (2) the idealization of death and relativization of the self, (3) the decline in the creative ability of his expression.

(1) Universalization of a cultural symbol—Mishima willed to take over the spirit of Japanese Romanticism in post-war Japan. Around 1941, he had been already influenced by Japanese Romanticism which had glorified the war in the situation where the Japanese Empire expanded its enemies to include the U.S. and Britain [Kato, Lifton and Reich 1979: 132]. The Romantic school was

loosely formed by poets and literary critics who gathered around journals such as *Cogito* and *Japanese Romanticism*, and Yasuda Yojuro (1910-1981), a representative figure of Romanticism, led the literary movement from the 1930s [Osawa 2014]. The central motif of Yasuda's Romanticism is distilled to the 'romantic irony'. It means a paradoxical nostalgia for a homecoming in the way that the Romantic poets expressed the contradictory status of aspiration for a homeland which never existed. In other words, the Romantics were those who expressed the ambivalence of the aspiration and alienation from it as an irony.

However, although the 'romantic irony' does not have a real home to go back to, Yasuda or other poets and critics found it expressed in Japanese culture and the Empire around the 1940s, when the war against China became more and more mired into a protracted situation, and finally Japan rushed into the war against the U.S.. Mishima was influenced by this kind of Romantic's expression of their desire for returning to Japan as a homeland under the Emperor. In *Six Lives, Six Deaths* (Kato, Lifton and Reich 1979; *SLSD* below), '[l]ike German Nazis before the Second World War, the Romantics never actually compared cultures, but simply asserted that Japan's was superior to all others', and '[t]hese elements of the Romantics—emperor-centered super-nationalism, aesthetic renditions of social and historical problems, and a highly mannered, obscure, vague, and emotive style—influenced all of Mishima's subsequent writing' [*SLSD*: 246]. However, 'He (Mishima) was a restorationist without a past to restore'. In this sense, Mishima strove to embody the ironical and nationalist ambivalence of Romanticism [*SLSD*: 272].

(2) Idealization of death and relativization of the self ———The Emperor and the authentic Japan was aspired for over the reality of a post-war society which had become more and more Americanized. For Mishima, death was the symbolical point to go beyond this reality, and the authentic Japan is regarded as a symbolical reality which eternally endures beyond the individual's death. Death could reconcile his ironic struggle, and it was a point of homecoming for him. Here, Mishima projected the historically authentic image to 'the belligerent Japan of his youth' which was limited to his own experience of the past [*SLSD*: 273].

(3) Decline in his creative ability——Mishima's sensibility to words and expressions eventually decreased with the heightening of his aspiration for death. When Mishima wrote *Confessions of a Mask* in his earlier years, his literary ability doubtlessly stood out in expressing his inner struggles. However, according to Kato's estimation, Mishima was 'a good observer of himself with a limited ability to understand other personalities, a sensitive aesthete with no profound cultural background, an intelligent writer without intellectual discipline at an abstract level' [*SLSD*: 271]. Mishima was too internal to himself and devoid of 'the exteriority of history and society' in his thinking, and as a result of it, '[i]n his imaginative world of novels, stories, and plays, Mishima's characters, even during best years, risked becoming mere mouthpieces of the author, a tendency culminating in *Kyōko's House* (1959), which clearly marked the beginning of his decline in creativity [*SLSD*: 271].

Mishima was only able to construct his own world of his inner monologue. He unleashed and expressed the world without linking with the world of others. Mishima 'felt his own alienation in post-war Japanese society' and his alienation 'appeared in the form of extreme ego-centrism and the necessity to dedicate himself to the Emperor as his god which represented to him an authority beyond the post-war society'<sup>6</sup> [*SLSD*: 190]. However, 'most Japanese people were not alienated from the post-war society, but were incorporated into it, and they did not require an authority beyond the post-war

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6 This description is only in the last chapter of the Japanese edition.

social order, but required the maintenance of the social symbol' [SLS: 190]. Mishima bemoaned this order, but it led to an acute gap between Mishima's words and the external society. The problem in Mishima's romanticism is that he assumed a coherence between the authority of his cultural symbol and his existential aspiration for his death. However, as his sense of creative expression was declining along with his heightening aspiration for death and the restoration of the Emperor system, his efforts at a dialogical dimension of expression were discarded.

Kato seems to thoroughly reject Mishima's romanticism. However, it is not merely a criticism from the Enlightened spirit. Rather, we must be aware that Kato criticizes Mishima over his theme of expressing *death*, that is, his lack of *sensibility to the intangible*.

As seen in the second part, Kato thought that death is not a denial of life, but something constitutive for living space, in which our actions and thinking are opened. There is a symbolical episode that illustrates this. When Kato visited the Royal Museum of Belgium, he was impressed by an unattributed picture, *Little Girl with Dead Bird*, drawn in the beginning of the sixteenth century in southern Holland, and he wrote an essay on his experience there. The eye of the little girl with a dead bird in her hands is fixed on the 'something unknown' or mystic—'not the dead bird, but the "death" which appeared in the bird'. The girl 'stands up to something with her fullest existence' [Kato 2016c: 146]. She does not show grief at the dead bird, rather, she starts to think of something through the death as an unknown thing [Kato 2016c: 147]. In other words, this picture depicts the appearance of a living space, or *movement* of the appearance constituted by the death of the bird. Perhaps, Kato saw himself in this girl, because his image of death is heavily imposed by his memory of WWII where death and ruins dominated his eye like Hiroshima after the atomic bomb (Kato observed the situation afterward as one of the investigative team). In his encounter with Hiroshima survivors, he described in his autobiography that:

'[i]t was something beyond comprehension—no sooner had some meaning been extracted from the experience than the substance of that meaning began to evaporate. And yet as long as one came face to face with it, [I felt] the weight of the experience I had never had before. But I witnessed those who had' [Kato 1999: 224].

The spectacle of absurdity which appeared in Japan's defeat constituted new living and thinking space for Kato. He tried to open his deepest anger to sensible narrations of the absurdity. As Wittgenstein had said: 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, so death was 'what one cannot speak of' for Kato. Our language is always intertwined with trans-linguistic intangibility. In the essay on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, while Kato respected the 'intellectual stoicism' of Wittgenstein against things that 'one cannot speak of', Kato suggests that 'Zen monks talked about their spiritual enlightenment, and lovers talked about their romances' [Kato 1980: 38]. That is, there are various sensitive ways to speak about something which 'one cannot speak of' clearly and hence, people should not refrain from narrating these things in diverse ways, because these unclear things are not a privileged object of '*Gedanke*' (thought). It was important for him to generate dialogical relations among people through diverse ways of expressing such encounters with trans-linguistic experiences, which constitute our living spaces. Language can capture the movement of the constitution for Kato.

In Mishima's case, death was a factor that formed his monologue in Kato's reading. However, Kato interpreted that death is something to direct us to live, think and create sensible forms of

expression. Political and cultural totalities appear as a moral imperative based on the idea of living for a death under authoritative symbols. Our sensibilities are easily connected with this mobilizational idealization. Words and expressions became irrational, because our living spaces for words are stifled by a heroic symbolizing of death as if death reveals what the most valuable thing is. Contrary to stamping on a *sensibility to the intangible*, Kato tries to find the possibility of being *subtler* to it in the millennial history of Japanese literature and his coeval era.

## Conclusion

Through the preceding argument, we are in a position to reevaluate Kato Shuichi's thinking globally. What has been argued in this article is, after all, that Kato's thinking is outstanding in postwar Japan in the sense of his unique perspective of universality. I place it as *universality through sensibility*. Admittedly, he was regarded as one of the typical Enlightenment thinkers in postwar Japan in terms of his thoroughly critical position against authoritative and forceful powers both domestically and internationally. However, the postwar democracy in Japan was for him not merely an imaginative narration of emancipation from the irrational military regime to the enlightened regime, but what is considered to be more important is that he criticized political powers from *sensibility* to trans-linguistic experiences and the will to express them to others. That is, he did not define the direction of Japanese society toward a universal value in terms of a temporal imagination such as the prewar Japanese militarism to the postwar western democracy. Rather, he found the Japanese people's own path to universality in the trans-linguistic experience of the war and put it into words. For Kato, the experience was the ineffaceable source to think and act universally. Moreover, he continued to emphasize the importance of *intangible* experiences through variegating them with themes such as death, love, and beauty in his description of the literary history.

In addition, there was a big obstacle against this project of opening sensibility to universality, that is, the problem of Japanese Romanticism which had nationalized sensibility. For the romantic existentialism of Mishima Yukio, the problem of his own internality and resistance against the postwar American way of life in Japan is the most imminent in Japan. Mishima's *sensibility to the intangible* was existentialized in the Japanese warrior styles and performances, and it was easily knitted together with the cultural authority which was ideally sublimed in his own existentialism. Kato was very critical of his romanticism. However, his criticism was not merely the rational against irrationality, but an attempt to drag *sensibility to the intangible* away from a particularized cultural authority, and open it to universality through the 'subtler language'. Thus, we should not overlook that his criticism against Japanese Romanticism came near to Romantic sensibility. He did so to salvage and open it to the horizon of universality in postwar Japan. In this sense, his Enlightenment was not rationality against the irrationality of Romanticism, but dismantling it through rescuing *sensibility to the intangible*. For Kato, this rescue was to bring his absurd experience of the war into expressions, and it was definitely different from molding the sensibility into an authoritative structure, dominant intellectual discourses and temporal and spatial imaginations such as progressivism. Hence, Kato's criticism against Romanticism was internal rather than external.

What does the above argument imply for us today? Let me comment briefly in terms of the relations between universality and political mobilization today. We have recently witnessed the phenomena, so-called *post-truth*, in political scenes in countries such as the U.S. and Japan, and politicians forcefully trying to, or pretending to integrate their states through a distorted recognition of

reality by utilizing internet medias such as the Social Networking Service. This phenomenon implies that our social reality and linguistic order are becoming quite unstable due to the social transformations and sufferings they cause. The post-truth discourses are summoned to respond to the breaking of the existing linguistic order without the sense of universality. Kato had to criticize the post-truth mobilization from his spirit of Enlightenment, but more than this, he had to try to define this broken situation of language as a moment to think of universality with words of *sensibility to the intangible* and diagnose our time as the age of re-questioning truth from the perspective of sensibility. What Kato is showing us is that it is possible to decontextualize and universalize our sense of the intangible, even if the politically defined concept of universality as a purpose of history becomes invalid.

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