

The Role of Geometrical Representations – Wittgenstein’s Colour Octahedron and Kuki’s Rectangular Prism of Taste

By Shogo Hashimoto*

In his writings Philosophical Remarks, the Austrian-British Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1989-1951) draws an octahedron with the words of pure colours such as “white”, “red” and “blue” at the corners and argues: “The colour octahedron is grammar, since it says that you can speak of a reddish blue but not of a reddish green, etc” (Wittgenstein 1980, §39). He uses the word “grammar” in such a specific way that the grammar or grammatical rules describe the meanings of words/expressions, in other words, how we use them in our language. Accordingly, the colour octahedron can also be taken to represent grammatical rules about how we apply words of colour, e.g., that we can call a certain colour “reddish-blue”, but not “reddish-green”. In a different context, the Japanese philosopher Shūzō Kuki (1988-1941) explores in his work The Structure of Iki what the Japanese word “iki” means. This word is often translated as “chic” or “stylistic” in English, but Kuki holds that it is an aesthetic Japanese concept that cannot be translated one-to-one, instead encompassing three aspects: “coquetry”, “pride and honour” and “resignation”. To explain the meanings of the word “iki” and other related words all of which Kuki calls “tastes”, he introduces a rectangular prism as a geometrical representation similar to Wittgenstein’s colour octahedron. In this paper, I argue that the rectangular prism does not solely explain how the modes of Japanese tastes are related to each other, but also has a grammatical character. On this score, I suggest that one can regard this rectangular prism as a description of the grammatical rules of the Japanese language. By appeal to the arguments of both philosophers and in comparison with them, I will not only clarify what they claim by geometrical representations but also examine what role this kind of representation plays as an explanation of grammar in general.

Keywords: grammar, colour octahedron, rectangular prism, Shūzō Kuki, Wittgenstein

Introduction

We have several colour systems. The most common one is the so-called Natural Colour Model, which has three pairs of elementary colours (white-black, green-red and yellow-blue). Different languages have different words which are supposed to refer to the same colour – e.g., “blue” in English, “blau” in German, “bleu” in French, “青” (“ao”) in Japanese. For several purposes like colour printing or the sensing display of images in electronic systems, we also employ different

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colour systems such as the CMY Colour Model, whose primary colours are cyan, magenta and yellow, and the RGB Colour Model, which is based on red, green and blue. Apart from these models, some ethnic groups employ their own colour systems that conform to their forms of life. The Eskimos use six different words referring to the word “grey” in the Natural Colour Model; the indigenous people of lowland Bolivia, the Tsimané, have fewer terms for colours than Bolivian-Spanish and English speakers. All these systems have different ways of applying colour words.

As is the case in colour systems, we can also imagine that there are different systems in different languages that describe the character, value, and taste of the people. Such descriptions can also be taken to correspond to their forms of life.

Ludwig Wittgenstein and Shūzō Kuki were philosophers who lived in the same time period – 1889-1951 and 1888-1941 respectively – in different countries, who conducted investigations into how we use words in our languages. Wittgenstein deals with the colour system familiar in the Western world whereas Kuki is concerned with the system of the Japanese “tastes”, which is to be seen in the following discussion. In an attempt to clarify the use of words, both philosophers bring geometrical representations into play. To what extent can these representations, however, serve to make the use of words clear?

Goal and Method

This paper aims to shed light upon the role geometrical representations play in showing how language systems operate. For this purpose, I consider the investigations of Wittgenstein and Kuki and compare their explanations of geometrical representations. Interestingly enough, these explanations have certain commonalities, including shortcomings, although there seems to be no correspondence or link between the philosophers.

From a Wittgensteinian point of view, Yingjin Xu similarly analyses Kuki’s aesthetics expressed in *The Structure of Iki*. He points out parallels in the two philosophers’ works (Xu 2016). Sharing with Xu the basic idea that Kuki and Wittgenstein conduct linguistic conceptual analyses of the same kind, I will, independently from his attempt, interpret Kuki’s “Wittgensteinian” investigations and discuss the role of “geometrical representations” in general.

This paper has the following structure. In the first part of the discussion, I explain what Wittgenstein says of the use of colour words in the Western colour system and the colour octahedron, which he introduces as a geometrical representation. His explanation also embraces some controversial remarks. I will have a short glance at some interpretations in the secondary literature although it is not my intention here to solve this problem or offer a new satisfactory interpretation. In the second part, I consider the rectangular prism, which Kuki also introduces as a geometrical representation of how one uses words standing for the “tastes” characteristic of the Japanese. Finally, I compare the explanations of both

philosophers to point out their similarities and clarify to what extent geometrical representations can show how we use words in our language systems.

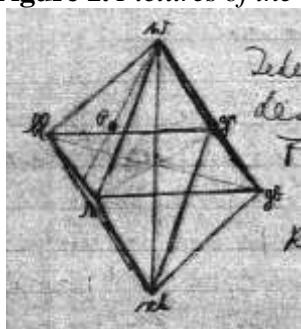
Discussion

Wittgenstein

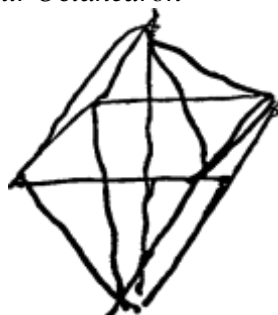
What is the Colour Octahedron?

Especially in his so-called middle period, Wittgenstein discusses the colour octahedron in several places. According to Tina Wilde and Josef G.F. Rothhaupt, “Wittgenstein adapts the model of the colour-octahedron from Höfler” (Wilde 2002, p. 284). The person in question is the Austrian philosopher and educationalist, Alois Höfler, who attempts to explain coloured sight in relation to the psychological effect of colours. It is to note that although Wilde refers to the picture drawn in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Remarks*, it is actually not what he means by “colour octahedron”. Now I give its three examples, which can be found in his other works (Figure 1).

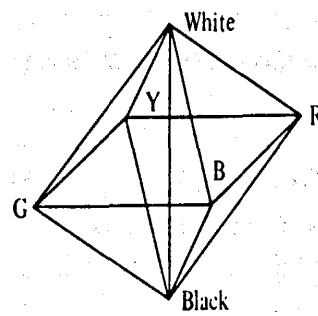
Figure 1. Pictures of the Colour Octahedron



Wittgenstein’s handwriting:
Rothhaupt 1996, p. 243



Wittgenstein 2016, p. 16



Wittgenstein 1980, p. 8

As the editors of Wittgenstein’s Cambridge lectures from 1930-1933, where the second picture stands, point out, and which one can clearly see from the third picture, what Wittgenstein means by “the colour octahedron” can be described as follows:

The colour octahedron has one of the “pure colours” (red, blue, green, yellow, white, and black) at each corner, with white at the top and black at the bottom. (Wittgenstein 2016, p. 16, fn.13)

Hence, this colour octahedron can be said to represent a certain kind of relationship between some colour words shown in a geometrical figure. One can say, e.g., that the mixed colour “orange” stands between the pure colours red and yellow. What does Wittgenstein, however, aim at with this colour octahedron?

The Colour Octahedron as a Representation of the Nature of Colour

Let's see the following passages about Wittgenstein's notion of the colour octahedron. He writes:

This [= the colour octahedron] is really a part of grammar, not of psychology. "People under these circumstances have red after-images" is psychology. (Wittgenstein 2016, pp. 16f., cf. Wittgenstein 1980, p. 8)

An octahedron with the pure colours at the corner-points e.g., provides a *rough* representation of colour-space, and this is a grammatical representation, not a psychological one. On the other hand, to say that in such and such circumstances you can see a red after-image (say) is a matter of psychology. (This may, or may not, be the case—the other is *a priori*; we can establish the one by experiment but not the other.) (Wittgenstein 1975, §1, Wittgenstein 2005, p. 322)

Unlike Höfler, Wittgenstein argues that the representation of colour-space is not only *rough* but also not psychological. What seems especially relevant for the present discussion in the quote above lies in the following point: The representation via Wittgenstein's colour octahedron has an *a priori* character. In other words, one has not discovered this representation by *a posteriori* empirical investigations. Wittgenstein's colour octahedron is not a result of psychological experiments, e.g., of colour images people can have under certain circumstances.

Wittgenstein then refers to the investigations of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe about colour concepts to discuss differences between results of experimental investigations and "the *nature* of colour". In *Remarks of Colour*, he argues:

Someone who agrees with Goethe believes that Goethe correctly recognized the *nature* of colour. And nature here is not what results from experiments, but it lies in the concept of colour. (Wittgenstein 1969, I, §71)

And here "nature" does not mean a sum of experiences with respect to colours, but it is to be found in the concept of colour. (Wittgenstein 1969, III, §125)

With this, Wittgenstein also points out that the *nature* of colour is neither the result of experimentation nor a sum of experiences, and therefore has an *a priori* character. In this respect, it seems natural to think that Wittgenstein's colour octahedron is related to this "*nature* of colour". To put it simply, when it comes to the representation of the colour octahedron, he does not have experimental investigations in mind. Rather, he conducts "grammatical" investigations, similar to Goethe and William James (cf. Wittgenstein 1969, I, §70, Wittgenstein 1969, III, §125).

Octahedron and Grammar

As we see it in the passages quoted above, Wittgenstein stresses in several places that the colour octahedron has a "grammatical" character. In the following passage, he gives a reason for regarding it as "grammar":

The colour-octahedron is grammar because it tells us that we can talk about a reddish blue, but not about a reddish green, etc. (Wittgenstein 2005, p.322, cf. Wittgenstein 1975, §39, Wittgenstein 1980, p. 8, Wittgenstein 2016, pp. 16f)

Wittgenstein uses the words “grammatical” and “grammar” in a somewhat specific manner in his later period. He explains the word “grammar” in the following way:

Grammar explains the meaning of words to the extent that it can be explained. (Wittgenstein 2005, p. 32, cf. Glock H-J 1996, p. 152)

Wittgenstein also utilises the expression “the meaning of words” in a particular sense, which derives from the central idea in his later period:

For a large class of cases of the employment of the word “meaning” – though not for all – this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its use in the language. (Wittgenstein 2009, §43)

When Wittgenstein says that the colour octahedron is grammar, it is obviously one of these cases where he also bears the notion of “meaning” as “use” in mind. Consequently, the colour octahedron as “grammar” is supposed to make clear how to use colour words in the colour system addressed by Wittgenstein. It is possible in this language, e.g., to talk about a reddish-blue, but not about a reddish-green. To repeat it again, however, this is not a result of experimental investigations, but rather a matter of how we use languages.

One can also see from Wittgenstein’s explanations in what sense propositions about colour words are not empirical. He also regards the proposition about colour words, “The white cannot be darker than the blue or the red.” (Wittgenstein 1969, III, §2), as grammatical and even as mathematical by saying “Here we have a sort of mathematics of colour” (Wittgenstein 1969, III, §3) and “We have a colour system as we have a number system” (Wittgenstein 1967, §357). The colour system has internal relations between colour words, just as our mathematical system has internal relations between numbers, formulas, etc. In other words, Wittgenstein takes these relations of colour words in the colour system to be analogous to the calculation of mathematics. In this sense, grammatical propositions about colour words can be considered just as little empirical as mathematical ones.

Different Grammars in Different Colour Systems

As there are different language systems, Wittgenstein also brings other colour systems than ours into play. He says:

Imagine a *tribe* of colour-blind people, and there could easily be one. They would not have the same colour concepts as we do. For even assuming they speak, e.g., English, and thus have all the English colour words, they would still use them differently than we do and would *learn* their use differently.

Or if they have a foreign language, it would be difficult for us to translate their colour words into ours. (Wittgenstein 1969, I, §13, cf. Wittgenstein 1969, III, §128)

This *tribe* would have another colour system than the colour system in the Western world and we could possibly not understand what they mean by their words. What Wittgenstein thereby emphasises again is the difference in the use of language. The grammar of the Western colour system would then be also different from their grammar. Thus, the colour octahedron he takes as a geographical representation of grammar could not explain their grammar but would require a different geometrical form, unless their grammar could not have any appropriate geometrical representation.

The “Surveyability” of the Octahedron

How does the colour octahedron serve as a representation of grammar? Wittgenstein holds that it can make our grammar “*übersichtlich*”. Unfortunately, one can find different translations of this German word in his different works. Above all, Peter Hacker levels criticism at this point: “The terms *Übersicht*, *Übersichtlichkeit*, and the related verb *übersehen* have given Wittgenstein’s translators much trouble. They have chosen to translate it non-systematically in conformity with the demands of English style, thereby partially obscuring the significance and pervasiveness of the concept in Wittgenstein’s work” (Hacker 2007, p. 151, fn.6). Hacker raises examples of expressions containing the translation of the term in question: “command a clear view”, “perspicuous representation”, “synoptic account”, “Survey”, “synoptic view”, “perspicuity”, “capable of being taken in”, which records unsystematic and problematic translations.

Without discussing all these passages containing the word “*übersichtlich*” or the like, I address Wittgenstein’s explanation about the relation between the colour octahedron and its “*Übersichtlichkeit*”:

The representation via the octahedron is a *surveyable* [*übersichtliche*] representation of the grammatical rules. (Wittgenstein 2005, p. 322)

Using the octahedron as a representation gives us a *bird’s-eye view* [*Übersichtlichkeit*] of the grammatical rules.

The chief trouble with our grammar is that we don’t have a *bird’s-eye view* [*Übersichtlichkeit*] of it. (Wittgenstein 1975, §1)

For the sake of convenience, I adopt Hacker’s translation of “surveyable” as “*übersichtlich*”. This term is often discussed as fundamentally significant for Wittgenstein’s philosophy in his later period, especially in the context of §122 of *Philosophical Investigations*, where this term also appears. However, instead of discussing interpretations of §122, I will instead concentrate on the necessity of the surveyability of the grammar, which is pointed out in the citations above, and also draw attention to the following aspect of the colour octahedron, which Wittgenstein formulates in another place:

In fact, grammar can indeed sometimes be given through geometrical bodies, e.g., in the case of the colour octahedron. This is a perspicuous [*übersichtlich*] representation of rules of grammar, but it does not do away with the need for the rules. It only simplifies the rules and *makes them more perspicuous* [*übersichtlicher*]. (Wittgenstein 2003, p. 135, cf. Wittgenstein 2003, p. 141)

To encapsulate the ideas in all these passages, including this quote, one can say that geometrical representations such as the colour octahedron can make rules of grammar *more surveyable*, but these representations are not sufficient to thoroughly clarify them. Beyond such a geometrical representation, it is necessary to adequately grasp how the grammatical rules operate.

In Wittgenstein's other discussions, it is clearer to see this point, i.e., that the colour octahedron cannot explain enough how the grammatical rules of colour words look, even if it can simplify them. In *Remarks of Colour* part I §§16-33, he argues that white is not a transparent colour and in this sense unique and different from other colours such as green. In reference to several remarks (cf. Wittgenstein 1969, III, §197), Gieringer (2015) holds that Wittgenstein is ultimately unsatisfied with the idea of the colour octahedron as the representation of the grammar. If and to what extent he is not satisfied seems to me still discussable, but I at least agree that the colour octahedron alone – without further details – does not explicate that one cannot talk about “transparent white” in the system Wittgenstein bears in mind, therefore, not fully explain how to use the word “white” in this language system.

Does the Octahedron “Belong to Grammar”?

In the secondary literature, it is even controversial whether the colour octahedron after all serves as a representation of the grammar of colour words. Gordon Baker shows a negative reaction:

In consequence, no verbal formulations of grammatical rules (and no assemblage of grammatical rules) can properly be called “a perspicuous representation of grammatical rules”, and conversely the colour-octahedron cannot properly be viewed as a mere compendium of the combinatorial rules for colour words. (Baker 2004, p. 24)

According to Hacker, Baker claims that the colour octahedron is no more than a subordinate and supplementary representation:

Baker held that the colour-octahedron is meant to be a second-order representation of the grammar of colour-words, i.e., not an expression of the rules for the use of colour words at all. Accordingly, the colour octahedron does not itself belong to grammar [...]. (Hacker 2007, p. 119, fn.23)

Hacker criticizes Baker's interpretation by appealing to Wittgenstein's remark, “The colour octahedron is grammar”. Here it is not my aim to examine whether and to what extent it is really grammatical. Instead, I simply note that geometrical representations like the colour octahedron might accommodate this controversial point.

The Four Features of Wittgenstein's Colour Octahedron

In light of the considerations above, one can see the following features of the colour octahedron Wittgenstein takes to be a “grammatical representation”. First, what he attempts to show with this representation is neither a sum of experiences nor the result of scientific experimentation; rather, it is a conceptual analysis which has an a priori character. Second, the colour octahedron is supposed to make the rules about colour words such as “red” and “blue” *more surveyable* by representing how these words are related to each other. Third, the conceptual analysis with the colour octahedron is based on a kind of “linguistic pluralism”. This means that different colour systems have different grammars, in contrast to the assumption that the colour system familiar to Europeans like Wittgenstein is the only correct one. Fourth, the colour octahedron is no more than a *rough* representation of the rules of colour words and this functional limitation may raise doubts about whether the octahedron can be regarded as “grammatical”. With Wittgenstein's descriptions of “the geometrical representation” in mind, I will argue that Kuki's explanation about his “geometrical representation” also has these features.

Shūzō Kuki

Now I proceed to what Kuki says about the rectangular prism, which he raises as an example of geometrical representations. Of course, he neither deals with ways of applying colour words nor uses Wittgenstein's terms, such as “grammar”; rather, he examines certain words describing the Japanese character. Yet, Kuki's consideration shares considerable commonalities with Wittgenstein's investigations of language and it is worth calling attention to these commonalities to clarify the role geometrical representations play in the system of language.

In this regard, the reading I propose in this paper is different from what is often found in the secondary literature, especially in western studies of Kuki's philosophy. For *The Structure of Iki* tends to be understood as a kind of introduction to Japanese aesthetics. Graham Mayeda even says very specifically that its popularity outside Japan “is in part due to the subject matter – *geisha* culture and the relationship between a *geisha* and her lover – a theme that seems stereotypical as a representation of Japanese culture” (Mayeda 2020, p. 125). However, this understanding seems restricted. What Kuki achieves in his work is more than a mere exploration of a specific sort of aesthetics represented in Japanese culture. It is actually an attempt to “grammatically” analyse the Japanese language system, just as Wittgenstein does in his investigations.

As stated above, like Xu, I suggest reading *The Structure of Iki* from a Wittgensteinian point of view. However, our focal points are different. Xu rejects the two kinds of interpretations found in the secondary literature: that Kuki's philosophy is a sequel of Heideggerian “phenomenological-hermeneutic” thoughts, and that his conception of *iki* is so “nationalistic” that non-Japanese people cannot

understand it¹. Xu argues that like Wittgenstein, Kuki also sees the importance of “samples” such as geometrical representations and that the “samples” could reveal the “general meaning”² of *iki*, which goes beyond Japanese culture (Xu 2016, p. 117) and it is, therefore, intelligible to all nations. My paper focuses on the considerations of the two philosophers on the role of geometrical representations, as well as their shortcomings. I neither deny the influence of continental philosophy on Kuki’s thought nor question whether *The Structure of Iki* represents “nationalism”. Regardless of these discussions, I attempt to grasp the concept of *iki* as encapsulated in Japanese language and culture. This is not a matter of nationalism, but just a matter of the variety/diversity of language systems, as is the case with colour systems and mathematical systems.

In the following sections, I first examine Kuki’s investigations. Then I will show that Kuki’s “geometrical representation” also has the four features distinctive of the “grammatical representation” discussed by Wittgenstein. As a result, Kuki’s geometrical representation is also not immune to the problems of the geometrical representation Wittgenstein introduces for the explanation of grammar.

Kuki’s Analysis of Iki as a “Phenomenon of Consciousness”

Kuki’s investigations aim at clarifying the structure of *iki*, which is characteristic of the Japanese. Similar to Wittgenstein’s contention, he also points out differences in the meanings of words between languages. Concerning the word “*iki*”, Kuki says:

If words describing natural phenomena already differ in this way [e.g., in the case of “sky” in English, “*ciel*” in French, “*Himmel*” in German] among languages, we cannot hope to find precise counterparts in one language for words describing specific social phenomena in other languages (Nara 2004, p. 14)

These specific social phenomena include the phenomenon represented by the word “*iki*”, whose translation into other languages is also difficult and seems even impossible. Then Kuki continues:

For a word to have a consistent meaning and value to a people, a linguistic path must be always open there. The fact that the West has no word corresponding to *iki* is itself evidence that the phenomenon of consciousness that is *iki* has no place in Western culture as a certain meaning in its ethnic being. (Nara 2004, p. 59)

Kuki stresses the importance of “a linguistic path” where words have consistent meanings and value to a people, when he speaks of “phenomena of consciousness”, which he later on explains in more detail. I understand the expression “linguistic path” to mean that the meanings of words and expressions can be clear only inside

¹As the main advocates of these two kinds of interpretations, Xu raises Mayeda (cf. Mayeda 2006) and Leslie Pincus (cf. Pincus 1996) respectively.

²Unfortunately, the expression “general meaning” (“普遍の意味” in Japanese) is misleading and seems unsuitable to the Wittgensteinian reading of Kuki because Wittgenstein dismisses a “craving for generality” that is supposed to be valid *absolutely*, i.e., independently of any system of language (Wittgenstein 1958, p. 17).

of the language to which they belong. In my opinion, the word “meaning” in Kuki’s sense is also concerned with the use of words or expressions, as Wittgenstein holds. In other words, both philosophers struggle to clarify language frameworks in which words and expressions can have their meanings. In this sense, I agree with Mayeda’s reading of “a phenomenon of consciousness” as “a sort of representational framework or an attitude”, although his reading traces back to what the late Martin Heidegger calls “frame” (“*Gestell*”). This is “an idea or set of ideas through which we filter or interpret our experience” (Mayeda 2019, p. 525 and *ibid*, Fn. 4 & 5, cf. Mayeda 2020, p. 130)³. Such a “framework” reading is well compatible with Kuki’s “linguistic pluralism” that there are several language systems such as German, French, etc. whose words and expressions have specific meanings that can be lost in translation.

What do Kuki’s philosophical investigations of the notion of “*iki*” in his linguistic sense look like? He claims it is necessary first to make clear two kinds of the features of the “phenomenon of consciousness” of *iki*. He writes:

To comprehend *iki*, which manifests itself as meaning as a phenomenon of consciousness, we must first recognize the **intensional features** constituting the meaning of *iki* and clarify their semantic content. We will then explicate **extensionally** the distinction between the meaning of *iki* and the meaning of related words in order to **differentiate** the meaning of *iki*. (Nara 2004, p. 18, emphases in original)

Kuki’s analysis proceeds on the assumption that the “meaning as a phenomenon of consciousness” of a word can come to light by explicating the intentional and extensional features. Hence, these two kinds of explication are also needed for the “comprehension” of the phenomenon of consciousness of *iki*. The word “comprehend” generally has a specific meaning in Kuki’s writings, according to Hiroshi Nara, the editor of his book *The Structure of Iki*:

³However, I doubt if the Heideggerian – whether early or late – philosophy is relevant for the “framework” reading of *The Structure of Iki*. I think that not only Mayeda’s Heideggerian reading of *The Structure of Iki* in general, but also his allusion to the late Heidegger in the quote above are related to Kuki’s manifestation that “a study of *iki* cannot be ‘eidetic’; it should be ‘hermeneutic’” (Nara 2004, p. 18, see also Mayeda 2020, p. 130), where Kuki also refers to Heidegger. Nevertheless, Kuki’s mention to Heidegger especially addresses the work *Sein und Zeit*, which was written by the early Heidegger in 1927, while the late Heidegger introduced the term “*Gestell*” in the lecture first presented in 1949. It is therefore much later than 1930 when *The Structure of Iki* was published. In addition, as Masakatsu Fujita states (Fujita 2003, pp. 29f.), Kuki does not seem to use the term “hermeneutic” exactly in the same sense as in the context of *Sein und Zeit*. With this term, he rather intends to contrast the “eidetic” study that attempts to gain abstract general concepts with his method with which to grasp the living form of *iki*, “as it is, without altering its actual concreteness” (Nara 2004, p. 17). From this criticism of Mayeda’s reading, it does not follow that, as Xu construes, there are essential differences between the thoughts of Kuki and Heidegger (Xu 2016, p. 119). I rather acknowledge Heidegger’s substantial influence on Kuki in a nod to Takako Saitō’s claim “Kuki’s respect and impression for the direction of Heidegger’s phenomenology is evident”, especially when he uses the Heideggerian terms such as “essence” (Saitō 2016, p. 135, fn.9). Here, I just want to point out that the “framework” reading of *The Structure of Iki* does not require any reference to Heidegger and can be conducted independently from his thoughts.

This usage [of “comprehend”] is based on the fact that, in other published writings, Kuki was quite strict about the distinction between ordinary understanding, including the sort of knowledge possible in the natural sciences, and the sort of comprehension that makes it possible to understand historical and cultural phenomena, including ideas, intentions, and feelings. (Nara 2004, p. 62, fn.14)

Accordingly, the comprehension in Kuki’s sense is different from the sort of knowledge possible in natural sciences and cannot thus, as I understand, be reached through experimental or empirical investigations. Rather, Kuki’s analysis is directed towards the other kind of comprehension in the quote. This is the historical and cultural analysis of how several words including “*iki*” are used by Japanese people in many phrases in some Japanese novels, some Japanese theatres, their ordinary lives, etc. In this regard, I think his investigations are actually just as little experimental and empirical and just as much grammatical as Wittgenstein’s ones.

Kuki finds it necessary to comprehend *iki* as a “phenomenon of consciousness” and the “objective expressions” of *iki*, claiming that the understanding of the former is a prerequisite for that of the latter. This approach is distinguished by its uniqueness because most of the studies on *iki* are inclined to begin with the latter or only deal with the latter (Nara 2004, p. 18, Fujita 2003, p. 36). For this reason, I first examine *iki* as a “phenomenon of consciousness”.

Intensional Features of *Iki*

Let’s look into the intensional features constituting the meaning of *iki*. Kuki explains its “semantic content”, as he calls it (Nara 2004, p. 18), briefly and succinctly:

Iki stands in an inseparable internal relationship to the idealism of bushido [“the way of the samurai”] and the unrealism of Buddhism. *Iki* means that *bitai* “coquetry” that has acquired *akirame* “resignation” lives in the freedom of *ikiji* “pride and honor”. (Nara 2004, p. 60)

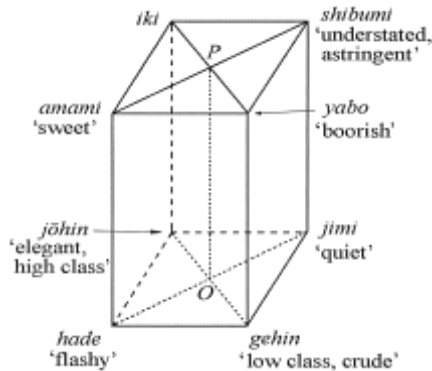
One might well say that the Japanese character of *iki* lies exactly in its Buddhist properties and the concept of bushido, which represent Japanese culture. Then, one can also see a difference between *iki* and the colours Wittgenstein addresses: unlike pure colours such as “red”, “white”, *iki* is not a pure property; rather, it is a composite of three distinguishing features: “coquetry”, “resignation” and “pride and honour”.

External Features and the Rectangular Prism of Taste

Now we consider the external features of *iki*. These features concern the internal relation of different words. Kuki says “we will clarify the extensional meaning of *iki* by examining and distinguishing other terms related to it” (Nara 2004, p. 24). He calls *iki* and these other related terms “tastes”. I think he uses this term in the sense of “aesthetic judgments”, similar to Immanuel Kant, who also

uses it in the *Critique of Judgment*⁴. To explain the internal relation, Kuki introduces a rectangular prism as a geometrical representation of the meanings of the words of taste:

Figure 2. *The Rectangular Prism of Taste*



Source: Nara 2004, p. 32.

Furthermore, Kuki goes into detail:

[...] the two squares at the top and the bottom, corresponding to the determinants for the various modes of taste [...] represent the two domains of the public. (Nara 2004, p. 32)

In this text, Kuki explains what each of the two different domains is like. Yet, it is important in the present context to note that tastes belonging to two different domains cannot stand together. It is also in the same domain that the words of taste connected by diagonal lines in the figure oppose each other: One cannot have *jōhin* and *gehin* at the same time and in this sense one can formulate: *jōhin* ↔ *gehin*; *hade* ↔ *jimi*; *iki* ↔ *yabo*. Yet, he adds that only *shibumi* lacks an obvious opposite (cf. Nara 2004, p. 24).

Through the rectangular prism, Kuki describes the character of the use of the words concerning *iki* as follows:

It is thought that *jōhin* belongs to the domain of the public of general human being and, as such, does not interact with coquetry. (Nara 2004, p. 25)

[...] since *iki* encompasses aspects of *ikiji* “pride and honor” and *akirame* “resignation”, *iki* is understood as a superior form of taste. When we look into the relation between *iki* and *jōhin*, we find they have superior taste and positive value in common, even as they differ with respect to coquetry. (Nara 2004, p. 26)

⁴In the original, Kuki uses the Japanese word “趣味” (*shumi*) and Nara translates it as “taste”. Note that the German word “Geschmack” in the *Critique of Judgment* is not uncommonly translated as “taste” and “趣味” and it is also the case in the time Kuki lived in.

Consequently, Kuki doesn't simply claim that *iki* is by itself incompatible with *jōhin* ("elegant"), *jimi* ("quiet") and *hade* ("flashy"), but rather encompasses three different aspects that are incompatible with these tastes. Due to such internal relations of words of tastes the rectangular prism represents, I think one can also call the taste system "mathematics of taste", as Wittgenstein does in the case of the colour system.

The "Objective Expressions" of *Iki* and its Relation to Grammar

Now I turn to the analysis of objective expressions of *iki*. As already seen, Kuki places importance and priority on the analysis of *iki* as a phenomenon of consciousness and even says that one will not grasp the ethnic specificity of *iki* in the area of objective expression if one focuses on separately from the viewpoint of the phenomenon of consciousness (Nara 2004, p. 18). The goal of *The Structure of Iki* is nothing but to "understand the being of *iki* and elucidate its structure" and for this purpose, Kuki claims, "[we] were forced to approach the subject by way of conceptual analysis" (Nara 2004, p. 54). Due to his goal-setting at the beginning of this work, this "conceptual analysis" can be understood as the analysis of *iki* as a phenomenon of consciousness, i.e., the explication of the intensional and extensional features of *iki* (Nara 2004, p. 18, cf. Fujita 2003, p. 165). As a result, he, however, admits that "the particularized, lived experience cannot be described by means of conceptual analysis alone. Even if such experience is assigned a certain meaning, some part of it will elude analysis" (Nara 2004, p. 54). In other words, it requires more than the conceptual analysis including geometrical representations to fully grasp the lived experience of the meaning of *iki*, which is "rich in the concrete" (Nara 2004, p. 54). Here, I do not discuss what is concretely needed to understand this experience of the meaning of *iki*. Yet, it can at least be said that the analysis of the objective expressions is undoubtedly concerned with the use of the word "*iki*". I think this analysis is also necessary for the clarification of its grammar and sheds more light upon it.

At this stage, Kuki explains how *iki* is expressed in our daily lives, e.g., in certain ways of talking, posture, gestures, designs – e.g., parallel lines –, in certain colours – grey, brown and blue – (cf. Nara 2004, pp. 35, 41, 47). This aspect of *iki* also characterises the use of the word "*iki*". In my opinion, it is doubtful that the rectangular prism of taste alone represents these objective expressions, and it is, therefore, doubtful that the prism fully explains how to use the word "*iki*".

Also, I hold that the same kind of controversy between Baker and Hacker applies to the rectangular prism of taste. In other words, one can ask if this geometrical representation really represents grammar or it is nothing but a subordinate and supplementary representation. For Kuki's rectangular prism of taste can also be regarded as a "verbal formulation" of grammar, similar to Wittgenstein's colour octahedron, and thus can't be viewed as a "surveyable representation" of grammar either, if Baker is right.

Conclusion

So far we have seen several features common to the philosophical investigations of Wittgenstein and Kuki, both of whom use geometrical representations for their linguistic conceptual analyses. In summary, one can state the four following points. First, it can be said from Wittgenstein's point of view that, like Goethe and James, Kuki also does grammatical investigations of the words of taste, including "iki", and uses the rectangular prism for his analysis in a similar way to Wittgenstein's use of the colour octahedron. Second, one can conduct grammatical investigations in the system of colour as well as other systems, such as the system of taste. Third, different cultures can have different systems of taste and different geometrical representations depicting them, as is the case with the system of colour.

The fourth point is the most essential point in this paper. Indeed, geometrical representations such as Wittgenstein's octahedron and Kuki's rectangular prism can make the grammar of a given language *more surveyable* and simplify it. Nevertheless, it is still questionable if such a geometrical representation really represents grammar. With Wittgenstein's expression, it can be said that a geometrical representation is no more than "a *rough* representation" (Wittgenstein 1975, §1, Wittgenstein 2005, p. 322). In other words, grammatical rules are too complex to be geometrically represented regardless of the discussion as to whether geometrical representations are grammatical or not.

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