

On Tamamushi-iro Expression: A Phenomenological Explication of Tamamushi-iro-no (Intendedly Ambiguous) Expressive Acts

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Introduction

Japanese novelist Kenzaburo Oe's (1935-) *Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself* (*Aimaina Nihon no Watakushi*)¹ was the title of this Nobel Prize winner's memorial address, at Stockholm, in 1994. Being ambiguous seems to be one of the conspicuous characteristics of the traditional Japanese culture and its people. A cultural transference between two human domains, such as the domain of school life and that of everyday social life, could be conceived as either commensurable or incommensurable. In order to transgress the boundary between two incommensurable domains, metaphorically speaking, a rite of passage will become necessary, while, between commensurable ones, a gradual progression will do, as explicated by Professor Bernd Jager in his inspiring article "From the Homestead to the City: Two Fundamental Concepts for Education."² Does ambiguity not constitute the incommensurable that would necessitate a rite of passage if we were to transgress the boundary between the domains of Japanese culture, in the East, and European cultures, in the West?

Keeping this general question in mind, let me invite you to an exploration of the meanings and structure of *tamamushi-iro-no* expressions and expressive acts in Japanese culture.

In Japanese-English dictionaries, *ambiguous* and *equivocal* are given as equivalents to *tamamushi-iro-no*. However, if you consult English-Japanese dictionaries, the Japanese words corresponding to *ambiguous* are *tagitekina*, *aimaina*, *fumeiryouna*, and *futashikana*, which would be translated back in English as *multivocal*, *ambiguous*, *unclear*, and *uncertain*. Similarly, the Japanese words for *equivocal* are *tagitekina*, *aimaina*, *futashikana*, *hakkirishinai*, and *ikagawashii*, which would be translated back again as *multivocal*, *ambiguous*, *uncertain*, *unclear*, and *dubious*. *Tamamushi-iro-no* is lost somewhere on our way back and forth. This suggests that there is no true equivalent in English for the Japanese adjective.

Thus, in a Japanese-English dictionary, the Japanese sentence "*Shusho ha tamamushi-iro-no touben wo shita*" is translated as: "The Prime Minister made an equivocal reply." What would you think of a Japanese prime minister who makes

an equivocal reply in the Diet or in a press meeting? You might naturally give a negative evaluation of such a prime minister. However, if I read the sentence as follows: “The Prime Minister made a *tamamushi-iro-no* reply,” then I would at least take a little time to think about why he did so and would cautiously refrain from giving an immediate negative evaluation of him. This would suggest that *tamamushi-iro-no* has some positive connotations as well as negative ones.

Tamamushi is the name of a kind of insect; in English it would be called a *jewel beetle* or a *metallic wood-boring beetle*, and its scientific name is *Chrysochroa fulgidissima*, according to dictionaries. The word *iro* is equivalent to *color*, and *-no* is equivalent to the English *of*. Therefore, *tamamushi-iro-no* could literally be translated as *of the color of a jewel beetle*. This beetle has been considered to be a beautiful one in the long history of Japanese culture, which gives the word a positive connotation. As is well known, the color of the jewel beetle changes depending upon the perspective from which it is observed; this is the source of the metaphor of the adjective *tamamushi-iro-no*.

This exploration is an attempt to investigate the positive meanings of *tamamushi-iro-no* expressions through researching (a) their possible genesis, (b) the structure and meanings of these expressive acts, (c) a few examples, (d) the development of these expressions, (e) the passivity and activity in the expressions, (f) motives for using such expressions, (g) their function, (h) the relationship between phenomenology and *tamamushi-iro-no* expression, and, finally, (i) a few comments on English equivalents.

A Brief Personal History of the Interests in Tamamushi-iro-no Expressions

Once in a while—for brevity’s sake—let me hereafter designate a *tamamushi-iro-no* expression as a *tamamushi-iro* expression or, even simpler, as a *tama* expression.

In my personal history—I do not remember when exactly—I became aware of a few expressions encountered in daily life as *tama* expressions, expressions that are intendedly made ambiguous/equivocal. Once this happened, I had to become aware that there is a great deal of occasions, in daily life, in which we encounter *tama* expressions. I felt as if expressions I never dreamed of considering as *tama* before had suddenly begun to claim to be *tama* one after another. The ubiquity of *tama* expressions was discovered. However, and within my sense harmoniously with the general social common sense at that time, *tama* expressions were implicitly associated with a negative evaluation. Besides, I noticed that I myself sometimes made *tama* expressions in spite of my personal negative feeling against them. The noticed ubiquity, the negative feeling against them, and my own use of them created an unpleasant dissonance within myself. This dissonance urged me to find

some time to consider the whole situation around the meanings of tama expression. I also felt that there should be some positive meanings in these expressions, regardless of the pervasive negative meanings commonly attributed to them. The negative feelings around them would be: Tama expressions are not clear about what they intend to say; they are cheating people by making things intendedly ambiguous and avoiding to say things frankly and honestly; they are not straightforward and honest; they are cunning and wicked; they are means to please everybody—"Are you a friend or an enemy? Do be clear!"—; they are multivocal; they are against clearness, truthfulness, and strictness, which would be valued in Western/European cultures, and so on.

My question now has become to ask whether all tamamushi-iro-no expressions could be dispensed only with the widely, commonly, and generally accepted negative evaluations. Is there not any room for a positive evaluation of tamamushi-iro-no expression?

Generally Accepted Meanings as Defined in Dictionaries

Searching through Japanese dictionaries, explanations and definitions for a *tamamushi-iro-no expression* were found to be varied, but could be summarized as follows:

1. It is a metaphorical expression, distinct from the literal descriptive meaning of the beetle and that of this beetle's color.
2. Tama expression refers to *sentences and so on*, indicating that it refers mainly to sentences in linguistic form, but that it could possibly refer to other forms of expression as well.
3. A tama expression is an ambiguous/equivocal/multivocal expression, in the sense that it could be understood in any way and could be interpreted in various ways.
4. A tama expression is not only simply ambiguous and multivocal, but also consciously made to be so by the person who makes it. However, even when it is not clear whether conscious intent is involved, a tama expression is still tama so long as it is ambiguous and multivocal. This could be said because dictionaries differ in opinion as to whether or not active intent on the part of the expressing person is essential.
5. The ambiguity of a tama expression is also suggested to originate in the way it is received; this is observed in some dictionary explanations such as: "according to the way of looking or interpreting," and "according to

the ways of looking and perspectives.”

6. Points four and five above suggest that the emergence of tama expressions involve both the persons expressing it and the ones receiving it.
7. The examples used in dictionaries are: “This agreement is tamamushi-iro,” “a tamamushi-iro reply,” “the Prime Minister’s answer was tamamushi-iro.” From these popular examples, we gather that tama expressions are frequently used in political and social contexts, even though they are not necessarily limited to these contexts.
8. In the old dictionaries dealing with Ancient Japanese, no explanation of the metaphorical usage of *tamamushi-iro* is given in the sense that interests us here. Therefore, metaphorical usage may be recent—perhaps less than a hundred years old.
9. In one of the old dictionaries, the definition “a vulgar usage” was given. Therefore, at least at one point, the word *tamamushi-iro* could have been thus considered.
10. As mentioned earlier, the English words equivalent to *tamamushi-iro* seem to be only *ambiguous* and *equivocal* (or *multivocal*). These words are highly abstract and without positive implication when compared to the metaphorical expression *tamamushi-iro*. This is a point to be noticed.

Some Examples of Tamamushi-iro Expressions

Let me give you a few examples of tama expressions.

Firstly, as the representative of tama expressions, *silence* could be given. Regarding the phenomenon of silence, in-depth considerations have been given by Picard,³ Gadamer,⁴ and Dauenhauer.⁵ However, I would like to limit our considerations here to the meaning and structure of silence as a tamamushi-iro expression. Silence is not “nothing” and does not express nothing. However, silence, as an expression, allows—and urges—its receiver to find multiple understandings and interpretations to it. Silence assumes a meaning, when both the person keeping it and the other parties commonly understand that it could be broken. The meaning assumed by silence cannot help but be multivocal, thus silence takes the characteristics of tamamushi-iro expression. It is interesting to note that even when it is impossible for the person keeping silence to break it, this silence will have meaning only if its receiver believes that it could be broken at will. Furthermore, even if no one is

keeping silence, the silence will have meaning for its receiver only if this receiver believes someone is there and keeping silence. The meaning of silence cannot be but multivocal. We might here recall the saying: “No news is good news.”

Secondly, let me give the Japanese expression “*doumo...*” as an example. In this expression, the possibility is left of saying something more after the explicitly pronounced *doumo*. However, in fact, quite normally nothing is said after this *doumo*, and the meaning to be expressed is supposedly contained in the silent part following the word. This meaning is accepted by both parties as taken for granted, being commonly and adequately understood according to the social context in which “*doumo...*” is situated. Therefore, this word is very ambiguous in its meaning, but very convenient because of its very ambiguity. If we compare simple silence to silence after *doumo*, we notice that the latter is recognized as intended silence. In contrast, mere silence may evoke the nonexistence of the other or the inability of this person, supposedly in silence, to express something. Thus, the word *doumo* works to make the silence afterward rather conspicuous and recognizable, and so this silence will surely have some implicit meanings which are tamamushi-iro. However, they are not supposed to be taken to be so, because of the *taken-for-grantedness* of the commonly assumed meaning of silence in a given, commonly understood situation. Therefore, the word *doumo* has its meaning as an introducer to the silence that follows it, and the substantial meaning is supposed to be contained in the silence itself, which in turn is supposed to be commonly understood by those concerned in the given situation. In this sense, the word *doumo* is, in its essence, the ground for the figure *silence* and, therefore, is a kind of tamamushi-iro expression only because of this silence as a figure. The word *doumo* introduces the silence, the meaning of which is given implicitly, but not explicitly.

Third, the Japanese expression “*ikaganamonoka?*” could also be understood as a tamamushi-iro expression. “*Ikaganamonoka?*” takes the form of a question, asking, quite literally and simply, something like “how is it, do you think?” or “what do you think of it?” However, the question could mean to ask its receiver to think about it again, and, more implicitly, it is saying that the *it* in the question “what do you think of it?” is, if said explicitly, undesirable, inappropriate. It is also saying that the receiver of the question should understand the inappropriateness of *it* without being told so explicitly. Therefore, the question “what do you think of it?” as “*ikaganamonoka?*” expresses, is a polite, implicit criticism and blame. However, this expression, on the surface, remains a question, not an assertion, and so the person expressing the question takes no responsibility for criticizing or blaming. This question could sometimes sound like one is talking to oneself. The interpretation of the question as criticism or blame is totally left to the receiver or to the people around this receiver, in such a way that the one expressing the question can avoid being blamed for criticism. In this sense, this expression could be considered a variant of silence as tamamushi-iro expression.

Fourth, a tamamushi-iro expression is not limited to being linguistic, so long as it is ambiguous and multivocal. You could think of an ambiguous figure, such as the well-known Necker Cube, as a tamamushi-iro expression. This is because the Necker Cube could be perceived differently according to the adopted perspective. This situation was thoroughly explicated by Don Ihde in his *Experimental Phenomenology*.⁶

Fifth, let us think of the famous Zen drawing named “Square, Triangle, and Circle” by Zen Buddhist Sengai (1750-1837). Several interpretations of this drawing’s meanings have been offered. Among these are interpretations as simple as *square*, *triangle*, and *circle*, and *earth*, *fire*, and *water*, and some others have also been raised. What else could you think of?

Sixth, we can notice that any expression could be tamamushi-iro so long as it is ambiguous and multivocal. In this sense, we could say that *every expression has a possibility to become tamamushi-iro*. This is because any expression could be interpreted literally or metaphorically according to the perspective, understanding, and interpretation of its receiver. In fact, every expression is possibly interpreted both literally and metaphorically.

Finally, it must be noticed that multivocality occurs with every expression, at least on the receiver’s part, after the “hermeneutics of suspicion” by Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, according to Paul Ricoeur,⁷ appeared on the stage. After the receiver notices the multivocality of an expression, then its giver may also notice it and intendedly make use of it in following expressions.

One way to eliminate or decrease the multivocality of an expression is to negate the possible interpretations that are neither intended nor wanted. In this sense, as Spinoza stated, “determination is negation.” However, negation itself could also contain multivocality, thus multivocality cannot be perfectly eliminated. Thus, again, *every expression has a possibility to become tamamushi-iro*. This argument has positive significance in that it shows the universality of tamamushi-iro expression, but also has negative significance in that it allows its meaning and structure to become too diffuse and ambiguous. Therefore, let us limit ourselves here on the theme of typical tamamushi-iro expressions, rather than on the potential multivocality of any expression.

The Origin of an Expression’s Multivocality

When multivocality arises with respect to a particular expression, where does it originate?

First, we could seek this origin in the content of the expression and in the way it

was expressed. On the one hand, the confusion/ambiguity of what is expressed can result in multivocality, and on the other hand, the immaturity/clumsiness of how it is expressed can also result in multivocality. The contrast between an intended, sophisticated tamamushi-iro expression and an unintended, unsophisticated one is comparable to the contrast between a childlike drawing by the great master Picasso and a simple naïve childish drawing by an ordinary child.

Second, we could also seek this origin in the receiver's way of understanding/interpreting the expression. Just as the relationship between the profiles of a particular thing-object and the intentional object synthesized/constituted out of these profiles is not unequivocal, so would be the relationship between a linguistic expression and the content expressed by this expression. In other words, when given an expression, there always remains the possibility of multivocality regarding the content intended to be expressed, however hard the receiver may endeavor to restore the original content which belonged to the consciousness of the person who had made the expression. This origin for multivocality could be understood as derived from differences between the lived world of the expresser and that of the receiver, which would offer contexts for interpretation.

The expression's receiver has also the freedom of interpreting any linguistic expression as metaphoric, depending upon which subuniverse, of the multiple universes, this expression is situated in. Here, necessarily, is also the possibility of multivocality.

These are the origins of expressions' multivocality, even from the perspective of the "hermeneutics of recollection of meanings." In addition, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion would support further the possibility of multivocality of any expression, insofar as latent meanings may reside in any expression, hidden even from the very person expressing it. The origins of multivocality, detected by the hermeneutics of suspicion, would spread further beyond those recognized by the hermeneutics of recollection of meanings.

Furthermore, the multivocality of an expression could arise from the motives and desires of its receiver, in this person's perception and understanding of the expression.

The origin of multivocality is, therefore, equally multivocal.

Regarding the origins of multivocality in the understanding/interpreting of an expression by a third party (onlooker/observer), we could assume that these origins are basically the same as those in the case of the receiver, even though there could be minor additional changes.

The Structure and Meanings of Tamamushi-iro Expressive Acts

At this stage, I would like to propose a basic framework for considering and explicating the meaning of tamamushi-iro expressive acts. Four kinds of persons are to be considered in relation to a tamamushi-iro expression. First, the person making a tama expression; we may call this person an *expresser*, a *giver*, and/or a *creator*. Second, the one receiving the tama expression may be called the *receiver*. Third, we may think of the person who observes the event, process, or activity beginning from the giver's creation/expression to the receiver's picking up of the expression. We may call this observing person the *observer*, *looker-on*, or *viewer*. Fourth, we may think of the person who understands and interprets the whole event/process executed by the preceding three kinds of persons, while assimilating and dissimilating their perspectives. We may call this last person a *transcendental observer*. The writer of this paper supposedly takes the role of the fourth person, so to speak.

The tama expression is created by an event during which a certain expression which will or may eventually become a tama expression is expressed/created by the giver. However, we need to distinguish between *expression* (表現) and *flowing-out* (流露). An expression is created when the giver chooses to express/create it consciously, intendedly, and actively. However, let us say, flowing-out happens when the giver does not at all have the conscious intent to make the expression, but instead lets it flow out unconsciously, unintendedly, and passively. This distinction is only made regarding the giver. It is the distinction based on whether there was or was not, on the part of the giver, a conscious intent to make an expression. For example, suppose that a man was very angry at a lady, but chose not to express his anger toward her—instead he suppressed it. However, suppose further that regardless of his determination not to express his anger, he was trembling because of it and his trembling was clearly perceived, by at least one observer, as an indication of hidden anger. Then his trembling is, in our terms, the flowing-out of his anger, because this man did not consciously intend to express his anger with trembling; rather, he intended to suppress it but it flowed out against his intentions. However, the same flowing-out of trembling becomes an expression if and when this man notices his own trembling, and the others—for example, the observers—notice that his unconscious trembling is a flowing-out of anger, and the man consciously makes use of this trembling, this time as an expression of his anger—to communicate his anger to the receiver, even without expressing it in words. Naturally, expression and flowing-out could possibly coexist in a single expressive act.

The receiver attempts to receive the expression of the giver—as an expression—and also intends to receive the meaning as it is intended by the giver. However, the receiver may sometimes notice the possibility of meanings contained in the expression which are not intended by the giver. Here is the possible origin of tamamushi-iro expression. The receiver has difficulty to distinguish between those meanings intended by the giver and those not intended. Thus the receiver could

receive meanings unintended by the giver as intended. Here arises the possibility of misunderstanding. However, evidently, this possibility always does exist. Thus, it becomes clear that the birth of misunderstanding is closely related to the birth of tamamushi-iro expression. To exist as such, the multivocality of a tama expression must be perceived by both giver and receiver. Even when the giver expresses a tama expression, if all receivers receive the expression as having a single meaning, then the expression cannot function as such. In this sense, it is not so much the giver as the receiver who decides of the formation of a tama expression.

The third party (the observer/looker-on) could observe the whole process of formation and functioning of a tamamushi-iro expression with far less commitment to the situation than the giver or the receiver. This would give the observer the disadvantage of not knowing the situation as much as the giver or the receiver, but would also give this person the advantage of remaining free to imagine possible meanings to the expression. When the observer could explicate these possible meanings far better than the giver or the receiver, this observer may obtain the capacity of playing the role of a mediator or arbitrator between the two.

The fourth party (the transcendental observer) is the person who understands/interprets and explicates the meanings and structure of the whole situation, while both assimilating and dissimilating the experiences of the giver, the receiver, and the observer. The explication offered by the transcendental observer will help the future giver, receiver, and observer to live tamamushi-iro expressions more adequately and richly, and thus to live their worlds more affluently.

This whole process will repeat itself again and again, to further enrich the meanings and structures of tamamushi-iro expressions and acts in human worlds.

The Genesis of a Tamamushi-iro Expression: Silence and “Doumo...”

At least three cases of occurrence of tamamushi-iro expressive acts could be distinguished.

First is the case in which a non-tamamushi-iro expression is transformed into a tamamushi-iro expression. At the beginning, no one among the possible giver, receiver, and observer notices that a certain expression could be understood as tamamushi-iro; then someone notices that it could, and the non-tama expression becomes tama. This could be understood as a case of *tamamushi-iro transformation*—passing from an already existing non-tama expression into tama.

Second is the case of conscious and intended creation of a tama expression on the part of the giver. This could be called *the creation of a tamamushi-iro expression*. Along the stages of development of tama expression, this is a highly sophisticated

stage.

Third, if we limit ourselves to cases in which tama expressions are used, then we would point out that there are cases of conscious and purposeful use of tama expressions which are already commonly recognized. This is a stage of *habituation in the use of tama expressions*. The use of “*doumo...*” could be considered as belonging to this case.

Let us now consider the true natural genesis/birth of a tamamushi-iro expression. This refers to the first case above. For this, I will pick up the examples of silence and of the expression “*doumo...*”

Let me touch upon one point concerning the distinction and relationship between misunderstanding and the birth of a tamamushi-iro expression. Suppose that the receiver misunderstands the meaning of an expression as it is intended by the giver. What would the giver do with respect to this perceived misunderstanding? The giver may a) attempt to correct the misunderstanding by saying: “No, ...,” or b) leave the misunderstanding as it is, even though this giver, from his own perspective, views the receiver’s understanding as a misunderstanding. If the giver does not deny the receiver’s understanding (thus believing it to be a misunderstanding), then, at that very moment, the expression becomes tamamushi-iro. Thus, whether or not the giver explicitly denies the perceived misunderstanding of the receiver is decisive in whether the expression becomes tama or just remains a misunderstanding.

An insightful giver could exclude the possibility of misunderstanding by foreseeing the receiver’s possible misunderstandings and delimiting the potentially receivable meanings, and making the expression as least ambiguous and most univocal as possible. Polishing a paper would contain such a process of eliminating possible equivocality. Negating possible misunderstandings by the assumed receiver(s) would serve this purpose.

In this sense, the tamamushi-iro transformation of an expression may be understood as caused by the allowance and tolerance for misunderstandings. In other words, as long as the giver allows and tolerates misunderstanding by the receiver, the expression becomes transformed into a tama expression, consisting of at least two meanings: the intended meaning and the misunderstood meaning. The protest against misunderstanding, in this sense, could be considered as a polishing after public expression. The tama expression would never cease to be one, regardless of the giver’s protests. In that sense, through misunderstanding and protesting, a new, equivocal tamamushi-iro expression would turn out to be mis-invented, born, and discovered.

As an example, there is the expression of silence. Silence is the maximally

multivocal/ambiguous expression. The communality of a great variety of acts to be characterized as silence is found, from a certain perspective, in the act of *expressing nothing*. However, each silence can express a great variety of meanings according to the situation the silent person is in and the way in which this person is living the world. Silence as an expression does not betray the experience of the silent person. This is because this *something* the person expresses can betray the person's experience, whereas silence can never betray this experience, as long as it expresses nothing. Naturally, there are expressions that express the meanings of silence, such as a smiling face, an angry face, a weeping face, and so on. These expressions can betray the contents of the person's experience, in the case, for example, of a smiling face hiding deep sorrow, or a tranquil face suppressing burning anger. However, silence itself cannot betray the experience of the silent person, so long as it keeps itself silent.

A great variety of silences come to mind, with respect to their experiential contents. For example, we may think of a silence full of benevolence; a silence with malevolence; a silence lost with words, in deep sorrow; a silence with tenderness; a silence concentrating on a thought; and so on.

However, it is the receiver and the observer of this silence, but not its giver, who *read* the meanings of these silences. This reading is an extremely complex and difficult act, therefore the actual, particular reading reflects the capacity of the reader. Reading demands a deep understanding of the situation in which the silence is situated, of the lived world of the silent person, of the meaning of the situation in the lived world of the silent person, of the reading capacity of the receiver himself, and so on. In this situation, the possibility of misunderstanding becomes maximal. All of the reading is basically left to the receiver. Therefore, since silence is multivocal and the capacity of reading greatly varies among its receivers, silence tends to become intrinsically tamamushi-iro. In addition, if and when the giver notices this, it becomes possible to consciously and intendedly use silence as a tama expression. This means that while the giver keeps silence, he leaves the reading of its meanings to the receiver(s). Here, silence is born as a conscious, intended, and active tama expression.

Next, and for example, there is the Japanese expression "*doumo...*," introduced earlier. This expression is extremely multivocal. Furthermore, its meaning depends most directly upon the situation in which it is stated, and it is expected of the receiver to understand this meaning. Its proper understanding is left to the responsibility of the receiver. Therefore, if the receiver of this expression begins to get angry upon hearing it, in many cases people will judge that this person is wrong, rather than judging the giver in this way, because it is the receiver, who happened to understand the expression in such a way that he got angry, that is responsible for this understanding of the situation. The giver could say that he only expressed "*doumo...*" implicitly, with its multiple possible meanings, and that he did not at

all intend to give any such meanings as to cause the receiver's anger. In other words, the expression leaves the responsibility to the receiver as to what meaning is understood and to how it is understood. In this sense, this tamamushi-iro expression is similar to silence. However, "*doumo...*," as a tama expression, clearly expresses the will and intent of the giver to express something far greater than mere simple silence does; thus, we may say, it is a maximally effective expression in making the best use of silence's multivocality.

Now, let me attempt to make explicit, in words, the meanings of the expression "*doumo...*" as it is expressed in everyday situations.

When you say, in a cheerful voice, "*doumo...*" to a friend you met a few days before, the expression could mean: "Hi, how are you doing?" "How is everything with you?" "I am glad to see you again." Or: "Thanks for the other day." And so on.

When you greet the chief mourner at a funeral, in a low voice, with the expression "*doumo...*," this could mean: "I offer you my deepest sympathy." "I am also in my deep sorrow." "I have no words to say in my surprise and sorrow." "I deeply regret that we have lost your beloved one." And so on.

When you are in a situation where you should express your thanks to a person who has done something good to you, the expression could mean: "Thank you." "Thank you so much." "I am grateful to you." "I am too happy to express my thanks to you in words." And so on.

When receiving a gift from a favourable person, "*doumo...*" could mean: "I have no words to express my thanks for such a favour." "Thank you very much." "I am so happy to receive such a gift." And so on.

When you are going to pass in front of a person sitting on a sofa and the person has to move back a little, the expression could mean: "I am sorry to cause you trouble." "Thank you for letting me pass through." "I apologize for passing in front of you." "Thank you for drawing your feet back." And so on.

We could think of other meanings, in other possible situations. However, let me stop here. The expression "*doumo...*" is an introductory one which leads to other, more explicit expressions. It leaves the receiver with the task of reading the following silence's meanings. In this sense, it is a typical tamamushi-iro expression. Since the receiver reads, interprets, and/or gives meaning to the expression, at least at a surface level, there is no possibility of misunderstanding. If and when the giver expresses the intended meaning explicitly, then the receiver may find it different from what he actually understood. However, the giver says nothing, explicitly, after *doumo*, so that no misunderstanding may appear on the surface. Even when, from a

transcendental observer's perspective, there should be a serious misunderstanding, it does not appear on the surface and so no quarrel will follow. And the giver does not have to assume responsibility for misunderstandings regarding the meaning of the silence after *doumo*.

Here is hidden a known situation in Japan, where silence is sometimes recognized as expressing the heart beyond any words.

At any rate, even I, myself, as Japanese, am surprised to find out the multivocality and ambiguity of the Japanese expression "*doumo*..." It might be one of the most useful words to learn, at first, for a visitor to Japan. Depending on your intonation, "*doumo*..." could mean anything you want it to in expressing your heart.

The Development of a Tamamushi-iro Expression

Next, let me attempt to schematize the developmental stages of a tamamushi-iro expression. This is to imagine how tamamushi-iro expressive acts develop between persons, while assimilating and dissimilating the respective perspectives of the giver, the receiver, and the observer, and further adopting the perspective of the transcendental observer, as if in the role of a novel writer with free access to the multiple perspectives of all of his characters.

Now, let us designate the state of consciousness regarding a tamamushi-iro expression in the following manner: When the person is aware and conscious of an expression as being tamamushi-iro, the state of the person will be designated by 1, and when the person is neither aware nor conscious of an expression as being tama, his state will be designated by 0. In other words, the level of consciousness regarding the tamamushi-iro will be extremely simplified and represented as discrete and digital as are 1 or 0. Let us apply this way of representation to the respective levels of consciousness of the giver, the receiver, and the observer. The giver will be represented by X, the receiver by Y, and the observer by Z, and a value of 1 or 0 will be applied to each person, thus creating different situations. Therefore we will have the following eight cases of combinatorial states of consciousness regarding a tamamushi-iro expression:

Table 1

Combinatorial states of consciousness regarding a tamamushi-iro expression

Case	X	Y	Z
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	1
3	0	1	0
4	0	1	1
5	1	0	0
6	1	0	1
7	1	1	0
8	1	1	1

We do not have the space or the time to develop all of these cases in detail. Let me just briefly mention the meaning of each case:

1. In case 1, all three persons are naïve regarding a tama expression and no awareness or consciousness of it occur yet, in any of them. For instance, this case may concretely be imagined as when an infant, X, shows an expression. Then, infant Y receives it and infant Z observes the interaction between X and Y. There will easily occur a childish misunderstanding and a quarrel between X and Y, and Z will not know what to do with it.
2. Case 2 would occur when the observer, Z, is a keen child psychologist, aware of the possible multivocality in the naïve exchange of an expression between the infants, X and Y. Since both infants are unaware of the possibility of multivocality and, therefore, of misunderstanding, the observer, with flexibility and perspective, could take the role of mediating and arbitrating the quarrel between X and Y.
3. Case 3 would be the situation in which the receiver alone is aware of the possibility of an expression's multivocality. The receiver cannot rely upon the understanding of the giver or of the observer, and thus must cultivate insight into the possible multivocality of the expression in X and Z.
4. In case 4, the understanding of the possible multivocality is shared only between the receiver and the observer. We could imagine the situation as follows: Counselor Y, with the assistance of supervisor Z, attempts to understand the equivocal expression of a naïve client who has no idea whatsoever of the possible multivocality of his own expression.

In the cases following the fourth, the giver is aware and conscious of the possible multivocality of the expressions, including his own, and may make use of this possibility for his perceived interests.

5. In case 5, the giver alone is aware, whereas both receiver and observer are unaware and remain naïve. In this case, the giver could make the best use of the tama expression. Naturally, when neither receiver nor observer become aware, the effects of such an expression are negatively affected. Cases 6 and 7 are, possibly, to be also interpreted as such cases.
6. In case 6, both the giver and the observer are aware, whereas the receiver is naïve and unaware. Relationships between the three will change radically according to the perceived motives of the giver in giving the tama expression. This will be openly revealed when case 8 is reached; that is, either a burst of laughter, or suspicion and hatred among the three may result.
7. In case 7, only the observer is unaware. When he becomes aware, there will be a new discovery on his part and case 7 will be transformed into case 8. There is a possibility of leveling up the motives and the sophistication of the uses of tama expression, because of the joining of Z into the circle of X and Y, and of the changed perception of the relationships between the three.
8. Finally, in case 8, all three parties are well aware and conscious of the possibility of multivocality of an expression, and of the possible intended, conscious, and purposeful uses of tama expressions. This is the case where all three parties, X, Y, and Z, have reached the most sophisticated state regarding tama expressions. In this sense, of the eight cases, this would be the most complicated and interesting case to explicate. Let us consider an example: In a diplomatic negotiation between two countries, the two experienced and sophisticated diplomats, each one representing his country, attempt to cooperate in order to reach an agreement that will satisfy the following conditions:
 1. The agreement must satisfy the interests of one's own country, and will hopefully be welcomed or at least be accepted by this country's public opinion.
 2. The same will have to hold for the other negotiating country as well.

3. Both diplomats take conditions 1 and 2 into consideration and know that they are willing to cooperate on this project.
4. They have to reach an agreement within a limited period of time.

In this situation, both diplomats reach an agreement which satisfy all above conditions. The third party, an experienced and sophisticated diplomat from another country, comments on the agreement, saying that it is tamamushi-iro. This case could be considered as an example of a more general one where the tamamushi-iro expression satisfies both the receivers belonging to the giver's in-group (e.g., friends, allies, supporters, etc.) and those belonging to the giver's out-group (e.g., enemies, opponents, etc.).

The above is a rather static explication of the eight kinds of states. Now, we can move into an explication of dynamic, mutual transitions between these eight states. This would more appropriately be called the *development of tamamushi-iro expressions*.

These transitions can be illustrated in the following figure:

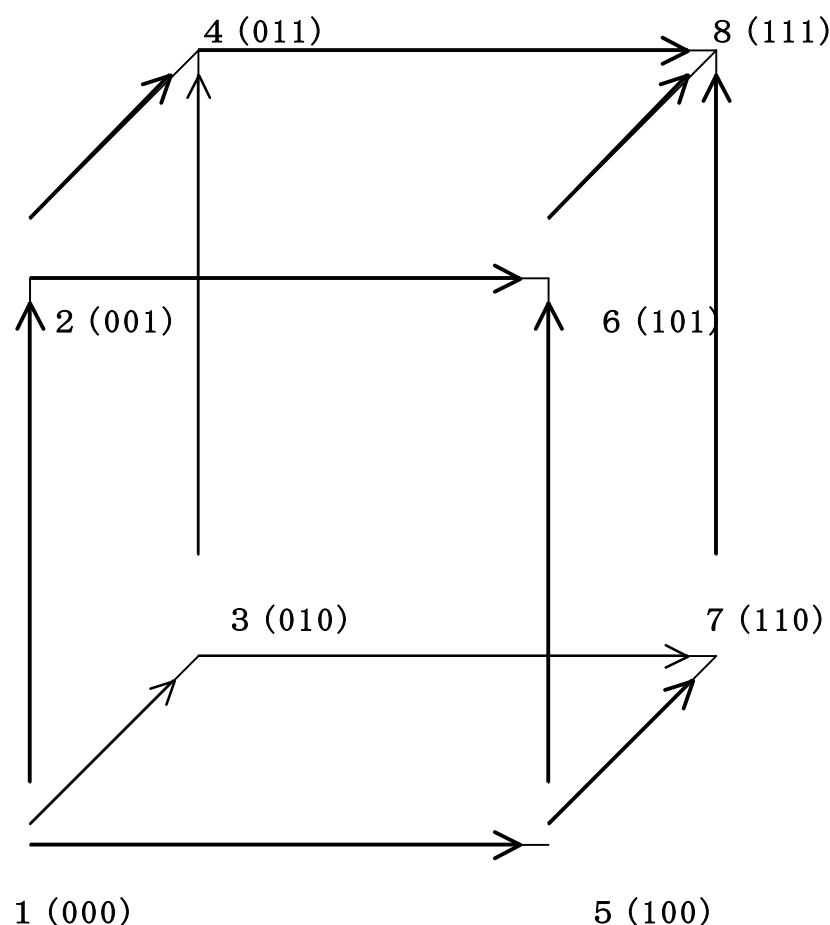


Figure 1. The cube of eight cases/corners, with 56 possible transitions.

It becomes clear that there are 56 transitions possible, if we choose to exclude the “identity transitions,” in which the transition is from one state to itself. A few comments are necessary. Obviously, the whole picture would be too complicated, and so every possible transition cannot be developed here. However, at least the traces of actual or possible transitions between states can now be drawn on this cube of eight cases/corners. If we suppose that, in normal cases, the awareness/consciousness of an expression as being tamamushi-iro will not disappear once it is so recognized, then all transitions are to be unidirectional, and transitions such as $2 \rightarrow 1$ or $3 \rightarrow 2$ will not occur. Therefore, of the 56, 28 possible transitions remain. On the other hand, bidirectional transitions could occur when we include pathological cases such as amnesia or Alzheimer’s disease. The notation used here (1 or 0), with respect to a person (the giver, the receiver, or the observer), has been restricted to the awareness or consciousness regarding a particular tamamushi-iro expression. However, the use of this notation could be expanded to become applicable to the awareness or consciousness regarding the possibility of

tamamushi-iro expression in general. This situation is somewhat similar to that of the common notation used in mathematics' set theory—sometimes being applicable to both an element of a set and a set of elements.

The traces on this cube are not limited to 28 or 56 fixed transitions, but could be expanded to represent a series of transitions, thus symbolizing their schematic history. In other words, examples of such traces can be $1 \rightarrow 2 \rightarrow 4 \rightarrow 8$, or $1 \rightarrow 2$, and so on. These expansions of traces enable us to illustrate developmental change, mapped as a succession of arrows on our cube. By this simple expansion of the meanings of traces, the number of possible traces may increase somewhat beyond our instantaneous intuitive grasp, but still remains within the limit of finite possible traces on our cube. Let us just imagine a concrete case of development, corresponding to a trace of successive transitions.

At the very beginning, nobody is aware of the multivocality hidden in any expression whatsoever. X, Y, and Z are all unaware; this situation would be expressed as $(X, Y, Z = 0, 0, 0)$. From this state, a transitional trace, a history, gets started.

Let us think about the transition $1 \rightarrow 5$, i.e., the transition from $(0, 0, 0)$ to $(1, 0, 0)$. Suppose a certain person gave an expression: "*doumo...*," for instance. Suppose also that this giver, X, expressed this while intending to display the feeling of an excuse, of an apology, something like: "Excuse me, please." However, later, suppose that X found out that Y received "*doumo...*" as expressing the feeling of gratitude, as if "thank you so much" had been said. And so X asked Z, who was also sitting with Y, what Z thought of it, and discovered that Z took the message as meaning "excuse me, please." It is then that the giver, for the first time, became aware that "*doumo...*" could have both meanings: "Excuse me, please" and "thank you so much." After this has happened, the giver begins to consider the possible equivocality of the expression when using it. In addition to this, X may begin to become aware of the multivocality of many expressions, in just the same way as in the case of "*doumo...*" This process could be either gradual or sudden. Next comes the stage of purposefully, but passively making use of the multivocality of certain expressions. Not only the transition $1 \rightarrow 5$, but also transitions $5 \rightarrow 6$, $5 \rightarrow 7$, and $5 \rightarrow 8$, i.e., from $(1, 0, 0)$ to $(1, 0, 1)$, from $(1, 0, 0)$ to $(1, 1, 0)$, and from $(1, 0, 0)$ to $(1, 1, 1)$, will proceed in a similar manner.

The next stage is reached when the giver begins to make a conscious and active use of the possible multivocality of a tamamushi-iro expression. At this stage, X is expecting that the receivers, according to their multiple perspectives, will understand the same expression in multiple ways. The giver, knowing the situation mentioned above, makes a tama expression which will make it possible for the multiple receivers, in their own respective ways, to understand it in a way that is favourable to their own interests. In the most successful case, all the receivers will

accept the expression while understanding it as favourable to their own interests and views. This stage takes place when the giver creates such a situation by purposefully creating a tama expression, thus actualizing the situation.

The multiplicity of motives and desires to be fulfilled by the tama expression, on the receivers' part, can be seen as at least one reason for the emergence of the expression. Thus, the giver becomes aware of the multiplicity of motives and desires on the part of the receivers. Then appears the possibility that the giver comes not only to make the expression simply tamamushi-iro, but also to make it tamamushi-iro such as to satisfy the motives and desires of as many receivers as possible.

Evidently, the levels of sophistication of this possibility differ greatly, according to whether the situation is in the fifth case (1, 0, 0) or in eighth case (1, 1, 1). In the former case, both receiver(s) and observer(s) will be "deceived" by the giver. In the latter, all participants are aware of the possible multivocality of the tama expression, and all accept it and reciprocally approve their respective positions. As concrete examples, we can think of a tamamushi-iro agreement among highly sophisticated, expert diplomats, or a tamamushi-iro reply by a prime minister in a politically tense situation involving serious conflicts.

A late Japanese prime minister, Mr. Masayoshi Ohhira (1978-1980), was reputed, when he was young, for his fluent speech, which was of an extremely logical clarity. However, in his later years, as I remember it, after he took the position of prime minister of Japan, his clear and precise speech progressively lost of its sharpness, and in his replies to questions he was noticed to spend much time making use of ambiguous expressions such as: "Ah..., uh..." In my interpretation, this may have been a clever, or wise, use of tamamushi-iro expressions.

At this point, we should be able to acknowledge the possibility that tama expressions have an extremely wide range of social and human horizons. Such expressions tend to be created when the giver seeks for an expression which, from his perspective, will satisfy a great variety of receivers and observers, while anticipating a great variety of understandings and interpretations on their part, and which will also, simultaneously, suit his own perceived purposes.

Of course, the resulting variety of understandings and interpretations will often times go far beyond the giver's anticipation, in which case the giver will learn a lot and become increasingly sophisticated in creating more suitable tama expressions afterwards.

Passivity and Activity of a Tamamushi-iro Expression

In order to give an expression to a state of affairs, an idea, or an experience, one faces a variety of possibilities. Among the origins of this multiplicity are perspective, temporality, spatiality, sociality, historicity, individuality, corporality, and linguistic variety (national, class-influenced, generational, professional, secret languages, jargons, etc.). Phenomenology and hermeneutics may explicate the meanings and structure of this so produced and emerged variety of expressions, which would make it possible to also do something else. This *something else* is, in my own view, the reversal of the *explication/explicitation* that has been done to the variety of expressions, that is to say: the *implication*, to make a variety of expressions that make the explicit implicit back again. Underlying the creation of the most sophisticated and refined tamamushi-iro expression seems to be this process of implication. Not all tamamushi-iro expressions would presuppose the implication process, of course. As mentioned earlier, these expressions would range from the most naïve, simple ones, to the most refined, sophisticated ones, as all kinds of expressions do.

Among the activities of creation, by the giver, of tamamushi-iro expressions, it must be pointed out that there are both passive and active cases. On the passive pole, one finds cases where the giver never consciously or purposefully intends to give out a tamamushi-iro expression, but simply makes an expression and is surprised to find out, when it is pointed out by others, that it happened to be tamamushi-iro. On the other pole, the active one, there are cases where the giver makes its utmost effort to produce the most effective tamamushi-iro expression possible. The giver will carefully, consciously, purposefully, and actively take into consideration everything possible including perspective, lived worlds, and possible understandings and interpretations of the receiver(s) and observer(s). Finally, the giver succeeds to elicit these selected understandings and interpretations, which he had wanted. This case would be one we can call *out of conviction*. Every tamamushi-iro expression can be located between these two poles.

What would the giver in the passive pole do, when the others point out that the expression is working as tamamushi-iro? There would be at least two possible cases:

1. To confirm and make it more tamamushi-iro, the giver accepts the pointing out and yet leaves the expression as it is, or dyes it deeper into tamamushi-iro. The giver may have discovered that the tamamushi-iro had been unconsciously wanted.
2. To bleach the color and make it less tamamushi-iro, the giver displays effort to make the expression less or least tamamushi-iro.

The first case can be called *dyeing* and the second, *bleaching*, so to speak.

What would the giver on the active pole do, when the others point out that the expression is working as *tamamushi-iro*? The giver will not bleach it, but will dye it deeper. He may say that the expression was bleached, but having in fact dyed it deeper in order to make the expression more effective as *tamamushi-iro*.

Therefore, when the *tamamushi-iro* quality is pointed out, the next move on the part of the giver will show where the expression, between the passive and the active poles, was initially located.

The Possible Motives of Tamamushi-iro Expressions: Daijou and Shojou Motives

When I was attempting to classify the possible motives, according to their essence, of a giver making a *tamamushi-iro* expression, I hit upon the idea that the distinction between *Daijou* and *Shojou* motives would work here. As is widely known in Buddhism, there is a basic distinction between *Daijou* (i.e., Mahayana) and *Shojou* (i.e., Hinayana).

Shojou Buddhists ran for their own interests (to enlighten themselves) and tended to neglect the general public believers. Daijou Buddhists, on the other hand, not only wanted to be Buddha (to be enlightened) themselves but also emphasized the mercy to want to rescue and help all the general public believers be enlightened also.⁸

In other words, on one hand, a *tamamushi-iro* expression could be created out of selfish, egoistic motives, and, on the other, out of altruistic as well as selfish motives.

Selfish and egoistic motives can produce a *tamamushi-iro* expression, which would be the case that leads to the negative evaluation of its use in general. For example, a *tamamushi-iro* expression can be used to hide selfish motives, to turn the receiver's eyes away from points that are disadvantageous to the giver, to avoid to be cornered by making one's position clear to the receiver, to be liked by everyone concerned, to adopt please-everyone policies, and so on. The essential communality of all these cases is that the motive for creating the *tamamushi-iro* expression is concentrated solely on the satisfaction of the giver's egoistic and selfish motives.

However, use of *tamamushi-iro* expression does not at all have to be limited to *Shojou*, egoistic motives. It could also serve *Daijou*, altruistic motives, to enlighten others; this will be elaborated on shortly.

The point is that the motives for a tamamushi-iro expression could be either on the line of Shojou or on the line of Daijou. There should be a variety of levels regarding the motives, in this respect.

The Possible Functions of a Tamamushi-iro Expression

The possible functions of a tamamushi-iro expression cover much broader areas than those yet known to us, and actual motives will necessarily be limited to the known functions at this time.

Let us separate between motives and functions, and let us limit ourselves here to some of the possible functions that could be used for the purpose of Daijou motives. A function could turn into a motive only when the giver becomes aware and conscious of this function and adopts it as an actual motive. However, all possible functions will not necessarily transfer to motives. And not all possible functions are altruistic motives. We could point out the following examples of possible functions:

1. The tama expression can help avoid, at least temporarily, imposing unity upon diversity. In some cases, if an unequivocal expression of an agreement that should mediate serious trouble, conflict, and/or opposition between people is demanded, chances are that the multiplicity of those concerned will be forced into uniformity, which may eventually result in disaster. A tama expression inserted into such an agreement would make it possible to avoid, at least temporarily, serious, formidable confrontation that could result in disaster.
2. In other words, when those concerned with serious conflict and/or opposition between themselves cannot reach the *common sharing by insight* which should approve of diversity as it is, then a tama expression may make it possible for them, at least temporarily, to approve that they are in fact diverse, and reach reciprocal approval.
3. A tama expression offers room and time for those receivers involved in and concerned with serious conflict/opposition to think calmly about the situation at hand.
4. Due to its equivocality and ambiguity, a tama expression leads and encourages the receiver to think about the possible perspectives of the other receivers involved in the conflict and/or opposition.
5. A tama expression makes it possible to avoid the immediate and clear determination of either victory or defeat. It makes it possible to postpone, for a while, any clear conclusion. In a culture where face,

honor, and pride are most valued, the immediate determination of either victory or defeat may result in an issue of life or death. A tama expression postpones the possibility of such a final determination of the issue.

6. Even in a culture where face, honor, and pride are most valued, a tama expression could make the meanings of victory and defeat equivocal and multiple by inviting the people concerned to change the perspective from which they view the meaning of either victory or defeat.
7. A tama expression offers its receiver the opportunity to experience the gradual process of unfolding from one perspective to multiple perspectives. In that sense, it is a device that lets the receiver actively experience the process of discovering multiple perspectives.
8. A tama expression offers the receiver the opportunity to become aware of and enjoy the perspectives of others, and to open one's eyes to and enter actively the lived worlds of others.
9. A tama expression can offer the way to relief of serious conflicts and the way to harmonious peace. It helps those in conflict ignore minor differences, for the common good.
10. A tama expression helps us move from the unidimensional valuing of victory and defeat to their multidimensional and multiperspectival relativization. In Japan, an old proverb states: "To lose is to win."⁹ The atmosphere of a tama expression, as an equivocalization of victory and defeat, is implied in this proverb.
11. A tama expression makes it possible to consider and honor both one's own face and the face of others. When maturity level is low, it allows self-satisfaction, and when maturity level is high, it allows reciprocal consideration of another's positions, multiperspectivity, relativization, and ambiguity regarding truth, goodness, beauty, right and wrong, merit and demerit, and so on. The full development of this issue would perhaps require many volumes.
12. A tama expression helps its receiver know himself/herself, allowing the comparison of one's own reading with others'. Like a Rorschach test in E. Schachtel's sense, it could serve to help one know oneself by knowing one's own way of reading. Japanese master teacher Enosuke Ashida (1873-1951) once said: "To read is to read oneself."

We could continue even further, but let us stop here.

The possible functions of a tamamushi-iro expression are founded upon the multiplicity of human lived worlds, the diversity of human perspectives, the great variety and yet uniqueness of human existences, and the reciprocal approval of the essential diversity, the meaning of which would lead further beyond relativism and skepticism, to the ideas of phenomenology.

The Tamamushi-iro Expression and Phenomenology

It seems to me that the nature of tamamushi-iro expression has a close relationship with the essence of phenomenology.

Two Japanese philosophers, Seiji Takeda and Ken Nishi, have offered their own understanding of the essential significance of phenomenology, after having pointed out what they assert to be “worldwide misunderstandings of phenomenology.” In their view, the essence of phenomenology consists in taking up

the idea of terminating to consider the cognition of the world in general as the “subject-object” structure, and in initiating to consider it as the “belief-structure,” thus in radically transforming the concept of the “correct cognition,” that is the concept of the “truth.”¹⁰

[Then,] the world image in general of human existence has the essential structure consisting of the division of two domains, one in which common understanding can be reached and the other in which common understanding can never be reached. . . . When and if this fundamental structure becomes consciously acknowledged, . . . then, there appears the principle for the possibility of overcoming the conflicts of religions and ideologies, . . . that is, the principle of the “reciprocal/mutual approval” of the world views and value consciousness. . . . The principle to overcome the clashes and conflicts between/among different world views and senses of values is the only one. That is to “mutually/reciprocally approve” diverse world views and senses of values as indispensable and inevitable.¹¹

Maintaining this mutual/reciprocal approval becomes “possible only through the formation of rules.”¹²

Now, how could phenomenology contribute to this situation? It is by explicating the *conditions of belief formation* through phenomenological reduction, in order to clarify the essential reason of diversity/multiplicity of world views. Accordingly,

phenomenology was conceived as the essential principle to overcome serious conflicts and oppositions between world views and beliefs. Out of this fundamental motive appeared the basic plan to “explicate the ‘conditions and structure of belief formation,’” and, correspondingly, the method of phenomenological reduction was established.¹³

Briefly stated, Takeda’s and Nishi’s interpretation holds that phenomenology’s fundamental motive is to overcome conflicts/oppositions between beliefs, and the radical rewriting and transformation of the *epistemological problem* is guided by this motive.

The same point of view has also been elaborated in Ken Nishi’s *Philosophical Thinking*,¹⁴ but this is not the place to introduce his thought.

Now, assuming this basic motive, we become aware, after explicating the nature of tamamushi-iro expression, that within a particular tama expression is hidden a motive for overcoming conflicts/oppositions between serious beliefs, and that there is possibility for fulfilling the motive in the possible functions of the tamamushi-iro expression.

I have come to be aware that, within a tamamushi-iro expression, which is a typical symbol of Japanese ambiguity/equivocality, have been hidden both the utility and the wisdom for overcoming conflicts/oppositions between beliefs, particularly so within its sophisticated forms.

Forms of refined, sophisticated tamamushi-iro expression will make reciprocal/mutual approval possible, through encouraging its receiver(s) to voluntarily approve the worlds of others, while taking necessary and sufficient time for this. These forms contain the possibility of inviting the receiver(s) to what Husserl called the “revitalization” of others’ cognition of the world and world views.

Phenomenology is a discipline to bring various conflicts into peace. It is wisdom to seek peaceful coexistence. World views belong to a domain where sharing is not possible. Phenomenology teaches us to distinguish between an essentially shareable domain and an unshareable one, and to acknowledge the diversity of world views as they are. If this is the case, then at least one way to actualize the basic motive may be the use of tama expression in its refined and sophisticated form. Thus appears the positive evaluation of *intended ambiguity*—to encourage every party to take time in thinking about the perspectives of others.

Phenomenology is usually claimed to be explicating the relationship between the implicit and the explicit. It makes it possible to render the explicit implicit, as well as the implicit explicit. If we understand *explication* in phenomenology as the

process of making the implicit explicit, then we may also understand the process of creating the refined and sophisticated tamamushi-iro expression as the process of making the explicit implicit. This process, as a reversal of explication, may be called *implicitation*. Phenomenology, in its capacity to explicate the implicit, will be able to exercise its power in the process of *implicitating* the explicit, while creating a refined, sophisticated tamamushi-iro expression. It is implicitation, but it is not simply equivocation; rather, we might call it “post-explication,” in the sense of “*post-freeing oneself out of*.” Tamamushi-iro expression needs post-phenomenology as well as phenomenology, both of which will naturally be integrated into a phenomenology at the next stage, with its implicitation as well as explication.

A tamamushi-iro expression, in its function, is very much like an illustrated Zen koan. An example, given earlier in this paper, is found in Sengai’s drawing. The Zen koan does not explicitly demonstrate the result of explication process to the Zen students, but it helps the students experience themselves the process of explication (or enlightenment), in that it is a device by which the students may experience, first-hand, the process of explicating the implicit. Considering this, a proverb occurred to my mind: “Heaven helps those who help themselves.” We might notice that this is very close to the thought contained in Heidegger’s *Fürsorge* (*caring for*).

The Japanese Word and the English Word for Tamamushi-iro

When you are asked about the English translation of the Japanese word *tamamushi-iro*, then you may have no word for it other than *ambiguous/equivocal*, as mentioned earlier. Let me give a few cursory comments on this point and ask these three following questions, as I believe this to be worthwhile:

First, let us comment on the value judgment of an expression being tamamushi-iro. In Japan, such an expression is typically valued in a negative manner and is associated with a negative feeling. However, simultaneously, there is also a positive value and feeling for it. In Japan, *tamamushi*, the jewel beetle, has a positive connotation in itself. I now have a question: Is a positively valued feeling possible, in the English world, for an expression being ambiguous or equivocal? I, myself, not being a native speaker of English, am not qualified to make a judgment on this point, but I have a hunch that there would not be any positive value or feeling associated to ambiguity or equivocality. If this is the case, what is the meaning of this difference?

Second, the word *tamamushi-iro* is an extremely concrete metaphoric expression, and it expresses, in a much adequate and precise manner, the situation in which one’s view changes according to changing perspectives, whereas the words

ambiguous and *equivocal* seem to be most abstract when compared with *tamamushi-iro*. What does this difference mean, if it does mean something?

Third, we might be able to see the uniqueness of Japanese culture in directing our attention to insects, more precisely to the *tamamushi*, an insect that has been considered beautiful for a long time, in Japanese history. Is there any such symbolic and emotional attention, in Western culture, on the beauty of certain insects—of a metallic beetle, for example?

Conclusion: From Negative Criticism against the Tamamushi-iro to its Praise, and toward Balanced Insight

When I came back to Japan as a newly graduated PhD, after having studied in the United States, in 1967, I was said to have become Americanized. One conspicuous change regarded my general attitude, in that I tended to speak explicitly and wanted other Japanese to do the same. At that time, I first accepted this change of mine rather positively. It was a change of attitude from *tamamushi-iro* to “post-*tamamushi-iro*,” so to speak. However, this change was not welcomed by any of my family members or friends who believed to have known me in former days. And, with time passing, living in Japan again, I gradually returned to the former general attitude of *tamamushi-iro*, this without my own explicit awareness. It was the state of “post-post-*tamamushi-iro*,” so to speak. However, upon reflection, I feel that I had accepted it as my returning to the atmosphere of Japanese culture and society, rather than as a positive valuing of the atmosphere of being *tamamushi-iro*. However, I again found and noticed myself sometimes valuing some *tamamushi-iro* expressions in a positive manner. While I was unaware of it, I seemed to have been accustomed to using both ways: *tamamushi-iro* with the Japanese and post-*tamamushi-iro* with the Americans and Europeans. In a way, I had learned to switch between these two modes of being. I then became vaguely aware of these two different ways of living, in two different worlds. However, it seems to me that I had, basically, in the bottom of my heart, a negative feeling toward *tamamushi-iro* expressions. Lastly, the time had come for the affirmation and negation of *tamamushi-iro* expressions to begin to change in my lived world. I was encouraged to take time in considering this problem.

It is possible that the difference between the attitudes for and against *tamamushi-iro* expressions may not be so much the difference between West and East as that between the spirit of prose and the spirit of poem. Ryokan (1758-1831), a Japanese monk, left a haiku, the shortest form of poem in Japanese, as his death poem: “*Ura o mise omote o misete chiru momiji*,” which translates into English as: “Now it reveals its hidden side. And now the other—thus it falls, an autumn leaf.”¹⁵ This short haiku seems to have accomplished an excellent work of implicitation, the explication of which would require a volume describing the monk’s whole life and

views on life and on the world.

The implicit tamamushi-iro expression is a key for bringing conflicts to peace, for peace beyond struggles; in other words, a key for reciprocal/mutual approval of diverse world views. I began to see that the transition from negative criticism of tamamushi-iro to its positive praise will bring tolerance into the lived worlds of giver, receiver, and observer, and the same tolerance will bring along with it a balanced insight into the positive meanings of tamamushi-iro expression.

For you, a reader in the West, can your experience of reading this paper so far be described as a progress or a rite of passage? Or, was it rather tamamushi-iro?

For me, a writer in the East, the experience of writing this paper has unambiguously been a rite of passage, leading up to an enlightening discovery of the meanings and structure of tamamushi-iro expression.

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Endnotes

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