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## A Maple Leaf

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# A MAPLE LEAF

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Bernd and I first met in person in the summer of 1981 in Sonoma, California. Now, it was more than forty years ago. I was on my way back to Japan from Pittsburgh, where I had been affiliated for a year, starting in the summer of 1980, with the Psychology Department of Duquesne University as a visiting Fulbright Senior Researcher. However, in reality, I was just a novice eagerly wishing to familiarize myself with the basics of phenomenological psychology and phenomenology. At Duquesne, I was allowed to sit in on graduate courses in both psychology and philosophy, while staying as a visiting scholar at the Twin Tower, (the graduate dormitory).

Andy (Professor Amedeo Giorgi) kindly took on the responsibility of being the advisor for a visiting scholar (i.e., a middle-aged novice quasi-graduate student from Japan at Duquesne). After a fruitful year, Andy advised me to visit Professor Bernd Jager on my way back to Japan, and Bernd invited me to stay a night at his Sonoma home. There, I met Mrs. Jager, Shinko-san, and their son, Mr. David Jager, then a junior high school student. The next day, Andy joined us. The three of us went out together to walk around barefoot on the Pacific Ocean shore. We talked and talked about the future of psychology and phenomenology. We enjoyed a home dinner cooked by Shinko-san. David told us about his own experiences of being the son of a Dutch-origin father and a Japanese-origin mother and, at the same time, of being an American boy born and growing up in the United States. He told us how he loved Rachmaninoff and deeply impressed me with his refined family and cultural atmosphere.

The second time I visited Sonoma was just after the first Seattle International Human Science Research Conference (IHSRC) in 1988. At the conference, Bernd invited me to visit him again. He showed me around Sonoma State University and some nearby wineries with Shinko-san. In addition, she kindly took me to the Pacific Ocean to the site of the well-known movie *The Birds*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

Some years later, when Bernd and Shinko-san visited Japan, we had a humble yet memorable Japanese dinner together with my family. Bernd told us

the story of his boyhood experiences in the Netherlands under the Nazi occupation during World War II. At the University of Tokyo, Bernd gave his invited lecture, which was later developed into an original article.<sup>1</sup> Bernd allowed me to translate the article into Japanese and publish it in our Japanese Journal published in 1999.<sup>2</sup> In 2002, he encouraged me to contribute an article<sup>3</sup> to a special issue on psychology and literature for the *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*. Bernd was the guest editor.

Some years later, Bernd began to teach at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), so Bernd and Shinko-san moved from Sonoma to Montreal. I and my late wife, Koko (1937–2020), visited him in Montreal in 2004; it was just after the IHSRC at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. He took us round the city of Montreal and finally to the grave in which Shinko-san sleeps. Late in the evening, Bernd and Aki alone in his comfortable living room, he naturally assumed the role of a counselor for me by carefully listening to my story about the anguish that I was experiencing as the result of the betrayal of an old friend of mine.

Our personal exchanges thus continued. And, upon request, I contributed an article<sup>4</sup> to the *Collection du Cirp* in 2006 to honor Bernd. I was also invited to contribute an article<sup>5</sup> to the *Collection du Cirp* in 2010 in honor of Professor Amedeo P. Giorgi (Andy).

Last but not least, Bernd kindly contributed his heartfelt encouraging essay for me to the collection of poems and phrases to celebrate my retirement from academic activities at the age of seventy-five in 2010. The title of the collection was *A Maple Leaf: A Life*. 「もみじ：一つの生」.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bernd Jager, “From the Homestead to the City: Two Fundamental Concepts of Education,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 23, no. 2 (1992): 149–181.

<sup>2</sup> ベルト・ヤガー (1999) (吉田章宏訳)：自作農場から都市へ：教育の二つの基本概念 『学ぶと教えるの現象学研究 八』 編集発行 東京大学大学院教育学研究科学校教育開発コース (中田基昭) 1999年9月発行、1–33 (NB. 本稿は前記脚注1の論稿の邦訳)

<sup>3</sup> Akihiro Yoshida, “My Life in Psychology: Making a Place for Fiction in a World of Science,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 32, no. 2 (2001): 188–202.

<sup>4</sup> Akihiro Yoshida, “On Tamamushi-iro Expression: A Phenomenological Explication of Tamamushi-iro-no (Intendedly Ambiguous) Expressive Acts,” in *Essais de Psychologie Phenomenologique-Existentielle*, ed. Christian Thiboutot (Montreal: CIRP, 2006), 300–335, [phenomenologyblog.com/?p=1042](http://phenomenologyblog.com/?p=1042).

<sup>5</sup> Akihiro Yoshida, “A Phenomenological Explication of a Master Teacher’s Questioning Practices and Its Implications for the Explanation/Understanding Issue in Psychology as a Human Science,” in *The Redirection of Psychology: Essays in Honor of Amedeo P. Giorgi*, ed. Thomas F. Cloonan and Christian Thiboutot (Montreal: Interdisciplinary Circle of Phenomenological Research, 2010), 279–297.

<sup>6</sup> 吉田章宏. 『もみじ：一つの生』、一莖書房 (私家版) [Akihiro Yoshida, *A Maple Leaf: A Life*] (Tokyo: Ikkei Shobo, 2010), private edition.

In response to Bernd's 2010 essay, of course this time in 2023, I thought I should write my own new essay for Bernd. However, when I reread his thoughtful essay for my *A Maple Leaf*, I was inspired and moved to be deeply empathetic with him, and became aware that, frankly speaking, I would rather quote and introduce his essay in English to our readers. Yes! I should share it with our readers in order to help the readers know who Bernd is and how our friendship over forty years has been.

Bernd starts his essay for *A Maple Leaf* as follows:

I have many wonderful memories of our conversations over the many years that we have known each other. What always touched me and inspired me about you was that you never stopped looking for wisdom, even in such a highly unlikely place as modern academic psychology. Let me offer you my modest poem and express my sincerest wishes for a serene and thoughtful retirement from your academic duties.

And, he gave me the following considerate advice in a poetic form:

Dear Aki, Prince of Innocence  
 All your life you pursued Lady Wisdom, while you fought,  
 Sword in hand, the dragons of pretense and idolatry  
 In the corridors of academia  
 And the labyrinths of science.  
 Soon you will put down your sword,  
 And devote yourself to poetry.  
 It is only then that the Lady will come out of hiding  
 And softly sing to you the secrets of Kokoro.<sup>7</sup> –Bernd Jager

The 2010 collection title, *A Maple Leaf: A Life*, commemorates the following “Death Poem” by the Japanese Buddhist Ryokan:<sup>8</sup>

「うらをみせ おもてをみせて ちるもみじ  
 裏を見せ 表を見せて 散る紅葉 良寛」

One version of its English translation is: “Now it reveals its hidden side and now the other—thus it falls, an autumn leaf.”

Bernd seemed to like both the title and the poem by Ryokan. So, he voluntarily contributed his essay on the poem as follows:

<sup>7</sup> “Kokoro” is the Japanese word for “Heart, Mind, and Spirit” and, perhaps, “Psyche” and “Soul,” simultaneously all together.

<sup>8</sup> Joel Hoffman, *Japanese Death Poems: Written by Zen Monks and Haiku Poets on the Verge of Death* (North Clarendon, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1986).

I much liked the poem by Ryokan and the image he presents of the last phase of our life as an autumn leaf slowly drifting downward from the crown of a tree. The poem makes us follow the downward path of the leaf that begins the moment it detaches itself from the sturdy and resisting branches of the tree and abandons itself to the wind. In its downward course the leaf is never a mere passive victim of gravitational forces. She presents herself instead as an elegant artist, dressed in a colorful costume, who performs graceful leaps and pirouettes as she dances herself to the ground. In this way she loses neither her dignity nor her beauty, nor her intimate awareness of surrounding world. The dying leaf refuses to be the victim of a faceless universe and she shows us that life still holds grace and beauty even as it finally falls to the ground. And even thereafter the dancing leaf's grace and beauty remain alive in all those who became enlightened when they saw her graceful drift. –Bernd Jager

A few days ago, Dr. Bilal Issa, the editor of this anthology, informed me that Bernd rests with his wife Shinko-san “under a Japanese maple tree and Japanese monoliths” at the Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery in Montreal.

I was told later that “the idea to plant a maple tree over what was at first” the grave of Shinko-san, and then years later also of Bernd, was the idea of their beloved son, Mr. David Jager, who is now “an arts and culture writer and a musician” in Manhattan, New York City.

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