

The (extra)ordinary (con)texts of beauty and be-ing

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This article aims to interrogate Japanese theorist Sōetsu Yanagi's philosophical writings on Zen Buddhism and Zen aesthetics (as expounded in his essays published in *The unknown craftsman: a Japanese insight into beauty*), as well as the being-historical writing of Martin Heidegger as encountered in his publication *Mindfulness*, in order to point out the similarities in thought expressed in these two publications with regard to the way in which the ordinary affords access to the extraordinary. In this way Heidegger's terms 'be-ing' and 'being' are related to Yanagi's framework of the relationship between 'wabi' and 'shibui'. In the process Heidegger's thought is hermeneutically interpreted in terms of Yanagi's explication of the Zen notion of non-dualist beauty.

Key words: beauty, craft, *ereignis*, Heidegger, Kizaemon tea bowl, *shibui*, *wabi*, Yanagi

Die (buiten)gewone (kon)tekste van skoonheid en syn

Hierdie artikel poog om die Japanese teoretikus Sōetsu Yanagi se beskrywing van Zen Boedisme en Zen aestetika (soos gevind in sy teks *The unknown craftsman: a Japanese insight into beauty*), sowel Martin Heidegger se syn-historiese skrywe *Mindfulness*, te ondersoek om sodoende ooreenkomste in hul denke oor die wyse waarop die buitengewone in die gewone aangetref kan word, uit te wys. Sodoende word Heidegger se terme 'be-ing' en 'being' vergelyk met Yanagi se beskrywing van 'wabi' en 'shibui'. Verder word Heidegger se denke hermeneuties geïnterpreteer in terme van die Zen benadering tot nie-dualistiese skoonheid soos deur Yanagi beskryf.

Slutelwoorde: *ereignis*, Heidegger, Kizaemon teekom, *shibui*, skoonheid, vleit, *wabi*, Yanagi

They did not see the extraordinary in the extraordinary. Therein lies their merit (Sōetsu Yanagi, *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight Into Beauty*).

The mastery of thinking lies in the reticence of the stillness, in freeing unto the simple, unto the unapparent 'effect' that comes from far away and is only mediated (Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness*).

The notion that the artefacts of various disciplines, in general, might be analysed in terms of their (extra)ordinary (con)texts implies that artefacts have about them elements of both the ordinary and the extraordinary, and that they can furthermore be thought of in terms of various contexts, for instance *as* texts. This notion has found a home in hermeneutic thought, especially in the works of twentieth century hermeneuts Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger and Hans-George Gadamer. In this branch of hermeneutic philosophy the interpretive faculty of the 'reader'/'viewer' is brought to bear on the text (as opposed to on the author of the text) and, more importantly, on the relationship between the text and the interpreter (Kruger 2008: 45). Apart from the interpretation of texts, artefacts can also be 'read' and interpreted, "as humanly created texts which speak" (Palmer in Kruger 2007: 5). In this article the artefacts which will be discussed in terms of their (extra)ordinary qualities, fall within the discipline of ceramics, and, more specifically, are implements used in the Japanese tea ceremony. In this regard, the writings of twentieth century Japanese aesthetic theorist Sōetsu Yanagi, as published in *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight Into Beauty*, are the primary consulted texts. Yanagi places the significance of craft within a Zen Buddhist framework. Furthermore, Yanagi's interpretation of the (extra)ordinary artefact is placed in direct relationship with hermeneut Martin Heidegger's explication of the significance of the ordinary, as clarified in *Mindfulness*, which in turn has elements which can be strongly related to Zen thought. These publications form the context by means of which to interpret and experience the extraordinary aspects of ordinary craft artefacts (Yanagi) as well as of ordinary 'objects' in general (Heidegger).

Yanagi's hermeneutic of Zen aesthetics

Japanese theorist Sōetsu Yanagi (1889-1961) founded the Japan Folk Craft Museum (the first of its kind anywhere), in Tokyo in 1936 and is regarded as the father of the Japanese craft movement. The museum was built to house Yanagi's extensive collection of anonymous craft objects of various kinds, owing to what Yanagi felt was the aesthetic and philosophical significance of craft objects, ordinarily disregarded as insignificant. Yanagi also published extensively on the crafts, particularly Korean and Japanese crafts, and formulated a word in order to enrich the discourse around craft: the word *mingei* is translatable as 'art of the people', and the museum was named *Nihon Mingei-kan*, "arts of the people returned to the people" (Yanagi 1982: 102).

The unknown craftsman: a Japanese insight into beauty, first published in English in 1972, consists of several essays on craft translated by English ceramist Bernard Leach (1887-1979).¹ The publication is, according to Japanese potter Shōji Hamada (in Yanagi 1982: 10) the "sutra of Oriental aesthetics", its content described as an attempt to clarify an Eastern perception of "significant loveliness" (Leach in Yanagi 1982: 87-8). Yanagi's can thus be described as a hermeneutic (interpretive) effort at clarifying the concepts surrounding the aesthetics of Zen Buddhism, specifically as found within the realm of craft.

Zen Buddhism has a convoluted provenance. Buddhism originated with the teachings of Siddharta Gautama, the historical Buddha, in India in the sixth century B.C.E. From there it migrated in successive waves between the first and seventh centuries of the Common Era to China via the Silk Route, where it absorbed Daoist elements to form (amongst other schools) Chan Buddhism.² Chan Buddhism (pronounced 'Zen' in Japanese) in its turn migrated to Japan from the sixth century of the Common Era, and by the eleventh century was an established practice giving birth to cultural phenomena such as the tea ceremony. Zen Buddhism can thus be seen as an amalgamation of original Hindu notions on enlightenment and reincarnation, the Buddhist reformation thereof, and mystical and esoteric Chinese Daoism. The main ethical and theoretical framework of Zen Buddhism revolves around the complex relationship between 'what is' (non-material reality), and 'what isn't' (illusion), or, in Heideggerian terms, between 'be-ing' (an authentic and originary state of consciousness) and being (material existence).

Briefly, the aim of Zen Buddhism (as of all Buddhist doctrines) is to reach a state of enlightenment, which can be defined as freedom from enthrallment by ego and material existence. Enthrallment, in turn, is seen to spring from the predilection to see and experience the world in terms of dualities, of which the dualities of self/other and of life/death are the greatest stumbling blocks to enlightenment. Yanagi (1982: 128) explains: "In Buddhist discipline ... the problem of primary importance as well as of greatest urgency, is how to eradicate man's two most representative forms of dualism – the opposition between life and death and the opposition between one's self and others; and every effort in Buddhism is directed to the solution to this problem". Zen, "for the lone seeker" (Yanagi 1982: 10), or *jiriki*, entails rigorous discipline in meditation in order to escape dualist thought. Meditation can take the form of sitting meditation, the contemplation of Buddhist *koans* which expressly deny and subvert the role of rational analysis, or the use and contemplation of certain objects, such as the various utensils of the tea ceremony, particularly the ceramic bowls used for the drinking of tea.

In this way crafts play a central role in the subversion of dualist thought, which is the main tenet of Yanagi's book on Japanese crafts. The connection between crafts and enlightenment is thus not arbitrary. Yanagi (1982: 108) states "The question of handcrafts is not simply technological or economic, but, basically, a spiritual question". Not only their use and contemplation, but also their production, is an expression of the "degree of enlightenment wherein infinity, however briefly, obliterates the minor self" (Leach in Yanagi 1982: 90). As regards the contemplation of

the relationship between ‘things’ and being, Heidegger expresses similar sentiments in his book *What is a Thing?* (1962), and opines that the “question concerning the character of the being of things” is completely enmeshed with the “question concerning being” (Heidegger 1985: 24). In this way, both Yanagi and Heidegger can be seen to offer an interpretation of the hermeneutic role of the ordinary object: the object leads the viewer to insights she or he would not have acquired otherwise, and in the Heideggerian sense, the object is thus a hermaneut, revealing, speaking, transforming.

Yanagi’s exegesis on aesthetics from a Zen perspective is centered on the notion of non-dualist beauty, or merely ‘beauty’ as he terms it. This specific kind of beauty, which one might also call ‘the beauty of the irregular’, was, according to Yanagi, first conceptualised as such by the original tea masters of sixteenth century Japan. In *The way of Tea* (1952) Yanagi (1982: 177) sings the praises of the early tea masters: “They saw. Before all else they saw. They were able to see. Ancient mysteries flew from the well-spring of this seeing ... Though everyone says he sees things, how few can see things as they are?” This conception (and appreciation) of beauty derives from a state of being freed from the illusion that the world is inceptually and essentially dualist. Thus this beauty derives from Buddha, or Buddhahood. In this case the term Buddha is not used to refer to a man, or to ‘a god’, to neither the created nor the creator, as such usage falls within the dualist framework of thought. Contrary to this, “Buddhahood is the ‘state’ in which that which creates and that which is created is undifferentiated ... to be in the Non-dual state forever is the meaning of the expression ‘entering into Nirvana’” (Yanagi 1982: 128). As rational thought is a primary instigator of the perception of dualism, an important strategy in the pursuit of enlightenment is to subvert and undermine the rational mind. This can be achieved through the contemplation of Buddhist *koans*: ‘sayings’ or ‘riddles’ which seem senseless and expressly can not be understood rationally. Yanagi (1982: 129) relates the tale of a Chinese Zen monk who drew a circle on the ground, and informed his disciple: “‘If you step into this circle, I will strike you. If you stand outside it, I will strike you just the same. What are you going to do?’”. The point of the *koan* is that the concepts ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are dualist in nature, and should be completely disregarded. Other *koans* serve to dismantle, or destroy, the chronological concept of time which gives rise to the illusion of a past, present and future. For example the question is asked: “‘What did your face look like before your parents were born?’” (Baggott 2005: 87). To attempt to solve the ‘riddle’ rationally would be to think in circles, whereas from a non-dualist point of view, no notions on ‘before’ or ‘after’ can be entertained. This dismantling of the ‘normal’ perception of time can be described as a ‘collapse’ of time (or of its perceived categories of past, present and future) into an ‘Eternal Now’, the conception (and experience) of which amounts to enlightenment, or *satori*, a flash of sudden insight. For Yanagi (1982: 131) “an object is only truly beautiful because it belongs to the Eternal Now”.

The craft object is seen to be ideally suited to ignite awareness of non-dualist beauty, as it is “free from impediment” and at the same time it houses an “invisible power [or] Buddha’s signature” (Yanagi 1982: 130, 136). The craft object is not made to astonish or to be ‘valuable’, ‘extraordinary’, or ‘impressive’. The craft object (particularly traditionally) is made quickly, repetitively, with no hesitation, anxiety or ambition, with total disengagement that can be described as a state of ‘no mind’, or *mushin* (Yanagi 1982: 112, 135). Yanagi (1982: 129) urges: “Let us look at a beautiful piece of pottery. Its provenance does not concern us. If the article is beautiful, we may say that it has achieved Buddhahood”. Kenneth Beittel, in *Zen and the art of pottery*, describes pottery made in such a state of mind, or ‘no-mind’, as having been made with “No rule ... complexity ... rank ... mind ... bottom ... hindrance ... [or] stirring” (Beittel 1989: 11). This beauty “is a kind of mystery”, always leaves “a little something ... unaccounted for” and “must have some room” in order to suggest the infinite (Yanagi 1982: 110, 121, 120). The

Zen notions of *sūnyatā*, (literally ‘zero-ness’) and *mu* (void) are strongly associated with this significance of the empty and the infinite, and are related to the term *wabi*.

Shibui and wabi

The kind of beauty Yanagi is at pains to explicate, and that is to be found in humble craft, is described in Japanese as *shibui*, a term not easily translated into English but which might be described as “‘austere’ ... ‘subdued’ ... ‘restrained’” (Yanagi 1982: 148). Yanagi (1982: 183) observes: “Many a term will serve to denote the secret of beauty, but this is the final word”. This notion of beauty has more recently been described (superficially) as ‘Zen style’, by which a kind of minimalism is implied. For Yanagi, *shibui* is less about style and more about spiritual practice. It is characterised stylistically by “simplicity in shape, tranquility of surface, mellow somberness of colouring [and] can be captured, even by inferior intellects” (Yanagi 1982: 184). The significant philosophical and spiritual implication of *shibusu* (noun) is that the appearance of *shibusu* points to something more intangible still, namely the extremely abstract concept of *wabi*. The difference between *shibui* and *wabi* is that *wabi* can not physically manifest as is: it is “formless” (Yanagi 1982: 184). *Shibui*, on the other hand is “communicable by matter” (ibid). If *wabi* relates to ‘*mu*’ or ‘void’, then *shibui* can be described as “the skin of *mu*” (Yanagi 1982: 124). It is its accessibility that makes it valuable, for it may be freely appreciated (more so in Japan than elsewhere), yet points the way toward the highly remote realm of *wabi*. ‘Reticence’ (as a withholding of ‘effect’) is an essential element of *shibui*, but Yanagi (1982: 148) notes that this reticence is not negative: it expresses “an infinite affirmation”. It is the same reticence that characterises much of Japanese poetry and dancing, as well as the *nanga* school of painting (or ‘ghost’ painting). Here vast areas of the page are left blank. Crucially “such space is not empty, but implies and suggests something immeasurably large” (Yanagi 1982: 149), or *wabi*, the inexpressible. *Wabi* may also be likened to the Biblical “Holy Poverty” (ibid). In the poetry of Zen monk Hsiang-yen (in Yanagi 1982: 150) *wabi* is described as follows:

Last year’s poverty was not yet true poverty.
This year’s poverty is at last true poverty.
Last year there was nowhere to place the gimlet.
This year the gimlet itself is gone.

This ‘poverty’ or *wabi* as relates to the Buddhist philosophy of ‘emptiness’ can be seen to correspond to Heidegger’s explication of the significance of ‘nothingness’, a concept explored below. Yanagi and Heidegger are in accord on the general inaccessibility of ‘nothingness’, or *wabi*. For Yanagi (1982: 184) “*wabi* is the objective for which we all strive ... But to expect its full comprehension by all people would be asking too much”. Similarly, Heidegger (2006: 28, 8) contrasts this ‘nothingness’, which is inaccessible, with material existence, which is “what is merely extant, easily possessed, familiar and used by everyone”.

Raku, Hakeme and Yi

Relating *wabi* and *shibui* (or the austere beauty that acts as the threshold of *wabi*) to ordinary objects, Yanagi comments on the Japanese development of Raku pottery in the sixteenth century. *Raku* ware (figure 1) was developed in order to encourage the ‘lack’ of control over process, as well as a certain kind of roughness and plainness, in accordance with the principles of *shibui*. To produce *Raku* (literally ‘enjoyment’ or ‘ease’), the ceramic object is heated to approximately 1000° Celsius often with a low firing glaze on the surface, and then removed with tongs and submerged into damp leaves, sawdust or even water. This places the ceramic vessel under utmost thermal strain, and cracks and irregularities emerge to show the drama of the process

and the fortuity of the outcome. Yet for Yanagi, this kind of ware is nonetheless flawed, because, though pushing the boundaries of technical control (in the sense of the forfeiting of control), it is nevertheless made with intension: the intention of creating seemingly spontaneous craft. It is thus not this Japanese derivation that Yanagi praises but, firstly, the original Korean ceramics which sparked the Japanese attempts at creating rough spontaneous ware, and, secondly, the early tea masters who were able to see the beauty of these Korean wares. He notes: “They were Japanese eyes who first saw this province” (Yanagi 1982:176).



Figure 1
Japanese tea bowl called *Fuji San*, by Hon'ami Koetsu, raku, 11.6 cm.
Early 17th century, Sakai family, Tokyo (Hayashiya 1974:24).

Korean ware from the *Yi* dynasty (1392-1910), in particular, is regarded as having been made without artifice or attachment to the extent that they become the truly ordinary within which the tea masters were able to discern the extraordinary. Works from the *Yi* dynasty were hardly noticed by anyone, as they were ordinary and affordable – “At one time they were the cheapest pottery in the world” (Yanagi 1982: 139) – whereas the work of the preceding *Koryo* dynasty (936-1392) was considered worthy of collecting, owing to its rarity and fame. Of *Yi* ware Yanagi (1982: 142) states:

They are relatively little known as compared with the earlier ... *Koryo* ... ware. They are more naïve ... simpler, rougher ... crude and primitive ... one may rightly call them childish – but ... they are beautiful just as they are. There is no trace of intellectual consciousness in them, no artfulness, no hesitation or perplexity.

Yi ware, falling well within the realm of ‘thusness’ and ‘Buddhahood’, “renders all critical comment meaningless” (Yanagi 1982: 142). Similarly, the discreet beauty of *Hakeme* ware, made in the *Yi* dynasty (figure 2), is “a kind of aesthetic *kōan*” (Yanagi 1982: 172), for to fully fathom its particular kind of beauty means to be liberated from thoughts relating to the ‘beautiful’, and the ‘ugly’. Yanagi was not blind to the fact that the making of such ware and its subsequent appreciation are not one and the same endeavor. He notes (1982: 172-3): “Of course, the talk here of *kōan* is the unhappy lot of us in our self-awareness; the Koreans concerned did their work in a state of mind blissfully innocent of the need, even, for such riddles. Questions such as the true nature of beauty were utterly remote from the Koreans of the day.”



Figure 2
***Hakeme* ware, Korean bowl, Yi dynasty, 17th century,**
17.1cm (diam) (Yanagi 1982: 14).

The Kizaemon teabowl

According to Yanagi (1982: 188), “Studying Zen through the intermediary of *things* is Tea” (emphasis added). The objects deemed most worthy of contemplation in the tea ceremony were selected by the early sixteenth century monks of tea, who were more perspicacious than the latter masters. These early monks “apprehended the profundity of normal things” (Yanagi 1982: 185). The objects selected by them were chosen from Chinese, Japanese and more particularly Korean wares, such as the *Yi* ware described above. Of the Korean *Yi* ware there were many varieties appreciated by the tea masters, such as *Ido*, *Goki* and *Totoya*, to name but three, and of the many varieties it is *Ido* ware which stands out, from the Zen Buddhist perspective inculcated by the tea monks, as most aesthetically satisfying. These works are hence described as *Ō Ido*, or ‘Great *Ido*’. (The origin of the term *Ido* is not known, but Yanagi (1982: 190) speculates that it is most likely a place name). Of the *Ō Ido* wares, in turn, the particularly fine pieces are called *meibutsu*, which means that they are registered as culturally significant artefacts. There are in existence 26 tea bowls registered as *meibutsu Ō Ido*. Yanagi (ibid) notes that among these, “the finest of them all ... is that known as *Kizaemon Ido*. This bowl is said to contain the essence of Tea”.

Ownership of the Kizaemon tea bowl can be traced back to the early 1600s. In the eighteenth century the Matsudaira family donated it to Kohō-an temple near Kyoto. Naturally, owing to its reputation as a consummate example of Zen beauty, Yanagi, in his efforts to come to grips with Eastern aesthetics from a Zen perspective, was compelled to seek out and scrutinise the bowl (figure 3). Of his efforts he remarks (Yanagi 1982: 191):

For a long time I had wished to see this Kizaemon bowl. I had expected to see that ‘essence of Tea’, the seeing eye of Tea masters, and to test my perception; for it is the embodiment in miniature of beauty, of the love of beauty, of the philosophy of beauty, and of the relationship of beauty and life. It was within box after box, five deep, buried in wool and wrapped in purple silk.



Figure 3
Korean tea bowl known as *Kizaemon Ido*,
***Yi* dynasty, 16th century, 8.8. cm (h) (Yanagi 1982: 11).**

Such immense expectation was bound to lead to disappointment. Yanagi (1982:191-192) continues:

When I saw it my heart fell. A good Tea-bowl yes, but how ordinary! ... It's just a Korean food bowl ... commonest crockery ... made by a poor man; an article without the flavour of personality ... the clay had been dug from the hill at the back of the house; the glaze was made with ash from the hearth ... The work had been fast, done with dirty hands; the throwing was slipshod ... The throwing room had been dark. The thrower could not read ... The people who did this were clumsy yokels ... it is enough to make one give up working as a potter.

Overcoming his tremendous disappointment, Yanagi eventually concedes that these very circumstances are what makes it the perfect vehicle for the contemplation of non-dualist beauty: in effect, there is no place for affectation, ideology, sentiment or attachment to lodge, and it is its ordinariness, its exceeding *shibui* quality and its seeming unloveliness, that make it so. The bowl is serenely poised to spark awareness and graciously “offers its silent answer to the seeker” (Yanagi 1982: 193).

To summarise, the notion of the (extra)ordinary (con)texts of the artifacts of the ceramic discipline is seamlessly illustrated in Yanagi's exegesis of the socio-spiritual significance of ordinary crafts, culminating the enlightening *satori*-inducing experience of seeing beauty in the most ordinary of vessels, such as the Kizaemon tea bowl. Furthermore it is the extraordinary vision of the early tea masters that makes such contemplation of the vessels possible at all. Yanagi (1982: 193) notes: “The Koreans laughed. That was to be expected, but both laughter and praise are right”.

The last sections of this paper constitute an attempt to bring Yanagi's hermeneutic of Eastern aesthetics, (as ‘read’ and experienced through the implements of the Zen tea ceremony) into relationship with Heidegger's hermeneutic of the extraordinary as hidden in the ordinary (or of the relationship between be-ing and being). In this way Heidegger's ‘reading’ of the ordinary (or being) is contextualised against Yanagi's theory on craft and its potential effect on perception and consciousness. In order to achieve this, Heidegger's text *Mindfulness (Besinnung)* is interpreted in terms of Zen Buddhist notions as encountered in Yanagi's text *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight Into Beauty*. Written in 1938-9, *Mindfulness* is Heidegger's second being-historical text. (The first, and more widely published being-historical work is known as *Being and Time*). Here, Heidegger's be-ing historical thought is itself subjected to a hermeneutic interpretation, whereby it is read in terms of the terminology employed by Yanagi to explain the principles of *shibui* and *wabi*, as relates to the ordinary and the extraordinary.

Heidegger's being-historical hermeneutic of be-ing and being

Yanagi explains the Japanese appreciation of crafts and the admiration of *shibui* and concomitant awareness of *wabi*, in terms of Zen theory and practice, which is centered on attempts at gaining liberation from dualist thought. All Zen practice can be demonstrated to revolve around attempts to transform human consciousness from being ensnared in duality, to an experience of undifferentiated 'oneness'. An attempt is made here to interpret Heidegger's *Mindfulness* in the Zen-theoretical terms explained by Yanagi.

To begin with Heidegger is at pains to point out the difference between what he calls metaphysical thought and being-historical thought, the latter being his own 'dissociating exposition' of metaphysical thought. Heidegger's use of the term 'history' (as encountered in the expression 'be-ing historical thought') needs clarification. For Heidegger 'history' is not the same as history. He uses the term 'history' to indicate what is commonly understood as history, as the study of past events. Heidegger is very critical of this conception of history, as it is closely related to the metaphysical framework of Western thought he is seeking to overcome. For Heidegger (2006: 206-7, 161) 'history' is "calculation according to progress and decline [and] evolves as the technicity of producing ... the past and present as they give rise to further plannings ... [it is] the arrangement of the present as object". In contrast to this Heidegger uses the un-apostrophised term, history, to refer to a specific mode of consciousness, and it gains a meaning quite the opposite to its normal interpretation, and closer to the Zen notion of enlightenment. Heidegger (2006: 357, 145-46) describes history as follows: "History [is] the onefold of the rupture between the completion and the beginning", not a "cacophony that reports the results of lived-experience" but "a trace left in the clearing of be-ing". The Dutch word '*Geschiedenis*' (literally a 'happening') seems closer to the meaning that Heidegger intends, as an 'event' (Heidegger 2006: 301, 160). Thus, for Heidegger (2006: 357) 'history' consists of events (plural), but history is a *unique* event experienced as "the suddenness of the rupture that occurs between the end and the beginning ... obtained only by a leap ... Here there is no escape into transition ... Suddenly and incomparably, the end and the beginning soar unto each other".

The 'historical' framework that Heidegger is critiquing, is for him an adjunct of metaphysical thought, which he means to overcome by a 'dissociating exposition'. This exposition is not an 'opposition', does not spring from an "urge of wanting to prove" or "the irreconcilability of standpoints" but is *transformation* of thinking itself (Heidegger 2006: 322). Mere opposition, for Heidegger, falls within the realm it wishes to destroy. Metaphysical thought, like machination, cannot be overcome by 'destruction' and refutation, because attack "immediately dislodges itself into the bondage by what is attacked" (Heidegger 2006:354). Rather, what is called for is a combination of a kind of resiliency, "sterner and more enduring than any 'attack'" (ibid), and '*Gelassenheit*', a certain detachment or 'letting things be'.

Heidegger uses the term metaphysical thought to indicate Western philosophy from the time of the ancient Greeks (notably Plato and Aristotle), up to the time in which *Mindfulness* was being written – ongoing Western thought, in other words. Heidegger (2006: 306) notes "Metaphysical [thought] ... has its 'method' ... One can interrogate [its] basic stances ... [it] thinks *from* beings ... past being ... back to beings". Heidegger's primary objection to metaphysical thought – which "appears with its self-certainty as a progression ... filled with triumphs and exploitations" (Heidegger 2006: 320) – is that it leads to an instrumentalist objectification of the world and of beings in the world, and ultimately of being itself (or, maintaining Heidegger's usage of the word, be-ing. For Heidegger the term 'be-ing' refers to authentic human existence, whereas the term 'being' refers to the material world and physical beings). Because of instrumental thought "'man' has become the subject for which the world ... has become a single object" (Heidegger 2006: 207). This instrumentality Heidegger refers to as 'machination', which means for Heidegger (2006: 12) "the accordance of everything with producibility ... [machination]

expands its sway as coercive force ... [is characterised by an] always transformable capability of subjugation that knows no discretion, and supercedes itself as it spreads". Machination is in league with rationalism's "calculative systematization" which appeals to the "simply accessible and intended by everyone ... autocratically sticks to itself ... entang[ling] itself more self seekingly in its own way of questioning", and values the 'effective', and the 'actual' "whose *ur-image* is seen in *matter*" (author's emphasis) (Heidegger 2006: 86, 99, 300, 110, 167).

The framework of machination, ordered and analysed by the "measures and pincers of beings" (Heidegger 2006: 81), is 'differentiation', by which is meant the objectifying 'othering' of every 'being' in terms of every other 'being'. 'Differentiation' corresponds to the Zen notion of duality. The easily accessed and explicable material world is described by Heidegger as a fallacy, in terms identical to the Zen interpretation of the physical world as a deceptive illusion of the 'real'. Heidegger (2006: 183) notes that "in manifold and even enormous variations all sorts of beings force themselves upon man, captivate him and lead him to unusual achievements without be-ing ever announcing itself in beings". Mastery, seen as the overcoming of machination, is also the means by which to rise above differentiation. It "prevails ... out of that simple superiority of the fundamental poverty that in order to be does not need something under itself or over against itself and has left behind every assessment in view of the 'colossal' and the 'tiny'" (Heidegger 2006: 170). Mastery can be likened to Buddhahood, a state of consciousness in which all opposition is nullified.

For Heidegger (2006: 324) differentiation is problematic, for as the stumbling block to authentic be-ing, it "makes enownment [*Ereignis*] inaccessible". Enownment can be explained as an 'owning of the self', a home-coming, a being's (or humankind's) claiming of its true nature, such as it is. This 'owning of the self' "has nothing in common with a seizing that seizes without negotiation" (Emad & Kalary in Heidegger 2006: xxiii). *Ereignis* is the reverse of falling prey to differentiation: it is to be 'gathered' "into the unity (*Einheit*), which does not at all mean indiscernability (*Einerlei*)" (Heidegger 2006: 325), and is argued here to correspond to the Zen notion of enlightenment, or 'reposing un-agitatedly in the now'. Heidegger (2006: 274) states: "Enownment is settlement". For Heidegger (2006: 220, 288) be-ing can only enown itself when "post-metaphysical man ... is sundered from all ensnarement by mere beings ... un-ownedness is grasped as ... being claimed by beings ... is the affirmation of machination". Enownment, "the *elusive* gathering midpoint" (Heidegger 2006:127) which is unity, can thus be described as the realisation of 'one-ment'. In Yanagi's (1982: 127-8) terminology, it is the word '*funi*' that denotes "Oneness", or "Non-dual Entirety", which is "the *inherent* nature of man", or his "homeland" (emphasis added), or the fulfillment of *Ereignis*.

'Clearing', 'ab-ground' and the 'between'

Having established a framework for relating Heidegger's be-ing historical terminology (namely machination, differentiation and *Ereignis*) to the key Zen precepts of duality and enlightenment, it is further possible to relate Heidegger's terms 'clearing', 'ab-ground' and 'in-between' to the Zen notion of *wabi*. Enownment (or enlightenment) is, in Heidegger's terminology, a "coming' into the clearing" (Heidegger 2006: 178). Clearing, for its part, is a "space that receives" (Heidegger 2006: 85), the supra-sensible site of be-ing. It is characterised as open and empty, but this emptiness "is not extant as emptiness into which ... subsequently beings always stream", thus not mere absence in the sense of the lack of presence (Heidegger 2006: 178, 217). It (the clearing) "points to something that can never be presented", is remote to the point of vanishing, and can only be traversed by be-ing, as be-ing is "the longest bridge of the 'between'" (Heidegger 2006: 224). The clearing is alternatively described as the t/here, which

indicates a free play and convergence of time/space. The t/here should not be misconstrued as a 'there' or a 'here' (a place or a sequence), but experienced as the site "for every possible 'where', 'here' and 'there' ... 'then' and 'when'" (Heidegger 2006: 289, 285). The clearing in its turn "indicates the ab-ground character of being" (Heidegger 2006: 275).

The ab-ground – "a ground that stays away as well as prevails" (Emad & Kalary in Heidegger 2006: xix) is the ineffable site of transformation, from being to be-ing. It is a site "unto which nothing has entry that returns as the same", the site of the 'crossing' "from the preeminence of beings ... into the stillness of the mastery of be-ing" (Heidegger 2006: 223). It can also be designated as Heidegger's 'in-between'. Heidegger (2006: 78, 93) in a repeated layering of terminology, speaks of the "'in-between' as the ab-ground ... which ... is the clearing for beings" and of "the ab-ground of the clearing ... understood as the glowing en-opening of the 'in-between'". The in-between, like the clearing and the ab-ground, is associated with 'nothingness' in the sense of 'not being': Heidegger (2006: 73) speaks of the "ab-ground dimension of the 'in-between' to which the 'not-character' by no means belongs as a lack or a limit, but as a distinction". True to its abstract dimension, the in-between "preserves its sway as incomparable and unapparent" (Heidegger 2006: 306).

To clarify, Heidegger's terms 'clearing', 'ab-ground', and 'in-between' are interpreted as designating the same realm that Yanagi addresses as *wabi*. This clearing, which is 'empty', or 'full of nothingness', can be described as the site of be-ing: "The truth of be-ing ... must ground itself in the 'never' and 'nowhere' of beings ... unto the siteless place and the hourless time of the struggle of en-ownment" (Heidegger 2006: 18). Accordingly "the truth of be-ing corresponds to ... refusal ... withdraws ... and gives a *hint* of itself" (emphasis added) (Heidegger 2006: 47-8). In the terminology employed by Yanagi, be-ing gives a 'hint' of itself through being, in the same way that *shibui* embodies the form of the formless.

This 'realm', (the 'clearing', 'ab-ground' or 'in-between', as 'nothing' or *wabi*) is easily dismissed, if it is cognised at all. Nor, in their obscurity, can the clearing (the site of be-ing) or *wabi* be directly approached, but can only (rarely) be discerned when "the '*between*' casts itself amid beings" (Heidegger 2006: 80). Rather than attempting to proceed directly toward be-ing, be-ing may be encountered through "accidental approaches and advances ... Because be-ing as refusal is beyond power and powerlessness ... man must come toward be-ing but not as though he could ever lay hold of be-ing and its truth" Heidegger (2006: 33, 80). This indicates an 'active passivity' where one can 'prepare', but never enforce or claim. According to Zen teaching, one of the obstacles to reaching enlightenment is to try too hard (Yanagi 1982: 145), as too much striving can lead to attachment, and thus achieve the opposite result to what is intended. Thus the chief impediment to 'becoming Buddha' is the perception that we 'are not Buddha' to begin with, and so we 'ride the ox whilst looking for the ox'. Yanagi (1982: 146) notes that "the moment during which I do nothing is the moment when tremendous activity takes place".

Addressing absence

It is according to Yanagi the early tea masters who were first able to fathom the existence of *wabi* through the ordinariness of clay utensils. Yanagi's 'tea masters' are interpreted here, in Heidegger's terminology, as the 'rare ones' whose exceptional perception and difficult task Heidegger describes at length. Heidegger has many terms for those of heightened perception whose charge it is to bring about the 'crossing', or radical transformation of consciousness (Yanagi's 'enlightenment'). The "poets and the thinkers", "those who ground – the founders ... have a burden to lift, whose weight escapes any and all numerical calculation [namely]

transforming the *sway* of be-ing” (Heidegger 2006: 204, 49). They are for Heidegger (2006: 204-205) the ‘alone ones’ and the ‘rare ones’. It is because of *their* resilience that “be-ing enters its ownmost” (Heidegger 2006: 204), that enlightenment is made possible. This they achieve by pointing the way towards be-ing, or ‘nothingness’, as it is in this realm that “be-ing ... hides itself ... in the simpleness that no one fathoms” (Heidegger 2006: 84). Here the correspondence between Heideggerian terms such as simpleness, remoteness, simple brightness, and fundamental poverty (Heidegger 2006: 84, 96, 90, 170) and the Zen Buddhist term *wabi* and what it denotes, can be established.

The ab-ground, in-between, or clearing is such that direct or quantitative descriptions thereof remain perennially inadequate. For Heidegger (2006: 280), “What these names name cannot be established by a ‘definition’ and arbitrarily addressed to everyone”. Heidegger, in his attempt to address notions on the clearing, ab-ground, and the ‘between’ employs a chanting *koan*-like language of his own by means of which he circumvents a metaphysical and rational interpretation of his be-ing historical framework. For instance, Heidegger (2006: 358) describes history as an ‘event’ where “‘what has already been’ and ‘what is futural’ and ‘arriving’ correspond to each other”. Of the complex relationship between abstract be-ing and concrete being, Heidegger (2006: 116) intones: “*Man as the guardian of the ‘in-between’* [is] not a guardian that is ‘prior to’, or ‘looks over’ the ‘in-between’, but one who is within the ‘in-between’ *while standing out of it*”. Be-ing and *wabi* remain ‘un-namable’ by virtue of their deeply unfathomable nature, such that every attempt to clarify them is obscuring. In this sense silence (though not the mere silence of wordlessness), is a more apt response, and ‘thinking-saying’ is “*not-saying*” (Heidegger 2006: 50, 81). In Yanagi’s terms, beauty, which is the reflection of *wabi*, “lives in that no-man’s-land where eloquence and silence are one”, and reticence is “infinite affirmation” (Yanagi 1982: 114, 148). Heidegger (2006: 289) posits: “How then should Da-sein [be-ing as enowning] ever be ‘explained’? It should not even be declared unexplainable”.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to convey the Zen notion of beauty as found in the text *The unknown craftsman: a Japanese insight into beauty*. Here Yanagi points out an appreciation of beauty that falls outside the realm of measurement and analysis (or beauty which is registered as the absence of ugliness), and describes a beauty that can only be grasped as a manifestation of *sūnyatā*, (‘zero-ness’), *funī* (‘Oneness’, or ‘Non-dual Entirety’), or more specifically *wabi*: radical absence. The term used to designate this beauty is ‘*shibui*’, an austere simplicity uniquely capable of affording a glimpse of *wabi*.

The realm of be-ing and *wabi* is so ineffable that they cannot be laid hold of, nor be addressed, and so render readiness and silence preferable to action and speech. Yet the mystery of be-ing and beauty are such that they *can* be accessed through the ordinary, do “not need anything unusual in order to be encountered”, can be experienced within “that which makes no impression and lacks effect” (Heidegger 2006: 45-6). For Heidegger (2006: 110) “[t]he unusualness of be-ing is never manifest in that which ... is solely unfamiliar and exceptional”. Yet, at the same time that it is for Yanagi only *certain kinds* of objects that have the potential to spark this transformation in consciousness, such as *par excellence* the Kizaemon tea bowl, Heidegger reserves no such distinction. For Heidegger ‘all things’, or whatever is related to beings (the material world) have the single virtue of harbouring (sheltering) a hint of be-ing, that is: the enowned nature of human beings. Thus whilst “be-ing is never an object”, Heidegger explains that “[w]hen the grounders of the abground – those who ‘go under’ – come, the

abground bears that which ... – as ‘work’, ‘deed’, ‘poetizing’, ‘thinking’, ‘gifting’, ‘building’, shelters-conceals the truth of be-ing in *things*” (emphasis added) (Heidegger 2006: 185, 213).

The extraordinary as sheltered within the ordinary is described in Zen Buddhist terminology as the relationship between *wabi* and *shibui*. This framework has been interpreted here to relate to the Heideggerian terms be-ing and being. For both authors it is the ordinary that provides access to the extraordinary (which seems to be a hopeful proposition), yet a tone of longing and nostalgia can be detected in their writings. Yanagi harks back to the first tea monks of the early sixteenth century, whose contribution to the deepening of aesthetics and perception he is at pains to emphasise. Yanagi (1982: 212) enthuses:

We would like to draw attention to the early men of Tea, such as those who are recognized as great masters, Murata Shukō, Taneko Jōō, Sen no Rikyū, and Sōami, and, somewhat later, Honami Kōetsu, too, may be included ... One may say that the exceptional love of crafts of the Japanese people has been mothered in [their] Way of Tea.

Yet for Yanagi, what came after is of great concern, as “from approximately the middle of the history of Tea onwards [the mid-sixteenth century] ... [it has] become a movement shunted on from behind. The intuitive creative process has dried up. Only formalism remains ... and now Tea has sunk into the mud of bad taste and cannot save itself” (Yanagi 1982: 212). Thus Yanagi feels the loss of an aesthetic revolution that cannot be repeated. In Heidegger a similar yearning can be discerned, along with a pathos for the ‘rare ones’, the ‘alone ones’, “the affirming ones [who] remain ... unrecognized and strange even among the likes of themselves” (Heidegger 2006: 100). Heidegger (2006: 214) inquires: “But will the grounders of the truth of be-ing come? No one knows. But we have an inkling that such groundership as preparedness for the thrust of be-ing should be prepared in advance and protected a long time”. The task seems daunting and interminable. Yet from a be-ing historical perspective, where time turns in on itself, Heidegger (2006: 245) observes: “In the meantime something else comes to pass occasionally, and the resolute individuals see the glowing hidden hearth-fire of all beings and intimate what is futural ... *has* already come”.

Notes

1. Leach in his lifetime was recognised as “the greatest living Western potter, ranking with ... Shoji Hamada, Kenkichi Tomimoto and Kanjiro Kawai as one of the four supreme masters of clay in modern times, East or West” (Art Pottery: the Seventh Kenzan online 1977) and has the singular achievement of being, as Kenzan the 7th, last in a line of revered Japanese potters dating back to sixteenth century Japanese master potter Ogata Kenzan (1663, 1743) (Pilcher online 2002).
2. Daoism, a philosophical school based on the text the *Dao de Jing* (ascribed to Lao Tse), is highly obscure in its teachings, its precepts meant to offer a ‘Way’ rather than a set doctrine. An important aspect of the ‘Way’ is the notion of action without action, by means of which ‘alignment’ with the Way is made possible. For this reason, ‘negative’ virtues are extolled in order to counteract the destructive effect of human action and focus on the material. Hence emptiness, simplicity, detachment and passivity are emphasised, as illustrated in the lines: “When there is abstinence from action, good order is universal ... The Tào is (like) the emptiness of a vessel; and in our employment of it we must be on our guard against all fullness ... The excellence ... of the mind is in abysmal stillness” (Lao Tze 1997: 3-4).

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