

Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language", in *On the Way to Language*, transl. by Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), p. 45 [1959].

J: The fact that you give ear to me, or better, to the probing intimations I propose, awakens in me the confidence to drop my hesitations which have so far kept me from answering your question.

I: You mean the question which word in your language speaks for what we Europeans call "language."

J: Up to this moment I have shied away from that word, because I must give a translation which makes our word for language look like a mere pictograph, to wit, something that belongs within the precincts of conceptual ideas; for European science and its philosophy try to grasp the nature of language only by way of concepts.

I: What is the Japanese word for "language"?

J: (after further hesitation) It is "*Koto ba*."

I: And what does that say?

J: *ba* means leaves, including and especially the leaves of a blossom—petals. Think of **cherry** blossoms or plum blossoms.

I: And what does *Koto* say?

J: This is the question most difficult to answer. But it is easier now to attempt an answer because we have ventured to explain *Iki*: the pure delight of the beckoning stillness. The breath of stillness that makes this beckoning delight come into its own is the reign under which that delight is made to come. But *Koto* always also names that which in the event gives delight, itself, that which uniquely in each unrepeatable moment comes to radiance in the fullness of its grace.

*I: Koto, then, would be the appropriating occurrence of the
lightening message of grace.*