

## THINKING IN TRANSITION: NISHIDA KITARŌ AND MARTIN HEIDEGGER

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The Europeans are inclined to regard their own present culture as the only highly developed one and the best. They tend to believe that other peoples, if they are to make progress in their development, must become just like themselves. I regard this as a petty conceit. The primordial form of historical culture is, in my view, richer.

Nishida Kitarō, 1937<sup>1</sup>

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It may seem remarkable that Heidegger's thought is prized in Japan because of, among other reasons, its significance for a possible evolution of a Japanese philosophy,<sup>2</sup> when one considers the few remarks of Heidegger about the "dialogue with the East Asian world" that is in his opinion "inevitable"—and not only for philosophy (*QT*, p. 158; *VA*, p. 43).<sup>3</sup> Heidegger regards philosophy as a specifically European phenomenon. Philosophy is for him always Occidental and European philosophy: "there is no other, neither a Chinese nor an Indian philosophy" (*WT*, p. 224; *WD*, p. 136). Consequently, for Heidegger the undertaking of a Japanese philosophy must remain suspect. He thus asks "whether it is necessary and justified for East Asians to chase after the European conceptual systems" (*WL*, p. 3; *US*, p. 87). To the Japanese philosophers he poses the question why they "did not call back to mind the venerable beginnings" of their "own thinking, instead of chasing ever more greedily after the latest novelties in European philosophy" (*WL*, p. 37; *US*, p. 131).

Naturally, Heidegger does not distinguish between European philosophy and East Asian traditions of thought in order to devalue the latter or to take them into account in a history of the spirit that, granted, arose in the East but is perfected in European philosophy. In a time in which Heidegger sees the philosophical tradition of the West culminating in the being of technology, in a time which, in the face of the "modern technicalization and industrialization of every continent" (*WL*, p. 3; *US*, p. 87), seems to him indicative of the "complete Europeanization of the earth and of man" (*WL*, p. 15; *US*, p. 103), Heidegger attempts rather with this demarcation to point to the originality and the peculiar possibilities of East Asian traditions of thought. Provided that one does not object to a European holding up in front of

Asians what is their own, this may make a certain sympathy on the part of the Asian side understandable. However, it remains surprising how Heidegger, who himself still belongs to one of those very “novelties in European philosophy” and who refers East Asian thinkers away from himself and his tradition to their own beginnings, would become the object of an intensive and broad reception in Japanese philosophical research, and thus even play the role of an essential starting point for the development of a Japanese philosophy<sup>4</sup> “which did not have its origin in Western-European philosophy, but emerges from the original ground of our own (East Asian) spiritual tradition.”<sup>5</sup> This is even more surprising as Heidegger’s philosophy never had as its theme a universal world history let alone one inclusive of East Asia, but rather limits itself to the reflection of one historical world, namely that of the Occidental “history of being”<sup>6</sup> and its metaphysics.

Perhaps the origin and particularity of the interest that Heidegger has prompted from the Japanese side will become clearer with a look at the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō. Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) is the initiator and hitherto the most brilliant “path clearer” of the attempt to bring an independent Japanese thought along a road proceeding from a genuine East Asian experience of reality and tradition to a critical confrontation with Western philosophy. The legacy of Nishida as the founder of a Japanese philosophy, visible among other accomplishments in his nineteen-volume *Collected Works* as well as in the thought of the Kyoto School<sup>7</sup> that he established, is to this day undisputed in Japan. “Nishida’s philosophy ... represents Japan’s first original formulation of a philosophical system.”<sup>8</sup> In the following, with an engaged presentation and outline of the thought of Heidegger and of Nishida, I wish to pursue the question of how far Nishida’s philosophy, along with its motivating experiences and thoughtful penetration, demonstrate a convergence or proximity to Heidegger’s thought. And thus I would like to suggest, on the basis of Nishida, an orientation and opening to Heidegger for further efforts concerning a genuinely Japanese philosophical thought.

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Nishida himself played hardly any role in the direct and immediate dissemination and reception of Heideggerian philosophy in Japan. Indeed, only a few publications of Heidegger’s works<sup>9</sup> are found in his library, but nothing can be said of any reference to Heidegger. Appreciation and critical distance are mixed in the few places where Nishida talks about Heidegger. “One can recognize that Heidegger has overcome Husserl’s standpoint of the immanence of consciousness to arrive at his own concrete standpoint. But this understanding inevitably sees the concrete from the abstract. In the long run this can be grasped as a scientific standpoint, but the way through which the abstract arrives at the concrete never escapes the confines of presentation and classification” (CW 6: 170). Nishida, who thoughtfully seeks to grasp reality as it is in its “concrete logic” (CW 9: 179), reproaches Heidegger, in his attempt to think being itself, for remaining stuck in a certain way in the subject-object scheme. “The world, as Heidegger considers it, is still a world that we view from

the outside; it is not the world in which we find ourselves" (CW 7 : 180). "Even Heidegger's ontology does not get beyond the standpoint of the subjective self" (CW 11 : 178).

Heidegger himself later concedes that his thought in *Being and Time* has the tendency to become "merely another entrenchment of subjectivity" (N IV, p. 141; N II, p. 194). In contrast he stresses: "The question concerning being as such stands outside the subject-object relation" (N IV, p. 142; N II, p. 195). In the critical position that Nishida and the later Heidegger take against *Being and Time*, a common feature of their thought emerges, which will be further clarified in light of the following remarks. In his Nietzsche lectures Heidegger puts it this way:

We actually think that a being becomes accessible when an "I" as subject represents an object. As if an open region within whose openness something is made accessible as object for a subject . . . did not already have to reign here as well! (N IV, p. 93; N II, p. 138)

A full ten years earlier (1926)<sup>10</sup> Nishida had written:

In order for consciousness and object to be able to relate to one another, there must be something that includes both within itself. There must be something like a place (*basho*) in which they can relate to one another. What is it that allows both to relate to one another? (CW 4 : 211)

The resemblance of both quotations, running through their structure of argumentation and intention behind their questions, is surprising when one considers that a direct influence appears to be excluded. Nishida and Heidegger both oppose the understanding of the relationship of reality and man in the framework of mere subject-object that is predominantly articulated in the modern European tradition. They seek to examine in its unchallenged normativity and certainty this interpretation of self and reality, which decisively characterizes the present world in the form of the modern sciences and technology. The concepts of both men point to the derivative-ness of the subjecthood of man as well as the objecthood of things from a prior openness of reality as a whole; that is to say, the subject-object relation is embedded in a deep structure embracing them and initially making their relation possible.

Heidegger considers this openness as the happening of unconcealment ( $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ ), occurring in the interrelation of being and man as that which emerges and is constituted as each being as a whole and in a historically and epochally determined manner. He considers it as that in which the horizons of meaning and the patterns of action are opened up, within which beings are relevant and accessible to man in a determinate respect and within which man can relate to them. Heidegger charges that in the tradition of philosophy up to the present, this originary happening of the opening and the giving of reality remains concealed. This is because it represents the origin and the ground of the possibility of determinate and constituted reality, as if it were a being—albeit the highest and most universal of beings. In this tradition the givenness and constitutedness of reality are reduced to a highest form of essence, an ultimate determining ground, always already given and present.

Through it all forms and determinations are thoroughly intelligible, so that no further constitution or determination appears to be necessary or possible. In going back to these representations that distorted the truth of being, Heidegger seeks to think the prevailing notions of givenness and constitutedness of reality as arising from out of a happening of the unfolding and arising of  $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ .

Nishida inquires into the place (of the occurrence) in which beings exist, each in a determinate form, for example as subject or as object, and in which they relate to one another. He also reflects on this with the consciousness that this question pursues a matter that European philosophy has hitherto not considered radically enough.<sup>11</sup> The European tradition thinks from its Greek beginnings “being as the ground of reality . . . , that is, the ground of reality as possessing form,” because it only values “the form-possessing and the determinate as reality” (CW 7:430). Beings *are* in each case only (*t*)*here*, determined as such and not another way; they *are* present in this and not in another form. The being of beings, that is, the constitution and determinateness of beings, thus always consists of a contrast and differentiation of beings from one another. All the demarcations and differentiations of beings from one another, through which beings are constituted and come to light, can, however, only open in a place that makes possible the “against” (*gegen*), where it itself is no longer “against” (*gegen*); that is, it is not something different from beings but rather includes within itself beings standing in contrast to it.

The genus concept, for example, is such a place, where the specific distinctions and differences of genus occur. The universal concept of genus, as the most universal form, is, however, always still determined through a difference from other forms and ultimately determined as being through difference with nonbeing, and is thus not the final comprehensive place of reality.<sup>12</sup> This final place, which includes reality, that is, beings as a whole, and first makes them possible as such (in their differentiation and constitution), is in every respect difficult to conceive because it does not allow itself to be determined through further identity and difference. It is not something different from reality, but it is also not identical to it. This place is nothing other than reality, but it is not reality. As the place of reality it has no place in reality, is not determinable within it. Viewed from reality it is nothingness—but also not a mere nothingness in contrast to being, but thoroughly nothing, an “absolute nothingness.”<sup>13</sup> Nishida conceives the “place of coming-to-be and passing away” (CW 4:219), in which all reality is, that is, all that is constituted and determined, as the “place of absolute nothingness.”<sup>14</sup>

A basic intention of Nishida’s philosophy is to show that reality is not grounded in an ultimate determination or highest form but rather is always found in this place of absolute nothingness, and therefore that reality opens into—or, more precisely, is—a “self-determination of the place of absolute nothingness,” and that it is thus always a “determination without determinant” (CW 8:11), a “form of the formless” (CW 4:6). The pressing question for Nishida in his concrete logic concerns how this “within one another” and “together” of the most extreme differentiatedness, determinacy, and constitution (life, being) on the one hand and of the ultimate indeterminacy, formlessness, and indifferentiatedness (death, nothingness) on the other hand,

as the “simultaneity” (*zugleich*) of which reality in each case is, are to be conceived. This question pervades Nishida’s thought from his first study, *A Study of the Good* (*Zen no kenkyū*) (1911), to his last uncompleted essay, *The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview* (*Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan*) (1945).<sup>15</sup> It drives his thought through numerous upheavals and new beginnings toward an elucidation and description of the historically real world as a world of “discontinuous continuity,” that is, “contradictory self-identity.”

### III

Terms like “contradictory self-identity” and “discontinuous continuity”—in general the attempt to think the “simultaneity” of what are apparently fully contradictory—are for European thought a presumptuous demand and thus questionable. European thought experienced the impossibility of such a “simultaneity” as the essential mark of all true reality and, in the principle of contradiction, made it into the highest law of all reflection on reality.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, Heidegger’s thought revolves around a similar “simultaneity” (*zugleich*) when he attempts to show the happening structure of reality (αληθεια) as a “within one another” (*ineinander*) and “at the same time” (*zugleich*) of “unconcealment” and “concealment,” “self-sending” and “self-withdrawing,” or “presencing” and “absencing.”<sup>17</sup> Heidegger’s attempts to bring this “and,” that is, “simultaneity,” into language, are numerous. In the following I wish to engage one of these attempts, which makes it possible to bring Heidegger’s thought into a fruitful tension with and proximity to Nishida’s thought. In a unique and fascinating interpretation of the Anaximander fragment,<sup>18</sup> Heidegger tries to grasp the “simultaneity” of presencing and absencing by describing how each and every being presences only as transitory and lingering awhile (*jeweilig*). Transitoriness and lingering awhile (*Jeweiligkeit*) means that a being is always only “between approach and withdrawal” (*EGT*, p. 41; *HW*, p. 350). Everything that exists presences in such a between; it is always a “transition from arrival to departure” (*EGT*, p. 45; *HW*, p. 354). The being has, as this between (*Zwischen*), as transition, its own while (*Weile*), in which it tarries (*weilt*), that is, is there. In the place of “between” and “transition,” Heidegger also speaks of “jointure” (*Fuge*):

Whatever lingers awhile comes to presence from the jointure (*Fuge*) between approach and withdrawal. It comes to presence in the ‘between’ of a twofold absence. (*EGT*, pp. 47–48; *HW*, p. 357)

The while apportioned in each case to what lingers rests in the jointure (*Fuge*) that joins (*verfügt*) what is present in the transition between twofold absence (arrival and departure). (*EGT*, p. 53; *HW*, p. 363)

The jointure is described by Heidegger as the open between, in which all beings presence in transition, and as lingering awhile. But this jointure is not something like a static theater stage, upon which the being enters for a while and then exits. A

jointure “is” only as the happening of the joining (*Fügung*)<sup>19</sup> of beings, which fit themselves together (*sich fügen*). Everything lingering is in each case only in a joining of what it already is—but every joining is a joining that conjoins lingering things. In Heidegger’s words: “The jointure (*Fuge*) belongs to whatever lingers awhile, which in turn belongs in the jointure” (*EGT*, p. 43; *HW*, p. 352). The question of which comes first here—the jointure into which the being first fits (*eingefügt*) or the being out of whose joining the jointure is constituted—is an empty question. This is presumably because the joining that lingers awhile, that is, the jointure itself, is a phenomenon of transition, a form of betweenness. The jointure only happens when the beings fit themselves together in their transitoriness and in their lingering awhile and thus “yield a fit” (*Fug geben*).

But what is the sense of this jointurehood (*Fügsamkeit*)?<sup>20</sup> Of what does its criterion consist? According to what has been stated above, it cannot lie in an abstract law standing above all beings, for example a highest conjoining (*Verfügung*) of a universally “destined transience” to which the being is subjugated. Rather we must ask: what happens when the being no longer fits (*fügt*) into its transitoriness, when dis-jointure (*Un-Fug*) wins the upper hand?

The disjunction (*Un-Fuge*) consists of the fact that whatever lingers awhile seeks to win for itself a while based solely on the model of continuance. (*EGT*, p. 43; *HW*, p. 351–352)

That which lingers perseveres in its presencing. In this way, it extricates itself from its transitory while. It strikes the willful pose of persistence, no longer concerning itself with whatever else is present. (*EGT*, p. 42; *HW*, p. 351)

Through this, everything that lingers awhile strikes a haughty pose toward every other of its kind. None heeds the lingering presence of the others. Whatever lingers awhile is inconsiderate toward others, each dominated by what is implied in its lingering presence, namely the craving to persist. (*EGT*, pp. 45–46; *HW*, p. 355)

This can go so far that the “beings which linger awhile . . . entirely dissipate themselves in the boundless conceit of aiming for a boldly insistent subsistence . . . [with] the compulsion to expel one another from what is presently present” (*EGT*, p. 47; *HW*, p. 356). The beings no longer fit together (*fügen sich*) in their transitoriness, but take themselves and their continuity [to be] of the utmost importance in an attempt to establish themselves against the other presences. And in this way the togetherness, that is, a “presencing to one another” (*EGT*, p. 56; *HW*, p. 365), of really different beings becomes impossible. Jointure (*Fuge*) and joining (*Fügung*) would have their significance in giving room for “lingering-with-one-another” (*EGT*, p. 40; *HW*, p. 349), in a “manifold of beings lingering awhile” (*EGT*, p. 47; *HW*, p. 356), that is, strictly speaking, as Heidegger stresses, not reducible to a general unity. The criterion of joining is the admittance of each being lingering awhile in a plural variety among other beings lingering awhile, which let one another be in a reciprocal concern and consideration, appreciation and attention. That is, they must fit (*fügen*) so that the mutual enjoinedness (*Eingefügtheit*) and dependence, in which everything lingering awhile finds itself, does not degenerate into a mere “conjoining

over" (*Verfügung über*) or "conjoinedness by" (*Verfügbarkeit von*), and each being can presence "to all others, each after its own fashion" (*EGT*, p. 37; *HW*, p. 346).

However, beings themselves give what is fit (*Fug*). . . . [A]s beings of such an essence, they also allow each respective being to be what it is of itself. . . . Every being mutually acknowledges every other. Each thus allows the other its appropriate regard. (*BC*, p. 102; *GB*, p. 119)

[B]eings which linger awhile let belong, one to the other: consideration with regard to one another. (*EGT*, p. 46; *HW*, p. 355)

Such a consideration, however, is only possible for a being that does not insist at any price on itself and the continuation of its form that lingers for a while. To be able to restrain oneself, to let others be, to give others room, does not happen at the behest of a subjugation suppressing one's own wishes under a moral imperative or result from a bitter compromise. Only a being that knows itself through others, which, as lingering awhile and transitory, that is, as "simultaneously" presencing and absencing, and thus also is able to experience its own retreat and absence (non-being) as a genuine manner of its selfhood, is able to take itself back, in order to let the other be, to make room for the other. Heidegger's remark that man "can be the shepherd of being only if he continues to remain the stand-in for the place of nothingness" (*EGT*, p. 36; *HW*, p. 344) is shaped by the background of this idea.

Now the European tradition, especially in its modern doctrines, has had and continues to have its difficulties with such self-restraint, with allowing the other to be in its own uniqueness, out of consideration. The essential feature of the metaphysical tradition instead appears to be that it thinks of reality always within the framework of a determinate universal removed from the happening of the joining (*Fügung*) of all beings to one another. It can allow the manifold singular beings only insofar as they fit themselves to (*sich fügen*) this universal. According to Heidegger, one reason for this is that in the history of this tradition, one being, man, increasingly struggles against its transitoriness, insists on its continuance, on its unbounded presence, and thus begins to establish itself against and eclipse other beings. Man would like to possess himself and reality as a whole outside the joining occurrence (*Fügungsgeschehens*), no longer sliced through by the "simultaneity" of presencing and absencing as merely lingering awhile and transitory, but rather in a lasting and consummated presence. As the modern subject, man in the end contemplates reality, as if he stood completely outside the reciprocal joining occurrence. From this standpoint, he experiences the being no longer as presencing in and out of the happening (*Geschehen*), in which all beings (even himself), as lingering awhile and transitory, are constituted in reciprocity and fit (*fügen*) one another, without being able to center themselves on a fixed point or fall back on some universal given.

What counts for him as real is that which fits (*fügt*) the highest and most universal being, because it is unconjoined (*unverfügten*) and not conjoinable (*unverfügbar*), that is, what can be arranged and fit into (*einfügen*) a representation. In the realm of the representation and conjuncture (*Vorstellungs- und Verfügungsbereich*)

of the subject (the realm of self-consciousness), beings are removed from the “simultaneity” of concealment and unconcealment; they are continuously unconcealed and present, but in a kind of presence whose only criterion is the significance and use of beings for the subject. Heidegger’s effort, through his interpretation of the history of metaphysics as a history of the forgottenness of being, as showing the “simultaneity” of presencing and absencing, of concealment and unconcealment, that is, lingering awhile and transience as the original layer of all reality—even that of the modern subject—can be understood as an attempt to disclose to the modern subject that has gotten out of joint a primordial understanding of self and world, and with that to prepare for the possibility of a transformation of the constitution of the world and of man.

Nishida’s elucidation of the primordial structure of reality as a discontinuous continuity and absolutely contradictory self-identity as well, while it arose in a completely different context (on this see section VI below), also moves within a similar tension of two different interpretations and manners of human selfhood. In his late philosophy (from about 1935 on) Nishida describes both of these modes as the “standpoint of the intellectual self” and the “standpoint of the acting self.” Nishida’s thought may be characterized as an attempt to philosophically clarify and set forth the standpoint of the acting self, which Nishida considers as the inevitable, primordial, and concrete way of realization of self and world in all their implications. In summary, Nishida thematizes the intellectual self as indeed possible and justified, but only simultaneous with the prejudice, and the limitation, that results from any abstraction, that is to say, from a one-sided view of the acting self.

#### IV

Nishida here certainly does not describe, as Heidegger does in his Anaximander Interpretation, the occurrence (*Geschehen*) of the world as a joining occurrence (*Függungsgeschehen*) of manifold beings, but rather as a “standing-opposite-to-one-another” (CW 8: 17), a “mutually-acting-upon-one-another” (CW 9: 147), or a “reciprocally-determining-one-another” (CW 8: 65) of countless individual beings. Nonetheless, overarching convergences may be discerned in view of the matter to be thought. The standpoint of the intellectual self corresponds to the modern subject, which imagines itself as independent and outside the world as the pervading conjunction (*Ineinanderverfügtseins*) and mutual fitting together (*Sichzueinanderfügens*) of all beings:

The standpoint of the intellectual self—even if one conceives this self as a universal self—is a standpoint that insists upon the independence of a *singular* self, a standpoint upon which the self finds itself outside the world and observes the world from the outside. That is, this standpoint is that of subjectivism and individualism. (CW 8: 53)

On the basis of this standpoint, the human self experiences itself as disjoined (*unverfügt*), that is, not determined by an other and conditioned by nothing. Its existence unfolds in an unrestricted self-determination (autonomy) and



unconditioned self-possession. The world is opened for this self in the continuity and identity of a pure self-mediation; that is, it is given to it and mediated through itself as the center of the world:

As long as one thinks that an individual, or, to be precise, our, self completely determines itself, one occupies the standpoint of the intellectual self. To consider the world from the standpoint of the self-mediation of a self means to consider it from the standpoint of the intellectual self. (CW 8: 52)

In short, this means that we represent to ourselves the world on a model of the individual self, that is, in the form of the self-determination of the self, and elevate this self into the world. (CW 8: 47)

The world becomes considered as a self-determination of a being completely removed from the occurrence of reciprocal determination, that is, as an absolute being. Thus, with the givenness of this being, reality as a whole is also already determined. It comes into question merely as “an object of cognition, that is, as a dead issue, as past” (CW 8: 52), and appears as something “simply given” (CW 9: 181).

On this basis Nishida insists that reality understood from this standpoint of the intellectual self is, however, only something “abstractly and conceptually represented” (CW 9: 181). Already the approach of an individual being in its pure self-determination alone for and through itself—even when it is a matter of the most universal and highest being—has entrapped itself in “object-logic” (CW 8: 275) and misses the “concrete logic” of reality. It is the self concretely, and that is, upon the standpoint of the acting self, so that self-determination never occurs in the empty space of naught, but rather is only possible in the refusal, reception, or transformation of an already preceding determination (through an other). “The self is itself through the fact that it is mediated through an other” (CW 8: 85–86). A self constitutes itself as singular and individual in each case only in contrast, difference, and opposition to other singular things:

It is not the case that there are initially independent singular things, which then connect. A singular thing is singular insofar as it stands against singular things. (CW 8: 65)

A singular thing is grounded in the reciprocal self-determinations of countless singular things. (CW 8: 56)

The insight formulated here into the determining relations of the coming-to-be of singulars and, that is, of differentiated and constituted reality in general, asserts the impossibility of an ultimate grounding for the determination and constitution of the world. The world cannot be conceived as a subsequent unification and fusion of singular beings, always already present, emerging from a plurality. This is because every singular is what it is only by virtue of the occurrence of world determination. However, this occurrence of world determination occurs not as the specially undifferentiated self-determination of an already fixed unity or highest universal, but rather as a reciprocal determination of countless singulars, truly distinct from one another, and not beings that are generalizable or classifiable into one unity:

The world can be thought of neither as the plurality of the one nor as the oneness of plurality. . . . As a substratum, it cannot be fundamentally thought of as an entire one nor as a singular many. (CW 9: 148)

The impossibility of a reduction of the world to a final (that is to say, initial) unity or plurality compels a contradictory description of the world. Nishida grasps the concrete world as a “world of the absolutely contradictory self-identity of the one and the many” (CW 9:152), within which is “the one, simultaneous<sup>21</sup> with the many; the many, simultaneous with the one” (CW 9:150). The world reveals such a double aspect, which thwarts every attempt to fixate it in an objectifying glance or to make a definitive assertion about it. As one and universal, the world embraces the many singulars, mediates them mutually among themselves, and thus offers to all singulars a place within which they stand in relation to one another, affect one another, are mutually constituted, and thus are first able to be as singulars. As the “placial mediation” (CW 8:41) of completely independent, contrasting, and thoroughly discontinuous singulars, this world, however, has no center; its unity and continuity are destroyed. Nishida thus describes it as the “discontinuously-continuously mediating” or as a “place of discontinuous continuity” or “contradictory self-identity.” This broken self-identity of the world means that the one world “has its identity in the many singulars” (CW 11:398). In other words, what the world is, the form of the world, is determined out of the reciprocally constituting occurrence of all beings and their connection of effects. Alternatively the continuous self-determination and self-constitution of singulars is none other than a self-determination and self-constitution of the placially mediating, the world. Applied to the relation of human being and world: “our life is a constitutive act in which the world constitutes itself” (CW 8: 27). “Our acting is a constitutive act of the historical world” (CW 8: 86).

The double meaning of the genitive in the previous sentence is thus to be read as an expression of the absolutely contradictory self-identical structure of all reality. If one thinks of man as the constituting subject of the world, that is to say, if one reduces the concrete givenness and presence of reality to the active achievement of man and takes this as the source of reality, one misses the fact that every human being is grounded in the occurrence that determines all beings, namely in the world as a whole. In turn, if one considers the individual human being as merely a passive, thoroughly shaped moment in the continuously passing process of the self-constitution of some final and true reality, [a process] of which only the merely passive intuition of reality retroactively remains from its constitution, then one overlooks the fact that the world as a whole in truth and in the end is only as the occurrence of the reciprocal determination of all singulars.

Both kinds of oversight have a common logic. They arise as an apprehension of reality that proceeds from the standpoint of the intellectual self. Originating from “above” and “beyond,” this view unfolds already in the distinction of subject and object, because to it [this view], reality also appears to be thoroughly pervaded by this distinction. Delving behind metaphysical representations that are centered on

substance and subject, through the filters of which reality appears to be given always in a fundamental distinction of cause and effect, subject and object, agent and patient, Nishida grasps the constitution and givenness-bestowing occurrence of reality in its concrete facticity. This is the standpoint of the acting self as an “acting intuition” (realizing the contradictory self-identical structure of reality):

Here is the acting of our self, precisely in that it is the acting of our self, the self-constitutive act of the world. When in this sense world and self act as one, I speak of an acting intuition. (CW 11 : 191)

With the term “acting intuition,” Nishida describes how the discontinuously continuous contradictory self-identical occurrence of world constitution is realized in the concrete actions of the human self. The word “action” plays upon the active and productive achievement of human beings, exerting an influence upon others, constituting and presenting reality, and thus making it visible. “That we act means . . . that things come to appear historically. This is why we see things through acting” (CW 8 : 65). However, in searching for the source or motive of this acting one does not arrive at the ultimate beginning of an achievement of the will of an autonomous subject nor at an ensemble of norms of action that have ultimate grounding. Asking about the “who” and the “why” of acting points rather to the fact that the acting self itself only exists in the occurrence of the reciprocal determination of all beings, thus a one constituted by other things, a place of the presence of countless foreign wills:

When one speaks of acting, one starts from the individual subject. But we do not act from outside the world. Rather we find ourselves, when acting, already within the midst of the world. Our acting is a being-acted. (CW 9 : 167)

The word “intuition” accentuates this aspect of human action. A reality, always already constituted and determined, is present and open to man. In an intuition, something becomes present, a field of vision opens, of which man is not the sole master. Reality penetrates man; things push, tempt, and move man to act. “One can say that we act out of seeing . . . and shape things by this seeing” (CW 9 : 168–169). The objects of human action and constitution have thus in an acting intuition simultaneously the rank of a constitutive subject. With each action things are seen. They emerge as demands, enticements, hindrances, distortions; they make determinate actions possible or impossible, and suggest others. In short: they determine in turn the constituting subject. The constituted constitutes its constitutor:

It is not simply that with each poiesis the I changes things, but also that things change the I. (CW 8 : 70)

What I myself have made is not only my possession but transcends [me] and in turn moves me. (CW 14 : 394)

We shape things. Although things are shaped by us, they are something independent of us and in turn shape us. (CW 9 : 153)

Each being exists as shaped and shaping in one, in the way of “subject-simultaneously-object, object-simultaneously-subject” (see CW 8 : 31). As states of

the “simultaneity” of self-contradiction, as an absolutely contradictory self-identity, no being, no form, has an enduring condition. “All things alter, pass away; nothing is eternal” (CW 11 : 408). “Whatever lives is something that dies. It is actually a contradiction, but our existence consists of this contradiction” (CW 11 : 396). However, while the being immediately transcends—Nishida says also that “life/death is accomplished” (CW 9 : 191)—it is in each case a site of upheaval, a transition, in which the occurrence of discontinuously continuous constitution, the arising and passing of reality, happens and continues. Everything that is found not only in movement, but is itself a “movement from a constituted to a constituting” (CW 10 : 237). Reality as a whole is, in a radical and fathomless sense, an open and creative “movement from form to form” (CW 9 : 157), in which “the world of the contradictory self-identity of the one and the many ... is completely groundless ... and endlessly constituted” (CW 11 : 400).

## V

Nishida and Heidegger are linked not only by the presentation of the unfixatable movement and fathomless inexhaustibility of historical reality. An attentive (parallel) reading of the above-mentioned engagement of a few essential topoi and thought patterns from Nishida’s late philosophy with, for example, Heidegger’s interpretation of Anaximander, will uncover numerous further parallels and commonalities. In my view, no artful construction is required to track down the proximity between the matter of Nishida’s thought and of Heideggerian thought. Is there not a correspondence between what Nishida conceives as “acting intuition” and what the early Heidegger calls *Dasein* and the late Heidegger dubs the “primordial relation of being and the human being” (see, e.g., *PM*, p. 308; *WM*, pp. 401–402)? Does not even Nishida’s idea of the “absolutely contradictory self-identity” mean the same as Heidegger’s question of “ontological difference,” that is, “difference as difference” (*ID[e]*, p. 47; *ID[g]*, p. 37).

This “same” of Nishida’s and Heidegger’s thought emerges here, however, in unbridgeably different forms. The basic concept of Nishida’s thought is “absolute nothingness” (*zettai mu*), while Heidegger’s thinking culminates in the question concerning the truth of being.<sup>22</sup> Does not the distance between “nothingness” and “being,” which cuts through the proximity between Nishida’s and Heidegger’s thinking, remove all questions of a convergence, every possibility of a comparison, from the table? Nishida’s thought and Heidegger’s thought surely do not allow for a simple parallelism and comparison. Each occupies its own place in different worlds, in varying languages and traditions of thought and life. And in addition each has a place within which both of these worlds, the East Asian and the European, their languages and experiences of reality, are continuously mediated with one another, allow themselves to be translated into one another without interruption. But this [latter] place is not always already and simply given. Presumably such a place would only be possible as a place of discontinuous continuity.

And does not this fact that it is possible to sense this shimmering “simultaneity” of proximity and distance between Heidegger and Nishida and to waver between the perception of difference as well as identity already mean—whether we like it or not—that we always already find ourselves within this discontinuously continuous place? If we follow Nishida’s idea, this place opens and unfolds its mediating achievement. However this happens, only there, where the individual world that lingers awhile, rather than determining itself and taking itself as the center of the place to displace (equivocate, conceive, understand) every other world into itself, transfers (*über-setzt*; [tran-slate]) itself into the other world, in a discontinuously continuous translation (*Übersetzung*). And through this transition it discovers itself in the other and the other in itself, both suffering a rupture and finding itself anew in this rupture. Put another way: there results a creative mediation—whether it is in mutual fitting together (*Sichzueinanderfügen*) or in reciprocal self-determination—when neither of these individual worlds insists on mere “continuity” or the “boundless stubbornness of expanding into the merely persisting continuation” of its own tradition and form. Rather, in awareness of its “absolutely contradictory self-identity” in regard to its own lingering awhile and transitoriness in the encounter of the dismantling of its own continuity, it risks its “identity” (*Selbst*) and its self-understanding and thus in sum its own unforeseeable transformation and new determination.

That one comes upon such an idea of the mode of (intercultural) mediation in Nishida and Heidegger rather than, for example, in Hegel or Kant is most likely due to the fact that Nishida’s and even Heidegger’s thought in each case emerges from the experience of a great historical upheaval. They are themselves a reflex and reflection of a historical transition. For Heidegger it is the experience of the atomic age in which he sees European modernity and the overall history of Western metaphysics consummate itself and thus come to an end. For Nishida it is the experience of the raging and thoroughgoing Westernization of Japan since the so-called “opening” of Japan (1868),<sup>23</sup> which brought with it a radical upheaval of the Japanese world and a new constitution of it that has yet to be completed.

## VI

Nishida’s philosophy itself is a genuine expression of this period of rupture, insofar as in it Japanese and East Asian traditions of thought and European philosophy are inseparably fused. To be sure, European conceptualizations, within which Nishida’s philosophy unfolds, to a great extent cover up its origin and deep-rootedness in the Far Eastern traditions of thought and life (Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism). By referring to a central, basic concept of the Buddhist tradition, I would like, at least briefly, to illustrate the continuity between this tradition and Nishida’s philosophy.

Buddhist doctrine describes the fundamental way of existence of all beings with the word *pratītyasamutpāda* (Sanskrit) or *engi* (Japanese).<sup>24</sup> The character *en* roughly means relation, dependence, connection; the sign *ki* or *gi* means origination. “*Engi*,” “dependent origination,” “relational emergence,” means that no being exists for itself; rather, only in relation to all others is it directly that which it is. One of the

most beautiful images for this experience of reality is the allegory of the net in the palace of the god Indra.<sup>25</sup> Into each knot of this net a gem is sewn. Since every gem is clear, that is, “empty” or “nothing,” all other gems are reflected in it, as it is also reflected in every other gem. Reality is this “inexhaustible, infinite mirroring,”<sup>26</sup> a coherence of effects in which everything is connected with everything else. The awareness of this reality is thematized in the Kegon Sūtra,<sup>27</sup> for example in the following sentences:

Beings never exist in themselves. While one always desires to seek after their substance in whatever manner, they still are never to be grasped. (*Kokuyaku daizōkyō* 5, 56/1, 149)

All life is impermanent. Every being is empty and without a self. (*Kokuyaku daizōkyō* 5, 57/1, 151)

All things originate through a coherence of effects. All things pass away through the coherence of effects. (*Kokuyaku daizōkyō* 5, 82/1, 224)

Producer and produced mediate one another and do not have their own essence. Producer and produced are never to be grasped for themselves however enthusiastically one may strive. This position of the ungraspability is directly the issue upon which all Buddhas are grounded. (*Kokuyaku daizōkyō* 5, 93/1, 230)

Undoubtedly, Nishida’s ideas of “acting intuition” and “absolutely contradictory self-identity” are an attempt not to conceptualize this “position of ungraspability” but rather to provide a philosophical demonstration and foundation. Even Nishida’s elucidation of reality as a reciprocal-acting-upon-one-another of all things mediated in the place of discontinuous continuity refers to the Buddhist insight of *engi*.

Of course, this Buddhist experience and its traditional interpretation find a thoroughly European expression in Nishida’s philosophy. In his thought Nishida practically never refers back to the old Buddhist texts or formulations; he depends almost exclusively upon the formulations of inquiries and the conceptualizations of European philosophy. For the most part, in his fundamental concepts, Nishida therefore does not use terms familiar in East Asian intellectual history, but rather uses technical terms, newly formulated or defined in the context of the reception of Western philosophy in Japan<sup>28</sup> (e.g., experience, mediation, subject, object, universal, singular, identity).<sup>29</sup> Because of this fact that Nishida developed his thought in the categories of the Western framework, in Japan his thought has often been felt to be foreign. The critic Hideo Kobayashi once characterized Nishida’s language even as “grotesque.”<sup>30</sup> This feeling of foreignness, which in Japan is equally a reason for the admiration as well as for the lack of comprehension of Nishida’s philosophy, is expressed in the fact that Nishida’s philosophy does not stand in seamless continuity with the Japanese tradition. His thought does not allow comprehension simply from out of it [the Japanese tradition].

On the other hand, Nishida’s philosophy militates against any understanding that—tempted by its compatibility and continuity with a language suggesting traditional European philosophy—would thematize and develop it exclusively within the

context of European philosophizing. Formulations such as “absolutely contradictory self-identity,” “subject simultaneously object,” and the like remain for the latter questionable and unsatisfactory. From the standpoint of the European, which proceeds from a (supposedly) self-evident logic, it appears that Nishida works with unproven assertions rather than “rationally and logically” thinking through and substantiating the matter. In short, the impression arises that this has nothing to do with “real” (*richtige*) philosophy. This impression might be correct if one limits the word “philosophy” to one type of ontotheological philosophizing, which has predominated in Europe up to now, but which at least since Nietzsche has nevertheless become questionable in this tradition. But still with this, nothing has yet been said about Nishida’s thought. Is it not possible to think “rationally and logically” but differently, in a world of another origin, to create out of other experiences of reality and traditions, to live in another language and its other logic, than has until now usually been predominant in Europe?

Both the opinion that Nishida’s thought is not “really” Japanese and also the accusation that it has nothing to do with “real” philosophy unquestioningly consider history and tradition in the horizon of continuity, as if they can even establish an essence or the correct identity of a particular tradition. With this acceptance of philosophy of history or, to be precise, substance-philosophy, however, one not only obstructs oneself from an understanding of the central ideas of Nishida but simultaneously becomes blind to the innermost uniqueness and source of Nishida’s thinking. The problems of understanding and the inadequacies that emerge when one considers Nishida’s thought merely as a philosophy of European extraction or merely as a traditional Japanese mode of thought rest on the fact that Nishida’s thought itself is a discontinuously continuous mediation of the East Asian tradition and European philosophy. Not only does Nishida reflect upon absolutely contradictory self-identity; his thought itself is such an absolutely contradictory self-identity, which constitutes and reconstitutes itself anew, so that “the subject constitutes the environment and the environment constitutes the subject” (*CW* 10 : 237). The subject in this case is Nishida himself, emerging from within the Japanese tradition, influenced by his Zen experience. During Nishida’s lifetime, Japan was “circumscribed” (*Umwelt*) by the Western world, that is to say, for Nishida the thinker, by Western philosophy as well. Insofar as Nishida (from the standpoint of the acting self) is intellectually involved in the occurrence of the reciprocal constitution of both traditions of thought, the place of discontinuous continuity and the transitory movement of all reality is not only the object of Nishida’s thought. His thought itself rather arises within this place and this transitory movement from form to form. *The thought of transition is itself realized in a transition of thought.*

## VII

In order to prevent a possible misunderstanding of the word “transition,” I would like again to refer to the discontinuously continuous structure of this transition. In

reference to Nishida's thought, transition does not mean a "way" from the Japanese tradition "toward" European philosophy, for, precisely as European philosophy is broken in this transition, the Japanese tradition also arrives at a new constitution. Thus, the transition is simultaneously seen as a return to the Japanese tradition—not, however, a return to a better, truer constitution of the essence of the Japanese tradition (as if it were uncovered initially through European philosophy), but to the origin of this transition, which itself takes up a form and is present only in the transition.

Heidegger is also aware of this discontinuously continuous structure of transition. "Transition (*Übergang*) is not progress, nor is it a dreamy voyage from the prior to the new. Transition (*Übergang*) is without transition (*Überganglose*)" (*N III*, p. 182; *N II*, p. 29). With this definition of the essence of transitions, Heidegger refers to the movement of his own thought. Heidegger's thought itself is transitioning, insofar as in thinking he attempts a "transition from representational thinking to a thinking that recalls (*das andenkende Denken*)" (*PM*, p. 289; *WM*, p. 375. See also *PLT*, p. 181; *VA*, p. 174<sup>31</sup>). The occasion for Heidegger's transitional thought is certainly not the clash of two different worlds of origin, but rather the realization and culmination of the representational thinking of European philosophy (metaphysics) in the enframing (*Gestell*) of modern technology, which Heidegger experienced as the devastation and destruction of the earth, and the "other commencement" (*N III*, p. 182; *N II* 29) that it necessitates. That is to say, the "other commencement" is a fundamentally different thinking, which perhaps could prepare a new determination and new constitution of the European world and its tradition.<sup>32</sup> The direction of this thrust of Heidegger's thought boldly comes to expression in his pronouncement of the "end of philosophy" and the requisite "task of thinking" (*TB*, p. 55–73; *SD*, p. 61–80): "But with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in transition to another beginning" (*EP* 96; *VA* 79). In our context it is noteworthy that the Heideggerian transition refers to the same discontinuously continuous structure as Nishida's transition. This can be seen particularly clearly in the various words through which Heidegger characterizes the relation of his thought to the previous tradition of metaphysics.

The term "transition" could be understood as a mere departure from metaphysics, that is, as a transition from the realm of metaphysics into another realm. In refutation of such a misunderstanding of the discontinuous, Heidegger thus also speaks of a "step back." The "step back" steps back from metaphysics (see *ID[e]*, p. 49; *ID[g]*, pp. 39–40) and preserves it, insofar as from this confrontation it makes it visible initially in its complete truth, and in this way brings it into its truth. This continuity is, however, only one side of the "step back," for in the "step back" the truth of metaphysics is directly uncovered in it, so that metaphysics—in short—is not the entire truth. In this way, the "step back" deconstructs (*destruiert*) metaphysics' claim to universal validity and is simultaneously a step out of metaphysics: "The step back moves out of metaphysics into the essential nature of metaphysics" (*ID[e]*, p. 51; *ID[g]*, p. 41); "The step back from the representational thinking of metaphysics does not reject such thinking" (*PLT*, p. 185; *VA*, p. 178). But does not this image of



stepping and going still stress continuity too much? For this reason Heidegger also speaks of the "leap of thinking": "Without a bridge, that is, without the steadiness of a progression, the leap brings thinking into another realm" (*PR*, p. 53; *SG*, p. 95); "The realm from which one leaps is the history of Western thinking" (*PR* 93; *SG* 157).

However, because only discontinuity becomes expressed in the discourse of the leap, Heidegger must at once provide a restriction: "The leap relinquishes this realm and nevertheless does not leave it behind. . . . The leap is essentially a backward-glancing leap" (*PR*, p. 68; *SG*, p. 119); "The leap of thinking does not leave behind it that from which it leaps; rather, it assimilates it in a more original fashion" (*PR*, p. 60; *SG*, p. 107). Even in the twofold discourse of the "adjusting to" (*Verwindung*) (continuous) as well as the "overcoming" (*Überwindung*) (discontinuous) of metaphysics, Heidegger seeks to indicate, in my opinion, the discontinuously continuous relationship of his thought to the tradition of metaphysics.<sup>33</sup> Not only can the phrase "discontinuous continuity" characterize the stance of Heideggerian thought toward metaphysics; it is simultaneously valid as a description and new formulation of the matter of Heideggerian thinking. The attempt not only to reverse the ideas of the continuity and identity of European metaphysics but to underscore as well a thinking of the "simultaneity" of presencing and absencing through the demonstration of the lingering awhile and transitioning of all beings can be interpreted as an attempt to uncover the discontinuously continuous structure of historical reality.<sup>34</sup>

One essential cause for the difficulties that German philosophical research has with Heidegger is this "discontinuous continuity" of Heidegger's philosophy, not only making any smooth connection with traditional philosophy impossible but also making it just as unfruitful to consider it merely as "unphilosophical." On the other hand, this "discontinuous continuity" is probably precisely the reason for the fascination that Heidegger elicits among Japanese thinkers. The proximity of Heidegger felt by the Japanese, and their interest in Heidegger, rests upon the approach that Heidegger's discontinuously continuous thinking signifies for a Japanese thinking that seeks to unfold itself by realizing its contradictory self-identity, even in the discontinuously continuous "between" of Japanese tradition and European philosophy. The fact that this accommodation of Heidegger was not explicitly intended at all, and that it does not have the structure of a West-to-East movement, mirroring Japanese endeavors (symmetry is a form of identity), but remains<sup>35</sup> completely within the horizon of its own origins, makes it perhaps even more fruitful. With his questions and insights emerging solely from his own inner problematization of the European tradition and world, there appear numerous associations and stimuli for a deeper reciprocal determination with a thinking of East Asian origin, in which what is East Asian can be clarified in the mode of European philosophy and what is European can be interpreted from the standpoint of the East Asian tradition and experience of reality as well.<sup>36</sup> Heidegger's thought is, thus, also one of the few (philosophical) European advances to the place in which East Asia and Europe can creatively encounter one another. In one of the few passages wherein Heidegger expresses himself explicitly in the direction of an intercultural conversation, he writes:

And here no prophetic gifts or gestures are needed in order to realize that planetary building will encounter issues to which those involved are today nowhere equal. This is equally true for both the language of Europe and that of East Asia, and is true above all for the realm of possible dialogue between them. Neither is able on its own to open or to found this realm. (*PM*, p. 321; *WM*, p. 418)

That neither of the two worlds can open this realm alone from out of itself means, in Nishida's terminology, nothing other than that this realm of their encounter can be opened only as a place of discontinuous continuity. Or, in other words, the encounter can succeed only insofar as both sides see their own identity clearly as an absolutely contradictory self-identical self; that is, they must become involved in the movement from form to form. That this has hitherto been not only recognized but also realized more (and almost exclusively) by the Japanese is regrettable. Is this perhaps because the European tradition, which is otherwise so proud of its universality and freedom, does not want to recognize "the freedom that frees us for the . . . jointure (*Gefüge*), playing through everything,<sup>37</sup> of never-resting transformation" (*PM*, p. 320; *WM*, p. 417)?

#### Notes

This essay is dedicated to Professor Alois Halder on his sixtieth birthday.

[The original essay appears in German in Hartmut Buchner, ed., *Japan und Heidegger* (Japan and Heidegger) (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1989), pp. 39–61. Translators' additions and notes are given in square brackets. The translators would like to thank Graham Parkes and Elmar Weinmayr for the various advice and suggestions made for improving the translation, and Joan Stambaugh for going over the final draft of this translation. The translators are responsible for any remaining errors. For readers who may be interested in pursuing this topic, the translators would also like to point out Weinmayr's *other* article (published in Japanese) on Heidegger and Nishida. In this second article on the two thinkers, Weinmayr focuses on their *differences*, especially on their intent and posture. See "Nishida to Heidegger—Hikakutetsugaku no kokoromi" (Nishida and Heidegger—An attempt at comparative philosophy), *Shisō*, November 1995, pp. 88–106.]

- 1 – Nishida is cited from *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* (Collected works of Nishida Kitarō) 19 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979), vol. 12, pp. 390–391. [Hereafter Nishida's *Collected Works* is cited as *CW*, followed by the volume and page numbers].
- 2 – See, for example, K. Tsujimura, in *Martin Heidegger im Gespräch* (Martin Heidegger in conversation), ed. R. Wisser (Freiburg/Munich: K. Alber, 1970), p. 27: "For me Heidegger is a kind of signpost . . . that can lead from Zen Buddhism to philosophy. More precisely, the way proceeds from Zen and passes over a reflection on Heidegger's thought to a possible Japanese philosophy. It is a necessary detour."

3 – [Heidegger's writings will follow extant English translations and be cited according to the following abbreviations:

- BC* *Basic Concepts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993);  
*EGT* *Early Greek Thinking* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1975);  
*EP* *The End of Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973);  
*ID[e]* *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969);  
*HNS* *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990);  
*N III* *Nietzsche III: The Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics* (San Francisco/New York: Harper & Row, 1987);  
*N IV* *Nietzsche IV: Nihilism* (San Francisco/New York: Harper & Row, 1982);  
*QT* *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977);  
*PLT* *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971);  
*PM* *Pathmarks* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998);  
*PR* *Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991);  
*TB* *On Time and Being* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1972);  
*WL* *On the Way to Language* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1971);  
*WT* *What Is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

Each reference to the English editions above will then be followed by reference to the original German editions according to the following abbreviations:

- GB* *Grundbegriffe*, in *Heidegger Gesamtausgabe* [division] II, [volume] 51 (Frankfurt/M.: V. Klostermann, 1981);  
*HW* *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1980);  
*ID[g]* *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1978);  
*N II* *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, n.d.);  
*SD* *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1976);  
*SG* *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1978);  
*US* *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1979);  
*VA* *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: G. Neske, 1978);  
*WD* *Was heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1973);  
*WM* *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt/M.: V. Klostermann, 1978).]

4 – And not only for a Japanese philosophy; similar attempts have also been made in China and Korea. For example, see Wing-cheuk Chan, *Heidegger and Chi-*

nese Philosophy (Taipei: Yeh-Yeh, 1986) or Hyong-kon Ko, *Sōn ūi sekye* (The World of Zen) (Seoul: Samyōngsa, 1977, T'aehaksa, 1971).

- 5 – K. Tsujimura, “Martin Heideggers Denken und die japanische Philosophie” (Martin Heidegger’s thought and Japanese philosophy), in *Martin Heidegger—Ansprachen zum 80. Geburtstag am 26. September 1969 in Meßkirch* (Messkirch: City of Messkirch, n.d. [1970]), vol. 11, pp. 160 ff. [This same article appears the volume *Japan und Heidegger* edited by Hartmut Buchner in which this present essay by Weinmayr appears. See pp. 159 ff.]
- 6 – [While some scholars translate *Sein* as “Being” with a capital “B,” we will render *Sein* as “being” with a small “b,” to avoid making *Sein* sound like some absolute or metaphysical principle that rules over other “beings” and is designated by a pronoun. Thus, quotations from extant translations of Heidegger will be modified accordingly.]
- 7 – On the Kyoto School see *Japanisches Denken: Die Philosophie der Kyōto-Schule* (Japanese thought: The philosophy of the Kyoto School), ed. R. Ōhashi (forthcoming). [This became published as *Die Philosophie der Kyōto-Schule: Texte und Einführung* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1990).]
- 8 – Nishitani Keiji, “Zen no kenkyū ni tsuite” (On A Study of the Good), in Nishida Kitarō, *Gendai Nihon shisō taikai* (Outline of modern Japanese thought), vol. 22, ed. Nishitani Keiji (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1970), pp. 7–64, at p. 9. [English: Nishitani Keiji, *Nishida Kitarō*, trans. Yamamoto Seisaku and James Heisig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 96.]
- 9 – These include *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (1916), *Sein und Zeit* (1927), and *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1929). Numerous markings in *Sein und Zeit* bear witness to his intensive treatment.
- 10 – [1924 is the year stated in the original German essay. The book was in fact published in 1926. This error was related to the translators by Professor Weinmayr.]
- 11 – Thus, Nishida turns, for example in the essay composed in 1926, “Torinokosaretaru ishiki no mondai” (The remaining problems of consciousness), to the fact that European philosophy has hitherto thematized merely “consciousness made conscious” but has never explicitly asked about the “consciousness that makes conscious” (CW 12 : 5–17).
- 12 – In regard to Plato, Nishida writes, for example: “In Plato’s philosophy the universal is considered to be objective reality. But Plato does not arrive at the idea that the universal, which really embraces all things in itself, must be the place that allows everything to come into being... Even the highest Idea is still always something merely determinate and particular” (CW 4 : 223–224).
- 13 – “Absolute nothingness” (*zettai mu*) is one of Nishida’s central concepts. If I am found to dissemble and avoid this word in what follows, it is because of the

way the German phrase “absolute nothingness” (*absolutes Nichts*), which is what Nishida has in mind with the Japanese phrase *zettai mu*, is, in my opinion, rather misunderstood. “Nothingness” (*Nichts*) and “absolute” (*absolut*) are, in the context of the European tradition, loaded with a sense that—without altering this tradition and with it the meaning of these words—would make them seem rather inappropriate as a translation for *zettai mu*. See E. Weinmayr, “Nishida tetsugaku no konponteki gainen—Doitsugo e no juyō” (The basic concepts of Nishida[’s] philosophy—Its reception in the German language), in Y. Kayano and R. Ōhashi, *Nishida tetsugaku—Shinshiryō to kenkyū no tebiki* (New materials and research tools for Nishida’s philosophy) (Kyoto: Mineruva Shobō, 1987), pp. 207–238, at 226–228. For an elucidation of “nothingness” in the context of the East Asian tradition, see H. S. Hisamatsu, *Die Fülle des Nichts: Vom Wesen des Zen: Eine systematische Erläuterung* (The abundance of nothingness: From the essence of Zen: A systematic elucidation) (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1975).

- 14 – On this see Heidegger’s commentary on ἀληθεια as an “open center.” “This open center is thus not surrounded by what is; rather the clearing (*lichtende*) center itself encircles all that is, like the nothing which we scarcely know” (*PLT*, p. 53; *HW*, p. 39). [Although Albert Hofstadter has translated *lichtende* here as “lighting,” I think “clearing” conveys a sense closer to that intended by Heidegger—as a place cleared for the happening of being. And this is precisely the sense of being in Heidegger on which Weinmayr wants to focus.]
- 15 – [For Weinmayr’s reference to the German translations of Nishida’s texts, see Weinmayr’s original text, pp. 44 n. 14.] For a bibliography and critical discussion of the many English translations, see J. C. Maraldo, “Translating Nishida” (which appeared in October 1989 in *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 4). A bibliography of collected translations and secondary literature in the European languages is offered in L. Brüll and M. Abe, “Bibliographie zur Nishida—Forschung in westlichen Sprachen” (A bibliography on Nishida—Research in the Western languages), in Kayano and Ōhashi, *Nishida tetsugaku*, pp. 389–398.
- 16 – See, for example, Aristotle *Metaphysics* Γ 3.1005.b19: “το γαρ αυτο αμα υπαρχειν τε και μη υπαρχειν αδυνατον τω αυτω και χατα το αυτο.” Or see Christian Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, Gesammelte Werke II. Abteilung-Lateinische Schriften Band 3 (Hildesheim: Goerg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962, p. 16), §28: “Fieri non potest, ut idem *simul* sit et non sit.”
- 17 – For example, *VA*, p. 264 [*EGT*, p. 114]: “the reciprocal intimacy of unconcealing and concealing”; *SG*, p. 109 [*PR*, p. 62]: “Both—proffering and withdrawing—are one and the same, not two different things.” Here belongs also the word-pair “appropriation (*Ereignis*) and expropriation (*Enteignis*)” (see *TB*, pp. 23, 43; *SD*, pp. 23, 46), “Truth and un-truth” (e.g., *PLT*, p. 54; *HW*, p. 40), “being and nothing” (e.g., *BC*, p. 46; *GB*, p. 54).

- 18 – Heidegger himself appears to have in view the possibility of coming into a dialogue with the Far Eastern world over his interpretation of the early Greek thinker. In *VA*, p. 43 [*QT*, p. 158], he identifies the “dialogue with the Greek thinkers and their language” as “the precondition of the inevitable dialogue with the East Asian world.”
- 19 – [The word *Fügung*, as used by Heidegger, also has the meaning of “destiny” or “dispensation,” with the connotations in German of “fate” or “providence,” along with “coincidence,” “submission,” “ordainment,” “construction,” “organization,” and “order.”]
- 20 – [*Fügsamkeit* can also be rendered as “compliance.” See endnote 21.]
- 21 – [Weinmayr translates the Japanese *soku*, used by Nishida, as *zugleich* in German. In English, *soku* has been translated with the Latin terms *qua* and *sive* or with phrases like “is simultaneously” or “is immediately one with” (see John Maraldo, “Translating Nishida,” in *Philosophy East and West* 39 [4] [October 1989]: 465–496). We will use “simultaneous,” which is closer to Weinmayr’s rendition and fits his analysis of Heidegger, who also uses the term *zugleich*.]
- 22 – This distinction also reflects, in my view, the foregoing elucidation of worlding as on the one hand a joining occurrence (*Fügungsgeschehens*) and on the other hand an occurrence of determination, that is, constitution. In a world of (substantial, unshakable) being, critical remembrance occurs in the happening character (*Geschehenscharakter*), the movement of everything real in an articulation of “compliance” (*Fügsamkeit*), that is, “nestling” (*Schmiegsamkeit*) (see *PLT*, p. 180; *VA*, p. 173). In the background of a tradition that is accustomed to thinking of reality as “empty,” or, to be precise, “nothing,” and in an unlimited plasticity and adaptability, the happening character of reality develops as a determining and constituting (driving forth, outlining). The critical intention of Heidegger and of Nishida in opposition to their own traditions, then, clearly shows in passing that it [the tradition] emerges in the “world of being” on the basis of “letting,” and in the “world of nothing” on the basis of the “action.” The proximity and distance between Heidegger and Nishida would then lie between “letting-be” and “doing nothing.”
- 23 – [The first modern Western squadron, under the command of Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, reached Japan in 1853, pressuring Japan to open its ports and enter into a trade agreement with the US. In 1868 troops in support of Emperor Meiji led by Saigō Takamori (who himself will later rebel against Meiji) seized the palace gates, leading to the downfall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the establishment of the Meiji Restoration, that is, the restoration of the emperor to political power. With the new government and a series of reforms, Japan was quickly underway to modernization.]
- 24 – On *engi* see Saigusa Mitsuyoshi, “Über ‘Relationalität’” (On “reality”), in *All-Einheit: Wege eines Gedankens in Ost und West* (All-unity: A path of an idea

- in East and West), ed. D. Henrich (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985), pp. 109–114. Also see the contribution “Ereignis und Shōki” (En-owning and *shōki*) by K. Tsujimura, p. 81 [in Buchner, *Japan und Heidegger*, the volume in which the original text of Weinmayr’s article is included].
- 25 – See *Kegon gokyōshō* (The Kegon book of the five doctrines), ed. Kamata Shigeo (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1979), pp. 286 ff. See also Tsujimura Koichi, “Zur Differenz der All-Einheit im Westen und im Osten” (On the difference of all-unity in the West and the East), in Henrich, *All-Einheit (All-Unity)*, pp. 22–32, at pp. 26–27.
- 26 – *Kegon gokyōshō*, pp. 265 ff., 276 ff.
- 27 – *Kegon-kyō: Kokuyaku daizōkyō* (Kegon-Sūtra: Grand Sūtra-treasure in Japanese translation), vols. 5–7 (Tokyo: Kokumin Bunko Kankōkai, 1917); for a German translation, see *Das Kegon Sutra*, trans. Doi Torakazu, 4 vols. (Tokyo: Von den Freunden des Übersetzers in Druck/Doitsubun-Kegonkyō-Kankōkai, 1978– ). The following citations are all lifted from vol. 5 of the Japanese edition; I use the translation from the first volume of the German edition. [The Kegon Sūtra is the Japanese version of the Chinese translation of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra* (Sūtra of the garland of the Buddhas), also called *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (Flower-garland Sūtra), a Mahāyāna sūtra that influenced the emergence of the Hua-yen school of Buddhism in China during the sixth and seventh centuries, and the Kegon school in Japan during the seventh and eighth centuries.]
- 28 – Even the Japanese word for philosophy (*tetsugaku*, “study of wisdom”) is such a word, at the time new but which in time became thoroughly familiar. When Japan opened itself to the West in 1868 and began to appropriate Western civilization and science, as well as European philosophy, several new Japanese words for philosophy were formulated through new combinations of Chinese characters. This was because according to Japanese feelings there was hitherto no way of thinking that corresponded to philosophy and thus also no suitable word for it in the Japanese tradition. Of these new combinations of Chinese characters, *tetsugaku* came about as one result. Among others, the terms *kyūrigaku* (the study of the thorough research of principles) and *rigaku* (the study of principles) were also suggested by Nishi Amane (1829–1897), who played a major role in establishing these terms. On this see “Tetsugaku,” in *Heibonsha tetsugaku jiten* (Heibonsha philosophical dictionary) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1977), p. 973, and L. Brüll, “Zur Entwicklung der japanischen Philosophie” (Toward a development of Japanese philosophy), in *Japan Handbuch* (Handbook of Japan), ed. H. Hammitzsch (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1981), pp. 1295–1297.
- 29 – On the semantic problematic of this aspect of the reception of European philosophy in East Asia, see Soon-Young Park, *Die Rezeption der deutschen Philosophie in Japan und Korea dargestellt als Problem der Übersetzung philos-*

*ophischer Text* (The reception of German philosophy in Japan and Korea: Presented as a problem of the translation of philosophical texts) (Bochum Dissertation, 1976), from around pp. 39–102.

- 30 – This “un-Japanese” aspect of his philosophy was even a cause for criticism from the ultranationalist camp. When Nishida was accused in 1943 for the fact that his “philosophy consequently is not devoted to imperial Japan” (see *CW* 11 : 189), Nishida answered with a short essay, on *Tradition*, in which among other things he wrote: “Acting in accordance with tradition does not mean merely following the past. . . . A tradition lives when we ourselves together with it are constituted thoroughly by the tradition as a self-offering of the historical world, and the world in turn is constituted by a tradition, that is, when it is creative through and through” (*CW* 11 : 189–190).
- 31 – [Although the original German edition of this essay refers to *VA* rather than to *WM* as the source of the quote, this is an error. The direct quote is from *WM* while the *VA* reference discusses the same topic. This has also been clarified through my correspondence with Professor Weinmayr.]
- 32 – On this see also K. Tsujimura, “Zur Bedeutung von Heideggers ‘übergänglichem Denken’ für die gegenwärtige Welt” (On the significance of Heidegger’s “transitional thought” for the present world), in “Wirkungen Heideggers” (Heidegger’s legacy), *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* (New journal for philosophy) 23 (1984): 46–58.
- 33 – From the standpoint of the discontinuous continuity in the thinking of Nishida, the aspect of continuity in Heidegger indeed appears to be stronger. Heidegger’s transition is a “transition to the other commencement” (*N* III, p. 182; *N* II, p. 29). But this other inception is not [just] some other inception but an inception in Western metaphysics, even historically considered, according to Heidegger. Therefore, Heidegger can understand his thinking even explicitly as a *return* “into the grounds of the first commencement” (*N* III, p. 182; *N* II, p. 29), or “into the ground of metaphysics” (*PM*, p. 279; *WM*, p. 363). The tone of an archaeology and of a philosophy of history in Heidegger’s thought presumably results from this priority of continuity. In my opinion, the fact that Heidegger, in a conversation with D. Suzuki, characterized Nishida’s philosophy as “Western” and, indeed, in a pejorative sense as “not genuinely Japanese” shows that Heidegger stands rather upon the standpoint of continuity and identity.
- 34 – Hence, the discontinuously continuous structure is shown, for example, in the “history of being” or the “sending of being.” “The sequence of epochs in the destiny of being is not accidental, nor can it be calculated as necessary” (*TB*, p. 9; *SD*, p. 9).
- 35 – On this see also the following comment by Heidegger in *Der Spiegel* (The mirror) 23 (1976): 214 [*HNS*, p. 62]: “I am convinced that a change can only



be prepared from the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated. It cannot come about by the adoption of Zen Buddhism or other Eastern experiences of the world." Shortly before this passage, however, Heidegger says: "And which of us can say whether one day in Russia and in China age-old traditions of a 'thinking' will not awaken that will assist human beings in making a free relationship to the technological world possible?" [*HNS*, p. 61].

- 36 – This twofold movement of an "East Asian interpretation of what is European, and a European interpretation of what is East Asian" is a characteristic of the thinking of the Kyoto School. An explicit example of this is offered in K. Nishitani, *Was Ist Religion?* (What is religion), published in English as *Religion and Nothingness* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1982).
- 37 – [The translation by William McNeil renders *das allspielende Gefüge* as "ever playful jointure." *Allspielende* has more of a spatial connotation than the temporal connotation of "ever playful." Thus "playing through everything," which can happen synchronically, appears to be closer to the original meaning. This suggestion was made by Graham Parkes.]

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