

Heidegger's hidden sources

East Asian influences on his work

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Rising sun over Black Forest

Heidegger's Japanese connections

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Reinhard May has argued on the basis of close textual comparisons that Heidegger's formulations of his major thoughts on Being, Nothing, the clearing, and on the complex relations between language, Way, and Saying, were influenced by his readings of German translations of Daoist and Zen texts and his collaboration with Paul Shih-yi Hsiao on translating selected chapters from the *Laozi*. Since Heidegger was so reticent about his acquaintance with East Asian ideas, it is hard to determine when he first started reading in that area. While it is likely, given the intellectual milieu in which he grew up, that this acquaintance came early, the first confirmed instance so far is Petzet's report of Heidegger's consulting the Buber edition of the *Zhuangzi* in 1930, an event that indicates a prior familiarity with that text.² This revelation should not perhaps have come as a major surprise in view of Heidegger's general reticence with respect to the sources of his ideas.³ Some good treatments of the early phases of his intellectual biography work have appeared recently in the secondary literature in English, though the scholarship continues to ignore extra-European sources or influences.⁴ A significant feature, it seems to me, in Heidegger's philosophical development, which is mentioned but not elaborated by Reinhard May, is the contact he enjoyed during the 1920s with several of the best minds in modern Japanese philosophy. The present essay aims, as a complement to the preceding discussion of Heidegger's hidden sources, to sketch some relevant background for readers unacquainted with Japanese thought, and in particular to convey a sense of the major figures in this context: Tanabe Hajime, Nishida Kitarō, and Kuki Shūzō.

If I may be permitted an autobiographical remark: before learning of Heidegger's familiarity with Buber's *Zhuangzi*, I wrote an essay outlining the Daoist themes to be found in *Sein und Zeit* and suggesting some kind of 'pre-established harmony' between Heidegger's thought and Daoist ideas.⁵ Reinhard May has noted that the Buber edition was first published in 1910, and that the other texts with which Heidegger is known to have been familiar date from around that period or earlier: Von Strauss' *Lao-Tse* (1870) and Wilhelm's *Laotse* (1911). It now seems probable that (at least some of) the parallels with Daoist ideas derive from Heidegger's familiarity with the *Zhuangzi* from the time during

which *Sein und Zeit* was being written. It is moreover likely, as I suggest below, that his acquaintance with Zen texts also dates from this period.

Two more general considerations tend to support the suggestion that Heidegger may have been influenced early in his career by East Asian ideas. First, with the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927, he inaugurated the most powerful ‘destruction’ of the Western metaphysical tradition since Nietzsche—several years after becoming acquainted with ideas from a quite alien yet sophisticated philosophical tradition that had been quite unmetaphysical throughout most of its history. Second, the enormous enthusiasm for Heidegger’s ideas in East Asian philosophical circles, and the fact that his later thinking has so many patent affinities (some of which he himself acknowledges) with East Asian thought, suggest some kind of prior harmony. In view of the conclusions drawn by Reinhard May, one is forced to entertain the possibility that this harmony may have been occasioned by some quiet appropriation on Heidegger’s part. Whereas the main text above lays major emphasis on Chinese works, what follows below will focus more on Japanese thinkers.

In 1921 Kuki Shūzō, the 33-year-old scion of a well-to-do aristocratic family, whose father, Baron Kuki, was director of the Imperial Museum in Tokyo, went to Europe to study philosophy. A man of unusually subtle intelligence, Kuki lived in Germany and France for eight years. From 1922 to 1923 he studied neo-Kantianism with Heinrich Rickert in Heidelberg. Possessing the means to do things properly, Kuki had Rickert give him private tutorials on Kant’s first *Critique*.⁶ He then went to Paris, where he visited Bergson (good taste being a salient feature of Kuki’s personality). He was, in any case, a thinker of fine aesthetic sensibilities, who had grown up in a quintessentially Japanese milieu, in an atmosphere of elegance and excellence: in his youth he had benefited from the beneficent tutelage of the well-known art critic and scholar Okakura Kakuzō.⁷ During his time in Paris, Kuki wrote a draft of his best-known work, *‘Iki’ no kōzō* (*The Structure of ‘iki’*); and when he left France in 1927, it was for Freiburg, to study phenomenology with Husserl—at whose home he would meet a young *Dozent* by the name of Martin Heidegger.

Another Japanese philosopher of note, Yamanouchi Tokuryū, went to study in Europe in 1921, as the first of several soon-to-be-eminent thinkers from Japan to make ‘the Freiburg pilgrimage’ to study with Husserl (and then Heidegger).⁸ The same age as Heidegger, Yamanouchi was a scholar of broad range who was one of the first to introduce phenomenology to Japan and would later initiate the formal study of Greek philosophy at Kyoto University. At Kyoto he had as a teacher and then senior colleague Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), a thinker whose epoch-making work *Zen no kenkyū* (*An Inquiry into the Good*) of 1911 is regarded as the first masterpiece of modern Japanese philosophical thought.⁹ Later, during the 1930s, Yamanouchi was to become one of the few thinkers of sufficient stature to challenge Nishida’s formidable philosophical system.¹⁰

The following year two more visitors—men destined to become major figures in modern Japanese philosophy—arrived in Germany: Tanabe Hajime and Miki Kiyoshi. Both were younger colleagues of ‘the Master’, Nishida. Miki went first to Heidelberg to work with Heinrich Rickert, and thence to Marburg to study with Heidegger after the latter’s move there in late 1923.¹¹ Tanabe went to Berlin to work with Alois Riehl, but soon moved to Freiburg to study with Husserl. In Freiburg he was introduced to Heidegger who, though four years his junior, impressed him as brilliant. Since one sometimes hears of the ‘Chinese and Japanese students’ who studied with Heidegger over the years, it should be noted that neither Tanabe nor Kuki was a mere student when Heidegger made their acquaintance. Tanabe had already published two substantial books, in the philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics (1915 and 1918), and Kuki, who was a year older than Heidegger, had spent the previous six years studying philosophy with several of the great minds of the time.

Japanese commentators sometimes characterize in broad strokes the major difference between the philosophy of the so-called Kyoto School and the mainstream of the Western philosophical tradition by saying that, whereas European thought tends towards philosophies of life based upon inquiry into the nature of being, East Asian philosophies tend to lay greater emphasis on the topics of death and nothingness. This generalization can provide a preliminary orientation that is by no means misleading, especially since what makes Heidegger’s *Being and Time* such a revolutionary work is the central place it accords to *das Nichts*, as well as the ‘existential conception’ of death developed there—as confirmed by the crucial role these ideas play in Heidegger’s subsequent pursuit of the ‘question of Being’. It is thus an extremely interesting question to what extent Heidegger had already developed his ideas on nothingness and death by the time of his first contact with the ideas of the Kyoto School.

TANABE HAJIME AND A PHILOSOPHY OF DEATH

Tanabe Hajime is widely regarded as being the second greatest figure (after Nishida) in modern Japanese philosophy and has been taken to be the ‘founder’ of the Kyoto School.¹² His personal and philosophical relationship with Heidegger was much closer and more enduring than Miki’s, who became sharply critical of his former mentor after the events of 1933.¹³ It was in part because of Nishida’s interest in phenomenology that Tanabe had gone to Freiburg to study with Husserl.¹⁴ But his enthusiasm over the new turn the method was taking at the hands of Heidegger prompted Tanabe to attend the lecture course the younger thinker gave in the summer semester of 1923 under the title ‘Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity’. Heidegger had, in turn, ample occasion to be impressed by the visitor from Japan, having gladly acceded to his request for private tutorials in German philosophy.¹⁵ Over the ensuing decades the two men remained on cordial terms, and when Tanabe was awarded (*in absentia*) an

honorary doctorate by the University of Freiburg, Heidegger sent him a congratulatory copy of the limited edition of his *Gespräch mit Hebel* together with a recent photograph.¹⁶

An appraisal of the nature of the philosophical interchange between Tanabe and Heidegger is hindered by the almost complete silence the latter maintained about his Japanese colleagues and their ideas. And while Tanabe continued to refer to Heidegger's works throughout his career, he was a reticent man and much of his correspondence has been lost or destroyed. However, approaching from the side of Tanabe's references to Heidegger, let us see what reconstruction of their philosophical relationship is possible—first with respect to the topic of death and then to the idea of nothingness.

After his return to Japan in 1924, Tanabe published his essay 'A New Turn in Phenomenology: Heidegger's Phenomenology of Life', the first substantial commentary on his thought to be published in any language.¹⁷ The essay is of particular interest since its concluding section gives us an idea of how Heidegger's 1923 lecture course ended. (The transcript published in the *Gesamtausgabe* is said by the editor to be lacking the last page or two: 'it breaks off suddenly in the middle of the train of thought'.)¹⁸ Missing from the transcript in the *Gesamtausgabe*—but prominent in the conclusion of Tanabe's discussion of Heidegger's phenomenology of life—is an account of the role played by the confrontation with death in the attainment of self-understanding.

Just as life is not merely a passage [of time], so death is not the mere termination or breaking off of such a passage. Rather death stands before *Dasein* as something inevitable. One can even say that it is precisely in the way life regards death and deals with it in its concern that life displays its way of being. If it flees from the death that stands before it as something inevitable, and wants to conceal and forget it in its concern with the world of relations, this is the flight of life itself in the face of itself—which means precisely that the ultimate possibility-of-being of life becomes an impossibility-of-being. On such a basis, to grasp *Dasein* in its primordial way of being is ultimately impossible. Because the way in which *Dasein* is concerned with death—from which it would like to flee but cannot— informs its very way of being, one must rather emphasize that it is just there, where life voluntarily opens itself to certain death, that it is truly manifest to itself (*JH* 107–8).

It is an intriguing quirk of textual history that this account of Tanabe's was for sixty-five years the sole source for Heidegger's first words on the topic of death. It was only with the appearance in 1989 of the German text of the 'Aristotle Introduction' from October 1922 that his first written thoughts on death reached print.¹⁹ Judging from what has been published so far, there is no evidence that Heidegger had engaged the ideas of death and nothingness on an existential or ontological level before the 'Aristotle Introduction'. And while the lectures from

the summer semester of 1923 make cursory reference to such themes as *das Man* and *Angst*, there is no discussion of death or nothingness.²⁰ The next public presentation of Heidegger's ideas about death (after the winter course of 1923) would appear to be in his lecture 'The Concept of Time', which was delivered in July 1924 in Marburg.²¹

It is interesting to compare Tanabe's account of the 1923 lecture course with the relevant passages in the earlier 'Aristotle Introduction':

Just as factual life...is not a process [*Vorgang*], so too death is not a termination of the kind that intrudes and cuts this process short. Death is something that stands in front of [*bevor steht*] factual life as something inevitable.... The forced lack of worry that characterizes life's concern [*Sorge*] with its death culminates in a fleeing into 'realworldly' concerns [*Besorgnisse*]. But this looking-away from death is so little a grasping of life in itself that it becomes precisely life's own evasion of life and its authentic being-character.... In the having of *certain* death (a having that *takes hold*), life becomes visible in itself.²²

The content (and even the style) of Tanabe's account is quite similar. What appears to distinguish this later version is the talk of life's 'voluntarily [opening] itself to certain death', which anticipates Heidegger's later talk of openness with respect to death but is also characteristic of the Japanese *bushidō*, the 'way of the samurai warrior', a mode of existence influenced by Buddhism and which is also 'the way of death'.

It is clear that Heidegger, when he made Tanabe's acquaintance, was already working towards the existential conception of death that would play such an important role in *Being and Time*; but it is possible that his encounter with this incisive and passionate thinker from the East Asian tradition stimulated him to develop his thinking about death along somewhat different lines from those he might otherwise have followed. Several circumstances tend to strengthen this supposition, the first of which requires a look forward in order to take a step back.

A consideration of the sources Heidegger cites in connection with the full-fledged treatment of the topic of death in *Being and Time*—Dilthey, Simmel, Jaspers (SZ 249, note 1)—reveals a number of familiar elements but nothing like the complex configuration of death and nothingness that so powerfully motivates the existential analysis of authentic temporality in that work. Heidegger lays special emphasis on the relevance of Jaspers' conception of death as a *Grenzsituation* ('limit-situation'), a topic he had discussed earlier in an essay from 1921 on Jaspers' ground-breaking work *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, first published in 1919.²³ In a discussion of Jaspers' engagement with the problem of comprehending life in its totality, Heidegger quotes and paraphrases as follows:

‘The relation of the human being to its own death is different from that to all other transitoriness, only the nonbeing of the world as a whole is a comparable idea’. ‘Only the destruction of one’s own being or of the world as a whole is something *total* for the human being’. There is an ‘experiential relation to death’, which is not to be confused with a ‘general knowing about death’, only ‘when death has entered into experience [*in das Erleben...getreten ist*] as a limit-situation’, that is to say, ‘only where ‘consciousness of the limit and infinitude’ has not been lost.’²⁴

Heidegger refrains from discussing these passages from Jaspers, but the concern with totality, an experiential relation to death, and the idea of death’s ‘entering into’ experience figure importantly in the existential conception of death that he would later elaborate in *Being and Time*. And indeed these passages are from the section of Jaspers’ book to which Heidegger draws special attention in the footnote at *Sein und Zeit* 249.²⁵

Heidegger’s citations in the ‘Anmerkungen’ break off on page 262 of the third edition of *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*; on the next page Jaspers begins a discussion of the Buddhist attitude towards death, referring to Buddhism as ‘the classic example of *the experience of transitoriness as the central experience* influencing the whole attitude towards life [*Lebensgesinnung*]’ (263). Quoting from the Indian Ashvagosha, Jaspers gives an account of the Buddhist attitude towards death as thoroughly nihilistic and pessimistic—an account apparently influenced by the (rather unreliable) interpretations given by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The Buddhists are said to renounce the world on account of its transitory nature: ‘Death is overcome in so far as everything that can die is experienced as an object of indifference’ (264–5). Their desire is for ‘the ultimate death’ that is found in release from the cycle of death and rebirth: ‘Death and transitoriness give rise in the Buddhists to a drive for the eternal reign of the peace of nothingness’ (265). While this attitude may be characteristic of certain schools of early (Hinayana) Buddhism, it is the antithesis—as we shall see—of the attitude towards death of later, Mahayana Buddhism.

Tanabe gives another retrospective account (in the late 1950s) of his enthusiastic discovery of Heidegger’s ideas about death, in his contribution to the *Festschrift* for the latter’s seventieth birthday.²⁶ He begins by contrasting the general inclination towards philosophies of life in the Western tradition with the more ‘death-oriented’ approach characteristic of East Asian philosophies. For philosophers in the Buddhist tradition, ‘in thinking of the enigmatic inevitability of death, the ephemerality and fragility of life pervade us to the very marrow’ (‘Todesdialektik’, 93–4). For this reason, Tanabe continues, he had always been dissatisfied in his studies of Western philosophy—until he went to Freiburg. He goes on to recall how deeply impressed he was to discover, on first attending Heidegger’s lectures, ‘that in his thinking a meditation on death had become

central to philosophy and supported it from the ground up. I could not help feeling that I had now found a way to the philosophy I had been seeking’.

This talk of ‘meditation on death’ as central to Heidegger’s thought should not be taken to imply either that Heidegger had by this time developed a full ‘philosophy of death’ or that Tanabe had been himself innocent of the topic. Since Tanabe’s scholarly output prior to his trip to Germany had been largely in the fields of science and mathematics, the encounter with Heidegger appears to have helped him to connect his academic endeavours with a deeper level of his existence. This deeper level had to do with Tanabe’s lifelong concern with the philosophy of religion: Christianity had interested him intensely during his school days, and he devoted most of his later career to religious philosophy, undertaking numerous comparisons between Christianity and Japanese Buddhism. It is reasonable to suppose that, at the time he met Heidegger, ‘the philosophy [Tanabe] had been seeking’ already comprised the problem of death, and that the discovery that Heidegger was working a number of existential concerns into his ‘phenomenology of life’ showed him that such topics could be engaged philosophically as well as on a personal level.²⁷

Otto Pöggeler has shown the relevance of Heidegger’s early engagement with Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard for the existential analytic he was to develop in *Being and Time*, and their ideas were no doubt an influence on his conceptions of anxiety, death, and nothingness.²⁸ John Van Buren has provided more details in an informative essay on Heidegger’s early engagement with ‘primal Christianity’.²⁹ There is also a striking prefiguration of Heidegger’s idea of *Vorlaufen in den Tod* (SZ, § 53) in Augustine, who characterizes ‘the time of this life’ as a ‘running to death’ (*cursus ad mortem*; *Lauf in den Tod*), a phrase reiterated by Luther.³⁰ Heidegger is spectacularly grudging in his cursory acknowledgement of Kierkegaard for having developed the concept of anxiety.³¹ In view of Tanabe’s early interest in the religion, Heidegger’s prolonged concern with the ‘factual experience of life’ in Christianity not long before the former’s arrival would make it all the more likely that the two thinkers would spark one another’s philosophical interest in the topic of death.³² Moreover, since Heidegger had written on Jaspers’ idea of death as a *Grenzsituation*, and read his discussion of the Buddhist attitude towards death, it is probable that this topic came up in his conversations with Tanabe. And if it did, Tanabe would have explained to him that the attitude towards death of the later (Mahayana) schools of Buddhism is, by contrast with that of early Buddhism, positive and life-promoting—just as their understanding of nothingness is by no means nihilistic.

It was not until two decades later that Tanabe eventually elaborated in detail the ‘philosophy of death’ that his encounter with Heidegger’s ideas had inspired him to develop, in the work that many regard as his masterpiece: *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (1946).³³ In the course of frequent discussions of Heidegger, Tanabe criticizes his conceptions of death and nothingness as being insufficiently radical. He implies an elitist quality to Heidegger’s account of the way an appropriate confrontation with death leads to authentic existence, suggesting that

the resolute facing of death is a way open only to ‘sages and heroes’ (85). Heidegger’s conception is of ‘a death interpreted entirely from the standpoint of life, a nothingness interpreted from the standpoint of being’. In laying out his ‘positive’ ideas about ‘living as one who is dead’, Tanabe allows that ‘Heidegger’s position is somewhat similar to Zen imperatives’ such as ‘Die to yourself once and for all!’ and ‘Above all else, the Great Death!’ (161–2). Tanabe’s own position, based on the notion of ‘Other-power’ (*tariki*) developed in Shin Buddhism and thus attainable by ‘ordinary ignorant people’, may be summed up as a ‘dialectic of death and life’ in which ‘just as death does not follow life but is already within life itself, so is life restored within death and mediated by it’ (164). This is not the place to present and evaluate Tanabe’s position on death, which takes much of the book to be articulated: suffice it to say that the critique of Heidegger deserves to be taken seriously, and that Tanabe’s engagement with the problem of death here and in other works shows that the issue increases in importance as his thinking matures, while in Heidegger’s thought it tends to diminish.

Tanabe continued to develop in print his ideas on ‘the enigmatic inevitability of death, the ephemerality and fragility of life’ in a work entitled *Existenz, Love, and Praxis* (1947) in which he proposes that philosophy return to the Socratic conception of the discipline as ‘practice for death’. He goes on to link this conception with similar understandings from the Christian tradition as well as with the samurai idea of ‘the way of death’.³⁴ An even closer accommodation between Buddhism and Christianity on the topic of death is attempted in the later essay ‘Memento Mori’ (1958), where the notion of life-death (*sh ji ichinyo*)—a perpetual death-and-resurrection *within* every moment of life—becomes the crux.³⁵ One of Tanabe’s formulations of this idea is remarkably similar to a locution Heidegger uses (borrowing from Rilke) in the essay ‘What Are Poets For?’ In tackling the question of how death can be incorporated into life without leading to nihilism and suicide, Tanabe writes:

The reason we have been driven to life’s self-contradiction is that we have unreflectingly pursued life’s direct enjoyment, and as a result have lost the self-perception that life is always ‘backed’ by death and that we do not know when these two sides will be reversed, with death appearing in front and life driven to the rear. It is a result of going against the injunction ‘Forget not death’ and of forgetting death.³⁶

One final consideration that is relevant here is the fact, generally unknown to Heidegger scholars in the West, that Tanabe’s contribution to the 1959 *Festschrift* for Heidegger was a translation of only the second part of the monograph that had been published the previous year, entitled ‘Sei no sonzaigaku ka shi no bensh h ka’ (Ontology of life or dialectics of death?)—the original version of which bore the somewhat spirited subtitle ‘A polemical engagement with Heideggerian ontology’.³⁷ hashi Ry suke has pointed out that

the first half of the monograph, which tact dictated should not be translated for the *Festschrift*, contains some sharp criticism of Heidegger's 'ontology of life'.³⁸ Tanabe's argument is too long and complex to be rehearsed here, but the gist of his 'polemical engagement' is a continuation of his customary criticisms of Western philosophies as overly oriented towards life and insufficiently mindful of death. Heidegger's understanding of death, he argues, is not radical enough and fails to reach as deeply as his (Tanabe's) own 'dialectics of death' which is based on a late Buddhist understanding of the interfusion of life and death and is elaborated this time by way of a quasiHegelian dialectic.

‘NISHIDA PHILOSOPHY’ AND THE *TOPOS* OF NOTHINGNESS

For several years prior to his visit to Freiburg Tanabe had been a junior colleague of Nishida Kitarō's at Kyoto University. While Nishida was well acquainted with German thought—the mystical tradition, German Idealism, and neo-Kantianism in particular—the philosophy he had begun to elaborate in his masterwork of 1911 was experientially based on the practice of Zen Buddhism and came more and more to turn on the Buddhist conception of nothingness (*mu*).³⁹ Tanabe would also make the idea of *zettai mu* (absolute nothingness) central to the philosophy of religion he develops in his mature thought—even though his different understanding of the idea became a major point of contention in his subsequent philosophical disagreements with Nishida.⁴⁰

At the conclusion of a chapter of *An Inquiry into the Good* entitled 'The Phenomena of Consciousness as the Sole Reality' (Chapter 6), Nishida suggests that—by contrast with situations in the physical world under the law of causality—in consciousness something *can* arise out of nothing. In a chapter dealing with his conception of God as the ground of reality, he follows the *via negativa* of Nicholas of Cusa and the idea of God as total negation: 'From this standpoint, God is absolute nothingness' (Chapter 7). He goes on to say that 'precisely because He is able to be nothingness, there is no place whatsoever where he is not present, no place where he is not at work'.⁴¹ And in the context of a later invocation of Nicholas of Cusa and Jacob Boehme, Nishida writes:

Nothingness separated from being is not true nothingness; the one separated from the all is not the true one; equality separated from distinction is not true equality. In the same way that if there is no God there is no world, if there is no world there is no God.⁴²

In the course of the next decade or so, Nishida continued to grapple with the problem of how, in consciousness, something appears to arise from nothing, in the context of an ongoing analysis of the nature of 'creative will'. The discussion in *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (1917), which actually refers more to Western sources (such as Boehme and Pseudo-Dionysius, Fichte and

Bergson) than to East Asian ones, emphasizes the close connection between creative will and nothingness.

To say that the will comes from, and returns to, creative nothingness ... seems to be in serious contradiction with the law of causality. However, there is no fact more immediate and indubitable than the birth of being from non-being, which occurs constantly in the actuality of our experience.... When we penetrate to the immediacy of that creative act which produces being from nothingness, letting no [logical/scientific] explanations overlay it, we find absolute free will. ...If thought thus creates natural reality, it is itself in turn created by will, the immediate, absolute process of creation. Beneath these apparently solid cognitive activities, being is constantly being produced by nothingness.⁴³

Later in the same work Nishida speaks again, alluding perhaps to the *Laozi*, of a 'birth of being from non-being':

At this level of immediate experience causal thinking has no place; being is born from nothingness....

Like our will, which is nothingness while it is being, and being while it is nothingness, this world transcends even the categories of being and nothingness...for here being is born from nothingness (157, 166).

Given that Nishida was well read in the Chinese classics and was especially fond of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, this familiarity would explain his use of locutions concerning being's being born from nothingness even in the context of an explication in terms of Western philosophical concepts.⁴⁴

Nishida further develops his ideas about the self as 'absolute will' in a work from 1920, *Ishiki no mondai (The Problem of Consciousness)*, where he writes that the true self 'exists at the juncture of being and non-being' and that the world of will 'emerges from nothingness and enters back into nothingness'.⁴⁵ But it is in the essays from the next few years, which were eventually published in 1927 under the title *Hataraku mono kara miru mono e (From the Acting to the Seeing)*, that Nishida elaborates his central idea of the 'topos of nothingness' (*mu no basho*) as the *fons et origo* of all reality. These essays, the earliest of which were written while Tanabe was with Heidegger in Freiburg, unfold the idea of a 'true nothingness' that is not relative to being but is rather a field or 'activity' (the influence of Fichte's idea of *Tathandlung* is evident here) that embraces both being and non-being. The deepest ground of the will is again referred to as a 'creative nothingness' but more often as 'absolute nothingness' (*zettai mu*).⁴⁶

Heidegger scholars assume without question that the revolutionary understanding of nothingness presented in *Being and Time* came out of his creative 'destruction' of the history of Western ontology. Reinhard May has shown the remarkable similarity between the locutions in which Heidegger

develops the *topos* of *Nichts* relative to the *topoi* of *Sein* and *Lichtung* in his middle and later periods; but the similarity of the earlier formulations to Nishida's ideas is just as remarkable.⁴⁷ While the documentation that would decide the question appears to be lacking, there is one consideration that militates in favour of the possibility that Heidegger learned of, and was influenced by, the idea of nothingness that was being developed by Nishida during the 1920s—and which would come to assume, in the form of 'absolute nothingness', a central place in the philosophy of the Kyoto School.

When Tanabe arrived in Freiburg, Husserl was immediately impressed by his philosophical acumen and was intrigued by what Tanabe had to say about Nishida's philosophy (what is now known in Japan as *Nishida tetsugaku*, 'Nishida philosophy'). According to an account by Aihara Shinsaku, a younger colleague of Tanabe's:

When Professor Tanabe told him about Nishida's philosophy, Husserl invited him to give some detailed lectures on the topic. Tanabe consequently gave a series of lectures on Nishida's philosophy at Husserl's home...in the course of which Husserl frequently asked questions. Tanabe's lectures were a great success, and a well known [German] philosopher wrote to Nishida to say that Tanabe's presentations had been outstanding [*ausgezeichnet*].⁴⁸

The audience could not have hoped for a speaker more qualified, since Tanabe had been following closely the development of Nishida's thought for the previous ten years. He was also a fanatically meticulous preparer of lectures and presentations. About the talks he gave at Husserl's home, one of Tanabe's foremost students, Takeuchi Yoshinori, has said: 'If he often stayed up all night composing his lectures just for us students in Kyoto, you can imagine how well prepared he must have been for a presentation in the presence of the great Husserl'. Heidegger was, of course, present at these lectures, though it is not certain that he attended every one of them.⁴⁹ The other leading student of Tanabe's, Tsujimura K ichi, relates how the first session barely got off the ground, thanks to the intervention of a member of the select audience, the mathematician Ernst Zermelo.⁵⁰ Zermelo was apparently so impressed by Tanabe's expertise in the philosophy of mathematics that he began asking questions on that topic early in the presentation, and ended up steering the rest of the evening's discussion in the direction of set theory.

In the absence of a direct record of Tanabe's presentations, one can only speculate on their content. But since Nishida had been developing his ideas about *mu* since 1911, and Tanabe was at the time the best interpreter of his mentor's thinking, the presentation could not have helped dealing with Nishida's conception of nothingness (especially since the idea of *mu* was soon to become so central to Tanabe's own thinking). In all of his published writings Heidegger

mentions Tanabe Hajime only once, in the ‘Conversation on Language’, where he has the Japanese say:

-J: Professor Tanabe often came back to the question you once addressed to him of why we Japanese didn’t reflect upon the venerable beginnings of our own thinking instead of greedily chasing after the latest things in European philosophy.⁵¹

The ‘venerable beginnings’ of Japanese thought include philosophical ideas from classical Daoism and the Zen tradition, as Heidegger well knew when he composed the dialogue. (More on this in the next section.) He may also have known by this time that, even though the Kyoto School thinkers read and wrote a great deal about Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and his own work, most of them then reverted to a study of their philosophical roots in the East Asian tradition.

The extent to which influences from Nishida’s philosophy may have helped nourish the development of Heidegger’s conception of nothingness is difficult to determine, not only because of lack of conclusive evidence but also because the conception of nothingness developed by the Kyoto School thinkers has some of its roots in the Western tradition. Relevant prefigurations would be the ideas of *das Nichts* found in such thinkers as Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, and Jacob Boehme, with whom Heidegger was as familiar as Nishida was at the time, as well as in the idealism of Hegel and Schelling. What makes this topic in the comparative history of ideas even more complicated, as well as more interesting, is that a strain of Asian thinking about nothingness feeds into the Western tradition, and into German philosophy in particular, from the end of the eighteenth century. Near the end of ‘What Is Metaphysics?’, Heidegger quotes with approval, though not without qualification, Hegel’s well-known formulation in Book I of the *Science of Logic*: ‘Pure Being and pure Nothing are the same’. It is significant in the present context that Hegel follows this equation with a pointed reference to Buddhist thought that Heidegger could not have overlooked: ‘In oriental systems, and especially in Buddhism, *nothingness*, or the void [*das Leere*], is the absolute principle’.⁵² We find another reference to Asian ideas of nothingness in Schelling, on whom Heidegger began to give seminars in 1928 (with Kuki Shūzō auditing the first). In *The Philosophy of Mythology* Schelling writes of Laozi’s notion of nothingness as follows:

The great art or wisdom of life consists precisely in attaining this pure potential, which is nothing and yet at the same time all. The entire *Dao de jing* is concerned with showing, through a great variety of the most pregnant tropes, the great and insuperable power of non-being.⁵³

A more immediate (though generally unremarked) precursor with respect to a radical notion of nothingness is Max Scheler, whom Heidegger refers to often in

his lectures from the 1920s, as well as in *Being and Time*. In his essay ‘Vom Wesen der Philosophie’ of 1917, Scheler proposed as the fundamental basis of philosophical activity the insight ‘that *there is anything at all* or, put more precisely, that “*there is not nothing*” (whereby the word “nothing”...means *absolute nothing*...)’.⁵⁴ After a discussion of how the circumstance that ‘there isn’t nothing’ prompts philosophical wonderment, Scheler goes on to say: ‘Whoever has not looked into the *abyss of absolute nothing* in this way will also completely overlook the eminently positive nature of the content of the insight that there is anything at all and not rather nothing’. This phrasing will be familiar to those acquainted with Heidegger’s writings on the topic from the late 1920s and mid-1930s.

In a discussion of religious activity in the essay ‘Problems of Religion’ (1920), Scheler returns to the topic of absolute nothing:

To believe in ‘nothing’ is something quite different from not believing. It is —as evidenced by the powerful emotional impact that the thought of ‘nothing’ exercises on our soul—a highly positive state of the spirit. *Absolute nothing* is to be sharply distinguished from every merely relative nothing as a phenomenon. Absolute nothing is not-being-something and not-existing in one, in utter unity and simplicity.⁵⁵

In a footnote at this point Scheler says that this unity distinguishes absolute nothing from the Buddhist idea of nirvana, which he (mis-) understands as ‘merely freedom and redemption from the actual world’. Although Scheler’s enterprise is more explicitly religious than Heidegger’s, his talk later in the same paragraph of ‘metaphysical *Angst*’ and ‘religious *Schauer* in the face of absolute nothing’ is a striking anticipation of Heidegger’s formulations several years later. And again, as with the case of Jaspers mentioned earlier, if the topic of nirvana (as discussed by Scheler) came up in Heidegger’s conversations with Tanabe (or, later, with Kuki), any misconceptions of nirvana or nothingness as negative or world-denying would surely have been corrected.

Otto Pöggeler reports Heidegger’s saying to him that the Japanese had, much to his surprise, introduced something into the discussion of *das Nichts* that had not previously occurred to him—a most interesting remark, even though it is unclear at what point on his path of thinking this introduction may have occurred.⁵⁶ The crucial question here is at what point Heidegger read hazama and Faust’s *Zen: Der lebendige Buddhismus in Japan* (1925).⁵⁷ Since August Faust had studied with Heidegger in Freiburg in 1922, the latter may well have read this anthology of Zen texts with extensive annotation and commentary shortly after its publication in 1925 - and thus before he wrote *Sein und Zeit*.⁵⁸ The question bears directly on the foregoing discussion of nothingness, since hazama’s introduction, which includes a comprehensive overview of the development of Mahayana Buddhism, makes it perfectly clear that the Buddhist conceptions of nirvana and nothingness are by no means nihilistic or world-denying. (He gives

accounts of such key figures as N g rjuna, Rinzai, D gen, Bash , and Hakuin.) The idea of ‘perfect’ or ‘consummate’ nothing (*muichimotsu, vollendetes Nichts*) comes up again and again in the Zen texts translated in this volume—as when the Zen master Hakuin writes of one who has seen into his own nature: ‘Then his own being is nothing other/than the nature of consummate nothingness,/and is sublimely elevated over the play of thinking’.⁵⁹ hazama offers numerous explanations of this consummate nothingness, and Heidegger will also have been intrigued by his explication of the ‘twenty-fold’ nothingness in the *Prajñ p ramit S tra*.⁶⁰

One last event concerning Heidegger’s relationship to Japan during this period should be mentioned, an incident that could have changed the course of Heidegger’s thinking prior to the writing of *Being and Time*. In a letter to Karl Jaspers from June 1924, Heidegger writes that he has received an official offer from Japan through a Japanese colleague (Miki Kiyoshi—though Heidegger refrains from naming him for some reason).⁶¹ The offer was for a three-year position at an institute in Tokyo for the study of European culture. Heidegger would have had to give only one lecture or seminar per week, and also collaborate on a quarterly publication of the institute. The financial remuneration would have been handsome, with travel paid for the whole family. ‘The advantages would be: broadening of my horizon, the opportunity for undisturbed work, money to build a house after returning. Nevertheless, I am not sure that I need such an excursion or should take on such a thing.’⁶²

Heidegger ends by asking Jaspers’ advice on whether or not he should accept the offer, and also whether, if not, he should put forward Jaspers’ name instead. Unfortunately, Jaspers’ reply has not survived. In any case, the possibility that *Being and Time* might have been written in Tokyo surely boggles the mind.

KUKI SHÛZÔ AND LIGHT FROM EAST ASIA

Kuki had been one of the participants with Miki Kiyoshi in Rickert’s seminar in Heidelberg in 1923, after which he spent three years in Paris studying French philosophy. He returned to Germany in the spring of 1927 in order to work with Husserl in Freiburg.⁶³ After meeting Heidegger at Husserl’s home, however, Kuki was sufficiently impressed by the younger philosopher that he followed him to Marburg later that year in order to continue sitting in on his classes.⁶⁴ Apparently, Kuki was already acquainted with Heidegger’s philosophy, since it is mentioned in the first draft of his manuscript on the idea of *iki*, which he had completed in Paris the previous year.⁶⁵ His *Haidegg no tetsugaku (The Philosophy of Heidegger)* from 1933 would be the first book-length study of Heidegger’s thought to be published in any language.

Among the Japanese thinkers who visited Heidegger in the 1920s it was Kuki who seems to have made the most forceful impression.⁶⁶ Reinhard May’s discussion has pointed out that the major role played by Kuki and his ideas in Heidegger’s ‘Conversation’ on language is quite disproportional to their part in

the actual conversation on which the text was based. Nevertheless, the Inquirer's opening statement—'To Count Kuki belongs my enduring remembrance'—sounds like a genuine expression of the author's feelings. It also rings true, in view of Kuki's reputed charisma, when the Inquirer remarks that the conversations 'unfolded freely and spontaneously [*wie ein freies Spiel*] in our home, where Count Kuki sometimes came with his wife, who would wear traditional Japanese dress'—and that 'the East Asian world would thereby shine more radiantly' (*WL 4/US 89*). In view of the major element of free invention in Heidegger's 'Conversation', an attempt to reconstruct the content of the original conversations might do well to proceed from Kuki's side.⁶⁷

Heidegger's Inquirer says that the conversations concerned Kuki's notion of *iki* and, more broadly, 'the essential nature of *East Asian* art and poetry'. Kuki had, in fact, completed a first draft of his seminal work on *iki* in Paris the year before coming to Freiburg, under the title 'Iki no honhitsu' ('The Essence of *iki*'). What is surprising about this treatment, written the year before *Being and Time* was published, is that its methodology clearly derives from Heidegger's hermeneutics. (A note in the first chapter of the final [1930] version refers the reader to Heidegger's discussion of the phenomenology of *Dasein* as 'hermeneutic' at *SZ 37f*.) hashi Ry suke has resolved the puzzle by pointing out that a note in the Paris manuscript refers to Tanabe's essay of 1924 (mentioned above) 'A New Turn in Phenomenology'.⁶⁸ One can imagine that Heidegger's puzzlement over the notion of *iki* would have been tempered by the pleasant surprise that the author of a treatise on it had already adopted the hermeneutical method outlined in *Being and Time*, which had only just been published.

In *The Structure of 'iki'* Kuki distinguishes three 'moments' in the notion of *iki*, which he sees as being distinctive of East Asian cultures, and of Japanese culture in particular.⁶⁹ He goes on to suggest, however, that the French '*coquetterie*', supplemented by connotations of 'chic', 'elegance', and 'refinement', comes close to capturing the first of the three moments (*IK 11–12*). This coquetry has to do with a sexual attraction between a man and a woman that is cultivated without being consummated, and is defined as 'a dualistic attitude in which the unitary self posits the other sex opposite itself, constituting a possible relationship between itself and the other sex' (*IK 17*). Since the paradigm for this first moment is to be found in the relationship between the geisha and her patron in the 'gay quarter' of Yoshiwara in eighteenth-century Tokyo, it is not surprising that one finds no mention of this central aspect of *iki* in Heidegger's 'Conversation'. Indeed it would be hard to imagine an atmosphere more remote from Heidegger's milieu than the 'floating world' of Edo-period Japan. The only feature of this moment that might have appealed to him is Kuki's emphasis on coquetry as embodying the *possibility* of sexual union and his insistence that the phenomenon is destroyed if the possibility is allowed to become an actuality.⁷⁰

The other two moments of *iki*, into which coquetry can be, as it were, sublimated, are the ideal of *bushidō*, the 'way of the samurai warrior', and the

‘resignation’ (*akirame*) of Buddhism. Kuki writes: ‘Within *iki* the ideal of bushido is still very much alive’ (IK 19); and while he elucidates this ideal as a sublimation of the first moment with reference to the resolute pride of the geisha, it is important for our purposes to note that the major maxim of bushido is: ‘The way of the samurai is the way of death’. While the basic idea here is the warrior’s willingness to sacrifice his life for his lord, the more existential aspect of it is exemplified in the way the attitude of the warrior on entering combat is generalized to the rest of his behaviour: only by totally extirpating the drive for self-preservation, by fully embracing his death in advance, will the warrior be capable of fighting at the top of his form.⁷¹

Although this aspect of *iki* also goes unmentioned in Heidegger’s ‘Conversation’, another consideration makes it more likely that the bushido ideal was a topic of his actual conversations with Kuki. After his time in Marburg, Kuki went back to France, and in August 1928 he delivered two lectures in French at a colloquium at Pontigny under the title ‘Propos sur le temps’.⁷² Since these lectures must have been prepared while Kuki was in Marburg, it is likely that he discussed them with Heidegger—especially since the second talk, entitled ‘The Expression of the Infinite in Japanese Art’, deals precisely with what Heidegger’s ‘Inquirer’ would later refer to as ‘the essential nature of *East Asian* art and poetry’. In the first talk, ‘The Notion of Time and Repetition in Oriental Time’, Kuki deals mainly with Hindu and Buddhist ideas of temporality, but he also discusses bushido. The talk begins with a reference to Heidegger’s contention in *Being and Time* that “‘the primordial phenomenon” of time is the future...the *Sich-vorweg-sein* (being-ahead-of-itself)’.⁷³ It is possible that Heidegger was already acquainted with bushido, perhaps from conversations with Tanabe, but assuming that ‘the way of death’ came up in his conversations with Kuki, there must have been astonishment on both sides at the parallels with the existential conception of death in *Being and Time*. This characterization of the idea of ‘running forward’ to engage one’s death, in particular, reads like a passage from a Zen swordsmanship manual:

When *Dasein* by running forward to its death lets death assume power over it, it understands itself, free for death, in the superior power of its own finite freedom in order to...become clear-sighted for whatever might befall in the situation thus revealed.... Only a being that is essentially *futural* in its being, such that, free for its death and shattering itself [*zerschellend*] against it, it can let itself be thrown back on to its actual situation...can be *momentary* [augenblicklich] for ‘its time’.⁷⁴

One of the earlier sources in Europe for an understanding of bushido was the work of Kuki’s mentor Okakura Kakuzo, who introduced many of the underlying principles of Japanese culture to the West with the publication in English of *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* in 1903. Kuki’s second set of *propos* opens with a reference to Okakura, and he could hardly

have talked with Heidegger about Japanese art without recommending his mentor's work.⁷⁵ Heidegger certainly came across Okakura's name later, when he read *Zen: Der lebendige Buddhismus in Japan*, in the preface to which the editor recommends Okakura's *Die Ideale des Ostens* (Leipzig 1923) as 'a beautiful introduction to the history of Japanese culture' (p. xi).

Heinrich Petzet also cites Okakura in the context of a discussion of Heidegger's acquaintance with Asian thought. Apparently, Heidegger came to be very interested in Chinese and Japanese art, and when Petzet had to write a review of an exhibition of Zen paintings and drawings, Heidegger 'brought [his] attention to the literature on the subject that seemed to him important'.⁷⁶ Assuming that works by Okakura were among the literature Heidegger thought important, he will have learned from them much about Daoism and the Zen-inspired arts of Japan, such as Noh drama and *tanka* and *haiku* poetry (with which he was certainly familiar by the time he wrote the dialogue with the Japanese visitor). He would in any case have been introduced to these things by Kuki, since they figure prominently in the text of his talk on Japanese art.⁷⁷

To return to the idea of *iki*: the third moment, briefly, has to do with Buddhist resignation. Kuki writes that the 'background' of *iki* comprises two aspects:

the Buddhist worldview, which regards the ephemeral and impermanent as the realm of distinctions and emptiness and nirvana as that of assimilations, and also the religious view that preaches resignation in the face of evil and detached contemplation of fate (*IK* 21).

This idea of Kuki's may be the pretext for Heidegger's introduction of the idea of *Leere* (emptiness) into the 'Conversation'—though in connection with Noh drama, an art form far removed from the milieu of the Edo period exemplified by *iki*. If we recall that Tezuka, in his account of his hour with Heidegger, mentions Kuki only at the beginning and briefly, and says nothing whatsoever about the idea of *iki*, it seems likely that the 'Conversation' is indeed 'a kind of confession' in which Heidegger finally acknowledges his acquaintance with Japanese ideas to which Kuki had introduced him almost thirty years earlier.⁷⁸ If *iki* was not a topic of his conversation with Tezuka, since no German translation of Kuki's work was available, Heidegger would have had to cast his mind back quite some way in order to remember what Kuki had said about it—which no doubt explains why the explication of *iki* in the 'Conversation' bears so little relation to Kuki's own presentation of the idea.

Since Reinhard May has discussed this text in detail, as a simultaneous revelation and concealment of the East Asian influences on Heidegger's thought, it will suffice to adduce one further consideration in favour of regarding it as a kind of confession. At one point the Inquirer says to the Japanese that his visit is especially welcome since his experience in translating German literature (including Heidegger's essays on Hölderlin) into Japanese will have given him (the Japanese) 'a keener ear for *the questions that I addressed to your*

compatriots almost thirty-five years ago' (WL 8/US 94; emphasis added). The Inquirer then adds in his next speech the understatement: 'and yet I think that in the meantime I have learned a thing or two [*einiges*] to help me inquire better than several decades ago'. Let us simply recall that this dialogue, written thirty years after Heidegger's contact with Tanabe, Miki, and Kuki in the 1920s, contains the *only* references to Japanese ideas in Heidegger's works published in the West so far.

In the second of his talks for the Pontigny colloquium, Kuki quotes from no fewer than nine chapters of the *Dao de jing* (Laozi) and also refers to the other major classic of philosophical Daoism, the *Zhuangzi*, and at the conclusion of another talk given around the same time he mentions Zen, the Buddhist idea of nothingness, the polarity of *yin* and *yang* in the *I jing*, and the philosophy of Nishida (KS 72, 97). As Reinhard May has observed, (near complete) German translations of the Daoist classics had been available since 1870.⁷⁹ Heidegger was surely familiar with these texts even before his conversations with Kuki; but even if it were Kuki who first introduced him to Daoist ideas, Heidegger would have had to go no farther than the university library or bookshop in Marburg to find German editions of the relevant texts.

Another factor making the milieu of Marburg more conducive to research into things East Asian was the presence on the faculty there, when Heidegger joined it in 1923, of Rudolf Otto, a scholar famous for his research on mysticism and the idea of the numinous. Heidegger had long been interested in the texts of Meister Eckhart, and so he no doubt read an article Otto published in 1925 comparing Eckhart's ideas with Eastern mysticism.⁸⁰ This topic would receive an extended discussion in Otto's *Mysticism East and West*, the first German edition of which was published the following year. Also in 1925, Otto wrote a foreword to hazama and Faust's anthology, in which he speaks of Zen as the basis for the samurai code of bushido (pp. iv-v). He begins the foreword with a reference to his own earlier discussion of Zen based on texts published in *The Eastern Buddhist* (p. iii), a venerable journal founded in Kyoto shortly after the turn of the century. In that earlier essay Otto reports that Japanese philosophers consider Eckhart (as they do to this day) to be the Western thinker who comes closest to Zen.⁸¹

In his editor's preface August Faust makes a highly significant remark (p. xii) in the course of describing the preparations he and hazama engaged in before embarking on the extremely difficult work of translating Zen texts into a Western language. He reports that they read some texts in Western philosophy together, including at least one by Heinrich Rickert, and that some of the philosophical terminology employed in their translation was derived from Emil Lask. Rickert had been Heidegger's teacher at Freiburg (until 1916), and was the dedicatee of his *Habilitationsschrift*, while Heidegger acknowledges Lask's work as the most important influence on him at that time.⁸² A bizarre coincidence—that such alien texts as the classics of Chinese and Japanese Zen should become accessible to Heidegger through the linguistic idiom of his philosophical mentors!

By 1927, then, Heidegger had engaged in philosophical dialogue with three of the greatest thinkers of twentieth-century Japan, whose formidable intellects covered a range of fields: philosophy of science and religion (Tanabe), social and political thought (Miki), and metaphysics and aesthetics (Kuki). He had been introduced to the philosophy of Nishida, and had had ample opportunity to learn about the Buddhist idea of nothingness, the affinity between Meister Eckhart and Zen, and the basic ideas of Daoist thought.

SIGNS FROM THE ‘MIDDLE PERIOD’

The story of Heidegger’s relations with Japanese philosophers after his contact with Kuki Sh z in 1927–8 can be recounted fairly briefly. The year 1930 is important, not only because Heidegger is definitely known to have been familiar with Buber’s *Zhuangzi* by that time, but also because the first translation of Heidegger’s work into Japanese was made that year. (Another ‘first’ for the Japanese.) The Japanese edition of ‘What Is Metaphysics?’, which appeared a year after the original had been published, was translated by Yuasa Seinsoke, who had come to Germany in 1926 and stayed until the late 1930s. After studying with Karl Jaspers for a year in Heidelberg, Yuasa went to Freiburg in 1929 to study with Heidegger. In view of Reinhard May’s discussion in [Chapter 3](#) above, and of the manifold opportunities Heidegger had had by this time to learn about East Asian conceptions of nothingness from his Japanese colleagues, it is hardly surprising that the translation of ‘What Is Metaphysics?’ was—as Heidegger himself would later put it—‘understood immediately’ by its Japanese readers.⁸³ The philosopher to whom Heidegger wrote these words, Kojima Takehiko, had studied with Nishida and Tanabe in Kyoto, and had visited Heidegger at his home in Messkirch in 1955.⁸⁴

The news of a Japanese translation of his work and its enthusiastic acceptance in a country as culturally distant as Japan is likely to have encouraged Heidegger’s interest in East Asian ideas. The highly poetic form of the Daoist and Zen classics appears to have impressed Heidegger as much as their content. Even though, to borrow an image from a Ming dynasty writer (quoted by Okakura), a translation is like the reverse side of a brocade—all the threads are there, but without the subtlety of the colours or the design—these texts (the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* especially) are so poetic that much of their beauty can come across in translation. And indeed Heidegger’s encounter with them appears to have contributed to a twofold effect on his thinking: for one thing his prose begins to change from the uncompromisingly functional language of *Being and Time* to the more poetic evocations of ‘On the Essence of Truth’ (1930), and for another, he begins to develop one of the major themes of his mature thinking—concerning the closeness of philosophical thought and poetry.⁸⁵

In his lectures on metaphysics from the summer of 1935, Heidegger remarks that the only thing that is of the same order as philosophy and its thinking is *Dichtung*. Although they are not the same, he continues, the only people other

than philosophers who are able to talk about *das Nichts* are poets. In a pronouncement that could have issued from the pen of a commentator on the thinker-poet Bash (in whose work Heidegger developed a keen interest), he writes: ‘In the poetizing of the poet and the thinking of the thinker, there is always so much world-space bestowed that in it any thing whatsoever—a tree, a mountain, a house, a bird-call—completely loses its indifference and ordinariness’.⁸⁶

Heidegger’s *An Introduction to Metaphysics* contains what may be the first published references to the Japanese, but they appear simply in lists of examples of what there is (*Seiendes*). But when it comes to a discussion of philosophies that have ‘inquired about the ground of the things that are’, no mention is made of the East Asian traditions with which Heidegger was by that time quite familiar: only thinkers who think in the medium of Greek or German, ‘the most powerful and spiritual language[s] with regard to the possibility of thinking’,⁸⁷ are deemed capable of inquiring into that ground.

The Origin of the Work of Art’ from the following year (1936) constitutes Heidegger’s first and longest meditation on the topic of art and betokens a further shift in the direction of his thinking. The original stimulus for his engagement with this topic may well have been his conversations about art with Kuki in 1927 and 1928; this essay, at any rate, shows the most influence from East Asian thought among the works of the middle period. A shorthand (if rather immodest) way of showing this is to recommend a reading of my Thoughts on the Way’—part of which was intended as an excursus on resonances between Heidegger’s texts of 1935/6 and Daoist philosophical ideas—as a catalogue of the influences of Daoism on Heidegger’s thinking of the mid-1930s.⁸⁸ On the assumption that Heidegger had read the Richard Wilhelm translation of the *I jing* (published in 1923), one can, for example, see his idea of truth as the *Riss* denoting the interplay of *Welt* and *Erde* as an adaptation of the notion of the *dao* as the common source of the cyclical forces of *qian* and *kun* (which correspond closely to the forces of *yang* and *yin*).⁸⁹ In the light of Heidegger’s contact with Nishida’s ideas (as mediated by Tanabe and probably also by Kuki), an obscure but central passage in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ becomes clearer. In the course of a discussion of truth as the unconcealment produced by the struggle of world and earth, Heidegger says more about the *Lichtung*, the illuminated clearing that in *Being and Time* had been equated with *Dasein* and which now appears co-extensive with *Sein* itself and *das Nichts*.

Beings stand in Being [*Das Seiende steht im Sein*]....

And yet, beyond beings—though not away from them but this side of them—something Other is happening. Amidst beings in totality there is an open space. A clearing is there. From the perspective of beings it is ‘being-er’ than beings [*seiender als das Seiende*]. The open middle is thus not surrounded by beings, but the central illumining clearing itself encircles—like the Nothing we hardly know—all that is (*PLT 53/Hw 41*).

Here, complementary to the Daoist ideas, is something like the Zen Buddhist idea of nothingness: *mu*, or *k* —emptiness, distinct but not different from form. Heidegger's *Lichtung* may be seen as the German version of Nishida's *mu no basho*, or *topos* of nothingness.⁹⁰ Nishida had begun in the mid-1920s to use a striking image to express the way the *topos* of absolute nothingness 'backs' or 'lines' all the other spheres of human activity and thought, in the way the lining of a garment completes it but remains invisible from the outside.⁹¹

The topic of Heidegger's relations to Nishida is a fascinating one that calls for more research. D. T. Suzuki reports that in a conversation with Heidegger in 1953 he asked him what he thought of Nishida's philosophy; Heidegger's response was: 'Nishida is Western'.⁹² One wonders about the basis for this remarkable comment. Four essays by Nishida had appeared in German by that time, three of them in a rather opaque translation; but this judgement of Heidegger's may also derive from conversations with his Japanese visitors. His near silence concerning Nishida echoes his near silence concerning Tanabe: although Heidegger never had personal contact with the former, Nishida's niece, Takahashi Fumi, studied with Heidegger in the later 1930s, and his son-in-law, Kaneko Takez , visited him during the 1960s.⁹³

To return to 'The Origin of the Work of Art', Heidegger drops an enigmatic allusion to the source of that essay in a *Zusatz* he added in 1956. (The editor of the new edition of *Holzwege*, in which the supplement is included after the *Nachwort*, remarks that 'Heidegger repeatedly emphasized the importance of this 'supplement' in conversation'.)⁹⁴ The *Zusatz* is concerned mainly with resolving the apparent opposition between the 'establishing of truth' (in the work of art) and a 'letting the advent of truth occur', and emphasizes that 'this *Lassen* is not any kind of passivity but'—just like *wu wei* in Daoism—'the highest kind of doing'. The last paragraph contains a striking remark:

It remains an inevitable difficulty that the reader, who naturally comes upon the essay from the outside, at first and in the long run does not think of and interpret its content from the secret source of what is to be thought [*nicht aus dem verschwiegenen Quellbereich des Zudenkenden*].

One wonders why the source of what is to be thought should be so secret—if only because *Quelle* is the term Heidegger uses soon after in discussing the possible basis for dialogue between Western and East Asian thought.⁹⁵

After this highly productive period from 1935 to 1936, another visitor from Japan arrived, Nishitani Keiji, a student of Nishida's with an intense interest in Nietzsche. Nishitani was to stay in Germany until 1938, attending Heidegger's seminars in Freiburg and having many informal conversations with him at his home.⁹⁶ Nishitani relates how in 1938 he presented Heidegger with a copy of the first volume of D. T. Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, only to find that he had already read the book and was eager to discuss it.⁹⁷ In conversation in Kyoto in 1989, Professor Nishitani recounted how Heidegger had given him 'a standing

invitation' to come to his house on Saturday afternoons to talk about Zen. Heidegger was apparently most interested in the striking imagery that characterizes so many of the classical Zen texts. He would have found excellent examples in the hazama and Faust collection, which translates excerpts from such works as *The Gateless Gate (Mumonkan)* and *The Blue Cliff Records (Hekiganroku)* that are rife with wild Zen imagery. Nishitani also concurs with other East Asian interlocutors in saying that Heidegger was always an avid and insightful questioner when it came to the topic of Asian thought.⁹⁸ In a brief note written on the occasion of Heidegger's death,

Nishitani made the following pregnant observation:

With respect to metaphysics Heidegger wanted to go a step further and inquire into what lies beneath it. It became clear that this attempt made direct contact with Eastern insights, such as those of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Zen Buddhism. For this reason Heidegger used to question me about Zen Buddhism.⁹⁹

Let me conclude by remarking upon an interesting reaction to some of Heidegger's middle period works on the part of Karl Jaspers, who is an important figure in this story as a long-standing friend of Heidegger's whose admiration for Asian thought was as open as the latter's was concealed. Jaspers was spending the summer of 1949 in the 'Nietzsche country', when he wrote to Heidegger from St Moritz on 6 August to thank him for sending three recently published books: the new edition of *What Is Metaphysics?* with the introduction and afterword, and the second editions of *On the Essence of Truth* and the *Letter on Humanism*.¹⁰⁰ Jaspers writes:

Many questions arise for me. I have still not managed to get to the mid-point of the whole thing. It helps somewhat to think of Asian ideas, which I've been interested in for years, knowing well that I lack a penetrating understanding, and yet finding myself wonderfully stimulated from that direction. Your 'Being', the 'clearing of Being', your reversal of our relation to Being into Being's relation to us, the remainder of Being itself—I seem to have perceived something of the sort in Asia. That you are driving toward that at all, and—according to your interpretation of *Being and Time*—always have done, is extraordinary.

It is most interesting, in view of Reinhard May's discussion of the *topoi* of Being and the clearing, that Jaspers (whose understanding of Asian thought had certainly become more 'penetrating' since his characterization of Buddhism as 'nihilistic' and 'pessimistic' in 1919), should find Heidegger's discussion of these *topoi* reminiscent of 'something of the sort in Asia'. Nor is it surprising that Heidegger should decline to take up the cue.

What you say about Asian ideas is exciting [*aufregend*]: a Chinese who attended my lectures on Heraclitus and Parmenides from 1943–44 [Paul Hsiao] also found resonances with Eastern thinking. Where I am unfamiliar with the language I remain sceptical [*skeptisch*]; and I became all the more so when the Chinese, who is himself a Christian theologian and philosopher, translated a few verses of Laotse with me. Through questioning I learned how completely alien that kind of language [*Sprachwesen*] is; we then abandoned the attempt. Nevertheless there is something very exciting here, and in my opinion something essential for the future.... The resonances presumably have a quite different root: since 1910 I have been accompanied by the master of learning and life Eckhardt; this and the ever-renewed attempt to think through the *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai* of Parmenides; the constant question of the *auto*, which is neither *noein* nor *einai*; the lack of the subject-object relationship in the Greeks brought me—along with my own thinking—to something that looks like a turn-around [*Umkehrung*] and yet is something different and prior.¹⁰¹

It is clear from the second half of the paragraph that what Heidegger finds ‘exciting’ is the prospect of exploring the nature of Asian languages and ideas, rather than his friend’s finding resonances between Heidegger’s ideas and Asian thought. (Though one could perhaps stretch the meaning of *aufregend* to take it to suggest that Heidegger finds Jaspers’ association of his thinking with Asian ideas *annoying*.)

While Heidegger’s point about Meister Eckhart and the Greeks is well taken, there is nevertheless still something disingenuous about his deprecatory account of the translation project with Paul Hsiao and his peremptory dismissal of Jaspers’ finding of resonances with Asian ideas. Given his familiarity with Daoism two decades before (at the time of the composition of the first two texts he had sent Jaspers), and that by ten years earlier he had become quite familiar—through the tutelage of Nishitani—with Zen ideas, Heidegger’s flat denial of any ‘resonances with Eastern thinking’ speaks volumes.

Jaspers actually mentions ‘Laotse’ in his subsequent reply; but since this elicits no further comment he sensibly drops the topic.

AMBIVALENCE OVER EAST-WEST DIALOGUE

Since Heidegger’s eventual acknowledgement that he had learned something from his contact with thinkers from Japan took place some thirty years after the fact, Reinhard May has scrutinized the text of that acknowledgement for a kind of confession and found one.¹⁰² In view of the amount of contact Heidegger had with East Asian thinkers, the fact of his acquaintance with philosophical texts from that tradition, and the keen intensity with which he used to question his

Japanese and Chinese interlocutors about those texts, the references to East Asian ideas in his published works are indeed remarkably few. As one might expect, under the circumstances, they are informed by a certain amount of ambivalence. As has been pointed out above (Chapter 1, note 7) there are, aside from the ‘Conversation’ (1959), only three instances, in texts published during the previous two years.

In a discussion of the term *Ereignis* in ‘Der Satz der Identität’ (1957), Heidegger writes that the word ‘can no more be translated than the Greek word *logos* or the Chinese Tao’.¹⁰³ At the time, few readers of the essay would have known that Heidegger was speaking from experience—having spent a summer, ten years earlier, working with Paul Hsiao on translating chapters of the *Laozi* containing the word *dao*.¹⁰⁴ In 1958 Heidegger completed the essay ‘Das Wesen der Sprache’, and Reinhard May has shown how the two paragraphs on *Tao*, ‘the key word in the poetic thinking of Laotse’ (WL 92/US 198), shed light on Heidegger’s frequent use of the key word *Weg* in his writings before and since. Finally, an essay ‘Grundsätze des Denkens’, published in a journal the same year—and not included in any subsequent edition of Heidegger’s works—cites the line from the *Laozi*. ‘Whoever knows his brightness veils himself in his darkness’.¹⁰⁵ If the jaded reader takes this as an ironical comment on Heidegger’s attitude towards Light from the East, the less cynical observer will still have to judge his mentions of Daoist and Japanese thought as significant in their grudging paucity.

As if to supplement these scant acknowledgements, Heidegger allows himself the occasional discussion of the possibility of dialogue between the Western and East Asian philosophical traditions. In view of his reticence concerning how much his own thinking has appropriated from East Asian thought, it is no surprise to find him vacillating on the issue of cross-cultural philosophical dialogue.

In the essay ‘Science and Reflection’ from 1953, Heidegger emphasizes that every meditation on the present situation must be rooted in ‘our historical *Dasein*’ by way of ‘a dialogue with the Greek thinkers and their language’—and laments that such a dialogue has not yet begun.¹⁰⁶ He then adds, almost in passing: ‘[This dialogue] has hardly even been prepared yet, and remains in turn the precondition for our inevitable dialogue with the East Asian world’. Despite its putative inevitability, the Inquirer in the ‘Conversation’ expresses doubts as to the very possibility of such a dialogue, on the grounds that if language is the house of Being ‘we Europeans presumably inhabit a quite different house from the East Asians’ (WL 5/US 90).

I do not yet see whether what I am trying to think as the essential nature [Wesen] of language is *also* adequate to the nature of East Asian language—whether in the end, which would at the same time be the beginning, thinking experience can be reached by an essence of language that would ensure that Western European and East Asian saying can enter into

dialogue in such a way that there sings something that wells up from a single source [*Quelle*] (WL 8/US 94).

Later in the conversation the Inquirer appears to be more convinced that ‘for East Asian and European peoples the essential nature of language (Sprachwesen) remains quite different’ (WL 23/US 113). The Japanese visitor, however, seems decidedly more sanguine. In talking about his experience of translating Heidegger’s essay on Hölderlin’s *Heimkunft* and some poems by Kleist, he says:

In the course of the translating it often seemed as if I were wandering back and forth between two different language-essences, and yet in such a way that every now and then something shone forth that made me think that the essential source [*Wesensquell*] of fundamentally different languages might be the same.¹⁰⁷

Since ‘the Japanese’ in this dialogue is at least ninety per cent Heidegger, we can understand this discrepancy as representing genuine ambivalence on the part of the author rather than a burst of objective reportage or a sudden access of ability to write dramatic dialogue.

In the context of a discussion of the possibility of ‘planetary thinking’ in ‘Zur Seinsfrage’ (1955), Heidegger remarks that neither side is equal yet to the encounters that the cultivation of planetary thinking will require: ‘This holds equally for the European and East Asian languages, and above all for the realm of their possible dialogue. Neither of them can by itself open up and ground this realm’ (QB 107/Wm 252). A hint of how this realm might begin to be opened up is given in a passage quoted earlier from the 1959 essay ‘Hölderlins Erde und Himmel’, where Heidegger speaks in vatic tones of the ‘great beginning’ of Western thought.

There can of course be no going back to it. Present as something waiting over against us, the great beginning becomes something small. But nor can this small something remain any longer in its Western isolation. It is opening itself to the few other great beginnings that belong with their Own to the Same of the beginning of the infinite relationship, in which the earth is included.¹⁰⁸

The opening anticipated here must at the very least be an opening to the ‘great beginning’ of East Asian thought, wherever one locates it.

There is more talk of beginnings in the open letter of 1963 to Kojima Takehiko, also quoted earlier, where Heidegger writes of the necessity for ‘the step back’ (*der Schritt zurück*) if human beings are to escape the domination of positivism, as exemplified in the tendency for *das Stellen*, and find the way by which they can come into their own:

The step back does not mean a flight of thinking into bygone ages, and least of all a reanimation of the beginnings of Western philosophy. ... The step back is rather the step out of the track in which the progress and regress of ordering [*Bestellen*] take place (*JH* 224).

Backtracking, a step off the path could well bring us back to one of those ‘other great beginnings’ mentioned earlier—and would thus be a prime instance of *reculer pour mieux sauter*.

It is in the next paragraph of this letter that Heidegger talks about the immediate comprehension in Japan of his discussion of nothingness in ‘What Is Metaphysics?’—which suggests that the step out of the progress-regress opposition (which might be accomplished by our opening up to another great beginning) could take us into the realm of nothingness as emptiness. This surmise is confirmed by a comment at the end of the letter, where he alludes to the possibility of a contemplative reconciliation with

the still hidden mystery of the power of *Stellen*...[which] is no longer to be accomplished by Western European philosophy up till now, but also not without it—that is, not unless its newly appropriated tradition is brought on to the appropriate path (*JH* 226).

Again the implication is that the reappropriation of the Western philosophical tradition will require a preliminary move out of it, optimally by way of a tradition innocent of the metaphysical ideas that gave rise to the modern Western worldview.

Confirmation for this surmise would appear to come from a remark Heidegger made two years later in the *Der Spiegel* interview of 1966, where he alludes to the possibility that ‘some day there might surface in Russia and in China ancient traditions of a “thinking” that might help make it possible for human beings to have a free relationship to the technical world’.¹⁰⁹ Advocates of philosophical dialogue with East Asian traditions will be disappointed, however, by Heidegger’s next move with respect to this issue (a page later), which seems to constitute a less helpful *Schritt zurück*. He is responding to a query about an earlier pronouncement of his concerning the ‘question mark placed before the task of the Germans’ by Hölderlin and Nietzsche:

I am convinced that it is only from the same part of the world in which the world of modern technology arose that a reversal can come about, and that it cannot happen by way of an adoption of Zen Buddhism or any other oriental experience of the world. In order to think differently we need the help of the European tradition and a reappropriation of it. Thinking is only transformed by a thinking that is of the same descent and provenance.

As a dismissal of a naive substitution of Eastern wisdom for Western thinking, this passage is clearly unobjectionable. However, the point of a number of Heidegger's earlier and later remarks on this topic seems to be precisely that a proper 'reappropriation' of the European tradition would occur by way of a 'step back out of [that] track' and an opening towards an 'other great beginning'—and that at this point in its history European thinking requires the injection of ideas from an *other* source. A psychologically inclined hermeneutics would want to ask what complex prompted Heidegger to bring up the topic of Zen Buddhism, which he had never mentioned in four decades of published works, only to dismiss its relevance in a tone that smacks of Eurocentric isolationism. This talk of a unilateral reappropriation of the European tradition rings somewhat hollow in view of the preceding pronouncements concerning the unfeasibility of precisely that—and the desirability of a bilateral approach involving East Asian thought.

This sole mention of Zen Buddhism recalls a reference to it by a German friend of Heidegger's, as recounted in the often dismissed anecdote by William Barrett: 'A German friend of Heidegger told me that one day when he visited Heidegger he found him reading one of Suzuki's books. "If I understand this man correctly", Heidegger remarked, "this is what I have been trying to say in all my writings"'.¹¹⁰ This book was probably the first volume of Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, which contains several discussions of the Buddhist notion of nothingness as well as numerous references to Meister Eckhart, and which Nishitani in 1938 discovered Heidegger already owned. In any case, Heidegger's remark takes on a new significance in the light of his familiarity with the contents of the *hazama* and *Faust* volume.

Suspicious that Heidegger may be speaking differently to a domestic audience and to the Japanese are confirmed by a passage written in 1968, in which he appears to be optimistic again about the possibility of opening up a realm for thinking dialogue between the cultures. In the foreword to the Japanese translation of his lecture 'Zur Frage nach der Bestimmung der Sache des Denkens' he writes:

By thinking the clearing and characterizing it adequately, we reach a realm that can perhaps make it possible to bring a transformed European thinking into a fruitful engagement with East Asian 'thinking'. Such an engagement could help with the task of saving the essential nature of human being from the threat of an extreme technological reduction and manipulation of human *Dasein*.¹¹¹

Given the importance of that task, and Heidegger's dialogue with Japanese philosophers over a period of forty years, one would like to read the 'doves' feet' (as they are called in German) around the second 'thinking' not as indicative of second-rate thought but as acknowledging a difference between equals.

In the course of putting together the collection *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, I had the opportunity for a conversation with Professor H.-G. Gadamer. I asked him why, in view of Heidegger's long-term acquaintance with and enthusiasm for Daoist thought (the question and response apply equally well to the case of Zen), there were so few mentions of Daoism in his published texts. He replied that a scholar of Heidegger's generation and calibre would be reluctant to write anything about a philosophy if he were unable to read the relevant texts in the original language. In view of the foregoing exposition, this response may seem disingenuous. (A similar inability certainly did not deter predecessors from Leibniz to Nietzsche from writing about Asian ideas and saying some interesting things about them.) It is, of course, possible to understand Heidegger's reticence as stemming from an intellectual modesty, from his being unsure whether he really understands these ideas from an alien tradition couched in a language so different from those with which he is familiar. But on the other hand, he did have numerous opportunities—which he apparently seized with alacrity—to question some of the foremost Japanese thinkers of the century precisely about the basic philosophical ideas of the East Asian tradition.

At any rate, the topic calls for further research and close attention to any relevant evidence. In view of the success with which Heidegger's translation work on the *Laozi* was kept secret, however, little of substance is to be expected from his *Nachlass*. While it is possible in the case of Nietzsche, ironically, to determine many of the books he borrowed from the libraries at Schulpforta and the University of Basel, inquiries into Heidegger's borrowing habits at the libraries at Freiburg and Marburg are met with a flat denial ('Keinerlei Unterlagen!') that any pertinent records exist. Corresponding research in Japan is hampered by the fact that so few letters and diaries belonging to the relevant figures have been preserved. In addition, contemporary Japanese scholars seem strangely diffident towards the suggestion that the sympathetic resonances—so often remarked upon there—between Heidegger's thought and ideas from the Japanese tradition may be due in part to bi-directional influence. Perhaps because Heidegger is the highest divinity in the Japanese philosophical pantheon it is difficult to imagine that some of his powers could have derived from the philosophically less prolific indigenous tradition.

Nothing in this essay is intended to deny that Heidegger produced one of the most profound, complex, and influential philosophies of the twentieth century: the question is whether the provenance of that philosophy is as exclusively Graeco-Teutonic as its author would have us believe. Even at this stage of the investigation, the conclusion is unavoidable that Heidegger was less than generous in acknowledging how much he learned from the East Asian tradition.¹¹² But what is most important here are the implications for how we read Heidegger's texts—especially as more comparative studies are undertaken, but also in the context of the Western tradition *simpliciter*. The possibility that he may have absorbed a considerable amount from an alien philosophical but non-metaphysical tradition prompts, at the very least, the adoption of a different

perspective on Heidegger's claims—however justified they may be—to have overcome or subverted the tradition of Western metaphysics.

In the absence of confirmatory texts (letters, transcripts, and so on), scholars with a stake in regarding Heidegger's philosophy as exclusively Western in its genealogy may persist in taking the similarities between his ideas and those of his Japanese colleagues as purely coincidental. Taken on its own, the present essay could then be understood as a study of one of those remarkable coincidences in the history of ideas, where similar patterns of thinking are developed simultaneously by different thinkers in the absence of any influence. But as a complement to the evidence adduced by Reinhard May in the main body of this volume, this essay is a call for a reorientation of our assessment of Heidegger's place in the 'planetary thinking' that is beginning to appear on our horizons as the millennium draws near.

NOTES

- 1 I am grateful to Professor Michiko Yusa of Western Washington University for providing a number of very helpful comments on the penultimate draft of this essay. Some of the material in what follows appeared earlier, under the more pugnacious title 'Heidegger and Japanese Philosophy: How Much Did He Know, and When Did He Know It?', in Christopher Macann, ed., *Heidegger: Critical Assessments* (London 1992), vol. 4:377–406—an effort that is superseded by the essay presented here.
- 2 In addition to the references to Zhuangzi mentioned by Reinhard May in 1.1 above, Heidegger quotes in full the story of the useless tree from the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi* in the opening section of a lecture delivered in July 1962 and published posthumously. See 'Überlieferte Sprache und technische Sprache' (Traditional Language and Technical Language'), edited by Hermann Heidegger (Erker 1989), 7–8. Heidegger uses the Richard Wilhelm translation and refers also to the two further episodes concerning useless trees in Chapter 4. It is interesting to note that later in the lecture (p. 21) Heidegger quotes Wilhelm von Humboldt on language (a passage from *On Language*).
- 3 See, for example, Jacques Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, translated by Michael Gendre (Albany 1991).
- 4 See Theodore Kisiel's monumental *The Genesis of Heidegger's 'Being and Time'* (Berkeley 1993), and Theodore Kisiel and John Van Buren, eds, *Reading Heidegger from the Start* (Albany 1994).
- 5 Thoughts on the Way: *Being and Time* via Lao-Chuang', in *HAT*, 105–44.
- 6 See *Kuki Sh z zensh (The Complete Works of Kuki Sh z)* (Tokyo 1952), *Bekkan* (supplemental volume), 291. We learn here that in October 1922 Kuki attended Rickert's course 'From Kant to Nietzsche: Historical Introduction to Contemporary Problems', as well as two courses on Kant. The following semester he sat in on two more courses given by Rickert, 'Introduction to Epistemology and Metaphysics' and 'Philosophy of Art'.
- 7 See Tada Michitar , 'Kaisetsu' (Commentary), in *'Iki' no k z* (Tokyo 1979), 202.

- 8 In a list of participants in Husserl's small seminar in the summer semester of 1922, Yama[no]uchi is named along with four other Japanese scholars, and also Karl Löwith, who would also later become a student of Heidegger (Karl Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik. Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls* [Den Haag 1977], 259). Yamanouchi is cited as the first Japanese to study with Heidegger by a later student, Tsujimura K ichi, in a speech on the occasion of Heidegger's sixtieth birthday (reprinted in *JH* 159–65).
- 9 There are two English translations of this text: *A Study of Good*, translated by Valdo Viglielmo (Tokyo 1960), and *An Inquiry into the Good*, translated by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven 1990). It may be fair to say that Nishida is the only major figure in Japanese philosophy of the first half of the twentieth century *not* to have been influenced by Heidegger (perhaps in part because he was twenty years Heidegger's senior).
- 10 See the discussion of Yamanouchi's critique in Nishitani Keiji, *Nishida Kitar* , translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and James W. Heisig (Berkeley 1991), 198–205.
- 11 A brief account of Miki's relations with Heidegger can be found in Yuasa Yasuo, 'Modern Japanese Philosophy and Heidegger', in *HAT* 155–74, 159–65.
- 12 See James W. Heisig, 'Foreword', in Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Meta-noetics*, translated by Takeuchi Yoshinori with Valdo Viglielmo and James W. Heisig (Berkeley 1986); a translation of *Zanged toshite no tetsugaku*, in *Tanabe Hajime zensh* 9:3–269 (Tokyo 1972). This is the only book of Tanabe's to have been published in English translation so far, but some helpful discussions of Tanabe's ideas can be found in Taitetsu Unno and James W. Heisig, eds, *The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime: The Metanoetic Imperative* (Berkeley 1990).
- 13 In September 1933 Tanabe wrote a commentary on Heidegger's *Rektorsrede*, 'The Self-Assertion of the German University', in which he mildly criticized Heidegger's 'championing [of] the racial significance of German academia'. It was published in three instalments in the *Asahi Shinbun* in October the same year, under the title 'Kiki no tetsugaku ka tetsugaku no kiki ka' ('Philosophy of Crisis or Crisis of Philosophy?'). A German translation by Elmar Weinmayr is to be found in *JH* 139–45.
- 14 A note in Schuhmann's *Husserl-Chronik* reads: 'SS [summer semester] 1923: Hasime [*sic.*] Tanabe nimmt an H[usserl]'s Seminar teil' (p. 269). Michiko Yusa has drawn my attention to a cordial letter from Nishida to Husserl (20 May 1925) in which Nishida gives news of both Yamanouchi and Tanabe. See Karl Schuhmann, ed., *Edmund Husserl Briefwechsel*, vol. 6 (Dordrecht 1994), 307. Volume 4 of the *Briefwechsel* contains six letters from Tanabe to Husserl written between 1922 and 1925 (pp. 509–16).
- 15 Heisig, 'Foreword', in *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, xi; confirmed in a conversation with Professor Yoshinori Takeuchi in June 1992.
- 16 See *JH* 181–8. Yuasa (in *HAT*) discusses Tanabe only briefly, and his judgement that the influence of Heidegger on Tanabe is 'relatively small' may understate the case. Tsujimura K ichi's claim that Tanabe maintained 'a thinking dialogue with Heidegger's thought until his [Tanabe's] death in 1962' (*JH* 159) seems closer to the mark. See, for example, the references to Heidegger in *Philosophy as*

- Metanoetics*, and also the discussion of Heidegger's influence on Tanabe by hashi Ry suke in *JH* 25–6.
- 17 'Die neue Wende in der Phänomenologie—Heideggers Phänomenologie des Lebens', translated by Johannes Laube, in *JH* 89–108. Tanabe's essay first appeared in the journal *Shis* in October 1924, and is reprinted in *Tanabe Hajime zensh*, 4:17–34.
 - 18 *GA* 63:114.
 - 19 'Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles', edited by Hans-Ulrich Lessing, *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 6 (1989):235–74; English translation by Michael Baur, 'Phenomenological Interpretations with respect to Aristotle', *Man and World* 25 (1992):355–93.
 - 20 *GA* 63:31–2.
 - 21 Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, translated by William McNeill (Oxford 1992), 11–13 and 21. See also the *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* of 1925 (*GA* 20:403), where the nothingness of *die Welt* is related, by way of the revelatory phenomenon of *Angst*, to the absolute nothingness of death in a way that prefigures the fuller treatment in *Being and Time* (§§ 49, 53, 57, 68b).
 - 22 'Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles', 244; 'Phenomenological Interpretations', 365 (translation modified).
 - 23 'Anmerkungen zu Karl Jaspers *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*', in *Wm*, *CA* 9: 1–44. For an account of Heidegger's debt to Georg Simmel, in the context of an illuminating discussion of the problematic of death in *Being and Time*, see David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington 1992), [Chapter 2](#).
 - 24 'Anmerkungen zu Karl Jaspers', *GA* 9:25–6. (There is a minor misprint in the second sentence quoted from Jaspers, where Heidegger's text has 'Zugrundegehen des einen Wesens' instead of 'des eigenen Wesens' for 'of one's own being'.)
 - 25 In his footnote Heidegger emphasizes, in turn, pp. 259–70 of the third edition (Berlin 1925) of *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, though the citations in the 'Anmerkungen' were, naturally, to the first edition. Subsequent references to this text in the present essay will be to the third edition.
 - 26 Tanabe Hajime, 'Todesdialektik', in *Martin Heidegger zum siebzigsten Geburtstag: Festschrift* (Pfullingen 1959), 93–133.
 - 27 According to the Japanologist Wolfram Naumann, Heidegger and Tanabe 'regarded one another as mutually giving and receiving partners in a community of thinking' ('Japan als Gegenstand der Forschung', in *Einsichten. Forschung an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München* [1995], 1:32–5, 34).
 - 28 Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, translated by Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands 1987), [Chapter 2](#).
 - 29 John Van Buren, 'Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther,' in Kisiel and Van Buren, eds, *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, 159–74.
 - 30 Augustine, *De civitate dei*, 13.10. See the careful elucidation of this point, and of the parallel with Heidegger, in Johann Kreuzer, *Pulchritudo. Vom Erkennen Gottes bei Augustin* (Munich 1995), 176ff. John Van Buren notes that a loose page that has been published with Heidegger's first Aristotle course from the end of 1921

(GA 61:182) contains a quotation from Luther's *Commentary on Genesis* in which he calls life a constant *cursus ad mortem* ('Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther', 171).

- 31 A significant anticipation of the role of death in Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* is to be found in an earlier phenomenology—in Hegel's account of the role of death in the attainment of freedom of self-consciousness in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. We read in the preface that it is only by refusing to shy away from 'the monstrous power of the negative...Death...the most terrible' that the life of spirit comes fully into its own: 'It attains its truth only insofar as it finds itself in absolute dismemberment [*Zerrissenheit*]. The life of spirit must allow itself to be torn away from 'natural life', in order to 'bear death and preserve itself in death' (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [Hamburg 1952], 29–30; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller [Oxford 1977], 19 [§ 32]—translation modified). See also the later discussion of death in the section 'Absolute Freedom and Terror', where the negation of the self in absolute freedom comes about by 'meaningless death, the pure terror of the negative'—but where this negation may, as 'universal will', be transformed into its opposite: 'and meaningless death, the unfulfilled negativity of the self, turns in the inner concept into absolute positivity'.

In the struggle between Master and Slave, each can attain the freedom of self-consciousness only through an engagement with death. The account of the slavish consciousness' attainment of self-consciousness vividly prefigures some of the corresponding language in *Being and Time*: 'For this consciousness has had anxiety [*Angst*] not over this or that, nor for this moment [*Augenblick*] or that, but for its entire being; for it has felt the fear of death, the absolute master. It has thereby been subject to an inner dissolution, has trembled throughout its being, and everything stable within it has been shaken' (B.IV.A).

- 32 Heidegger uses this phrase in discussing the letters of the Apostle Paul in his lecture course 'Einführung in die Phänomenologie der Religion' (Freiburg, winter semester 1920–1); referred to by Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, Chapter 2.
- 33 Though *Philosophy as Metanoetics* was not published until 1946, the manuscript had been completed in 1944.
- 34 Tanabe Hajime, '9:397ff, esp. 474. See James Heisig, 'The "Self That is Not a Self"', in Unno and Heisig, eds, *The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime*, 288 (where a misprint gives the pages of the Tanabe passage as 190ff). Heisig mentions the influence of Heidegger here, but suggests that 'Heidegger could not have [related the practice of death to] the story of Jesus and the Zen samurai ideal'. In the light of the considerations contained in the present volume, one might be tempted to say that perhaps Heidegger could have, after all.
- 35 This essay is available in an English translation by Valdo Viglielmo in *Philosophical Studies of Japan* 1 (1959):1–12.
- 36 Tanabe Hajime, 'Memento Mori', 3. Heidegger cites a passage from one of Rilke's letters from Muzot which emphasizes that the *Duino Elegies* are concerned with the essential unity of the affirmation of life and of death: 'Death is the *side of life* that is turned away from us, unilluminated by us: we must try to achieve the greatest awareness of our *Dasein*, which is at home in *both inseparable realms, inexhaustibly nourished from both...*' (Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe* [Frankfurt 1950],

- 896). Heidegger quotes only the first clause of this sentence—which is strange, since the second part seems to offer a more appropriate basis for the commentary which follows: ‘Death and the realm of the dead belong to the totality of beings as its other side’ (‘What Are Poets For?’, in *PLT 124/Hw 279*).
- 37 *Tanabe Hajime zensh* , 13:525–80.
- 38 hashi Ry suke, ‘Die frühe Heidegger-Rezeption in Japan’, in *JH* 23–37, 26. hashi is surely right to suggest that Tanabe’s 1924 essay on Heidegger, when read in the light of Tanabe’s later writings on the topic of death, can be seen as the first step in his ‘negative’ Heidegger-reception.
- 39 See Hans Waldenfels, *Absolute Nothingness*, translated by J.W. Heisig (New York 1980), 37–9. Nishida practised Zen meditation regularly from around 1896 to 1908 or so. Though he wrote most of the manuscript of *An Inquiry into the Good* during the last few years of this period, he had apparently given up formal sitting by the time of its publication in 1911, when the development of his own philosophy was well under way. The characterization of Nishida’s enterprise as the attempt to work out a new philosophy of Zen Buddhism in Western philosophical terms may be overly simple but it is not entirely misleading. (See also above, **3.1.2**)
- 40 See Nishitani, *Nishida Kitar* , Chapter 9, ‘The Philosophy of Nishida and Tanabe’.
- 41 Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good*, Chapter 14 (James Heisig’s translation in *Absolute Nothingness*, 40–1).
- 42 *An Inquiry into the Good*, Chapter 31 (Heisig translation, p. 41). Nishida’s understanding of God, conditioned as it is by the Buddhist idea of *mu*, is one Heidegger would not have found uncongenial.
- 43 Nishida Kitar , *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness*, translated by Valdo H. Viglielmo with Takeuchi Yoshinori and Joseph S.O’Leary (Albany 1987), 140–1; a translation of *Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei*, in *Nishida Kitar zensh* , vol. 2 (Tokyo 1978). (Heidegger’s attention may have been drawn to this work, if not by Tanabe, then by Kuki Sh z , who refers to it in a lecture he gave shortly after his sojourn in Marburg: see ‘Propos on Japan’, in Stephen Light, *Sh z Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre* [Carbondale 1987—hereafter *KS*], 72, which also contains translations of some of Kuki’s brief essays from the period just before he met Heidegger.) In the previous section Nishida cites Max Stirner’s *The Ego and its Own*, and adds: ‘No concept can capture and no quality can exhaust the self, which comes from, and returns to, creative nothingness’ (p. 134). For a discussion of the remarkable parallels between this idea of Stirner’s and late Buddhist conceptions of nothingness, see Nishitani Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, translated by Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara (Albany 1990), [Chapter 6](#).
- 44 For Nishida’s familiarity with the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, see Lothar Knauth, ‘Life is Tragic—The Diary of Nishida Kitar ’, *Monumenta Nipponica* 20 (1967):335–8, 349, referring to entries from the end of 1897. For a fuller account of Nishida’s youth, see Valdo Humbert Viglielmo, ‘Nishida Kitar : The Early Years’, in Donald H. Shively, ed., *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture* (Princeton 1971).
- 45 *Nishida Kitar zensh* , 3:133, 141. I am grateful to my colleague Valdo Viglielmo for showing me draft translations of this essay and of the essays in *Hataraku mono kara miru mono e*, done by him and David Dilworth.
- 46 See, for example, *Nishida Kitar zensh* , 4:155, 207, 213, 218, 224–5, 38ff.

- 47 For an insightful comparison of aspects of Nishida's philosophy with Heidegger's thought, see Elmar Weinmayr, 'Denken im Übergang—Kitarō Nishida und Martin Heidegger', in *JH* 39–61. While Weinmayr is not concerned with the question of influence (though he writes at one point that 'direct influence appears to be ruled out'), some of the parallels he draws are striking. Near the beginning, for example, he juxtaposes these two passages, the first from Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures during the mid-1930s, and the second from an essay by Nishida from 1924:
- 'We think that an entity is accessible by virtue of an I as subject's representing [to itself] an object. As if beforehand there would not be the necessity for an Open to prevail, within whose openness something...can become accessible as object for a subject!' (*Nietzsche* 2:138).
- 'In order for consciousness and the object to be able to relate to one another, there must be something that includes both within it. There must be something like a place in which the two can relate to one another' (*Nishida Kitarō zenshū*, 4:211).
- 48 Aihara Shinsaku, 'Tanabe-sensei ni tsuite' ('On Professor Tanabe'), in *Tanabe tetsugaku (Tanabe's philosophy)* (Tokyo 1951), 264.
- 49 Conversation at Professor Takeuchi's home in Yokkaichi, June 1992.
- 50 Conversation with Professor Tsujimura in Kyoto, June 1992. Ernst Friedrich Ferdinand Zermelo (1871–1953), a friend of Husserl's, was famous for his contributions to axiomatic set theory—a subject that interested Tanabe throughout his career.
- 51 *WL* 37/US 131. The Inquirer says earlier (3/87) that he often discussed this question with Kuki Shūzō.
- 52 Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Book I, section 1, [Chapter 1](#), *C.Werden*, 1. 'Einheit des Seins und Nichts', and *Anmerkung* 1.
- 53 Quoted by Reinhard May above, **3.1.3**.
- 54 Max Scheler, 'Vom Wesen der Philosophie', in *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Bern 1954), 5:93.
- 55 Max Scheler, 'Probleme der Religion', in *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, 263–4.
- 56 Personal communication from Otto Pöggeler, September 1991.
- 57 *Zen: Der lebendige Buddhismus in Japan, Ausgewählte Stücke des Zen-Textes*, übersetzt und eingeleitet von Shōmei Buson, herausgegeben von August Faust, mit einem Geleitwort von Rudolf Otto (Gotha/Stuttgart 1925). See above, **3.1.2**. For Nishitani Keiji's report that Heidegger had taken this book out of the Freiburg University library and found it 'very interesting', see my introduction to *HAT* (p. 10).
- 58 In talking about the many Japanese scholars who came to Heidelberg to study with Heinrich Rickert, Hermann Glockner mentions that August Faust was obliged to become an early riser during his sojourn in Freiburg (in 1922) thanks to his enthusiasm for Heidegger's classes (*Heidelberger Bilderbuch. Erinnerungen von Hermann Glockner* [Bonn 1969], 197). Glockner paints an interesting picture of Shōmei Buson (227–43), and also gives a brief account of Kuki's studying with Rickert (232).
- 59 *Zen: Der lebendige Buddhismus in Japan*, 63. The verse from Hakuin that stands as the epigraph to Shōmei Buson's foreword prefigures Heidegger's later talk of Being as

- 'nearness' or *das Nächste*: 'Woe to those who seek in the far distance [*in weiter Ferne*]and ignore what lies near [*nahe*]!' (p. xiv).
- 60 hazama distinguishes consummate nothingness from 'empty, abstract nothingness' in terms that prefigure Heidegger's discussions in works from the late 1920s and early 1930s: 'Consummate nothingness is not to be found through abstracting negation but through the concentration of everything concrete. It is thus not empty, but full through and through. It is the absolute, the totality standing over all parts, the perfection standing over all opposites, the freedom [*Freiheit*] standing over all causal contexts. It is the highest truth [*Wahrheit*] itself (pp. 134–5). It is also the 'twenty-first nothingness'—'the consummate nothingness of not-nothingness' (148–9).
- 61 See Miki's letter of 19 June 1924, in *Miki Kiyoshi zensh* , 19:277–8. My thanks to Michiko Yusa for providing this reference.
- 62 *Martin Heidegger/Karl Jaspers: Briefwechsel, 1920–1963*, edited by Walter Biemel and Hans Saner (Frankfurt 1990), 48.
- 63 The entry for 12 October 1927 in the *Husserl-Chronik* reads: 'The evening [at Husserl's home] was very nice, nothing but philosophers...and the most interesting couple: the Kukis'. Roman Ingarden, who was there that evening, reports that 'Heidegger came from Marburg for just a short visit' (p. 325). Kuki subsequently went back to Paris, and it was then that he came to know the young Jean-Paul Sartre: see Light, *Sh z Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre*.
- 64 *Kuki Sh z zensh* , Bekkan, 293. In Freiburg Kuki attended Heidegger's course on Kant's first critique and his seminar on Schelling's *Treatise on the Nature of Human Freedom*; in Marburg he audited Heidegger's course on Leibniz and his seminar on Aristotle's *Physics*.
- 65 See hashi Ry suke, in *JH* 29.
- 66 Stephen Light cites a report to the effect that in 1957 Heidegger expressed (to Tsujimura K ichi) his desire to write a preface to an anticipated German translation of one of Kuki's books (*KS* 31, note 16)—a significant desire when one considers that by that time Heidegger can hardly have been casting around for books for which to write prefaces.
- 67 The kind of evidence one would hope would be available—diaries from the period by Kuki or his wife, letters sent to friends in Japan—is unfortunately lacking, according to the staff responsible for the Kuki archive at K nan University.
- 68 hashi Ry suke, 'Heidegger und Graf Kuki: Zu Sprache und Kunst in Japan als Problem der Moderne', in H.-H. Gander, ed., *Von Heidegger her: Messkircher Vonträge 1989* (Frankfurt a. M. 1991), 93–104, 96. hashi also points out three errors in the picture of Kuki that emerges from Heidegger's 'Conversation': the correct equivalent for Kuki's title would be 'Baron' rather than 'Count'; while the 'Japanese' says that Nishida was Kuki's teacher, the latter had gone to Tokyo University rather than Kyoto and did not become a colleague of Nishida's at Kyoto until 1935; nor is it the case, as Heidegger's 'Japanese' says, that Kuki's lectures at Kyoto on 'the aesthetics of Japanese art and poetry...appeared as a book' (94).
- 69 '*Iki* may therefore be thought of as a remarkable self-expression of specific modes of existence in oriental cultures, or more narrowly in the Yamato [ancient

- Japanese] people' (*Kuki Sh z zensh* , 1:1–86, 12). References to 'iki' no k z will be made by the abbreviation *IK* followed by the page number of this edition.
- 70 This moment of *iki* as possibility is said to 'naturally disappear if the sexes achieve union and thereby lose the tension' (*IK* 17). Whereas Kuki emphasizes the preservation of possibility with respect to sex, Heidegger does so with respect to death (SZ § 53).
- 71 For a brief discussion of this maxim, see the section 'The Way of the Sword' in my 'Japanese Ways of Thinking', in Robert Solomon, ed., *From Africa to Zen: An Introduction to World Philosophy* (Savage, Md. 1992), 25–53.
- 72 The texts of these lectures were published as a book, *Propos sur le temps*, in Paris in 1928; English translations can be found in *KS* 43–67.
- 73 Light, *Sh z Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre*, 43. Kuki's mention of Heidegger's theory of temporality at the beginning of the first talk constitutes one of the earliest introductions of Heidegger's ideas in France—the discussion of which would later become a major industry.
- 74 Heidegger, *SZ* 384–5. The similarity with Zen ideas puts Tanabe's criticism of Heidegger for emphasizing 'self-power' at the expense of 'other-power' in a different light. It is a salient feature of Heidegger's elaboration of the authentic response to the confrontation with death that one is acutely aware of one's 'powerlessness' (*Ohnmacht*) in the situation, and that once the 'Man-*selbst*' has shattered itself through the confrontation with death, one is then able to let the 'authentic self—definitely something Other—'operate through one' (*in-sich-handeln-lassen*). Heidegger writes that in understanding the call of conscience, *Dasein* 'lets the ownmost self *operate through it* (*SZ* 288), and speaks later, in the same context, of the 'letting the ownmost self operate through it' (*SZ* 295). These ideas bear a remarkable similarity to the Zen idea that if one effects a full confrontation with death, then 'Great Life', 'No-mind', or the 'True Self' will work and play through the field of one's body.
- 75 Incidentally, a contemporary Japanese philosopher claims that the earliest use of the term *In-der-Welt-sein*, resplendent with hyphens, occurs not in *Being and Time* but in a German translation of Okakura's *The Book of Tea* that was published in 1919 (Imamichi Tomonobu, *Betrachtungen über das Eine* [Tokyo 1968], 154). Okakura uses the term with reference to Daoism, which he calls 'the art of being in the world' (see the chapter 'Taoism and Zennism' in *The Book of Tea*).
- 76 Petzet, 168–70/177–9.
- 77 The discussion in the dialogue with the Japanese about the pregnant gestures of Noh drama, where the Japanese demonstrates a gesture evoking a mountain landscape (*WL* 18/*US* 107), echoes a line in Kuki's *Propos* concerning Japanese théâtre: 'Hands shading the eyes will make one think of a mountain landscape' (*KS* 75—where Kuki is actually quoting from a French commentary: Albert Maybon, *Le théâtre japonais* [Paris 1925]).
- 78 See Michiko Yoneda, *Gespräch und Dichtung*, 88–96, who reports (p. 91) Tezuka's saying that he did not know Kuki personally or attend his lectures, and that he was actually not very conversant with Heidegger's writings—so that he could not possibly have uttered many of the things ascribed to the visitor from Japan.

- 79 See Reinhard May above, **1.1** and **3.2.1**.
- 80 Rudolf Otto, 'Meister Eckeharts Mystik im Unterschiede von östlicher Mystik', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (1925), 325–50 and 418–36. In a footnote in his *Habilitationsschrift* of 1916, Heidegger evinces a desire to write a philosophical appraisal of Eckhart's mysticism (*Frühe Schriften*, 344).
- 81 Rudolf Otto, 'Der östliche Buddhist', *Die Christliche Welt* (1925), 978–82.
- 82 In the foreword to *Frühe Schriften* (p. x; *GA* 1:56), Heidegger writes: 'In the seminar exercises with Rickert I became acquainted with the writings of Emil Lask, who, mediating between [Rickert and Husserl], also tried to attend to the Greek thinkers'.
- 83 It is ironical that while Heidegger protested 'the nihilistic misinterpretation' (prevalent in Europe) of his idea of nothingness, Tanabe eventually came to level a similar criticism at Heidegger. Johannes Laube notes that Tanabe's copy of the 1948 edition of *Was ist Metaphysik?* contains marginalia in Tanabe's hand that become ever more critical, from page to page, of Heidegger's conception of *Nichts* as a mere negation of being and *nihilistisches Nichts*. See Naumann, 'Japan als Gegenstand der Forschung', 34.
- 84 Kojima wrote a long letter to Heidegger in 1963 which was subsequently published together with a lengthy reply as a pair of 'open letters' in both Japanese and German. Kojima starts out by saying that when an outline of Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* was published in a Japanese newspaper, 'it almost seemed to us as if you, Herr Professor, were directly addressing us Japanese' (*JH* 216). This impression is no grounds for amazement, in view of the allusions in that text to both Zen and Daoism; see the excerpt from Kojima's letter quoted and discussed in **3.1.1** above.
- 85 It is also around this time, in the mid-1930s, that Heidegger turns his attention to the poetry of Hölderlin—the first of several German poets whose work will inspire his philosophical thinking. Later, in the 'Letter on Humanism', he writes (though presumably alluding to what was called 'the Near East' rather than to the Far East): 'We have hardly begun to think the mysterious relations to the East that have been given voice in Hölderlin's poetry' (*Wm* 169). See Otto Pöggeler's discussion of Heidegger's interest in the poets in the light of his acquaintance with Daoism (*HAT* 62–8).
- 86 *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 26/20. Heidegger's keen interest in Bashō is attested by Tezuka Tomio (see above, **12.1** and **Chapter 7**; also note 98 below) and Tsujimura K ichi (*JH* 265). See also the discussion of Bashō in a Heideggerian context in Yoneda, *Gespräch und Dichtung*, 186–225.
- 87 *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 76, 38, 57/58, 29, 43. For further discussion of this topic, see my essay, 'From Nationalism to Nomadism: Wondering about the Languages of Philosophy', in Eliot Deutsch, ed., *Culture and Modernity: East and West* (Honolulu 1991), 455–67.
- 88 Graham Parkes, 'Thoughts on the Way: *Being and Time* via Lao-Chuang', in *HAT* 105–44, especially the 'Epilogue'. Footnote 9 of that essay stands in need of revision: as Reinhard May has pointed out, the Buber edition of the *Zhuangzi* was first published in 1910, not 1921, and so there was ample time for Heidegger to

discover the text and assimilate its ideas by the time he wrote his works of the mid-1930s.

- 89 See the diagram and dialogue in 'Thoughts on the Way,' *HAT* 137. Compare Richard Wilhelm, *I Ging: Das Buch der Wandlungen* (Düsseldorf 1970), 14–16, 25, 30, 272–6. The assumption that Heidegger had read the *I jing* is not necessary: he could have gleaned an adequate sense of ideas such as *yin* and *yang* from his conversations with Kuki and/or readings of the other Daoist classics and the commentaries of the translators or editors.
- 90 Elmar Weinmayr refers to this passage about the *offene Mitte* in explicating Nishida's idea of 'the place of absolute nothing' as 'the place of arising and perishing' (*JH* 44). This place, which Nishida explicated at length in the mid-1920s, is indeed reminiscent of Heidegger's clearing, 'into which all that is stands and from which it withdraws itself' (*PLT* 52/*Hw* 41).
- 91 Nishida uses the verb *urazukeru*, 'to be lined', as in a passage from *Hataraku mono kara miru mono e* (*From acting to seeing*) where he writes of nothingness as 'the inner lining of being' (*Nishida Kitar zensh*, 4:227). See also the entry under 'lining' in the glossary of Robert Schinzinger's translation of *Kitar Nishida: Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness* (Honolulu 1966), which includes a translation of the 1928 essay 'Eichiteki sekai' ('The Intelligible World') where this term occurs again.
- 92 D.T.Suzuki, 'Erinnerung an einen Besuch bei Martin Heidegger', in *JH* 169–72.
- 93 Personal communication from Michiko Yusa, November 1995. Takahashi Fumi was the translator of the essay by Nishida (referred to by Reinhard May in 3.1.2 above) that was published in German in 1939 in the *Proceedings* of the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin.
- 94 *GA*, 5:70–4; editor's note, 377. My thanks to Holger Krüger (Düsseldorf/Essen) for adducing the following quote from the *Zusatz*.
- 95 *WL* 8, 24/*US* 94, 115, to be discussed in the following section.
- 96 Two of Nishitani's works containing some discussion of Heidegger have been translated: *Religion and Nothingness*, translated by Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley 1982), and *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, translated by Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara (Albany 1990). This latter text devotes an entire chapter to Heidegger's thought, although—written a dozen or so years earlier than *Religion and Nothingness*—the Heidegger in it appears comparatively 'undigested'.
- 97 See my introduction to *HAT*, 9–10.
- 98 In an appendix to the Japanese translation of 'Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache', Tezuka Tomio recalls how during his meeting with Heidegger in 1954, the latter brought the conversation around to a *haiku* by Bashō he had read in translation: 'He asked me about the poem in Japanese and posed a number of perspicacious questions about the special nature of Japanese thought as it manifests in language and in art. During my rather inept explanations it seemed as if various thoughts occurred in rapid succession to this prominent thinker. He took notes with great zeal' (*JH* 179).
- 99 Nishitani Keiji, 'Gendai bunmei ni fukai kikikan', *Yomiuri Shinbun* 27 May 1976; translated by Elmar Weinmayr as 'Ein tiefes Gefühl für die Krise der modernen Zivilisation', in *JH* 193–4.

- 100 *Martin Heidegger/Karl Jaspers: Briefwechsel*, 178, 280.
- 101 It is worth noting with respect to Heidegger's expression of scepticism concerning 'Eastern thinking' in this passage that the Greek roots of the term *skeptisch* (*skepsis*, *skeptomai*) have to do, as he well knew, with 'examining closely'. In this sense he would seem to be admitting that with the unfamiliar language of Chinese he is concerned to 'examine closely'.
- 102 Although most of the passages from Heidegger in this section have been discussed above by Reinhard May, they appear in a different light in the context of this complementary essay. For the 'Conversation' as 'confession', see [Chapter 5](#) above.
- 103 *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen 1957), 25; *Identity and Difference* (New York 1969), 36.
- 104 See Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, 'Heidegger and Our Translation of the *Tao Te Ching*', in *HAT* 93–104. This translation work was kept secret until after Heidegger's death: see above, [1.2.2](#), note 23. This secrecy may account for the fact—strange in view of how much of Heidegger's *Nachlass* has been preserved—that no written record of his summer's work with Professor Hsiao has been found.
- 105 See Reinhard May above, [1.1](#).
- 106 *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen 1967), I, 39; 'Science and Reflection', in *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt (New York 1977), 158.
- 107 *WL 24/US*, 115. For an intelligent discussion of the relations between Heidegger's philosophy and Japanese thinking, with special attention to his conceptions of metaphysics and technology, the issue of intercultural understanding, and considerations of translation between Japanese and Indo-European languages, see section 4 of Elmar Weinmayr, *Entstellung: Die Metaphysik im Denken Martin Heideggers, mit einem Blick nach Japan* (Munich 1991), 271–312.
- 108 'Hölderlins Erde und Himmel', *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 11 (1958–60), 36; quoted above, 5.2.
- 109 'Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten', *Der Spiegel* 30/23 (May 1976), reprinted in G. Neske, ed., *Antwort: Martin Heidegger im Gespräch* (Pfullingen 1988), 106.
- 110 D.T.Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, edited by William Barrett (New York 1956), xi–xii. One is less inclined to dismiss this report as being purely apocryphal in the light of Petzet's report (mentioned in [1.1](#) above) to the effect that Heidegger responded to the Buddhist monk from Thailand's characterization of 'nothingness' as 'fullness' with the words: 'That is what I have been saying, my whole life long' (P 180/190).
- 111 *K za-Zen* 8 (Tokyo 1968), 321f; reprinted in *JH* 230–1.
- 112 Hans A. Fischer-Barnicol reports that Heidegger once said to him, after remarking that from early on he had worked with Japanese philosophers, that 'he had nevertheless learned more from the Chinese' (see above, [1.2.3](#)). This is a telling remark: in so far as none of Heidegger's Chinese visitors came close, as philosophers, to the calibre of Tanabe, Miki, Kuki, or Nishitani, one should perhaps take *von den Chinesen* to refer to the classical Chinese thinkers he had read in German translation.

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