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Chapter Eight

Nietzsche and Nishitani on Nihilism and Tradition

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Since cultures develop always within traditions, problems arise when disruptions take place in this process—and especially when dislocations bring on a phase of nihilism. Some of the most illuminating reflections on human participation in such phenomena come from Friedrich Nietzsche; and some of the best responses to those reflections, from the Japanese philosopher Nishitani Keiji. The present chapter discloses how these thinkers envision our relations to tradition following an eruption of nihilism. To the extent that what Nietzsche called “European nihilism” still appears to be endemic in advanced industrial societies (Asian as well as American), a comparison of his views with Nishitani’s on this phenomenon will apply to contemporary cultural conditions.

In view of the bulk of recent Nietzsche scholarship in English (some of it very good), a justification is in order for this chapter’s focus on a Japanese text written almost fifty years ago. Indeed, there are two major reasons to expect a reading of Nietzsche from the East-Asian perspective to be instructive.

The first reason concerns the advantages that accrue from a certain hermeneutic distance. Nietzsche’s interest in the ideas of non-European cultures appears to have been motivated more by a desire to gain perspective on the modern Western condition than by an urge to understand those foreign worlds for their own sake. Nishitani comes to a deeper understanding of his tradition through the intensive study of European philosophy, though he still has a strong drive to understand the latter on its own terms. And by viewing it from the standpoint of a completely alien philosophical tradition he can better discern the larger contours of European nihilism, as well as Nietzsche’s role in diagnosing and responding to it, than can thinkers from that
same tradition. (Counterparts on this side of the Pacific appear sadly lacking, in that no major figure in Western philosophy has gone to the trouble of learning an East-Asian language well enough to think in it.)

The second reason has to do with differences in language, in the context of interpretation. To borrow Nietzsche's language in Beyond Good and Evil: The fact that Japanese philosophers grew up under the "unconscious domination and direction" of a set of "grammatical functions" quite different from that of thinkers in the West is likely to afford them an interestingly different perspective on his texts. And just as Nietzsche speculates that "philosophers from the domain of the Ural-Altaic languages (where the concept of the subject is least developed) will most likely look 'into the world' differently and be found on different paths than Indo-Germans," so Japanese philosophers (as a philologist, he presumably knew that Japanese was considered a member of the Ural-Altaic family) will look into the worlds of Nietzsche's texts differently from their Western counterparts.

This circumstance might render Japanese readers blind to certain features of the text (however well they read Western philosophy in the original languages); but, conversely, it might enable them to see features generally overlooked from our side. The above passage from Beyond Good and Evil suggests that thinkers who think in languages where "the concept of the subject is least developed" will be less likely to see the world as populated by subjects perceiving and acting upon objects. And indeed whereas the early Western commentators on Nietzsche (and by no means only they) saw rampant egoism and a megalomania of the individual subject, the Japanese interpreters, some coming from the perspective of the Buddhist idea of "not-self" or "no ego" (mage), often discerned in Nietzsche a self that gets emptied out in such a way that a greater self (or "Self") can operate through it.

Two early interpretations of Nietzsche in Japan were the influential studies by Watsuji Tetsurö and Abe Jirö that appeared during the second decade of the twentieth century. It has been fashionable to criticize both authors for importing inappropriate conceptions from the Asian tradition into their readings of Nietzsche—and specifically for interpreting the idea of will to power as representing some kind of cosmic self, suggesting that Nietzsche's program involves a transcending of the boundaries of the conscious ego in order to achieve participation in this universal self. Whereas Abe's interpretation may appear suffused with an excess of sweetness and light, Watsuji's understanding of the human self with respect to will to power (as the driving force of all existence) is quite profound—and deeper than most of the Western interpretations developed during the first half of the century. Whatever their shortcomings in the long run, these works highlight some salient features of Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche is often regarded as an iconoclast whose philosophy is nihilistic in a negative sense. A consideration of Nishitani's discussion of his ideas on nihilism reveals an aspect of Nietzsche's thinking about the optimal relationship of the self to its cultural tradition that is often overlooked.

The Role of History

Let us begin, as Nishitani does, with a consideration of the role of history in the development of the human individual and culture. In the second of his Untimely Meditations Nietzsche presents a vivid "image of the mental processes taking place in the soul of the modern human being," especially in relation to past tradition.

Historical knowledge streams in unceasingly from inexhaustible wells, things strange and incoherent press in on us . . . and our nature strives to receive and arrange and honor these strange guests, but they are themselves in conflict with each other, and it seems necessary to constrain and master them if we are not ourselves to perish in the struggle.

The ability to accommodate this constant influx from the past depends on what Nietzsche calls one's "plastic strength," upon which in turn the health of the organism hinges. He writes of this capacity as "the plastic strength of a human being, or a people, or a culture . . . the strength to grow out of oneself in one's own way, to transform and incorporate what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to reform out of one's self forms that have been broken." It is a force that would counteract nihilism to some extent. Animal life, for Nietzsche, is naturally conditioned by a constant forgetting, whereas to become fully human one must remember and assimilate the past:

The stronger the roots of a human being's innermost nature, the more one will appropriate and arrogate to oneself; and for the most powerful and tremendous nature there would be no limit to the historical sense . . . . It would draw to itself and take in the entire past, its own and the most foreign, and transform it as it were into blood.

Maximum openness through the appropriate kind of historical sense is something Nietzsche always considers worth striving for, even though this early essay warns repeatedly of the dangers consequent upon a hypertrophy of history. Indeed, a primary symptom of the sickness of the modern age is its inability to assimilate the past properly: "An excess of history has attacked the plastic power of life, such that it no longer understands how to use the past as strong nourishment." Since the discernment necessary to maintain the balance between admitting the influx of the past and experiencing life in the present is a rare trait, Nietzsche emphasizes that history can be borne "only by strong personalities." And since he maintains this idea all the way through to its apocryphal in the figure of Goethe in Twilight.
of the Idols, it will be appropriate to ask how one’s relationship to the tradition is transformed in the encounter with nihilism.12

Nishitani begins his discussion of nihilism by insisting that we understand it first and foremost as “a problem of the self,” as an existential problem in which the being of the self is revealed to the self itself as something groundless.713 This is not to deny that nihilism is also “a historical and social phenomenon”; in fact, Nishitani’s first chapter is devoted to showing how these two aspects of the phenomenon are to be integrated. Because history (especially since becoming world-historical) highlights the contingency of the religious and philosophical systems that have given meaning to human life in different places and epochs, the study of history tends to open up a “void” at the ground of existence—which in turn prompts the onset of nihilism. The two aspects can be brought together when a philosopher of history understands the subject existentially: “The great historical problems need to become a problem of the self.”714 Nishitani sees this happening in Nietzsche, for whom “the history of humankind has to be made the history of the self itself, and history has to be understood from the standpoint of Existence.” And indeed Nishitani’s characterization of the impact of European nihilism in the late nineteenth century applies most pertinently to Nietzsche himself: “The problem of how to live came to be fused with the problem of how to interpret history.”16

A salient feature of Nietzsche’s interpretation of history is his claim that cultural advancement requires occasional phases of degeneration (which we can understand as a major factor in nihilism). In an aphorism entitled “Ennoblement through Degeneration,” he argues that the point at which “degenerate natures” weaken an otherwise healthy cultural community provides the opportunity for it to be “inoculated with something new” that will contribute to its richer and more robust development.17 Some of these degenerate natures will turn out to be what Nietzsche calls “free minds” (or “free spirits”) that are able to liberate themselves from orthodoxy because of the greater range of possibilities to which they are open.18 (Indeed, it is precisely the greater multiplicity of motives and viewpoints that renders them weaker than the minds that are bound by tradition.)19 And yet, though the free mind operates in opposition to its cultural heritage and needs to be liberated from tradition in order to be creative, Nietzsche by no means thinks that human flourishing can take place in isolation from the historical past. This he believes would be impossible since he understands history not only as something acclimated from outside, as it were, but also as something ineluctably “in the blood.” In Assorted Opinions and Maxims he writes: “Direct self-observation is not nearly sufficient for us to know ourselves: we need history, for the past flows on within us in a hundred waves; indeed, we ourselves are nothing but that which at every moment we experience of this continual flowing.”20

Recent scholars have discussed the importance for Nietzsche’s project of the idea of experimentation (Nietzsche’s term is Versuch, for which there are cognates having to do with testing and seduction); Nishitani’s emphasis of its importance in 1949 was somewhat precient. Nietzsche writes along the lines of Montaigne and Emerson, insofar as he declines to set down truths about the human condition but, instead, offers propositions and hypotheses for the reader to experiment with in direct experience. Nishitani discloses the historical dimension to Nietzsche’s experimentalism by pointing out that Nietzsche advocates that one “experiment with history within oneself” and “experiment with the future tendencies and issues of history by making the self one’s laboratory.”21 Nietzsche was thus a philosopher of history in the sense that he “lived history within history experimentally and philosophically, and in such a way that the self lives in history and history lives in the self.”22

The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism

Nishitani goes on to discuss in detail the various forms and phases of nihilism in Nietzsche’s thought, but it is with respect to the latter’s suggestions for engaging the phenomenon that the discussion becomes most interesting. Nishitani approved of The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism for the title of this English translation as expressive of the book’s major theme—namely, that if one lets oneself down into it deeply enough, there will come a point at which nihilism overcomes itself. He sees Nietzsche as the first thinker to suggest this possibility, though the actual words appear to have occurred only in an unpublished note where Nietzsche refers to the thought of eternal recurrence as “the self-overcoming of nihilism.”23 Nishitani thus helps us understand the sense in which the thought of eternal recurrence is “the highest formula of affirmation” (as characterized in Ecce Homo). All too often Nietzsche is assumed to have brought our attention to the prevalence of nihilism only to indulge in a cynical wallowing in it thereafter. Or else he is interpreted as saying that if nihilism can be overcome, it is only through the summoning of tremendous willpower on the part of some super-heroic ego.

Nishitani offers a reading of the epilogue to Nietzsche contra Wagner in which he links the (self-) overcoming of nihilism to Nietzsche’s concern with amor fati, or love of fate:

As my innermost nature teaches me, everything necessary is, when seen from a great height and in the sense of a great economy, also useful in itself—one should not only bear it, one should love it. Amor fati: that is my innermost nature. . . . Only the great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit, as the teacher of the great suspicion . . . . [And] out of the abyss of the great suspicion one returns newly born.”24
Taking “the abyss of the great suspicion” to refer to nihilism, and interpolating a few phrases from the preface to *The Joyful Science*, Nishitani amplifies this passage with some telling images:

In this rebirth from the depths with a higher health and with a second and more dangerous innocence one’s innermost nature bursts forth as a familiar spring from which the covering debris has been removed. At this point the spring proclaims as its liberator the sharp pick-axe of necessity that has pierced down through the debris and brought it pain.

This striking image shows how spontaneous is the overcoming of nihilism. The blow from the “pick-axe of necessity” (a nice variation on Nietzsche’s hammer) at first appears not to be willed by the self but, rather, to reach the depths of the abyss from outside, falling as a stroke of fate. The subsequent emergence of one’s “innermost nature” is seen as a natural consequence of such an intrusion, like the gushing forth of a spring. Nishitani illuminates Nietzsche’s otherwise puzzling assimilation of the self and fate when he says that “ultimately the spring will come to affirm even the debris it burst through and which now floats in it.” The idea is that things and persons that have obstructed one’s development, that have been rejected as *other* and definitively *not-self*, can ultimately be seen as necessary for one’s “becoming what one is,” as part of one’s fate. In the “great economy” of life, then, “what is not oneself—what has prevented one from being oneself—is appropriated into the self and transformed into something uniquely one’s own [eigen].”

Nishitani’s interpretation provides a helpful perspective on the appropriate relation to tradition in the self-overcoming of nihilism, insofar as the project of appropriation extends back beyond one’s personal past to a broader history. The image of the debris covering the self can be related to the “camel stage” in the “Three Transformations” in *Zarathustra*, specifically as the sedimentation of layers of traditional values with which the spirit has burdened itself. After these values have been dissipated by the lion’s roaring “No!” in the second transformation, the child of the third phase becomes an image for the possibility of creating new values. The question then arises: From what are these new values created? Nishitani’s reading suggests that the creation of new values is a *creatio ex nihilo* only in the sense of being a creation from out of the abyss of nihilism—and not in the sense in which the Christian God creates out of nothing, since the creation signaled by the image of the child *reappropriates* certain elements from the tradition that was rejected at the stage of the lion.

Nishitani’s image, which apparently derives from a Zen background, suggests that when one’s true nature bursts through the overlays of conceptualization and conventional values that have kept it repressed, the resultant condition is not one of pristine purity but, rather, one in which the pool of the psyche is still polluted by debris from the barriers that have been breached. The point would be that such debris need not be rejected but may properly belong to the development of the new self. In Nietzschean terms, one fulfills one’s responsibility to previous generations by reconnecting with the appropriate branches of one’s tradition.

**Love of Fate**

One of the major obstacles to affirming life, and doing so with sufficient verve to entertain the prospect of its eternal recurrence, is naturally the phenomenon of suffering—especially in its “fateful” aspect, when one is moved to ask “Why did this have to happen to me?” Nishitani offers in this context an interpretation of a pivotal wordplay in *Zarathustra*. The wordplay first occurs (though he doesn’t mention this occurrence) in the section entitled “On the Bestowing Virtue,” where Zarathustra praises those possessed of a magnanimous selfishness by saying: “You force all things into yourselves, so that they may flow back out of your well as the gifts of your love.” The aquatic imagery flows on with Zarathustra’s telling his disciples that the primal source (the *Ursprung*) of their virtue is attained “when you are willers of one will, and this turn of all need [Wende aller Not] is for you necessity [Notwendigkeit].” This virtue of giving, he continues, is “a new deep rushing [Rausch] and the voice of a new welling up [eines neuen Quellens Stimme].” And in “On the Great Yearning” Zarathustra addresses his soul as “turn of need” (Wende der Not) and “fate”—the former phrase again a trope on the word for “necessity.”

Nishitani interprets this wordplay on distressful need in the light of his earlier discussion of *amor fati*:

> Under the compulsion of the need or necessity that prevents one from becoming oneself and from becoming free, one is forced to descend into the abyss within. But once one is freed within the abyss, the need is turned into an element of this life of freedom. In this case necessity becomes one with the creative.

He stresses the aspect of *Not* that connotes distress (i.e., suffering in *extremis*), suggesting that it persists through the descent into nihilism and then becomes the axis, as it were, of the turn to creative existence.

This turn within the abyss can also be understood as a transformation of the configuration of will to power that comprises the self. Alluding to his previous discussion of that type of will to power, which manifests as “will to illusion” (*Wille zum Schein*), Nishitani writes: “Absolute affirmation affirms even the deceptions that had blocked it, and which themselves are part of that ‘great economy’ through their biological usefulness as lies of principle. Even that which negates and obstructs life is affirmed as useful for life.” In arguing that *amor fati* has to do with fate’s being “made one with the self’s creative will,” Nishitani makes a further connection through the idea of will to power to the “thought of eternal recurrence.”
Since the nature of this connection remains somewhat enigmatic in Nishitani’s exposition, it is helpful to adduce the idea of the redemption of the will from “the spirit of revenge” as described in the section “On Redemption” in Zarathustra. Affirmation of the recurrence involves teaching the will to power to affirm fate creatively by learning to will the past (to will all “it was”)—in other words, by learning what Zarathustra calls Rückwollen, in the dual sense of “willing backwards” and “wanting everything back again.”

What now becomes clearer is how the willing of eternal recurrence can constitute “the self-overcoming of nihilism.” Nishitani discusses “the nihilistic formulation of [the thought of] eternal recurrence” with reference to an unpublished note by Nietzsche that reads “the most extreme form of nihilism: nothingness (‘meaninglessness’) eternally!” Adding two more notes that speak of the thought of recurrence as “the turning point of history,” “the consummation and crisis of nihilism,” and “the self-overcoming of nihilism,” Nishitani argues that “only those who can bear the thought of recurrence with courage and without dejection in order to consummate their nihilism will be able to attain the will to . . . absolute affirmation.”

If we recall that Nietzsche regards the thought of eternal recurrence as in some sense a principle of selection, we can make explicit the connection with tradition, which remains implicit at this point in Nishitani’s discussion. Entertaining at every juncture the possibility of the eternal recurrence of one’s entire life (“the question with each and every thing: ‘Do you want this once again, and innumerable times again?’”) helps one to choose those actions and responses to circumstances that will make one truly oneself and to dismiss those possibilities that one might otherwise unthinkingly accept under pressure from society.

The possibility also provides a principle of selection in the process whereby the self “becomes what it is” in relation to the tradition from which it springs, and from which it is distanced through nihilism. This is an important part of the force of Zarathustra’s characterization of “redemption”: “To redeem what is past and to recreate all ‘It was’ into a ‘Thus I willed it!’” Since it is impossible for a finite being to recreate all “It was,” whoever thinks the thought of eternal recurrence must be content with redeeming selected elements from the past (both personal and transpersonal) and letting the fact that “all things are firmly knotted together” take care of the rest. Most discussions of Nietzsche fail to appreciate his emphasis on our responsibility (Verantwortlichkeit) to the past—to the tradition as well as to our personal past: The thought of eternal recurrence can help one select those features of history that are to be redeemed in the task of becoming what one is to be.

Creative Appropriation

In a later chapter in The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism entitled “The Meaning of Nihilism for Japan,” Nishitani brings together the “positive” responses to nihilism that he has found in the work of Nietzsche, Max Stirner, and Martin Heidegger under the rubric of “a unity of creative nihilism and finitude,” and proceeds to apply them to the case of Japan in the twentieth century. He describes how, with the Europeanization of Japan that began toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Buddhism and Confucianism on which the country’s development had been based “lost their power, leaving a total void and vacuum in our spiritual ground.” The subsequent emptiness is “the natural result of our having been cut off from our tradition.” After dismissing as inappropriate two opposed responses—those of contempt for one’s Japaneseness and of an exclusionist patriotism—Nishitani invokes Nietzsche’s “sense of responsibility toward the ancestors,” thanks to which one can take on “the accumulation of every possible spiritual nobility of the past.” Here he is referring to a passage in The Joyful Science, where Nietzsche writes of the historical sense as the peculiar virtue and sickness of contemporary humanity.

Anyone who knows how to experience the history of humanity as his own history . . . [and could] endure this immense amount of grief of all kinds . . . as a person with a horizon of millennia in front of and behind him, as the heir of all the nobility of all previous spirit and an heir with a sense of obligation . . . if one could take all of this upon one’s soul . . . this would have to produce a happiness that up until now humanity has not known.

Nishitani sees this attitude as a potentially salutary one for the condition of postwar Japan.

[Nietzsche’s] standpoint calls for a returning to the ancestors in order to face the future, or to put it the other way around, a prophesying toward the tradition. Without a will toward the future, the confrontation with the past cannot be properly executed; nor is there a true will toward the future without responsibility toward the ancestors. For us Japanese now, the recovery of this primordial will represents our most fundamental task. It is here that European nihilism will begin to reveal its fundamental significance for us.

When Nishitani considers the task of comparing “the fundamental integration of creative nihilism and finitude” that he finds in Stirner, Nietzsche, and Heidegger with “the standpoint of Buddhism, and in particular to the standpoint of emptiness in the Mahayana tradition” (though he does not actually undertake this task in The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism), he finds the three “remarkably close.” Yet he still thinks that “there is in Mahayana a stand-
point that cannot be reached even by nihilism that overcomes nihilism, even though this latter may tend in that direction.” Though it would be illuminating to consider Nishitani’s reasons here, as well as those implied by his discussions of Nietzsche and Heidegger in his later masterwork Religion and Nothingness, it must suffice simply to note the important place he assigns these figures in the contemporary elaboration of Mahayanah thinking (as practiced, presumably, by the Kyoto School of philosophy).

Nevertheless, Nishitani distinguishes among three significant traits in European nihilism that he considers relevant to the situation in postwar Japan—and that seem no less relevant fifty years later. The first is that a consideration of European nihilism can disclose the “hollowness in [the] spiritual foundations” of modern Japan and stimulate reflection on the historical process (extremely complex in the Japanese case) whereby the culture has become dislocated from its tradition. Second, such analysis can thus prompt a rediscovery of the tradition from the perspective of the new horizons opened up by Japan’s westernization—an undertaking that is by no means “a turning back to the way things were,” since modernization has rendered the tradition profoundly problematic. And third, an engagement with European nihilism can enable contemporary Japanese thinkers “to recover the creativity that mediates the past to the future and the future to the past” in the context of their own philosophical traditions. When set in the context of the “creative nihilism” developed by the German thinkers, “the tradition of oriental culture in general, and the Buddhist standpoints of ‘emptiness,’ ‘nothingness,’ and so forth in particular, become a new problem.” Nishitani concludes the chapter by exhorting his contemporaries, in light of the examples of Dostoevsky’s and Nietzsche’s anticipations of nihilism, to find their own means to engage nihilism so that “the spiritual culture of the Orient which has been handed down through the ages [may] be revitalized in a new transformation.”

There was surely no expectation on Nishitani’s part, when he delivered his talks on nihilism in 1949, that the text would ever be translated into English or be considered a contribution to Nietzsche scholarship in the West. But even if the Eurocentrism of much of that scholarship prevents a general acknowledgment of Nishitani’s contribution, we can acknowledge that it highlights an important aspect of Nietzsche’s thinking about the self’s relation to traditional culture. For while Nietzsche emphasizes the impossibility of a conservative return to earlier cultural conditions, in his abiding concern to raise the level of culture he also advocates a judicious enhancement of the “plastic strength” that incorporates the past—and of “the will to tradition, to authority, to responsibility ranging over centuries, to solidarity of chains of generations forwards and backwards ad infinitum.” But since Nietzsche also remarks (in the aphorism just cited, which bears the title “Critique of Modernity”) that “the whole of the West no longer possesses the instincts from which [true] institutions grow, and out from which a future grows,” Nishitani’s book can help us recognize that in contemporary Western attempts “to recover the creativity that mediates the past to the future and the future to the past” the ideas of thinkers from the Japanese Buddhist tradition may have a significant role to play.

Notes

1. All translations of quotations from Nietzsche’s works are my own, from the original texts edited by Giorgio Colli and Massimo Montinari (see Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe [Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1980]). Each citation is followed by the corresponding aphorism and/or section number so that it can easily be found in any translation.


6. In conversation, Nishitani has acknowledged the importance of Watsuji’s study for his own intellectual development. He came upon the book during his high school days in Tokyo and was thereby encouraged to study German so as to be able to read Nietzsche’s works in the original. Watsuji’s study of Nietzsche prompted him, he writes, to “read Thus Spoke Zarathustra—over and over.” See Nishitani Keiji, Nishida Kitarō, trans. Yamamoto Seisaku and James W. Heising (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 6.

7. Nietzsche, On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life, section 4 (see Colli and Montinari, eds., Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe). For a more detailed discussion, see the section “Rootings Through the Past” in
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., section 11.
11. Ibid., section 5; original emphasis.
15. The term *Existence* is a translation of Nishitani’s translation of Karl Jaspers’s *Existenz* and refers to human life as lived “existentially.” The existential attitude toward history is summed up nicely in the dictum from Goethe with which Nietzsche begins his *Un timely Meditation* on history (in *On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life*): “I hate everything that merely instructs me without enhancing my activity or directly enlightening it.”
18. Ibid., aphorism 228.
19. Ibid., aphorism 230.
22. Ibid., p. 31.
25. *The Joyful Science* (see Colli and Montinari, eds., *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, p. 224). Though Nietzsche often employs metaphors of springs, wells, and fountains, the conjunction with the image of the pick-axe appears to be Nishitani’s own. There is perhaps a resonance here with a passage in Nietzsche’s *Un timely Meditation* on Schopenhauer (*Schopenhauer as Educator*, section 1), where educators are called liberators and culture, liberation, “a clearing away of all weeds, rubble, and vermin that would encroach on the delicate buds of the plants, an outpouring of light and warmth, a loving downpour of nocturnal rain.”
28. Heidegger’s account of the authentic relation to history is couched in strikingly Nietzschean language when he writes of “the fateful repetition [Wiederholung—“fetching again”] of possibilities that have already been” (*Being and Time*, section 75; see Colli and Montinari, eds., *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*).
29. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1.22, section 1. In a later passage, Zarathustra expresses his admiration for the soul “that loves itself most, in which all things have their flow and counterflow, their ebb and flood” (3.12, section 19).
30. The wordplay is impossible to convey in English translation without reference to the German terms. As one sees from Nishitani’s reading, both Kaufmann’s translation of *Wende aller Not* as “cessation of all need” and Hollingdale’s rendering, “dispeller,” miss the point of the turn.
33. Ibid., p. 51.
34. Ibid., p. 53.
35. Ibid., pp. 53–68.
36. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 2.20. It is surprising that Nishitani doesn’t discuss this section, especially in view of his respect for Heidegger, whose interpretation of eternal recurrence puts so much emphasis on overcoming the spirit of revenge.
37. The second sense is lost in the translations by Kaufmann and Hollingdale.
40. Nietzsche refers to the thought of eternal recurrence as an “auswählendes Prinzip” in an unpublished note from the period during which he was working on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. (*See The Will to Power*, section 1588.)
41. The parenthetical is taken from the locus classicus for the thought of eternal recurrence—namely, *The Joyful Science*, aphorism 341. Note the striking similarity between this idea and the role played by Angst, which brings one face-to-face with the nothingness of one’s death, in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (section 40): “[A]nxiety liberates one from ‘nugatory’ possibilities and lets one be free for authentic [eigentliche] ones” (*Being and Time*, section 68b).
42. The issue is actually much more complex than this, insofar as the thought of eternal recurrence helps transform the self into a multiplicity—as Pierre Klossowski was one of the first to realize, in his Nietzsche e le ceri vici eus (Paris: Mercure de France, 1969). The nature of this multiplicity is a major topic of my *Composing the Soul*. See especially chapters 3, 8, and 9.
43. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 3.2, section 2. This idea of the interconnection of all things, which is central to the thought of eternal recurrence, bears a striking similarity to the Buddhist idea of “codependent arising” (*pratitya samutpāda*).
45. Ibid., p. 175.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p. 177.
50. Ibid., p. 180. Of the three figures mentioned, Nishitani thinks Nietzsche comes closest, especially “in such ideas as ama fai and the Dionysian as the overcoming of nihilism.”
53. Ibid., p. 179.
54. Ibid., pp. 179, 181. Nishitani's book also contains a chapter entitled “Nihilism in Russia” in which there is a lengthy discussion of Dostoevsky in relation to the topic of nihilism.