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Philosophy and Japanese Philosophy in the World

In tackling the question of what is Japanese philosophy, the paper discusses: (1) philosophy in general, (2) the issue of Japanese philosophy, and (3) the relevance of both philosophy and Japanese philosophy in our present age of globalization. Examining the definitions of philosophy provided by Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, and looking at the philosophies of Nishida and Nishitani among others, I argue the source of philosophy—its originary and universal motivation—to be the question of meaning of existence. Japanese philosophy is no exception. I then discuss whether there is something unique to Japanese philosophy in particular and look into the question of the essence of Japanese philosophy. Furthermore, I argue that in order to be true to the original motivation of philosophy, the study of Japanese philosophy, if it is itself to be considered philosophy, cannot be reduced to biography, history, or philology. It must be relevant to our life. I then conclude with a discussion of the relevance of Japanese philosophy and the philosophical study of Japanese philosophy to our life today.

keywords: Philosophy—Japanese philosophy—Nishida Kitarō—Nishitani Keiji—Kant—Hegel—Heidegger—Miki Kiyoshi—Nakamura Hajime—Nakamura Yūjirō—globalization—Ueda Shizuteru—Karatani Kōjin—*tetsugaku—nihon tetsugaku*

We are here to discuss the question of Japanese philosophy. What is Japanese philosophy? Is there such a thing? But more fundamental is the question of What is philosophy? In order to examine what Japanese philosophy is, we need to inquire into the general meaning of philosophy itself and in addition examine what the adjective "Japanese" entails. It is certainly not an easy task to define once and for all what philosophy is. It has meant different things to different thinkers throughout the ages. And we cannot ignore the linguistic, socio-cultural, and historical conditions of particular traditions that inevitably influence how philosophy is understood. Japanese philosophy is no exception here. Its definition depends on a variety of factors that make it difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is. As Uehara Mayuko 上原麻有子, the head editor of the *Journal of Japanese Philosophy*, remarked in her introduction to vol. 1 of the journal, the definitions of both "philosophy" and "Japanese philosophy" need to be reconsidered all the time.[1] In the following I would like to tackle first this preliminary question of philosophy itself. Following this, I will discuss in light of the first question, the issue of Japanese philosophy. I will then conclude with their relevance—of both philosophy and Japanese philosophy—today. Throughout this process I will be making references to, and discussing the positions of, a number of philosophers and scholars from past and present, Japan and the West. But in tackling both these questions of philosophy in general and Japanese philosophy in particular, I want to stress the very philosophical import or relevance of Japanese philosophy and moreover the study of Japanese philosophy.

1. Uehara 2013, 1.

What is Philosophy?

What is philosophy? Contemporary Japanese philosopher Nakamura Yūjirō 中村 雄二郎 has defined philosophy (哲学) as an exercise of the mind, whereby we ground our ideas or way of living.[2] Similarly comparative and Asian philosophy scholars H. Gene Blocker and Christopher Starling have taken philosophy in its narrow sense as a "critical, reflective, rational, and systematic approach to questions of very general interest."[3] Since not everything is conveniently placed before one's eyes, philosophy with a critical spirit attempts to cast out the arbitrary despite the fact that in this very attempt there nevertheless often results a proliferation of different competing philosophical views that in turn feed endless and lively debates and arguments, continually engendering philosophical discourse.[4] For example, philosophy has often historically arisen within religious traditions that have writing, and when it does so we might distinguish the philosophical component from the rest of the religion as "the attempt to intellectually explain and systematize problems that arise in interpreting and defending religious texts."[5] Blocker and Starling argue that in that sense we can recognize at least three independent original traditions of thought that qualify as philosophy: Greek, Indian, and Chinese.[6] That is not to say that we can ignore the historical origins or etymological significance of the word *philosophy*. In our attempt to understand what philosophy is, it would also be helpful to see how philosophy has been understood and defined through the ages.

As most students of philosophy know, the word *philosophy* comes from the Greek word *philosophia* (φιλοσοφία) meaning literally the "love of wisdom." Pythagoras was said to have coined the Greek word *philosophos* (φιλόσοφος)—"lover of wisdom"—by combining *philos* (φίλος) ("friend") and *philein* (φιλειν) ("to love") with *sophos* (σοφός) or *sophia* (σοφία) ("wise," "wisdom," etc.). Despite its originally ethico-religious sense in Pythagoras and noticeable still in Plato's *Phaedo*, Aristotle equated *philosophia* with *epistēmē* (ἐπιστήμη) for "rational knowledge" or "science" in general.

2. Nakamura Y. 1967, 173.
3. Blocker and Starling 2001, 16.
4. See Blocker and Starling 2001, 16; Nakamura Y. 1967, 194.
5. Blocker and Starling 2001, 21.
6. See ibid., 16.

Immanuel Kant in his attempt to critique reason considers what such "rational knowledge" would be and connects it with the interests or ends of reason. He provided two definitions for philosophy in terms of its ideal and the concrete attempt to actualize it : (1) "a mere idea of a possible science, which nowhere exists *in concreto*"; and (2) the exercising of "the talent of reason, in accordance with its universal principles, in certain actually existing attempts at philosophy."[7] More specifically that ideal of philosophy (the first definition) would be "the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason"[8] or the science "...in which everyone necessarily has an interest."[9] In other words, for Kant, the field of philosophy is inseparable from the interests of reason. This leads us to the question of what those interests of reason are. And if the interests of reason themselves shift—although that certainly was not Kant's belief—or the possible modes for attempting to realize them shift according to historical conditions, we are led to the question even more fundamentally of: What are the conditions of human existence that guide such interests of reason?

In the attempt to understand what philosophy is, we certainly cannot ignore the historical development of philosophy itself. If ways of thinking can differ on the basis of the socio-cultural environments, they may also change when those conditions change. G. W. F. Hegel provides a certain understanding of philosophy on the basis of its historical development. His brief definition of philosophy was that it is the "thinking study of things."[10] Philosophy thinks about the concerns of other disciplines of knowledge, their presuppositions, their justifications, etc., at a higher and more systematic level. In other words, it involves not only thinking directly about the objects of these other disciplines but also about their thinking of these objects. But the concrete attempt to engage in philosophy as such has led to its historical development and plurality of competing claims to philosophy.[11] For Hegel these many philosophies complement each other and their

7. A838/B66 in Kant's first Critique: KANT 1993, 753; and KANT 1965, 657.

8. A839/B867 in Kant's first Critique: KANT 1993, 753; and KANT 1965, 657.

9. A840/B868 in Kant's first Critique: KANT 1993, 754 and note; and KANT 1965, 658 and note a.

10. HEGEL 1975, §2, 4.

11. See HEGEL 1975, §13, 18–19.

inconsistencies or incoherences are resolved only through their transition to another higher level philosophy that would sublate the lower ones, embodying the very principles each of the competing philosophies hold in opposition to one another. The implicit claim is that it is Hegel's own philosophy as universal philosophy that embraces what is true in all earlier philosophies by reflecting on them. Yet philosophy, and especially universal philosophy, as such can appear only when the main business of life is done, that is, only when we no longer have to worry about the basic concerns of life. Heidegger provides another view to philosophy that rejects that claim.

From Martin Heidegger's perspective, the very interests of reason that would guide philosophy for Kant presuppose certain fundamental facts of human existence, our essential situatedness or "(t)here" (*Da*) of our existence in the world, such as our concern for being in the face of death, that is, our mortality, as it becomes explicated in the late 1920s. We might generalize this to mean our concern for the meaning or the value of existence, being, in the face of its annihilation or nothingness, that is, the pointlessness or meaninglessness of existence. Heidegger early on (1926–1927) speaks of philosophy as a science of being (*Sein*) rather than of *a* being (*Seiendes*).[12] It digs beneath the sciences of particular sorts of beings and particular views of the world in order to look at being (*Sein*) as such. But it can do so only by investigating what makes these particular sciences and perspectives possible, our "being-(t)here" (*Dasein*) that shapes our preconceptual understanding of being. In other words, the questions of philosophy, as the queen of the sciences, are questions in which the philosopher herself is *already* entangled rather than being questions of an abstract and impersonal academic exercise. In his attempt to revitalize philosophy as a *practice*, Heidegger, from his early years, wanted to emphasize philosophy's connection to "life."[13] Hence in a 1921 letter to Karl Löwith, Heidegger writes, "I work concretely and factically out of my 'I am,' out of my intellectual and wholly factic origin, milieu, life-contexts, and whatever is available to me from these as a vital experience in which I live...."[14] For Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and*

12. HEIDEGGER 2004, 6ff; 1997, 17; and 1988, 13.

13. On this see MALPAS 2006, 40.

14. Letter of August 19, 1921 in PAPPENFUSS and PÖGGELER 1990, 27–32, 29. For the English see KISIEL 1993, 78.

Time, 1927) it is precisely our mortality, our comportment to death, that shapes our understanding of being and accordingly our being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*). Philosophical inquiry in investigating our understanding of being is disconcerting because it is motivated by unsettling moods like anxiety, which frees us from our day-to-day concerns to face being *as such* in its irreducible abyss. Such moods set us on the path to philosophize, to inquire after being *as such*. Even a few years later (1930) when Heidegger is no longer particularly concerned with our being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*), he maintains that philosophy remains disconcerting in that it questions into the whole (*Ganze*) of being[15] in which we ourselves are implicated.[16] In 1936 he states this to mean also an inquiry into the "ground of beings": "With this question it had its inception, in this question it will find its end...."[17] In 1929 Heidegger expressed that question as: Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?[18] We might add then that philosophy in that sense makes explicit the abyssal depths of being—for the whole cannot be conceptually or intellectually fathomed in the context of that environing nothing. In that respect it is *also* transformative by putting the very being of the questioner into question. Even if Heidegger in his later years, post-1930, begins to distance himself from "philosophy," identified with the metaphysical tendencies of the Western tradition that he wants to overcome, replacing it with "thinking" (*Denken*) which he associates with poetry, we might still accept Heidegger's earlier understanding of philosophy as something broader and deeper than mere metaphysics taken narrowly as one occluding direction philosophy might fall into. That is, it looks into the depths of being in general including our very own existence in the face of an abyss

15. Heidegger 1994, 141.

16. Later, however, Heidegger comes to identify philosophy with metaphysics itself in its onto-theological constitution that originates the *forgetfulness* of being and *leads to* (rather than springs from) nihilism under the reign of technology. Thus, the later Heidegger poses "thinking" itself that attempts to commemorate the address of being as an alternative to this pejorative sense of philosophy.

17. Heidegger 1983, 26; and 2000, 26. It is good to keep in mind here that *Grund* for "ground" here can also be translated as "reason," and hence can signify the *why*, the purpose or meaning of things.

18. Heidegger 1976, 121.

that metaphysical solutions—claiming universal or eternal solutions—tend to cover over.

It has often been stated that the original motivation for philosophy—the "love of wisdom"—ultimately springs from a sense of wonder, amazement or bewilderment—what the Greeks called *thaumazein* (θαυμάζειν). When Socrates was overcome by thoughts to be thrown into prolonged states of motionless and speechless shocked wonder, the content of his absorption, according to Hannah Arendt, was untranslatable into words. Plato and Aristotle agreed that *thaumazein* as such is the beginning of philosophy.[19] Plato stated, "For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else" (*Theaetetus* 155d)[20] and Aristotle wrote, "For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize" (*Metaphysics* 982b12ff).[21] And what is it that we wonder at or are amazed by? Taking off from our discussion of Heidegger above, the wonder would be in facing being *as such*, in its abyss, that is, its precariousness or absurdity, or perhaps what the Kyoto School philosophers called "nothing" (無). Heidegger in his works from the 1920s often referred to Max Scheler's notion of nothingness. Scheler proposed that what grounds philosophical activity is the insight "that *there is anything at all*... that '*there is not nothing*' (whereby the word 'nothing'... means *absolute nothing*...)."[22] In this proposal, Scheler emphasized the positive nature of this insight that "there is not nothing," prompting philosophical wonderment, which is precisely what the Greeks seems to have meant by *thaumazein*. Philosophy is driven by the existential question concerning being in the face of nothingness, which also means meaning in the face of meaninglessness. The wonder that there is... (x) rather than nothing, that I exist rather than not, or that there are beings when there may just as well be nothing, or that we find (x) meaningful when we find no reasons why—a wonder that can be provoked by confrontations with death, the sublime, the absurd, or senses of boredom, uncertainty, contingency,

19. Arendt also adds here that for them some such state of speechless wonder is also its end. ARENDT 1998, 302 and note 67.

20. PLATO 1997, 173.

21. ARISTOTLE 1941, 692.

22. SCHELER 1954, 93: "die evidente Einsicht... daß überhaupt Etwas sei... daß '*nicht Nichts sei'* (wobei das Wort Nichts... *absolutes Nichts* bedeutet...)."

nihilistic despair—initiates the activity of philosophy. What are we to make of our existence when a secure ground seems to be lacking, when *is* could just as well be *not*? What is its meaning despite the contingencies and failures of our various projects or when there is no ground, reason, guarantee to support it? That seems to me to be the ultimate concern of philosophy. This cannot be merely an intellectual or academic issue, for it has existential implications. But at the same time philosophy aims to systematically articulate and respond to these concerns.

The lives of both Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 and Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 may serve to illustrate my point despite Nishida's own contrasting of his view from the ancient Greek postulation of wonder or *thaumazein* (驚き) as the beginning of philosophy. Nishida in『無の自覚的限定』[Determination of the nothing in self-awareness, 1932] instead identifies the starting point of philosophy to be "the facticity of the self-contradiction of our self" (我々の自己の自己矛盾の事実) and its motive to be "the deep sorrow of human life" (深い人生の悲哀),[23] that is, the pain of living as man. And in his「生の哲学について」[On the philosophy of life] of the same period, Nishida writes that "What has been called philosophy since ancient times in some sense has always been founded upon the deepest demands of life. How can there be philosophy without the issue of human life?"[24] Those familiar with Nishida's life know how much his life abounded in tragedy. As a young man he lived through the failure of his father's business and the family's loss of land and inherited estates. In his adult life he endured a series of deaths in his family, not only his parents, but including the passing of his first wife, four daughters, and a son—that is, five of his eight children plus his wife—from a variety of diseases, in some cases after long periods of being bedridden. Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 allegedly noticed the resemblance of Nishida's life to that of Job from the Old Testament.[25] Already in his preface to『善の研究』[Inquiry into the good, 1911], Nishida implies the issue of human life to be the basis of philosophical inquiry,[26] and two years previous to this, in a preface written for Fujioka Sakutarō 藤岡 作太郎 who had published his

23. Nishida 2002, 92.
24. Ibid., 335.
25. See Kosaka 2003, 29.
26. Nishida 2003, 6; and 1990, xxx.

book in memory of his deceased daughter, Nishida who had also lost his daughter in the same year, states:

> …the spiritual life of man cannot be meaningless but must have some deep significance. To solve the issue of death is the greatest matter of human life. In the face of death, life is like a bubble. Only by solving the issue of death will we awaken to the true meaning of life.[27]

Gōdo Wakako 神戸和佳子 argues that with the passing of his daughter, Nishida could not bear the possibility of life's meaninglessness and as a consequence began his philosophical inquiry. Here the deep sorrow of losing people he loved served to motivate his philosophizing.[28] So it is likely that this sentiment was behind Nishida's repetitions throughout his later years that "the motivation behind philosophy is the consciousness of pathos [or sorrow] (悲哀)."[29]

But we also know that the starting point for Nishida's early philosophy was what he called "pure experience" (純粋経験). Ueda Shizuteru 上田閑照 thus focuses on what he considers to be the "call" of pure experience and its unfolding descent and—in the reverse direction—the ascending climb out of philosophical concern back towards that source, and their alternating currents and interpenetration.[30] For it is in pure experience that we first encounter the above-mentioned contradiction of the self, the sorrow or pathos of living life, and from which fundamental philosophical questions emerge about the real world—both the life-world and the world of history—in which we are born, act, and die. Ueda, looking at the same passage we pointed to above in Nishida's *Determination of the Nothing in Self-awareness*, likewise notices that what is questioned in this world of actuality (現実の世界) tied to the being of one's self is the "facticity of the self-contradiction of our self." He interprets this to be the fissure that runs through the world wherein we are born, whereby the world is a "world of anxiety and unrest" (不安動揺の世界).[31] According to Ueda, Nishida's response to

27. Preface to『古文学史講話』[Lectures on the history of classical Japanese literature] in Nishida 2003, 332–3.

28. See Gōdo 2013, 97–8, 100.

29. See Kosaka 2003, 13.

30. See Ueda 1991, 86–7.

31. Ibid., 359–60.

that fissure or crack entering into everyday life, the acuteness of the "sorrow/pathos of life," is in its very concrete experience: "My way of thinking, ever since the idea of pure experience has been to start off from the most immediate concrete reality."[32] For Nishida, "we need to grasp most deeply what our most ordinary everyday life is…" but we do this by plumbing into its depths through that very fissure as passage. If the fissure in the immediacy of everyday life is the start of philosophy, its solution also lies deep within, just as spring water gushes forth from the depths of the underground.[33]

Nishitani describes what initiates the philosophical enterprise to be specifically nihilistic despair that pulls the rug from under one's feet. What moved him to begin his study of philosophy was a "pre-philosophical nihilism" (哲学以前のニヒリズム).[34] When he was sixteen his father died from tuberculosis and he himself then became ill with tuberculosis. Such experiences sparked a certain "existential doubt" about his own existence, whereby he fell into a state of despair or nihilism that he describes as the mood of "nihility" (虚無).[35] He thus came to feel as if life itself is nothing but suffering,[36] and it was such anomie that led him to the enterprise of philosophy.[37] For Nishitani nihilism then is the starting point of philosophy, as well as the beginning of the religious quest that poses the question, "For what purpose, why, do I exist?"[38] And he claims that its overcoming is "the single greatest issue facing philosophy and religion in our times."[39] Here Nishitani understands the religious quest as man's search for "true reality" and the avenue of that "self-realization" (自己実現) or "self-awareness of reality" (実在の自覚)—a quest that arises from a profound personal existential crisis at the limits of one's existence, where the meaningfulness of day-to-day living is negated.[40] In this sense, a religious significance is discovered here in the practice of philosophy.

32. Nishida 1989, 138 cited in Ueda 1991, 360.
33. Ueda 1991, 360–1.
34. Nishitani 1990a, 186.
35. See ibid., 178ff, 180, 186, 193–5.
36. Ibid., 175–6.
37. See Nishitani 1993, v; and 1990b, xxxiii.
38. Nishitani 1987, 5–6; and 1982, 2–3.
39. Nishitani 1987, 54; and 1982, 47.
40. Nishitani 1987, 8–9; and 1982, 5–6.

Now despite their differences there seems to be a common ground here among these distinct postulations of the source of philosophy—what Heidegger and the Greeks called wonder, what Nishida called the deep sorrow of life, and Nishitani's nihilistic despair. The sorrow of life is its "self-contradiction," most acutely felt in the face of death, the annihilation of existence. The wonder of being for Heidegger comes out explicitly in its contrast to nothing—"Why are there beings rather than nothing?" Death looms large also in Nishitani's nihilistic despair. Epicurus also seemed to regard anxiety stemming from an unacknowledged fear of death as the cause of philosophy. If Socrates was often found in motionless states of shocked wonder, Nishida, at least once, was found analogously motionless gazing into the sea for a long time. Nishitani Keiji recalls a story of how when an old woman, noticing Nishida staring into the sea, asked him what he was thinking, Nishida replied, "I'm thinking about the world. The world is indeed mysterious."[41] Nishida had also written in his「鎌倉雑詠」[Kamakura poems], "I love the sea, it seems to me that something unlimited is moving there."[42] All of these apparently distinct starting points of philosophy—wonder, sorrow, anxiety, despair—involve an experience of contingency, indeterminacy, uncertainty in regard to life or existence that calls into question the very meaningfulness of things. It points to an *excess* or *other* that exceeds, is irreducible to, and disrupts or disturbs the pre-given framework of meaning.[43] Even if it evokes anxiety or sorrow, it also evokes awe and wonder. Nishida's experience of the sea seems indicative of this. Some might also describe this as the experience of the sublime in Kant's sense or what Rudolf Otto called the experience of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.[44] They are all cases in which the presumed world, the framework of intelligibility, ordinarily taken for granted, has crumbled or threatens to crumble. And they point to an *otherness* lying beyond the horizon of the familiar that shakes its framework—an ungrounding—opening up its indeterminacy or contingency. As the meaningfulness of existence is called into question, we

41. NISHITANI 1951 cited in UEDA 1991, 393–394. An English translation is available in NISHITANI 1991, 19. My translation differs slightly.

42. Cited in UEDA 1991, 394. The poems have been published in NISHIDA 2004.

43. For a discussion of the occurrence of the other or alien that can motivate philosophy, see WALDENFELS 2011, 81.

44. Although Otto (in his *Das Heilige*) takes this to be the origin of religion. See OTTO 1958.

can either resign or despair, even engage in nihilistic self-destruction—as in the suicide of the character Matsuko at the end of Ōshima Nagisa's 大島渚 1966 film *Violence at Noon* (『白昼の通り魔』) with the crumbling of her ideal world informed by love and humanism—on the one hand, or partake in an investigative quest for, or reconstruction of, meaning on the other. Philosophy is one such course. I am not so sure if that means that philosophy in itself is an attempt to "escape" the meaninglessness of life.[45] I think it is instead an attempt to come to terms with that shaking of the foundation and to positively deal with it.

But furthermore because that undoing of the horizon often happens in the interstices between cultural communities, that is, between horizons, in the fragile space of exchange and circulation between them—fragile in the sense that the space lacks any positive communal identity or grounding—Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人 suggests how philosophy as such, emerging from that interstitial space—a "space of sheer difference" that is insubstantial and amorphous—is homeless.[46] Socrates' philosophizing challenged—and hence displaced him from—the very communal framework of Athens. The source of René Descartes' doubt that led him on his search for certainty was precisely his "multicultural" experience through his travels that one's own tradition is not necessarily better than what appears to one as the "eccentric" traditions of others, "others" who may not necessarily be barbarians or savages but rather may be possessed of reason, just as much as or even more than those of one's kin.[47] This homelessness of philosophy will indeed be relevant in the next sections when we look into the question of Japanese philosophy and its place in the world.

In any case, to the extent that philosophy is motivated by that question thrust upon the meaningfulness of our existence or life, it can neither be simply an intellectual or academic exercise nor can it be reduced to mere biography, historiology, or philology. Of course historical knowledge as well as biographical or philological knowledge can contribute to philo-

45. As Gōdo seems to suggest. Or at least she says it was an attempt in the case of Nishida to escape the fear that life is meaningless (see Gōdo 2013, 99). "Escape" seems to connote a sense of inauthenticity which would be antithetical to the purpose of philosophy.

46. See Karatani 2005, 81–2, 98, 134. Also see Žižek 2004, 266–7.

47. See Descartes 1994, pt. 2, §4, 32, 33.

sophical understanding. Nevertheless every work that claims to be philosophical ought to keep in mind the original motivation for philosophizing and make itself relevant to our lives. And to the extent that we can never treat the matter of this concern as an object standing outside of ourselves—since it implicates our very own existence—Heidegger states that all great philosophers "think the same." To this Miki Kiyoshi 三木清 adds that philosophy is an expression of life itself (生のひとつの現はれ), an existential necessity of a process proceeding from *within* life itself (生の裡から発生する過程の存在論的必然性), whereby one questions the very world wherein one lives along with one's own existence for—as we saw above—the nature of life itself is insecure.[48] In that sense every thinker is him/herself implicated in the very activity of philosophizing as it emerges from his/her own life. And yet because that "same" is so rich and saturated in its abyssal excess of potential meaning, no individual thinker can ever exhaust it.[49] In this connection we are led to the question of how philosophy as such, in its attempt to think and give shape to that excess, manifests in other historical epochs and cultural regions that have provided distinct preconceptual horizons for thought.

Nakamura Hajime 中村元, for example, looked for the root of philosophical enterprise in what he called "ways of thinking" or "thought" (思想), as expressed in the popular sayings, proverbs, songs, myths, and folklore of a people as opposed to the self-conscious systems of thought that would be "philosophy" (哲学) proper.[50] He found thought as such to be a cultural phenomenon (文化現象), involving socio-historical, psychological, aesthetic, and linguistic phenomena, etc.[51] Nakamura suggests that thought as such is the cultural-historical site of concrete issues encountered in everyday life which then provides a foundation indispensable to the growth of philosophy.[52] Philosophy thus becomes manifest in different ways according to its cultural or regional setting—its socio-cultural environ-

48. MIKI 1966, 36. For the English translation, see MIKI 1998, 309–10.

49. HEIDEGGER 1961, 46; and 1979, 36; Cf. also HEIDEGGER 2007, 198; and 1984, 156.

50. See NAKAMURA H. 1964, 5, 10.

51. See the forward by Arthur Frederick Wright in ibid., vii-viii; and the editor's preface by Philip P. Wiener in ibid., xi.

52. See ibid., 9.

ment—and changes as those environing conditions change. The definition of philosophy itself is thus bound up with the very "practice of philosophizing within distinctive cultures"—as the editors of the *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (James Heisig, Thomas Kasulis, and John Maraldo) have argued.[53] But as cultures change, philosophy has a history. Philosophy thus gives voice to the universal concern of man—the issue of being, existence, meaning, life—within the perimeters of its setting, which however are not permanent and may perhaps be challenged. This returns us to the definition of philosophy as a "critical, reflective, rational, and systematic approach to questions" Blocker and Starling provide that we saw at the beginning of our discussion. On the other hand, Heidegger had claimed that the only philosophy is Western European philosophy.[54] This leads us to our next question: Japanese philosophy, is there such a thing?

Japanese Philosophy?

The concept of "philosophy" as known in the West was first imported to Japan during the Meiji (明治) period (1868–1911/1912) and enthusiastically pursued by the intellectual milieu. It was a time when a generation of scholars were devoted to importing Western intellectual culture as a whole, including a variety of academic fields from the West. In 1874 the Japanese term *tetsugaku* (哲学) was introduced when Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897) neologized the term *kitetsugaku* (希哲学), "the science of seeking clarity," to translate the Western concept and then shortened it to *tetsugaku*. At the time philosophy or *tetsugaku* was conceived by the Japanese as exclusively Western in origin and distinct from the traditional forms of intellectual pursuit originating in East Asia. The general belief was that in order to compete with Western powers and avoid being colonized, they ought to embrace the variety of Western sciences, including philosophy.

53. Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 17.

54. See Heidegger 2002, 228; and 1968, 224. We ought to remember here however that this statement is connected to Heidegger's critique of the Western tradition as metaphysics as shaped by Platonic dualism, which he attempts to overcome with what he calls "thinking" (*Denken*).

Even today in Japan the distinction is often made between on the one hand *tetsugaku* as referring to Western philosophy and modern and contemporary Japanese philosophy that had been engendered through the adoption of Western philosophical methods and approaches, and on the other hand *shisō* (thought, thinking) referring to pre-Meiji intellectual practices and traditions. For example, Uehara Mayuko has defined *tetsugaku* in Japan as designating the scholarly domain (学問領域) opened through the introduction of Western philosophy during Japan's modernization process that began in the Meiji period.[55] "Thought" or *shisō* however points to the rich intellectual history of Japan that encompasses the sort of literature that in other non-Western regions—such as in India and China—has become classified as "philosophy." Through contact with the modern West, Indians have borrowed the Western concept of "philosophy" to call their own ancient thought, "Indian philosophy." Likewise the Chinese, after learning of Western philosophy, from the 1920s have appropriated the Japanese neologism for philosophy to call their own ancient intellectual traditions, "Chinese philosophy" (*zhōng guó zhé xué* 中国哲学).[56] By contrast, Japanese intellectuals for the most part have regarded their own native intellectual traditions as precisely *not* philosophical for the reason that it is not logical, analytical, abstract in the same way Western philosophy is. Even Nakamura Hajime suggests that the more sensual, integrative, or aesthetic aspects of Japanese thought traditions, in distinction from the more intellectual elements imported from China and thus from Chinese or Indian philosophy in general, precludes them from being philosophy.[57]

Meiji thinker Nakae Chōmin 中江兆民 famously declared in 1901 that "from ancient times to the present, there has never been any philosophy [*tetsugaku*] in Japan."[58] He not only refused to call the thought of National Learning ("Nativist" thought), Confucianism, and Buddhism philosophy, but also to regard as philosophy what his Westernized intellectual contemporaries were doing for lack of sufficient originality.[59] Many contemporary

55. Uehara 2008, 65.

56. On this, see Blocker and Starling 2001, 3–4; and Davis 2015, 6.

57. See Blocker and Starling 2001, 8.

58. Nakae 1975, 8.

59. See Blocker and Starling 2001, 1; Nakamura Y. 1967, 174.

Japanese intellectuals are sympathetic to this view. What at first appears here to be a rather narrow view that refuses to recognize the finer points of traditional Japanese thought, in Nakamura Yūjirō's reading of Chōmin's statement, was in fact for the sake of freeing thought and enlivening what ought to be enlivened by carefully considering what "philosophy" is without being shackled by traditional Eastern thought but also without becoming an absolute devotee of "Western thought."[60] Nakamura suggests that what was lacking in traditional thought is an objectification or thematization of the subject of study—whether "nature," "self," or "norms"—modeled on rationality as opposed to the "emotive naturalism" (感情的自然主義) prevalent in Japanese intellectual life that assumes the self-evident and ordinary to be what is natural and which culminated in the traditional "family system" and "emperor system."[61] Miki Kiyoshi, while studying abroad in Germany towards the end of the Taishō (大正) period (1912–1926), also wrote a piece for a local German newspaper in which he discusses the lack of any recognition for history in the traditional Japanese worldview and the lack of objective historical research. Miki's target here is what he calls "Buddhistic naturalist pantheism" (仏教的、自然主義的汎神論) and Nakamura identifies this with what he calls "emotive naturalism."[62] We might object that simply objectifying one's own origins or milieu, the self-evident or what is assumed as natural, cannot be the end-all of philosophy. If the very act of philosophizing itself implicates one's own subjective being, one cannot deny the hermeneutics involved in philosophizing. Nakamura's point however is that to simply take for granted what seems natural is arbitrary and antithetical to philosophy, the task of which is to repel the arbitrary. His point is that such "emotive naturalism" has been the spiritual milieu of Japan, thus making it difficult for philosophy to be realized in that setting.[63] Nakamura thinks that it is only through the work of Nishida Kitarō, with the 1911 publication of his *Inquiry into the Good*, that one could speak of a philosophy in Japan, suggesting that only with this work was Chōmin's judgment dis-

60. Nakamura Y. 1967, 181, n. 1.
61. See ibid., 186, 190–1.
62. Ibid., 192, n. 3.
63. See ibid., 193–5.

proven.[64] Nakamura Yūjirō however adds to this that even today, despite the passing of over half a century since Chōmin's critique, he has felt the same sort of lack in the Japanese intellectual milieu, for example, that there are no thoroughgoing debates in politics between distinct intellectual positions or ideological stances that move beyond mere compromise.[65] The observation Nakamura makes here about the general intellectual climate of contemporary Japan, of course, does not necessarily pertain to the exercise of philosophy within the academic setting nor mean an outright denial of the existence of a "Japanese philosophy."

Some decades after writing the above-mentioned German newspaper article, Miki also wrote in a piece aptly titled, "There is no Philosophy in Japan" (「哲学のない日本」) that Nishi Amane, who came up with the very term *tetsugaku* as we discussed above, may have been of a similar opinion as Chōmin, but *also* that this all depends on what we understand by "philosophy" (*tetsugaku*). Miki refers to Ikuta Chōkō 生田長江, a critic, who remarked that if we simply accept the concept of *tetsugaku* as imported from the West and try to fit everything into that category, indeed, we would not find anything corresponding to that idea in Japan of the past. Nevertheless Ikuta also could not help but eventually concede that one cannot find any great "scholars" (学者) nor "scholarship" (学問) in the history of Japan. Miki thus concludes that the statement, "There is no philosophy in Japan," really refers to philosophy as "scholarship" or a "scholarly discipline."[66] In other words, there has been no philosophy in Japan as a scholarly or academic discipline, that is, the kind of scholarly discipline that developed in the West as "philosophy." The pre-Meiji intellectual schools were not scholarly enough to be counted as such.

On the other hand, the editors of *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*—James Heisig, John Maraldo, and Thomas Kasulis—have argued that if philosophy means "the critical investigation of deeply perplexing questions," there is no a priori reason to limit it to the way it has been construed and conducted within a particular cultural context, i.e., the Greco-European tra-

64. Nakamura Y. 1995, 80.

65. See Nakamura Y. 1967, 176.

66. Miki 1968, 153–154. For an English translation, see Miki 2016.

dition.[67] Their claim is that there was already in Japan prior to the mid-nineteenth century coining of *tetsugaku*, "a solid philosophical tradition rooted in an intellectual history that provided it with resources comparable to but very different from those that have sustained Western philosophy."[68]

In his own study, "Defining Philosophy in the Making," John Maraldo[69] has isolated four senses in which the notion of "Japanese philosophy" has been used: (1) Western philosophy as it happens to be practiced by Japanese scholars; (2) traditional Japanese thought (Confucian, Nativist, Buddhist, etc.) as it was formulated prior to the introduction of Western philosophy; (3) a form of inquiry with methods and themes that are Western in origin, but that can be applied to pre-modern, pre-Westernized, Japanese thinking; and (4) a kind of reverse Orientalism that asserts the superiority of specifically Japanese ways of thinking. With some modifications, this four-fold sense of Japanese philosophy was adopted by the editors of *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, of which Maraldo was a part, in their discussion of the topic.[70] Let us examine these four senses.

In correspondence with the first sense of Japanese philosophy, it was Meiji-era critics who denied Japan had its own philosophy and who applied the term *tetsugaku* to describe what the scholars who imported European philosophy were doing. But as we saw above, the prevailing view in Japan even up to the present has been that philosophy is a scholarly discipline that developed in the West and that if there is a Japanese philosophy (日本哲学), it is only as a discipline first made possible by the importation of, and consequent appropriation of, Western philosophy since Meiji times. Yet many others feel that this places too severe a limit to the meaning of *tetsugaku*[71] and question whether pre-Meiji *shisō* (thought) might be regarded as "*tetsugaku*" or not.

The most intriguing of the four senses, in my view, are the second and the third. On the opposite end of the spectrum from the first sense is the second sense that would claim classical Japanese thought to be philosophy

67. Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 17–18.

68. Ibid., 17.

69. Maraldo 2004, 238–42.

70. See Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 19–21.

71. See ibid., 19.

insofar as it deals with ultimate reality and general principles, for example as Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 asserted concerning premodern Japanese Confucianism. Bret Davis makes the point that even if "philosophy" as a scholarly discipline arose in the West, it aims at a universal truth that transcends cultural linguistic horizons, and that likewise pre-Meiji Japanese thinkers of Buddhist and Confucian schools—Kūkai 空海, Dōgen 道元, Hayashi Razan 林羅山, Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠, and so on—pursued universal truths that transcend the Japanese cultural context. Insofar as they were *also* inquiring into truths about life and existence that would be universally valid or applicable, can we not include their claims and arguments into philosophical discourse?[72] Blocker and Starling also assert that there is no question that pre-Meiji Japanese thinkers have been deeply engaged in certain issues in a way we can characterize as philosophical and that there is a large body of Japanese literature even before the Meiji period that is sufficiently philosophical *and* sufficiently Japanese even if deriving from the Chinese tradition that we can regard as "Japanese philosophy," in addition to the Japanese philosophy influenced by and contributing to the Western tradition of philosophy since the Meiji period.[73] This issue of whether the pre-modern Japanese intellectual traditions are philosophical or not in the sense of being sufficiently rational or analytic is certainly not an easy question to solve but analogous sorts of questions also arise concerning certain figures in the margins of the Western tradition—e.g., Presocratics like Heraclitus, medieval mystics like Meister Eckhart, or even moderns like Nietzsche or Dostoevsky or contemporaries like Emil Cioran—that is, whether they can be regarded as part of "philosophy" or not. Some within the West regard them as philosophers and some do not. But even if we cannot accept pre-Meiji thinking just as it is as "philosophy," as Davis asserts,[74] we certainly cannot deny that it is one source for us who engage in philosophy today. At the same time, however, any philosophical discussion of these premodern Japanese intellectual currents needs to be cognizant of its own *reconstructive* nature, its use of a *more* methodologically aware philosophical thought, informed by

72. See DAVIS 2015, 6.

73. BLOCKER and STARLING 2001, 11.

74. DAVIS 2015, 6.

the contemporary world including the modern West, as a lens for viewing premodern thought[75]—a lens not previously available.

This leads to the third sense of Japanese philosophy that intentionally takes such methods and themes borrowed from Western philosophy and applies them to premodern, pre-Westernized, Japanese thinking, engaging premodern thought intentionally under the light of modern philosophical terms and methods, for example the philosophical explication, analysis, or critique of key concepts appearing in Native Studies, Confucian thought, or Buddhist thought. At the same time, however, premodern thinking might also illuminate contemporary Western philosophical issues by proposing alternative solutions. So critique here can run in both directions to contribute to the broader tradition of philosophy that continues to grow and unfold in the contemporary global context.[76] In this regard, Kyoto School (京都学派) philosophy in particular may be regarded as a prime exemplar of this sense of Japanese philosophy. For example, Uehara adds to her definition of *tetsugaku* we saw above that seemed to limit philosophy in Japan to post-Meiji developments, that "Japanese philosophy" (*nihon tetsugaku*), even while rooted in the modern introduction of Western philosophy to Japan was established on the basis of an intellectual history which *also* inherits the traditions of Japanese and Eastern thought.[77] I would also say that while we can point to Nishidian philosophy as the prime example, we probably should not however to restrict Japanese philosophy to a particular school of thought—Kyoto School—stemming from Nishida and his colleague, Tanabe, and we might find the same sort of inter-epochal examination and development of pre-modern thought as philosophy among other modern and contemporary intellectual currents in Japan.

Maraldo in his own work argues for the superior viability of the third of these four senses for it pays due hermeneutical attention to the Greek origins of the philosophical methods and themes that have been inherited. But at the same time he stresses that these methods and themes, enriched by the plurality of perspectives brought by different times and cultures, are essentially always "in the making," and that the production of "Japanese phi-

75. On this see Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 20.

76. See ibid., 20.

77. Uehara 2008, 65.

losophy" will have to "strike a balance between reading (pre-defined) philosophy into the texts [of the pre-modern Japanese tradition] and reading alternatives out of them, constructing contrasts to that [pre-defined] philosophy [of the West]."[78] In other words, this third sense can lead to the critical *reexamination* of the very meaning of philosophy and hence participate in the ongoing historical hermeneutic of philosophy's self-understanding. Davis makes the point that *shūkyō* (宗教) for "religion," like *tetsugaku*, was also a Meiji era neologism that has been used to apply to pre-modern Japanese practices and modes of thought. In the same way that an investigation into purported "religions" like Buddhism forces us to redefine the concept of "religion," our application of the term "philosophy" for pre-Meiji thought may contribute to the ongoing hermeneutical discussion and reexamination of the meaning of philosophy itself. This is not to deny the complex political implications and dangers of applying a term coming from one cultural sphere to practices and traditions belonging to another—a topic that Leah Kalmanson has been examining in her work on Japanese philosophy.[79] Davis[80] reminds us in his discussion of this topic that in the history of Western philosophy, "philosophy" itself has been redefined from time to time. And even today philosophers from different schools of thought are continuing the discussion of "What is philosophy?" So the question arises: Why not include pre-modern Japan into these discussions? Especially considering the fact that the harshest skeptics in regard to considering pre-modern Japanese thought as philosophy have been the Japanese themselves and that it has been comparativist philosophers and scholars of the West who have been willing to concede the possibility that pre-modern Japanese thought could be philosophy, a cross-cultural discussion on this issue could contribute to the ongoing unfolding of philosophy and a fuller comprehension of its nature.

And yet we also cannot deny the very Japanese cultural context from out of which such a contribution to philosophy as such would emerge. For even if philosophy aims at a universal truth, a philosopher cannot ignore his/her own cultural-linguistic-contextual horizon that shapes his/her own intellect.

78. MARALDO 2004, 244. See also HEISIG, KASULIS, and MARALDO 2011, 17.

79. See KALMANSON 2015, 205–6.

80. See DAVIS 2015, 6.

This relates to the issue or question of whether there is an *essentially* Japanese form of philosophy, that is, a *Japanese* philosophy as distinct from simply philosophy *in Japan*. As Davis explains, while there certainly are those in Japan who research, comment upon, interpret, criticize, and develop Greek philosophy or German philosophy, only when that becomes developed in an original way that reflects Japanese linguistic and cultural characteristics and the traditional modes of thinking of Japan, can it be called "Japanese philosophy."[81] For example Nakamura Yūjirō, as we saw earlier, pointed to the character of "emotive naturalism" belonging to Japanese intellectual life. If philosophy begins with "self-cognition," it cannot be utterly unconnected to its own spiritual milieu. Nakamura thus argues that even if philosophy *ought* to be universal, its *material* must be rooted in its immediately given actuality. In the case of Japan, this means the "emotions" and "nature" of the Japanese people. The Japanese philosopher cannot ignore the conditions of her being Japanese, the "emotive naturalism" of her intellectual cultural milieu that Nakamura had argued to be precisely un-philosophical. Nakamura therefore argues that a Japanese philosophy would have to take such "emotions" and "nature" as its *objects* of a thorough investigation—even if their *complete* objectification or thematization may be impossible—rather than simply taking them for granted from the very beginning.[82] And this is where a specifically *Japanese* philosophy, Nakamura seems to suggest, would differ from pre-philosophical Japanese thought. Moreover, Nakamura also acknowledges that Japanese "emotive naturalism" had birthed a pre-modern tradition of "aesthetic sense" or "aesthetic consciousness" (美意識) that has functioned in a way somewhat similar to philosophical thinking, which we may be able to enliven and grasp within the bounds of philosophy.[83] Blocker and Starling as well argue that not only the European origin in Meiji times onwards of philosophy in Japan but the Chinese influence in pre-Meiji times would not preclude the emergence of a distinctively Japanese philosophy deriving from those origins just as we can argue for the existence of an American or German philosophy that developed from Greek origins. It is an inevitable result of the process of acculturation that transforms, modi-

81. Ibid., 6.

82. See Nakamura Y. 1967, 195–8.

83. See ibid., 199.

fies, and adapts an imported philosophy originating from elsewhere so that it comes to express local ideas and values and in its modified form becomes a tradition in its own right.[84] Undeniably, an example of such *nihon tetsugaku* would be Kyoto School philosophy stemming from Nishidian philosophy that while working within the intellectual perimeters of the academic discipline of philosophy imported from the West, has also inherited the traditions of Japanese and Eastern thought. But Blocker's (and Starling's) point is that these inherited pre-modern traditions in themselves can be considered Japanese philosophy insofar as they are "philosophical" and are "Japanese."

However, even if there is such a thing as "Japanese philosophy" that unfolds from the linguistic and cultural horizon and intellectual traditions of Japan, Davis reminds us that insofar as it is "philosophy," that is, something that aims for universal validity, it ought not to preclude the participation of non-Japanese people. In other words, Japanese philosophy ought not to be a monopoly of Japanese people. Just as Japanese intellectuals and philosophers participate in discussions and arguments concerning Western philosophy, Westerners and other non-Japanese can likewise participate in discussions and arguments concerning Japanese philosophy to contribute to its ongoing development.[85] And at the same time we need to always keep in mind that what is meant by "Japanese" here is a contingent and multisided ever-changing complex with historical origins and that the identity of individual persons—Japanese or otherwise—is never a simple issue.

And this brings us to the fourth and final sense of Japanese philosophy for which I have reservations. For it tends toward an inverted Orientalism that stereotypes or essentializes qualities or characteristics identified as uniquely Japanese. It is possible to "generalize certain fundamental orientations as commonly or typically 'Japanese'" as the *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* editors remark[86] and as Nakamura Yūjirō suggests with his talk of "emotive naturalism." Nevertheless we should heed Nakamura Hajime's warning concerning common stereotypes—whether it is Orientalist essentialism or the East-West dichotomy—that might accompany the attempt to discover what

84. See Blocker and Starling 2001, 9, 11.

85. See Davis 2015, 6–7.

86. Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 21.

is unique to Japanese thought.[87] Concerning "Eastern thought" (東洋思想) Nakamura Hajime concluded that we are "incapable of isolating a definite trait which can be singled out for contrast with the West," and that "there exists no single 'Eastern' feature...,"[88] and therefore that commonly repeated clichés, such as those concerning East and West, are conceptually inadequate and need to be reexamined.[89] But if there is no Eastern essence, what about the essence of Japanese thought? Nakamura Hajime's analyses show the contingency of thought to linguistic and socio-cultural conditions. Certainly differences in language, culture, and tradition determine the direction of philosophical thought.[90] And this can lead to the development of a certain kind of philosophy distinct to a certain region, such as Japanese philosophy, as Blocker and Starling, and Davis, all suggest. Those cultural and linguistic conditions that characterize our ways of thinking or philosophizing, however, are not easily reducible to a single and eternal essence. While there are recognizable trends, tendencies, and orientations, they are not set in stone. They are certainly not unalterable, unbreakable or eternal for the environing conditions themselves change. What we call "essences" are themselves contingent to time and space, allowing for fluidity and diversification, rather than being monolithic eternities. If we trace the origination of such "essences," we find that it always occurs at the margins of pre-existent horizons where they meet other horizons—an interstitial space, as mentioned above, or inter-horizonal chiasma—whereby the origin, to borrow Reiner Schürmann's term, is an-archic.[91] In the end I think every philosopher ought to keep in mind that the perpetuation of intellectual customs and stereotypes is not the aim of philosophy, although it is also important and necessary to recognize them.

87. Nakamura's target here however is the essentializing of "the Orient" rather than Japanese thought *per se*. See Nakamura H. 1976, 205–12; and 1964, 3–4, 12ff. For example, without naming Watsuji Tetsurō's 和辻哲郎 name, Nakamura points out the difficulty in his theory of summing up the characteristics of the whole of what Watsuji called "the monsoon zone" (India, China, and Japan) and labeling it as "Asiatic." See Nakamura H. 1964, 18–19.

88. Ibid., 21.

89. Nakamura H. 1963, 59; and 1992, 4.

90. See Uehara 2013, 1.

91. Schürmann develops this idea throughout his major works. See for example, Schürmann 1987 and 2003.

I myself am most sympathetic to the second and third senses of Japanese philosophy with a slight preference for the third. But the third sense as we saw above, in a certain sense, can also lead to the second sense in its reevaluation of the premodern and hermeneutical reexamination of what constitutes philosophy. The line between the second and third senses can thus be blurred or at least allow for crossing over. But in addition, in regard to that third sense that Maraldo argued to be the most viable, I would also emphasize that a philosophical discussion of premodern thought should not be mere intellectual history. That is, the discussion ought to speak to contemporary philosophical concerns. While philosophy cannot ignore its history, that encounter with the past—if it is to be *philosophical*—cannot be mere historiology or philology. Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, for example, all emphasized how thinking itself involves engagement with the history preceding and conditioning one's own thinking.[92] But the point here is not to simply duplicate what has already been said but to make it philosophically relevant to our own concerns through appropriation, which is what Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger all attempted to do in different ways. Philosophy in confronting its past—or its other—cannot remain at a safe distance from its subject matter but must engage it in a thoughtful manner that implicates its very own identity as well as that of the philosopher.

We need therefore to be aware of the danger that philosophical inquiry become nothing more than philology or intellectual history. The practice of philosophy itself always involves translation and transmission and continued assimilation by succeeding generations of the material inherited from prior generations.[93] This is an ongoing dialogical process, requiring linguistic and historical expertise. Philosophy can certainly employ philology, historiology, or biography as tools for its analyses. But at the same time philosophy engages in living questions and confronts issues that are alive or real to us. For to philosophize is to take part in a conversation crossing not only individuals, texts, and traditions, but also generations. When philosophically examining the ideas of previous philosophers, we ourselves must philosophize, otherwise our work is not philosophy. We must take their content and place it into our own context to make it a living and meaningful

92. See Jacobs 1999, 5, and see 11 on the following.

93. See Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 22.

issue. Simply parroting Nishida's ideas would not constitute philosophy. A philosophical analysis of his thought must confront, engage in, and appropriate it in a way that is meaningful to us, or relevant to our concerns. The philosophical examination of previous thought in that sense involves a critical hermeneutic. And this goes for the philosophical examination of premodern Japanese thought as well. Here we ought to bear in mind Nakamura Hajime's critique of the fields of Chinese philosophy and Indian philosophy in Japanese academia. His criticism was aimed at the predominantly philological approach taken in those fields and their lack of any critical spirit willing to tackle philosophical issues that matter to us.[94] His point was that these ancient philosophies have contemporary relevance with implications for our lives. Hence their study ought to make their *philosophical* relevance, transcending region and period, evident within today's global context despite their historical-cultural particularities. In that respect the historical hermeneutic involved in the philosophical examination of previous thought not only leads to the reexamination of what philosophy is but should also contribute in some way to our own self-understanding, which is the topic of our next and final section.

Conclusion: Philosophy and Japanese Philosophy, Their Relevance:

Through investigation and critique philosophy opens up a space for dialogue that can cross borders and reshape constellations of difference. Such a space is crucial if humanity is to survive this current trend of globalization. Philosophy has universal relevance and Miki Kiyoshi, even while expressing skepticism concerning the existence of a Japanese philosophy prior to modernization—that is, philosophy at least as an academic or scholarly discipline—believed that Japan *needs* philosophy especially in order to face world scale conflicts, including the ideological and class wars of his time.[95] And philosophy continues to be relevant for us today in the post-WWII and post-Cold War world. But to realize this potential, philosophy itself must mature beyond its Eurocentric pubescence and open its horizons

94. Nakamura H. 1976, 233–5, 299.
95. Miki 1968, 154–5.

to the diversity of perspectives having their source in other cultural regions of the world. There is the necessity to critically regard the restrictions and preconceptions stemming from one's own cultural, linguistic, or traditional starting point *and at the same time* to investigate its actual or potentially universal significance stored within that starting point but without taking that universality simply for granted.[96] And this goes for both Western and Japanese philosophy. Nakamura Hajime's critique of the narrow approach of what Japanese academicians called "pure philosophy" (純粋哲学) that only recognized Western philosophy while ignoring Asian thought[97] was related to his belief that the study of Indian and Buddhist thought, for example, belong within a *philosophically* broader perspective than mere philological studies and can be placed within a global context that could make their relevance evident. He believed philosophical claims and ideas possess value and meaning for the entire human race despite the particularities of their historical-cultural context.[98] At least they can be considered in light of our current concerns and possess a storehouse of ideas that might be made relevant. We can say the same for Japanese philosophy in both its pre-modern and contemporary guises even if Nakamura Hajime himself seemed reluctant to consider pre-modern Japanese thought as philosophy. Whether or not there is universal philosophical significance in something culturally particular as in Japanese thinking—whether pre- or post-Meiji—ultimately can only be decided through *philosophical* dialogue, argument, and discussion, and Japanese thought/philosophy ought to be included in that dialogue. Hence we have to cast serious doubt on any attitude that would maintain the superiority or predominance of Western philosophy over non-Western philosophy and intellectual currents and/or refuses to acknowledge the latter's existence or relevance.

The Japanese intellectual tradition—whether one regards it as philosophy or as thought—harbors the influence of a multiplicity of cultural and religious traditions coming from India, Central Asia, China, and Korea.

96. See Davis 2015, 6. Davis gives the examples of how the idea of "democracy" that arose in ancient Greece and developed in the modern West has come to hold universal significance today, and how the notion of "emptiness" that developed within the Buddhist tradition likewise also has universal significance.

97. Nakamura H. 1976, 233–5, 299.

98. See ibid., 304–5.

And Japan after the Meiji period as well has served as an intense juncture for the meeting of Western and Eastern cultures. Ueda Shizuteru thus sees the "place" of Japan as a rich reservoir of ideas that can contribute to the formation of a world philosophy. As one example of an exceptional individual philosopher who placed himself in this fertile ground into which diverse intellectual currents were flowing, Ueda mentions Nishida Kitarō.[99] The result was the formation of the Kyoto School of philosophy, which as many acknowledge and as we have already mentioned serves as a prime example of Japanese philosophy but with global significance. It is an example of Japanese philosophy unfolding in a global setting with relevance, not just for Japan, but of global proportions. But this is just one example, and there are other non-Kyoto School strands of Japanese philosophy developing today that should be able to make significant contributions to philosophy as a whole. The global significance of philosophical movements like the Kyoto School is especially pertinent when we realize that we ourselves, Japanese or non-Japanese, Westerner and Easterner, today are placed—whether we like it or not—within the interstices of different cultural communities as a result of so-called globalization. Moreover it is precisely in the fragile interstitial space *between* communities that, as Karatani suggested with the example of Descartes' "multicultural" experience,[100] true philosophy as that which questions and critiques the natural and obvious emerges. Philosophy thus in its constitutive "homelessness"[101] emerges to challenge any positive identity that is simply to be assumed *as is*. Japanese philosophy thus emerging out of that space where identities are both constructed and deconstructed can thus contribute today to the ongoing discourse concerning philosophy's *own* identity and its resulting unfolding. It permits us to reexamine *who* we are—as Japanese, Westerners, human beings, and so on—and *what* we are doing when philosophizing.

And this forces me to return to a point I have been making throughout this paper. When we today engage and examine Japanese philosophy or thought—pre-Meiji, modern, or contemporary—and/or engage in a comparative philosophical examination of such Japanese philosophy with any

99. Ueda 2011, 22.
100. See Karatani 2005, 81–2, 98, 134.
101. Žižek 2004, 267.

non-Japanese philosophical thought, we must not forget the philosophical relevance of what we are doing. Even the study of previous philosophy, if the study is itself to be regarded as philosophy, cannot end with mere intellectual history or philology, it must be philosophical. Philosophy implicates us, must be relevant to our lives, as it looks into the very depths and grounding of our existence. And so as Wilhelm Halbfass says, "comparative philosophy" cannot just be the comparison of *philosophies*. As philosophy it aims at self-understanding and must be prepared to self-referentially bring into its comparative analysis its own standpoint and horizonal conditions of comparison.[102] In our engagements with Japanese philosophy, some of us are historians, some linguists or philologists, some sociologists, etc. But insofar as we are doing philosophy or claim to be doing philosophy, we cannot forget the importance of a *philosophical* engagement with Japanese philosophy that brings Japanese philosophy into *philosophical* conversation with philosophy in the rest of the world, making it relevant to our own philosophical concerns in our current and immediate context. We need to bring what we study into philosophical dialogue with the world at large, including Western philosophy, in a way meaningful and relevant not just to Asianists or those in Japanese Studies or even comparativists but to *philosophers* in general. The hope is, for example, that someday Nishida can be discussed, not just as a *Japanese* philosopher or even as an *Asian* philosopher, but as a *philosopher* alongside Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, or Heidegger, standing on equal ground with them.

In conclusion I believe that the study of Japanese philosophy will contribute to this opening of the philosophical horizon as well as to intercultural dialogue that is much needed today when the sense of belonging to a single globe has been intensified to the degree that it can no longer be ignored. And in this process Japanese philosophy will contribute to the ongoing unfolding of its own definition as well as of philosophy in general. If philosophy must presuppose the very conditions of life in which it (or the philosopher) is situated, the context of one's factical implacement—as both Heidegger and Nishida suggest—then it cannot ignore the contemporary broadening and/or disruption of our horizons, whether we like it or not, wherein we face a multiplicity of competing truth claims, imaginaries,

102. Halbfass 1988, 433.

and world views. This is especially so when the present situation—along with the origination of Japanese philosophy as its prime example—indeed presents what one might argue has always been the case for the origin of philosophy in general—its homelessness of emerging out of an interstitial space between horizons or their margins. That is, while we cannot ignore the locality of its and our origins, we also cannot ignore the *dislocation*—the very *dislocated location*—of/in that very *origination*, *both* of philosophy and of ourselves. In philosophizing, along with philosophy itself, our own being is thus also implicated, questioned, deconstructed and reconstructed, and transformed vis-à-vis those contexts and horizons.

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