

Transitions

Crossing Boundaries in Japanese Philosophy



EDITED BY

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CHISOKUDŌ

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Editors' Introduction

The idea for the present volume stems from the Fourth Annual Conference of the European Network of Japanese Philosophy (ENOJP), held in September of 2018 in Hildesheim, Germany. For us as editors, it was the first time to organize an international conference and we are grateful for the generous support of the ENOJP, Prof. Dr. Rolf Elberfeld and Dr. Ralf Müller, as well financial assistance from the Institut für Philosophie Hildeheim, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the Toshiba Foundation. As with the previous ENOJP conferences, it was a momentous event. Not only did it draw more than ninety scholars of Japanese philosophy from around the globe, but it reunited a growing circle of colleagues joined by a common passion and the shared vision to connect Japanese philosophy to the broader field of cross-cultural and contemporary thought. To host this event at one of the birthplaces of the ENOJP was a special honor.

“Transitions,” the central topic of the conference, reflected one of the main aims of the network, namely, to promote engagement in inter-cultural and cross-linguistic modes of philosophizing. Our aim was to consider how “thinking transitionally” not only relates to conceptual boundary-crossing as a perennial part of Japanese philosophy itself, but also how it might help us transcend the limits of our respective specializations and provoke new ideas on universal themes of human existence and contemporary issues. Moreover, each of the languages used at the conference—German, English, and Japanese—had its own contribution to make to the web of cultural and linguis-

tic relationships that take shape around the concepts of “Transition,” “Übergang,” and the newly coined term *utsuri-watari* (移り渉り).

Transitions are generally characterized by a creative vagueness and openness, a multi-faceted, iridescent, and continually changing process. On the one hand, transitions can be seen in terms of spatial continuities: blurred borders, spaces of openness, and mediating intersections. On the other, they highlight the temporal side of transmission, tradition, and transformation. Taken together, these two dimensions combine to form spatiotemporal dynamics and transpositions. Transitions can also be operationalized on a purely conceptual or methodological level, which has repercussions for the basic categories of thought that can be traced directly in translation and inter-cultural exchange. The phenomena of transition are more than the concrete tracks they leave along the way. They blur the boundaries between apparently distinct phenomena and the predefined concepts associated with them, enabling them to resonate and emerge in provocative, often contradictory arrangements.

Japanese philosophy is rich in examples of this process. The notions of nothingness (無) and emptiness (空) in Buddhist thought can be interpreted as modalities of indeterminacy and infinitude, as spaces of co-dependent origination that promote non-obstruction and interpenetration among differing phenomena (事事無碍). They also provide the conceptual basis for ethics and the concrete practice of openness and non-attachment. This emphasis on the transitory and inter-dependent nature of reality is particularly evident in modern Japanese philosophy. Nishida Kitarō's logic of place emphasizes the (me-)ontological priority of encompassing fields and autopoietic processes of self-formation over rigid substances. Watsuji Tetsurō's notion of betweenness (間柄) stresses the relational and transitional nature of human existence, which inspired the sociologist Hamaguchi Eshun's concept of an “intersubject” (間人). In similar fashion, practices of self-cultivation across East Asian philosophy present the human subject as open to transitory self-transformation, enabling mediations

between body and mind through habitualized enactments of bodily patterns (型) and psychosomatic discipline. Such modes of philosophizing stimulate a kind of “thinking in transition” that reforms itself continuously through practice and contributes to current debates on a wide range of scientific and aesthetic questions. “Thinking in transition” is further enriched by embedding it in deliberate efforts at cross-cultural engagement in a variety of languages.

All of this and more is reflected in the essays that make up this collection, where transitions are studied in a variety of disciplines ranging from phenomenology to linguistics, feminism, aesthetics, political history, martial arts, spiritual practice and anthropology. Philosophy has traditionally emphasized clarity and distinction in its ideas. As a result, it has not always been easy to pry its dominant modes of thought to the deeply relational, instable, and often nebulous reality of the transitory phenomena that appear at the fringes and in the intersections of the clear and distinct. The editing of these pages has taken place in the transitional crisis a global pandemic, reminding us forcefully of the fragility of everyday life and the transitory nature of social contact. It is our hope that this tenth volume of *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy* will guide readers to new ways of thinking to take us through these trying times and beyond.

Leon Krings
Francesca Greco
Yukiko Kuwayama

Abstracts

ARISAKA Yoko

Transition to the “Eternal Present”: Nishida Kitarō’s Notion of Self and Responsibility in Our Context Today

The aim of my essay is to show that the standpoint of Nishida Kitarō’s early theory of “pure experience” remains intact throughout his philosophical development to the later period, through examining the notion of the “eternal present.” Pure experience is not “subjective,” nor is it a state of “consciousness,” but rather an ontological opening in the Here/Now, which Nishida reinterprets as the “eternal present.” The eternal present is a concrete actuality as our present; as such, it is the current historical moment in the “dialectical world.” As selves in this dialectic of the Here/Now, we are responsible for the decisions we make today (in the Here/Now) for the making of our reality in the present.

Keywords: Nishida Kitarō—Japanese philosophy—pure experience—eternal present— Here/Now—responsibility

DAVIS, Bret W.

Commuting between Zen and Philosophy: In the Footsteps of Kyoto School Philosophers and Psychosomatic Practitioners

What can philosophers today learn from the psychosomatic practice of Zen Buddhism? How does Zen challenge the methodology of our cerebral practice of philosophy? In order to address these questions, this essay examines one of the major transitions that have occurred in modern Japanese philosophy, namely the translation of Zen Buddhist ideas into a philosophical idiom. When Zen ideas are discussed in an academic context, we need to be attentive to the fact that they have been displaced from the psychosomatic practices—the embodied-spiritual disciplines—in which they were originally embedded. Fortunately, there have been a few philosophers who have commuted between the psychosomatic practice of Zen and the intellectual discipline of philosophy, most notably the main figures of the first three generations of the Kyoto School: Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), Nishitani Keiji (1900–90), and Ueda Shizuteru (1926–2019). The central

sections of this essay examine how they challenge not just the ideas but also the disembodied methodology of Western philosophy by drawing on their psychosomatic practice of Zen. The final sections then critically compare and contrast Zen's psychosomatic practice with Richard Shusterman's "somaesthetics" and with Pierre Hadot's retrieval of the ancient Greek and Roman conception of philosophy as a "way of life," a way that was not only more soteriologically oriented but also more holistically practiced than is modern academic philosophy. The essay concludes by addressing the prospects, for those living in contemporary Western or Westernizing countries, of incorporating psychosomatic disciplines such as those of Zen into the practice of philosophy as a truly holistic pursuit of wisdom and liberating way of life.

Keywords: Kyoto School—Zen Buddhism—Japanese philosophy—Nishida Kitarō—Nishitani Keiji—Ueda Shizuteru—psychosomatic practice—Richard Shusterman—Pierre Hadot—philosophy as a way of life—somaesthetics—bodily practice

FONGARO, Enrico

Trans/Formations: Tentative Remarks on the Practice of *Kata* as Bodily Experience of Time

The author tries to interpret the practice of *kata* (型) in traditional Japanese arts, considering it as a bodily experience of time. After having analyzed the etymological meaning of the term "kata" as "form," the author analyzes it in more detail, starting from the Stoic conception of time and focusing the analysis in particular on the notions of *keiko*, *nagare* and *senu hima*. In this way, memory of the past, discontinuous continuity of the present, anticipation of the future and subsistence of the eternal are presented as related to the individual bodily experience peculiar to *kata* aesthetics.

Keywords: *kata*—embodiment patterns—form—temporality—bodily experience—ghosts—bodily practice

GIACOMELLI, Alberto

Transitions and Translations. *Kire-tsuzuki* as "discontinuous continuum" between Art and Nature

This essay intends to underline the affinities between the notion of "transition" (*utsuri watari* 移り渉り) and that of "discontinuous continuum" or

“continuum of the cut” (*kire-tsuzuki* 切れ・つづき). These fundamental notions in the context of Japanese culture are not simply theoretical concepts, but rather lived practices, which help us to understand the relationship between artistic and religious experience in Japan in comparison to the West. From this point of view, the article also aims to show the complementarity between the notions of “transition” and “translation.” The practice of *kire-tsuzuki* will be analyzed through some examples, provided by Ryōsuke Ōhashi, concerning the “cut” (*kire* 切れ) between art and nature, as well as through a reflection on the concepts of “nature” and “technique”, drawing on the work of Martin Heidegger.

Keywords: transition—translation—art—aesthetics—nature—*kire*—discontinuous continuity—Japanese culture

GRECO, Francesca and Leon KRINGS

Logic of Boundary:

Spaces of Transition following Nishida Kitarō

The aim of this paper is to investigate Nishida Kitarō’s way of philosophizing in the light of the concept of “transition” in order to deepen our understanding of both Nishida’s philosophy and our thinking about and in transitions, using the concept of “boundary” or “border” (*Grenze*) as a catalyst.

For that purpose, we focus on Nishida’s essay “Place” (「場所」), passing through different parts of the text as if through successive gates on a path of transition between one place and the next, until we reach the final place of “absolute nothingness.” Dwelling on this place, we turn our attention to its internal structure and try to depict it along the outlines of a boundary, following the movements taking place in Nishida’s essay.

The second part proposes an interpretation of the place of nothingness as an interminable practice of boundary-crossing that doesn’t come to a halt in a final, all-encompassing place, but dynamically situates itself on countless intersecting planes. After a more or less abstract analysis of the concept of “boundary,” we will apply and concretize this approach by using the example of the skin. To this end, we expose five main features of the skin as boundary: permeability, enclosure, excessiveness, interstitiality and reciprocal self-formation.

Keywords: Nishida Kitarō—Japanese philosophy—logic of place—relational logic—transition—self-reference—autopoiesis—

absolutely contradictory self-identity—discontinuous
continuity—space—border—boundary—skin

GURJANOV, Filip

Towards a Logic of Place of Photographing: Perspectives with
Nishida Kitarō

This paper offers a sketch of a philosophical theory of photographing, based on an application of Nishida Kitarō's middle and later philosophy. More specifically, Nishida's idea of a logic of place (場所的論理) will play a central role in developing a topological theory of the practice of photography.

The article will focus on certain relevant "places" in which photography emerges: the camera, the photographer, and the situation in and out of which photographs are created. Following Nishida's logic, the aforementioned places will be thought of both as independent and as correlated with one another. Furthermore, the difference between the technological mode of seeing of the apparatus and the bodily mode of seeing of the photographer will be discussed in greater detail, to which end Nishida's idea of reflection (映し), as well as his discussion of tools (道具) will be of import. In order to further cast light on our understanding of the photographic practice, concepts from Nishida's later thought, including the historical world (歴史的世界), from the made to the making (作られたものから作るものへ), as well as acting intuition (行為的直観) will be put to critical discussion. While it can be said that photographs are always reproductions of something that (historically) already exists, they at the same time represent a creation of something entirely new.

Photographing involves both acting and seeing. The challenge posed to photographers is thus to identify something photographically relevant (seeing) and to respond to it (acting). At the same time, a photographer's inter-dependence with his or her environment allows for interpreting the photographic seeing as being triggered by actions (or events) within the given situation, which do not entirely depend on the photographer. Insofar as the photographic practice is also characterized by a specific temporality, a brief discussion of such a temporality shall, at the end of this paper, complement the topological theory. For this purpose, Nishida's theory of time,

especially his concepts of the eternal now (永遠の今) and the discontinuous continuity (非連続の連続) will be applied.

Keywords: Nishida Kitarō—logic of place—reflection—camera—
photography—photographer—situation—time—Japanese
philosophy

KIRLOSKAR-STEINBACH, Monika

Why Bother? Relational Knowing and the Study of World

Philosophies

Recent scholarship in cross-cultural philosophy draws attention to the limits of conventional, comparative philosophical approaches. Urging us to be more attentive to the power politics played out in philosophy, they suggest that our conventional understanding of a knower may have to be revamped, even in this sub-discipline. Against the backdrop of this scholarship, this article will first sketch salient characteristics of a relational knower. It will then move on to examine whether such a knower can be set in relation to some developments in Japanese philosophy. Using the example of an intercultural encounter in Indo-Japanese relations, the article will, in its concluding section, examine how the notion of a relational knower would be able to tease out a more nuanced understanding of this encounter.

Keywords: cross-cultural philosophy—art history—positionality—
ethnocentrism—relational knower—world philosophies—
Japanese philosophy—cross-cultural feminism

KUWAYAMA Yukiko

Experiences as Transitions: Ueda Shizuteru's Concept of
"Original Word"

Ueda Shizuteru's concept of *Urwort* (*kongengo* 根源語), or "original word," seems at first glance to be a merely provisionally designed and newly coined concept. However, a significant potential of this concept opens up if we connect it to Ueda's interpretation of experience. The original word—which, on the grammatical level, can be associated with interjections such as "oh!"—can be understood as a concrete event in the sense of an affective movement such as being surprised, and is both a linguistic and an affectively embodied phenomenon. Ueda sees the emergence of an original word as an occasion to consciously or unconsciously question one's own understanding of an experience or feeling in a situation and let

it transform itself. In this way, Ueda brings together shocking or surprising experiences that cause the emergence of an affective movement embodied in an exclamation like “oh!” with the possibility of a transformation of the mode of experience that is not external, but native to the dimension of language itself. In the present work, an interpretation of this phenomenon of the transition between experience, exclamation and renewed experience is attempted using Ueda’s linguistic-phenomenological approach.

Keywords: original word—language—Japanese philosophy—pure experience—poetry—phenomenology

MARINUCCI, Lorenzo

Images of the Wind: A Japanese Phenomenology of Imagination as Air

In this paper, an effort is made to frame the philosophical problem of imagination and image consciousness using European and Japanese sources. I argue, especially with the help of the latter, for an apparently odd thesis: that *imagination holds an essential homeomorphism with air*; that *air is the hyle of imagination*. Three peculiar traits—which could be called a) transparency, b) haziness and c) flow—define the distinctive phenomenology of both. As will be seen in an example by Hokusai, we must *imagine* air and wind through other physical things and together with them. Conversely, *imaginary* things are “like thin air,” a relationship that goes well beyond the metaphorical. We can say that air, wind and atmospheres, once phenomenologically understood, are not simple givens, but instead the membrane in which a subtle “shift” or “passage” (*Übergang*) between the self and the world, the visible and invisible, the real and unreal can occur. Like respiration, this process is a constant, necessary process involving all of these poles in “reciprocally revolving connections” (Nishitani). Rather than being an internal state limited to the reproduction of mental figurations, imagination is “the totality of our consciousness as it realizes its freedom” (Sartre). At the same time, in such a surreal field, “being becomes transparent” (Nishitani), letting us grasp the ultimate coincidence of emptiness and phenomenal world in consciousness and emotion alike.

Keywords: imagination—image—phenomenology—atmosphere—air—transition—Japanese philosophy—Nishitani Keiji—Jean-Paul Sartre—Hokusai

OKADA Yūsuke

From Expression to Symbol: The Philosophy of Hatano Seiichi in Political Context

In this paper, the philosophical anthropology of Hatano Seiichi (波多野精一, 1877–1950) is interpreted as a transition of human nature. While Buddhist philosophers such as Nishida Kitarō or Nishitani Keiji have been intensively studied as the mainstream of the Kyoto School, Hatano, a Christian philosopher, has been more or less ignored for a long time. This paper is, in this respect, a contribution from a new perspective to the scholarship of Japanese philosophy and the Kyoto school.

In *Time and Eternity*, Hatano deals with philosophical anthropology as a significant element of his philosophy of religion, together with religious typology and the question of the essence of religions. In previous research on the topic, Hatano's philosophical anthropology has been explained in terms of the development of three forms of life, which constitute the whole schema of *Time and Eternity*, namely natural life, cultural life, and religious life. This analysis itself is not wrong or irrelevant, but it can be elaborated to the point where the ethical demand of his philosophical anthropology becomes clearer. In my view, the core concept of his philosophical anthropology can be described as *a transition from expression to symbol*. While 'expression' is a way of being whereby the subject uses the other as a material for self-expression, the subject as 'symbol,' on the contrary, becomes directly the expression of the other, especially transcendence or God. The human being as 'symbol' is no longer limited to an egoistic life aiming merely at self-realization, but opens itself to a selfless life dedicated to the other. In this way, Hatano clearly follows in the Christian tradition of self-sacrifice, and gives it a sophisticated philosophical expression.

However, this discourse could be seen as problematic if it is properly situated in the Japanese context of Hatano's lifetime. When *Time and Eternity* was published in 1943, Japan was in the midst of the Pacific War. Although Hatano, an established liberalist, was not a supporter of the so-called 'Great East Asian War,' and could be even critical against it, it is still likely that his religious discourse of self-sacrifice had affinities with the nationalistic ideology of "annihilating the self, serving the public." (滅私奉公) In this way, it is necessary to reassess Hatano's heritage critically and to

reread it in the light of a possible new foundation of Japanese philosophy of religion today.

Keywords: Kyoto School—Hatano Seiichi—political history—philosophy of religion—philosophical anthropology—Christianity—self-sacrifice—expression—symbol—transition

OKADA Yūta

The Way to Translation: On the Translation of Heidegger's
Being and Time

In this paper, I trace the history of Japanese translations of Heidegger's magnum opus *Being and Time* (1927). Through tracing the history of translation, I show that Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941) has played an important role in the Japanese tradition. Kuki's translation of Heidegger's terminology is still commonly employed in many representative translations. I try to show that the terms he uses for his translation are justified as they minimize the risk of misreading *Being and Time*. In addition, I argue that translation is not only a process by which Heidegger's thought is received, but also constitutes a philosophical act in and of itself.

Keywords: Kuki Shūzō—Heidegger—translation—*Being and time*—misreading

SCHNEIDER, Tamara

Transitions after Destruction: The Artistic Response to the 2011
Triple Catastrophe in Japan

Japan has a long history of coping with disasters. The March 2011 triple catastrophe – namely the Tōhoku Earthquake, the resulting tsunami, and the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant – have had dramatic impacts on Japanese society. The creation of artworks and the expression of sentiments through art is one way of coping with such traumatic experiences. Against this background, in this paper I will discuss the following research questions: First, how have Japanese artists reacted to the 2011 triple catastrophe? Second, which individual and societal transitions can be identified in this context? Third, how can the creation of art help societies in coping with the consequences of large-scale disasters? In order to answer these questions, I will analyze selected examples of Japanese artworks related to the 2011 triple catastrophe by, first, following an iconographic approach and then extending it to an interpretation based on an

iconological perspective. I will mainly show that after catastrophic destruction there is an urgent need for creation, not only in material but also in spiritual-artistic terms. I will provide a description of how these transitions emerge, evolve, and become manifest within the artists, the artworks, and society at large. And I will also show how these transitions provide room for new mindsets in art and society.

Keywords: transitions—Japanese art—iconography—ethics—climate change—Fukushima Daiichi—Tōhoku Earthquake—Murakami Takashi—Katagiri Atsunobu

TAKÓ Ferenc

Maruyama Masao on (Failures of) Transition in Japanese History

In his writings, Maruyama Masao was focusing on historical periods in which he detected certain forces that could spur on Japanese society in its ‘progression’ or, on the contrary, certain obstacles that had ‘delayed’ it. In this paper, I will examine Maruyama’s interpretation of such factors in the Tokugawa era (1603–1868) and in his own time, analyzing his ideas about the role of individuals in post-war Japan against the background of European philosophies of history that influenced his thought.

Keywords: Maruyama Masao—*Weltgeschichte*—world history—Japanese history—modernization—ultra-nationalism—social action

TANI Tōru

Body, Medium, In-Between

A philosophy as a work of *logos* is inseparable from its language. The Japanese philosopher Sakabe Megumi analyzed and reinterpreted the Japanese word *utsushi*, which means both “transferring/transitioning” (移し) and “reflecting” (映し). Reconsidering Western phenomenology by thinking along with Sakabe, we unearth a manner of *utsushi* between intuition and language—a relationship that can also be found between the two meanings of the Japanese word *koto*, namely 事 as a “matter of fact” and 言 as “word.” Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, analyzed a similar relationship using the notion of “medium,” which indicates a transfer from intuitive sense to linguistic meaning and inserts a “form” (which is now linguistic form) between them. Through this function, the original intuitive sense appears more explicitly. Husserl further developed the notion of medium to describe the relationships between spirit and living

body—where the medium enables something internal to appear externally and mediates between what is pre-temporal and what is temporal as well as between the ego and the Other. In the course of this development, a new problematic emerges. The relationship between something that is already given as a form and something not yet given as a form (something that is strange or “foreign”) comes into question. Something occurs between the two, and this is the phenomenon of *aida* (betweenness). The Japanese word *aida* derives from the verb *au*, which means “to meet” and also “to fit.” The Japanese word *kotaeru*, which means “to respond,” derives from *koto* (word) and *au* (to fit), which became *kotau* or *kotoau*, and finally *kotaeru*. It means, therefore, the “fitting of words.” This brings us to the experience of the meeting of languages and also of cultures. Inasmuch as “form”—*kata* (型 or 形) in Japanese—is deeply linked to *kataru* (to speak), this experience most often takes the form of a meeting between the mother tongue and a foreign language. And because languages are also cultural phenomena, the meeting of languages opens us to new possibilities and new tasks of mutual understanding in intercultural phenomenology.

Keywords: Phenomenology—Edmund Husserl—Japanese philosophy—*kata*—*koto*—*aida*—medium—the body—transferring—reflecting—transition—betweenness—form—language

UEHARA Mayuko

Examining the Self-Other Relation Based on Gender Differences in Takahashi, Nishida, Beauvoir, and Levinas

A relation between self and other that is based on gender differences can be considered as a kind of basic unit of human relations. It is a timeless question transcending specific epochs and cultures. Nishida’s niece Takahashi Fumi exposed the ideology of “honoring men, despising women” dominating Japanese society in the 1930s. I will connect this problem of the equality of self and other to Nishida Kitarō’s discourse on the self-other relation as it is treated in his essay “I and Thou.” Moreover, I will turn to Beauvoir’s criticism of Levinas’ view of women in order to critically examine his concept of “absolute other.”

Keywords: Takahashi Fumi—Simone de Beauvoir—Nishida Kitarō—honor men, despise women—self-other relation based on gender differences—asymmetric otherness—I and Thou—absolute other—feminism