

## Heidegger in Nishida Philosophy

### Heidegger na Filosofia nishidiana

Agustín Jacinto Zavala

Research-professor. Centro de Estudios de las Tradiciones. El Colegio de Michoacán. México.

E-mail: jacintoz@colmich.edu.mx

**Abstract:** Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) was one of the introducers of phenomenology in Japan. However, for him, there were points of disagreement with the statements of philosophy. In his encounter with the writings of Heidegger, the author also presents points to itself unacceptable or, at least, unsatisfied. In this work, we chose some critical views of the philosophical stance of Heidegger, between 1925 and 1940. The presentation will focus the historicity of the existence, based on texts and how Nishida discusses Heidegger's position on this issue.

**Key-words:** Nishida, Phenomenology, East.

**Resumo:** Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) foi um dos introdutores da fenomenologia no ambiente acadêmico japonês. No entanto, a partir de seu próprio ponto de vista, foram encontrados pontos de discordância com as afirmações da filosofia. Em seu encontro com os textos de Heidegger, o autor também detecta pontos que ele são inaceitáveis ou que o deixam insatisfeito. Neste trabalho, escolhemos algumas das críticas de Nishida à postura filosófica de Heidegger, entre 1925 e 1940. A apresentação terá como ponto central a historicidade da existência, focalizada a partir de textos de Nishida e o modo como problematiza a posição de Heidegger sobre esse tema.

**Palavras-chaves:** Nishida, Heidegger, fenomenologia, oriente.

## 1. Introduction

Several sources of Eastern thought have been known in Germany since the times of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, at the least, and translations of Oriental texts have been hidden sources for some Western philosophers. In 1906, Okakura Kakuzô published *The Book of Tea*, which was translated into German in 1908, by Marguerite and Ulrich Steindorff. It is known, for example, that in 1919, the scholar Itô Kichinosuke (a 1909 Tokyo University graduate) gave Heidegger, as a parting gift, a copy of *The Book of Tea*. In this book Taoism is described as “the art of being in the world”, meaning to “live among people” (Ch. *chû-shî*; Jp. *shosei*). The sentence, quoted by professor Yamashita Yoshiaki, says, “Chinese historians have always spoken of Taoism as the >art of being in the world<, for it deals with the present –ourselves”.<sup>1</sup> In this case, in the background of Dasein as being-in-the-world, we would have an ethics as the “art of being in the world”, an ethics which, given the ‘anticipatory resolution’, “the call of conscience [...] summons Dasein to existence, to its utmost own potentiality-for-Being-itself” (SZ, Vol. 2, 2nd ed., §59, p. 294)<sup>2</sup>. As Graham Parkes says, Heidegger received the influence, not only of the translations of Oriental texts but also of his contact with Eastern, especially Japanese, philosophers (May, 1996). Heidegger himself translated under the direction of a Chinese guide, some of the chapters of the *Tao Te-ching* (Shih-yi Hsiao, 1990)

Since very early in his teaching career at Kyoto university, Nishida Kitarô (1870-1945) saw to it that his students would have a solid academic formation and that the best of them would be sent to study in Europe. Since the time in which the first Tokyo university Japanese philosophy professors came back from Europe in the 1870s, German philosophy gained priority, and Nishida’s students also went to Germany. They studied under Lotze, Husserl, Heidegger, Rickert, and so on.

---

\* Research-professor. Centro de Estudios de las Tradiciones. El Colegio de Michoacán. México. jacintoz@colmich.edu.mx.

<sup>1</sup> The Steindorffs translated as: “Die chinesischen Historiker haben vom Taoismus stets als von der, Kunst des In-der-Welt-Seins’ geredet, denn er handelt von der Gegenwart, von uns selbst” (Yamashita Yoshiaki, 2009, pp. 148-149)

<sup>2</sup> All references are to the John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson translation (Heidegger, 1962). Page numbers refer to the German edition: Martin Heidegger. (1927). *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

It was a custom, since the Meiji era, that on coming back from Europe each scholar would publish one or more books presenting the doctrines of the professors under whom they had studied. Some others published books presenting the viewpoint of the master under whom they had trained. This is the case of Abe Jirô, who published his *Aesthetics* from the viewpoint of the *Einfühlung* (*kanjô i'nyû*: empathy) taught by Theodor Lipps, who had been his teacher in Germany.<sup>3</sup> And this was also the case of some of Nishida's students. For example, on his return from Germany, after taking Heidegger's 1923-1924 Winter seminar, Tanabe Hajime published his understanding and evaluation of the new tendency in phenomenology, which Heidegger had presented in that course. Tanabe's article, published in 1924, was the first text written in Japan and perhaps in the whole world, that gave an account of this "new turn in phenomenology". After the publication of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurô published a critique pointing out that in his book Heidegger overlooked the fundamental importance of space. And as a result of his stay in Europe, especially in Germany and France, Kuki Shûzô published a phenomenological study of "iki" in the Genroku era (XVII-XVIII c.) in Japan.<sup>4</sup>

Each scholar returning from Europe or from the U. S. A., brought back the course notes and whatever reading material he had been able to obtain. My hypothesis is that this was also the case with the scholars who studied under Husserl and Heidegger, some of whom would have brought to Japan the manuscript or typed notes of Husserl's and Heidegger's courses. One example would be the case of Sendai University, which made available to researchers a private printing, not for sale, of the typed text (perhaps the notes taken by Simon Moser) of the course "Grundproblem der Phänomenologie" (Summer, 1927), which the Western world would know only much later.<sup>5</sup> I would suppose that this

---

<sup>3</sup> He took as a basis four of Lipps' works: *Asthetik*, *Leitfaden der Psychologie*, *Die ethischen Grundfragen*, y la *Asthetik (Kultur der Gegenwart)*, as he writes in the prefatory notes (Abe Jirô, 1917, p. 1)

<sup>4</sup> See Kuki Shûzô (Kuki Shuzo, 2007). In his introductory study, doctor Falero places Kuki in the "group of first-line intellectuals who, having come back from their stay at German universities where they study under Husserl and Heidegger, publish their own systems of thought and, at the same time, are receptive to phenomenological language and are anxious to inaugurate a Japanese phenomenology" (Kuki Shuzo, 2007, p. 17).

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *Grundproblem der Phänomenologie von M. Heidegger*. (Kolleg. Marburg. S/S. 1927). Sendai: Tôhoku daigaku. Bungaku-bu. Tetsugaku kenkyû-shitsu (Tohoku University. Department of Letters. Office of philosophical research). July the 31st, 1954. 629 pp. Out of commerce (limited to 80 copies). It

private circulation of course notes taken in Germany by his students, permitted Nishida to know the contents of the courses imparted by Husserl and Heidegger, for the period 1920-1938 at the least.

Some of Nishida's disciples who, between 1921 and 1939, studied under Husserl or Heidegger, were: Yamanouchi Tokuryû (1921-1923); Tanabe Hajime (1922-1924); Amano Teiyû (1923); Miki Kiyoshi (1923-1924); Mutai Risaku (1926-1928); Kuki Shûzô (1927-1928); Watsuji Tetsurô (1927-1928); Miyake Gôichi (1927); y Nishitani Keiji (1937-1939). Doctor Yusa quotes from a letter Nishida wrote in 1922 in which he comments that there were many Japanese students in Germany. Among those who were there in the Summer and Autumn, 1922, Yusa mentions: "Miki Kiyoshi, Naruse Mukyoku, Abe Jirô, Ishihara Ken, Kuki Shûzô en Heidelberg. [...] Yamanouchi Tokuryû, Kiba Ryôhon, Itô Kichinosuke, Fujioka Zôroku, Koyama Tomoe, Ishikawa Kôji" and Tanabe Hajime, in Freiburg and later in Berlin. Chiba Takenari was also in Berlin. (Yusa Michiko, 2002, p. 181).

A characteristic shared by the majority of Nishida's first disciples is that they were always ready for an enthusiastic discussion of philosophical problems. While he was teaching at Kyoto university, Nishida invited them for discussion and this custom continued later, when after retiring in 1928, he was living in Kamakura. There is a letter from Husserl to Ingarden, in which he writes that half of his 30 students are foreigners –especially English and Japanese– who "have vitality and the tone of discussion is high" (KayanoYoshio, 1972, p. 288). Nakai Masakazu, a 1925 Kyoto university graduate in Aesthetics, recalls that "great professors –Nishida [Kitarô], Fukada, Tomonaga [Sanjurô], Hatano [Seiichi], Fujii [Kenjirô], Konishi and Matsumoto– were in the company of younger energetic assistant professors and lecturers such as Amano Teiyû, Tanabe Hajime, Watsuji Tetsurô, Yamanouchi Tokuryû, Ueda Juzô, Ojima Sukema, Kuki Shûzô". In addition, "students of the first generation, such as Miki Kiyoshi, Tosaka Jun, Nishitani Keiji, Kôsaka Masaaki, Kimura Motomori, and of the second generation, Shimomura Toratarô, Kôyama Iwao, Mashita Shin'ichi, Danno Yasutarô, and others, gathered at the houses of their professors and engaged in lively, sparkling debates" (Yusa Michiko, 2002, p. 233).

---

bears a remark: "(This is not a published book, so please refrain from quoting from it or from any other [use])". Re-edited on October the 5th, 1968, in a limited edition of 100 copies.

We can say that a continuous parade of graduate students from Kyoto university who, as said before, together with the English students were dedicated and eager to discuss, advised Husserl and Heidegger of recent publications in Japan and, especially, of Nishida's new ideas. This was especially the case of Tanabe Hajime<sup>6</sup> and Nishitani Keiji, who made oral presentations of Nishida's thought in two different epochs. Tanabe presented Nishida philosophy before 1926, and Nishitani presented his own formulation of Nishida's later philosophy. Most certainly at the time of these presentations there were questions raised by Husserl, Heidegger and other hearers present.

As Yusa Michiko writes, Japanese scholars in Germany always mentioned Nishida's name and some, such as Kiba Ryôhon, even showed his picture, and in this manner Nishida was known to Husserl, Rickert and Heidegger, even though his thought was not well understood at the time: "Takahashi Satomi, who studied with Husserl in Freiburg, 1926-1927, tells us that Husserl failed to see the originality of Nishida's thought; instead, he believed that Nishida's 'intuitionism' was something akin to his own and considered Nishida an adherent to *his* branch of phenomenology" (Yusa Michiko, 2002, p. 182). We know that Nishida wrote a letter and sent books to Husserl on August the 10th, 1923, and that Husserl answered on September the 19th of the same year. Similarly, through Nishida's disciples, his work became known to Rickert, who on October 31st, 1924, writes from Heidelberg: "I have become aware of the large number of your disciples and of the respect you receive in your country. Many of your compatriots, especially doctor Miki [Kiyoshi] and professor Amano [Teiyû] have told me so". Rickert says that, as there is no hope that Nishida's *Intuition and Reflexion in Self-perception* would be translated into a Western language and, being a theme that interests him, he has to "be satisfied with some talks of your compatriots about your philosophy. As he is now here, I will ask your student, professor Matsubara [Hiroshi] to explain your basic thought to me" (Shimomura Toratarô, 1990, pp. 283-284).

## 2. Nishida and Phenomenology

---

<sup>6</sup> The communication between Nishida and Heidegger took place mainly through Tanabe. (Yusa Michiko, 2002, p. 200).

For a better understanding of what we will see in the following, there is a need to have a complete listing of the works of phenomenologists Nishida read. However, such listing is still pending and here I will include only some of the works that are explicitly mentioned in Nishida's texts.

The first mention of Husserl in Nishida is the entry for June the 6th, 1911, of his Diary: "I read Husserl". The second is the entry for December 30th, 1911, in which he writes that he borrowed a book by Husserl from Kyoto university. On October 16th, 1913, he writes, "I read Husserl's *Phänomenologie*". There is textual evidence that Nishida read Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, *Ideen*, and the *Cartesian Meditations*. Most probably he also read the three articles on Renewal that between 1923 and 1924 were published in Japanese translation by the journal *Kaizô*,<sup>7</sup> because Husserl writes in a letter dated September 19th, 1923, "I sincerely wish to return your kindness by sending you my articles. It is to my regret that I have not received even one offprint of my first article that I submitted to *Kaizô* last year, and I have not the foggiest idea of what happened to the subsequent three articles that I submitted to the same journal" (Yusa Michiko, 2002, p. 193).

Apart from the possibility of his having been informed about Heidegger's courses by those disciples of his that were in Germany, there is a textual basis for the assertion that Nishida read Heidegger's *Aristotle* (1924), *Being and Time* (1927), and that he ordered and sent money to pay for *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. A Characterization of Phenomenology

I would like to present Nishida's approach to phenomenology through the main points taken from the several summaries he published.

Between 1911 and 1916, Nishida presents what he considers basic in phenomenology, mainly in Husserl's works. Apart from the *Logical Investigations* and the *Ideas for a pure phenomenology*, Nishida bases his understanding on Wilhelm Schapp

---

<sup>7</sup> See Husserl, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Diary, entry for February the 15th, 1933; NKZ, Vol. 17, p. 490.

(1884-1965) (Schapp, 1910)<sup>9</sup> and Kazimierz Twardowski (1866-1938) (Twardowski, 1894).<sup>10</sup>

In 1911, when referring to epistemological schools, Nishida says that one of them can be called “school of pure logic”, to which the neo-kantians Windelband and Rickert would belong. He also asserts that even though Husserl’s genealogy differs from them, he can also be classified within this same school,<sup>11</sup> which has two main characteristics: its adherents a) set apart “the origin of knowledge from the problems relative to value”; and b) “try to establish the foundation of truth completely apart from reality” (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 209). In order to achieve this aim, they set apart cognitive activity (*Denkakt*) from the object of knowledge (*Gedanke*). Following Bolzano, Husserl bases his *Logical Investigations* on the distinction between perceptive activity (cognitive activity) and content (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 216). Both Husserl and Rickert explain “the world of objective value” as something which “transcends intellectual activity”. In doing so, “Rickert comes more and more nearer to Husserl, and it may be that he verbally expresses in a clearer manner what Husserl was trying to say” (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 222). This means that, in the early period Nishida finds that the Husserlian phenomenological project to some extent coincided with the neo-Kantian project. He later changes somewhat his appreciation.

In a previous paper I presented the several accounts of phenomenology Nishida wrote (Zavala, 2005). Here I would like to mention the stages of the development of phenomenology according to Nishida. a) Its inception goes back to Brentano and Bolzano: “Husserlian philosophy basically originated from the immanence of the object in Brentano, it accepted Bolzano’s proposition as such, and it developed from psychologism towards a logicism (in his *Logical Investigations*)” (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 179). b) Husserl conceived philosophy as an exact science after the manner of mathematics, and so, phenomenology “is a science of the intuition of essences; it is science of the essence, *Wesenswissenschaft*”. c) Its main characteristic is that it “completely rejects the natural position and holds on to the viewpoint of pure intuition. And this is what he calls phenomenological ἐποχή [epoché].

---

<sup>9</sup> See NKZ, Vol. 2, p. 137. Husserl also read this text in 1912(?):

[www.springerlinck.com/content/j60k842736741132/fulltext.pdf](http://www.springerlinck.com/content/j60k842736741132/fulltext.pdf), consulted on 10/08/2010.

<sup>10</sup> See NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 355. Later, Kawamura Yasutarô translated the book into Japanese as *Hyôshô to naiyô no taishô*. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. 1929. Husserl wrote a presentation text for the French edition.

<sup>11</sup> We should remember that the *Logical Investigations* I, bore the subtitle “Prolegomena to a pure logic”.

And, as Husserl himself says, it is something which differs from the logic-objetual, universal dubitative viewpoint of Descartes”. d) However, Husserl’s phenomenology is not completely disentangled from Cartesian philosophy, as can be seen in his *Méditations Cartésiennes*, which he delivered in France in his old age: “he tried to return to the intuition of the self, just as Descartes had done. And his starting point was [...] *l’évidence apodictique du ‘je suis’* [the apodictic evidence of the ‘I am’]” (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 179).

In Nishida’s texts we see that he characterizes phenomenology pointing out two positive and seven negative traits.

The positive characteristics are: a) Phenomenology thinks from the viewpoint of the given, that is, of that which is intuitive (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 147). b) The viewpoint of phenomenology is the viewpoint of pure description, it is *rein descriptiv* (NKZ, Vol. 1, pp. 359, 366), which is based on a reflecting consciousness (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 93). The first characteristic is compatible with Nishida’s early view of pure experience, but Nishida criticizes phenomenology on account of the second.

The negative characteristics that Nishida points out are: 1. Intentionality in phenomenology belongs to a noematic consciousness and remains as such in reflective consciousness (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 93). This means that it is not the intentionality of noetic consciousness, which is active and constructive (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 217; see NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 149). This is why, 2. phenomenology overlooks the constructive meaning (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 149) that constructs the object of cognition (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 147). In other words, it forgets the constructive aspect of the phenomenological ego. 3. From the phenomenological ego we cannot reach the truly transcendent object (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 147), because the phenomenological ego basically is a representational consciousness, and 4. in the representational consciousness the noesis cannot be made conscious of (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 149), which means that, we cannot reach Aristotle’s *noesis noeseos*. Furthermore, 5. representational consciousness does not make conscious either the object of the will or the object of thought (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 148). 6. This is the reason why things remain mere phenomena. On his part, Nishida states that 7. objects are *Sache* from which “the *Tat* of *Tatsache* has been eliminated” (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 364; see NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 234; NKZ, Vol. 6, pp. 166, 170), which is to say that things are not *phaenomena* (as phenomenology

affirms) but the result of a doing (an operation) and of the will: things are “*pragma*” (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 169), they are *pragmata*; and this means that what is made turns into something active, and that historical things are expressive.

In brief, we can say that according to Nishida, the limits of phenomenology are: a) a representative consciousness turned into the viewpoint of the transcendental ego (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 213); b) pure experience, which cannot go beyond description (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 217) without, at the same time, going beyond its own point of view (See NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 170); c) there is no constructive aspect (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 217); and d) there is no objectual consciousness (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 213).

At the beginning of his 1925 article in the *Encyclopaedia britannica*, Husserl says that “‘Phenomenology’ designates a new descriptive method [...] and an a priori science which comes out of it and is destined to provide a fundamental organ for a rigorously scientific philosophy”.<sup>12</sup> Nishida asserts that phenomenology wants to be an exact science but that “a hermeneutic phenomenology which sees the self from [the viewpoint] of Being may possibly be scientific but cannot be thought of as philosophical. Philosophy in no manner becomes science: when philosophy becomes science in a strict sense, it is no longer philosophy” (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 179).

We should keep in mind this list of basic wants in phenomenology because, as we will see later, Nishida thinks Heidegger did not overcome them.

#### **4. A Characterization of Husserl**

In April 1916, from his own point of view Nishida criticizes Husserl (NKZ, Vol. 1, pp. 334-368). Hence we can say that he did not accept everything he read in Husserl. In short, we can say that Nishida’s characterization and critique of phenomenology in general are parallel to his view of Husserlian phenomenology.

The world of Husserl is intuitive, “we should say that Husserl’s phenomenological world clearly is a kind of intuitive world” (NKZ, Vol. 1, pp. 364, 366) and through intuition, he attempts to explain the world of objective values that transcends intellectual

---

<sup>12</sup> Retranslated from Husserl (Husserl, 1992, p. 35).

activity (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 222). Insofar as it is an intuitive approach, it has points of contact with “pure experience”, which Nishida takes as a starting point in *A Study of Good*: “Husserlian Ph.[phenomenology] rejects all dogma and is based on pure experience. [...] But his phenomenology is not totally *rein unmittelbar*” [purely immediate].<sup>13</sup>

In Husserl there is still a trace of Western dualism, because from the start he separates: a) perceptive activity/ from its content (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 216); b) cognitive activity / from that which is thought of (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 216); c) essence / from fact (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 358). Because of the presence of dualism, even though Husserlian philosophy be *rein descriptiv*, purely descriptive, Nishida questions whether “in the last instance, Is this our world –as he says– a world of pure description?” (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 366). The main reason for this criticism is that through Husserl’s method “the relationships in a world of immediate flux cannot be expressed” (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 366). This can be seen from two aspects that go beyond the problem of description. The first is that the activity and content of consciousness can be bodily experienced, because they are part of the world of internal evidence; but the objects cannot (NKZ, Vol. 2, p. 93). The second reason is that “Husserl finds the essence of consciousness in representationality and not in its self-perceiving determination” (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 204). In other words, not everything is bodily experienciable in phenomenology and so, there are areas of reality that do not reach self-perception. In Husserl there is no self-perceiving self-determination of consciousness, hence it remains an abstract consciousness.

Nishida says that in his phenomenology, Husserl “did not consider the objective world as necessary and remained entirely in the point of view of transcendental subjectivity, in the *subjectivité transcendentale* of the *ego cogito*”. Putting aside other characteristics of Descartes’ thought, “Husserl stands entirely on the point of view of Cartesian internal intuition, *mentis inspectio*” and, from that standpoint, “he tries to reduce into essence even that which is factual”. This is why “Husserl’s point of view is the viewpoint of the immanent self which completely reflects itself passively; that is to say, it is the viewpoint of a mirror that simply reflects” (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 180). Nishida adds that phenomenology does not overcome the point of view of apodictic evidence as conscious

---

<sup>13</sup> Letter Nr. 2376, 4/09/1915, to Tanabe Hajime.

self-determination of the world of intentional objects and that, from this abstract viewpoint “we cannot reach a concrete point of view”. In the last instance, Husserlian approach is insufficient because “the world of self-determining events cannot be reduced into a world of essences”; and because “from a world of essences does not result the praxis of our historical self” (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 181).

As was said before, Nishida thinks that through Husserl’s method “we cannot express the relationships in a world of immediate flux” (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 366). Nishida says that “this is an important problem in present-day philosophy” but, even though “Husserl is detailed in his analysis, he lacks depth” (NKZ, Vol. 1, p. 366). In other words, Nishida does not think that Husserl’s method is a solution and expresses his doubt in the form of a question: “Is there a chance that the task of philosophy be solved in a phenomenological way?” (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 181).

## **5. Nishida’s Letters Concerning His Contact with Heidegger**

Nishida’s correspondence allows us to see another aspect of his contact with phenomenology. I would like to present some comments of his concerning Heidegger that can be seen in the letters he addressed to his disciples.

1. The first time Heidegger appears in Nishida’s texts is the entry for January the 3d, 1924, of his Diary. He writes, “I asked Miki: *Kant* (Cassirer [edition]) VI, *Phänomenologie* (Heidegger, *Aristotle*)”. It is not clear whether Heidegger’s text refers to his book on Aristotle (1924), or to the notes of his 1923-1924 course.

2. In 1925, Nishida writes Tanabe Hajime, “Today I read your text on Heidegger’s thought; for the first time I understood that there is a very interesting intention in his philosophy”<sup>14</sup>. Here Nishida refers to an article Tanabe published in October 1924 (Tanabe Hajime, 1963), which is the first commentary in Japan (and perhaps in the whole world) concerning Heidegger’s thought.

---

<sup>14</sup> Letter Nr. 2470, 2/10/1925, to Tanabe Hajime.

3. In 1927, Nishida writes Watsuji Tetsurô that Heidegger thinks that the self is something that “**auslegen** [interprets]” and that Heidegger remains “attached to the **Ich** of the **Erlebnis** and that will be good for the historical” aspect.<sup>15</sup>

4. However, “the problem is that therefrom does not result that which *vollenden* [realizes] itself with the character of *Idee*, that is to say, the *gedachtes* [that which is thought of] as, for example, *Natur*”.<sup>16</sup>

5. Nishida also comments that “in Heidegger there is a ‘being-towards-death’ but there is no ‘being-born-into’”.<sup>17</sup>

6. In February 1927, he emphatically asks Mutai Risaku to visit Heidegger.<sup>18</sup>

7. In June 1927, he acknowledges receipt of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*.<sup>19</sup>

8. Nishida writes Tanabe, concerning *Being and Time*, “I read a little and I think it is a very strict and fruitful research; however, as I am dissatisfied with the basis of **Phänomenologie** it does not **inspire** me much”.<sup>20</sup>

9. He also writes, “I read enough of Heidegger and I think it is a strict and interesting research, although a little bit prolix”.<sup>21</sup>

10. Among his first criticisms of *Being and Time*, we find that, “these days I read Heidegger again and I changed my opinion. There are no deep or great things, but it is a work I respect in the sense that, with [great] effort, it has opened a new way of seeing and thinking”.<sup>22</sup>

11. In 1929 he writes, “I re-read Heidegger and I think that I have understood him in some measure and, at the same time, I have grasped his outstanding points and lacks”.<sup>23</sup>

12. There are several criticisms Nishida writes in a letter to Miyake Gôichi, which I will mention in the following points. The first criticism says, “to see **Wahrheit** [truth] merely

---

<sup>15</sup> Letter Nr. 433, 9/02/27, to Watsuji Tetsurô.

<sup>16</sup> Letter Nr. 433, 9/02/27, to Watsuji Tetsurô

<sup>17</sup> An alternative translation would be: “there is room for death but no room to be born into”. Letter Nr. 433, 9/02/27, to Watsuji Tetsurô.

<sup>18</sup> Letter Nr. 436, 18/02/27, to Mutai Risaku.

<sup>19</sup> Letter Nr. 448, 17/06/27, to Mutai Risaku.

<sup>20</sup> Letter Nr. 2516, 20/06/27, to Tanabe Hajime.

<sup>21</sup> Letter Nr. 449, 26/06/27, to Mutai Risaku.

<sup>22</sup> Letter Nr. 2523, 06/11/27, to Tanabe Hajime.

<sup>23</sup> Letter Nr. 2550, 04/02/29, to Tanabe Hajime.

as **Unverborgenheit** [unveiling] in the manner of Heidegger, is not enough. In reality truth is not something like that. That is nothing but Greek-style thinking".<sup>24</sup>

13. "In Heidegger's thought, wherever *Entwurf* [project] and *Entschlossenheit* [resolution] appear, he really does not understand them. If they are not thought of together with what I call 'self-perceiving Nothingness', it is no good".<sup>25</sup>

14. "Even in relation to **Zeit** [time], Heidegger's **Zeit** is, in any case, a **möglich Zeit** [possible time] and not an **actuell Zeit** [actual time]. If **actuell Zeit** [actual time] is not thought of taking the **Augenblick** [instant] as a center, it is no good".<sup>26</sup>

15. Heidegger's time is not centered on the instant. Nishida says, "I think that τό ἐξαίφνης [**tó exaíphnes**, the instant] in the **Dialog Parménides** is extremely interesting".<sup>27</sup>

16. In 1932 we can see that his view of human historicity is different from Heidegger's. For example, Nishida writes, "as he says, humans are historical and were given as an **Aufgabe** [task] to decide their destiny, [but] apart from the mission that historically has been given to each one, there must be a moral ought".<sup>28</sup>

17. The basic problem Nishida sees in Heidegger is that with the latter's thought, "the deep problem of substance and of human life" cannot be treated".<sup>29</sup>

18. Nishida was aware that Heidegger's thought was applied in many fields, and even mathematics were seen historically. For Nishida this "is interesting, but perhaps it does not become a philosophical **Begründung** [foundation] of mathematics".<sup>30</sup>

19. In 1935, Nishida writes, "the central problem of philosophy up to now has been historical reality. Even Heidegger's viewpoint is not such that can penetrate this problem".<sup>31</sup>

20. Furthermore, Nishida criticizes Heidegger's hermeneutics of Aristotle: "to think Aristotle **hermeneutisch** [hermeneutically], as Heidegger does, is a superficial thought that sees only one aspect. [...] But through it we cannot think historical substance".<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Letter Nr. 655, 04/01/31, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>25</sup> Letter Nr. 655, 04/01/31, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>26</sup> Letter Nr. 655, 04/01/31, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>27</sup> Letter Nr. 655, 04/01/31, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>28</sup> Letter Nr. 722, 14/04/32, to Watsuji Tetsurô.

<sup>29</sup> Letter Nr. 824, 19/12/33, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>30</sup> Letter Nr. 846, 02/07/34, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>31</sup> Letter Nr. 880, 05/02/35, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>32</sup> Letter Nr. 880, 05/02/35, to Miyake Gôichi

21. In 1944, near the end of his life, Nishida still does not consider Heidegger an extraordinary thinker: “Japanese scholars do not have a view of their own; Kant and Husserl are good enough, but people like Heidegger and Jaspers are nothing but **Epigonen** [somewhere else he says the same about neo-kantians in regards to Kant]; together with universal history it is now a time for a change in philosophical thinking”.<sup>33</sup>

This is what we can see from Nishida’s letters. Even though they are valid views, the information they provide us is one-sided, because we do not have the disciples’ answers. Here I have presented them as an appetizer. In the following we will see an outline of what Nishida says in his published works.

## 6. Heideggerian Phenomenology in Nishida’s Works

In general, we can say that Nishida finds in Heidegger the same lacks mentioned above: “the viewpoint of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology, in comparison to the viewpoint of Husserl’s, advanced in some points but we still cannot say that it has overcome the basic lacks of the phenomenological viewpoint itself” (NKZ, Vol. 5, pp. 349-350). Most probably Nishida did not have access to Heidegger’s texts after 1938, however, he questioned and commented on Heidegger’s thought on the basis of the texts he had at hand.

### A. *DASEIN* OR NISHIDA’S SELF

After *Being and Time*, an aspect of Nishida’s critique concerns *Dasein*. Nishida acknowledges that his ‘self’ [*jiko*] corresponds to Heidegger’s *Dasein*. However, in Nishida this self is a bodily-historical poetic self. It is a self that is in the here and now, and that exists together with the eternal now, which, the same as the instant, is a saccadic continuity. This is why Nishida says that *Dasein* instead of being there, should be named *Hiersein*, because “it is not something that is ‘there’ [**da**] but must be ‘here’ [**hier**]: from ‘here’ can the ‘there’ be seen” (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 173; see NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 176).

---

<sup>33</sup> Letter Nr. 2288, 13/01/1944, to Omodaka Hisayuki.

Nishida accepts three of the implications of the postulate that the question concerning the meaning of Being should be clarified in Dasein: a) the first is that Dasein interprets itself because it is active; b) the second is that Dasein, or Nishida's 'self', is itself meaningful and this is why it can also be that which is interpreted; c) the third is that the 'self', being meaningful and something that interprets itself, can by itself clarify meaning (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 350). However, this would seem to enclose Dasein within itself because there is no study of the manner in which Dasein's consciousness is linked to the experienceable world. In other words, Heidegger's viewpoint sees only the self-determining "facts" of comprehension (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 351) and does not relate them directly to events outside consciousness. This is why it is an incomplete intentionality that cannot intend the content of the complete concrete experience (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 430). And so, Heidegger's Dasein is not the complete self but, rather, a consciousness with an incomplete intentionality. Let us see the reasons for this assertion.

Firstly, "the viewpoint of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology carried the aspect of direct perception of what I call the self-loving self, up to the viewpoint of the intelligible self" (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 289 note). In this manner, he eliminates the meaning of self-perceiving determination from the willing self. As he only sees the self-determining facts of comprehension, Heidegger overlooks that it is a self-determination that does not see its own content and that, because of this, it is abstract (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 351). The self-determination of Dasein does not reach completion, it remains only a self-determination of comprehension, and this is why Dasein is not active. From the sole question concerning the meaning of Being does not result a self-determining self (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 477 note).

It is a Dasein that asks the question concerning the meaning of Being and in which that meaning is clarified. However, Nishida points out that this self that questions must be a bodily-experiencing self, a self in which there is no separation between mind and body. Even though Dasein is considered a meaningful and historical existent, it is a bodily-experienceable self that in no manner can see its own content (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 477 note). It is a meaningful existence, but "a meaningful existence is not something that directly clarifies its own meaning; historical existence is not something that directly clarifies its own meaning" (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 350). The main reason is that, because of its being a self-

perceiving abstract determination, it cannot establish objective truth (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 351). Because it lacks the meaning of self-perceiving self-determination, the action of the self does not have a self-perceiving content and solely becomes verbal expression (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 351). Consequently, even though Heidegger says that his own viewpoint is that of the *logos*, being only verbal expression, it is not the viewpoint of the self-perception of the *logos* as in Hegel (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 179), or the *logos* of historical reality (See NKZ, Vol. 7, pp. 79-80).

Secondly, the Dasein that questions concerning the meaning of Being and in which this meaning is clarified, is a knowing ego; but Nishida says that the knowing ego should not be simply a comprehending ego (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 170). On the other hand, Heidegger's Dasein is a self that opposes the world in the same manner in which the I and the Thou are mutually opposed; this means that it is an opposition in which each part talks and the other understands. As it cannot give the world a verbal answer, Dasein can only hear the talk of the world (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 85). However, according to Nishida, the relationship between the self and the world is of mutual formation and transformation; it is a world of action in which the bodily historical self forms the world and, at the same time, becomes a self-expressive point of the world. This is not the case with Heidegger's Dasein (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 185). The reason is that Heidegger's phenomenological ego is subjective (V: 349). Even though Heidegger asserts that Dasein is historical, the problem is that "something like phenomenological time, is not time". This is why Nishida sees Dasein as a historical self of potential time, a self of the "merely possible time" (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 165).

Thirdly, Dasein is active, but "the true self is not something which simply understands itself, but rather, must be something that factually knows itself through activity" (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 168). However, in Heidegger, the active Dasein refers to the noetic self-perceiving activity of the self (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 349) and it does not refer to a bodily historical poietic self: it is not, as in Nishida, a bodily experienciable self. The problem here is two-fold. On the one hand, from the world of essences which phenomenology seeks, does not result the praxis of our historical self (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 181); and, on the other, as Dasein is not self-determining but only self-perceiving, Dasein is

ontological but it is not ontical (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 352). This is why Nishida says that its existence is not a “fact” of fundamental ontology (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 170).

Fourthly, Dasein is a “being, which essentially is in its *future being*” (Löwith, 2006, p. 285): “only so far as it is futural can Dasein *be* authentically as having been. The character of ‘having been’ arises, in a certain way, from the future” (SZ, Vol. 2, 3rd ed., §65, p. 326.). Dasein is a being that only is authentic in its ‘anticipatory resoluteness’ of being-towards-death. This means that Dasein exists only in its being oriented towards the future: “Anticipation makes Dasein *authentically* futural, and in such a way that the anticipation itself is possible only in so far as Dasein [...] is futural in its Being in general” (SZ, Vol. 2, 3rd ed., §65, p. 325). Dasein determines itself from the future; it is not a time that must come but, rather, a potential time: “By the term ‘futural’ we do not here have in view a ‘now’ which has *not yet* become ‘actual’ and which sometime *will be* for the first time. We have in view the coming in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, comes towards itself” (SZ, Vol. 2, 3rd ed., §65, p. 325). The reverse of this futurism of potential time in which Dasein is determined from the future, would be traditionalism in which the self can only exist as being-from-the-past and determined from the past. However, according to Nishida, the self which is a creative element of a creative world, is not determined either from the past or from the future. The creative self exists and is determined in the now, in the *exaiphnes* (instant), which is not in the past or in the future, and which is not in time but outside time: the self exists concurrently in lineal time and circular time. The self is a creative focus in the space-time dialectics of the basho of absolute Nothingness as historical world, which goes from that which has been made to that which makes, and from that which makes to that which is made.

## B. THE WORLD OF HISTORICAL REALITY

According to Nishida, the world phenomenology studies is a world of essences (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 181) which, for Dasein, is a world of comprehension (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 179). It is a world without individual determination (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 347) in whose basis that which determines itself cannot be seen (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 365). As there is no individual determination, in such a world there are no objective things (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 347).

As said before, the phenomenological world is a world from which the praxis of our historical self does not result (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 181), because it is not a world that determines us through its own self-determination (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 180). It is a world that lacks self-determination and that cannot determine our action (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 179). And so, it is not clear why this world –that does not determine the individual (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 180)– can bring Dasein to its *Angst* [angustia] (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 365). Between 1908 and 1910, Nishida says that “our anguish [*hammon*] comes from an abstract willing will” (NKZ, Vol. 16, p. 324) and not from a world indifferent to the individual. This is so, specially when we consider that this phenomenological world is not a world that while determining each individual, embraces both the I and the Thou (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 180).

In this phenomenological world there are no objective things because there is no individual determination (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 347). As there is no individual self-determination, this world does not determine us and, this is why the manner in which we are ‘project’ or ‘thrown’, or why we carry an infinite burden, never becomes clear (NKZ, Vol. 7, pp. 179-180). Even though Heidegger says that we carry an infinite burden, and that we are a ‘project’ [*Entwurf*], it is a world from which we are not born (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 180). As said before, it is a world in which there is “being-towards-death” but there is no “being-born-into”.<sup>34</sup> This is why the phenomenological world is not the world of historical reality.

Nishida thinks that Heidegger’s phenomenology is a phenomenology of the world of consciousness (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 213) and not of the world of historical reality. In such a world, Dasein cannot be a historical reality (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 213) because, as said before, from the world of essences does not result the praxis of our historical self (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 181). In order for Dasein to become a historical reality, it must be active. And activity must be, above all else, expressive activity (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 213). If in this phenomenological world there were self-perceiving determination, that which objectively determines itself in time would be at the bottom of such a world (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 365). Even though Heidegger places Being in relationship with time, the time he treats about is lineal, chronological time.

---

<sup>34</sup> Letter Nr. 433, 09/02/27, to Watsuji Tetsurô.

It is not a time centered on the instant,<sup>35</sup> it is not Being as related to the instant which “is not within time but outside it” (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 160). Furthermore, Heidegger overlooks that time is at once both linear and circular (NKZ, Vol. 14, p. 362).

The world is *logos*-ical (NKZ, Vol. 9, p. 92) and in order for the phenomenology of the world to become a phenomenology of the historical world, of historical reality, such phenomenology must become a logic; this means that it must become the phenomenology of a reality which is *logos*-ical (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 213). It must become a dialectical logic (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 213; see NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 4). But “Heidegger’s philosophy is not dialectical: it is nothing but simply an hermeneutic phenomenology” (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 180) and, because it does not become a phenomenology of the world of the self-perception of the *logos*, it cannot reach that which can only be seen as Nothingness (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 365).

In *Being and Time* there is a Dasein analytic –centered on a temporality of potential time, which results in a “virtual” historicity of Dasein<sup>36</sup>,– as being “on the way” towards the question concerning the meaning of Being, that is to say, as a preparation for the hermeneutical horizon for the interpretation of Being (SZ, Vol. 2, 6th ed., §83, p. 437). But this “preparatory existential-temporal analytic of Dasein”, does not arrive into an ontology of Being, even though Heidegger declares himself “on the way” towards it (SZ, Vol. 2, 5th ed., §77, pp. 403-404, 437). This means that, after the analytic of Dasein, Being does not appear anywhere (Löwith, 2006, p. 284). Consequently, as Nishida says, we cannot think that Heidegger’s “fundamental ontology” is truly fundamental (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 213).

### C. NOTHINGNESS

Apart from the “‘nothing’ of the possible impossibility of its [Dasein’s] existence” (SZ, Vol. 2, 1st ed., §53, p. 266), which “unveils the nullity by which Dasein, in its very basis, is defined” (SZ, Vol. 2, 3rd ed., §61, p. 308), Heidegger also writes about the “‘nothing’ –that is, the world as such” (SZ, Vol. 1, 6th ed., §40, p. 187). According to Nishida, in the bottom of the historical world which self-perceptively determines itself, there is something which can only be seen as Nothingness (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 365). In order

---

<sup>35</sup> Letter Nr. 655, 04/01/31, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>36</sup> Just as Heidegger says Yorck gained this insight into the basic character of history. (See SZ, Vol. 2, 3rd ed., §77, p. 401).

to reach that bottom, one must needs clarify what expression is. Furthermore, one must go beyond the plane of absolute will (NKZ, Vol. 13, p. 375). Heidegger has not gone beyond and, thus, he does not come to see that which is noetic in self-perceiving determination (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 458). One must reach the intelligible universal. The world of the intelligible universal, which is beyond the categories, is a world which surpasses all willful construction of historical reality. When he places expression on the plane of absolute will, Heidegger lets the will subsist at the basis of his nothingness (NKZ, Vol. 13, p. 375). Nishida says that “when we transcend the willful self we reach the viewpoint of the intelligible self” (NKZ, Vol. 13, p. 339), this means that the domain of absolute Nothingness is not the domain of the willful universal. Because he does not understand this, “Heidegger confuses the willful universal and absolute Nothingness” (NKZ, Vol. 13, p. 375). In order to be able to see that which can only be seen as Nothingness (NKZ, Vol. 7, p. 365), we need to come to see the noesis in the self-perceiving determination. When we reach by way of *noesis* to the *noesis noeseos*, we reach the self-perceiving absolute Nothingness (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 458). And when we reach the *noesis noeseos*, we can reach the point in which there is “neither noesis nor noema” (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 459).

#### D. EPISTEMOLOGY

A basic problem of a phenomenology of consciousness Nishida points out is the distinction between noesis and noema. Nishida says that when we reach the self-perceiving absolute Nothingness, it becomes possible for us to reach the point in which there is neither noesis nor noema. But to know is not merely the self-perception of consciousness (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 400). To know must be an event in the social historical world (NKZ, Vol. 9, p. 154 note) and this “world of self-determining facts cannot be reduced into a world of essences” (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 181). To know cannot be merely to reflect, as Heidegger says (NKZ, Vol. 9, p. 155), because in this case, the world of objects which is simply reflected is nothing but a dead thing (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 400).

When Heidegger thinks expression, he abstracts it from its formative direction. But Nishida says that “*logos* emerges from *poiesis*” (NKZ, Vol. 9, p. 20) and that our body comes to have the character of *logos* (NKZ, Vol. 9, p. 43). This is why, in the self-forming

historical world, expression is a force of formative action. Because it abstracts expression from its formative direction, in Heidegger's expression there is no "doing" (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 440) and, in this sense, it is not dialectical cognition (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 400). A self-perceiving and self-forming historical reality requires a dialectical logic; and dialectically to know is poiesis=praxis.

To know is for the self, as creative element of a creative world, to become a self-forming focus of this world, and through technical poiesis to become the self-forming expression of the historical world. This is why truth is not merely that which clarifies itself, it is not merely that which unveils itself.<sup>37</sup> Truth must be that which determines itself (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 352) in the basho of absolute Nothingness, and this is why truth is constituted as a noematic determination of the self that sees Nothingness (NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 388). Even though Heidegger speaks of a noematic determination of the self, he does not give a clear reason why Dasein objectively determines itself (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 170).

As we saw above, Nishida states that to conceive of truth as unveiling is simply to go back to Greek thought, and he writes: "from my viewpoint, to know truth is to see the event in which our self really determines itself as self-determination of absolute present. Truth is *alethes*. That is for the self to be attested to by the ten thousand dharmas. This is what I express as 'having become the things [themselves], to see'" (NKZ, Vol. 11, p. 70). But definitely to link truth to Dasein in such a way that "there is truth only in so far as there is Dasein" (Löwith, 2006, p. 185), is to relativize truth, as Dasein is relative, and dependent on its mode of existing, even though in *Being and Time*, Heidegger does not consider the possibility of the diverse modes of existence of Dasein. In Nishida we see these diverse modes: there is a human being of antiquity, "in medieval Europe, there existed a medieval man. In modern Europe lived a modern man", and a new human being is about to be born in the new epoch of the historical world.<sup>38</sup>

In short, "intuition" in the case of Husserl's pure ego, and "comprehension" in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, are both merely **particular cases** of the "self-perceiving determination of absolute Nothingness". Nishida explains this, saying that "the 'facts' of primitive history are determined in the sense that the now determines itself as

---

<sup>37</sup> Letter Nr. 655, 04/01/31, to Miyake Gôichi.

<sup>38</sup> See NKZ, Vol. 12, p. 374.

self-perceiving determination of Nothingness, that is to say, in the sense of the self-determination of the active self” (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 165). The focus is the **now** in the self-perceiving self-determination of Nothingness as primitive ‘fact’, and this is why all “*Sache* [thing] must be *Tatsache* [a ‘fact’] of consciousness” (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 166). Nishida says that they are particular cases of the self-perceiving determination of absolute Nothingness, because: a) when Husserl, “talks about the now that determines itself, it is a **now** that does not have a past nor a future. Consequently, it is not a now: something like phenomenological time is not time. From this viewpoint only something like the essence is determined, and it could be said that it is the content of the determination of the predicative aspect, which has become united to the aspect of subject”. b) In the second case, “we can think that Heidegger’s ‘comprehension’ is a type of active determination, but it is an action which has lost its own self-perception; the world of comprehension is nothing but a world of merely possible time, which does not have a present. It must be said that it is a world of the self-determination of the mere predicative aspect. If we consider that judgment is the subjective determination of the universal, we can also think that the self-determination of its predicative aspect is something like comprehension; this is why we can think that the self-determination of the predicative aspect which has the character of subject, is intuition” (NKZ, Vol. 6, pp. 165-166).

Nishida states that “knowing must have the meaning of acting; there we find the meaning of the self-determination of the ‘facts’. Something like Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology also considers comprehension as a type of action and, consequently, through its considering existence as a ‘fact’ of comprehension, we can understand that the comprehending self sees its own ‘fact’” (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 170).

On the basis of these considerations, Nishida proposes an alternative foundation for ‘fundamental ontology’. His proposal says that “Heidegger’s fundamental ontology can stand on the viewpoint of the self-determinating eternal now” (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 170) as self-perceiving self-determination of Nothingness (NKZ, Vol. 6, p. 166), and not on the centrality of Dasein as in *Being and Time*. The reason is that “if we start from Heidegger’s viewpoint, insofar as he sees the world as having the self as mediator, the truly objective world cannot be thought of. Furthermore, even though it could be said that he thinks the world taking Dasein as

a *Mittel*, [...] he still cannot escape the point of view that takes the self as mediator. From that viewpoint he cannot think the world which truly determines itself” (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 20).

We can understand Nishida’s proposal if we take into account his project of displacing the conscious self from the center of philosophy,<sup>39</sup> because when Heidegger attempts to go on the way towards the question concerning the meaning of Being taking Dasein as mediator, “he cannot escape the viewpoint that thinks the world taking our self-mediating self as a model” (NKZ, Vol. 8, p. 20). However, this does not mean that Nishida’s alternative proposal is not problematic. But these problems will be treated on another occasion.

## 7. Conclusion

Through this outline of the manner in which Nishida understood Heidegger’s writings, we can see how he confronted his own thought with phenomenology.<sup>40</sup> As I am not a specialist in phenomenological thought, I am not in a position to say whether this manner of understanding Husserl’s and Heidegger’s positions, approximately until 1938, do justice to their thought. Instead of passing a judgment of my own, I would like to quote from a text in which Tanabe Hajime polemizes against the philosophy of Nishida concerning these points.

Tanabe studied under Husserl and Heidegger, and was the first to write, in 1924, about Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology (Tanabe Hajime, 1963). Furthermore, he presented Nishida’s thought to his German professors. Husserl writes Nishida: “I have a copy of your *Intuition and Reflection in Self-perception.*, which Mr. Kiba [Ryôhon] presented to me. Your distinguished disciple, Mr. Tanabe explained to me interesting things

---

<sup>39</sup> In my study of Nishida’s social philosophy, I found that “Nishida’s effort directly concerns the possibility that the concepts of the logic of basho be the self-expression of historical reality in cultures other than the Japanese. [...] This means that the thought of the logic of basho emerges also as self-expression of other cultures. This became possible once Nishida displaced the conscious self as central concern of philosophy and placed instead, and not as a center any more, the poietic self which is active-intuitive. There, knowledge [...] is a self-expression of objective reality and, at the same time, construction of that reality on the part of the poietic self: the subject becomes the environment and the environment becomes the subject”. (Zavala, 1994, pp. 80-81).

<sup>40</sup> Perhaps because of this, we may hold some doubt concerning Graham Parkes statement that: “It may be fair to say that Nishida is the only major figure in Japanese philosophy of the first half of the twentieth century *not* to have been influenced by Heidegger (perhaps in part because he was twenty years Heidegger’s senior)”. (May, 1996, pp. 108-109).

from this book”. He then adds, “I would like to make some time in the near future to know more about your work from your country-men who are studying over here” (Yusa Michiko, 2002, p.193). As doctor Yusa says,

“Tanabe took part in Husserl’s seminar in the Summer semester of 1923. Husserl, who had heard much about Nishida Kitarô from Yamanouchi Tokuryû and Kiba Ryôhon – both of whom were in Husserl’s seminars in 1922– asked Tanabe to give him and his colleague mathematician Ernst Zermelo an exposition of Nishida’s thought as developed in *Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei*” (Yusa Michiko, 2002, p. 160).

Shimomura Toratarô himself asked Tanabe about this. Tanabe told him that at the time the famous mathematician Ernst Zermelo was on a visit and both, Husserl and Zermelo, heard his exposition. But because at the beginning of the book Nishida writes about number theory, Zermelo began a discussion with Husserl, so that Tanabe “could not finish his conference”.<sup>41</sup>

This is why I consider that it is fitting that the viewpoint of Tanabe Hajime’s concerning the aspects treated in this paper should be presented here.

In his 1930 article “Requesting professor Nishida’s elucidation”, Tanabe presents his doubts concerning the central points of Nishida’s thought and begins the third section, saying, “from the above viewpoint, I cannot avoid harboring some doubts concerning the criticism professor Nishida levels against phenomenology and, contrasting it against Kant’s philosophy” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 321). Even though I will not present here the part that concerns Nishida’s interpretation of Kant, I want to present the part relative to phenomenology.

Tanabe Hajime, in his request for Nishida’s teachings, says that Husserl’s position cannot be defended against Nishida’s critique. Tanabe writes that Nishida clearly points out the limitation of Husserl’s thought, when he criticizes “the viewpoint of the abstract, formal noesis of the intelligible universal, which Husserl’s ‘pure consciousness’ makes its own” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 322). Tanabe further points out that “according to professor [Nishida], Husserl’s phenomenology purifies the conscious self as the content of the self-perceiving

---

<sup>41</sup> Shimomura comments that Husserl used to interrupt speakers and that the only occasion in which this was not so was at the time of a presentation by Takahashi Satomi, who concluded his talk as soon as Husserl interrupted him. (Shimomura Toratarô, 1990, p. 282).

universal of its own internal perceptive determination, and brings it [=the self] up to the willful determination of the intelligible universal; and that, furthermore, through the merely formal viewpoint which abstracts the noetic content of the will, it reaches a point of view that thinks that the essence of consciousness is [its] intentional activity. What Husserl calls pure ego has not reached the viewpoint of the intellectual self-perceiving interior life and is nothing but simply the purification of the internal perceiving ego. Consequently, the pure consciousness of this pure ego is a [noematic] consciousness that is made conscious of, and not a [noetic] consciousness that is conscious of" (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 321).

Tanabe adds that in Husserl, "as professor [Nishida] points out, intentionality stops at the essence of representative consciousness and at the content of willful intelligible self-perception, which is concrete. It can be said that, in the last instance, Husserl's phenomenology reached and stayed in the reflection of intellectual consciousness. However, Husserl's achievement was the clarification of an untrodden domain and we should not overlook the perennial meaning of this achievement on account of the limitations of his point of view. Even though we can say that in Husserl's epistemology, the object has the meaning of a limit of noematic determination and stops there, and that he pays no attention to the noetic universal which also includes it, this should be acknowledged as a just delimitation of Husserl's viewpoint in order to prevent a fall into mystic intuition" (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 321).

The main defect, which Tanabe cannot defend in Husserl's thinking, is the following, "the lack that should be criticized in Husserl's viewpoint is that it entirely stops at the abstraction of intellectual consciousness and, conversely, that it is an intellectualism which tries to express the concrete structure of the totality of consciousness through such abstraction. It should perhaps be said that this is a treason to the original tendency of phenomenology which requires complete concretion, and it is a weakpoint which does not provide us with a basis to defend it" (THZ, Vol. 4, pp. 321-322).

Concerning the manner in which Nishida interprets Heidegger, Tanabe says, "professor [Nishida] points out that even though it can be said that Heidegger's phenomenology eliminated the viewpoint of immanent consciousness which, according to Husserl, simply sees, and through placing himself in the point of view of interpretative

consciousness, Heidegger approached the viewpoint of the self-determination of the intelligible self, insofar as it is still an abstract point of view which eliminates the self-perceiving content of the self, it cannot establish objective truth which is constituted through the content of the intelligible noema” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 322; see NKZ, Vol. 5, p. 351).

As regards Nishida’s critique of the limitations of Heidegger’s thought concerning society and the world, Tanabe’s comments that “the existence which is placed at its basis is an individual existence which relates to things as tools, and which obtains its autonomy in its anticipatory resoluteness; this is why this ontology, in spite of its intention, strays from the way that interprets the truly historical social existence; because of the defect in [holding] a relationship with the world as tool instead of a world which has to be bodily experienced in a religious manner as a unification that melts together and communicates equal lives, and the fact that the finite existence of the individual emerges atomically in the cosmos, are fundamental lacks in this otherwise rich creative ontology” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 322). However, Tanabe differs from Nishida when he states that this is not a defect in the phenomenological method but, rather, in Heidegger’s viewpoint, “that existence as an object of self-interpretation in Heidegger has not reached this point, is an imperfection in Heidegger’s thinking and cannot be said to be a defect of hermeneutic phenomenology itself” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 323).

Tanabe adds that “perhaps hermeneutic phenomenology can be freed from many of the defects that professor [Nishida] has pointed out concerning phenomenology”. For example, he says, “I think that self-interpreting existence in hermeneutic phenomenology, is not something that simply has a meaning in itself and clarifies its own meaning by itself, as professor Nishida understands it. [When it is understood] In this manner, the meaning of anticipation of the possibilities of free action of the self, which are given in comprehension which is Heidegger’s central concept, is completely lost” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 323). He also points out an irreducible difference between Heidegger’s and Nishida’s thought. Tanabe says, “in the self-perceiving absolute Nothingness of professor [Nishida], everything is embraced in the topos-ical [*basho-teki*] determination of the universal, and apart from this self-perceiving determination, there is no place where something remains; on the contrary,

de self-perception of existence in hermeneutic phenomenology in no way can be freed from bearing a task, there are always things that remain outside the self that cannot embrace all of them, and to [consider as] completely immanent the resulting transcendence, is nothing but an *Idee*. Conversely, I think that perhaps from the viewpoint presented above, phenomenology would be most appropriate to preserve the general limits of philosophy” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 323). This means that an irreducible difference between Nishida’s and Heidegger’s thought is that Nishida takes absolute Nothingness as the ultimate, and that he organizes his thought taking the basho of absolute Nothingness as its center.

“Professor Nishida has pointed out that a defect common to phenomenology in general, is that it cannot establish objective truth because its noetic determination is something abstract that does not have the meaning of seeing its own content; he [also] points out the in order to be freed from this defect, it should take the viewpoint in which noesis includes noema, [and this means that] it must depend on the self-perceiving interior life of the pure self which embraces the intelligible noema. A peculiarity of critical philosophy is that Kant’s ‘consciousness in general’ takes the self-perception of this intelligible noema as the essence and, through it, a subjectivity that constructs objectivity is established. It is said that the lack of this principle of subjective construction, is an important weak point in phenomenology. In reality, as I said before, the viewpoint of phenomenology, even in Heidegger, stops at the point of view of the self-perceiving conscious individual and does not reach the more concrete viewpoint to which, following the spirit of phenomenology, it should arrive and, for this reason, it is a fact that it does not include the relationships that [go] to the concrete, which should be the basis of the relationship between the world and the selves, as unification of trans-individual lives” (THZ, Vol. 4, pp. 323-324).

On the one hand, Tanabe says that “we cannot deny the defects that professor [Nishida] has pointed out both in Husserl and in Heidegger, and we should say that professor [Nishida’s] criticisms involve important directives for phenomenologists” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 324).

On the other hand, Tanabe expresses his own doubts concerning Nishida philosophy. Tanabe’s main counter-critique is that a philosophy like Nishida’s, that takes

the self-perceiving absolute Nothingness as its center, is not a well-founded philosophy. He considers that the self-perceiving Nothingness Nishida talks about, is a religious bodily experience, and philosophy cannot take its ultimate principles from religion, without risking its status as philosophy (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 313). He points out that the defects Nishida finds in phenomenology correspond to strong points in Kantian philosophy. Tanabe adds that just as Nishida says, Kantian philosophy “offers a principle of subjective construction, however, I cannot but think that there will be important restrictive conditions concerning this interpretation” (THZ, Vol. 4, p. 324). On the basis of the above-mentioned critique, Tanabe criticizes other aspects of Nishida’s thought, but we will leave their presentation for a later occasion. Here I have mentioned Tanabe’s comments on Nishida’s critique of phenomenology, because in 1930, he is one of the best qualified arbiters.

## References

- Abe Jirô. (1917). *Bigaku* [Aesthetics]. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time* [SZ]. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Husserl, E. (1992). *Invitación a la filosofía*. Barcelona: Ediciones Paidós Ibérica.
- Husserl, E. (2002). Renovación del hombre y de la cultura. *Anthropos*, pp. 1-46 (A. S. de Haro, Trans.).
- Kayano Yoshio. (1972). *Shoki Heidegger- no tetsugaku keisei* (The formation of early Heidegger’s philosophy). Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai.
- Kuki Shuzo. (2007). La estructura del ‘Iki’. Iki y furyu. In Kuki Shuzo. *Ensayos de estética y hermenéutica*. (pp. 55-135) (A. J. Falero, Trans.). Valencia: Institución Alfons el Magnànim.
- Löwith, K. (2006). *Heidegger, pensador de un tiempo indigent: Sobre la posición de la filosofía en el siglo XX*. México: FCE.
- May, R. (1996). *Heidegger’s hidden sources: East Asian influences on his work*. (G. Parkes, Trans.). New York: Routledge.
- Nishida Kitarô. (1987-1989). *Nishida Kitarô Zenshû* (Complete Works of Nishida Kitarô,

- in nineteen volumes, cited as NKZ followed by volume and page number). (4th ed.). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Schapp, W. (1910). *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung* (Contributions towards a phenomenology of experience). Göttingen: W. F. Kaestner.
- Shih-yi Hsiao, P. (1990). Heidegger and Our Translation of the *Tao Te Ching*. In G. Parkes (Ed.). *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (pp. 93-103). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Shimomura Toratarô. (1990). Tetsugaku to Nihon no shisô. In Shimomura Toratarô. *Shimomura Toratarô chosaku-shû*. (Vol. 12). Tokyo: Misuzu shobô.
- Tanabe Hajime. (1963). A new turn in phenomenology: Heidegger's phenomenology of life (Originally published in *Shisô*, October de 1924). In Tanabe Hajime. *Tanabe Hajime Zenshû* (Complete Works of Tanabe Hajime) [THZ] (Vol. 4, p. 17-34). Tokyo: Chikuma shobô.
- Twardowski, K. (1894). *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellung* (Concerning the theory of the content and object of representation). Wien: Hölder.
- Yamashita Yoshiaki. (2009). *Identität als Unverborgenheit: Kant, Nishida, Heidegger* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.
- Yusa Michiko. (2002). *Zen & Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitarô*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Zavala, A. J. (1994). *La filosofía social de Nishida Kitarô: 1935-1945*. Zamora, Mich: El Colegio de Michoacán.
- Zavala, A. J. (2005). El encuentro de Nishida Kitarô con la fenomenología: Husserl, Heidegger y Jaspers. *Revista de Filosofía*, 7, p. 205-224.

Recebido em 04/09/2011.

Aprovado em 30/11/2011.