

Heidegger and Japanese Fascism

An Unsubstantiated Connection

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If one moves through certain academic circles having to do with modern Japanese political philosophy, it soon becomes clear that Japan's most renowned thinkers of the twentieth century, members of the so-called "Kyoto School," were primarily responsible for "defining the philosophic contours of Japanese fascism," and that the major impetus for this nefarious project came from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger.¹ This impression is given by a number of books, some of which are written by renowned scholars and published by prestigious university presses.² These texts criticize the most prominent figures in the Kyoto School—Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, Kuki Shūzō, Nishitani Keiji, and Miki Kiyoshi—for promulgating fascistic and ultra-nationalistic ideas, usually by trying to establish "guilt by association" with Heidegger. But on closer examination the scholarship turns out to be sadly short on facts and long on neo-Marxist jargon and deconstructionist rhetoric. Ideological concerns have stifled philosophical inquiry

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1. NAJITA and HAROOTUNIAN 1993; HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 359 and *passim*.

2. DALE 1986, FAURE 1993, PINCUS 1996, and SANDFORD 2003.

and are now promoting a kind of censorship that smacks, ironically, of a fascism of the left. This would be of no great consequence if fascism had been eradicated after the Second World War, but since fascist movements are still very much with us, scholarly discussions of the phenomenon have a responsibility to identify it properly.

This essay engages several concerns. It extends the argument of an article of mine from 1997, “The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School,” which shows the neo-Marxist criticisms to be unfounded, and which appears to have gone largely unnoticed in Europe (PARKES 1997). And since such criticisms of the Kyoto School continue, and now on this side of the Atlantic too, it’s worthwhile to keep showing how the critics’ ideology distorts the picture they present and ignores any studies that point this out. This exercise also serves to outline further, positive dimensions of the political philosophy of the Kyoto School thinkers. Finally, the appearance of such neo-Marxist criticisms in the U. K. prompted an attempt at exchange and dialogue, the failure of which demonstrates how this kind of ideology extends to the politics of academic journal publishing.

I

So what did the much criticized Kyoto School philosophers say and write to deserve the moral censure they’ve been receiving in the Anglophone West? They certainly opposed British, Dutch, and American colonial expansion in East Asia—but only an unregenerate Western imperialist could find their grounds for that opposition invalid. They also venerated the nobler aspects of traditional Japanese culture and lamented their dwindling vitality under the onrush of mass enthusiasm for the modern and the Western. Some of them even wrote kind words about the emperor system, and suggested that Japan could become a world power through leading the so-called Great East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere. For all of this they have been dismissed as mere fascist ideologues—when in fact the fascism is being conjured up by projections on the part of morally superior commentators from the side of the victorious Americans. These dismissals have had the dismal effect of stunting

the growth of English-language studies of the Kyoto School thinkers, insofar as many potential students have been persuaded that those philosophers are promoters of fascism.

Neo-Marxists love to hate the Great East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere, denigrating it as “Japan’s colonial empire.” But if one looks at Nishida’s and Tanabe’s ideas about how the project should work, it’s clear there is nothing fascistic or even imperialistic about them. And the nationalistic aspect of those ideas—since Japan is the only Asian nation not to have been colonized by the West, it’s natural that it should play a leading role in the Coprosperity Sphere—is balanced by a thoroughgoing internationalism. Christopher Goto-Jones has demonstrated the vacuity of the charges of fascism against Nishida’s political philosophy and shown the distinctly internationalist dimensions of his thinking.³ Tanabe’s ideas about individual freedom and the multi-ethnic state, and above all his relentless insistence throughout his career on the primacy of reason, definitively preclude his being a fascist philosopher in any sense of the word. This is made clear in a recent study by David Williams that, among many other things, demonstrates the flimsiness of the grounds for accusing Tanabe of fascist leanings.⁴ In essays written during the thirties, Kuki expressed optimism about Japan’s ability to play a leading role in the Great East-Asia Coprosperity Sphere to help her neighbors combat Western imperialism in East Asia, but his nationalism is again tempered by an emphasis on internationalism as the appropriate strategy for Japan to become a greater power in a globalizing world (see PARKES 2008, 164-70).

Nishitani has been especially harshly criticized for his contribution to a series of symposia held in 1941 and 1942 and sponsored by *Chūōkōron*, a well-known literary journal, the transcripts of which were later published under the title *Japan from a World-Historical Standpoint* (1943). In the course of the discussions he said (among many other things) that Japan’s assertiveness in its drive to colonize regions of China and South-East

3. See the discussions of Nishida in GOTO-JONES 2005. Also, PARKES 2008.

4. WILLIAMS 2004, esp. 92–116. This book also contains a translation of Tanabe’s essay “On the Logic of Co-prosperity Spheres: Toward a Philosophy of Regional Blocs.”

Asia, and in its attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor (which had happened shortly before), might not be such a bad thing for East Asia, from a world-historical perspective. One can certainly criticize these remarks for being nationalistic and promoting a kind of imperialism, but the context in which they were made was one in which Japan, as the only major East-Asian country that hadn't been invaded by the imperialist powers of the West, was simply beginning to follow their example by trying to obtain an overseas empire on behalf of its own, longer-standing emperor. In any case nationalism and imperialism are different from fascism—as is the scepticism toward modernism evinced by the Kyoto School thinkers generally, and their reverence for what is great in the Japanese tradition.

It is important to understand these symposia in their context, insofar as their basic premise is that the army's influence on the government was dangerously bellicose, and that some rational discussion of Japan's foreign policy was desperately needed. The main theme of the first session (November 1941) was originally to be "How to avoid war [with the United States]," but under pressure from government propagandists after the attack on Pearl Harbor it had to be changed to "How to bring the war to a favorable end as soon as possible, in a way rationally acceptable to the Army" (HORIO 1995, 301–2). Even though the publisher prudently expurgated the sharp criticisms of the army and General Tōjō that were in the original transcripts, the published version was immediately attacked by ultranationalist and fascist elements in the government as being too tame, "seditious and anti-war." The army reacted by ordering the suppression of public activities by the "Kyoto faction" and forbidding any further print-runs of the book or mention of their ideas in the press (HORIO 1995, 291, 303). Such measures would have been unnecessary had the participants in the symposium been the raging fascists they are now accused of being. What is clear is that the accusers, if they have read the texts at all, have completely ignored their complicated context.

But why can't these conflicting views in the contemporary academy be taken simply as a matter of disagreements among scholars offering differing interpretations, without introducing the contentious concept of ideology? The reason is that what traditionally distinguishes philosophy from ideology is that the former is primarily a *questioning*—a question-

ing of the purported facts of the matter, of the motives and prejudices behind interpretations of the facts, and of any dogmatism that declines to engage in dialogue. Ideology by contrast tends to discourage questioning of the facts so as to promote belief or faith in its system of ideas, and is correspondingly reluctant to engage in dialogue that might put into question the origin of those ideas. The neo-Marxist scholarship on the politics of the Kyoto School thinkers and their relation to Heidegger is a perfect example of this latter syndrome.

II

It wasn't until 1994 that a dialogue concerning the politics of the Kyoto School thinkers got underway, with a conference on the topic in New Mexico, the revised proceedings of which were published the following year under the title *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism*. What is interesting about this collection of essays is that positions on the Kyoto School divide more or less along national lines, with the Western authors generally being more critical and the Japanese more defensive.⁵ The divide has to be seen against the background of the received view in the Western academy, which conveniently ignores the broader context of international relations formed by Western imperialism—which is that the Pacific War as pursued by the United States was a just war, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor completely unprovoked. It would be hard to take this “Pacific War Orthodoxy” seriously (in David Williams’s apt phrase) if it hadn’t been so clearly manifested in the attitudes that underwrote the United States’ disastrous invasion of Iraq some sixty years later.

None of the neo-Marxist scholars referred to earlier appears in *Rude Awakenings*, but they figure prominently in “The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy,” which appeared a couple of years after *Rude Awakenings*. This

5. WILLIAMS 2004, 147. John Maraldo criticizes Williams’s characterization of *Rude Awakenings* in his review of *Defending Japan’s Pacific War* and Goto-Jones’s *Political Philosophy in Japan* (MARALDO 2006, 398–9).

essay, which remains more or less neutral with respect to the political ideas of the Kyoto School thinkers, examines the grounds for the allegations of fascism made by scholars such as Harootunian, Dale, Faure, and Pincus against the major Kyoto School thinkers. One would expect to find such allegations to be based on a working definition of fascism and a reading of primary texts containing ideas that meet the criteria for being fascistic. And when Heidegger is invoked as a pernicious influence, one would hope to be shown just which ideas in his works are fascist in tone or orientation, and which fascist currents of thought they fed into in Japan. Yet none of this is to be found in these neo-Marxist excoriations: the allegations remain brazenly unsubstantiated. They depend on quotations taken out of context, tendentiously inaccurate translations, mere assertions without justifications or arguments, and general insinuation and innuendo.

Although I sent copies of the final draught of the article to the authors whose work I had criticized, in the eleven years since its publication I've seen not a single rebuttal of its claims.⁶ While the flood of accusations of Kyoto School fascism has abated somewhat, Harry Harootunian continues to prosecute his case. Even though *The Cambridge History of Japan* has been reprinted, the allegations of fascism by Najita and Harootunian in their chapter "Japanese Revolt against the West" remain unchanged. This piece was reprinted without modification in 1998 and again in 1999 in a collection titled *Modern Japanese Thought* (WAKABAYASHI 1998). So here is a situation where Harootunian's allegations of Kyoto School fascism in the most prestigious English-language publication on Japan have been shown to be unsubstantiated—and he simply ignores the criticism and keeps on publishing the accusations. See the evil, speak the evil, but keep the ears stopped firmly shut.

A hint of what is behind this tactic can be found in the transcript of a conversation between Harootunian and Naoki Sakai (whose writings on

6. By contrast with this silence, a Japanese translation of the "Putative Fascism" essay was published (PARKES 2002) and later reprinted (FUJITA and DAVIS 2005). Several important studies have appeared which give a clearer picture of the political philosophy of Nishida and other Kyoto School thinkers, and one that confirms the essay's premises: YUSA 2002, WILLIAMS 2004, GOTO-JONES 2005, NARA 2005.

the Kyoto School philosophers are often very critical but always responsibly argued) published in 1999. Here Harootunian criticizes “the model of the colonial regime for area studies” of Japan in the United States, and the resistance to “theory” manifested by the conservative American scholars of Japan who had dominated the field since the end of the Second World War (HAROOTUNIAN and SAKAI 1999, 606–8).

Theory teaches us to question the object itself, the object of our inquiry. What’s revealed ... is that the object of knowledge is a fiction.... The object [in this case] is held together by the complicit relations between American scholars and Japanese scholars. This is why the introduction of theory is seen as so dangerous and why professional journals like the *Journal of Japanese Studies* will do anything to suppress it. *What counts is who has the power to make their fiction stick....* Enormous resources are involved in this. We’re not just talking institutional resources; we’re talking about social power, status, jobs, fellowships. (611; emphasis added)

He has a point here, insofar as the neo-Marxists have tried to exert a Foucauldian power through their knowledge of materials in Japanese that are inaccessible to scholars who don’t read the language. And because some of them occupy powerful positions at top universities, people in Japanese studies have been reluctant to question their criticisms of the Kyoto School.

So, now “theory” appears to have supplanted “facts” in the postmodern academy. But can “the object of knowledge” *always* be a fiction? It seems unhelpful to claim so, since the practical distinction between fiction and fact would then collapse altogether. It’s reasonable to say, for example, that we know for a fact that Heidegger resigned from the Rectorship of Freiburg University in April of 1934, twelve months after his being appointed. We can also more or less agree on what kinds of new evidence would require us to reassess that fact and to say that we now know that he resigned at a different time. Of course what we think we know about history, and refer to as “historical fact,” always obtains within a certain horizon of interpretation; and as horizons of interpretation vary across cultures and change over time the realm of historical fact is altered accordingly. Yet the general distinction between fact and fic-

tion, while subject to blurring and modification, remains a helpful one—such that one needs compelling circumstances to abandon it.

The first name Harootunian mentions in his book from the following year, *Overcome by Modernity*, and in its very first sentence, is “Friederich [*sic*] Nietzsche.” Perhaps his invoking of power in connection with fiction is meant in the spirit of Nietzsche’s famous (but unpublished) dictum: “There aren’t any facts, only interpretations.”⁷ It could derive from a quasi Nietzschean understanding of the world as a field of interpretive forces, a play of will to power: if one excels at such play, one can make one’s fiction stick by having one’s will prevail, one’s world interpretations hold sway.

Yet, when Harootunian says “What counts is who has the power to make their fiction stick,” one is reminded less of Nietzsche than of the American neoconservatives’ contempt for members of what they call “the reality-based community.” To adapt that laudably forthright statement by the senior adviser to George W. Bush: “We’re an empire now, and when we write, we create our own reality” (SUSKIND 2004). Just as the Bush administration’s strategy of repeating over and over the mantra *Saddam Hussein/Al Qaeda* had two-thirds of the American people believing for several years that Iraq was implicated in the attacks of 9/11, so Harootunian’s mantra, *Kyoto School/Heidegger fascism*, seems to be equally effective in the world of academe. Of course the bulk of the American people had to be made to believe in “our own reality,” to accede to that interpretation of the world, but this hardly validates it.

Nietzsche was a philologist as well as a philosopher, and through practicing that science he came to appreciate the salutary power of scientific scholarship in general. And so a practice like Harootunian’s, where one acknowledges sources and texts in the name of doing (theory in/of) history, but then simply says what one wants regardless of evidence or justification of any kind, is from a Nietzschean perspective utterly inadmissible. By contrast with ego assertion through “social power and status,” will to power at its noblest wills through the world rather than the ego, and exercises power through clear and responsible interpretation.⁸

7. Nietzsche 1980, 315 (*The Will to Power*, § 481).

III

In the introduction to *Overcome by Modernity* Harootunian explains that the work “grew out of a collaboration with Tetsuo Najita that produced... ‘The Revolt against the West’” (Harootunian 2000, xxxiii). The reader who consequently expects more on the putative fascism of the Kyoto School is not disappointed, though now the main target is the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi, who is described as “clearly associated with Kyoto philosophy” (HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 41)

The book begins with an account of a well-known symposium on “Overcoming Modernity” that took place in 1942 and some of Nishitani’s contribution to it, followed by a discussion of the symposia on “Japan from the Standpoint of World History.” It’s a relief to find that the “philosophic contours of Japanese fascism” refrain is now quite muted, being relegated to a dismissive endnote:

But also see Horio Tsutomu, “The *Chūōkōron* Discussions: Their Background and Meaning” ... for a thinly disguised whitewash of this symposium, whose major orientation was philosophic fascism. (HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 421)

The claim that no group in prewar Japan “came closer [than the philosophers of the Kyoto faction] to defining the philosophic contours of Japanese fascism” was merely asserted by Najita and Harootunian in “The Revolt against the West,” with not a shred of evidence given in support of it. By contrast, Horio’s analysis of the *Chūōkōron* discussions is based on painstaking research on the original sources and makes nonsense of the idea that the group was in any way promoting or supporting fascism. If Harootunian wants to claim that this is “a thinly disguised whitewash” he had better provide some substantive justification, either by showing that Horio is misquoting and/or misinterpreting the transcripts of the symposia, or else by quoting from them himself in order to show just how they constitute “a major orientation [of] philosophic fascism.” David Williams’s devastating criticisms of Harootunian’s account

8. For a more detailed explication of will to power as interpretation, see PARKES 2005, xx–xxii.

of the symposia show that he is no more interested in even getting the basic facts concerning them right than in offering interpretations based on readings of the primary texts (WILLIAMS 2004, ch. 4).

Turning to Miki Kiyoshi, Harootunian first introduces him in a tone of some equivocation:

Miki often skirted with forms of fascist totalizing, even though he also sought to distance himself and Japan from an identity with it. Nevertheless, there is a good deal of folkic totalism in Miki's thinking, which in lesser hands or more determined thinkers... easily slipped into fascism. (XXXII)

For readers acquainted with Miki's writings, who was profoundly influenced by Marx and studied and wrote about Marxism for many years, this insinuation of a penchant for fascism will come as a surprise. Even Harootunian himself has to acknowledge that Miki's "Marxian phase... in a certain sense remained with him until the end" (365) One would have thought that having such a prolonged Marxian phase would have kept him from slipping into fascism. But perhaps Harootunian will amaze after all by adducing works that have been overlooked, or else by demonstrating through analysis of familiar texts an agenda running counter to the received view of Miki as a good Marxist.

The first forty pages of the last chapter of *Overcome by Modernity* discuss Miki's writings on political philosophy which, according to Harootunian, has two sides. One side is introduced by the "guilt-by-association-with-Heidegger" trick: Miki is said to be "deeply implicated in Heidegger," though just what this unusual condition consists in is left unspecified (359). In fact Harootunian himself admits two sentences later that Miki distanced himself from the German thinker whose work he had at first admired:

Despite the hostility he registered in response to Heidegger's Rector address and his decision to join the Nazi party in 1933, there was simply no way of bridging Miki's two sides: the philosopher analyzing the "current situation" (Marxism) and the thinker promoting the space of Asia (fascism) In this sense he remained true to the Marxian analytic, even though his theory of action promising a solution bordered on fascism. (HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 359–60)

After “skirting with” fascism, Miki’s ideas are now bordering on it, thanks somehow to his “promoting the space of Asia.” But since a continuing loyalty to Marxism would tend to render one immune to the lures of fascism, expectations of a truly spectacular revelation from Harootunian become ever greater.

Instead, there ensues an exposition (often obscured by the opacity of Harootunian’s jargon-ridden prose) of Miki’s writings during his explicitly Marxist period, after which the term “fascism” begins to reappear.⁹ Referring to Miki’s later treatment of the relationship between politics and culture, Harootunian writes:

Yet this concern surely constituted a sign of a global historical conjuncture where fascism was increasingly the political strategy employed to save capitalism.... But this attempt to realign politics and culture ... showed clearly the linking of fascism and imperialism that ... others would see as a natural manifestation of the expansion of the communal body. (390–1).

Whatever these sentences mean, we are given no reasons for believing that, if indeed Miki was concerned with saving capitalism, the strategy he proposed for doing so was fascistic—or that he advocated anything like a linking of fascism and imperialism.

Harootunian goes on to generate a great deal of heat around Miki’s concern with the “people” (*minzoku*), which he makes sound sinister by translating the term consistently, and misleadingly, as “folk.” Why render a word that means “people” or “nation” by the bizarre term (in this

9. The text is rife with syntactically challenged sentences and orthographic oddities. The reader will be especially baffled by the discussion of Miki’s “theory of action through ‘poises’” (a misprint for “poses?”), until much later when the word appears italicized and is associated with the Greek *technē*—which confirms that Miki (if not Harootunian) is talking about *poiēsis* (360, 387). Numerous similar errors marring the text suggest that in the case of this book Princeton University Press simply dispensed with the tedious work of copy-editing. And the fact that Harootunian’s frequent discussions of Heidegger nonsensically conflate his fundamental distinctions between Being and beings (*Sein und Seiendes*: what Heidegger calls ‘the ontological difference’), and between Being and Dasein, suggests that the manuscript failed to undergo any kind of review for content either.

context, at least) “folk”? An associate of Harootunian’s, Leslie Pincus, has given the answer in the context of another Kyoto School thinker:

Kuki drew, no doubt, on the semantic resources of the German *Volk*—“folk” in English—and as a translation, “folk” would have the advantage of invoking the German fascist politics associated with the term. (PINCUS 1996, 55)

This misleading translation will serve the purpose, then, of linking Kuki, and now Miki, to fascism in Germany. But Harootunian himself has to admit, in discussing Miki’s ideas about the Japanese people: “This kind of folkism, observed in Japan and throughout East Asia, differed from the volkisch ideology of national socialism and was not necessarily incompatible with ‘globalism’” (395). Not at all incompatible—and in fact it’s central to the political philosophy of the Kyoto School during the 1930s that nationalism and what they call “Japanism” are completely compatible with internationalism (treated in PARKES 2008, 172–5). Harootunian’s emphasis on the “folk” in Miki serves to bend his thought in the direction of National Socialism, so as to facilitate the underhand application of the “fascism” label.

Underhand because Harootunian presents not a shred of evidence for the claim that Mike espoused any kind of fascism, but simply piles on the solemn asseverations.

In Miki’s reasoning, the idea of social order that the present required was one that “had to transcend modern *gesellschaft* to conform to a new *gemeinschaft*” (14:263). This new *gemeinschaft* was to be seen not as a throwback to a primitive or feudal community (here, his fascism was both modern and rational), but rather as one that now was capable of sublating (*shiyō*) modern society within itself. (397)

After more than thirty pages of innuendo, it suffices simply to insert a parenthetical remark about the nature of Miki’s putative fascism and the case is made. But granted that Miki advocated a new *Gemeinschaft*, we would need to be told what features of this new community make it fascistic. Instead, Harootunian merely raises the spectre of “the organicity implied by Miki’s conception of fashioning a community”: a bizarre idea, since something that is growing organically can hardly be fashioned—

but in any case no text of Miki's discussing organicity is cited as evidence. Perhaps we are supposed to be stunned by this utterly unsupported non sequitur: "In Miki, this organicism led to political totalitarianism since techné and physis shared a common origin" (HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 398) But because organicism doesn't necessarily entail fascism, we need to hear which features of Miki's organicism made the good Marxist go so totalitarian.

Although the climax of Harootunian's discussion begins hesitantly with yet another admission of Miki's distaste for fascism (almost as if made for television, with fair and balanced presentations), it soon turns unequivocally assertive:

He often sought to distance himself from historic fascisms ... even as his analysis of Japan's modernity and his defence of imperialism led him to imagine an order that was just as fascistic, inasmuch as it sought to salvage capitalism and the folk which had been estranged from it in its original form as an organic community. A "modern gemeinschaft" propelled by technological rationality and an organicist folk cooperativeness was simply another name for fascist political totalism. (98–9)

As if to set a seal of validity on this preposterous claim, the next phrase reads (as the title of the chapter's last section) "Folkism and the Specter of Fascism"—though there is no further discussion of Miki or his work.

We might call Harootunian's method here "the Don Basilio approach," after the character in Rossini's *Barber of Seville* who sings famously of the insidious power of "*la calunnia*" (slander).¹⁰ Slander should be initiated as "a tiny breeze, a gentle little zephyr, which insensibly, subtly, gently, sweetly begins to whisper," becoming "crescendo, gathering force little by little" until, growing like "the thunder of the storm rumbling in the depths of the forest," it finally "explodes with a crack and crash, like a cannon or an earthquake," *fortissimo*: — *il fascismo!*

Over forty pages of text the problem is that Harootunian provides no evidence to support the bizarre conclusion that Miki's philosophy turned fascist. To the minimal extent that there's an argument, it's a

10. "La calunnia è un venticello" (Slander is a tiny breeze), in Gioachino Rossini, *The Barber of Seville*, Act One, aria no. 6.

travesty of the deconstructive method: Because Miki distanced himself from Heidegger's association with Nazism, he was deeply implicated in it; even though he seemed to remain true to Marxism and was repelled by European fascism, he actually supported the Japanese fascists; in short, because nothing overtly fascist is to be found in Miki's political ideas, he was in fact advocating "fascist political totalism."

In the light of such a travesty of scholarly argument what is puzzling—and revelatory about the contemporary state of Japanese studies in the United States—is the admiration that *Overcome by Modernity* appears to have generated on the part of some major figures in the field.¹¹ Has ideology so permeated historical scholarship that reasoned argument on the basis of textual evidence has become *passé*? When the application of the "fascist" label to thinkers one dislikes has been shown to be unfounded, is it praiseworthy simply to ignore this awkward circumstance and go on doing the same thing at greater length?

A version of the Don Basilio strategy, shorter and *mezzo-piano*, is to be found in Goto-Jones's treatment of Miki in *Political Philosophy in Japan*. Here we learn at first that Miki is among those associates of Nishida who "disfigured themselves" (scare quotes in the original) "by explicitly placing solidarity before criticism, becoming 'professional' or 'bureaucratic' intellectuals" (GOTO-JONES 2005, 98). We are told that Miki became "a central ideologue of Prince Konoe's New Order Movement," though we hear nothing about the kind of ideology he promoted there. A few pages later Goto-Jones plays the Heidegger card: "In the late 1930s/early 1940s, Miki executed an about face, a "turn" toward endorsement of the state paralleled by Heidegger's coincident "turn" in Germany" (GOTO-JONES 2005, 104-05). If the second "turn" here refers to Heidegger's famous (and perhaps never accomplished) *Kebrre*, it isn't toward endorsement of the state but toward the thinking of Being; if it refers to his earlier flirtation with National Socialism, it disregards the fact that Miki became highly critical of Heidegger as a result of that turn of events

11. See the endorsements and excerpts from reviews on the Princeton University Press website: <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/6954.html>. On the contrast between the current state of Japanese studies in the U.S. and in Europe, see WILLIAMS 2004, 46-9.

in 1933 (MIKI 1933). But now that the mention of Heidegger has presumably triggered the idea of “fascism” in the minds of the cognoscenti, there comes, on the next page, the crescendo:

Miki argued [in an essay titled “Principles of New Japanese Thought”] that Japan’s unique ability to unite Asia rested on its history of assimilating foreign (Chinese) culture, giving it the understanding to instigate a *kyōdōtai* (cooperative body) in East Asia. Japan’s assimilation of Western technology gave it the power necessary to expel the West from China, which was crucial before a peaceful *kyōdōtai* could be established on the principles of cooperativism (*kyōdōshugi*), which he envisioned as an Asian alternative to socialism and liberalism. (GOTO-JONES 2005, 106)

So far, so good. Japan had certainly assimilated foreign cultures more comprehensively than any other nation in East Asia, which might well justify a leadership role. And it was certainly the only nation in the region with sufficient military strength to stand a chance of ousting the Western powers from China: a laudable enough aim—except for diehard imperialists who think the Western powers had some legitimate business in occupying the Central Kingdom. But then, after adding that “much of Miki’s language appeared in Prime Minister Konoe’s proclamation of the new world order in East Asia” (though without saying exactly what language or specifying its political tenor), Goto-Jones wraps up the argument with a startling non-sequitur: “With Miki, a strand of the Kyoto School is securely woven into fascist thread.” Now that this has been established, he is free to drop a remark, in a later footnote, about “Miki’s fascist standpoint” (GOTO-JONES 2005, 168, n. 4). But as with Harootian the “fascist” label is applied on the basis of nothing in the way of evidence, but simply on the claims that Miki had “disfigured himself” as an intellectual, made a Heidegger-like “turn” toward endorsement of the state, and promoted an Asian alternative to socialism and liberalism. But in Asia, as elsewhere, there are ways for intellectuals to disfigure themselves, to endorse the state, and to pose alternatives to socialism and liberalism that have nothing whatever to do with fascism.

It is unlikely that Goto-Jones deliberately set out to condemn Miki as a fascist thinker, insofar as the latter is a peripheral figure in *Political Phi-*

losophy in Japan who stands in “Nishida’s shadow” as a Kyoto “Rebel.” But the insouciance with which Goto-Jones applies the fascist label to Miki (by contrast with his careful and measured exposition of Nishida’s political philosophy) suggests that the Harootunian ideology is taking hold in the European academy too.

IV

The glad tidings were apparently brought to the shores of Albion a couple of years earlier, by Stella Sandford’s article “Going Back: Heidegger, East Asia and “the West,”” which was published in *Radical Philosophy* in 2003. The opening paragraph begins by invoking Heidegger’s influence on Miki, Nishitani, Tanabe, and Kuki.¹² But when Sandford goes on to claim that Miki was the only one, and the only Marxist, seriously to criticize Heidegger after 1933, she goes astray. The philosopher Tosaka Jun was a more committed Marxist than Miki, and he criticized Heidegger often.¹³ More important, Miki was not alone in criticizing Heidegger for the infamous Rectoral Address. In September of 1933 (shortly before Miki’s criticisms were published), Tanabe wrote a commentary on “The Self-Assertion of the German University” in which he criticized Heidegger’s “championing of the racial significance of German academia.”¹⁴ But then Sandford closes the paragraph with a topic sentence making this breathtaking assertion: “The most influential reception of Heidegger’s work fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan, as Tanabe’s writings in particular show” (SANDFORD 2003, 11). And where does one learn about this philosophical justification of fascism in Japan? The endnote cites two sources: for Miki, it’s the chapter in Harootunian’s *Overcome by Modernity* just discussed and

12. SANDFORD 2003, 11, drawing (with acknowledgment) from the work of PARKES.

13. Sadly little of Tosaka’s work has been translated into English, but see the selections in DILWORTH and VIGLIELMO 1998, 330–71.

14. PARKES 1996, 109, note 13. In the meantime, an English translation of Tanabe’s essay has appeared in WILLIAMS 2004, 181–7. See also Williams’s account of Tanabe’s essay, 114–16.

found less than reliable, and for Tanabe an essay by Naoki Sakai titled “Ethnicity and Species” (SANDFORD 2003, 20, n. 3, citing SAKAI 1999 and HAROOTUNIAN 2000, 358–414).

The impression that the philosophical justification of fascism is going to be a major theme in Sandford’s essay is reinforced in the last paragraph of her introduction, where we read that the comparative literature on Heidegger is misleading insofar as it “facilitates the repression of the history of Heideggerian fascism in modern East-Asian, and particularly Japanese, thought.” Her fantasy is farther-reaching than Harootunian’s: Heidegger’s pernicious influence has now apparently spread to fascists in China and Korea as well. Readers keen to learn the identities of these East-Asian fascists who were influenced by Heidegger are disappointed, since no sources are cited for this expansionist claim. Then, strangely, what appeared to be a key topic—the way “Heidegger’s work fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan”—simply disappears from the essay until one page before the end, where Sandford again deplores a supposed “silence on the fascist reception of Heidegger in Japan” (SANDFORD 2003, 19). That this framing assertion of a Heideggerian fascism in Japan should enclose nothing in the way of justification, or even discussion, shows just how powerful the invocation of Harootunian is expected to be. But non-believers will want to be pointed to the specific Kyoto School texts that go beyond nationalism, patriotism, and militarism as far as “philosophical justifications of fascism”—and to the respects in which these show the influence of Heidegger.

It’s strange that Sandford should cite Sakai’s essay on Tanabe as a justification for her claim that Heidegger’s work fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan, since nowhere in that essay is there any discussion of fascism *or* Heidegger.¹⁵ But in case Sakai does address these topics but indirectly, between the lines as it were, we should examine the argument of “Ethnicity and Species,” since it might turn out to be an indictment of Tanabe’s Heideggerian fascism after all. The essay is a critical exposition of such ideas as ethnicity and subjectivity as articulated

15. The exception is that at one point in his exposition Sakai resorts to the Heideggerian terms *Geworfenheit* and *Entwurf*, and in an endnote he mentions Tanabe’s criticizing Heidegger for failing “to recognize the spatiality of social practice” (SAKAI 1999, 39 and n. 24).

in a series of essays that Tanabe published during the period from 1932 to 1946, and which were eventually collected under the title *Logic of Species*. Sakai also criticizes an infamous lecture Tanabe delivered at Kyoto Imperial University in 1943, “Death and Life,” and for which he later expressed profound regret. He sums up the main thrust of the lecture:

Having anticipatorily put oneself on the side of death, and thereby secured one’s loyalty to the country, one could in fact transform or even rebel against the existing state under the guidance of the universal idea. (SAKAI 1999, 35)

Sakai adds that Tanabe was somewhat naïve in failing to see that his argument “could easily be distorted or appropriated to serve unintended political interests.” Fair enough—but it’s hard to imagine the leaders of a fascist state agreeing that their subjects might be justified in “rebell[ing] against the government at any time.”

A similar idea is prominent in the *Logic of Species*, where it’s clear that “the nation-state is primarily and essentially something to which the individual *chooses* to belong,” and where this belonging must be “mediated” by the individual’s “*freedom*” (SAKAI 1999, 35). For Tanabe the individual only truly belongs to the nation-state when it tries, as Sakai puts it, to “negate and change it,” when it “distances itself” from it, “actively transforming it, according to the dictates of universal humanity” (39–40). Or, in Tanabe’s own words:

Membership in the state should not demand that the individual sacrifice all its freedom and autonomy for the sake of the unity of the species [in Tanabe’s sense of the nation-state]. On the contrary, the proposition would not make sense unless the state appropriates into itself individual freedom as its essential moment.¹⁶

Sakai then draws the conclusion: “Therefore the view which equates the nation-state with one ethnic community cannot be accepted at all’—whence Tanabe’s promotion of the “multi-ethnic state” of Sakai’s subtitle. Again these are hardly ideas that would have delighted the fascists in Japan, or in Europe for that matter, so it remains a mystery why Sand-

16. Tanabe, ‘The Logic of Social Ontology’, cited in SAKAI 1999, 41.

ford should think that “Tanabe’s writing in particular show” that the reception of Heidegger’s work “fed into the philosophical justification of fascism in Japan.”

While Sandford elsewhere in her article makes a valid criticism or two of some of the “comparative literature” on Heidegger, her complaints that commentators (and especially Parkes) have naively overlooked Heidegger’s eurocentrism, nationalism, and association with Nazism, and so have been silent about “the fascist reception of Heidegger in Japan,” are groundless (SANDFORD 2003, 17–19). It is true that Parkes has been silent concerning the fascist reception of Heidegger in Japan, but this is because the existence of such a phenomenon has never been demonstrated.¹⁷ But on the topics of Heidegger’s nationalism and his putative connection with Japanese fascism he had published two articles in places where anyone doing research on the comparative literature on Heidegger would easily have found them.¹⁸ So why does Sandford, whose research seems to have been thorough in other respects, fail to take these into account? Either she ignores them because they undermine her main thesis, or else her infatuation with Harootunian’s work has blinded her to the existence of anything that contradicts it. In any case her essay is evidence that Harootunian’s strategy of relentless assertion of his ideological position—combined with complete silence in response to criticism and adamant refusal to engage in dialogue with dissenters—is working quite well on the other side of the Atlantic.

In the culture of academic journal publishing, if a journal has published an article whose author has failed to get the facts right in criticizing other authors in the field, and one of those authors sends in a cogent response pointing out what was missed and misunderstood, it’s customary to publish it on the grounds that errors of fact need to be corrected—especially since one can always let the first author reply and have

17. For discussions of the receptions of Heidegger’s philosophy in Japan, see PARKES 1987, 9–11, and 1996, 80–1.

18. Six years before “The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School” there was “Between Nationalism and Nomadism: Wondering about the Languages of Philosophy,” in DEUTSCH 1991, 455–67, where I criticize Heidegger’s nationalism and compare unfavorably his obsessive attachment to a particular plot of soil with Nietzsche’s nomadic and cosmopolitan commitment to “stay true to the earth.”

the last word in print. In the present case Parkes contacted the editor of *Radical Philosophy* to ask whether the journal would entertain a response to Sandford's article, and received the answer yes. He duly submitted a long and detailed rebuttal with the title "Heidegger and Japanese Fascism: An Unsubstantiated Connection." This piece outlined what was valid in Sandford's criticisms, and then examined the grounds for her most provocative claim—that there's "a history of Heideggerian fascism in modern East-Asian, and particularly Japanese, thought"—which in turn necessitated a discussion of her sources in Sakai and Harootunian (as in sections 3 and 4, above). The conclusion was that those grounds are flimsy to the point of being non-existent. The subsequent story is worth recounting since it reveals much about the politics of a certain area of academia and academic publishing in the U.K., and also demonstrates that the politics of the Kyoto School thinkers in the 1930s and 1940s continue to be entwined with the politics of the contemporary Anglophone academy.

V

The reply from the editor of *Radical Philosophy* was polite enough: "I'm sorry to say that we won't be able to offer to publish this."¹⁹ The reasons are given in three short paragraphs, reproduced here in italics, with each one followed by some remarks demonstrating the absurdity of the reasoning.

While of obvious interest, the bulk of the article is an attack on Harry Harootunian and other "neo-Marxists" in US Japanese Studies, worked through a critical response to Sandford's 2003 essay. As such, the few points at the beginning in relation to Sandford's piece function as an introduction to a somewhat personalized attack on Left readings of Japanese Heideggerianism in the 1930s.

It's hard not to hear the voice of Stella Sandford herself here, in this talk of "Japanese Heideggerianism in the 1930s." *Radical Philosophy* distin-

19. Mark Neocleous, email communication, 27 May 2008.

guishes itself from other academic journals in the field by relying on an in-house “Editorial Collective” rather than sending submissions out for external review. Since Sandford is a member of the Editorial Collective, most people would see a conflict of interest here—especially since she is the only member to profess even an inkling of acquaintance with Japanese philosophy.

It’s at any rate clear that whoever read the essay merely skimmed it, as evidenced by the skewed representation of its content. Rather than a “few points at the beginning” the response to Sandford constituted just over half of the article, and the criticisms of Harootunian were not “the bulk” but less than half. Other “neo-Marxists” or “Left readings” are mentioned in only three of the essay’s sixty-four paragraphs. This already makes clear how one’s prejudices about a text inform and can *deform* one’s apprehension of it.

More problematic is the “somewhat personalized attack”—by contrast, presumably, with impersonal criticism. But if *Radical Philosophy* is comfortable with publishing Harootunian criticizing Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Robert Paxton (HAROOTUNIAN 2006, 23–33), and Sandford criticizing Heidegger and Parkes *et al.*, how can they reasonably brand Parkes’s critical responses to Harootunian and Sandford personal attacks and therefore unpublishable? But in the interests of keeping the main arguments clear, I cut out anything that could be construed as personal and said that if they could point out anything else that bordered as a personalized attack, I’d be happy to get rid of that too.

The impression that no one had bothered read the article with any care is reinforced by the second set of reasons for rejecting it:

The Editorial Collective remains unconvinced both by the attempt to read Heidegger as a means of developing intercultural dialogue and by the suggestion that the history of Heideggerian fascism in East Asia is as “nonexistent” as the question of fascism in Heidegger’s texts prior to the Rector address. ...

The initial comment is astounding—since my essay made no attempt whatsoever to read Heidegger as a means of developing “intercultural dialogue” and doesn’t even mention the term. So the Editorial Collective is rejecting my article because it’s unconvinced by a reading of Heide-

gger that the article doesn't attempt to make! This egregious misreading is presumably based on a single sentence *in parentheses* which mentions that some of the secondary literature in German "evaluates Heidegger's contributions to cross-cultural dialogue"—a topic that is touched on for the first time there and never mentioned again. So a 20-word sentence in parentheses stimulates a reading of the essay that ignores the other 7,480 words, through carelessness and a projection onto the text of some fantasy of what it might contain.

As for the problem caused by the question of "fascism in Heidegger's texts prior to the Rector address": I had made the mistake of mentioning in passing that I was personally "unconvinced by any of the arguments for the existence of fascist ideas in Heidegger's pre-1933 writings," but I immediately corrected it by dropping the issue of Heidegger's fascism entirely. With that issue left aside, the argument was now simply this: that, "whatever Heidegger's relation to fascism, not a shred of evidence has been provided for the existence of a "Heideggerian fascism" in Japan." The Editorial Collective was invited to cite any reliable source (one that gives evidence rather than mere asseveration) that shows otherwise.

But the most striking thing here is the utter spuriousness of the demand for proof of the nonexistence of Heideggerian fascism in East Asia. How does one prove the nonexistence of such a thing? Well, one could cite any text published in East Asia after 1935 that doesn't mention Heideggerian fascist ideas, of which there must be millions. Which East-Asian fascists does the Editorial Collective have in mind? And which fascist ideas of Heidegger's influenced them? It's surely up to the Editorial Collective to produce the texts from (in this case) Miki Kiyoshi, and/or the arguments from Harootunian, that validate the claim that Miki was a fascist. And if there isn't a proven history of Heideggerian fascism in Japan (let alone in East Asia as a whole), Sandford's claim that the comparative literature on Heidegger ignores it is nugatory.

And the last objection:

Likewise, there are some other, related, political misrepresentations. For example, the article fails to mention that the "multi-ethnic state" promoted by Tanabe was the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, otherwise known as Japan's colonial empire.

The article had indeed failed to mention that, and I duly rectified the omission, though not without emphasizing that the Co-Prosperity Sphere was never treated by the Kyoto School thinkers as a means to expand the Japanese empire, insofar as they consistently warned *against* the danger that Japan might end up simply emulating the aggressive imperialism of the Western powers.²⁰ Since no other “political misrepresentations” were specified, I wrote that, if they would tell me what the others were, I would be happy to excise or rectify them.

There were some grounds for supposing, initially at least, that *Radical Philosophy* might be interested in promoting reasoned debate about the vexed topic of Heidegger and Japanese fascism. Among them the statement of principle on its website, which reads:

Radical Philosophy is not committed to any particular philosophy, ideology or political programme. The purpose of the journal is to provide a forum for debate and discussion of theoretical issues on the left.

I sent in a revision of my paper which corrected the above-mentioned shortcomings they had pointed out, along with a 2000-word response showing the absurdity of the other reasons for rejection, and offering to revise again if any relevant facts or arguments were to be advanced by the Editorial Collective. I recommended, if there was any doubt, that it be sent for review to someone like Naoki Sakai, who could be counted on to read it critically. I emphasized the desirability—especially on this side of the Atlantic, where the issues seem less well understood—of initiating a dialogue between the parties in disagreement by publishing my essay, with all errors duly rectified. I concluded with a point of protocol in the publishing of scholarly journals: “Sandford’s essay gives the impression that Parkes, as a (perhaps the) primary representative of the comparative literature on Heidegger, is politically a simpleton. Since it’s a matter of her having failed to read or cite the relevant texts, isn’t the EC obliged to publish a response from me that sets things right?”

It was no surprise that in the final rejection from *Radical Philosophy* the editor declined to respond to any of the arguments I had made, but simply complained that the piece hadn’t been changed enough, remain-

20. See notes 3 and 4, above.

ing “a criticism of Sandford which is then used to launch an attack on Harootunian.” So when it’s a matter of criticism of their Editorial Collective or its friends, the journal is completely uninterested in “providing a forum for debate and discussion.” Indeed, for a publication with *Philosophy* in its name, the adamant refusal to give a decent reading to opposing views, or respond to reasoned argument, or engage in discussion of what constitutes the facts of the matter, is ludicrous. Nor is *Radical Philosophy* “not committed to any particular philosophy, ideology or political programme”: instead it employs neo-Marxist ideology to block any incursion of the politically incorrect or factually inconvenient. The refusal to publish a response that corrects errors of fact that undermine the argument of an article previously published in the journal is tantamount to censorship.

What we have here is a continuation of the Harootunian strategy of silencing the opposition by pretending it doesn’t exist, and so far it seems to be catching on in the U.K. The reasons for being concerned about this still hold: prospective students of the Kyoto School thinkers continue to be put off studying them by reading that they are fascist ideologues, just as Heidegger’s involvement with the Nazis justifies not bothering to read his works. The political philosophies of these thinkers continue to be relevant today, even if they contain features that we find disconcerting or distasteful. These things need to be discussed—especially since fascism is still with us, in pockets of virulence all over the world. It helps to acknowledge the ideas and conditions motivating fascist activity and to correctly identify their sources. It’s a distraction to discover fascist ideas that aren’t fascistic, and time instead to devote our energies to the central tasks.

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