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## Nishitani's Nietzsche: Will to Power and the Moment

Abstract: This paper reviews the current literature on the relationship of the Kyoto School philosopher Keiji Nishitani to Nietzsche's writings. In particular, I respond to Bret Davis' treatment of the relationship between the two thinkers in his 2011 article: 'Nishitani After Nietzsche: From the Death of God to the Great Death of the Will.'<sup>1</sup> Through recourse to Nishitani's treatment of Nietzsche in *The Self Overcoming of Nihilism* as well as his later work *Religion and Nothingness*,<sup>2</sup> I dispute the claim that Nishitani's eventual dissatisfaction with Nietzsche's philosophy is based on a negative assessment of will to power. I then go on to show that it is primarily on the issue of *time* more than that of will that Nishitani ultimately takes issue with Nietzsche's mature philosophical standpoint. Finally, I outline a possible response to Nishitani's criticisms from the perspective of Nietzsche's thought.

1. Bret Davis, "Nishitani After Nietzsche: From the Death of God to the Great Death of the Will." In *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School*, ed. Jason M. Wirth, Bret W. Davis, and Brian Schroeder (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 82-101.

2. Keiji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans. Graham Parkes and Setsuko Aihara (New York: Suny Press, 1990) & *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

## Nishitani's Nietzsche: Will to Power and the Moment

Nietzsche's 'death of God' refers to a moment of profound upheaval within European culture. The death of God represents not only the demise of the Christian deity, but along with it the destruction of all absolute conceptions of reality, truth and the good: those metaphysical values that have sustained philosophy in the West since Plato. This destabilising event provides the focal point for Keiji Nishitani's cross-cultural examination of the problem of nihilism in the context of his critical engagement with Nietzsche's writings.

Bret Davis, in his landmark study 'Zen After Zarathustra: The Problem of the Will in the Confrontation Between Nietzsche and Buddhism,'<sup>1</sup> maps out the intricate relationship between Nietzsche's thought and Buddhist philosophy. He undertakes this examination with reference to Nietzsche's arguably ill-informed critique of Buddhism. Davis then offers an overview of the converse perspective on this dialogue, by examining the Buddhist critique of the will as a means to the overcoming of nihilism and by considering how this stands in critical relation to Nietzsche's philosophy of will to power. The present paper will consider Davis' subsequent discussion of the same issue in 'Nishitani after Nietzsche: From the Death of God to the Great Death of the Will.'<sup>2</sup> The decision to focus on the later paper is informed by its particular emphasis on the relationship between Nishitani and Nietzsche, offering a more appropriate foundation for close textual analysis of Nishitani's reading of Nietzsche.<sup>3</sup>

Davis' paper begins with a discussion of Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God and its significance for the possibility of dialogue between Eastern and Western thought. Much Western philosophy after Nietzsche can be characterized by a self-critical attitude, which is itself a reaction to the 'crisis' represented by the death of God: the crisis of nihilism or the undermining of all values hitherto known. As Davis asserts, the crisis of Western value-metaphysics entails not only the destabilization of the long-established foundations of Western thinking but also the emergence of a new possibility of dialogue with non-Western thought. The newfound intellectual humility arising from this moment permits Western philosophy to open itself up to dialogue with traditions of thought that had previously been characterized only in terms of their

irreducible difference, and only in negative contrast to the presumed superiority of their Western alternatives. Davis recalls Heidegger's various references to the future possibility of 'planetary' thinking and the inevitability of an 'eventual dialogue with the East Asian world.'<sup>4</sup> It is in this context that the work of the Kyoto School thinkers, including Keiji Nishitani, gains its distinctive status as one of the first significant attempts to engage in cross-cultural philosophy from a perspective 'united beyond differences of east and west'.<sup>5</sup>

Nishitani was an avid reader of Nietzsche throughout his life, and his regard for the significance of Nietzsche's contribution is vividly manifested in his writings. Davis interprets Nishitani's attitude towards Nietzsche as sympathetic, but ultimately critical and, according to Davis, it is on the issue of the will and its role in the overcoming of nihilism that Nishitani sees himself (and the Zen tradition more generally) as parting ways with Nietzsche.

It cannot be denied that Nishitani does express certain misgivings concerning Nietzsche's thought. Whereas his earlier treatment of Nietzsche in *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* is almost entirely positive, his doubts begin to coalesce in his later work *Religion and Nothingness*. It seems likely that Nishitani's contact with Heidegger during the first cycle of the latter's lectures on Nietzsche significantly influenced Nishitani's own approach to Nietzsche. Davis touches on the central difference between Heidegger's and Nishitani's interpretations by pointing out that, through his focus on the notion of *amor fati*, Nishitani is able to give 'a more nuanced and sympathetic interpretation of the depth and reach of Nietzsche's thought.'<sup>6</sup> But despite this acknowledgement, and the sensitivity of his treatment of Nietzsche, Davis' interpretation nevertheless seems to assume that Nishitani's treatment of Nietzsche on the will is continuous with Heidegger's insofar as it is the idea of will to power, as Nietzsche's essential thought, that renders him unable to extricate himself from the dynamic of nihilism.<sup>7</sup> The question then remains as to whether Nishitani is really as Heideggerian in his criticism of Nietzsche as Davis implies.

I do not want to suggest that Nishitani did not eventually see Nietzsche's thought as divergent from his own. However, my misgivings with Davis' account of the divide between the two thinkers stem from his emphasis on Nishitani's criticism of Nietzsche's understanding of the will. In the following sections I consider Davis' account of the subtleties of Nishitani's reception of Nietzsche—particularly the purported tension between Nishitani's standpoint of absolute emptiness and

Nietzsche's philosophy of will to power. By drawing on Nishitani's earlier treatment of will to power in *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* as well as his later work *Religion and Nothingness*, I aim to illustrate how Nietzsche's idea is better received by Nishitani than Davis' interpretation suggests. I then go on to show that, while the issue of will remains a pivotal one, it is on the subject of time that Nishitani ultimately takes issue with Nietzsche's mature philosophical standpoint.<sup>8</sup>

### Nietzsche's Nihilism and the 'Will Critique'

According to Nietzsche, nihilism does not begin in modernity but is already tacitly present throughout the history of the Christian tradition. One could go so far as to say that, for Nietzsche, nihilism is the defining value implication of Christian metaphysics, in which nihilism is expressed—either implicitly or explicitly—through the denial of the value of life and of the immediate world. The Christian metaphysical worldview presupposes transcendent, world-renouncing values in place of values by which one might affirm life in this world. It places all power and value in the world beyond, through the assertion of the omnipotence of the will of God above, over and outside of the immediate world. As Nietzsche succinctly puts it in *Ecce Homo*:

The concept 'hereafter', 'true world' invented in order to devalue the only world there is—so as to leave no goal, no reason, no task for our earthly reality! ('Destiny', 8)<sup>9</sup>

In its preferring to will toward this 'true world' (a fabricated nothingness) than not to will at all, Christianity denies the natural reality of will to power whilst covertly reasserting its own will to power in sublimated form.

In the next stage of the history of nihilism, modern nihilism reveals the sublimated will of religion in its turn to atheism. Yet by failing to replace God with a suitable metaphysical alternative, the modern will forgets to will even nothingness, and thereby the radical danger of a life that can no longer posit metaphysical value for itself comes to the fore. In this modern pessimistic nihilism, which neglects to take up an active and affirmative evaluation of life, will to power appears in its weakest and sickliest form.

Nietzsche's mature philosophy may be interpreted as an attempt to resolve this problem through the idea of will to power, conceived as the fundamental principle of life and even the world itself, whereby the world can be understood in its intelligible

aspect as “will to power” and nothing else’ (*BGE* 36).<sup>10</sup> For Nietzsche, by relocating (or rediscovering) our foundational constitution in will to power, we thereby uncover the world-affirming creative impulses that have been operating covertly for millennia. He thereby hopes to open up the possibility of creating new values in a world beyond the nihilistic values of Judeo-Christian metaphysics. In his boldest estimations, the idea of will to power as a new means of evaluation is intended to herald the true overcoming of nihilism through the possibility of value-creation in a world *beyond good and evil*.

But according to Davis, by focusing on the idea of will to power Nietzsche endorses a reactive affirmation of the will of the subject. This subjectivized interpretation of existence is personified in Nietzsche’s figure of the *Übermensch*, who aggressively asserts his will in the formation of new evaluations. Nietzsche thus embraces ‘an active nihilism that would prepare for the overman as a figure of maximal will to power’.<sup>11</sup> The problem however, Davis argues, in line with Heidegger’s Nietzsche critique, is that this assertion is only a further entanglement in the logic of nihilism. By reifying the subject-perspective, and through the reactive formulation of wilfulness in the idea of will to power, Nietzsche unwittingly becomes the ultimate propagator of nihilism. Nietzsche’s answer to the problem of the will in nihilism is simply to relocate what was once the will of God to the perspective of the will of the human being. The idea of will to power is therefore conceived merely as the positing of human will over the world, and as humanity’s misguided attempt to establish its position at the centre of existence through the reification of will to power itself. According to this line of reasoning, Nietzsche fails to come to terms with the essence of the problem that nihilism presents us with, which, once again framed from a Heideggerian perspective, is understood to be constituted precisely by the striving of the will itself. To put this in Buddhist terms, the problem of nihilism is equated with the problem of karmic existence.

By having misconstrued the elemental source of nihilism, that is, the will itself, Nietzsche fails to achieve a perspective of radical non-willing akin to that of Heidegger or Nishitani’s Zen-inspired philosophy. Nietzsche’s vision of reality therefore affirms a continued attachment to the infinite striving to expand the ego that is understood to be the very source of nihilism. On this basis, Davis concludes that ‘in the end, Nietzsche’s reaffirmation is found to remain limited insofar as residues of heteronomy as well as of egocentricity inevitably remain in a philosophy of will to

power.<sup>12</sup>

However, as Graham Parkes has previously stated, there is a strong case for disputing Davis' assertion that Nietzsche's idea of will to power is subject- or ego-centred.<sup>13</sup> Parkes points to the importance of distinguishing between the 'small-self' or ego-hypothesis on the one hand (which Nietzsche criticizes as a mere construction), and the superseding idea of the 'great-self' on the other. He thereby situates Nietzsche more closely to the non-anthropocentric conception of subjectivity found in Zen Buddhism (and indeed in Nishitani's own philosophy). On this basis, Parkes suggests that the criticisms of Nietzsche's will to power offered by both Davis and Nishitani result from a lack of attention to the overcoming of the ego-perspective as it appears in Nietzsche's writings.<sup>14</sup>

In order to justify my further defence of Nietzsche against Davis' will-critique I now take a rather different direction by referring back to Nishitani's treatment of Nietzsche in *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*.

Nishitani's earlier reading expressly denies the claim that Nietzsche's will to power is a wilful reaction against nihilism. Instead, Nishitani focuses on the idea that will to power, in Nietzsche's most refined formulation, constitutes precisely the position beyond 'the very duality of will and will-lessness' that Davis denies him.<sup>15</sup> This is clearly evident in the text itself:

Thus the world of eternal recurrence is a phenomenon of will. As Nietzsche says in the final lines of *The Will to Power*: "This world is will to power and nothing besides! And you also are this will to power – and nothing besides!" [WP 1067]. At this point not only knowledge as such but even the concept of will itself becomes useless, insofar as will is nothing more than a striving against things that resist it. But in the standpoint of the eternal recurrence both the resistances and the striving against them have been overcome. As Nietzsche says, the world is "divine play" (göttliches Spiel). This does not mean that whatever resists or expends effort simply disappears; if it did, there would be no "play." It is rather a standpoint where resistance is resistance and yet becomes non-resistance, where striving is striving and yet becomes not-striving.<sup>16</sup>

Nishitani further underscores this point by referring to Nietzsche's own idea of 'the elimination of will' as a requisite for the true consummation of fatalism (or nihilism)—that is, for its self-overcoming. He quotes from Nietzsche's posthumously published note to that effect:

My consummation of fatalism:

1. Through eternal recurrence and pre-existence

2. Through the elimination of the concept of will<sup>17</sup>  
(Nietzsche, *KGW*, VII, 2:25, 214, 66)

In Nishitani's reading, Nietzsche's 'elimination of the concept of will' must be understood as a transformation of what the word 'will' designates on the cosmic level of life conceived as will to power. Otherwise, this elimination of will, in order to face the abyssal thought of thoroughgoing fatality, would become a denial of will to power rather than its ultimate formulation.

The point, for Nishitani, is that the 'bird's-eye view' from which the self comes to encompass all that is not the self through *amor fati*—learning to love the self as a piece of fate—transcends the understanding of will as a striving against opposing forces (*WP* 1004). At its furthest reaches, the soul becomes the summation of these opposing forces, taking on the perspective of will to power or of the world itself. But as Nishitani rightly notes, from this most extreme perspective 'even the concept of will itself becomes useless, insofar as will is nothing more than a striving against things which resist it'.<sup>18</sup> Therefore the will of all that is, considered as a totality, as will to power, is not a will at all. But this is not to eliminate the infinite differentiation of the will to power and the manifold resistances of which it is entirely composed. Rather, the perspective of the whole does not negate multiplicity, but is in fact constituted by it. This explains Nishitani's employment of the Zen logic of contradictory identity here in order to describe Nietzsche's ultimate intentions for the concept of will where 'striving is striving and yet becomes not striving' and 'will in the ordinary sense is overcome'.<sup>19</sup>

The formulation of the world as will to power as an explicit middle way between will and will-lessness suggests that, through the perspective of *amor fati*, Nietzsche has already achieved a harmony of active and passive voice, of will and will-lessness.

However, Davis' account of Nishitani's reception of Nietzsche would still ring true, if Nishitani came to replace his earlier sympathetic treatment of Nietzsche's will to power with a more critical position in *Religion and Nothingness*. However, there Nishitani's move toward criticism of Nietzsche is not primarily a transition in his understanding of will to power, but instead expresses his misgivings over the way Nietzsche depicts time as never-ending *sameness* in his notion of eternal recurrence—a point which I will return to later.

Nishitani does indeed refer to will to power critically in *Religion and Nothingness*, but the ways in which he addresses it here can appear frustratingly under-elaborated,



if not contradictory. Both Parkes and Davis refer to one of the most detailed discussions of the will to power in the text, where Nishitani writes:

Insofar as what is here at issue is a “will,” that is, something conceived of in the third person as an “it,” it has yet to rid itself of the character of a “being.”<sup>20</sup>

In relation to this passage, Davis rightly asserts, contra Parkes, that the problem for Nishitani here is not merely that Nietzsche casts will to power as a ‘being;’ but instead, that will to power is articulated in the third person means that it is conceived heterogeneously and therefore as something fundamentally separate from the self, where ‘it does not lose its connotation of being an *other* for us’.<sup>21</sup> However, Davis’ recognition of this seems incongruous with his subsequent formulation of Nishitani’s criticism of will to power in terms of its excessive emphasis on the subject-perspective. Nishitani’s claim here is that the field of will to power is still conceived too much as a ‘transhistorical’ plane, rather than in its immediate existential significance within the self and within time.<sup>22</sup>

For Nishitani, even in those places where Nietzsche goes so far as to identify the self with the will, he cannot yet make the further and more radical claim that the will is in fact also *only* the self. The problem then for Nishitani is not that the concept of the will to power places too much emphasis on the subject, but rather that it is not subjectivized *enough*. Its implications on the existential level have not been incorporated to the extent that it can be encountered from a position beneath the split between subject and object or, in other words, on the field of emptiness. Until will to power is comprehended from the perspective of that common source of both self and world, it will be conceived in the third person as an “it”: a “being” with substantial independence from our own. Nishitani suggests that this is precisely what marks the fundamental distinction between Nietzsche and Zen:

Although from Nietzsche’s stance, we can say that our self is, in fact, “that,” [will to power] we cannot yet say that “that” in itself is, in fact, our self. In other words although one can speak of a “self that is not a self,” one cannot yet speak of a “self that is not self.”<sup>23</sup>

In response to Nishitani, one might follow Parkes and point to the explicit transition between the negative pole of the negated small-self or ego in Nietzsche and the active pole of a great-self that has negated even that negation.

Further, we might consider Nietzsche’s own suggestion that the commanding influence of will to power exceeds even those who command, who, he claims, must

go so far as to 'risk [life] for the sake of power' (Z II.12). Whereas Davis depicts this thought as a reason to conclude that Nietzsche's will to power resists incorporation, we might well conclude the very opposite insofar as Nietzsche's claim can be taken to suggest that will to power, as the secret of life itself, cannot be understood merely in terms of the self-will of any individual. This is not to say that will to power is fundamentally other than the self, a being that the self stands in relation to, but that it in fact operates at a deeper level of our constitution than any individual instance of its enactment can fully express. The will commands the self, and not vice versa, even if self-willing is that process through which, on occasion, the will to power expresses itself.

During the same discussion of will to power in *Religion and Nothingness*, Nishitani underscores the more pressing criticisms of Nietzsche in the text as a whole. There is, for instance, Nishitani's aforementioned suggestion that will to power is conceived as a being 'on a transhistorical plane,' along with his subsequent account of what a plane of existence fully reverted back into the self would amount to.

If it had been completely so reverted back into the self, we should not find so much as a single strand capable of representation as a "being" left ... Then the original countenance of time would be unveiled in time originating as truly bottomless time; and the original countenance of history would be unveiled in the complete and radical discharging of its historicity.<sup>24</sup>

These later claims are complex ones that are central to the overarching project of *Religion and Nothingness* as a whole. But this summary intimates that it is most fundamentally on the topics of time and history that Nishitani's criticism of Nietzsche comes to rest. At one point Nishitani suggests that it is only insofar as it is formulated in relation to eternal recurrence that the idea of will to power is lacking. He claims:

Insofar as the Will to Power comes down in the final analysis to a world view of Eternal Recurrence, it is my view that the meaning it gives to history as its last and final ground, on the field of ecstatic transcendence, is based only on a negative pole.<sup>25</sup>

Nishitani's criticisms of the eternal recurrence are intricate. But, in simple terms, his problem with Nietzsche's temporal model is that through the idea of sameness in recurrence Nietzsche disallows an account of lived time as the experience of perpetually new moments. The distinction that Nishitani thereby makes, between Nietzsche's understanding of time and his own, is between repetition, which he takes to exclude the possibility of genuine novelty, and an eternal process of differentiation

or what Nishitani calls 'truly bottomless time'.<sup>26</sup>

Along the same lines Nishitani disputes the assumption that the Zen-Buddhist conception of time is cyclical. His point regarding Nietzsche is that the cyclical nature of eternal recurrence indicates a conception of time in which humans cannot escape their karmic existence by coming to fully comprehend the temporal as one and the same as the eternal, in Nishitani's terms, as '*samsāra-sive-nirvāna*'.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, *samsāra-sive-nirvāna* describes the essence of lived-time in its existential actuality, as the incomparable and therefore unrepeatable moment. Nishitani puts it like this:

If the Will to Power [...] only opens up a field of the Eternal Recurrence of the same world-time, then history is ultimately merely restored in such a fashion that it cannot discharge its true historicity.<sup>28</sup>

The subsequent sentence then summarizes Nishitani's main concern here:

So long as the view that something absolutely new is being created in time cannot radically be carried through, history is always deprived of its true meaning.<sup>29</sup>

As if this were not already clear, he repeats the same point once again in later discussion:

I have to repeat what was said before: Nietzsche's standpoint of Eternal Recurrence and the Will to Power was not able to fully realize the meaning of the historicity of historical things.<sup>30</sup>

In this last passage Nishitani elaborates on his previous reference to the problem that the will to power is conceived as separate from the self. The 'historicity of historical things', for Nishitani, is always connected to the immediate existential content of our direct experience within time. His criticism seems to be that in being conceived as an *other*, will to power cannot be the subject of our direct experience of ourselves or our own self-awareness from the perspective of a lived history: one that is understood through the lens of genuine momentariness. That is to say that it cannot be the subject of an experience of a moment that can never recur:

So long as it is regarded as an entity named will, it does not completely lose its connotation of being an other for us and thus cannot become something wherein we can truly become aware of ourselves at our elemental source.<sup>31</sup>

He further states:

Eternal Recurrence does not make time to be truly time. Nietzsche, too, speaks of the "moment" as the twinkling of an eye (Augenblick), but it

is a moment standing against a background of Eternal Recurrence and hence does not possess the bottomlessness of the true moment.<sup>32</sup>

## Nietzsche, Nishitani and the Moment

One of Nishitani's key contributions in *Religion and Nothingness* is his presentation of the benefits of a Zen-inspired focus on the emptiness of the immediate moment as a foundation for understanding time in general and, in fact, the world and ourselves as such. For Nishitani, temporality is equated with genuine and thoroughgoing transience, where what it is to be in time is precisely to be coming to be and always to be already passing away. The true nature of the moment does not reside in its persistence or substance but in its perishing or emptiness. For Nishitani, the Zen thinker Dōgen provides the inspiration for reformulating our understanding of reality on the basis of a moment-focused conception of time. To quote from Dōgen's *Uji*:

Since there is nothing but just this moment, the time-being is all the time there is. Grassbeing, form-being are both time. Each moment is all being, is the entire world. Reflect now whether any being or any world is left out of the present moment.<sup>33</sup>

Nishitani argues—perhaps unfairly—that even Nietzsche's thought is incapable of freeing itself from bondage to a traditional Western conception of time wherein the moment, because of its transient nature, is relegated to the status of something that never attains full reality. He therefore sees the Zen tradition as offering fresh insights into the problem of nihilism, where lived-time—the moment itself—can be understood to be radically empty and at the same time completely real.

Nishitani's further charge against the eternal recurrence is that it represents a mythological as opposed to an actual understanding of the nature of time as lived experience. In opposition to this conception, he presents the understanding of time in Zen with reference to Hakuin's commentaries on the *Heart-Sutra*:

Before all the kalpas [world-times] past and after all the kalpas to come.

A marvellous spiritual light glints with austere chill in the sheath of a hair-splitting blade.

A round gem, shining in dark night, is brought forth on its tray.<sup>34</sup>

Hakuin's comments allude to an understanding of the inner essence of momentariness as a perspective that resists or even transcends the reality of the sublimely large

measures of time as given in the idea of repeating kalpas. Nevertheless, Nishitani insists that this way of understanding time, with reference to the bottomless moment, is closer to the presented reality of moments as we actually experience them.

Nishitani's comment on Hakuin then provides further illumination:

Hakuin's words are enough to give us a glimpse of how radically actual time is in Buddhism and on what standpoint so radically realistic a view of time is able to come about ... it is on the standpoint of sunyata [emptiness] that historicity is able to realize itself radically.<sup>35</sup>

In order to reply to Nishitani's critique of the eternal recurrence it will be necessary to establish a more elaborate account of Nietzsche's idea in relation to Nishitani's understanding of temporality, and to ascertain whether Nishitani's criticism does justice to Nietzsche's formulation. This in turn demands an explanation of what precisely is intended by the idea of sameness in recurrence as Nietzsche understood it, and whether eternal recurrence does in fact allow for a depiction of time (or specifically, the nature of momentariness) in affinity with Nishitani's own.

If particular configurations of entities is what Nietzsche sees as recurring eternally within the context of indefinite time, then Nishitani's criticisms may be on the mark. Nietzsche's suggestions that it is things and our encounters with them that will recur in their selfsame configurations might also be taken as evidence for this. However, if what remains the same in recurrence is *the moment itself*, then Nietzsche is much closer to Nishitani's position, and to that of Zen more generally, than Nishitani gives him credit for. Justification for this interpretation lies in the fact that Zarathustra's encounter with the thought of eternal recurrence in 'On the Vision and Riddle' takes place from the perspective of the gateway of the moment. The gateway of the moment is presented by Nietzsche as being the position from which the necessity of eternal recurrence can be apprehended: 'From this gateway Moment a long eternal lane runs backward: behind us lies an eternity... Must not whatever among all things can walk have walked this lane already?' (Z III.2)

Further, if every moment is for Nietzsche truly distinct from every other, then the temporality of the moment is ecstatically self-alienating—that is, the moment is always different from that which it is likened to: other moments. This conception, being congruent with Nishitani's own, involves an approach to time in which the nature of temporality resides in its own utter transience—not the transience of time conceived as a whole, but of the moment itself. The temporality of momentariness is

thereby understood to reside in its very passing away, in its actual and ineradicable finitude. It is not surprising then that for Zarathustra the encounter with the thought of eternal recurrence from the standpoint of the moment is represented through the *empty* structure of the gateway, which is, moreover, a structure that is given its function by means of a transient activity—that is, our passing through it. Thus, the gateway provides an image which represents two types of essentially non-substantial activity, both that of the moment itself and the coming-to-be of that which passes through it: ourselves. We can say on the basis of this that the moment is both eternally present as the structure of our temporal pathway and, with regards to any substantial content, that it is also perpetually empty. This suggests that, for Nietzsche, the ever-present moment is both eternally recurrent and yet perpetually irreducible to all other moments past and future.

The presence of the gateway of the moment on Zarathustra's path also announces a clear connection between this passage and Nietzsche's other insights into the possibility of affirming the whole with reference to the moment. Interestingly, in relation to Zen, it is Nietzsche's understanding of the *interdependence* of all things that allows for an eternal affirmation to take place within time, where all things 'are knotted together so tightly that this moment draws after it all that is to come' (*Z III.2*).<sup>36</sup> It is this interconnectedness of things that explains the affirmation of the eternal from the perspective of the momentary when Zarathustra says:

—if you ever wanted one time a second time, if you ever said 'You please me, happiness! Quick! Moment!' then you wanted it all back!  
—All anew, all eternally, all chained together, entwined, in love, oh then you loved the world—(*Z IV.19*, §10)

In the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche reiterates Zarathustra's words with the claim that 'If we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence' (*WP* 1067).

We have seen from Nishitani's *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, that he offers a more sympathetic interpretation of will to power than the will-critique supposes, and further that his problem with understanding will to power as a being is that such a conception is not sufficiently subjectivized, and therefore not comprehended in its immediate existential relation to the self at its most elemental level.

From what has been said, it seems that the discussion of Nishitani's relationship to Nietzsche is better served through an analysis of the questions Nishitani raises regarding temporality rather than through a primary focus on the issue of the will, even though the latter remains a pivotal issue for the ongoing discussion of Nietzsche's relationship to Buddhism. With regard to the general framework for considering Nietzsche in relation to the Buddhist position, and specifically to Mahayana, Davis' work constitutes the most significant assessment to date. However, the truly distinctive aspect of Nishitani's contribution to world philosophy may be seen to lie in his creative reappraisal of the understanding of time in Zen Buddhism. Nishitani's re-evaluation is undertaken from a perspective that is also profoundly sensitive to the historically and temporally oriented context of the post-Kantian Continental tradition. Therefore the shift in focus that I have advocated in this paper would have the benefit of placing the debate between the two thinkers in much closer proximity to the central project of Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness*, and would also demonstrate the largely unappreciated importance of Nishitani's philosophy from the perspective of European thought.

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<sup>1</sup> Davis 2004, 89-138.

<sup>2</sup> Davis 2011, 82-101.

<sup>3</sup> It might be suggested that I have misinterpreted Davis' reading on the basis of insufficient reference to his earlier work. However, I am of the view that his earlier account depends upon the same problematic emphasis on the problem of will in Nishitani's interpretation of Nietzsche, which I will now explain in more detail.

<sup>4</sup> Davis 2011, 82. See also Heidegger 1985, 424; 1998, 321; 1994, 43; 1977, 158.

<sup>5</sup> K. Nishitani, quoted by Jan Van Bragt in the Translator's Introduction to Nishitani 1983, xxviii. Original source: Keiji Nishitani, ed., *Gendai Nippon no tetsugaku (Philosophy in Contemporary Japan)* Kyoto: Yukonsha, 1967, 2-4.

<sup>6</sup> Davis 2011, 84.

<sup>7</sup> Davis does refer to the fact that Nishitani's treatment of Nietzsche cannot be reduced to the influence of Heidegger, and has also made profound contribution to the critical understanding of Heidegger's own dealings with Nietzsche on the issue of will in his own previous work, but I would still suggest that he does not pay sufficient attention to the distinction between the line of criticism offered within Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as the 'last metaphysician' and Nishitani's own treatment.

<sup>8</sup> My reading expands on Graham Parkes' suggestion that Nietzsche and Nishitani 'ultimately diverge on the problem of temporality'. See Parkes 1984, 55-74.

<sup>9</sup> I have chosen to refer to Duncan Large's translation of *EH* and Graham Parkes' translation of *Z*. When citing *Z I* refer to part, speech, and—if applicable—section of speech. Thus, the second section of 'On the Vision and the Riddle' would be *Z III.2, §2*. For every other Nietzsche text referenced in this paper I have preferred to make use of Kaufmann's translations.

I follow Bernard Reginster's argument for the justifiability of reference to Nietzsche's unpublished writings in 2006, 16-20. The materials available there are particularly significant in relation to the theme of nihilism, since explicit references to nihilism are much less frequent in the published works—though undoubtedly the issue of nihilism remains implicit throughout Nietzsche's mature writings. The *Nachlass* material is also crucial for understanding Nishitani's perspective on Nietzsche since he understood the relationship between the published and unpublished materials to be broadly harmonious.

<sup>10</sup> See also *WP* 1067. I fully acknowledge the complexity and importance of the debate that surrounds this claim of Nietzsche's. However, any further discussion on this topic would go well beyond the scope of the current discussion.

<sup>11</sup> Davis 2011, 96.

<sup>12</sup> Davis 2011, 97.

<sup>13</sup> Graham Parkes; the first published account of Parkes' position appears in the present volume.

<sup>14</sup> I am indebted to Parkes' Nietzsche reading as well as his interpretation of Nishitani on this issue.

<sup>15</sup> Davis 2004, 90. Davis repeats the same point in 2011, 86: 'It may be the case that Nietzsche's critique—for all its effectiveness in revealing existing hypocrisies and degenerate forms within these traditions—fails to take account of their most radical message. In particular, it fails to follow their indications of a radical step back from (or "trans-descendence" of) "the life of will to power," a path that would lead not to a hypocritical "covert will" or a pessimistic "renunciation of the will to live," but rather to a genuinely alternative way of life, a way of being in this world that is other than willful or will-less.'

<sup>16</sup> Nishitani 1990, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Nishitani 1990, 61.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

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<sup>19</sup> Nishitani 1983, 216.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Dōgen 2000, 77. For further discussion of Dōgen's understanding of time see, e.g., Raud 2012, 153-173. Raud's 'momentary mode' of reading Dōgen fits particularly well with Nishitani's moment-centered existential approach, further underscoring the significance of Dōgen's influence on Nishitani in this regard.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Nishitani 1983, 217.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> The doctrine of co-dependent origination/arising (that all things come to be in relation to other things) forms one of the central principles of the Buddhist understanding of reality from the early Indian tradition onwards. It is of particular philosophical importance to the various schools of thought within the Mahayana tradition, including Zen. For Mahayana the doctrine is emphasized in its association with the idea of emptiness/Śūnyatā, where relational existence precludes substantial existence.