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Chapter 2
Reading Miki Kiyoshi's Anthropological Humanism in the Struggle against the Ecological Crisis

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Cross-cultural philosophy should not be seen as a subfield of philosophy. Philosophical traditions do not arise in isolation and exclusive narratives obscure the interconnectedness of human history. The importance of this kind of argument can be found in debates about the relationship between the mind and the world and in the rise in nationalist narratives around the globe. Resolving the extended mind debate will likely not impact ongoing debates about the importance of cross-cultural philosophy, but it does provide us with a place to start. Much like the road to San Jose, the path to overcoming the borders between countries and traditions is before us. It's up to us to follow it.

What is most important in terms of addressing the current ecological crisis is the role of our own behaviors. The implication of this view is that any approach we introduce philosophically must be one that directly confronts our problem of anthropocentrism: the view that the natural environment was made for our own consumption. But there is another task that must be pursued if we want to guarantee a world of ecological sustainability: namely, this task of moving us from anthropocentrism towards ecocentrism, where nature, including all of its "non-sentient" objects, things, and forms are intrinsically honored, cherished, and respected independent of human existence. One way to approach this has been through returning to those thinkers who seek to

redefine the subject-object relationship on epistemological grounds. In fact, it has been quite common for scholars to draw on the Kyoto School thinkers, such as Nishida, Nishitani, or Watsuji, in the race to develop an ecological discourse in the light of our ecological emergency (see Shinohara 2020; Johnson 2019; Wirth 2019).

What many of these pursuits have in common is their shared claim that the Kyoto School offers a path out of anthropocentrism by virtue of their non-dualistic account of the self, nature, and the world. The basic argument goes as follows: if the anthropocentric self can be eliminated within the subject's dialectical relationship with the world, then subjectivity will spontaneously unite with the objects of nature and thereby build a relationship based on playful reverence and harmony. One common example of this approach is to investigate the work of Nishitani Keiji, who claims that the mechanization of "man" and "nature" derived from the reification of scientific rationality instantiates how subjectivity has been stripped from the objects of the world, thus clearing the way for the paradigm of infinite growth to reign dominance on a planet with finite resources. If all objects and things are perceived as dead matter, ready to be conquered, dominated, and controlled at any whim or desire, then no guilt can ever arise in our never-ending thirst for consumption and production. Without a curbing of human desires, the insatiable impulse or drive to produce scientific technology in the service of plundering the earth will inevitably lead humanity to a dystopian future.

Such an approach to the looming ecological collapse certainly has its critics. Historian Richard Reitan (2017), for example, calls these types of approaches a "reactionary ecology," because they reflect a "fascist desire to create or rely upon a nationalistic narrative of Japanese cultural uniqueness that conceals the excesses of capitalism and operates to sustain the socio-economic order that is today generating ecological catastrophe" (p. 1). Underpinning these discourses, Reitan maintains,

is the romanticized desire for an ethnic community that claims to stand in contrast to some Western conceptions of nature. Similar to the views of Deep Ecology, such an imagined ethnic community promotes an aesthetic of harmonious "oneness," which seeks to challenge the Western viewpoint that nature is an object detached and separate from humanity, existing as an object of domination and exploitation (p. 3). Reitan claims that such reactionary views nonetheless embody oppressive power because of their narrative potential to be coopted by the state toward fascist ends — even if their intent were not aimed at being tyrannical (p. 8). As a response to Reitan, however, I want to suggest that there is room for theoretical negotiation around deploying one strain of the Kyoto School philosophy for the mining of an ecological discourse. With the hope of having a productive conversation with the critics of the Kyoto School, the aim of this paper is not to defend scholars who rehabilitate Nishida's or Watsuji's philosophy towards an environmental ethics as such, but to look at how Miki Kiyoshi's philosophy in particular can provide us with a "half-way meeting point" or "middle way" between the idyllic, "idealized" motif of Watsuji's and Nishida's socio-historical vision on the one hand and the "utopian" mythos of the Marxist narrative structure (like Reitan for instance) on the other. In this presentation, I will argue that Miki's philosophy, although limited as to how far we can extend it, offers a dialectic that sublates the Marxist and the Kyoto School position in a way that presents a new way of thinking about our relationship to the environment.[1]

1. Miki and the Subject-Environment Relationship

Miki Kiyoshi, like many of the early Kyoto School thinkers,

1 The longer version of this presentation was made into an article and accepted for publication in *Environmental Philosophy.*

redefines the subject-object relationships in a way that disrupts many of the bifurcations formulated within Western intellectual traditions. In response to one of these bifurcations, Miki claims that the epistemological subject cannot be thought of as a mere being who theorizes outside of historical occurrences but must always be viewed as the dialectical maker of the facts, objects, and forms of history in pursuit of self-knowledge. The general principle of this viewpoint was borrowed from his teacher, Nishida Kitarō, who maintained that Western modernity itself was problematically founded on an epistemological dichotomy between subject and object, and that the only way to overcome this gap is by collapsing the distinction between them. Nishida's first attempt at this was through his notion of "pure experience" (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験), which was later deemed a failure on the grounds that it was a psychological reduction. But during his middle years, Nishida would then logicize the problem by developing a concept called *basho* (場所) that sought to capture a non-reifiable place in which all categories of thought, including forms and non-forms, emerge and die. Eventually, Nishida's logic of *basho* would metamorphosize into what he called "absolute contradictory self-identity" (*zettai mujun-teki jiko dōitsu no ronri* 絶対矛盾的自己同一の論理) to describe the creative formation of historical reality as one where opposites always exist in dynamic tension, never to resolve in a kind of Hegelian synthesis. According to Nishida's dialectics at this point, the formation of subjectivity corresponds to the formation of the world historical identity along the lines of affirmation *qua* negation as a bilateral movement. That is to say, the more self-aware subjectivity becomes, via self-negation, the more historically creative subjectivity will be - and vice versa (NKZ 11: 447–448).

The dialectics Nishida developed to resolve the subject-object duality set the stage for Miki's approach to historical creativity as well.

Like Nishida and Hegel, Miki develops a dialectic that unifies the subjective and the objective, that points towards a new chapter of social history; but unlike Nishida and Hegel, such a chapter of social history would include a new material formation where feudalism and capitalism are superseded by a system of cooperatives (*kyōdō shugi* 共同主義) that will define the divisions of labor and thereby replace the duties ascribed within the capitalist class structure. This particular distinction between Nishida (and Hegel) on one side and Miki on the other is quite important here, in that due to Miki's early interest in hermeneutical Marxism, formulating the subject and the material world into a dialectical unity was central to overcoming the many bifurcations left unresolved by Hegel, Marx, and Nishida (and many others in the Western canon). While Nishida himself would embark in this direction of unifying subjectivity and material objects as well, instantiated by his logic of *poiesis*, Miki's engagement with materiality was more in the spirit of developing a praxis that avoided any reduction of historical change to the singular intuitive agent à la Nishida (Stromback 2020: 114–116). The logic of *poiesis* is not just a creative circle moving back and forth from subject and object, but also a creative engagement with historical forms (*rekishi-teki na katachi* 歴史的な形), in particular with institutions (*seido* 制度), that mediate, transform, and galvanize subjectivity in the direction of what we may dub as a "self-realization *qua* social realization." But note that Miki was not fully Marxist either, because of his commitment to securing a view of the historical actor, an actor that refuses to be buried within the relations of production. There is a true subjectivity in Miki's worldview, one that is driven by *pathos*, which refers to the unconscious affective dimension of the subjective interior, to unite with *logos* — reason and language — to create ideal material formations appropriate for the historical era. In this regard, subjectivity cannot be reduced to an epiphenomenon of material production. In the

end, Miki believes in a dialectics that joins together the Nishidian, the Hegelian, and the Marxist view of the world.

Critics maintain that Nishida was never really able to get out of the problem of anthropocentrism (e.g., see Heisig 2001: 263–269). In Nishida's discussion of the (self-forming) historical world *qua* dialectical world (*benshōhō-teki sekai* 弁証法的世界), which set up a co-determining relationship between the embodied actor and the environment, there is a sustained distinction between the biological sphere of life and the historical body (*rekishi-teki shintai* 歴史的身体). For Nishida, the historical body referred to the creative intentionality of the lived body to move beyond ideality and into the domain of making the surrounding environment *qua* creators of the historical world (Krummel 2015: 88–89). The implication is that the historical body has a degree of independence from the environment and therefore represents an articulated domain of reality that is truly creative, because it is not dependent on the environment like the biological body. Miki inherits this general framework from Nishida, but then modifies it. In the essay "The Human Being and the Environment" (*Ningen to Kankyō*「人間と環境」), Miki discusses the Kyoto School truism of how subjectivity creates the environment and inversely how the environment creates subjectivity, but then warns us against thinking about these relationships as an abstract correlation, because such would downplay how the various structures and activities of social history are built into these dialectical relationships. Miki writes:

> …both relationships as just correlative are insufficient. For me, I myself cannot be conceived of as things of the environment, and conversely, for me, what is the environment cannot be conceived as something for me. The subject does not come out of the object and the object does not come out of the subject, [and yet] both thoroughly oppose each other. (MKZ 7: 12)

Miki would then develop this thesis even further in the second and third chapters of the *Logic of Imagination* (*Kōsōryoku no Ronri*『構想力の論理』), where the subject and the environment are formulated as a dialectical unity that becomes expressed as the technical production of historical forms. For Miki here, the environment is not merely made up of material or physical objects, but also social institutions (such as language, morality, law, art, politics, customs, habits, and so forth) that co-mingle with the creative imagination lying within the subjective interior. Miki suggests as such, when he says:

> The logic of imagination is not a logic of mere images but instead would have to be a logic of forms. And what are initially conceivable as objective historical forms in this way are institutions. Therein we must advance to investigate the relationship between institutions and the imagination. (MKZ 8: 98; Miki 2016: 65)

The distinction between Miki and Nishida within the subject-environment relationships become more glaringly visible in the "dual transcendence" (*nijū no chōetsu*; 二重の超越) that emerges as one of the defining characteristics of Miki's stance on self-awareness. While both thinkers are concerned with uniting the subject and the environment into a "dialectical unity," Miki's "dual transcendence" includes an interior transcendence within subjectivity that moves beyond its ego consciousness, deeper into its interior as well as an exterior transcendence that moves towards the world of matter, by going beyond the interior and out towards the exterior (MKZ 19: 582). Keep in mind that Miki's notion of self-awareness is mediated in both the subjective and objective sense, with all actions externalizing the historical forms that have been internalized. While this particular view

of the subject-object relationships can be found in Nishida's dialectics as well, Miki's position here is a little more nuanced: Miki's internal-external stance imbricating a "dual transcendence" is one where the interiority of subjectivity seeps into the everyday consciousness and thereby dialectically threads the subjective interior into the material forms unfolding as historical time. Here, we can see that Miki's interweaving of the material dimension within a self-awareness that is socially mediated begins to collide with Nishida's grounding of history from within a standpoint of action-intuition, where it becomes difficult to conceptualize how distinct historical forms (e.g., political, social, and economic institutions or class-based systems) emerge from the collective actions of the subjective interior and in turn are shaped by it. Further formulated within Miki's critique of Nishida's dialectics, which he elaborates on in "On the Character of Nishida's Philosophy" (*Nishida Tetsugaku no Seikaku ni tsuite*「西田哲学の性格について」), is the failure to develop an account of sociohistorical forms that bears practical significance and relevance to the present and everydayness of human life (MKZ 10: 433–444). Placed in contrast with Miki's dialectics then, Nishida's view of social history appears rather reductionistic or "empty" and therefore devoid of any meaningful emancipatory praxis.

Within Miki's account of the subject-environment relationship, the place where activity occurs in the environment is subjectivity itself. In other words, subjectivity shapes itself as a result of its own actions and tinkering with the environment (and vice versa). Miki writes:

> That is to say, speaking of the human being and the environment, the human is made from the environment, and contrastively, it is a relationship where humans create the environment. This relationship is not only between the human being and the environment, but also similarly exists between the human being and society. Society exerts

> itself on us and transforms us along with it while we exert ourselves on society and transform it. (MKZ 7: 10)

While the human being must be thought of as a somatic form that always works on the environment and creates meaning therein, at the same time, however, is that within the subject's relationship with the environment is the active determination of subjectivity from the side of the environment. This is all to say that there is a bilateral movement in the activities between subject and object leading to both a subjectification of the object as well as an objectivization of the subject (MKZ 18: 164). Or to put it another way, there is an exchange of creative engagements between subject and object *qua* human being vis-a-vis environment, with each particular form existing as both subject and object that are both simultaneously passive and active. Therefore, the human being is not just an objectified expression of the world, but also its own unique subjective particular existing within and against society. But within this particular frame, Miki also appears to be distancing himself from the cruder forms of Marxism, because if we are to think of subjectivity as mere subjectivized objects placed in an environment, then the tendency is to reduce the interiority of subjectivity to that of mere conscious objects that are products of their own effects on the material environment.

1.1. Materiality and Subjective Awareness

Miki's take on materiality is quite different from both Nishida and Marx. According to Miki, material substances have a particular reality within subjectivity, which generates the "dual transcendence" structuring the development of self-awareness. This is because the formless "inner substance" (or what he occasionally calls "inner body") that lies deep within the subjective interiority is the fuel for artistic and

literary expression (Fujita 2011). But, as Miki explains, such "inner substances," which he likens to Descartes's notion of animal spirits (*dōbutsu seiki* 動物精気), cannot be thought of as part of the external body, because they are part of the *pathos* that drives subjectivity to praxis (MKZ 11: 208). Miki explains:

> The subjective interior cannot be viewed externally, but [from] the so-called *absconditus cordis homo* (an invisible human being hidden in the heart). As a human being, this inner body is also not something like a pure spirit, but [rather] must be physical. In this manner, due to subjectivity transcending consciousness heading towards the interior, consciousness, insofar as it is determined, is *pathos*. *Pathos* is not said to be a copy of the subjective interior, but to express it. The problem of creativity is like this problem of *pathos* placed at the foundation. (MKZ 11: 208).

This relationship between the subjective interior and the material world in the production of social history develops even further in Miki's dialectics of *logos* and *pathos* in the *Logic of Imagination* where he discusses how historical forms are produced through the creative power of the imagination. According to Miki, the historical world is created out of nothing, out of the formless, by virtue of the creative force of *pathos* within subjectivity, but then given form and meaning through its unity with *logos*. Miki writes: "Historical forms are not simply of *logos*, but rather the unity of things in terms of *logos* and *pathos*. The logic of imagination thus stands upon the unity of *logos* and *pathos*" (MKZ 8: 19; Miki 2016: 28).

1.2. From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism?

But what can we make of Miki's discussion of the subject-

environment relationship? In other words, does Miki's thought expunge the traces of anthropocentrism inherited from Nishida? Miki's longing for a new human being that is indeed the centerpiece of much of his philosophy does not initially look like a clear path out of anthropocentrism in the way the critics thought of it. This is due in part to the fact that the human being itself is still celebrated as a unique, creative being that can move beyond the biological sphere of life. After all, Miki does argue that the human being, from a state of estrangement, reconstructs the environment through technics in a way that suits its existence. Therefore, at this juncture, it seems as if the critics of humanism, who have been quite vocal about this very problematic tendency to build an entire philosophy around the creative essence of subjectivity, may have the last word. But in defense of Miki's anthropological humanism, I want to suggest that the charge of anthropocentrism is not so simple. As we can see from the discussion thus far, which also will be elaborated in the next section when we discuss his theory of technical production, Miki tends to avoid the naïve trap of assuming the material environment is bereft of any creative agency. Miki claims that since all the various activities of life can be thought of as "technical," then the natural environment — the biological sphere of existence — must be deemed as part of the process of technical production as well. Later in the *Logic of Imagination*, Miki would argue that the logic of the creative imagination is also operative within nature itself, and that human history and natural history unite on the grounds that both are expressions of trans-*formation*. As Miki argues, humans act as nature does by inheriting, modeling, and imitating what already occurs in nature (MKZ 8; 424). Therefore, human technics are an extension or continuation of the technics of nature and not a unique feature of what it means to be human as such. More importantly, by designating the natural environment as technical

and form-creating, materiality gets brought into the discussion in a way that Nishida even failed to develop theoretically. In Nishida's dialectics, all historical reality becomes merely reduced to the creative movement among empty vessels within a present temporality, with a culminating point of subjectivity realizing its own historical self-awareness via self-negation, but in Miki's dialectics, the technical production of material forms (e.g., the system of cooperatives or social institutions) that furthers the creative development of self-awareness becomes the very unity needed for that historical moment. In Miki's worldview, to become truly self-aware means to be socially and historically aware, as well as environmentally aware. In other words, materiality is only part of the creative exchange within Nishida's dialectics, whereas for Miki, materiality is baked within the culminating points of the dialectic itself when subjectivity realizes its own face as not only a creative being in the physical world but as a manual laborer (*nikutai rōdōsha* 肉体労働者) confronting the problem of capitalism as a system of class domination — a point that will be further discussed in Section Three.

2. Miki's Theory of Technics and the Production of (Ideal) Historical Forms

Miki's theory of "technics" or "technology" (*gijutsu* 技術) refers to the logic elucidating the trans-*formation* of social history. What can be read as a critical response to Nishida, who leaves us with an underdeveloped account of how history moves from one period to the next, the *Logic of Imagination* seeks to illuminate how the creation and formation of institutions are linked to the interiority of subjectivity by means of the imagination, whereby the elements of *logos* and *pathos* are one. Throughout this discussion, Miki draws on Immanuel Kant's account of the synthetic function of the imagination and Henri

Bergson's discussion of the creative intuition in order to make sense of how the power of the imagination can produce both physical and socio-cultural forms through technical actions. For Miki, since historical forms are produced by the creative imagination, social, cultural, and political institutions can be thought of as inventions or fictions that provide meaning to human life, but since institutions have a structure that possesses materiality, they have a particular social body that is both spiritual and somatic, or subjective and objective, thus functioning as if they have their own independent or autonomous life form. In this regard, Miki's view is such that "institutions are not just the actions of the human, but on the contrary, as one of its meanings the environment opposes the actions of humans" (MKZ 8: 160).

This tells us quite a bit about the dynamic relationship between humans and the environment, which we can interpret as Miki's attempt to move from anthropocentrism towards ecocentrism. According to Miki, institutions are adapted to and shaped in accordance with the ever-changing environment and can therefore never be viewed as fixed, and whenever humans create new environments, institutions will emerge or die as a result of human actions and responses to the environment. What Miki is pointing out here is the unpredictability of the environment and the human openness to the influxes of change. But there is also a rationality to the structure of institutions that "is also essentially required because of the relationships of human actions towards the environment" (MKZ 8: 164). This rationality is indicative of the cooperation between organisms and the environment, exemplified in the form of habits, which speaks to how "technics signifies the unity of subject and object, the human being and the environment," and thus how "habit requires the support of the environment, and therefore, also of society" (MKZ 8: 165). But what Miki is theorizing here more broadly is the creative intertwinement humans have with the institutions

of social history, where there is a dialectical relationship between subjectivity and institutions (in the form of myth or traditions) calling to produce institutions appropriate for the historical present, a sort that will move subjectivity towards a more creative society (*sōzō-teki shakai* 創造的社会). Miki suggests as such in the following passage:

> The creative society in particular is the true transcendental subject. Due to becoming one with that creative society, the inventive individual can thereby be truly inventive. …In such cases at the root of institutional society, we must think of the creative society. The relationship between creative society and institutional society is something like the so-called relation between nature *qua* producing (*natura naturans*) and nature *qua* product (*natura naturata*). Similar to how the subject and object cannot be separated abstractly, institutional society and creative society cannot be separated abstractly. (MKZ 8: 184).

But what is the driving force of technical production? While the driving force for material production within the Marxist tradition are the relations of productions that make up the economic activity of society, Miki, on the other hand, traces the driving force behind the process of production even further back by examining the deeper, unconscious forces of human nature and history. Miki claims that the root source for technical production (which includes the relations of production) begins with the desire to gain mastery and ownership over oneself in the world, which he seeks to capture in the category of *pathos*. As previously mentioned, Miki posits that the interiority of subjectivity is inextricably linked to the production of historical forms through a unity of *logos* and *pathos* at the base of imagination, and so "the logic of imagination… does not belong to the mere activities of consciousness, but rather is

rooted in our psychophysical existence" (MKZ 8: 35; Miki 2016: 36). Materiality, therefore, exists prior to the forms or ideals that become expressed in the world, but even prior to materiality, on the other hand, is the place of nothing, where the production of forms from the formless involves a movement from darkness to light, nothing to being (MKZ 11: 473). All reality, in this sense, is fundamentally a creation *ex nihilo* (MKZ 8: 245). Drawing from Plessner and Jasper, Miki further explains this point by telling us that when the subject faces the nothing deep within itself, it is driven by a "demonic" urge to create a new historical world by giving order, form, and determination to the formlessness of reality. Deep within our existence is alienation and loneliness, where we are forever faced with the danger of falling into anxiety, generating the "hope or fear, love or hatred, desire, passion, impulse and so forth" (MKZ 8: 49) that make up the source for creating the cosmos out of the chaos.

Inferred from all of this is that human action or praxis can be defined as an activity that builds images from the unformed material existing as the "inner substance" of subjectivity prior to any social conditions. While the trans-*formation* of *pathos* into something objective is due to the power of the imagination, we have to resist thinking that *pathos* is a distinct or special faculty of the mind, because the concretization of nothing into something also involves the physical body as the site where *pathos* intermingles with reason. At the same time, however, Miki tells us that even *pathos* is inherently connected to the body, so we also have to resist thinking that the body is a mere material object within the dialectical play of *logos* and *pathos*. This is because the body is more of an object endowed with "heart and mind" or encased with "spirit" or a "soul" as it interacts with the objective world by means of imitation. Nevertheless, Miki holds that history begins with human desire, and the material world becomes the articulation of historical forms derived from human actions involving a unity between *logos* and *pathos*, because

while *pathos*, which is both a passive and active state of existence, initially urges us to create the historical world with our bodies, *logos*, which is the intellectual consciousness that comes into being by transcending *pathos*, brings the human being into a more universal place where the limits of the established reality can be examined by a meta-*logos* that envelops both *logos* and *pathos* — meaning, a secondary *logos* conditioned by society and history (MKZ 18: 157–160). The creation of a new type or new form will be born out of the self-reflection constitutive of the secondary *logos*.

While it seems at this point that Miki might be smuggling in the "man-nature" bifurcation by virtue of locating the dialectics leading to a creative transcendence mostly within the powers of the human being, such is not entirely the case. In his standpoint of action, for instance, Miki emphasizes how the body is the basis of all human existence, and that without a body, there can be no human activity. And the body itself, as Miki asserts, is closely related to lived nature, not as an objectified nature, but rather as an incarnate-subjective nature. The human body is, as Miki writes, "…a parted-body of the Great Mother, and its expression" (MKZ 18: 153),[2] and as such, can be thought of as an instantiation of the creative expression of nature, and not as a pure subjectivity transcending natural history. Furthermore, if the impulse for our creative actions is issued forth from unformed material *qua* nothing, then humans themselves are always, already intimately connected to the fount of creativity that is the evolution of nature itself. In fact, in chapter two of *The Logic of Imagination*, Miki discusses Bergson in the service of this view of creative evolution — that is, how mind and matter are bridged through the image, thus demonstrating how material forms continuously develop through the creative impulses of technical

2 The translation here was borrowed from Nagatomo Shigenori's monograph on Miki Kiyoshi. See (Shigenori 1995: 62).

activities.[3] By grounding the human within the same logic of technics found in the natural environment, Miki is able to elevate all life forms and physical objects to the logic of creativity that is often taken to be the hallmark feature of what it means to be human.

But does Miki's theory of technics fully move us into the terrain of ecocentrism? In the crudest version of anthropocentrism, non-human life forms have only instrumental value, serving only as a means to an end instead of ends in themselves. There is no intrinsic value assigned to the non-human because the needs and rights of humans are prioritized above all. In Miki's theory of technics, however, we can see the inherent subjectivity bestowed to nature, which the human being is merely an instantiation of; therefore, Miki's lens here provides us with some insight into theorizing personhood status to the natural environment. Furthermore, if we read deeper into Miki's theory of technics, we can see that by granting "the human being," "nature," "institutions," and other historical forms an inherent subjectivity, the human being, in order to realize itself as a historically self-aware individual, has to come to value the non-human on these same grounds as well. Miki's dialectics is a uniting of the subject and object in the production of historical forms, which means that both other human and non-human subjects must be valued within the self-determination of historical forms *qua* self-awareness, because insofar as human life is said to be technical, the objective elements of the world must be incorporated within subjectivity and expressed into concrete forms reflective of the Huayan logic of "one is many and many is one." The shared basis for developing this relationship, as Miki maintains, is located in *pathos*, prior to its unity with *logos*. Miki writes:

3 However, Miki would criticize Bergson in the following moment for failing to dialectically unite intellect and instinct and instinct and collective habits. See (MKZ 8, 109–110).

> But how does a single unified form thread together from such an intersection? …The condition for imitation is sympathy — namely, to share *pathos*. In order for such sympathy to be possible, there must exist a certain *pathos* that is universal at the root of the individual person. Something like the ethnos [ethnicity] would be such a thing. But the individual person's independence would be inconceivable if we merely foundationalized the Dionysian as [that element of] *pathos*. We probably would have to conceive the combination of the countless independent individuals and that which is universal like the ethnos on the basis of the logic of imagination that is intellectual and at the same time emotive. … If nature follows the logic of imitation as Pascal also thought, that logic would have to be a logic where one is many and many is one. In developing this logic, we would also have to conceive the ethnos as well as the world. (MKZ 8: 127–128).

But how does the transition from a state of extrinsic valuation to a state of intrinsic valuation occur through the forms of technical production? Miki mentions the limits of adaptation: "As the critical spirit increases, it eventually destroys that institution, but people immediately sense the misfortune and come to build a new institution once again" (MKZ 8: 182). But now the question is: what sort of institutions will human subjectivity need to destroy and rebuild in the contemporary era of the impending ecological collapse?

3. The Dialectics of Social Responsibility

In his unfinished manuscript of *Philosophical Anthropology*, Miki would capture the essence of his dialectics in the words "physical

existence and spiritual existence is societal along with being individual" (MKZ 18: 160). For an individual, as a corporeal and spiritual being, to be truly self-aware, it must realize itself as a socially aware agent of history. Having taken cues from Wilhelm Dilthey, Miki would begin his anthropological humanism from the study of history, because such an approach can be a guide or teacher on what life is and what life can be (Townsend 2009: 155–157). After all, possibilities, for Miki, are the fundamental basis of real existence. But since humans live in the present, and history can only be written from the perspective of the present, all critical thought must be focused on the present and the everyday experience in a way that can be directed towards the future. In search of this historicity, Miki believed that while Marxism was one of many ideologies produced at that time, it was also the most relevant and practical in terms of responding to the particular demands of the era. In what Miki calls "the proletarian basic experience" (*musansha-teki kiso keiken* 無産者的基礎経験) is his attempt to define the raw, pre-reflective consciousness comprising the everyday experience of the proletariat that emerged during the Meiji period. Miki writes "One completely new basic experience was developed. This was the proletarian basic experience" (MKZ 3: 29), but then adds:

> When I say proletarian basic experience, I'm not saying in particular the experiences of the proletariat or the consciousness that can be experientially acquired by the proletariat; on the contrary, I am pointing out the existence of reality itself that is the structure of that which becomes the particularities due to it. (MKZ 3: 44)

But given Miki's anti-dogmatic approach to historical knowledge, the relationship Marxism should have to the historical age should not be that of a fixed doctrine where its narrative structure is accepted as an

unquestioned theory of the stages of historical development but rather treated as an ideological tool that can be used to transform the everyday experience. In other words, Marxism is interpreted only for the purpose of social reform instead of being deployed as a bible for revolutionary political action.

In fact, in all of Miki's earlier work on Marxism, the historical present and everyday experience were joined together in the theorization of the proto logic expressing the trans-*formation* of subjectivity. Miki's notion of "basic experience" (*kiso keiken* 基礎経験), in particular, would play a significant role in the self-determination of the self-aware agent of history by virtue of its negotiations with *logos*: anthropology (*qua* self-understanding) and ideology (MKZ 3: 5–19). For Miki then, the historicity of the human being can be characterized as the moment when anthropological self-understanding and ideology come together to move subjectivity beyond the arena of the everyday — in other words, the historical point of reality where the ideology of the public sphere becomes the present everyday consciousness. Such a progression, however, depends on the basic experience of the proletariat to naturally discover its own true nature within the historical present, not by authoritarian means, but by developing a *logos* that reflects and reveals the basic experience back to itself. The purpose of *logos* then is to incrementally guide the basic experience in its process of self-reflection in order to change the existing material conditions; therefore, *logos* must emerge from a socio-economic experience because basic experience and ideology must be dialectically united in a manner where each mutually shapes the other (MKZ 3: 39–41). While this general task of social reform has to be undertaken by the intellectual class from Miki's perspective, as one can see here, this process of knowledge transmission must be done without imposing an abstract or ahistorical ideal. Only at that juncture is it possible for the proletariat to assume the role of a

critic in society.

As a hermeneuticist, Miki would borrow from Marxist terminology, but never sublate his own language into the orthodox narrative. The concepts of "labor," "sensuousness," and "proletariat" were often employed, but re-interpreted in a way that positioned the individual and the social dialectically. For instance, Miki defines labor as the experiential structure of the proletariat while characterizing the proletariat as existing in relation to its sensuous praxis through negotiation (MKZ 3: 25–26), both of which set the stage for Miki's reading and engagement with Marx. On the whole, Miki was determined to resolve the dilemmas put forth by the early Marx, agreeing that the human being was alienated from its own essence and labor by virtue of being another impersonal commodity sold in the marketplace. Of course, the human being can influence its own nature through its own labor practices, but it relies on the role of intellectuals nonetheless to demystify the social relations and reveal to them for what they are at that historical moment and thereby move the proletariat to an emancipatory praxis. This is because, while the proletariat subject can negotiate its own existence by sensing it directly, it does not necessarily understand its real existence abstractly. It is at this point where we see the role of ideology and its relationship to Marx's theory of commodities in Miki's writings.

According to Miki, the problem of commodities represents the entire problem of capitalistic society because it is the mode of objectification of social existence, that which conceals the structures of relations within capitalism (MKZ 3: 61). As taken from Marx, Miki holds that we assume there is a natural social relationship to one another, but the objectification of *logos* creates a gap between ideology and the real experience of the worker, because the specter of commodification masks the real socio-economic relationship between people in the assumption

of what is thought to be the natural social conditions of life. This is because the very belief that commodities have a value of their own means to have belief in their phantasmagorical structure itself. Miki then adds:

> In the process of capitalism, the structure of commodification constantly enters into the consciousness of humans in all the more depth, all the more fatefully, and all the more structurally. All *logos*, which is under the universal and decisive control of the category of commodification, is transformed into an ideology in the bad sense, where it becomes abstracted from human beings and thereby separated from the existence of reality. (MKZ 3: 65–66)

Here, the Marxist theory of commodities moves from being inherent to the economic relations of capitalism towards the domain of subjectivized consciousness, because commodification functions as the mystification of the social nature of life that informs basic experience (see Wirtz 2020: 121). For Miki, while all members of society suffer from this fetishization, it is only the experience of the proletariat that is negated in this process. Since ideology has the potential to become a useful framework by which to analyze and criticize the commodification of social-economic knowledge, Marxist ideology can therefore be used in defense of the proletarian experience in the unification of theory and praxis.

While the more explicit Marxist terminology would eventually fade in Miki's later writings, the dialectical unity of subject and object oriented towards the development of ideal historical forms would remain a priority. In what we may call his "post-Marxist years," Miki would argue that if humans transform the world through a unity of *logos* and *pathos*, then subjectivity will realize its specie-being in a

system of "egalitarian" cooperatives (*kyōdō shugi* 共同主義), where the one is many and the many are one while each particular preserves its own subjectivity. The system of cooperatives Miki promotes cannot be thought of in the likes of a state-run communist order, because like totalitarianism, such would reduce the particularities of existence. Conversely, the system of cooperatives should be thought of as a kind of liberal-communitarianism derived from both Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. In fact, Miki was concerned that without a strict unity of *logos* and *pathos*, an overflow of either one would eventually direct history to a violent end. When *pathos* exceeds *logos*, for instance, the irrational dimension of human existence will thereby be activated, thus propelling the nationalist and totalitarian fervor of society towards fascism. For Miki, fascism, which has its origins in romantic thought, is nothing other than irrationalism in the most concentrated form (MKZ 10: 377–380).[4] On the other end, when *logos* exceeds *pathos*, universal reason will become objectified in history, leading to the (re)formations of capitalism, individualism, or classical liberalism.[5] Nonetheless, these rational orders all embody the same fundamental logic for Miki, because they all place individual interests above the interests of the collectivity which in the end reproduces the class structure of capitalism. Rather, the principle of *kyōdō shugi* is somewhere in between all of them, because it simultaneously resolves the problem of human existence, class struggle, and the growing "bureaucratization" around the world.

Theorized in a manner similar to Watsuji's view of ethics, Miki argues that the system of cooperation is an ethical relationship based on meeting the needs of the individual and the social at the same time,

4 In fact, Miki criticized his German tutor, Marin Heidegger, in 1933 for succumbing to the emotional forces of fascist nationalism.

5 Miki called classical liberalism "bourgeois liberalism." See "After Liberalism" (*jiyū shugi igo* 自由主義以後) (MKZ 13: 168–175).

because individual cooperation towards the public interests of society allows for each person's individuality and freedom to be realized within and through the social relationships themselves. If one's own personal interests are prioritized over social interests, for instance, then each individual ego will conflict with the other and thus impede any further development of individual creativity. Miki writes:

> Individualism in the form of egotism must be negated as far as co-operatives are concerned. It goes without saying that individualism, which always places one's [self-interest] above society and ignores the whole [society] while attaching itself to the self, is an incorrect [form of] individualism. (MKZ 17: 524)

The central point behind the cooperative is that it is for the mutual benefit of all its members because it produces a system that is stronger than its individual parts by virtue of everyone working together to solve problems. Although there is a need to preserve the autonomy and creative power of the individual, when contrasted with individualism however, Miki's principle of cooperativism takes social interests first and the individual interests second, but not at the expense of reducing the individual to the social. "Freedom is responsibility, and responsibility is twofold," Miki writes, because "responsibility towards oneself and responsibility toward society is bound into one" (MKZ 17: 574). Miki describes the logical basis for this ethical relationship as follows:

> The human being is made from society, and oppositely, it is said that the human being creates society, and like how there is a dialectical relationship between the individual and society, there stands a relationship where there is a dialectical unity and opposition

between social ethics and individual ethics. (MKZ 18: 453)

The culminating point that is reached in Miki's thought here is that individual creativity is not only protected but empowered through its service to the cooperative body because in the end "there is a dialectical unity and opposition between social ethics and individual ethics."

In order to make the co-operative system a successful alternative to the "abstract cosmopolitanism" found in the West however, Miki believes there must be an intellectual class that can mobilize and guide the actions of the individuals. Of course, such a leader cannot act like a dictator, which will force the particularities of the individual into the social, but rather like an educational leader that respects the spontaneity of the individual. Championing progressive thought and criticism is fundamental to the system of co-operatives because, "if criticism is prohibited, then it is impossible for the intelligentsia to cooperate from its own standpoint" (MKZ 15: 262) in order to convey the truth of the time. Embedded within the structure of cooperativism is the principle of democratic participation, not necessarily in the form of Western parliamentary systems, but in the form of intellectual pluralism, where criticism of the status quo is prized for the sake of continuous and immediate social reform. Otherwise, as Miki says, "it is not possible to truly mobilize intellectuals if they are deterred from forming groups" (MKZ 15: 262–263). The system of cooperatives is set to replace the class structures of capitalism.

But is Miki's critique of capitalism and vision of cooperatives sufficient in terms of providing the infrastructure for maintaining an ecocentrism? At this point, it is hard to give an affirmative answer, but I want to suggest that there are kernels of wisdom within Miki's work that will provide us with some hope for the future, nonetheless. Although Miki has a lot in common with Watsuji, Nishida, and Nishitani in terms

of the subject-environment relationship. Unlike these thinkers, however, Miki engages the Marxist critique to a much deeper extent, making Reitan's criticism of the Kyoto School for failing to address the limits of capitalism moot. What can we extract from Miki's hermeneutical Marxism and theory of cooperatives that can ease the anxiety of the critics like Reitan then? For one, Miki's triadic account of basic experience-anthropology-ideology provides us with the much-needed flexibility in handling our interventions with the natural environment. The impact of our well-intended meddling is often unpredictable simply because animals, plants, and other non-sentient objects are all agents as well, all of which are active in responding to our own interference. Miki avoids any robust set of guidelines for the management of crises, and so the negotiation we conduct with ourselves and the world forces us away from always trying to control the natural environment.

Secondly, we see a rise of climate deniers, not just within the ranks of the property class, but among the proletariat as well. Such cannot be thought of as a mere product of well-funded bourgeois propaganda: denying the science on climate change for instance has taken on its own internal momentum among the working class, where radical skepticism directed towards the authoritarian tendencies of the scientific enterprise is perceived as "edgy" and liberatory. Trending on social media are memes and fake news articles that unabashedly conflate the intellectual elite and its supporters with techniques of fascist and communist control. Anti-intellectualism is the critical spirit among many within the proletariat today, which represents a *patho*-logical take-over of the *logos* of neo-liberalism;[6] and without restoring a proletarian confidence in the intellectual class, then I argue that it is impossible to empower the proletariat to become active in addressing their own as well as others'

6 The assumption within this *pathos* is that everyone is rational and already has full access to perfect information.

participation in the production of those institutions responsible for the crisis faced today. The fetish of capital motorizing the despoliation of the earth is one of these fundamental institutions that need to be uprooted. The task of the times then should not be one of a direct imposition of ecological discourses directed by the intellectual classes, which will only fuel further intellectual resistance among climate deniers, but to exploit the fundamental creativity lying at the base of the imagination (e.g., *pathos*) by encouraging the proletariat to become active in producing knowledge that is local and relevant to their own ecological situation — to transform the basic experience of the proletariat, as it were, by means of realizing the *logos* of our historical age.

4. Conclusion: Responding to Miki's Critics

What I showed in this brief chapter is how to read Miki's anthropological humanism as a theoretical resource for understanding ourselves and the world in the age of ecological crisis. In conclusion, however, I want to suggest that there are indeed limits to reading Miki towards this end. For example, Marxist philosopher Hiromatsu Wataru was quite critical of Miki's hermeneutical Marxism, which he deemed a failure in terms of addressing the problem of reification (Nakajima 2011: 119). That is, in Lukác's theory of reification (*Verdinglichung*),[7] which is an evolution of both Marx's theory of commodity fetishism and theory of alienation, subjectivity is turned into a passive object that does not behave in any sort of human way but rather in ways that reproduce the market system itself. In other words, subjectivity is transformed into the objects and things that represent the relations of production within a capitalist society. To break through the reification of consciousness then

7 Even though Miki went to study with Lukács, it seems apparent that he did not adopt his account of reification.

is not a matter of recognizing one's own misrecognition (via intellectual guidance and persuasion), as implied in Miki's subjectivization of economic relations, but through constantly renewed efforts at becoming conscious of the immanent contradictions within the actions of subjectivity marked for the total development of society. Thus, the breakdown of the market occurring from a shift in social praxis itself is what generates the breakthrough in the reification of consciousness. If we take Hiromatsu's deployment of Lukács's point seriously, then reification represents the very ensemble of social relations that go beyond the individual subject, therefore demanding a far deeper praxis than what Miki can offer.

Another criticism Hiromatsu raises is Miki's over-emphasis on the individual, where it becomes difficult to see how the individual and the social are inherently connected, thus posing a challenge for us on how to conceptualize the move from the individual toward a proper social practice (Nakajima 2011: 119). This is not a particularly fair reading of Miki's philosophy, however. In fact, it is rather clear that individuals are inherently connected socially by means of *pathos* lying at the base of the subjective interior. As Miki writes: "Society holds the sense of a substratic nature towards humans, and humans within the logical self are denied this, [and so] humans are unified pathologically. Society as a whole is a pathological unity" (MKZ 18: 159). Of course, this is not where it ends for Miki. On the next page, he would then write, "Along with being a unity of pathos, society is a unity of logos" (MKZ 18: 160). Therefore, the question of how to move from the individual towards a social practice fundamentally mistakes Miki's account of sociality for a new brand of social liberalism,[8] but again, from Miki's standpoint, there is no atomized individual prior to the development of the social. "Man

8 I have opted to think of Miki's brand of "new liberalism" as a kind of "liberal-communitarianism."

is not an isolated existence," Miki writes, "but shares his existence together with human beings" (MKZ 1: 26). The individual and the social exist coterminously and hence dialectically. What is prior to the social is what lies at the base of the social: *pathos*.

Finally, Hiromatsu contends that Miki's ontological foundation is not a truly relational system of thought, but rather a "substance-based doctrine" that allows for the reification of the nation-state and thereby centers the East Asian co-operative arrangement within wartime Japan. Even though Miki's philosophical account seeks to transcend the East and West binary by liberating subjectivity and the rest of East Asia from capitalistic and colonial domination, the political implications of his wartime writings show tacit support for the colonial invasion enacted by the Japanese state. The theoretical reasons for this blunder, as suggested in a previous article I wrote on Miki, were perhaps due to Miki's quasi-idealist account of social history, stemming from a substantification of the imagination that would set in motion the recuperation of Japanese nationalism under the guise of economic, political, and colonial liberation. To correct the problems associated with Miki's quasi-idealism, I recommended a return to Nishida's concept of "absolute contradictory of self-identity" (*zettai mujun-teki jiko dōitsu no ronri* 絶対矛盾的自己同一の論理), Tosaka Jun's concept of the "people" (*minshū* 民衆), and Takeuchi Yoshimi's concept of resistance as articulated in his essay "Asia as a method" (see Stromback 2020: 136–137). The colonial implications of Miki's wartime writings should not be treated lightly and ultimately reflects a failure on three accounts: to incorporate a stronger account of reification, to develop a robust view of (subaltern) resistance, and to resolve the aporia of resisting colonialism without secretly asserting a new one.

Criticisms aside, it should be re-iterated that there is real value to reading Miki's anthropological humanism as a way to reflect on our

relationship with the current ecological crisis. The threat of extinction of many life forms, including our civilization as we know it today, speaks to the urgency of investigating viewpoints that are neither beholden to the romanticized ethos of Deep Ecology nor to the totalizing narrative of scientific Marxism. Miki's "middle way" approach not only serves as this practical alternative, but it also introduces a new pathway towards overcoming the dichotomy between the Kyoto School and Marxism. By sublating Nishida's philosophy and Marxism into a "third" position, Miki's dialectics not only present us with a narrative that is counterposed to the anthropocentrism quilted to the capitalist project, but also with an opportunity to improve or re-interpret Miki's philosophy by correcting what he failed to see or develop. Therefore, it is in the spirit of Miki's philosophy, as I tried to argue in this presentation, that we will find a critical trajectory that has the raw materials for furthering our understanding of our relationship to the ecological crisis today.

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Chapter 2: Reading Miki Kiyoshi's Anthropological Humanism in the Struggle against the Ecological Crisis

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