

# *Fate, Freedom and Anime-Worldliness*

From Heidegger and Nishida to Anime-Philosophy

Philip Gordon Martin

Macquarie University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy

Bachelor of Arts (Philosophy)

Masters of Research Candidate

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## Summary

Recent philosophy has begun a fruitful relationship with the challenges posed by film. One form of this encounter, sometimes termed 'film-philosophy', explores general and aesthetic questions about film and its relationship to philosophy, such as why film matters, if film can engage in philosophical thinking, what philosophical concerns may be relevant in our experience of film, and how film may change the way we think about philosophising. However, such inquiries have held an overwhelming bias towards traditional 'live-action' film. This brief dissertation will open up the field to a heretofore neglected form of audiovisual media: Japanese anime. I will develop a concept of anime-worlds from Thomas Lamarre's media theory and philosophy of technology alongside Daniel Yacavone's film-philosophy in order to explore how anime can be philosophical and the ways in which it can engage in reflective philosophical thought. I will demonstrate the value of this approach by addressing specific examples of anime and examining how they develop ideas of fate and freedom. This will be accomplished through the deployment of a hermeneutic framework extracted from readings of fate, freedom and worldliness in the philosophies of Martin Heidegger and the Kyōto School. Through this engagement, anime will reveal new ways of understanding the relationship between philosophy and film media. Anime has its own special contributions to make to philosophy, and to understand these (beyond film-philosophy) we must embark down the path of anime-philosophy.

## **Author's Declaration**

This essay has not previously been submitted, in full or in part, for a Higher Degree at any other university or institution.

All work not of my own composition which appears in this thesis (including, but not limited to, images and text) has been properly cited.

Philip Martin

## **Acknowledgements**

I might joke that this thesis is not, and could not have been, the product of an isolated brain in a vat - if not for the input and encouragement of family, friends, peers and Macquarie University staff, this short dissertation would not have come into being. Of my family I would particularly like to thank my parents Leanne and Steven, Aunt Gem, and Nan and Bop. The Department of Philosophy's Masters of Research cohort, helmed and managed by the wonderful Jeanette Kennett, has been a key source of inspiration and direction. Though the contributions of my many other intellectual peers must not be underestimated, I would particularly like to thank Julia, Michelle and Lachlan for their constant enthusiasm and interest. I must also give my gratitude to all the staff of Macquarie University's Department of Philosophy who have taught me over the course of my higher education and shaped my capacity for critical thought.

Above all I would like to thank the endless well of insight, optimism and encouragement that is Robert Sinnerbrink, who has gone far beyond the supervisor's call of duty during the creation of this work. His intellectual and emotional aid has flowed into the core of this thesis, making possible the arguments herein.

## Notes on Translation and Localisation

### Sources

This essay contains many references to texts translated into English from their original language. In the case of texts originally published in German I have uniformly used the translations which I have cited in the bibliography. Some technical terminology such as 'Dasein' has been preserved in accordance with these translations. In some cases I have included the original German to supplement the English translation. For texts originally published in Japanese I have used the translation cited in the bibliography and occasionally included explanatory notes.

### Custom Translations

Throughout this essay Japanese terms which do not come from an official translation of a Japanese text have been used. I have personally translated these terms and notate them with a combination of *rōmaji* (romanised phonetic Japanese), the original Japanese characters (kanji, hiragana and katakana) and my English translation. This form is used to situate the terms within a philosophical context and emphasise certain nuances. These translations will take the following format:

*rōmaji* (Japanese characters; tr. 'English translation')

For example:

*iki* (粋; tr. 'stylish')

The anime quotations which open some of the chapters in this essay are also my own translations. Complex terms or proper names with an important meaning within these quotations have been rendered using the above notation.

## **Anime Localisation and Romanisation**

English-localised titles of anime (which are often used as supplementary subtitles even in their local Japanese use) are often decided by their Japanese license-holders, publishers or original creators. Such titles frequently differ significantly from a direct translation of their original Japanese name. For anime titles, unless otherwise noted, I have used the English localisation (which may occasionally be a direct translation or a rōmaji transliteration of the original). In my filmography I have used the English-localised title but supplemented this with the original Japanese (in Japanese characters) and my own direct translation.

Anime studios and other Japanese production companies often have an official romanisation or English-language version of their company name which involves punctuation or capitalisation that may appear awkward or inconsistent to English-speakers. In such cases I will use the official stylisation unless a more consistent form of the name appears elsewhere in official sources. Examples include 'BONES', 'ASCII MEDIA WORKS', 'member of SOS' and 'ufotable'.

## **Concerning Names**

Japanese and other non-Western names will appear in this essay in their local form and will be referenced accordingly. In Japanese this form is family name followed by personal/given name.

In Japanese there are a variety of common legitimate modes of address. In anime, characters are often referred to in multiple ways which are not in nickname form. When it is necessary to refer to a character in an abbreviated form, I will use the name they are most frequently known by in the narrative but without an accompanying honorific. For example, I will use the family name 'Okabe' for Okabe Rintarō from *Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Satō 2011) but the personal name 'Shiki' for Ryōgi Shiki from *Kara no Kyōkai* (Various 2007-2013).





## Introduction

Philosophy, in recent years, has widely begun to understand film as a serious philosophical object. Within the intersection of film and philosophy, there are diverse sets of problems and numerous systematic approaches. Distinct debates and key theorists exist for issues such as image ontology, the role of affect in cinematic experience, philosophical approaches to understanding narrative structure, and the notion of film *as* philosophy. In these areas there are a number of key theorists and works, such as Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1 & 2* (2013a, 2013b), Daniel Frampton's *Filmosophy* (2006), Stephen Mulhall's *On Film* (2008), along with the writings of Noël Carroll (e.g. 1985, 1988, 1995), Stanley Cavell (e.g. 1979, 1981, 2005) and Thomas Wartenberg (e.g. 2006, 2007, 2011).

Contemporary image ontology debates come from classical film theory inquiries such as the notion that film and photography have a special artistic relationship to reality. These debates address questions about how to define the film medium, how to define movement in film, and the status of film as art (Sinnerbrink 2011: 28). Additional intertwining debates generally concern the quality of cinema's representational capacities and the relationship of images to reality. The scope of this field of inquiry includes questions of how the filmic image is a unique kind of representation compared to non-film or non-photographic visual art forms. For some theorists, such as more recent film-philosophy figures like Stanley Cavell (1979: 16) along with more traditional film-theory figures like André Bazin (2004: 13), film is akin to photography; further, due to the mechanical artist-removing quality of its creation, it is able to more directly and intuitively represent reality than other art forms. Other theorists, such as Noël Carroll (1995: 81-2), maintain that it is only possible to philosophically elucidate the loose necessary conditions of film (qualities such as eliciting the expectation of movement and possessing a disembodied viewpoint) without any substantive medium-based qualities. Other debates concern the role of affect in cinema, such as the ethical significance of forming audience relationships with characters (Plantinga 2010). Another example of prominent film and philosophy inquiries revolves around how we should understand narrative structure - some suggest that it must be conceptualised as a process of synthetic

cognitive construction by the viewer, while others propose less rationalistic and more aesthetic understandings (Frampton 2006: 103, 107).

These fields of inquiry are generally unified to some extent by debates over whether and how film can, in any strong or meaningful sense, *be* philosophical or *do* philosophy. What is often called "film-philosophy" is the exploration of such questions about the philosophical significance of film at the general or aesthetic level (Sinnerbrink 2011: 90). "Cinematic thinking" or "film as philosophy" examines the possibility of individual films making powerful contributions to thought; perhaps philosophy can be strengthened through thinking cinema as well as cinema's *own* 'thinking' (Sinnerbrink 2011: 117, 137). These debates have been well-rehearsed and thoroughly investigated. Paisley Livingston (2006: 11), for example, suggests that a "bold" thesis that cinema can make *original* contributions to philosophy is untenable, since any contribution cinema makes to philosophy must be presented in philosophical terms, which would then by definition make the contribution possible within academic philosophy alone. Other philosophers defend a bold film as philosophy thesis by arguing that such criticisms mischaracterise both philosophy (as limited to formally logical discourse and argument) and film (as incapable of self-reflective consideration) (Sinnerbrink 2011: 117; Mulhall 2007: 281-2).

However, traditional 'live-action'<sup>1</sup> cinema is by far the most seriously considered film medium. When philosophy explores non-live-action alternatives, they are understood through the lens of live-action film-philosophy as adding insights, supplementing current analysis or signalling changes in the film art form. The digitisation of contemporary film and the subsequent malleability of the image are treated as problems disrupting the ontology of the film image (Sinnerbrink 2011: 29). There are, however, non-live-action film media which are radically different from traditional alternatives that do not fit the frameworks applied to live-action cinema. These art forms, peripheral to traditional live-action film, are autonomously deserving of philosophical consideration but may also shed light on film and philosophy debates. Such film media often include those aspects (malleability, a dynamic

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<sup>1</sup> Such a term is problematic, given the widespread integration of computer generated images into contemporary cinema, and so I use it here only in an intuitive sense to indicate the rough bias of contemporary film and philosophy debates.

relationship to the image's referent, etc.) which are understood to challenge our traditional understanding of cinematic media. This essay will focus on one of these art forms - animation; but more specifically, a subset of this art form - Japanese anime<sup>2</sup>.

I single out anime because it presents the most radical divergence from traditional live-action film. Thomas Lamarre (2009: 10), who will later be important in developing my argument, notes two contrasting filmic tendencies, the cinematic and the animetic; anime is an example of a particularly radical appropriation of the animetic tendency<sup>3</sup>. Anime is an incredibly diverse and prolific field, in terms of narrative and aesthetics, which includes both pieces of mainstream appeal and experimental works<sup>4</sup>. Many works often overtly include philosophical themes - from the complex psychological dynamics of Anno Hideaki's (1995-1996) (in)famous *Neon Genesis Evangelion* to the romantic musings on memory and identity in Yuasa Masaaki's (2008) *Kaiba*. Simultaneously, however, the aesthetic and technical dimensions of anime offer new philosophical problematics for the ontology of images, film and affect, and - most importantly for this essay - world-building. Such issues indicate that anime is deserving of serious philosophical consideration.

Anime scholarship has generally treated these issues as separate concerns, reducing scholarly concern with anime to aesthetics, film theory, sociology, or narrative criticism (Lamarre 2009: x). For example, Dani Cavallaro (2013: 42-3) specifically examines the influence of traditional Japanese aesthetics - through concepts such as *iki* (粋; tr. 'stylish') -

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<sup>2</sup> In Japan, 'anime' (アニメ - the contracted form of '*animeeshon*': アニメーション) often refers to animation generally, while the specific (but vaguely delineated) style associated with *Japanese* animation (what concerns me here) is sometimes termed 'Japanimation' (see n4). Amongst English speakers, however, anime *strictly* refers to this specific style. I will adopt the latter usage. However, for the moment I will leave the crude and generic working definition of anime as 'post-war Japanese animation' intact. This conception of anime will be gradually refined to the point where it may be possible to include some examples of non-Japanese or Western animations and perhaps exclude certain Japanese cartoons. I intend to leave such a possibility open, though I would suggest that substantively delineating a 'domain' of anime may be suspect at best or impossible and distorting at worst.

<sup>3</sup> I do not seek here to make any robust and determinate technical distinction between anime and other animation, but instead view anime as a particularly disruptive form of the animetic divergence from traditional cinema.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the term 'anime' in Japan involves some controversy. Many anime creators wish to dissociate themselves from the connotations of the word 'anime'. Anime, instead of being understood as a style or a medium, is often associated with low-budget productions, specific *narrative* tropes and genres, and otaku culture. Given that my emphasis is on anime as a *medium*, I will not address these concerns. I suspect, however, that such terminological debates hide a worrying and reactionary aesthetic elitism. On this controversy see Gan (2009).

on contemporary anime. Other more rich philosophies of anime's technological condition also fail to understand anime holistically, ultimately deflating its general philosophical significance. This essay will seek an alternative more unified and multifaceted approach through the notion of world-building in film. The question of a new anime-philosophy will be *whether* and *how* anime can *do* philosophy.

I contend that, by using a concept of *anime-worlds*, we may come to an understanding of how anime can make original and interesting philosophical contributions. To develop and apply this concept I will use a hermeneutic framework to explore the thematic and narrative content of specific anime examples, alongside a philosophical understanding of the medium of anime combined with a philosophical concept of film-worlds. My intent is to uncover the mechanisms by which anime does philosophy and explore particular examples of anime doing philosophy. This exploration will be sharpened by examining the particular concern of fate and freedom in these anime examples. In Chapter One I will begin developing my hermeneutic framework through a reading of the existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger. I will look at fate, freedom and disclosure in anticipation of narrative analysis, but I will also approach the related concerns of technics and worldliness which have broader 'ontological' consequences for my concept of anime-worlds. In Chapter Two I will further develop this framework through the work of the Kyōto School. Using a reading which emphasises its convergences and divergences with Western Continental philosophy, I will further explore the relationship between fate, freedom and worldliness, but this time in terms of the Kyōto School's concept of Absolute Nothingness. Again, the significance of this exploration for anime will be both narrative/thematic and ontological. In Chapter Three, which forms the core of my argument, I will develop and deploy a concept of anime-worlds. This will be based on a critical examination of Thomas Lamarre's (2002, 2006, 2009) philosophy of anime technics and Daniel Yacavone's (2008) philosophical concept of film-worlds. The resulting concept will be refined using a combination of film-philosophy, Heidegger, and the Kyōto School. Finally, I will use this concept to analyse two key examples of contemporary anime - *Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Satō 2011) and *Kara no Kyōkai*<sup>5</sup> (Various 2007-2013). This critical trajectory will ground and demonstrate the philosophical

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<sup>5</sup> *Kara no Kyōkai* (空の境界; tr. *Boundary of Emptiness*) is published in English as *The Garden of Sinners*. I have used the rōmaji '*Kara no Kyōkai*' with the hopes that the reader will keep both titles - *Boundary of Emptiness* and *The Garden of Sinners* - in mind.

significance of anime - unveiling that which has been profoundly neglected. This essay will lay the path to *animetic thinking* and *anime-philosophy*, and in doing so it will demonstrate the most critical ways in which contemporary film-philosophy is lacking.

## ***Chapter One***

### **Enclosure, Disclosure and Technics: Heidegger and the Laying Bare of Potentialities**

The existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger may at first glance seem alien to anime. Most often for those not immersed in anime-related culture the phrase 'philosophical anime' will immediately call to mind titles like *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii 1995) where the meditations on mind seem far more Cartesian. Such ideas and philosophical problems also initially appear to be easier to render for popular media<sup>6</sup>. For some, Heideggerian (1962) concepts like "being-towards-death" or "facticity" may seem to be problematically abstract concepts that resist 'superficial' concrete depiction in popular artistic media (though ultimately such ideas are phenomenological and closely tied to everyday experience). However, even at this surface level in anime Heidegger announces his presence. Many anime, particularly those whose themes pivot around problems of time and freedom, reference Heidegger by name<sup>7</sup> and explore the relationship between self and world, technics, time, and death in profoundly Heideggerian ways. On the other hand Thomas Lamarre (2009: 50), whose work I will explore in Chapter Three, draws heavily on Heidegger to frame the philosophical significance of anime as a problem of (and a problem posed by) the technological condition. In this sense, the question of anime at the level of the *medium* (animated images) is also a Heideggerian question. In this chapter I will seek to develop an understanding of fate and freedom in Heidegger with respect to technics and worldliness. These two modes of exploration - fate/freedom and technics/worldliness - will later (alongside the Kyōto School) serve to flesh out the narrative and thematic philosophical components of anime on the one hand (fate/freedom) and articulate the philosophical quality of the medium on the other (technics/worldliness).

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<sup>6</sup> See *The Matrix* (The Wachowski Siblings 1999) as a prominent popular film often understood in terms of Cartesian themes. Thomas Wartenberg (2007: 55-75) is one film-philosopher who looks at *The Matrix* through the lens of Cartesian scepticism.

<sup>7</sup> *Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Satō 2011) and *Black Lagoon: The Second Barrage* (Katabuchi 2006) are two popular examples of anime which refer directly to Heidegger. A number of other philosophers and theorists whose recognition in popular media is minimal, such as psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, literary theorist and philosopher Julia Kristeva, and philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, are also referenced by name in several popular anime such as *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* (Ishihara 2006) and *Ergo Proxy* (Murase 2006). The point is that, in anime, these are neither exceptional cases nor are they simple generic references to philosophy.

## Fate as a Condition of Worldliness

Before directly addressing the issue of technics, wherein worldliness, fate and freedom interact in the most rich and relevant ways for anime, it is necessary to understand the function of the existential-phenomenological 'world' and how this concept relates to fate and freedom. Here I intend to develop the starting points in Heidegger from which we can begin to explore the intricate and rich connections between fate, freedom, worldliness and technics. A full exploration of what it means to be free or fated in Heidegger's philosophy is far too broad an inquiry for this essay; instead I wish to open the hermeneutic space for the way in which anime might explore these ideas with respect to worldliness and technicity. Specifically, this relationship will be articulated through the issues of *enclosure* and *disclosure*<sup>8</sup>.

Before exploring the rich ground of disclosure and technics in relation to worldliness, it is necessary to understand the general relationship between being and the world. Heidegger's (1962: 32 [12]) inquiry begins with the idea of "Dasein" - literally 'being-there', a term emphasising ontological situatedness - which is the being for which its own existence is a concern, and a way in which we might understand *human* existence. For Heidegger (1962: 78 [52-3]), one of the most crucial aspects of Dasein's Being<sup>9</sup> is "Being-in-the-world". The phenomenon of the *world*, understood in Heidegger's (1962: 93 [64-5]) existential analytic, appears not simply as the objective environment or totality of entities present to Dasein but is the ontical and ontological *place*<sup>10</sup> of being: it is the basic "wherein" of Dasein (its 'environment') and its a priori embeddedness. That is, the world is both what is external to Dasein and the situated *condition* of its Being. The world *situates* the Being of Dasein,

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<sup>8</sup> Although in many (translations) of Heidegger's (1962, 2002, 2008) texts the word "disclosure" (or "disclosedness") appears alongside such related concepts as "deconcealment", "unhiddenness" or "revealing", the word "enclosure" is never used synonymously with "concealment", "hiddenness" or "enframing". I use the words "enclosure" and "disclosure" here for hermeneutic assistance, playing on the etymological connection and the connotations of freedom and unfreedom.

<sup>9</sup> Throughout this chapter I will utilise both the terms 'Being' and 'being'. I roughly follow Heidegger in my use of these terms insofar as the former suggests an ontological problem and the latter an ontical one. Hubert Dreyfus (1991: 19-20) characterises this difference between the ontic and the ontological as the difference between "beings" and their fact-like existence (ontic) and "ways of being", existential structures and the issue of interpreting being as such (ontological).

<sup>10</sup> In my use of the term 'place' with regard to worldliness I am anticipating my reading of Nishida Kitarō in Chapter Two for whom place ('*basho*': 場所) is a key concept.

presents the boundaries and possibilities of its existence, and lays out its potentialities. The world is both the phenomenological *outside* that Dasein experiences and the existential *ground* of Dasein. In this sense, the world is not simply the collection of external entities which can be experienced by Dasein, but it is also what makes possible such "encounter[s]" (Heidegger 1962: 92 [63]). The world is the ground upon which these occurrences - the appearance of entities, their encounter with Dasein, and Dasein's Being itself - may unfold. Entities have yet to be *revealed* to Dasein within the world because it is the world, in this ontological sense, that makes possible their revealing and their becoming-present. Simultaneously, Heidegger (1962: 102 [73]) emphasises that Being-in-the-world involves practical and engaged coping and dealing with "equipment" - the ordinary things and basic stuff of everyday life. One of the striking qualities of many anime is a fascination with such simple objects of common everydayness. Whether this is the comedy of a broken fast-food deep-fryer in *The Devil is a Part-Timer!* (Hosoda 2013), the futuristic Augmented Reality of *Dennō Coil* (Iso 2007)<sup>11</sup>, or the interaction of everyday low-tech microwaves and high-tech particle accelerators in *Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Satō 2011), anime often concerns itself with how such objects - normal things, basic stuff, gear and technologies - are an essential part of our *ordinary* practical world. It is in the usability of such things, their state of being "ready-to-hand" (seamlessly integrated into our action) or "un-ready-to-hand" (broken or conspicuous, interrupting our action), that the world reveals itself (Heidegger 1962: 102-3 [73]).

This makes the phenomenon of the world neither the "subjective world" of phenomena nor the "common world" of objective being (Heidegger 1962: 92 [64]). The phenomenon of the world is, in this sense, a 'characteristic' of Dasein (qua Dasein's situatedness) and is therefore something that disappears when carving existence up into 'subjective' and 'objective' categories (Heidegger 1962: 92-4 [64-5]). The world is neither simply what is perceived nor simply what is. From this, we may understand worldliness as the quality of the Being of the world, rather than as a property of an individual being. Worldliness suggests situatedness within a whole. The world is the whole - but not an enclosed whole or 'totality' - within which Dasein exists. The Being of Dasein is always Being-in-the-*world* and the Being of the world is always the Being *of* Dasein. This characteristic of worlds as wholes, ontologically

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<sup>11</sup> The official English localisation or subtitle of *Dennō Coil* is *Coil - A Circle of Children*. However, many distributors outside Japan use its primary Japanese title.



grounding and opening the *possibility* of experience, and as such "radically singular" will later be important in developing my notion of *anime-worlds* out of Daniel Yacavone's (2008: 84) concept of *film-worlds*.

Through the world's ontical, equipmental dimension, Dasein is situated according to its "facticity" - its possibilities as determined and "bound up" with other entities in its world (Heidegger 1962: 82 [56]). These entities are the raw facts which surround Dasein and compose all the things which it is capable of engaging with. In this sense both possibilities and limits are established by the facticity of Dasein's world. It is this attachment to the world, this essential being-alongside other entities and this determination of potentialities, that opens the domain of Dasein's action. This *immersion* in its world, Dasein's inauthentic facticity, "functions as a *positive* possibility of [Dasein]" (Heidegger 1962: 220 [176], author's emphasis). That is, this factual determination is not negative, oppressive and suffocating (though it may become so) because it is, in a sense, the collective name for *any* form of worldly determination - including authentic self-affirming 'free' action. This means that in acting through this positive possibility Dasein takes up a relationship to *itself* as a worldly being. In relating to its world and its facticity, Dasein, qua *being-there (Da-sein)*, takes its own Being as a problem for itself (Heidegger 1962: 223 [179]). Existence is an issue of Dasein's own possibilities, and is therefore always a relationship of Dasein to its facticity (Heidegger 1962: 33 [12]). This means that although facticity is ontical in character, its relationship to Dasein has ontological significance. This being bound within the world is what Heidegger (1962: 82 [56]) calls the "destiny" of Dasein, a collective mode of what I will call *fate*. Destiny here is not a case of unfreedom, but rather the establishment of possibilities for Dasein. It is a *condition of worldliness* which makes possible *any* way of Being-in-the-world, whether free or alienated.

Freedom, therefore, is an issue of how one relates to one's own facticity. For Heidegger (1962: 105 [75]; 2002: 66; 2008b: 318) the possibility of an affirmative and free relationship to one's facticity and one's own Being lies in the "deconcealment", "revealing" or "disclosedness" of Being and beings. This is because possessing one's own Being is only possible through reinterpreting one's facticity. Dasein is caught up in the ways it can interpret itself and its world: "Dasein has grown up both into and in a traditional way of

interpreting itself: in terms of this it understands itself proximally and, within a certain range, constantly. By this understanding, *the possibilities of its Being are disclosed and regulated*" (Heidegger 1962: 41 [20], my emphasis). The structuring of Dasein's possibilities is accomplished by the way Dasein sees the truths of its own Being and other beings. Therefore freedom, as the opening of possibilities for oneself, is the opening of ways to interpret oneself and one's facticity: *freedom lies in disclosure*. New ways of interpreting one's world, one's facticity, permit new ways of *engaging* with it and therefore new ways of harnessing one's own Being. This suggests that disclosure is a form of 'becoming' for facticity. Dasein's facticity itself transforms with disclosure. Disclosure is not simply seeing-something-as-true (as opposed to not knowing, or seeing-something-as-false), rather it is the arising of something *new* for Dasein. Disclosure, in this sense, is an opening of possibilities. Furthermore, "unhiddenness only occurs in the history of permanent freeing ... [when history] is always a matter of the unique task posed by *fate* in a determinate practical situation" (Heidegger 2002: 66, my emphasis). Genuine disclosure is always a freeing, a clearing, which enables new ways of grasping one's everydayness - the practical concerns and equipmental activity which constitute Dasein's Being-in-the-world.

The function of destiny, in its most open and disclosing state, is therefore a *laying bare of potentialities*. Freedom lies in how these unhidden possibilities are taken up. If we are then to interpret freedom in terms of Dasein's authenticity, its capacity to *own* itself, freedom is constituted by "a modified way in which such everydayness is seized upon" (Heidegger 1962: 224 [179]). This is a form of Dasein taking its own Being upon itself through a relationship to its world. In this sense, "[g]enuine becoming free is a projective *binding of oneself*" (Heidegger 2002: 43, author's emphasis). Freedom is therefore present in the deconcealment of the world - the revealing of destining *for* and *as* destining - in a practical mode of engagement, a particular way of dealing with the truths of everydayness. So for Heidegger (2002: 44), "[t]o see in light [disclosure] means to become free for what makes-free, to which I comport myself". *Freedom is a particular practical relationship to destiny, and fate is the individual condition of worldliness which grounds this*.

It is in light of this conception of the disclosure of the *world* (not simply Dasein *as its Being appears to itself*) that we should interpret the existential phenomenology of *moods*, such as

the crucial passages on anxiety (Heidegger 1962: 227 [182]; 2008a: 100-1). Moods are states of being which structure the forms of revealing that Dasein experiences, not simply modes of existential comportment towards its own Being. In these states of being, appearances are *coloured* in such a way that specific kinds of experience - specific forms of disclosure - are given over to Dasein. Things stand out and are experienced in certain ways. Moods are a structural quality of Dasein's world. For example, in the time travel anime *Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Satō 2011), which I will explore in greater detail later, the protagonist Okabe Rintarō suffers from paranoia. In this case paranoia functions as a mood in which everyday objects appear in a certain form. For Okabe, *broken clocks* are specifically revealed as something to be feared, for they anticipate the unstoppable horrors that unfold every time Okabe goes back in time to prevent the death of his friend. Okabe's paranoia *produces* this reduction of everyday objects to items of dread. For Okabe, the only meaningful content of a broken clock is death. The simple equipment of clocks, when framed by paranoia, disclose the world in a certain way. Within the mood of paranoia, certain *everyday* objects are disclosed in particular ways and are only capable of producing fear. This simple form of paranoia shows a mood in which it is Dasein's enclosing relationship to its equipment-filled *world*, first and foremost, which produces unfreedom. This form of revealing effects an alienating relationship to the world and prevents one from grasping one's own Being. This shapes the possible ways we can engage with our world in a certain way. Moods, as states of being, are *structures of disclosure*, forms of worldliness, and modes of fate. As such it is always within a form of worldliness that freedom may be said to take place. A distorted form of worldliness leads to an enclosed form of revealing and a negative relationship between self and world. These issues are shown in their most prominent form for us within the scope of *technics*.

## **Technicity, Worldliness, Freedom, and Destining**

The central conceptual tools for my analysis of anime will be the notions of technicity and worldliness, which I believe to be the key points around which the philosophical qualities of anime move. Worldliness, understood as the intertwining of the being(s) of the world, the Being of the world and Being-in-the world, will be crucial in understanding the capacity of an anime to philosophise as a whole, but it is the role of technicity in anime that grounds its most radical dimensions as a medium. Heidegger is particularly relevant in this regard, since

his understanding of technology and worldliness provides a particularly vibrant way to think fate and freedom. The significance of exploring the question of technology, for Heidegger (2008b: 311), is the possibility of gaining a "free relation to it" by way of "open[ing] our human existence to the essence of technology". Technics is an existential concern of structuring our potentialities, where being closed off from the essence of technology effects a closed off relationship to the world and to ourselves. Being open to the essence of technology would then involve being open to the world, making possible an affirmative relation to our worldly facticity.

Starting with a critique of the common but insufficient idea of technology as mere instrument, Heidegger (2008b: 316-7) reinterprets this conception in the rich sense of 'cause' in classical Greek philosophy (encompassing means, purpose and efficient cause in bringing something about), which leads to an understanding of technology as a form of *presencing*, a form of disclosure wherein the absent is made open to us. This is because technology, understood as both the instrument itself and instrumental practices, involves manipulating and changing what is given in experience (whether this is nature or something already artificial), reordering it for new reasons and purposes. The technical tool is something which effects material change. In this sense the deployment of technology results in something new arising out of the old. Technological 'making' therefore suggests the coming-into-being, the becoming-present, or the "bringing-forth" of the non-present (Heidegger 2008b: 317). Technology does not, of course, bring things into existence *ex nihilo*, but involves the presencing of a new possibility of the material world. Technics therefore involves structuring ways of perceiving the world. This makes technology "a way of revealing" - a mode of disclosure (Heidegger 2008b: 318). This revealing makes possible certain ways of engaging with the world, it enables certain modes of being: it opens potentialities. In this sense, when what is concealed is revealed through technology it already anticipates and makes possible the responses to it and the actions in its wake (Heidegger 2008b: 324). Technological revealing is, in this sense, a "*destining*" (Heidegger 2008b: 330). But for Heidegger (2008b: 330), such a "destining is never a fate that compels", it is not a thorough determinism, despite the fact that technology in particular is a disclosure concerned with the presencing of the *material* world. The destining that comes with revealing is, rather, the *conditioning* of freedom (Heidegger 2008b: 330).

Technology makes new things and possibilities present to us making available new ways of interacting and engaging with the world. However, the specificity of the modern technological condition gives rise to a new problem connected to the particular mode of revealing that modern technology enacts (Heidegger 2008b: 320). The particular relation of the human to technology and nature changes in the wake of industrialisation, where the condition of industrial production is grounded in the manufacture and circulation of *energy*. The difference between pre-modern technology and modern technology - between the hammer and the steam engine - is a difference of the kind of production at work, whereas the former *transforms* one material object into another, the latter *suspends* an object in order to process, order and totalise it as an instrument for other purposes. The task of modern technology therefore becomes the extraction and storage of energy from nature (Heidegger 2008b: 320). Modern technology reveals nature as exploitable. Heidegger (2008b: 324) refers to this as an "enframing", a kind of revealing which is no longer an authentic bringing-forth, but which produces nature as a "standing reserve". Nature is conceived of, and treated, as a *resource*. The enframing of modern technology is the revealing of the world and its possibilities as standing reserve. The "danger" inherent in modern technology is that when revealing discloses qua enframing, and thereby transforms new possibilities into standing reserves, what opens up is a mere instrumental resource (Heidegger 2008b: 331). As a revealing which *only* limits, this form of enframing is a kind of enclosure. Through this, humans relate to themselves, nature and technology as static and purely instrumental resources. In this sense, the enframing of modern technology is a revealing which "drives out every other possibility of revealing" (Heidegger 2008b: 332). This marks the establishment of a form of worldliness which is enclosed and dominated by instrumental logics. It is in this condition that the human cannot face the essence of (modern) technology - enframing as revealing, enframing as "claim" - nor can it face its own essence (Heidegger 2008b: 332). Under the pressure of technological enframing and instrumental rationality humans begin to interpret themselves and others as resources. As such the danger of technological enframing is that it may enclose revealing entirely - destining and fate may become enclosed to the point where the relationship between oneself and the world is thoroughly alienated and alienating. Within enframing lies the risk that fate, Dasein's worldly condition, may slip into something *absolutely unfree* (a traditional conception of fate).

The question is, then, how are we to gain a free relation to modern technology qua revealing qua enframing? Because enframing is a destining (a way of revealing which makes possible certain engagements with the world), and consequently orders and lays bare the possible responses to it, a freer relation to technology cannot be an issue of overturning enframing (Heidegger 2008b: 329). The rejection of enframing is already precluded by enframing. Alternatively, it is rather a question of being open to enframing as part of our facticity; being open to the essence of technology, understanding the problem of enframing and reflecting on our relation to it can transform our experience of enframing (Heidegger 2008b: 329). This is because enframing, as a destining, is not simply enclosing but also disclosing. Enframing, regardless of its dangers, "starts man upon a way of revealing" (Heidegger 2008b: 337). Enframing cannot simply be an enclosed and totalised revealing, it is also a revealing *of* revealing and it makes possible new forms of revealing. That is, the essence of modern technology is what makes revealing possible for us. This revealing, which is always out of our grasp, is the laying bare of our potentialities - "this destining, the essential unfolding of technology gives man entry into something which, of himself, he can neither invent nor in any way make" (Heidegger 2008: 337). Within the essence of technology lies hidden both the danger of complete enclosure and the "saving power" of freeing disclosure (Heidegger 2008b: 334). A free relation to technology would then be a special form of authenticity more generally; it is a matter of *grasping* and *seizing* enframing in a way of revealing that does not merely produce being as a standing reserve. The possibility of technological freedom lies in taking hold of the inexhaustible disclosure which enframing permits.

It is in this mode that technology is both enframing/enclosing and opening/disclosing, where one is only achieved by the means of the other. Opening a free relation to technology therefore lies in making apparent its disclosing possibilities beyond revealing entities as standing reserves, since this would involve unveiling the potential for enframing to bring-forth. Therefore, the possibility of a free relationship to technology manifests in making it *visible*. Technology which is a bringing-forth of itself - the technology which makes technology visible and presents itself non-instrumentally - therefore opens up the possibility of an open relationship to modern technology more generally. That is, a free relation to technology rests with fleeting open technologies which must be seized as part of our

facticity before settling in an entrenched enclosing mode, before becoming thoroughly enframing. A laying bare of technology is therefore a laying bare of potentialities. This engenders a disclosed fate, and the possibility of a freer relationship to the world. It will be my contention (following and building upon Lamarre) that this making-visible of technology, this bringing-to-the-fore and laying-bare, is an essential concern of anime and is part of the construction of what I will call 'anime-worlds'. Anime keeps technology at the surface, and I will contend that a structural component of anime is the disclosure of technology *as* technology, distinct, but at the same time inseparable, from nature.

### **From the Question of Technology to the Question of Nothingness**

I will close this chapter by tying together the various threads I have developed and laying some of the ground for the next chapter with a brief exploration of Heidegger's (2008a: 93-110) conceptualisation of "the nothing" (*Das Nichts*). The questions of technology, worldliness and disclosure - which concretely ground my examination of the concepts of fate and freedom in Heidegger - are ultimately certain manifestations of the problem of ontology, the animating force behind Heidegger's philosophy. The tension between Being and beings, persisting in a philosophical and *practical* mode, is the source of much of Heidegger's (e.g. 1962: 21 [2], 152 [116]) questioning. It is the disappearance of Being from our consciousness in favour of beings that enables a fragmented and distorted disclosure of the world (e.g. Heidegger 2008a: 96). It is thinking technology in terms of mere ontical beings - instruments that populate the world, rather than a condition (a destining and a fating) of our existence - that perpetuates enframing. To unearth Being as a fundamental philosophical and practical issue and understand the free and fated Being of Dasein, it is therefore necessary to think what is fundamentally other than beings. This is the nothing.

Insofar as the nothing is broadly thought as that which is different from beings, the question of the nothing is the question of Being (Heidegger 2008a: 108-9). The problem then becomes, for Heidegger (2008a: 97-9), the issue of how to think the nothing qua "negation of the totality of beings" without reducing it to the negative activity of thought. The solution lies in how the nothing is revealed in concrete experience, rather than derived from the activity of the intellect. When conceptualising the negation of the totality of beings, this can only be

understood through the situation of "finding oneself in the midst of beings as a whole" rather than "comprehending the whole of beings in themselves" (Heidegger 2008a: 99). That is, the idea of the totality of beings and its negation lies in ways of Being-in-the-world where the world as such and its negative underside are disclosed. In boredom, for example, *particular* beings are hidden in their indifferent ready-to-handness where they are always available but never interesting or problematic, leaving us with a blunt impression of the totality (Heidegger 2008a: 99). In contrast, anxiety reveals the nothing because it is an uneasiness in the face of nothing-in-particular, a disquiet driven precisely by the fact that there can be no determinate being which is its object (Heidegger 2008a: 101). In anxiety all things become un-ready-to-hand, evading our grasp as beings. At the same time, however, it is this revealing of the nothing that discloses the Being of beings - it is only when they appear as something "radically other" that beings are brought-forth in their inherently strange quality (Heidegger 2008: 103). The nothing illuminates beings by allowing them to slip away, "[making] possible in advance the revelation of all beings in general" (Heidegger 2008a: 103). It is therefore the nothing which enables the experience of beings in the first place. The nothing grounds Being-in-the-world and makes Dasein's relation to beings and to itself possible (Heidegger 2008a: 103). The nothing lays out the potentiality of all determination in general. The action of Dasein qua Being-in-the-world is underwritten by the state of the nothing producing its fate and destiny. The nothing provides the ontological fating which grounds the possibility of freedom. The nothing is Being.

From this we can read Heidegger's comments on technology and science together. Forms of modern science, in their obsession with beings, deny the nothing and hide Being (Heidegger 2008a: 96). This focus on beings, a concealing form of thought, maps to the instrumental rationality that dominates technological thinking under modern conditions of enframing. It is under such a condition, where technology is thought in purely ontical terms as instrument, that the question of Being - in its concrete forms in everyday life - disappears. It is this vanishing of the question of Being in the everyday practical world that propagates instrumental rationality and establishes the negative effects of technological enframing. Enframing lies in an everyday loss of the nothing and it is through this that an unfree relationship to technology arises.



I will contend that anime's fascination with (an open relationship to) its own technological condition, the ways it thinks its own Being, and its treatment of everyday Being-in-the-world and equipment creates a complex and active form of worldliness - both in the contingent narrative themes that arise and the core attributes of the medium. Through these fundamentally Heideggerian aspects, anime often explores fate and freedom in new and interesting ways. These conditions are part of what I will call *anime-worlds* and, I will argue, it is through these qualities that (an) anime 'thinks' philosophically. For Heidegger, such concerns about technology and worldliness are grounded in the question of Being, which is essentially the question of the nothing. In the next chapter I will provide a brief examination of the ideas of fate and freedom in the philosophy of the Kyōto School, for which nothingness is a central concern. Nothingness will show itself to be a far richer problem than Heidegger paints it to be.

## Chapter Two

### Passing Through Nothingness: Teleology and Dialectic in the Kyōto School

*Seitō Hakari* (誠刀「銚」: tr. "Scales", the True Blade') is a sword upon which one weighs oneself. It is not a sword that cuts people. It is a sword that cuts oneself, a sword that tests oneself, a sword that knows oneself. Thus it is an edgeless sword. You could call it *Mutō* (無刀: tr. 'No-Blade' or 'Nothing-Blade').

- *Togame*, Katanagatari (Motonaga 2010)

The Kyōto School ('*Kyōtōgakuha*': 京都学派) is a philosophical tradition that traverses conventional Western/Eastern dichotomies. As a school it combines elements of Western philosophy (particularly Classical Greek philosophy and German Idealism/Romanticism) with Japanese Mahāyāna (particularly Zen and Pure Land) Buddhisms to produce an interesting and original philosophy. Though difficult to define, the School generally revolves around a particular uptake of the philosophy of Japanese academic (and Zen practitioner) Nishida Kitarō. In light of its complex origins and thorough integration of Western and traditional Japanese philosophy, it has many possibilities for innovative contributions to philosophical debates about fate, freedom, self, and world. There are several scholars who have developed their own philosophies out of this broader project such as Nishitani Keiji and Abe Masao, as well as contemporary philosophers such as Ōhashi Ryōsuke. However the most important key debates and the central concepts upon which the school is founded come from the school's earliest figures, Nishida and Tanabe Hajime.

In this chapter, I will develop an account of the relationships between fate and freedom, self and world, as they can be drawn from the encounter between Nishida's and Tanabe's philosophical projects. To do so, I will explore Nishida's practical conception of active intuition and contradictory identity alongside Tanabe's 'metanoetic' dialectical approach to

philosophy<sup>12</sup>. These philosophies develop a vivid way of thinking fate and freedom in terms of worldliness through a critical deployment of the concept of 'Nothingness'. In part, I will also situate this account with respect to my previous chapter on Martin Heidegger in order to develop a more open and flexible, but robust and concrete, hermeneutic to deploy in the context of thinking anime philosophically. There are many Western philosophers (particularly in the Continental tradition) whose work resonates with Kyōto School philosophy. Besides Heidegger, there are profound connections with G. W. F. Hegel, F. W. J. Schelling and Gilles Deleuze in particular. My reading of Nishida and Tanabe will reflect these harmonies.

Though it may seem too convenient, or at worst Orientalist, to interpret a Japanese art form which arose in the mid-twentieth century (anime) in terms of a Japanese philosophical tradition that peaked in the mid-twentieth century (the Kyōto School), I believe that the philosophical connections are too profound to ignore. The Kyōto School and anime share in a specifically modern way of approaching certain cultural-philosophical problems, some of which are more specific to Japanese contexts. With regards to technology in particular, the School shares little ground with anime<sup>13</sup>, but when it comes to a particular way of understanding the world, they often explore ideas with a strange harmony. Although, unlike in the case of Heidegger, Kyōto School philosophers generally go without direct recognition in contemporary anime, there are many rich parallels to be explored. In particular, anime is stunningly open about exploring questions of Nothingness in ways that are rare outside of Kyōto School scholarship. *Kara no Kyōkai* (Various 2007-2013) is a striking example, where in the epilogue film the protagonists discuss Nothingness and the *self and world* of the heroine Ryōgi Shiki. However, the connections between anime and the Kyōto School are not *merely* narrative, thematic, or interpretive. Anime, as a particularly radical form of animation, constantly poses the question of how life arises from nothingness, with the *being* of movement and life always becoming problems. Simultaneously, as will become evident, both

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<sup>12</sup> It may seem curious to those familiar with the Kyōto School that I will not provide an interpretation of Nishitani's (1982) philosophy in this chapter, since he is the most prominent figure of the school who offered direct engagement with the work of Martin Heidegger. This is because, in the development of my hermeneutic framework, I wish to focus on the most diverse aspects of the school, and its earliest proponents most effectively illustrate this. It is also, in a certain sense, too 'easy' to read Nishitani in Heideggerian terms, and developing a hermeneutic framework from the two may deprive us of Nishitani's most original ideas.

<sup>13</sup> The Kyōto School philosophers I engage with directly in this chapter, Nishida and Tanabe, do not generally engage with technology as a philosophical question. However, others connected to the school, such as Nishitani (1982: 81-89) and Tosaka Jun (2013), do.

anime and the Kyōto School always ground themselves in fusions of concrete everydayness and the 'mystical', the material and ideal, and the immanent and transcendent. In both we also witness the profound intertwining of Western and Japanese culture.

## Absolute Nothingness: Negation Beyond Being

Central to Kyōto School thought is the concept of 'Absolute Nothingness' (*zettai mu*: 絶対無)<sup>14</sup>. The notion, first rigorously developed in Nishida's philosophy, is so crucial that it is frequently cited as the most non-arbitrary and consistent way of defining the School and identifying its philosophical thought and lineage (Davis 2010: §3). Absolute Nothingness is used to negotiate a number of philosophical problems such as the possibility of practical freedom<sup>15</sup>, the ontological 'ground' of the "interdependent origination" or "reciprocal expression" of being, and how we might affirm the phenomenal world (Davis 2010: §3.2; Nishida 1987: 49). Although it is a contested concept within the school itself, there are key characteristics which persist through its conceptual history.

In order to think against the totalisation of philosophies grounded on being (which relativise nothingness), Kyōto School philosophers emphasise the *absolute* quality of the phenomenon of Nothingness. Absolute Nothingness is not mere negation, non-being or absence of being (Nishida 1987: 78, 83; Wargo 2005: 79). It is not simply that which *remains* once being has been extracted. To understand Absolute Nothingness on such terms would reduce it to a relation of being. For Kyōto School philosophers, Nothingness cannot be conceived of as mere lack. This is because Absolute Nothingness is a way of conceptualising "that which is *radically* other than beings" (Davis 2010: §3.1, my emphasis). Through this, Absolute Nothingness can articulate the possibility of a historical world without recourse to *substantive* metaphysical foundations. Nothingness is vital in thinking the way in which "our historical reality [...] transforms itself without underlying substance or ground" (Nishida

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<sup>14</sup> Though some Kyōto School philosophers (such as Nishitani) may not use the exact phrase 'Absolute Nothingness' with the same frequency that others do (such as Tanabe), it is notable that, as I shall explore later, they all refer to a nothingness beyond mere negation (a nothingness with an absolute character). For the sake of consistency, I will use the phrase 'Absolute Nothingness' for any use of this *specific* idea of nothingness throughout, except when using direct quotes. 'Nothingness' will be used as a blank concept from which I will characterise Absolute Nothingness and 'nothingness' will serve as the most generic term.

<sup>15</sup> Questions of practical freedom are a key point of harmony between Western and traditional Japanese philosophy (particularly Zen Buddhism) with which the Kyōto School engages.

1987: 62). This groundlessness ties into the absoluteness of Nothingness when thought in this way. That is, the Kyōto School's philosophy of Absolute Nothingness is, to a certain extent, a "meontology" or an anti-metaphysics<sup>16</sup> (Davis 2010: §3.1). One key problem that the Kyōto School philosophers grapple with is how to conceptualise this without reducing Absolute Nothingness to being (making it substantive) or *lack* of being (making it purely negative). In light of these components, Absolute Nothingness is used as a way of rejecting, and conceptualising an alternative to, the metaphysical dichotomies of dualism/monism, difference/identity and subjective/objective (Nishida 1987: 64; Wargo 2005: 170-171). From this brief examination of Absolute Nothingness alone, it is clear how an exploration of fate and freedom in terms of the relationship between self and world is a central concern of Kyōto School philosophy.

## **Nishida Kitarō on Place: Nothingness, Contradictory Identity and the Human-Historical World**

Nishida's mature philosophy is grounded in a certain concept of an existential relationship between self and world. This notion is what he calls "religious experience" (Nishida 1987: 49). At bottom, this refers not to a mystical or miraculous theological event, but to the concrete phenomenological experience of practical contradictions wherein one's own existence is problematised (Nishida 1987: 65). When one is confronted with the notion of themselves as irreducibly both subject and object simultaneously, it is impossible (within the confines of objective formal logic) to resolve the conceptions of oneself as a wholly transcendental consciousness and as a wholly physical being (Nishida 1987: 65). The central figure of this movement of contradiction is our conscious relation with death: as biological beings who know we are necessarily condemned to die, doomed to *nothingness* and subsequently have our existence structured as temporal and singular, humans *enact* "the ultimate self-contradiction" of "exist[ing] while being absolutely nothing" (Nishida 1987: 78). This source of existential tension, the experience of oneself as the identity of contradictory elements, is the religious experience. In such an experience, one encounters the "bottomless self-contradiction" of one's ontological foundations (Nishida 1987: 66). The *ambiguous* condition

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<sup>16</sup> I use such a term with caution, since the concept of Absolute Nothingness is certainly metaphysical in some sense. What lacks in this 'metaphysics', however, is both the structural bias towards being/beings and much of the intellectual baggage of the history of Western Metaphysics.

of human life is a *contradictory* condition which reveals the Absolute Nothingness which 'grounds' one's existence.

It is in this realisation of contradiction that one's conscious self is concretely negated (Nishida 1987: 72). This negation is due to religious experience, which violates merely mechanical everyday activity<sup>17</sup>. The sense of self that operates in unreflective activity disintegrates. It is in this sense that in religious experience,

[t]he self does not suffer over something that merely transcends it, something external to it. It suffers over that which concerns its very existence, its very life. The more deeply it reflects on its own life, the more it agonizes over the religious question. (Nishida 1987: 81)

Religious experience in this sense is similar to an existential mood - a relationship to the world - which makes possible the disclosure of Being. In more familiar and particular terms, Nishida (1987: 77-8, 88) characterises this as the realisation of one's existence as determined by both death and life - we do not merely die as living biological beings, we *know* of our immanent and imminent death which underwrites our life. Religious experience is the confrontation with death; it is the self-aware experience of living *through* death and dying *through* life. In a sense it is a crisis of anxiety, where one is forced to face the endless void at the heart of their own Being. This is because religious experience is an existential condition which reorients the self towards the Absolute Nothingness that is its Being, since it is only within the place of Absolute Nothingness that this contradictory identity makes sense. It is this "place of Absolute Nothingness" ('*zettai mu no basho*': 絶対無の場所) as the *concrete* ground of the self and its world which stands at the centre of Nishida's philosophy (Davis 2010: §3.3). From this, questions of the self, world, fate, and freedom are reoriented towards a logic of contradiction, since they become questions of how the force of Absolute Nothingness operates and *creates*.

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<sup>17</sup> Already, strong connections to Heidegger should be clear. In this case, the experience of the loss of the ready-to-hand and its significance for the revealing of Being is particularly relevant. The religious question and the question of Being as fundamental existential (and practical) issues for the individual/Dasein will be another key point of resonance.

Thus for Nishida a conception of genuine activity must therefore account for the unity of contradiction, a task impossible within any objective logic or phenomenology of beings. It is in the way this sense of activity is conceptualised - amongst the relations between life, expressive activity, active intuition, and the human-historical world - that the notions of fate and freedom are developed. For Nishida (2013a: 36; 2013b: 76, my emphasis), the notion that a thing *acts*<sup>18</sup> contains the idea that what acts changes its own qualities, since expression (the thing which expresses or acts, the expression or act itself, and that which is expressed or acted upon) implies both teleology and "*reciprocal* independence". In action, subject determines object and object determines subject and through this dialectic the subject itself is transformed (Nishida 2013b: 79). That which changes cannot be fundamentally independent and detached from that which is changed. Action requires both unity and differentiation. Therefore, the unity which is required for action indicates that all change involves the change of the self - insofar as one expresses, the object of expression is always oneself. For Nishida (2013a: 37; 1987: 49) this required unity can only be a non-substantial *force* - the dialectic which unifies but simultaneously differentiates - Absolute Nothingness. However, this cannot be understood in terms of a simple subject/object dialectic, but rather requires their originary differentiation and unity in Absolute Nothingness which grounds their contradictory identity and makes action possible. This is the *place* of Absolute Nothingness, the fundamental situating world as the condition in which subject and object arise (Nishida 2013b: 71). When Nishida (2013b: 71, 74) speaks of active intuition, he refers to this structure of action as a fundamental condition of the relationship between self and world: even passive "immediate perception" is active codetermination. That is, existence is essentially active and in being active reveals this contradictory and teleological structure and force. From this notion of existence as involving a constant play of subjective and objective determinations it follows that existence, the world and the ground of Being are necessarily *creative* and *transformative* (Nishida 1987: 57, 71; 2013b: 74). In this creativity which is central to action, the potentialities which open for one's existence are simultaneously unveiled and realised. All action is in some sense a

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<sup>18</sup> The word '*hataraku*' (働く), when it appears in Nishida, is generally rendered by translators as 'act/acting'. However, given the emphasis that some contemporary readers (such as William Haver himself in his introduction to his translation of *Ontology of Production*) have placed on the influence of Marx on Nishida's thought, it may be appropriate at times to opt for the alternative common translation 'work'. In this case it is noteworthy that the title of the essay 'Expressive Activity' in Japanese is '*Hyōgen Sayō*' (表現作用) which may suggest a terminological distinction which is lost in translation.

*revealing* of the world. This creativity is a teleological projection of the self through both the individual and the collective; it is a *fating* and, in Heideggerian terms, a *destining*.

It is only through this mode of expressive activity or active intuition that the self can be open to religious experience. It is only within the mode of the self as dynamic revealing of the world that the subject/object relation is disclosed as contradiction. This reflective mode of activity, as a determination of the human-historical world, is what opens the problematisation of the self when it confronts its own being as subject and object - not simply as a paradox, a confusion to be resolved, but as a contradiction which can only be grounded dialectically in Absolute Nothingness. The way one finds one's subjective will determined physically in one's objective physical surroundings (through expressive activity) is the existential experience of a breach which unveils the identity of contradiction. The self confronts its own negation in active intuition. So for Nishida (1987: 49, my emphasis), "[i]t is in this structure of biconditional, interexpressive, *mutual revealment* of self and other that an individual act is an individual act".

From this, Nishida (1987: 51, 53) gives a concrete definition of the place of Absolute Nothingness, the absolute ground of infinite(ly creative) being, as the "human-historical world". In understanding beings as products of the *self*-negating force of Absolute Nothingness, individuals are articulated as the "self-determination of the absolute present" - expressions of the world and instances of the world's own becoming (Nishida 1987: 110). It is from this understanding of action that the notion of freedom can be articulated. Freedom, in its various forms, must be a certain relation to the structures of one's own acting. It is in the mode of disclosure of the self's determinations in the world, where "teleological unity is made conscious" and the structures of action become explicit, that pure mental activity can become free (Nishida 2013a: 40). As with Heidegger, we see that freedom opens with a certain disclosed relationship to one's fate. However, this form of freedom is constituted by a formal and rational self-conscious mode of expression (Nishida 1987: 60). Self-reflective active intuition in this form has not yet reached absolute self-negation. It is when expressive activity is disclosed as the historically creative dynamic *contradiction* of subject and object, where one reaches the impasse of their Being, that the religious experience occurs and concrete practical freedom arises (Nishida 1987: 110-111). This genuine and vivid freedom

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occurs when we discover that active intuition, the form of acting, is a dying to oneself. This is a new relationship of disclosure to the world as transformative expression of the self - not simply disclosure as revealing or illumination as it is in Heidegger, but disclosure as *enlightenment*<sup>19</sup> which returns experience to the everyday in the frame of a new individuality (Nishida 1987: 110-111). This is why Nishida (1987: 72) insists on distinguishing Kantian self-legislative freedom under the rational construction of the moral law from the concrete freedom only possible with the self-negating relationship to one's own Being as the determination of the creative human-historical world. In a certain sense, the religious experience is where the individual realises the will of the world as their own. The individual can see themselves as a self-expression of the world, where their ownmost Being is directed towards the determination of the world. The individual is simultaneously harshly *fated* through the world and absolutely *free* through it.

*Kara no Kyōkai* (Various 2007-2013) is a provocative example of such ideas. As I shall explore later in Chapter Three, the protagonist Ryōgi Shiki undergoes a profound change after a near-death experience, gaining the so-called 'Mystic Eyes of Death Perception'. Her condition enables her to literally see the seams which stitch the world together. These are lines which disclose the connections holding things together as always-already severed. Every object she sees falls apart before her eyes. A mere touch of these lines shatters, kills, the object. Shiki can see and touch death itself. In Shiki's case, her confrontation with death enables her to see the chaotic and irreparable condition of the world - it is held together by nothing. Shiki knows better than anyone else that all life is constantly haunted by its immanent and imminent death. The person who truly *knows* death sees in their death the death of all things, and sees their death only in the death of all things. Shiki's religious experience of her own death reveals (to her) her own ability to unravel the world - precisely because she *is* the world. This is how we must contextualise the abstract and mystical conversation which closes the film series in its *Epilogue* (Kondo 2011). One of Shiki's personalities claims that she *is* the world. Her absolute embeddedness is her absolute power. This is also how we should understand the film series' assertions about the singularity of

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<sup>19</sup> Nishida does not generally use the word 'enlightenment' except when quoting traditional Zen figures. When it is used, however, the emphasis on concrete revealing or disclosure and freedom is clear. I use the term cautiously and suggest that a traditionally mystical reading of the term is inappropriate.

killing - a person always and only kills once in their life, because all destruction is self-destruction.

From this reading of the ontology of Nothingness and the transformative experience of one's own Being disclosed through religious experience, it is tempting to read Nishida as centrally Heideggerian<sup>20</sup>. However, it is important to note where Nishida's philosophy must be thought in more original terms. One of the key differences is that in Nishida's logic of Nothingness, the self/world relation is one of mutual *construction* where active intuition (disclosure and laying bare, where the self is considered active) and expressive activity animate the dialectical activity through the unifying and differentiating situating power of Absolute Nothingness. The ontological world, the Nothingness in which self and world are infinitely differentiating, but never yet differentiated, breathes life into co-determining and co-originating activity. The crucial difference is that the world, by virtue of being the place of Absolute Nothingness, is not a *characteristic* of Dasein, since Dasein proper has yet to arise. Yet at the same time, by characterising Absolute Nothingness as the *dynamic and self-creative* human-historical world which makes itself by negating itself through the individuals it creates, Nishida collapses the ontical/ontological distinction between facticity and temporality. This is why he maintains that expressive activity qua "the self-determination of the absolute present" is *eschatological* (Nishida 1987: 111, 113). Animated by teleological projection and the self's temporal finitude, it is for *ordinary* activity that freedom is *ontologically* significant. For Nishida, it is crucial to emphasise the permanently active position of the individual in relation to its world. This is stated most clearly in a brief critique of existential phenomenology:

In the world of historical transformation, expression is a force, a formative vector. It is not merely something like "meaning," as the phenomenologists and hermeneuticists are saying. These scholars abstract expression from its vectorial character. Phenomenological meaning is the content of the world considered non-transformationally [...]. In the world of historical

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<sup>20</sup> As William Haver points out in his translation notes to 'Expressive Activity' (Nishida 2013a: 190n13), Nishida himself, given his criticisms of existential phenomenology, would probably be unhappy with such a direct comparison. However, some contemporary commentators (see Davis 2010, whose tone in describing Nishida and the Kyōto School is clearly Heideggerian) would suggest their convergences significantly outweigh their divergences.

transformation, there is neither mere objective facticity nor subjective act.

(Nishida 1987: 104)

## **Tanabe Hajime on Acting Nothingness: Metanoetic Freedom and the Species**

Tanabe, in contrast to Nishida, offers a way of conceptualising the relationship between Absolute Nothingness, self, and world that is thoroughly dialectical and focussed on self-realisation in a concrete socio-political system. He develops this philosophy in part out of criticisms of Nishida, resulting in the two representing perhaps the most polarised philosophies in the Kyōto School<sup>21</sup>. Tanabe's philosophy conceptualises the nuances of Absolute Nothingness differently, offers a different account of concrete action in the social sphere, and characterises the transformative action of freedom in an alternative way.

The divergences between Nishida and Tanabe are best introduced through their mutual criticisms. Nishida and Tanabe refer to each other indirectly through rather sharp criticisms. The most well-established criticism Tanabe directed towards Nishida's philosophy is the charge of *mysticism* (Davis 2010: §3.4). Nishida's notion of a 'place' of Absolute Nothingness that grounds being and a concept of religious experience which relates existence to Absolute Nothingness as an *object* of intuition leads his philosophy towards a metaphysics of being, rather than a philosophy of nothingness (Davis 2010: §3.4; Tanabe 1969: 283). Through this, Nishida's philosophy becomes bound by orthodox characterisations of a religious Absolute. As an extension of this criticism, Tanabe suggests that characterising Absolute Nothingness in terms of an originary *place* requires that we think it in terms of being - 'place' implies a substantial situating foundation, rather than a *force* of co-origination. This suggests that in Nishida's philosophy the world is conceived of as a situating whole, or a totality of being(s). Tanabe (1969: 280) suggests that Nishida's naïve characterisation of Absolute Nothingness as the untainted ground from which beings arise nullifies the dialectical significance of the identity of contradiction and instead transforms Absolute Nothingness into Absolute Being. This is because anything other than a pure mutual dialectic would subsume contradiction and Nothingness under the simple identity of the Absolute (Tanabe 1969: 280). This makes

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<sup>21</sup> Some commentators suggest that the two thinkers can be brought together, enabling new ways of thinking about the Kyōto School and the common ground that unites its philosophers. See Sugimoto (2011) as an example.

disclosing and transformative existential moments (such as religious experience) abstract and reflective cognitive experiences of a mystical Absolute rather than concrete socio-political practices - what Tanabe (1969: 282) calls "the experience of practice and faith through conversion". From these criticisms Tanabe then develops the idea that Absolute Nothingness can only be conceived of in terms of an existential dialectic. Within Tanabe's philosophy, Absolute Nothingness cannot be understood as unifying in any meaningful way. In a certain sense, Tanabe may be seen to invert many of Nishida's positions and prioritise difference over unity, discontinuity over continuity, the dialectical over the topological, and the socio-politically religious experience (faith) over the individually religious (crisis of anxiety)<sup>22</sup>.

To avoid the problems of mysticism and reducing Nothingness to being, Tanabe bases his conceptualisation of Absolute Nothingness around notions of "species" and "metanoetics"<sup>23</sup>. These terms are used to characterise the active relationship between Absolute Nothingness, the individual and their social surroundings<sup>24</sup>. Tanabe (1969: 274) uses the notion of species to refer to the concrete social conditions which situate the individual as both a limited (determined) and creative (active) being. Specifically, the species is the cultural formation which confronts the will of the individual, restricting and determining it (Tanabe 1969: 274). These socio-political conditions, within which the individual finds themselves, establish their limits and possibilities as an active being. The species is 'society' - that which is produced in the mediation and mutual negation of the social totality and individual will (Tanabe 1969: 275-7). The species initially stands opposed to the individual as that which negates, integrates and oppresses it. In this form of negation the individual *passes through* Nothingness, dying to the species. In its politically submissive *faith*, where the individual gives itself over to "a despair in which we renounce all hope for and claim to justification",

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<sup>22</sup> Such a comparison needs to be made carefully, however, since the concept of Absolute Nothingness generally refuses binary characterisations. However, in articulating the sharper points of distinction for a Western philosophical audience, mapping these general oppositions out in this way may be useful.

<sup>23</sup> "Metanoetics" is the translation of *zangedō* (懺悔道) offered by translators and commentators. It may also be translated, more literally, as the 'way of repentance'. "Metanoetics" loses the etymological connection between *zangedō* and *zange* (懺悔; tr. 'repentance'). *Dō/tō* (道 which I have rendered as 'way') is a significant suffix and suggests an art or practice as in *Shintō* (神道; tr. 'way of the gods'), *kadō* (華道; tr. 'way of the flower' - flower arranging, also known as *ikebana* 生け花) and *kendō* (剣道; tr. 'way of the sword').

<sup>24</sup> Some scholars suggest that Tanabe's thought is characterised by a significant break or religious turn which separates his use of the terms "species" and "metanoetics" (Davis 2010: §3.4). However, I will treat these terms and their development as consistent. It is noteworthy that both of Tanabe's major works on species and metanoetics, which I draw upon here, were originally published in the same year.

the individual surrenders to the species (Tanabe 1986: 5). But it is in this negation of the individual that the species qua oppressor of life is dissolved, since it "loses its nature of opposition" and function of social integration (Tanabe 1969: 278). So faith is not merely a surrender to the political order (an acceptance of the status quo, or the path of least resistance), but a *double negation* - a negation of the self and a negation of society. It is in this way that this mediation of the species existentially grounds political ideals (Tanabe 1969: 276). Such ideals may even be the subject of this concrete enacting of faith, but for Tanabe (1986: 8) the primary function of faith is through love and compassion. For Tanabe (1969: 276) this negation is the "death and resurrection" of the individual through faith, which is the self-negation of the species. It is within this dialectic that the social world is self-determining, self-forming and self-expressing. The creative spontaneity of individual freedom therefore lies in the "activity of nothingness" where the subject is negated and reinscribed in the species where it may be affirmed (Tanabe 1986: 120). It is the individual's negation which gives it the character of a determining factor in the species. This is Absolute Nothingness as the ground of the endless self-negating dialectic of the species which simultaneously determines the possibilities of the individual and opens up their active transformation. It is in this sense that the free will is the "will of nothingness" rather than the "will to nothingness" (Tanabe 1986: 119, author's emphasis).

This experience of absolute negation is the central concern of Tanabe's philosophy of metanoetics. The practical socio-political experience of a faith beyond pure reason which negates the individual enables pure activity as a *determination* of the world (Tanabe 1986: 120). In this sense, freedom is an issue of becoming-nothing. With this understanding of Absolute Nothingness, however, Tanabe does not develop a simple social philosophy nor does he purely repeat a Hegelian understanding of individual and collective freedom and self-realisation. Tanabe's philosophy includes the same emphasis on activity and passing through Nothingness as Nishida, but reoriented towards one's becoming within a concrete social situation. In contrast to Nishida, for Tanabe freedom is found not in dying to *oneself* but in dying to the *world*. In this sense fate and destining does not lie merely in one's teleological transformative projection *into* the world, but is instead the transformative being-*of*-the-world. One either struggles against the species, or negates themselves through faith - in both the individual is thoroughly determined and fated. However it is in the act of

becoming(-nothingness), self-determining integration into the world, that faith opens up the possibility of concrete freedom.

As with Nishida, *Kara no Kyōkai* (Various 2007-2013) serves as a striking example of such philosophical thinking. In the second and seventh films of the series - *Satsujin Kōsatsu (Part One)* (Nonaka 2007) and *Satsujin Kōsatsu (Part Two)* (Takizawa 2009) - we are given a particularly vivid picture of the faith of co-protagonist Kokutō Mikiya. In these films, Shiki is depicted as a vicious and impulsive murderer, driven by a fundamental desire to end the lives of others. Despite the fact that Mikiya is given the most compelling reasons and evidence to believe that she is a brutal killer (he even finds her standing next to a freshly decapitated corpse, blood still spraying out of it), he continues to have faith that Shiki has never killed anyone. It is through his faithful attachment to Shiki that he 'encounters' the supernatural. He begins work as an investigator for the mage Aozaki Touko, Shiki's employer and teacher, and is introduced to the supernatural world. What is fascinating, however, is that throughout the entire film series Mikiya is never party to an actual supernatural experience. He may be absent, unconscious, unaware or simply looking away, but he never directly experiences the supernatural (though he may unknowingly fall victim to it). It is only by way of his unyielding faith in Shiki - his unconditional love for her - that he is integrated into the (new) social reality of the magical. It is through this integration into a new social (and metaphysical) world that faith allows him to act in new ways - it lays out new possibilities for Mikiya and his world, even though he never sees or experiences the supernatural himself. The new (potentialities, possibilities) presents itself through his act of pure faith in Shiki. Mikiya's lack of knowledge about the supernatural is entirely inconsequential: disclosure is not something that is constituted by or grants *knowledge*. Rather, it is faith which makes such disclosure possible. The unveiling of the world is not an event given by a new epistemically substantial experience, a change of knowledge, but the act of faith itself. It is in this faith, the negation of his own experience in favour of his dedication to Shiki, that the disclosure of the world occurs and new possibilities arise for Mikiya. Faith is a fating and a freeing.

## **Towards the Question of Anime**

In Chapters One and Two I have attempted to open up certain questions of fate and freedom through an exploration of self and world. These critical engagements have been hardly exhaustive, and merely serve to lay the groundwork for an open hermeneutic framework for investigating the thematic content of anime in Chapter Three. Fate and freedom are common themes in many art forms, but in anime these themes are particularly interesting. These chapters have an open, interpretive and instrumental character for my readings of the philosophical themes of anime. They serve the purpose of creating a theoretical base and reference point for thinking how anime narratives can be philosophical. I do not wish to suggest that the examples I examine take a specific conscious position with regard to the philosophies of Heidegger and the Kyōto School. However, these chapters have also served the purpose of laying some of the conceptual foundations for anime-philosophy more generally. The meaning of worlds, significance of technics and even the functions of Absolute Nothingness will all have an important role in the philosophical characterisation of anime.

## Chapter Three

### Anime-Worlds and Anime-Philosophy: Fate, Freedom and Animetics

*It's like there's a labyrinth of mysteries keeping me alive.*

- Mifune Ryuuko, *Denpa Onna to Seishun Otoko*<sup>25</sup> (Shinbō 2011)

In the previous two chapters I have sought to elucidate some of the philosophical ground for the problematics that are relevant to anime by briefly engaging with Martin Heidegger, Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime. In particular I have focussed on the themes of fate and freedom with respect to worldliness in order to open up a philosophical interpretive space. Throughout this chapter these problematics will arise in the context of a hermeneutic framework for understanding the narrative contents of particular anime and how this material connects to aesthetic and technical elements. However, this exploration will also be central to articulating the fundamental philosophical operations at work in anime - its 'ontological' aspect. Specifically, the ontological understandings of worldliness that have appeared will form part of the core of a philosophical understanding of the medium of anime. Fate and freedom, as a theme, serves as a particularly profound philosophical trajectory through which such an ontology is animated. My hermeneutically-based analyses of fate and freedom in particular anime, which will close this chapter, therefore function in order to concretely point towards to how anime can *do* philosophy. First, however, I will use the media theory of Thomas Lamarre to articulate the connections between anime and philosophy at the level of the medium. I will then explore how narrative content is powerfully tied to these problems by developing a concept of *anime-worlds* out of a revised understanding of Daniel Yacavone's conceptualisation of film-worlds. It is only through a concept of anime-worlds, I contend, that we can finally arrive at a rich and holistic understanding of what *anime-philosophy* might mean.

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<sup>25</sup> Published in English as *Ground Control to Psychoelectric Girl*, *Denpa Onna to Seishun Otoko* literally translates to 'Electromagnetic Girl and the Adolescent Boy'. However, denpa (電波; tr. 'electromagnetic wave' or 'radio wave') is sometimes used to describe a delusional or schizophrenic person.



## To Film, To Animate, To Be: Animation and Philosophy

Contemporary animation scholarship is somewhat fragmented, particularly with regards to anime. In the broad field of animation studies, debates often concern the relationship between cinema and animation. Theorists such as Alan Cholodenko (2008: §II), drawing upon the legacy of early animation scholars like Imamura Taihei<sup>26</sup>, seek to challenge the idea that cinema is ontologically prior to animation by arguing that all cinema is ultimately animation. Other theorists such as William Schaffer (2006) situate animation alongside established film-philosophy<sup>27</sup>. Another fascinating line of inquiry concerns the politico-material conditions of the animated image (Furuhata 2011; Driscoll 2002). However, when the topic is anime specifically, there are no central established debates or schools of thought. What work there is, is highly diverse in an underpopulated field. Academic engagement with anime is often on the level of literary or cultural theory, such as in the work of Susan J. Napier (2001, 2005), where symbolism and narrative structure in anime are read critically in tandem with contemporary Japanese culture, mythology or gender critique (see also Ortega 2007 and Mizuno 2007). Such theorisation seeks to unveil how anime reproduces, critiques or troubles particular cultural (or, occasionally, philosophical) norms. Other explorations of anime focus on sociological elements such as cross-media proliferation in 'otaku' culture, looking at the connections between manga, light novels, visual novels<sup>28</sup>, video games, anime and merchandising in terms of commodification (e.g. Steinberg 2006). Such approaches explore anime within the bounds of narrative text and cultural object, using anime "to pose 'high textual' speculative questions" or "[as] a source of information about Japan" (Lamarre 2009: x).

Another line of inquiry regards the aesthetics of otaku cultural media. Dani Cavallaro (2013), for example, explores the relationship between traditional Japanese aesthetics, its cultural, religious and philosophical grounding, and contemporary anime. These analyses are generally conducted through traditional aesthetic concepts, such as *mono no aware*

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<sup>26</sup> On Imamura and contemporary animation theory see Driscoll (2002) and Furuhata (2011).

<sup>27</sup> In Schaffer's case, the emphasis is on both how animation problematises Gilles Deleuze's film-philosophy and the possibilities that lie in a Deleuzian understanding of animation.

<sup>28</sup> These are three other key sources of narrative fiction in Japanese otaku culture. Manga are comics, light novels are semi-illustrated novellas, and visual novels are extended narrative video game/novel hybrids which often feature interactive elements, constant visual accompaniments, some animation, and audio.

(物の哀れ; tr. 'pathos of things'<sup>29</sup>) or *kire* (切れ; tr. 'cut'), and the ways they are reappropriated and deployed for symbolic purposes in contemporary contexts (Cavallaro 2013: e.g. 48). Other explorations oriented towards broadly aesthetic concerns seek to interpret anime through a critical reading of thematic, aesthetic and technical elements in terms of more traditional film theory (such as psychoanalytic film theory) and similar approaches to how film and animation apparatus determine modes of viewer engagement (Ruddell 2008: 121, 123-6).

In such a sparse field, explorations of the relationship between anime and *philosophy* are rare at best. Key examples of these rare philosophical engagements with anime interpret thematic material in anime through traditional Japanese religion and philosophy such as Japanese Buddhism or Shintō (Bigelow 2009). However, such inquiries often underemphasise the technical and aesthetic *philosophical* issues at stake in anime (though the role of animation-as-medium in making particular thematic meanings possible is generally acknowledged) as well as risking an almost wholesale identification of anime with a Japanese cultural framework. These examinations of anime also fail to address the well-established concerns of film-philosophy. As such, there is much light to be shed on anime through film-philosophy inquiries and a thoroughly philosophical understanding of the significance of anime (individually and generally).

The primary exception to the lack of philosophical engagement with anime is Lamarre's media theory. Lamarre presents a philosophical consideration of anime focussed on its technical qualities, aiming at a kind of specificity thesis for anime (2009: xxii-xxiii). A specificity thesis here refers to delineating the area of a medium in order to determine what is special about it. In order to do this Lamarre develops a philosophy of anime technics - a specific understanding of the technological condition of animation and what qualities it gives the medium. In particular, these issues, as questions of *animating*, are questions of *movement*. For Lamarre (2002: 331), "[a]nimation presents qualities of movement that differ profoundly from live-action cinema". This means that at the level of the medium - film as

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<sup>29</sup> Cavallaro's (2013: 39) alternative translation is "sadness of things". However, this may fail to capture the poetic significance and sense of care that the phenomenon (exemplified by falling sakura petals) the concept refers to elicits. 'Aware' also connotes compassion and charity.

moving images - animation is *philosophically* distinct from live-action cinema. In pursuing this notion of anime specificity through a broad philosophical exploration of anime technics, Lamarre is therefore the most central theorist for *anime-philosophy*.

## Anime's Philosophical Technicity

At its most basic, animation is not mimicry of live-action cinema. Even in the case of rotoscoping (where individual animation cels are produced through tracing live-action footage), the composition of movement is different since it must be *constructed* from individual frames rather than filmed in real-time. Lamarre (2002: 333) describes this as animation's decoding and recoding of movement, where the idea of (a) movement in a particular sequence must first be broken down before being rebuilt. Animation "reaches into so-called live action and unravels it" (Lamarre 2002: 333). But even further for Lamarre (2006: 121), anime is distinct from much traditional animation at the technical level because the *way* movement is constructed in the image (and the resulting *sense* of image-movement) is fundamentally different. On the other hand, despite this technical difference Lamarre does not seek to strongly delineate a boundary between anime and alternative forms of animation.

Concurrently, however, Lamarre (2009: xix-xxiii) wishes to avoid common controversies associated with specificity theses in film studies. Such controversies include the association of specificity with apparatus theory, which treats film technology deterministically (Lamarre 2009: xix). Such theories are problematically essentialist<sup>30</sup> (Carroll 1995: 68). Alternatively, Lamarre (2009: xxiii, author's emphasis) proposes that a specificity thesis for anime be thought "in terms of *determination* rather than *determinism*, ... *machine* rather than *structure*" and technicity rather than technology. These key distinctions - machine and structure, technicity and technology - show influence of the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (for machine) and Heidegger (for technicity) in Lamarre's account. The notion of the machine in Deleuze and Guattari (2009: 2) suggests an undifferentiated *process* of production and co-production unhindered by the restrictions of a pre-existing

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<sup>30</sup> The charge of medium essentialism is a common cognitivist criticism of much film theory and film-philosophy most commonly associated with Noël Carroll (1995).

structure which articulates its elements. The notion of technicity (or *technē*) developed in part from Heidegger (2008b: 312, 339) serves to resist reductive understandings of technology by incorporating the active relationship between the human and the technological, as well as technological activity and the ontological condition of technology. By collapsing the distinction between technique and technology (technicity) and understanding the medium as a fluid and open process (machine), a specificity thesis for anime can be developed without falling into essentialism. Borrowing Guattari's notion of the "abstract machine", Lamarre (2009: xxvi, xxviii, xxx) calls this understanding of anime specificity the "animetic machine". Anime specificity therefore lies in the abstract and flexible *principles*, the ways of *working with* and *thinking* technology, which operate in the construction of animated images; the animetic machine functions "in terms of passive determination [or] underdetermination" (Lamarre 2009: xxvi). This contrasts with a conception of the medium as determined by the technology of the material apparatus. The technicity of anime is therefore 'machinic' (open, fluid and process-driven) rather than mechanical (closed, structured and functionally determined). Lamarre (2009: 10) thus characterises anime in terms of what he calls "animetism", in contrast to "cinematism": two contrasting technical *tendencies*<sup>31</sup>. Anime should be conceptualised as a particularly extreme deployment of animetism - an evolutionary tendency<sup>32</sup> which lies in all animation (and perhaps in all film). Anime is a particularly radical overturning of traditional cinema. This emphasis on *technicity* and the *machine* leads Lamarre (2009: xxxvi, my emphasis) to orient his examination of the (philosophical) medium specificity of anime towards the question of "*how anime thinks technology*". This, as I will explore later, necessarily leads us to the question of how anime thinks *itself*.

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<sup>31</sup> Many animation theorists utilise the terms "animatism" or "animatic" as a point of contrast to cinematism (Cholodenko 2007a, 2007b; Schaffer 2007: 460). However, it should be noted that the way this is conceptualised differs significantly from Lamarre's *animetism*. Animatism, particularly in Schaffer's case, tends to be associated with the aesthetic-narrative squash-and-stretch malleability and quasi-immortality of animated figures (such as those in the Looney Tunes lineage), while animetism is based on the technicity of animated images. Animatism is not equivalent to animetism. Neither animatism nor animetism should therefore be understood as the binary *opposite* of cinematism. This has many roll-on effects for the philosophical conceptualisation of animation, but such an exploration is beyond the scope of this essay. An example may be the conceptual logic of *death* in animation, which is often explored by animation theorists (Cholodenko 2004, 2007b, 2007c; Schaffer 2007: 469). It seems to me that the logic of death operates differently under animatism and animetism (life and death will appear prominently later in my discussion and case studies), but for the purposes of this essay it is enough to note that the two concepts are fundamentally different.

<sup>32</sup> The idea of a self-evolving technical tendency as central to animetism recalls Bernard Stiegler's (e.g. 1998: 80-1) philosophy of technics.

Lamarre's work on anime can thus be understood to be developing a strong picture of what constitutes the animetic machine and its philosophical consequences. The two broadest technical characteristics of anime that Lamarre (e.g. 2002: 338-40; 2006; 2009: 18, 124-5, 184) tends to associate with the animetic machine are *the multiplanar image* and *limited animation*, interrelated concepts which are broken down further when dealing with more specific genres or styles of anime. The filmic-ontological channels into which these two technical characteristics flow are *depth* and *movement* respectively. These concepts are drawn from Lamarre's readings of the history of animation and the particular uses of animation techniques in a variety of classic examples of anime, from the films of Miyazaki Hayao to the television series of Anno Hideaki and the manga-anime franchises of CLAMP. In order to develop his account, Lamarre (2009: xxxvi) engages with other theorists who have written on anime, particularly Azuma Hiroki and Saitō Tamaki, using their ideas regarding the relationship between anime, postmodernity and psychoanalysis to fill out his picture of how anime thinks technology.

The first broad concept of the animetic machine, the multiplanar image, is theorised in relation to the technical characteristics of the classic animation stand. This animetic technique comes from a particular technical appropriation of the multiplane camera and the kind of animation it enabled (Lamarre 2006: 127-8). The multiplane camera is an apparatus designed by Walt Disney which sought to improve on traditional cel animation methods in order to create a realistic sense of movement into depth (Lamarre 2006: 123-4). Movement into depth and depth-based camera techniques such as zoom appear unrealistic in pre-multiplane cel animation (which only utilises a single animation cel on a background) since it cannot correctly scale distance to match everyday perception (Lamarre 2006: 123). The older way of dealing with this problem, stacking cels with different size features, creates several technical problems (Lamarre 2006: 123). The multiplane camera solution enables animators to change the distance between individual layers, each comprised of their own animation cel, realistically rendering depth (Lamarre 2006: 124). The goal of this use of the multiplane camera is to make the distance *between* layers disappear, creating an unbroken continuity between foreground and background (Lamarre 2009: 30). The multiplanar image - the first concept of the animetic machine (or animetism) - comes about when "some degree of play or openness [appears] between the layers of the image" (Lamarre 2009: 37). This means that

unlike Disney-style animation, which seeks to minimise the gaps between layers to emulate perspectival depth, anime uses minimal layers in order to open the gaps between layers, rendering the *invisible* movement of the image's world *visible*. This becoming-visible of the layers which compose the world creates a *sliding* experience, a sense that the drawings themselves are moving rather than movements being drawn (Lamarre 2006: 128).

Many philosophical consequences can be drawn from this technical tendency in anime. One of the central potential consequences is that when the movements of image-components - individual aspects of the environment - are prioritised over emulating perspective from a single point, organising the image through perspective is undermined and "the viewing position of the camera loses its privilege; it becomes another layer" (Lamarre 2006: 128). This constructs the viewing position relative to the movement of the *world* rather than relative to the perceptual matrix of a single viewing subject (Lamarre 2009: 104). This sense of independent movement in the image makes our "viewing position ... feel less instrumental" since there is no "fixed subject" to stabilise image components (Lamarre 2009: 38, 185). The 'camera' is integrated into the world as something fluid and contingent, balancing on the edge of radical shifts in perception. This is most clearly embodied by the quick cuts, angular views and erratic movements associated with much anime. Through this, viewers are "[encouraged to recognize] the technological ordering of the image": the sliding planes reveal their modes of production and disclose the technological condition of the image, which can no longer assimilate the viewer's perspective (Lamarre 2009: 54). Rather than technology naturalising and hiding itself, animetism is a way of technology revealing itself as technology, a form of life *intertwined* with nature. This animetism which breaks down the instrumental structure of the cinematic image opens up new ways of perceiving technology and perceiving technologically not available in cinematism. Another philosophical development of the multiplanar image is that the components of the image are radically dehierarchised (Lamarre 2009: 110). This results from what Lamarre (2009: 110, 121-2) calls the "distributive field" which he connects to "exploded projection": constructing an image without concern for relative depth. This means that "the force of the moving image" is rendered in lateral movement as a result of the play between layers (Lamarre 2009: 124). When Senjougahara Hitagi and Araragi Koyomi confront Kaiki Deishu in *Nisemonogatari* (Itamura, Shinbō 2012), we are shown this destruction of depth-based perspective in its

most radical form. The scene, a psychologically tense 'negotiation', features random, unexplained and arbitrary changes in the distance between the characters. No movement is shown, implied or acknowledged and we are forced to question the legitimacy of our perspective (Figure 1). Relationships of seeing and knowing in this world are degraded - the villain Kaiki becomes incomprehensible, unknowable and threatening. In such cases the structural privilege of camera and composition is broken down, resulting in an image filled with anarchic component elements standing thoroughly independent of our own perspective. As such, many of the *structural* questions of cinematism in film-philosophy or film theory are systematically undermined in anime. Instead, we are exposed to the *machinic* qualities of animetism.

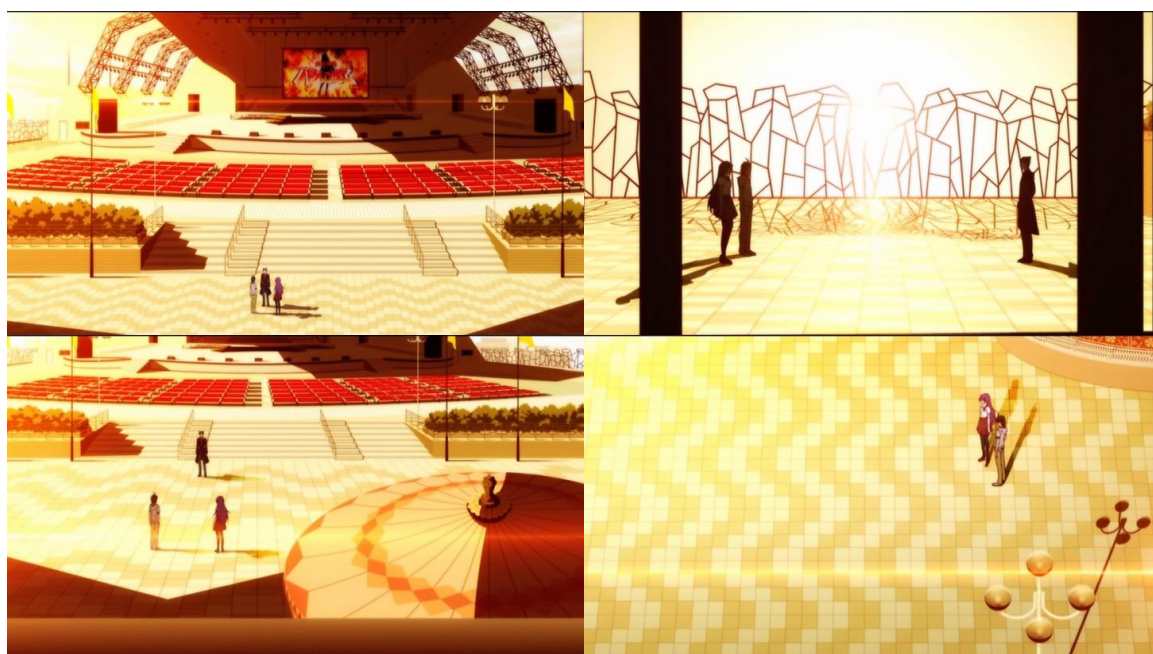


Figure 1. *Nisemonogatari* (Itamura, Shinbō 2012) Episode 7. In Araragi and Senjougahara's standoff with Kaiki, character locations shift erratically without any depicted movement.

The second broad concept of Lamarre's notion of the animetic machine, limited animation, is related to the multiplanar image in some respects but emphasises the truncated animation cel count of anime. In a standard twenty-four frame per second film, anime conventionally works with substantially fewer independent frames than full animation. The kind of limited animation often employed in anime may work with eight drawings or fewer per second, as opposed to the Disney average of eighteen drawings per second (Lamarre 2009: 187). This technique may be accomplished by utilising extended static sequences, long pauses,

repeated sequences, or doubling, tripling or even quadrupling the number of frames per second used on a single drawing. Traditionally, full animation is treated as artistically superior to limited animation (perceived as economical at best) and more true to the art of animation (Lamarre 2009: 187). However, Lamarre (2009: 188, 191) suggests that numerous creators treat limited animation as an art form in its own right - one that requires different "mode[s] of expression" and "generat[es] movement in a very different way".

There are several philosophical consequences which may be drawn from the use of limited animation in anime. One of the central consequences is that due to the irregularities that open up in limited animation, the sense of movement in the image becomes significantly different, with different things at stake in the experience of such movement. For Lamarre (2002: 338), with the "skippiness, jerkiness, awkwardness or artificiality" that occurs with limited animation, "something new appears in the mechanism of recognition, something that troubles it". This means that movement itself becomes alienated and is brought to the front of our attention, rather than fading away into a seamless representation of live-action movement. Lamarre (2002: 338-9) contends that this makes the bodies that appear on screen not "walking automaton[s]" but "automaton[s] of walking". For Lamarre (2002: 339, my emphasis) "it is not simply a question of a walking machine, [...] it is a question of a machine *of* walking" - it is not a machine moving, but a machine-movement. This means, in more Deleuzian terms, that in anime it is not the movement of beings that is in question but rather the *being of movement*<sup>33</sup>. Lamarre (2002: 340) describes this in terms of anime's capacity for generating *life*: "anime [is] concerned with the minimal conditions for life, and with the question of how to generate life from movements". Animetism is troubled by how to build life out of the not-yet-living; it is not merely fascinated by the *components* of life (as cinematic animation may be), but with the question of how life *arises from nothing*. Another important philosophical consequence that arises from limited animation is that it creates "character[s] whose integrity does not depend on the unity of space of an image" (Lamarre 2009: 196). This is due to the erratic and unpredictable jagged movements that are made

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<sup>33</sup> Lamarre (2009: 185-6, 199, 201) suggests that the most extreme forms of limited animation - where movement is disrupted and disorientation becomes central - should be thought in terms of the time-image of Deleuzian film-philosophy. However we may extend this connection beyond the way animetism makes the "aberration [of movement] ... valid in itself" to issues like thinking the body (Deleuze 2013b: 41, 195). *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (Kamiyama 2002-2003) (which should be differentiated from the original *Ghost in the Shell* (Oshii 1995) film) is an extraordinary example which directly (animetically and narratively) addresses Deleuze on issues of individuation/differentiation, embodiment, life and having-a-brain.



possible through limited animation. The relationship between the planes of the image and the moving character permits randomness and detachment, where "characters do not simply move gracefully across the image; they can literally jump into and out of the image along angular trajectories that follow one or more multiple fields of action crisscrossing the image" (Lamarre 2009: 196). The ultimate consequence of this is that the concrete being of a character is not dependent on *structural* unity through image composition, but instead on movement, aesthetic qualities, psychology and narrative. Animetic logic permits a dispersed sense of being, a sense of being which simultaneously transcends the image and is immanent to it. The machinic evolution of animetism is enclosed and disclosed by the image, but also exceeds it. Animetism thus produces a specific *thinking* and *soulfulness* possessed by the characters and the anime as a whole (Lamarre 2009: 203, 206)<sup>34</sup>.

A particularly important example of these philosophical trajectories latent in anime is the *Monogatari Series* (Shinbō et al 2009-), an extremely radical utilisation of these characteristics of animetism. Fully animated sequences are rare and movement is instead generated through quick, angular cuts, slow motion, sliding layers, and camera pans. Characters erratically change their form, with numerous contrasting art styles appearing for split seconds (from rounded and cute monochromatic caricatures to grotesquely surreal deformations to the chiselled jaws and prominent facial shading of an aggressive action-hero design), and arbitrary visual quirks are used to signify the entirety of the character - Araragi's *ahoge* (アホ毛: tr. 'fool's hair') being a key example. Movement in the *Monogatari Series* is always transformative - a series of chaotic and tenuously connected new forms coming-to-life-from-nothing in static succession. When fully animated sequences do appear in amongst what is generally driven by the static and verbose - such as in the ultra-violent fight scene in episode eight of *Bakemonogatari* (Oishi, Shinbō 2009), which is coloured in bright pastel blues, yellows, reds and pinks while Araragi is swung around by his still-attached intestines - they generate movement as highly stylised explosive *events*.

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<sup>34</sup> For Lamarre (2009: 201-6) this is instantiated by the emphasis on character design in the lineage of animetism inherited from anime studio GAINAX. I would suggest, however, that this is a broader characteristic of animetism that results in significance being placed on modes of embodiment.

These articulations of animetic logic reflect a Heideggerian and Deleuzian core which persists in the logic of animetism. In Lamarre's case he primarily seeks to unveil the ontological aspects of anime technics. To understand anime is to explore the techno-ontological condition of anime - its procedures of image and movement production, the assemblages and bodies it produces, and the experiences it creates - beyond traditional philosophy of film questions regarding the *mere* relationship of the image to reality. This is the philosophical significance of anime's technological condition beyond its physical apparatus. Digital animations may be as animetic as (or more than) traditional multiplane camera/animation stand animations. Even 3DCG animation may make use of the flatness of the multiplanar image and the jarring motion of limited animation. The stunning *Mononoke* (Nakamura 2007), for example, uses 3D images and textures with staggered and stylised movement to elicit the sense of classic forms of Japanese painting<sup>35</sup> (Figures 2 & 3).

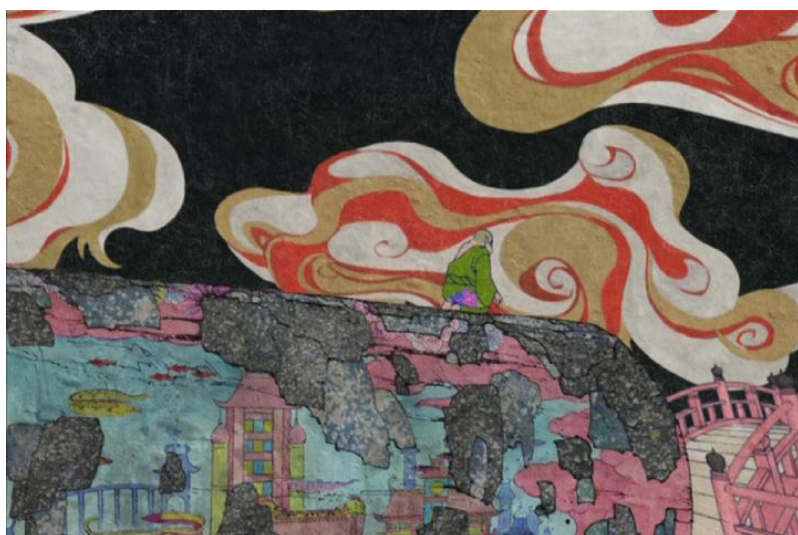


Figure 2. *Mononoke* (Nakamura 2007) Episode 5. Textured and stylised art preserves the animetic principles of the multiplanar image, despite being 3D rendered.

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<sup>35</sup> The art in *Mononoke* (Nakamura 2007), not to be confused with the similarly 'traditional' but quite distinct and far more naturalistic *Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki 1997), appears to be inspired by Azuchi-Momoyama and Edo period painting (though its colouring is more vibrant). The sense of movement it creates is also highly reminiscent of genres of Japanese theatre, such as *kabuki* and *noh*.



Figure 3. *Mononoke* (Nakamura 2007) Episode 7.

The broader downside to Lamarre's analysis is that, in his explorations of the animetic machine, he does not address how the opposing tendencies of animetism and cinematism translate to substantial *philosophical* differences. These questions include those which film-philosophy/film-theory debates regarding the nature of representation, the role of the psychoanalytic gaze, image ontology and so on. From Lamarre's account we may expect to see a radical intervention in the field of film and philosophy through challenges to conceptions of movement, perception, representation and so on. Instead, Lamarre (e.g. 2009: 170) focuses his account specifically on the relationships between anime, technology and modernity/postmodernity. This partial picture of anime, focused exclusively on questions of technicity, is also made clear when Lamarre (2009: x) explicitly rejects narrative analysis. One problem with neglecting narrative analysis (or any single aspect of anime considered as a whole) is that it ignores the capacity of the medium to reflect upon *itself*. In Lamarre's references to narrative, his focus is always on how certain narratives map the specific conditions of their technicity<sup>36</sup>. However, for example, narrative components may include more ambiguous references to technical or aesthetic components and vice versa. Anime is filled with self-reference and 'meta-animetic' reflection. One episode of surreal psychological thriller *Paranoia Agent* (Kon 2004) depicts the creation of a children's anime about the day-to-day adventures of a cute dog mascot by a small low-budget production team. It tracks the maniacal egoistic breakdown of a low-ranking and incompetent assistant

<sup>36</sup> See Lamarre's (2009: 45-55, 77-85, 155-179) analyses of *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* and *Nadia*.

as he seeks to take more credit for the project while the production team are mysteriously murdered, assaulted or succumb to crushing stress. In the most explicit sense, this episode involves a direct but psychedelic commentary on anime production, depicting the disturbing psychological underpinnings and material conditions of an incredibly benign form of entertainment. It is this capacity for components to look upon one another that enables an anime to reflect upon, recalibrate and disclose its themes, its techniques, its rhetoric, or itself as medium and storytelling. This is why investigating the way anime thinks technology must also be a critique of *the way anime thinks itself*. Another problem Lamarre faces is that the philosophical meanings of the thematic content become neutralised and detached from the philosophically significant technical and aesthetic components. With the relevant example of technics, this involves the detachment of a philosophy *of* technology from a *technical* philosophy and a *philosophical* technic.

Lamarre's worries about narrative analyses are, to a certain extent, justified, since such analyses may often work through the assumption that there are *hidden and exhaustive structurally deterministic* forces (whether these be a cultural condition, a symbolic heritage, psychological forces, or the director/writer) at play in constructing narrative (an assumption which Lamarre explicitly seeks to reject). However, if we can interpret and understand narrative as part of an open and fluid machinic evolution, wherein anime may *think for itself*, these issues may be avoided. This is not a question of 'discovering' the essential substantive philosophical *content* of anime, but is instead a question of *how* anime can philosophise: anime *as* philosophy. A unified analysis of anime as philosophy would be able to unravel the significance of the self-reflexive capacity of anime as well as systematically situate thematic content in context and draw out its philosophical contributions while avoiding the speculative traps that concern Lamarre. The key to such a holistic understanding, I suggest, lies in a concept of *anime-worlds*.

When it turns towards its own ontology, anime never attempts to hide its technological construction. But anime is not merely a philosophy of technics concretely expressed as an art form. Anime, taken singularly and as a whole, are a far richer concern for philosophy. Anime seeks open(ly) technological worlds, it thinks Being, and does philosophy. It is in these technological worlds that anime thinks itself and reflects upon its own philosophical

problems. In being brought forth only through anime holistically conceived, I contend that these are problems of worldliness. It is now our task to understand this worldliness.

## **Reflective Anime-Worlds and Anime-Philosophy: Meshing Technics, Narrative and Aesthetics**

The idea of 'worlds' has often been utilised in film-philosophy. A notion of the world is central to Stanley Cavell's film-philosophy, for which philosophical scepticisms - such as other minds scepticism, ethical scepticism, and external world scepticism - are a fundamental practical issue. Films, in this case, emulate and re-present the form, viewing position, content and philosophical problems of our everyday world - the only difference between the film's world and the real world is that the real world exists *presently* (Cavell 1979: 24, 102). This worldly filmic realism has an ethical and practical dimension wherein the cinema confronts its own limits and we, the viewers, confront (and cope with) the epistemic limits of our relationship to the world (Cavell 1979: 128, 131, 146). In Daniel Frampton's (e.g. 2006: 1, 3-5, 27, 35) work, too, the idea of a film's world and its relationship to our world is a crucial component of film-philosophy. For Frampton (2006: 27, 35-6 my emphasis), the key concern of film-philosophy is how "film creates a new thinking *world*" which is the product of the lives of characters. However, the most thorough confrontation with a potential concept of film-worlds comes from Daniel Yacavone<sup>37</sup>.

Yacavone (2008: 86, 93) draws upon Nelson Goodman's philosophical study of symbol systems as worlds and Mikel Dufrenne's "existential phenomenology of art worlds" to develop his notion of film-worlds. In terms of their symbolic stream, film-worlds are fundamentally *transformative* - they are created out of the appropriation of the symbolic resources of other worlds in a new style (Yacavone 2008: 87). Symbolic worlds are constructed from symbolic materials already existing in *the* world - 'interpretations' of the world (Yacavone 2008: 87-8). For Yacavone (2008: 89), the symbolic processes which are involved in the transformative appropriation of pre-existing symbol-worlds that creates a

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<sup>37</sup> This section is based on a reading of Yacavone's "Towards a Theory of Film Worlds" (2008). A more extensive development of this theory is to appear in his *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema* (Yacavone forthcoming 2014).

film-world are cinematic techniques, styles, practices and the characteristics of film-making (such as framing and editing). These constitute a medium-specific reorganisation of already existing symbolic materials directed towards the creation of a new singular whole - the film-world. For Yacavone (2008: 87, 91), individual films are exemplars and instantiations of the film-world in which they belong. Simultaneously, however, Yacavone (2008: 93) contends that "films are worlds in more or different ways" than *mere* symbol-systems. The expressivity, affectivity and temporality of the experience of a film-world is also significant in understanding a film as a singular whole (Yacavone 2008: 93, 97). The aesthetic-phenomenological stream of film-worlds maps to the subjective experience of a film, rather than to its objective-representational creation and structure. The aesthetically expressive quality of a film-world is "a synthetic or *Gestalt* property of the work as a whole, one which pervades objects and beings", creating a general atmosphere and feeling which situates the representational content (Yacavone 2008: 94, author's emphasis). This intertwining relationship between the symbolic content of the world and its aesthetic structure enables a film to present an awareness of its own possibilities and limits. Through this, "a cinematic work may choose to self-consciously draw attention to the processes by which it creates a world not only in relation to its formal world structure but in relation to *how this world structure is experienced*" (Yacavone 2008: 95, author's emphasis). This is the self-reflexive dimension of the film world.

Yacavone's understanding of the creation of film-worlds shows how film in the condition of philosophy (a film-world self-reflexively thinking its own conditions and its own substance) is always film *as* philosophy in a broader sense. A film-world only achieves its radical singularity by appropriating symbolic materials from elsewhere and as such, when it reflects upon itself, it reflects upon that which is external to it. Given that a world is formed through synthesising these materials in a *new* way, this opens up the possibility of an *original* contribution to philosophy through the active *creation* of worlds<sup>38</sup>. In the case of animation, which often presents an affection for the non-real (such as the fantastical in Disney or the chaotically stylised and apocalyptic in anime), this is a crucial point: the capacity for philosophising is

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<sup>38</sup> This creative understanding of film-worlds should not necessarily be construed as running directly counter to all 'realist' conceptualisations of film. However, to resolve Yacavone's approach with, for example, Cavell's, it would be necessary to rearticulate the relationship between film-worlds and 'the' world.

not contingent on an *orientation* towards the 'real' world (whether this orientation is through argumentative discourse or an aesthetic relation), but is *a form of worldliness itself*.

The most prominent grounds for distinguishing between Yacavone's understanding of film-worlds and a potential concept of *anime-worlds* are the differences in the aesthetic schema and forms of symbolic synthesis. In terms of symbolic synthesis, Yacavone (2008: 89) points to the significance of techniques which are specific to film-worlds - these are the tools which reorganise pre-existing symbolic content and generate a new symbolic system. These are, in part, technical characteristics of cinema (specifically, live-action cinema) and therefore need to be reformulated for anime-worlds. The 'tools' which create anime-worlds are *fundamentally* different to those which create cinematic film-worlds.

Still, it is in this emphasis on the active *creation* of film-worlds through the intertwining of transformative symbolic and affective aesthetic streams that Yacavone's account is most valuable for the ambiguous and counter-cinematic nature of anime. Unlike in, for example, Cavell's understanding of the worldliness of the film-world, anime does not reframe and re-present part of the actual world, because it is not *photographic*. Anime does not contain snap-shots of the world and does not capture the material possibilities of the world that have been expressed in the past and recorded. The constant shifts in framing throughout the *Monogatari Series* (Shinbō et al 2009-), where aspect ratio arbitrarily shifts mid-scene to double or even triple wide-screen, actively mock the possibility of consistently framing a *pre-existing* world. Rather this framing appears as a *part* of the world<sup>39</sup>. Anime-worlds do not represent or *re-present*, but instead, as Yacavone (2008: 84, my emphasis) insists in the general case of film-worlds, "*create and present*". Yacavone allows us to account for how, in anime, worlds are actively *built*. In terms of understanding the philosophising capacity of anime, this means that anime-worlds create and embody their own philosophical questions and logics; they possess a distinct way of rendering their own practical-philosophical problems and the ways these are worked through in the narrative. As a world which borrows from and reworks the symbolic material that has preceded it, this results in an appropriation

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<sup>39</sup> Recall the contingency of the viewing position that comes with the multiplanar image. The 'camera' itself is merely another layer *in* the world.

and thinking through of the philosophical problems we deal with in academia, art and everyday life.

However, there are elements of Yacavone's account which are problematic here. Lamarre suggests that anime cannot and must not be thought in deterministic terms, but in Yacavone's account of film-worlds there persists both an emphasis on the self-enclosed nature of film-worlds and a strong auteurist account of the structure of the film-world. The idea of self-enclosure is inherently problematic for media often based on an episodic series format, particularly in cases where source material is ongoing (as is often the case for anime). Such series always 'conclude' in a state of indetermination and uncertainty - the world may or may not expand and change. Anime in particular is also strongly connected with other media and narrative forms which relate to the anime in varying ways (see Steinberg 2006). These conditions feed into anime's obsession with self-parody, self-reference and direct critical engagement with its own broader historical and social context. Many anime, such as the *Hidamari Sketch* series (Various 2007-2013) and *Monogatari Series Second Season* (Itamura, Shinbō 2013) are also fundamentally *non-linear* series (which we should contrast to non-linear narratives in standalone films, which may still be retrospectively understood as enclosed) and consciously force the viewer to *reinterpret* previous narrative material - their stories and worlds are always open to being undermined or restructured. The case of anime shows that film-worlds are not simply an enclosing and transformative appropriation of prior material, but are also necessarily directed towards the future - always at risk of *retroactive* change. Such concerns point to the need to think anime in fluid and open terms. Individual anime episodes or films are not merely exemplars of an anime-world, but are active *interventions* in it. Simultaneously, the collaborative nature of film-making is often cited as an important counter to the auteurist position, but this objection is taken to the extreme in anime. Anime teams frequently include many staff (such as storyboard staff, animators, artists and script writers) who often vary between episodes but also engage with the product directly with comparatively high levels of control. The sci-fi comedy *Space Dandy* (Watanabe, Natsume, Various 2014) is a particularly striking example designed to showcase artistic diversity where the chief director has little direct influence and each episode is managed by a different episode director and other different staff. There is incredible diversity within such an anime-world, but its singular and unified nature persists and its unity



does not come from the structuring authorial power of an auteur. Many anime even parody the idea of directorial control. The concept of anime-worlds must therefore relinquish these deterministic and enclosing elements.

To substitute for these deterministic aspects, which give the film-world stability as a unified whole, we may integrate into our conception of anime-worlds a *technical* stream which operates alongside the symbolic and aesthetic streams Yacavone develops. This is possible because the philosophy of anime technics that Lamarre develops is stronger than the set of cinematic techniques and symbolic processes that Yacavone suggests is involved in film's appropriation of symbolic content. The philosophical technicity of anime is robust enough that it must not be considered merely as a set of optional tools utilised in the *construction* of a world. Anime is *steeped in a technological condition*, a condition which permeates the symbolic and aesthetic streams, but also adds to them. It is this technicity, the underdetermined machinic animetism of the multiplanar image and limited animation, which enables an anime-world to be holistically unified, radically singular, self-reflexive, open and fluid at the same time. The resulting concept of anime-worlds permits anime to be thematically robust and inherently philosophical while opening the reflective space for anime to think for itself and actively philosophise.

What is curious about many examples of anime lies in this crucial aspect of film/anime-worldliness - self-reflexivity (Yacavone 2008: 103). Given the soulfulness and thinking quality of animetism that Lamarre emphasises, this self-reflexive orientation opens up the capacity for anime to think about what it means to be anime, to exist in the condition of philosophy (Mulhall 2007: 282-3). In this sense, the most important motivation for anime-worlds is not simply that it is a holistic and more complete conception of the philosophical substance of anime but that it opens up the *gap* through which anime thinks itself as a whole. Some of the most profoundly philosophical anime, like films, are those that reflect on their own constitution. As I have developed from Lamarre, anime (as a medium) is constantly thinking technology, and therefore thinking itself. However, qua film-world, this should not simply be taken at the technical level of the medium, but also in terms of its aesthetic and narrative content. This is the point of a philosophical concept of anime-worlds: *anime's own confrontation with its Being, its self-reflexive component, is an ontology of anime-worldliness.*

That is, the philosophical narrative situations that we find characters in can simultaneously address their own technical, aesthetic and narrative foundations - their own worldliness. Characters confront the contradictions and problems of their Being, *both in their existential condition and in the principles that animate them*. It is in thinking this ontology that both Heidegger and the Kyōto School become indispensable: the self-reflexive confrontations of anime-worlds are confrontations with Being and meditations on how life sprouts from Nothingness - how life arises from the lifeless<sup>40</sup> - *animation*. Animation is the expressive *contradictory identity of technics and life*, and anime, the most extreme deployment of animetism, is most openly so. Therefore, what is philosophically significant about anime as an art form is how it is curiously positioned to think its own Being and, therefore, philosophise more generally. This is especially true when it comes to questions of fate and freedom, which recode and render anime's ambiguous technological condition and issues of the determination of the animetic machine.

In the following sections, I will explore how two individual cases of anime use the theme of fate and freedom to think (themselves) philosophically and, in the process, make original contributions to philosophy. It is necessary to stress, however, that I do not think that there is some sort of thematic essence which persists across anime - the anime-worlds interpretations herein are based on the fusion of my hermeneutic framework and the critical analysis of anime-worlds.

## **Fate in a Distorted World and Okabe's Scientific Delusion: *Steins;Gate* and the Existential Phenomenology of Paranoia**

*Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Satō 2011) is a time travel anime based on a popular visual novel. It features a group of science and engineering university students who accidentally develop a time machine out of a microwave and a CRT television and, with their friends, begin to experiment by sending text messages into the past. The series explains time-travel and the alteration of history through a Many Worlds metaphysics, where a change in the past will effect a jump to a new "world line" in the present. Through the mechanism of an ability that

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<sup>40</sup> Such an issue glances at philosophical questions of animism and mechanism, which is a set of problems beyond the scope of this essay. For more on mechanism/animism and animation, see Cholodenko (2007a).

he calls a "Reading Steiner", the protagonist Okabe Rintarō (self-proclaimed "mad scientist" obsessed with delusional conspiracies) is the only one whose memories are preserved across world lines. After altering the past several times through text messages Okabe finds himself in the situation where his childhood friend Shiina Mayuri is set to die at a certain determined time. In order to save her, he uses a "time leap" device to repeatedly send his memories back in time to his former self in a vain effort to prevent Mayuri's death. From this point in the narrative the story takes a dark psychological turn as Okabe is endlessly forced to repeat the death of his precious friend and experience the alienating cost of his attempts to harness and control time itself.

Initially, whenever Okabe sends a message back in time, and we experience his Reading Steiner along with him, we are shown in a flash the world being temporarily digitised, scrambled and distorted before being restructured as another world line, one that fits the changes caused by the message, is realised. However, this distortion leaves scars on the (supposedly ideal) world now shaped by time travel: the memories of those surrounding Okabe become unknowingly muddled and inconsistent, radical physical changes occur, and unintended consequences manifest. Upon seeing the more extreme changes, such as the huge architectural and cultural changes to the Akihabara district, we see Okabe in awe and fear of a brightly lit, expansive, constantly shifting and dominating world which seems at once uncanny, strange and alienated, but also totalising and alienating. This reaches its peak with Mayuri's first death. Bright and undersaturated, static, fragmented and partial images flow, with a new emphasis on images of time-keeping devices (in particular wall clocks, hourglasses and Mayuri's pocket watch), marking the beginning of Okabe's struggle against technology and time (Figure 4). As the episodes progress and Okabe confronts the inevitability of his friend's demise, his relationship to his world becomes coloured in a certain way and his actions become simultaneously depressively nihilistic and desperately manic.



Figure 4. *Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Sato 2011) Episode 12. Broken clocks and fragmented images begin Okabe's clash with technology.

In *Steins;Gate* what we see is a situation where our protagonist can only, by virtue of his alienated relationship to technology, perceive and engage with the world in a certain way. This is why there is a breakdown of the border between what are initially Okabe's egoistic and playful delusional fantasies and the appearance of actual threats in the world. Okabe's clearly ridiculous ramblings about "the organisation" seeking to sabotage his mad scientist efforts at every turn are ultimately entirely justified, though he never really believed his own theatrics in the first place. This new relationship to the world and the delusional slippage that accompanies it is the effect of *paranoia*. In the wake of his quest to harness time through technology - turn time itself into a resource - which then violently collapses as he faces the brutal futility of such an attempt, paranoia appears as the product of a certain kind of enframing. Time and technology become things which oppose, stand against, and specifically *target* Okabe. However, the presented changes in the tone of Okabe's existence are not the limit of his paranoia. As I briefly explored in Chapter One, specific objects are transformed into things of terror: Mayuri's pocket watch, an hourglass, clocks - they reveal death in advance when they stop functioning. Immediately before Mayuri's death these objects break, and even the sand in the hourglass stops falling. These objects cease to *keep time* and instead become things to be feared. In their brokenness Okabe sees reified his inability to control time. They reveal themselves as the brutal fact that time *cannot be kept*. It is the repetition of these objects as signs of impending doom, precisely as everyday

objects entirely unrelated to death, that makes them so worthy of fear. Unlike the proximal causes of Mayuri's death - a gun, a train, a car - the time-keeping devices cannot be avoided. If Okabe cannot even prevent a 'mere' clock from stopping, how can he prevent his precious friend's death? In this sense, paranoia is a mood in which singular ordinary objects are experienced as thoroughly alien and profoundly transcendent: they represent to us our own impotence. What is fear-inducing then is not the actual consequences of these objects, nor is it even the events they are associated with as such. It is not simply that objects of paranoia confront us with an unavoidable future, but that in them we confront the limits of our being not as a horizon but instead as an incapability to cope with even the everyday. Paranoid revealing is therefore an enframing which encloses. Unlike the case of anxiety or angst, where one confronts the emptiness, nothingness and *indeterminacy* of their Being-in-the-world, paranoia is an overproximity to one's fate (the conditions, limits and potentialities of one's existence) and a confrontation with the determinacy of their Being-in-the-world - to the point where even the miniscule reveals itself as thoroughly (even impossibly, as in the case of the hourglass) determined. Paranoia is, in this sense, a *loss* of the experience of the nothing or Nothingness and therefore a loss of one's Being.

In such a situation it is no coincidence that Okabe is a scientist working under the specifically modern understanding of technology and causation that Heidegger suggests is pathologically enframing. As a loss of Nothingness, it is also the fundamental inversion of the religious experience in Nishida. It is that specific kind of modern scientific technological rationality that makes Nothingness vanish, produces it as mere negation. For countless repetitions, Okabe attempts to prevent Mayuri's death by avoiding the proximal efficient cause of her death. The inevitability of her death is conceived of only in terms of a series of inescapable immediate causes. By working under this truncated and alienated understanding of the processes which lead to the tragedy, Okabe misses the broader technological condition - the advent of time travel, limiting the way one can think both technology and time - which has come to make Mayuri's death necessary. Okabe is alienated from the real time-driven mechanism which determines Mayuri's death. Paranoia is scientific paranoia.

It is within this framework that it is crucial to note that the only way Okabe can prevent Mayuri's death is by going back and *undoing* all his previous tampering within the timeline.

Okabe learns to 'escape' his fate by returning to the past to *affirm* the limits that time had already disclosed to him. It is only through this affirmation of fate, the potential already laid bare to him, that he is able to avoid the alternative - the infinite repetition of Mayuri's death. But further, what is never directly addressed is that the prime cause of Mayuri's death lies in Okabe himself and his unfree relationship to technology. In his paranoia, Okabe turns away from *himself* as the root mechanism of fate. The absolute freedom which comes with time travel - the near-divine ability to reach into and tamper with the mechanisms of causality themselves - brings about the most oppressive kind of deterministic fate. At the same time, however, paranoia is only completely enclosing in the condition where Okabe struggles individually after his connection to the equipment of the world becomes distorted. When Okabe is caught repeatedly time-leaping by his friend and colleague Makise Kurisu, she forces her way into his problem to find a solution. It is together that they resolve to undo all the changes to the timeline. In this sense, when the retreat of paranoia is disrupted by trust in another, it becomes the possibility of an open form of disclosure which reveals ways to resist the most vicious condition of fate.

What is animetically significant about this paranoia is that it is embodied in the seizure of *movement*. Time-keeping devices stop. They are broken because they no longer move. The end of movement reveals the end of life. When movement halts, the world itself breaks down. It is the strange paradox of the series that fate asserts itself in its most deterministic mode precisely when *time is out of joint* - fate only becomes infinitely deterministic when the horizon which relativises all disclosure, all laying-bare, all fating and destining, itself breaks down. When Okabe tries to control and harness time, this breaking down becomes clearly evident as the world itself becomes confused and disjointed. It is in this relationship between time, movement, and disclosure that the anime-world of *Steins;Gate* thinks its own openness. When time is destabilised, the limits of animation and the minimal conditions of life are brought forth. Okabe, at his weakest, fills the role of the traditional animator - the figure who controls and manipulates *time* and *movement*. Full cinematic animation hides the fact that it is a technology used to harness time. The animetism of *Steins;Gate*, on the other hand, discloses exactly what is at stake in the technological production of time and movement: a fragile life that always risks breaking apart and falling away from itself. In the openness of its technological condition, the controlling animator loses its transcendence and

transforms into the paranoid character of the anime-world. This is a confrontation with the components of life, the constant possibility of life falling back into Nothingness, and the mechanisms of determination that produce concrete potentialities. The question of what Okabe can do is produced alongside the question of what *Steins;Gate* (qua anime) can do. Okabe's paranoia is a revealing of the anime-world and its way of thinking itself. *Steins;Gate* shows possible modes of coping with paranoia and *transforming* it into a condition that can affirm both fate and freedom.

### ***Kara no Kyōkai* and the Mystic Eyes of Death Perception: Living in a World that is Falling Apart**

*Kara no Kyōkai* (Various 2007-2013) is a film series based on a series of novels by Nasu Kinoko that connects with a highly developed and intertwined narrative universe steeped in complex lore. The film series is saturated with Buddhist, Daoist and existential concepts and symbolisms, but its philosophical thinking runs far deeper. It follows two primary protagonists, the supposed 'murderer' Ryōgi Shiki and investigator Kokutō Mikiya, as they confront the supernatural condition of the world around them and those who seek to control Shiki's unique power - the 'Mystic Eyes of Death Perception'. The Mystic Eyes, which are awakened within Shiki when she wakes from a coma after a car accident, force Shiki to see the 'threads' upon which the world is built, lines which run through all objects and along which they may be cut. Shiki sees the death of all things.

The fourth film in the series (chronologically the second), *Garan no Dō* (Takiguchi 2008), focuses on the time Shiki spends in hospital after first waking from her coma. In a pivotal scene where Shiki first regains consciousness, we are shown a small number of point-of-view shots of Shiki looking around her hospital room, now filled with sharp black and red cracks which flow through the images. It is along these lines that the objects they permeate *slide* apart, opening up a visible gap or void. All things literally *fall* apart - when Shiki looks at her own hands, chunks of flesh and bone appear to fall away from each other (Figure 6). The components of what is viewed, the building blocks of the world, reveal themselves to be only arbitrarily connected - mere images ready to vanish at any time. Things are fundamentally and essentially separated, not only from that which surrounds them, but

from *themselves*. Shiki sees that things are held together by nothing at all, the consistency of the world lies in the contingent self-negation of this void of Nothingness which underwrites all things. It is only by virtue of the absoluteness of this void that the world of things persists. Next to her bed, Shiki sees a bouquet of roses left by Mikiya. As the petals appear to drop away from each other, she reaches over to touch the flowers and after a physical shock the vase falls to the floor, the roses dead and withered (Figure 5). The ultimate breakability of beings is revealed. There is nothing to pin things together, and so they literally fall apart at the seams. From a mere touch, Shiki may kill the world. Here the revealing of the world is the revealing of the image, where the connection between components is *severed* and objects appear as layers sliding over one another. The real is constituted by the fragility of the mere image. Exposed to the vision of such a world, Shiki attempts to gouge out her eyes with her bare hands.

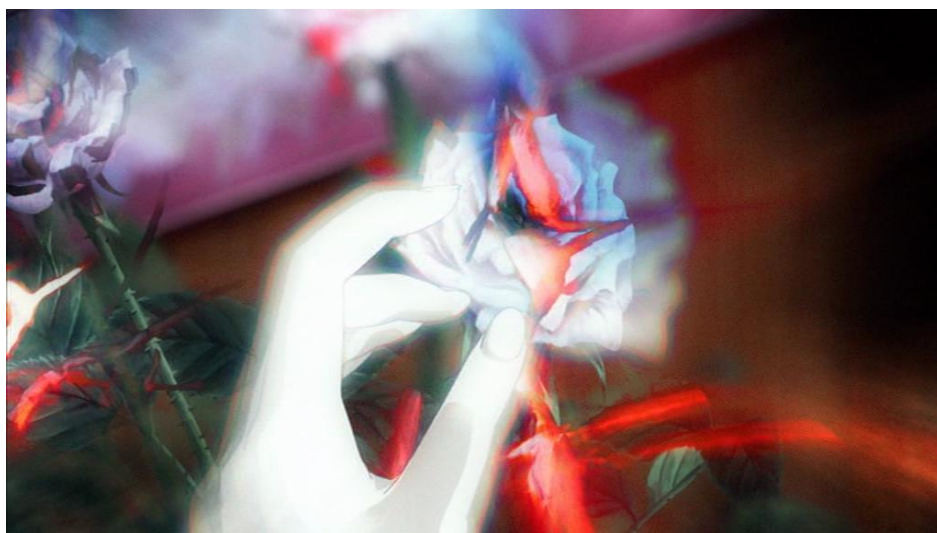


Figure 5. *Kara no Kyōkai: Garan no Dō* (Takiguchi 2008). Shiki sees the cracks which compose the roses beside her bed.



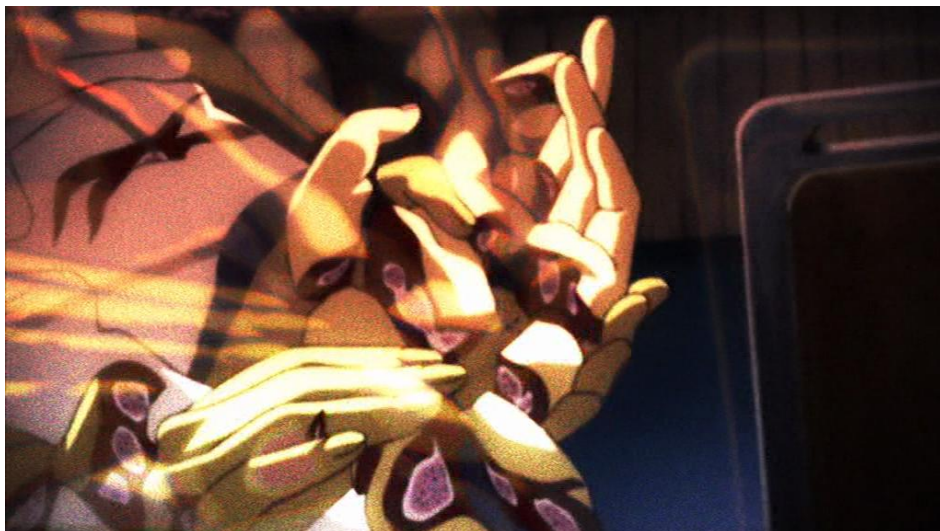


Figure 6. *Kara no Kyōkai: Garan no Dō* (Takiguchi 2008). Shiki's flesh falls apart before her eyes as the doctor checks her pulse.

With the advent of her Mystic Eyes, Shiki faces a new dual existential condition. Firstly she has the religious experience of the revelation of Absolute Nothingness. Shiki sees in herself the ground of the world, the contradictory identity in which she is not merely *in* the world but the expression of the world itself. As such she finds within herself the power to reach inside and undo the world itself. Things are ultra-sensitive and fragile, always falling apart and yet holding themselves together. Shiki, given the ultimate power over things, finds all objects of concern as ready-to-hand in the most direct and absolute way. If she wills it so, everything will fall apart. Secondly, however, on the other side of this existential condition Shiki is confronted by the bottomless and endless anxiety of universal un-ready-to-handness - *all things are already broken*. In the same way that Shiki has control over everything, she has control over nothing. If she wills it so, everything will fall apart, *but even if she does not will so*, everything may still fall apart. The Mystic Eyes of Death Perception reveal all things as simultaneously radically ready-to-hand and radically un-ready-to-hand. The sturdiness of everyday things, upon which we secure our factual existence, gives way into bottomless, contradictory Nothingness.

Shiki experiences an event which changes the mode in which the equipment that makes up the world is disclosed. It is this form of disclosure which constitutes a specific orientation towards the world and a specific way of being for Shiki. She is fated to a certain way of

engaging with the world, which entails a certain kind of freedom and alienation. Much like Okabe in *Steins;Gate*, Shiki's capacity to reach into and tamper with the aspects of the world which usually forbid human contact is not a freeing condition. However, at the same time Shiki is given the opportunity to face *towards* Absolute Nothingness and affirm the world and her own existence, not only in spite of their emptiness but also *because* of it. It is this concern that the film series attends to constantly - what does it mean to lead an authentic existence in the face of Absolute Nothingness? Rather, in the context of the anime-world - how can a series of highly contingent and unstable images, moving from nothing and sliding past one another, ground a meaningful existence?

In this context, what *Kara no Kyōkai* suggests is that nihilism and faith are not epistemic conditions but existential ones. Further, they are not mere opposites or conflicting orientations - nihilism is not the collapse of faith upon itself and faith is not the denial of nihilism. It is only *after* Shiki's religious experience, her nihilistic thrownness into Absolute Nothingness, that she becomes capable of affirming her relationship with the endlessly faithful Mikiya and overcoming her compulsion to kill him. It is only within a world which denies the possibility of faith at all - a constantly dying world, one which is falling apart at the seams, one which compels only *destructive* freedom - that Shiki is capable of an affirming freedom. The suffocating fate of this existential burden is simultaneously the positive possibility of an authentic self-and-other-affirming act. Indeed, the entire series spends much time asking what the conditions are for an affirmative act of killing. A recurring theme in the series, particularly in the final film *Satsujin Kōsatsu (Part Two)* (Takizawa 2009), is the idea that one always and only kills one person in their lifetime, whether that be another human or themselves. Those who kill others may never die on their own terms, never affirm their own life and death, because by denying that possibility for another they already misunderstand the significance and singularity of death. In the climax of the final film, Shiki takes her first and final human life, while under vicious attack and believing that Mikiya has been killed. It is at this point that she can let go of the *desire* to kill that haunted her for her entire life. Shiki, the murderer who never killed anyone, ceases being a murderer at precisely the moment where she kills another human being. It is an act of faith, opened up to her by her love for Mikiya, in the face of Absolute Nothingness, opened up to her by her Mystic Eyes, that allows her to affirm herself and her world. The succession of fractured

images which constitute the world are no longer meaningless and arbitrary, but meaningful precisely because they are broken and fleeting.

The animetic unfolding of *Kara no Kyōkai* is the thinking of how a contingent and unstable world, where the genesis of life lies in Nothingness, can still be profound and meaningful. We are shown, through a medium unafraid to reveal itself as a 'mere' succession of images, the ways in which our own world troubles us. In the same way that Shiki sees the death of the world in herself and herself in the death of the world, we see the death of our world in *Kara no Kyōkai* and the death of *Kara no Kyōkai* in our world. This anime-world is a self-reflective rendering of Absolute Nothingness that reveals ways in which one may affirmatively orient oneself towards a dynamic and unstable world, understand fate, and act freely.

These examples of contemporary anime demonstrate the capacity for the medium to not only *be* uniquely philosophical, but also for anime to reflect upon themselves *as* philosophical problems and actively *do* philosophy, making original contributions to thought. This is accomplished by specific formations of worldliness using narrative, aesthetics and technics to reflect upon each other and produce innovative conceptual-perceptual thinking. *Steins;Gate* and *Kara no Kyōkai* in particular use their self-reflective worldliness to think life and death in specifically animetic ways and rearticulate relationships of fate and freedom, extending ideas that map to Heidegger and the Kyōto School. This *animetic thinking*, as a slice of *anime-philosophy*, produces striking philosophical insights heretofore lost to academic philosophy.

## ***Conclusion***

### **Towards Anime-Philosophy: Decoding Anime-Worlds**

In this essay I have sought to indicate the possibility of a robust and rich anime-philosophy. In the same way that film-philosophy has been able to open up new possibilities for thinking worldliness, perception, embodiment, affect, representation, art, ethics and other philosophical concerns, anime-philosophy promises to make similar contributions to philosophy. As a point of contrast to the logic of cinematism, animetism unveils new problems, perspectives and forms of philosophical engagement. I have intended to begin such an exploration by developing a concept of anime-worlds and interrogating how they can be philosophical. This concept of anime-worlds, drawn from the critical fusion of Thomas Lamarre's philosophy of anime technics and Daniel Yacavone's conceptualisation of film-worlds, brings to the fore a number of philosophical issues. Amongst these issues I have emphasised the capacity for thought and self-reflection that anime-worlds possess, the holistic and more complex sense of an anime work as an artistic whole, the technical qualities of anime which disrupt traditional understandings of film and give anime a special philosophical meaning, the evolving technological condition which actively produces anime-worlds, and the possibility of anime engaging in philosophical activity.

In order to decode anime-worlds and proceed along the path of anime-philosophy I developed an open hermeneutic framework from the philosophies of Martin Heidegger and the Kyōto School. My emphasis in these readings, anticipating the case studies which closed the body of this essay, has been the conceptualisation of the relationship between fate and freedom. Fate and freedom served as a particular instantiation and specification of a philosophical consideration of worldliness and technology (alongside another concept - Nothingness), which have special ontological significance for anime-worlds. In Chapter One I took from Heidegger a broad conceptualisation of the significance and components of worldliness in both an ontical and ontological sense. I focussed on how disclosure and enclosure produce a kind of fate and make possible a kind of freedom, articulating this problematic within the context of the question of technics. In Chapter Two I developed from

Kyōto School philosophers Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime an understanding of Absolute Nothingness, focussing on how this has consequences for thinking the activity of Being. In particular, the concepts of religious experience and species are central to understanding fate and freedom. In Chapter Three, the crux of this essay, I developed the concept of anime worlds from an engagement with Lamarre's work on anime and Yacavone's work on film-worlds. I then sought to lay out some of the most central points, with respect to anime-philosophy, anime in the condition of philosophy, and anime *as* philosophy, which make anime-worlds philosophically significant. I then closed the body of this essay with philosophical readings of two key examples of contemporary popular anime, built around this concept of anime-worlds. These readings involved a deployment of the hermeneutic framework I developed from Heidegger and the Kyōto School, specifically targeting concerns of fate and freedom. Through these readings, I have sought to emphasise the originality of the philosophical thinking that *Steins;Gate* (Hamasaki, Satō 2011) and *Kara no Kyōkai* (Various 2007-2013) engage in. Not only do they reflect on what it means to be anime in a way that academic argumentative philosophical discourse cannot, but they also add to our understanding of the practical worldly significance and conditions of specific philosophical concerns (in this case, how we may understand fate and freedom).

My contention is that anime (or, more generally, *animetic film*) *engages in* and *calls for* a specific form of philosophical thinking. This form of thought, though not entirely distinct from cinematic thinking, is thoroughly irreducible to it. Beyond film-philosophy, this form of thought is anime-philosophy.

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