Kiyoshi Miki (1897–1945), a Japanese philosopher, is little known at least among Western psychologists, but his thoughts seem to help us to clarify features and problems in modern Western psychology, especially the psychology of C. G. Jung (1875–1961). Since 1967, Miki’s works have been available in *Miki Kiyoshi Zenshu (Complete Works of Kiyoshi Miki; henceforth MKZ)* in 20 volumes, and some soft-cover editions of his essays are long sellers in Japan. However, none of his writings has been translated into any foreign language. Although some studies of modern Japan have mentioned Miki, the secondary literature in English thematically dealing with his works is limited to two (Nagatomo, 1995; Townsend, 2009).

This chapter’s task is twofold: to present Miki’s ideas for Western readers and to explore their implications for Jungian psychology. A systematic comparison is not my intention here, and even though I try it when possible, it remains modest and provisional. I rather will be content with identifying similarities and differences between them. Although Miki is perhaps the most historically conscious of all Japanese philosophers, the reference to his biography and the historical and political situation in which he worked as an intellectual will be restricted to the minimum. In contrast, I will devote more space for the intellectual-historical context of both men.

In Miki’s writings, the name of Freud appears only a few times as one of the figures representing irrationalism in current thought (MKZ 11, pp. 185, 213), and Jung is never mentioned as far as I know. He was perhaps interested, not so much in psychology as a discipline, but in psychological aspects of various philosophical thoughts.

Miki was a thinker who, refraining himself from claiming originality, found it especially important to locate himself in the whole historical
context of the ongoing intellectual history in the West as well as in Japan. So understanding something in light of his philosophy means virtually viewing it through the eyes of those thinkers whom he had studied and incorporated before interpreting it with his own theoretical framework. What might be called his original thoughts only came from his awareness of problems raised in his current situation. Miki’s stance is therefore conducive for correctly locating the Swiss psychologist, too, in a comprehensive context of Western intellectual history.

The primary concern with individuality

Miki’s primary concern with individuality is already apparent in his earliest unpublished writing, ‘Unspoken philosophy’ (1919; MKZ 18). As the unusual title suggests, it is not so much a philosophical but a psychological essay, for it confesses and explores the subjective basis of his philosophy. Noteworthy is that the young Miki’s psychological insight resembles Jung’s and even Dialogical Self discourse:

Individuality implies, paradoxically speaking, having a mind being both a single person and several persons opposing, contradicting and conflicting with each other. ... The individual is correctly evaluated only in an intuition toward its wholeness. Thus understanding individuality does not find its foundation in a spoken but in an unspoken point. (MKZ 18, p. 61)

Also in common with Jung, as a characteristic style of discourse, is Miki’s preference of using opposites and types, including introvert and extrovert, in his writing.

Goethe

Both Jung and Miki admired the German writer Goethe since their adolescence. Reading Faust, Jung saw ‘a prophet’ in the German poet (Jung, 1961/1989, p. 60). For Miki, he was the master in art. Both quote, in their autobiographical writings, the line ‘two souls live in my bosom’ from Faust (Jung, 1961/1989, p. 234; MKZ 18, p. 51).

However, there is an important difference: While Jung’s references to Goethe are almost exclusively from Faust Part 2, Miki extensively cites Goethe’s writings on natural science as well, treating him as a thinker. It is not an exaggeration to say that his ideas on individuality, type and character are based on Goethe.