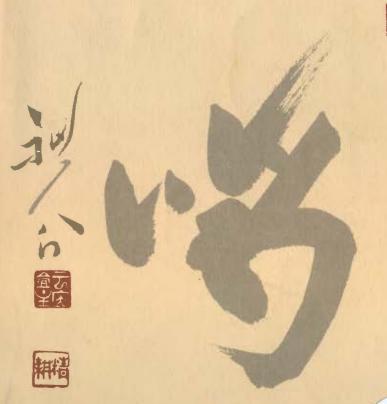# ZEN BUDDHISM TODAY

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE KYOTO ZEN SYMPOSIUM

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Cover Calligraphy by

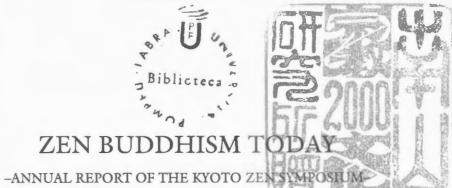Seikō Hirata

"Katsu"
(a shout to awaken trainees)

ZEN BUDDHISM TODAY

CONTENTS

NISHIDA'S PHILOSOPHY, NISHITANI'S PHILOSOPHY, AND ZEN

Reflections on the Notion of Reality
in the Thought of Nishida and Nishitani

BERNARD STEVENS

AT FIRST GLANCE, *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 [A study of the good][1] may seem somewhat disappointing, despite the fact that in many ways it constitutes the fountainhead of Kyoto-school philosophy. It can appear to be a kind of schematization and flattening of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (POERTNER and HEISE 1995, pp. 336–38),[2] with a few colorful references to non-Western thought thrown in to lend it some apparent originality. It can be regarded as moving in the realm of the obvious, and seen as the result of an adequate but average understanding of Western philosophy. It does not strike one immediately as being a milestone in the history of philosophical thought. And I must admit that my first reading of the book left me with an impression close to this.

However, after becoming better acquainted with the philosophy of the Kyoto school as well as with its Japanese and Asian cultural background, I have gradually changed my view and have recently rediscovered this book in a new light. *Zen no kenkyū* does indeed appear to be a relatively simple work. But it is, I believe, the type of simplicity Heidegger told us we must try to regain: not the simplicity of simple-mindedness, nor the simplicity of the infancy of the Spirit, but the simplicity of *das Anfängliche*, "the beginning," or *das Ursprüngliche*, "originality." The very simplicity of this book makes for its difficulty, in a way comparable to the way that archaic Greek thought, in its embryonic form, contains too much conceptual richness and too many levels of meaning to be easily transcribed into the more "scholastic" discourse of the conventional academia. This book contains—and this might also be

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[1] Hereafter abbreviated as ZK. Translated into English as *An Inquiry into the Good* (hereafter IG), by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (NISHIDA 1990).

[2] POERTNER and HEISE (1995, pp. 336–38) have convincingly demonstrated the influence of the English neo-Hegelian Thomas Hill Green on Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū*.

linked to the semantic structure of the Japanese language—a type of "plurivocity" that cannot be exhausted by the "univocity" aimed at by modern philosophy with its scientific and rational ambitions.

This "archaism" of *Zen no kenkyū* contributes to its perfection. Nishida himself declared that, although he felt unsatisfied with the book in his later years, he couldn't change it because "one's thoughts have a living integrity at each point of time" (ZK, p. 6; IG, p. xxxi). He also added that "what lay deep in my thought" while writing the book was not limited to its apparent "psychologism," but already contained what was to develop into such later notions as "absolute will" (*zettai ishi* 絶対意志), "place" (*basho* 場所), "dialectical universal" (*benshōhōteki ippansha* 弁証法的一般者), "acting intuition" (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直感), and "historical reality" (*rekishiteki jitsuzai* 歴史的実在). Thus the notion of "pure experience" (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験) that forms the core of *Zen no kenkyū* is not "overcome" in Nishida's later philosophy but is continued, with its various seminal potentialities progressively explored and new viewpoints opened, new concepts discovered, and new possibilities enabled that in no way negate the original ones.

And I believe it is not just the later philosophy of Nishida that is seminally contained in *Zen no kenkyū*, but also the various aspects of the philosophy of the Kyoto school as a whole. Moreover—although this might sound like somewhat of an overstatement—it is not just the philosophy of the Kyoto-school philosophers that was affected but also that of people who, like us today, took Nishida's endeavor seriously and attempted to follow the path of thought he opened for future generations. It seems to me that one of the most thought-provoking notions of *Zen no kenkyū* in this respect is Nishida's notion of reality (*jitsuzai* 実在) or the universe (*uchū* 宇宙) as a "manifestation of God" (*kami no hyōgen* 神の表現). The following pages do not offer an explanation of that notion, but just a few hints at some of the steps that can lead in its direction.

The Ground Common to Nishitani and Nishida

The author who has probably influenced me the most in my new estimation of Nishida's philosophy is Nishitani Keiji, whose writings, being more accessible to Western ways of thought than those of Nishida, often prove more appealing to the European reader. Two books of Nishitani's in particular have clarified my understanding of Nishida: *Shūkyō to wa nanika* 宗教とは何か

(NISHITANI 1961; hereafter SN)[3] and *Nishida Kitarō: Sono hito to shisō* 西田幾多郎— その人と思想 (NISHITANI 1985),[4] his monograph on Nishida.

When, for example, Nishitani states in his introduction to *Shūkyō to wa nanika* that "the inquiry into religion attempted here proceeds by way of problems judged to lay hidden at the ground of the historical frontier we call 'the modern world,' with the aim of delving into the ground of human existence and, at the same time, searching anew for the wellsprings of reality itself" (SN, p. 2; RN p. xlvii), I personally understand this statement as a perfect continuation of what Nishida was attempting to do through his notion of "pure experience." Indeed, pure experience—a concept that is meant, among other things, to counter the obliterating preeminence of the intellectual over the volitional in modern thought—is precisely "the ground of human existence" and the "wellsprings of reality itself," since Nishida saw in it the main access to "the problem of human life" (*jinsei no mondai* 人生の問題) as well as to the "unconscious unifying force" (*muishiki tōitsu ryoku* 無意識統一力) that functions both at the heart of human consciousness and at the heart of reality as a whole. Although Nishida's approach to the religious problem in *Zen no kenkyū* is psychological and epistemological as opposed to the existential approach of Nishitani, the "immanentist realistic" standpoint (or "radical realist" standpoint) constructed in *Zen no kenkyū* still remains the basis without which Nishitani's impressive intercultural enterprise might not have been possible.

This appears clearly when Nishitani speaks of religion "as the self-awareness of reality, or, more correctly, the real self-awareness of reality" (*jitsuzai no jitsuzaitekina jikaku* 実在の実在的な自覚). Nishitani explains further that

> by the self-awareness of reality I mean both our becoming aware of reality and, at the same time, the reality realizing itself in our awareness.... In this sense, the realness of our existence, as the appropriation of reality, belongs to reality itself as the self-realization of reality itself. (SN, p. 8; RN p. 5)

This question of "reality," which Nishitani views here from an existential-religious standpoint, had been considered by Nishida from an epistemological

[3] Translated into English as *Religion and Nothingness* (hereafter RN) by Jan Van Bragt (NISHITANI 1982).

[4] Translated into English as *Nishida Kitarō* (hereafter NK) by Yamamoto Seisaku and James W. Heisig (NISHITANI 1991).

perspective. Indeed, it is Nishida who opened the path to grasping reality beyond the subject-object dichotomy, before "the standpoint of separation of subject and object, or opposition between within and without, what we call the field of consciousness" (ZK p. 14; IG p. 9). So if Nishitani makes a more extensive use of the theological terminology of religion and the ontological terminology of existential thought, with clearly readable references to famous texts of the Christian and Buddhist literatures, it is from a standpoint that had previously been defined by Nishida on the level of pure experience. This appears more specifically in Nishitani's book *Nishida Kitarō*, which I would now like to look at more closely.

Nishitani's study on Nishida is instructive on many levels, but there are three aspects of the book that have struck me as particularly thought-provoking: 1) the relationship Nishitani identifies between Nishida's work and the European intellectual context of the late nineteenth century; 2) the link he establishes between Nishida's ontological "principle" (ri 理) and the Aristotelian notion of "power" or "potentiality" (*dynamis*), together with the Leibnizian notion of "force" (*vis*); 3) his explanation of Nishida's concept of God.

The Historical Situation of Nishida

In part 2 of *Nishida Kitarō* Nishitani has a chapter entitled "Nishida's Place in Philosophy." Here Nishitani shows how Nishida's thought can be seen as an attempt to respond to the crisis in European philosophy at the turn of the century. It is an attempt comparable in many ways to that of Husserl, although Nishitani, unfortunately, does not establish this comparison himself. One of the interesting things about Nishitani's description is its proximity to Heidegger's position regarding the state of philosophy at the time Husserl wrote his *Logische Untersuchungen*. Indeed, in his lectures on the concept of time, Heidegger shows how Husserl's phenomenology was an attempt to respond to the decline of philosophy in the face of the rise of positivism (HEIDEGGER 1924). I do not know whether Nishitani was acquainted with Heidegger's lectures, but if he wasn't the similarities are all the more striking, and point to a correspondence between Nishida's and Husserl's respective enterprises that demands further examination. Here I will only offer a brief sketch of the view offered by Nishitani and Heidegger of the state of European philosophy at the beginning of Nishida's and Husserl's careers.

During the last years of the nineteenth century Western philosophy had just experienced the overthrow of the idealistic systems. The end of Hegelian-type metaphysics was thus the context within which the philosophical activity of those days tried to find a new configuration. Such a situation opened the path for the rise of positivistic thought. The humanities attempted to emulate the exactness of natural sciences, so that philosophy was forced to redefine itself according to the empirical standards of the scientific method. And thus appeared philosophy's ambition to become a "rigorous science," based on the "facts" of experience rather than on the "empty concepts" of metaphysical speculation. One result was that psychology separated itself from the field of philosophy in order to become a completely empirical science, a physiology of the "psyche" investigating "internal sensations" and the life of the mind through methods of experimental observation defined according to "objective realities." Then, through an inversion of the traditional hierarchy, scientific psychology attempted to recreate philosophy as one of its applications. Logic also had to be explained in terms of psychological processes.

Attempting to balance the imperialism of speculative objectivism and the positivistic sciences were a number of initiatives such as Neo-Kantian anti-psychologism, Dilthey's formulation of an autonomous understanding of life, and Kierkegaard's affirmation of subjective existence. One issue in particular tended to take an increasingly central position: the status of consciousness, a phenomenon common to the natural sciences, human sciences, and metaphysical speculation.

Such was the historical situation of philosophy at the turn of the century. And, following Nishitani's interpretation, Nishida's contribution to philosophy must be seen in relation to it. Husserlian phenomenology, born in exactly the same context, is similarly oriented: in both cases there is an attempt to find a unity of consciousness preceding the specification of knowledge into particular sciences, an attempt to find a level of experience that is pretheoretical because it is foundational to the theoretical. The problem is to overcome the "crisis of European sciences" by discovering that which is prior to the various methods of investigation, using an approach that redefines their presuppositions in order to uncover their foundational dimension.

In both cases the problem is to go back to "the things themselves." This implies an attempt to find a level of consciousness that is still undifferentiated from the reality to which it endeavors to find access. But whereas Husserl

sought to establish a phenomenology capable of founding both natural sciences and human sciences (by uncovering a more original level of access to reality, which he called "intentionality"), Nishida, with his notion of *junsui keiken*, attempted to establish an experience that is still undifferentiated and thus capable of founding not only the sciences but also the traditional disciplines of metaphysics and religion.

Moreover, Nishida's thought, in comparison with the logicism of the early Husserl, is not totally opposed to psychologism. In Nishida's view there were reasons for the establishment of psychology as an empirical science, just as there were for the appearance of the notion of "pure experience." Nishida, as we know, borrowed this latter concept from the psychologism of William James, but with the intention of liberating it from the antimetaphysical attitude that psychologism shared with logicism, and then of using it to investigate the secular questions of metaphysics. Indeed, aside from his discussion of psychologism, Nishida's thought is essentially concerned with the fundamental questions of the German idealists (Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, and Fichte), which he tries to reappropriate from the ruins of speculative metaphysics.

The positivistic context—which Nishitani describes elsewhere as a major aspect of modern nihilism—meant the total rejection of any metaphysics, any transcendence, be it in the form of Kantian a priori categories, of Hegelian conceptualism, of the Platonic intelligible world, or of religious belief in some other dimension. As Nishitani clearly explains, positivism emphasized observable facts to the exclusion of any other reality. The access to the metaphysical dimension was thus closed. Such a dichotomy seemed to put an end to traditional philosophy's capacity to offer a unified vision of man and the world.

Thus, in Nishitani's eyes, the task of the philosopher was—and is—to overcome the opposition between positivism (psychologism, scientism, and scientific socialism) and metaphysics (idealism, existentialism, and the religious attitude). The state of the *Zeitgeist* needed a philosophy capable of standing solidly on the ground of pure experience while offering new answers to the fundamental questions of metaphysics, religion, and human existence in general, and doing this without falling into traditional scholastic metaphysics. So—as Nishitani puts it—since philosophy was incapable of responding to the positivistic challenge and positivism was incapable of thinking philosophically, Nishida wished to establish a metaphysically oriented standpoint that at the same time would maintain a footing in experience and facticity.

Nishitani writes, "A standpoint that was metaphysical and yet empiricist, that maintained ties with God without departing from the actual world of fact, was almost unthinkable in the West" (NK, p. 71). And that is precisely what Nishida endeavored to create as early as *Zen no kenkyū*, where he strove to do justice to both the contemplative life of religious ontology and the positive facts of empirical sciences. Such an attitude was bold in its novelty and yet at the same time was in accordance with ancient Buddhist tradition, since Buddhism offers an individual morality and spirituality based on facts of self-experience, and free from any type of scholastic metaphysical speculation or rigidified religious dogma (see RADAKRISHNAN 1929, pp. 342ff.). Thus the point of Nishida's philosophy that was most novel vis-à-vis modern Western thought was the same point that linked it with the most profound tradition of the East.

It was also the point at which Nishida, perhaps unconsciously, practiced what Nishitani describes elsewhere as "the self-overcoming of nihilism." Indeed, if the positivistic spiritual void is a major aspect of contemporary nihilism, standing on the ground of this void (the positivistic notion of pure experience itself) in order to transcend it and uncover the ontological principle of true reality (be it called "the unconscious unifying force," "the place of nothingness," or "emptiness") appears to be what Nishitani is referring to when he speaks of "overcoming nihilism through nihility" so that one might reach the emptiness that transcends it and rediscover the suchness of reality.

The Ontological Level

However, it is not only Nishida's work with consciousness, experience, and reality on the epistemological, psychological, and transcendental levels that is of particular significance, but also his contributions in the area of fundamental ontology.

Nishida defines the "principle" (ri 理) common to consciousness and reality as an "unconscious unifying force" (*muishiki tōitsu ryoku* 無意識統一力). This principle—which in later works Nishida related to the notion of nothingness (mu 無) and place (basho 場所)—is the ontological background that enables the union of the self with the absolute, which is the ultimate goal of religious experience. The manner in which Nishida expresses the nature of *ri* reveals his thought to be a late heir of the traditional Eastern search for such a religious union (the classical example of which is the union of *ātman* and *brahman* in ancient Indian spirituality).

Furthermore, Nishida's discourse enables the reader to establish a relation between two ontological philosophers whose significance Heidegger has shown to be decisive in the historical (*geschichtlich*) becoming of Western ontology: Aristotle and Leibniz (see HEIDEGGER 1931).

By establishing in this way a possible relationship between the spiritual tradition of the East and the ontological tradition of the West, Nishida enables what one might call a reactualization of the antique "giant's battle for being" (*gigantomachia peri tes ousias*). Indeed, the "giant's battle for being," to which Plato refers in *The Sophist*, concerned the definition of the "beingness" (*ousia*) of nature (*physis*). The "foreigner" in Plato's dialogue realizes that the concept of being (*on*) is not so easy to define once one accepts the fact that "nonbeing" (*me on*) of some type must be posited if one is to explain the ontological defect of a pseudo-being (such as, for example, the discourse of the sophist himself). Thus in attempting, with the aid of some historical retrospection, to go a step further in defining being, he realizes that there is a type of intellectual "battle" between those who, like the Ionians, view being as something that is "becoming" (*genesis*) and "moving" (*kinesis*), and those who, like the Parmenidians, view it as a kind of immutable "essential beingness" (*ousia*). And both sides claim that the ontological principle (*genesis, kinesis*, or *ousia*) "is." So, asks the foreigner, what is the meaning of this "is" (*estin*)? What is the Being (*einai*) that it expresses? Is it an additional principle of some kind? Does it precede all other types of ontological principles, or perhaps include them?

Actually, concludes the foreigner, we thought we knew the meaning of being, but we realize that in fact we do not and "we have fallen into trouble." This sentence in Plato's *The Sophist* (244a) is quoted by Heidegger in the famous opening of *Sein und Zeit*.[5] Heidegger's effort can be seen as an effort to reopen the "battle" (i.e., the discussion) on the question of being, after almost two millennia of onto-theo-logical substantialistic speculation (since, in Heidegger's view, Western metaphysics as a whole has developed the meaning of being as *ousia*, understood by means of the Aristotelian *hupokeimenon*, thus giving it a substantialistic dimension that obliterates its

[5] "Denn offenbar seid ihr doch schon lange mit dem vertraut, was ihr eigentlich meint, wenn ihr den Ausdruck 'seind' gebraucht, wir jedoch glaubten es einst zwar zu verstehen, jetzt sind wir in Verlegenheit gekommen." Haben wir heute eine Antwort auf die Frage nach dem, was wir mit dem Wort 'seiend' eigentlich meinen. Keineswegs. Und so gilt es denn, die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein erneut zu stellen. (HEIDEGGER 1927, p.1)

"dynamic" essence). In his Nietzsche, Heidegger explicitly speaks of the urgent necessity of reactualizing such a *gigantomachia peri tes ousias* in light of the invading nihilism of the times.

This growing nihilism is, indeed, partly due to the incapacity to conceptualize being as such, the understanding of which presupposes an experience of nothingness (*das Nichts*). In his own effort to rethink the essential meaning of being in relationship with the experience of nothingness, Heidegger stresses the necessity of reaching beyond the traditional substantialistic interpretation of Aristotle's *ousia* and uncovering the basic meaning of being as *dynamis* (power, force, or potentiality to become)—which is the fundamental meaning of *physis*, the initial site of the ontological questioning of the Greeks.

In his effort to reappropriate Aristotle's "dynamic" ontology, Heidegger underlines the importance of a mediation through the Leibnizian notion of "force" (*vis*). And this is where Nishida's "unconscious unifying force" comes into the picture. Nishida explains that this force is that by which consciousness comprises a manifestation of reality in general. This unifying force, which expresses, altogether, the activity of consciousness and the fundamental essence of the universe, is explicitly compared to Leibniz's monad, while the Aristotelian "dynamic" background is also hinted at (and clearly emphasized in Nishitani's interpretation of Nishida [NK, pp. 35ff., 86ff., 130]). At the same time Nishida links it to the Buddhist and pre-Buddhist concepts of *ātman* and *anātman* and their relation to *brahman*.

So, when seen from the perspective of the Kyoto school, Heidegger's effort to overcome the substantialist interpretation of Aristotelian ontology in favor of a more dynamic one was not simply a way to favor the Ionian (Heraclitean) interpretation of *physis* over the Parmenidain *ousia*. Its significance was that it enabled a dialogue between Western metaphysics and the relational ontology of Eastern spirituality (particularly Mādhyamika thought), where substance is reduced to relations between elements whose very existence depends on such a relational situation. And when, later, Nishida saw Leibniz's "force" as mediating this reappropriation of the dynamic dimension of being, he also underlined the "willing" or "desiring" aspect of this force (its *appetitio*). Attempts to uncover the metaphysical principle of any Buddhist-inspired Weltanschauung (or even pre-Buddhist Weltanschauung, since this principle reaches back to the Vedanta and can be found in the Vedantic-inspired philosophy of Schopenhauer as much as in Nishida) invariably rediscover the same characteristics: that consciousness (*ishiki* 意識) is will (*ishi*

意志), that will is pulsional (*shōdōteki* 衝動的), and that this pulsion is to be found at the heart of reality (*jitsuzai*) (ZK, p. 19, IG, p. 8).

Concerning this dimension of will, desire, or pulsion in original being ("original" in the sense both of "fundamental" and "initial"), I cannot resist quoting this beautiful passage of the *Rigveda* (cited by David J. Kalupahana in his remarkable study, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy* [KALUPAHANA 1992]), where archaic Indian thought seems to have expressed in one pure intuition what we are now trying to rediscover quite clumsily through our commentary of Nishida, Heidegger, and the Greeks:

1) Not nonexistent was it nor existent was it at that time: there was not atmosphere nor the heavens which are beyond. What existed? Where? In whose care? Water was it? An abyss unfathomable?

2) Neither mortal was there nor immortal then; not of night, of day was there distinction: That alone breathed windless through inherent power. Other than That indeed there was naught else.

3) Darkness it was, by darkness hidden in the beginning: an undistinguished sea was all this. The germ of all things which was enveloped in void, That alone through the power of brooding thought was born.

4) Upon That in the beginning arose desire, which was the first offshoot of that thought. This desire sages found out (to be) the link between the existent and non-existent, after searching with the wisdom in their heart.

5) Straight across was extended their line of vision: was That below, was That above? Seedplacers there were, powers there were: potential energy below, impulse above.

6) Who, after all, knows? Who here will declare—arose whence this world? Subsequent are the gods to the creation of this world. Who, then, knows whence it came into being?

7) This world—whence it came into being, whether it was made or whether not—He who is its overseer in the highest heavens surely knows—or perhaps He knows not!

(KALUPAHANA 1992, p. 4)

The Manifestation of God

It would necessitate a long study to establish the possible links between the Sanskrit notion of *brahman* and the Greek notion of *physis*. There is an etymological link that people like Heinrich Zimmer, Emile Benveniste, and Pierre Aubenque have proven (ZIMMER 1951; BENVENISTE 1966; AUBENQUE 1989). But to prove the philosophical link on the level of ontological meaning is a much more difficult task. And this is where Nishida provides an interesting possibility: his notion of God, which, as indicated by the previous ontological considerations, is closer to the Greek notions of *physis* and *dynamis* than to the Christian notion of a personal and transcendent God. Nishida describes God as an Absolute that is immanent to the reality of the universe as a whole; God is defined as the "foundation of the universe" (*uchū no konpon* 宇宙の根本), and the universe is described as the "manifestation of God" (*kami no hyōgen* 神の表現) rather than the creation of God.

Furthermore, the relation of man to God is not described as some face to face interpersonal dialogue, but as a reappropriation by man of his essential divine nature: God is perceived at the most profound level of the true self. To determine the extent to which this notion is a continuation of the antique search for authentic *ātman* would require extensive research, as would the question of the extent to which the Buddhist ethical quest is a continuation of its predecessor in the Vedantic tradition. But Nishida gives clear indications that he saw his own thought to be a continuation of such a spiritual quest and, moreover, to be in deep communion with Christian spirituality (particularly as it was expressed by the mystics of the Renaissance):

There is a fundamental spiritual principle at the base of reality, and this principle is God. This idea accords with the fundamental truth of Indian religion: Ātman and Brahman are identical. God is the great spirit of the universe.... An infinite power is hidden even in our small chests that are restricted by time and space; the infinite unifying power of reality is latent in us. Possessing this power, we can search for the truth of the universe in learning, we can express the true meaning of reality in art, and we can know the foundation of reality that forms the universe in the depth of our hearts—we can grasp the true face of God. The infinitely free activity of the human heart proves God directly. As Jakob Boehme said, we see God with a "reversed eye" (*umgewandtes Auge*).... The religion of India of

the distant past and the mysticism that flourished in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries sought God in intuition realized in the inner soul, and this I consider to be the deepest knowledge of God. In what form does God exist? From one perspective, taken by such thinkers as Nicholas of Cusa, God is all negation, whereas that which can be affirmed or grasped is not God. (ZK, p. 120; IG, pp. 80–81)

So, although Nishida's notion of God seems far removed from the Christian notion of a transcendent and personal Creator of the universe, it is in Nishida's view quite close to that of some great Christian mystics. He also describes God as "the great personality at the base of the universe" (*kami wa uchū no konteitaru ichidaijinkaku de aru* 神は宇宙の根底たる一大人格である, ZK, p. 225; IG, p. 161).

This, of course, depends on the understanding one has of "personality." In this case, I guess, it is something that reveals itself when the ego-centered person (*jiga* 自我) is negated (*muga* 無我) to uncover the true selfless self (*jiko* 自己)—thus revealing what Nishitani refers to as "the real self-awareness of reality" (*jitsuzai no jitsuzaitekina jikaku* 実在の実在的自覚). The personality of God is thus the "self" of the universe. It is—as stressed by Nishitani (NK, p. 154)—the dimension of spirituality (intellectual intuition, freedom, and love) that unfolds from the standpoint of the true self in pure experience. In order to have a clear grasp of this notion of personality one has to stand at the point where the ground of "pure experience" coincides with the ontological dimension of the "unconscious unifying force." Such a personality is (in a concept later developed by Nishitani) an "impersonal personality" (*hijinkakuseiteki jinkakusei* 非人格性的人格性; RN part 2), that enables the "egoless" person to express the basic universal virtues of agape and *karuṇā*.

Abbreviations

IG   *An Inquiry into the Good*. Abe Masao and Christopher Ives, 1990. New Haven: Yale University Press.

NK   *Nishida Kitarō: Sono hito to shisō* 西田幾太郎ーその人と思想. Nishitani Keiji, 1985. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō.

RN   *Religion and Nothingness*. Translated by Jan Van Bragt, 1982. Berkeley: University of California Press.

SN   *Shūkyō to wa nanika*. Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治, 1961. Tokyo: Sōbunsha.

ZK   *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究. Nishida Kitarō 西田幾太郎, 1950 (1995). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

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Nishida's Philosophy of Religion

A Religious Philosophy

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Nishida developed his logic of topos into a philosophy of religion, dubbing it the "theology of the logic of topos." This philosophy of religion incorporated his understanding of Western philosophies of religions, as well as of the religious experiences of human beings in both the East and the West. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that, fundamentally, Nishida cast the problem according to the Buddhist worldview of emptiness, while drawing from his experience of Zen practice. In this sense his philosophy of religion may be called a Buddhist philosophy of religion, a fact that does not, however, exclude or negate Christian spirituality and its experience of the divine.

One can thus argue that his philosophy of religion is in fact neither Buddhist nor Christian but universal; it may also be argued that as such it is truly Buddhist, in that it empties conventional categories and affirms the reality of all-embracing compassion as the basis of human society. The basic insight contained in his logic of topos being already in line with the wisdom traditions of the world, his philosophy of religion is informed by a nondualistic mode of discourse that discusses the relationship between the individual and the world, and between humanity and God. Whether it is his philosophy of religion or his other philosophical thought, Nishida's speculation always has the characteristic of "religious philosophy." It treats humans essentially as religious beings; it also has the existential power to move and console the reader. This salvific power comes, I believe, from the very source of Nishida's person: a deep and expansive spiritual awareness and sincerity in which he not only lived but also philosophized.

IT IS WELL KNOWN that Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 chose Kyoto Imperial University over the more prestigious Tokyo Imperial University for the sole reason that the philosopher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 was teaching there. While a student at the First Higher School in Tokyo,[1] Nishitani had come

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[1] In the prewar education system the "higher schools" began as three-year national institutions designed to prepare students for the imperial universities. Five such schools were established under

across a copy of Nishida's *Shisaku to taiken* 思索と体験 [Philosophical reflection and direct experience] (1915)[2] and been deeply moved by some of the essays contained in it. It was the late summer of 1919; Nishitani had finished his first year at the higher school and had just returned to Tokyo from a summer vacation spent at the home of a friend in Shinshū. "In those days Nishida's name was not known to the general public, and I was no exception, but because the title of the book appealed to my youthful fancy I bought it and took it home," recalls Nishitani (NISHITANI 1985, p. 4). Philosophical essays at the beginning of the book totally eluded the comprehension of this higher school student who had yet to be initiated into the rigors of philosophical training, but the essays towards the end of the book deeply moved him. Concerning those essays Nishitani writes:

> They struck me as more familiar than anything I had read or than anyone I knew. There was something qualitatively different about them. This sense of familiarity seemed to well up from my very soul. I'm not saying, of course, that I could have written the same thing. No. It's that I didn't feel the essays were written by someone wholly unrelated to me.... When we think about it, it is not so easy to be truly "oneself"; this being the case, it is possible that others are in fact closer than we are to who we really are. It is the greatest blessing and good fortune indeed to encounter such a person. (NISHITANI 1985, pp. 4–5)

Nishitani goes on to explain that what happened to him was quite unexpected, because it was not in conformity with the trend of the times. Granted, the issue of self-identity, or of how to establish one's individual self, was a major concern of Taishō intellectuals, but Nishitani—then preoccupied with personal health-related problems—was somewhat immune to the issues that consumed his generation (NISHITANI 1985, p. 8). He felt that Nishida's approach towards establishing individuality was different from those of popular writers like Abe Jirō 阿部次郎 (1883–1959)[3], and saw greater similarities

the Education Ordinance promulgated by Mori Arinori, Minister of Education, in 1886. The Revised Education Ordinance of 1918 allowed the establishment of new higher schools, both public and private, and by 1926 the number of higher schools had increased to thirty-four.

[2] The first edition was published by Senshōkan 千章館 on 10 March 1915. The Iwanami edition came out on 18 May 1919. Nishitani says he got hold of the first edition.

[3] Abe was a student of Raphael von Koeber at Tokyo Imperial University and closely associated

in the thought of the Meiji-era novelist Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916). For Nishitani this difference between his generation and that of Natsume and Nishida boiled down to a difference in the direction taken in the search for the self:

> In their search for the self, Natsume Sōseki and Nishida proceeded forward from within the center of the self instead of lapsing into an inward spiral regression, as our generation of writers did. In the latter case, the deeper the self delved into itself the more confused it became, until finally one lost sight of the self...and was left open to nihility.... In contrast, Sōseki's and Nishida's approach began with the self as center, then took a forward leap towards something beyond the self—something for the self to base itself upon—and sought the "self" there. That is to say, their approach broke through the self at the center of the self and located the source of the self in the deeper inner realm that transcends the self. This was more than just "cultivation" (*kyōyō* 教養), because, on a deeper level, it was religious and quest-like in nature (*shūkyōteki gudōteki* 宗教的求道的); it was something not merely intellectual but radically volitional. Perhaps Sōseki and Nishida were able to maintain this attitude because they stood within the spiritual tradition of the East. And it may have been that this traditional spirit, imbibing deeply of the Western spirit flowing into Japan, came to flower as the establishment of the individual self (the problem of the establishment of the self having been of fundamental importance to the Japanese since the beginning of the Meiji Period). (NISHITANI 1985, pp. 9–10)

Despite the generation gap that existed between his own generation and that of Natsume and Nishida, Nishitani found a viable direction in Nishida's writings, a road sign that he was to follow.

Kōsaka Masaaki 高坂正顕 (1900–1969), one year ahead of Nishitani at Kyoto Imperial University, was similarly inspired by Nishida:

> Whenever we were in the presence of Professor Nishida what impressed me the most was the sense that "here is the spring of living

with Natsume Sōseki and the members of the "Thursday Group" (*Mokuyōkai* 木曜会). His *Santarō no nikki* 三太郎の日記 [Diary of Santarō] (1914), which was immensely popular among higher school students, defined the tone of self-search and self-identity in a narcissistic manner.

life" (*koko ni wa ikita seimei no izumi ga aru* ここには生きた生命の 泉がある). As I returned home after discussions at the professor's house I would find my debilitated soul resuscitated and my confidence in life restored. I felt the consolation of philosophy at work. (KŌSAKA 1948, p. 6)

Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 [An inquiry into the good] (1911) had a comparable impact on young Kurata Hyakuzō 倉田百三 (1891–1943), who, driven by his existential questions, called upon Nishida on 18 September 1912, in order to get some advice and guidance from the latter.[4] Unfortunately for Kurata, Nishida was not impressed by this higher school student; years later, when Kurata had become a successful writer idolized by students, Nishida told his son Sotohiko 外彦 not to emulate him because Kurata lacked, in Nishida's view, a will of iron.[5] But, judging from the fact that Kurata visited Nishida at his house in Kamakura twice in February 1929,[6] the philosopher's criticism of this gifted writer must have been kept strictly within the family.

The Source of Nishida's Philosophical Contemplation

What attracted youngsters like Nishitani and Kurata to Nishida was, undoubtedly, what Nishitani called the attitude of "religious quest" (*gudō* 求道) they found in him. Indeed, by 1915 Nishida already had a decade of Zen practice "under his belt"; he had attained a significant level of awakening, well beyond the initial breakthrough (*kenshō* 見性) that he had experienced in August 1903. The insight he gained through his Zen practice, along with the suffering he underwent owing to the deaths of several people very close to him, shaped and reshaped his person. Some events that challenged his emotional-spiritual strength were the death of his younger brother, Hyōjirō 憑次郎, during the siege of Port Arthur in August 1904; the death by illness of his second daughter, Yūko 幽子, in January 1907; and the death of his closest friend, Fujioka Sakutarō 藤岡作太郎 (or Tōho 東圃), in February 1910. In each case Nishida suffered deeply, only to come out of the loss a little more mature, a little less selfish, and with an expanded awareness of the workings of the divine power (*tariki* 他力) or "fate" that was beyond his con-

[4] Nishida's diary, 8 September 1912 (NKZ 17:298).

[5] Nishida's letter, 15 August 1922 (NKZ 18:252).

[6] Nishida's diary, 2 and 17 February 1929 (NKZ 17:452).

trol and could not be affected by his personal exertions (*jiriki* 自力).[7]

When Nishida began serious Zen practice he initially felt a conflict between his scholarly study (*gakumon* 学問) and the spiritual quest (*dō* 道), but eventually the latter prevailed, so much so that he could think of nothing else until he found an answer to his search. In his letter of 16 July 1901 to Yamamoto Ryōkichi 山本良吉 (or Chōsui 晁水), Nishida noted, "I'm so constantly preoccupied with the question of my own spirituality (*jiko no reisei mondai* 自己の霊性問題) that [unless I attain some solution] I don't feel I will have enough energy or courage to do anything in the outside world.... Apart from the usual scholarly and moral discussions there must be a spiritual fact (*reiseijō no jijitsu* 霊性上の事実) that, however much one may beat or pull it, will not budge an inch. Lacking this, how uninteresting life would be!"[8]

When we consider the many years of Nishida's serious engagement in finding and establishing his "true self," it is not surprising that his philosophical writings and personal essays reflect something of the spiritual strength and wisdom that he gained through his practice of Zen. He did not start writing extensively until well after he felt comfortable with what he wrote; it had to come from his "center" and not just from his head. But of course it was not his intention to proselytize or spread his "spiritual message." He wrote strictly as a philosopher, devoid of any evangelical interest. Nevertheless, its deep inner source marked his thought with a clear stamp. It is undoubtedly this spiritual quality that continues to render his thought appealing, enabling it to cross the boundaries of culture, religion, and time.

To identify Nishida's philosophical source as informed by religious insight (and more specifically, *Zen* insight) is not to disparage his philosophical rigor or dismiss his efforts to evaluate critically the work of Western thinkers. He was a voracious reader, someone gifted with an uncanny ability to intuit the presence, or lack, of originality in each philosopher whose works he encountered. His rule of thumb was to check the footnotes—if a thinker was quoted by another reputable thinker it was a good sign that the former's work was worth examining. In this way Nishida identified major Western thinkers and explored their writings, although he himself (unlike most of his colleagues and many of his students) never had the opportunity to travel abroad.

[7] The terms *jiriki* and *tariki* cannot be rendered in a univocal way. In another place Nishida explains *jiriki* as the power of the egoless self.

[8] Nishida's letter, 15 July 1901 (NKZ 18.56).

Nishida, in short, paid close attention to the activities of contemporary Western thinkers. Indeed, he was among the first Japanese to take notice of Bergson and in Husserl, and is in fact credited with having introduced Husserl to Japanese students of philosophy (NITTA, TATEMATSU, and SIMO-MISE 1979, p. 8). For example, from a 1914 letter to Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 (1885–1962) we learn that he was familiar with a work of Husserl that had appeared in the 1913 *Jahrbuch für philosophische und phänomenologische Forschung* (most likely Husserl's "Ideen zu einer rinen Phänenomenologie und phänomenologische Philosophie"); this was over twenty years before it was translated into Japanese.[9] He was also in the habit of purchasing philosophical books from abroad as soon as they were available, which, it is said, caused no small financial woe to his family (already in 1916 Nishida had a copy of the third edition of Rickert's *Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*, less than a year after its publication in 1915[10]). His attention was focused on the masters of the past as well. He advised young Tanabe to read Plato and Augustine as writers who "deserve deep appreciation," and also recommended Spinoza and Leibniz.[11] He also held it an ideal for any philosopher to be conversant with new developments in mathematics and physics.[12]

Nishida's philosophical system was shaped on the one hand by his natural powers of intuition, his Zen experience, and his cultural sensibility, and, on the other, by his assiduous philosophical engagement with the works of leading Western thinkers both ancient and modern. Likewise, his philosophy of religion was a product of his dialogue with past and present theologians, Western philosophers, scholars of *Religionswissenschaft*, Zen masters, and Christian colleagues and mystics. Nishida learned much from the Western discipline of the philosophy of religion, which aided him in formulating his own philosophy of religion.

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[9] Nishida's letter to Tanabe Hajime, 1 January 1914 (NKZ 19:507); also 4 September 1915 (NKZ 19:525). This work of Husserl's was translated into Japanese in 1937. Although Nishida appreciated Husserl's precise philosophical methodology and felt that Japanese thinkers had much to learn from his approach (Nishida's letter to Tanabe Hajime, 12 July 1915 [NKZ 19:524]), he remained critical of Husserl's phenomenological stance and his interpretation of consciousness as intentionality (*shikōsei* 志向性). Nishida wished to base his philosophical enquiry on an investigation of the self-reflective nature (*jikakusei* 自覚性) of consciousness (NKZ 5:454).

[10] Nishida's letter to Tanabe Hajime, 10 March 1916 (NKZ 19:529).

[11] Nishida's letter to Tanabe Hajime, 4 August 1917 (NKZ 19:541).

[12] Nishida's letter to Tanabe Hajime, 3 August 1914 (NKZ 19:515).

Nishida and Religionswissenschaft

Nishida was put in charge of teaching an introductory course on religious studies (*shūkyōgaku* 宗教学) the academic year of 1913–14, his fourth year of teaching at Kyoto Imperial University. Contrary to what one might expect, he was not particularly pleased with this assignment. Although he was a profoundly religious man, his primary interest at that time was in establishing himself as a philosopher, and not as a scholar of religion. He was devoting most of his energy to the study of epistemology and logic in order to hone his philosophical skills, which he applied to writing the series of articles "Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei" 自覚に於ける直観と反省 [Intuition and reflection in self-consciousness] (1913–17). In these articles he engaged the questions and criticisms of other philosophical minds. Moreover, such scholars as Anezaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 were already at the forefront of the study of religion, and Nishida probably felt it best to leave the matter to the specialists.

The study of religion, *Religionswissenschaft*, was initially introduced to Japan as part of the field of philosophy and later as an independent discipline. When Nishida was a student at the Imperial University in Tokyo, 1891–94, Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 taught a course on comparative religion and Oriental philosophy (*hikaku shūkyō to tōyō tetsugaku* 比較宗教と東洋哲学), which was a precursor of the study of religion. Anezaki succeeded Inoue and taught religion as a lecturer from 1898 to 1900, then was dispatched to Europe in 1900 for three years.[13] In 1904, upon his return, he was appointed the first professor of religious studies at Tokyo Imperial University. Likewise, Matsumoto Bunzaburō 松本文三郎, Nishida's friend from higher-school days and his colleague at the Kyoto Imperial University, studied under the Indologist and Sanskrit scholar Albrecht Weber during his stay in Germany (1899–1902) and was in charge of the religion program in Kyoto for a while.

By 1913, when Nishida was asked (by Matsumoto Bunzaburō, in fact) to teach the religion course, Japanese academics were conversant with Western scholarship in this field. Even so, the list of thinkers and books[14] Nishida introduced to his students is impressive, and reveals the scope of his study:

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[13] In Germany he studied with Paul Deussen; he also came to know H. Oldenberg and other leading scholars. In London he studied with Rhys Davids. Following his return to Japan in 1903 he began teaching religion, and in the following year he was given the chair of the professor of religion.

[14] See Nishida's *Shūkyōgaku* 宗教学 [Lecture notes on religion] (NKZ 15:221–381).

Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Über die Religion*, Windelband's *Präludien* (on the category of the Holy), Max Müller's *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, Tiele's *Einleitung in die Religionswissenschaft* (Gifford Lectures), Cohen's *Der Begriff der Religion in System der Philosophie*, Höffding's *Religionsphilosophie*, Otto Pfleiderer's *Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage*, James Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's *La Morale et la Science des Moeurs*, and, of course, William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Gifford Lectures)—just to mention a few of the works cited in his lectures.

In his lectures Nishida presented the central issues in the study of religion (e.g., rituals, institutions, psychology, and the relation between religion and culture) and in the study of the philosophy of religion (e.g., the proofs of God's existence, the relation between religion and art, and the development of the philosophy of religion). His lectures, arranged in six parts—"Introduction," "A History of the Study of Religion," "Religious Demands," "Various Types of Religion," "God," and "Humanity Enjoying the Light of Religion"—greatly inspired his students. Among them were two second-year students, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一 and Morimoto Kōji 森本孝治 (or Shōnen 省念), both of whom became deeply involved in Zen practice. Morimoto left the academic world to become a monk and eventually a Zen master, while Hisamatsu remained in the university and was appointed professor of Buddhism at Kyoto Imperial University. Two first-year students, Okano Tomejirō 岡野留次郎 and Shinohara Sukeichi 篠原助市, probably took the course as a general requirement. Other students who might have heard Nishida's lectures on religion are Yamanouchi Tokuryū 山内得立, Katsube Kenzō 勝部健造, Oikawa Eizaemon 及川栄左衛門, Osada Arata 長田新, and Takahashi Keiji 高橋敬視, although there is no record extant to substantiate this conjecture.

God and the World

In his lectures on the study of religion, Nishida defines religion in terms of the relationship between God and humanity. One may wonder why he brings the notion of God into the discussion, especially in view of the fact that Buddhism is generally considered to have no God. "Of course," says Nishida, "Buddhism [postulates] no God (*kami o motanu* 神を持たぬ). Moreover, modern idealism as found in such thinkers as Emerson considers God in an

abstract and idealized way. We must interpret the word 'God' or 'divine' quite broadly" (NKZ 15:264). Nishida further considers the case of Zen, which negates even Buddha (as the saying goes: "If you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha"):

> Certainly, there are religions that do not even think about the existence of God, and Zen Buddhism is one of them. Zen upholds the identify of the mind (or consciousness) with Buddha. (But even if Zen denies the existence of Buddha, the fact is that if there were only humanity, or if there were only Buddha, there would be no talk of religion.) In Christian mysticism Eckhart said, "If I believe in God, there is no God." In these traditions there is no recognition of what we normally consider to be God (God as the object of worship and so forth), but in fact they acknowledge the presence of profound Divinity (*fukaki kami* 深き神). (NKZ 15:224)

By "profound Divinity" Nishida undoubtedly means God beyond our ordinary, objective mode of conceptualization. He sees religious plurality as arising out of different ideas of what God is and different conceptions of the relationship between God and humanity (NKZ 15:224).

Nishida's interpretive stance on religion embraces both Christianity and Buddhism. He finds in these two religions identity rather than disparity. Nineteenth-century Western scholarship tended to uphold a model of difference, considering "the fundamental difference between Buddhism and Christianity to lie in how one transcends the world." Nishida presents Hermann Siebeck's view as one such example. Siebeck postulated two kinds of religions, "moral religions" and "religions of salvation," which Nishida recapitulates as follows:

> In Christianity, transcending the world does not mean fleeing from it or from morality and the demands it imposes on humanity. Humanity opens up its heart towards the will of God, establishes a direct communication with this will, and thereby determines its conduct. In Buddhism, it tries to leave [*dassuru* 脱する] the world.
> (NKZ 15.329)

In contrast to Siebeck, Nishida argues that for any religion to be authentic and real it must bring together these two aspects, "morality" and "salvation." Nishida's elaboration of this point touches on his view of religion:

In any authentic religion, we enter once into the absolutely selfless state in our relationship to God, discard our egos, and take refuge in God. This is the state of "release" (*gedatsu* 解脱). However, when we reach the apex of this state, we break open into the dimension of activity and arrive at the standpoint of "moral religion." The essence of religion consists of our dying and subsequent rebirth. "Letting go one's hold on the steep cliff so as to be reborn" [into a new self] is the essence of religion. At this point, the two directions of morality and the attainment of salvation are brought into harmony.

There is no shortage of expressions for this kind of reality. Kogun Kanemichi 古郡兼通, disciple of Zen master Hakuin 白隠, expressed it in the following poem:

> From the cliff,
> Eight times ten thousand feet high,
> Withdrawing your hand—
> World burns,
> Body becomes ashes and dirt,
> And resurrects.
> The rice-rows
> Are as ever,
> And the rice-ears
> Stand high.[15]

Bernard de Clairvaux (1090–1153)[16] spoke of four degrees of love. At the first stage, humanity loves itself for its own sake. At the sec-

ond stage, humanity loves God but not for the sake of God but for humanity itself. At the third stage, humanity loves God for the sake of God. At the fourth and the final stage, humanity loves itself precisely for the sake of God. Such indeed is the relationship between God and humanity.　　　　　　(NKZ 15:330).

As amply demonstrated in the above passage from his lecture notes on religion, Nishida's focus was on the way in which humanity and the Divine interrelate. As such, it transcends the boundaries of Christianity and Buddhism; all such labels as Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Greek Orthodox, Pure Land Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism are "emptied out." In this sense, we may call Nishida's approach "ecumenical" (beyond sectarianism) and "catholic" (universal), and, at the same time, fundamentally Buddhist. Indeed, Nishida is formulating a Buddhist philosophy of religion.

The Logic of Topos and the Wisdom Tradition

Nishida began developing the "logic of *topos*" (*basho no ronri* 場所の論理) in around 1924 or 1925. It is necessary to mention here the existential agonies that Nishida experienced as he faced the successive illnesses and deaths of several members of his family. His mother died in 1918; the following year a stroke left his wife bedridden; a year later his eldest son, Ken, died of a sudden illness at the age of twenty-three. Two of his daughters contracted typhoid and were hospitalized in 1922; the recovery of one of them was extremely slow and almost left her crippled. Yet another daughter had suffered from lung troubles since 1921.

These deeply painful circumstances, however, awakened him to the realization that the deep recesses of his mind remained untouched—the mind was like the deep sea, with the waves and foam on its surface forming but momentary appearances. The unshakable reality of this mind struck Nishida, and he came to a clear recognition of the "real self" or the "original face" he thought he had known through his struggle with Zen kōans two decades before. This decisive awakening seems to have taken place in early 1923.

Nishida's renewed awareness of the reality of the "real self" not only effected an existential release of his self from the yoke of ego-centered concern and

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[15] Translation from SCHINZINGER1958 (p. 137). Nishida explains the meaning of this poem in a letter to Kimura Motomori 木村素衛 (#1396; 30 November 1939 [NKZ 19:93–94]). Kimura, Kōyama Iwao 高山岩男, and Nakajima Ichirō 中島一郎 were collaborating with Robert Schinzinger in translating works by Nishida into German, and were having difficulties interpreting this poem quoted by Nishida. By incorporating Nishida's explanation, this verse can be translated, somewhat prosaically, as:

> When, in my despair [for not being able to become one with my kōan], I'm about to release my grip from the top of the steep cliff I have been clinging to, all of a sudden fire breaks out of the tip of my plow (as if I had been cultivating the narrow top of the cliff) and burns the entire universe. My body is completely reduced to ashes and then, lo! I am reborn. When I look at the farm that I was tending before, ripe heads of rice plants are there as before!

[16] Bernard is considered "the most dynamic figure of the twelfth century." Born of a wealthy Burgundian family, he joined the Cistercian monastic community at the age of twenty-two, and

later was a regular correspondent with influential leaders of the days—kings, popes, and feudal nobility. He was a charismatic spiritual mentor, and a close friend to many (HOUSTON 1983, pp. xiii–xxv, 154–61).

suffering but also opened up the new intellectual vista that he came to express in his philosophy of *topos*. For him, logic, as that which gives structure to any philosophical system, was of essential importance. He thus directed his awakened mind to the formulation of this new kind of logic. He was dissatisfied with traditional Western logic, holding that it did not take into account the primordial unity of subject and object, a unity that Nishida had been convinced of since his higher-school days and that he came to know more deeply through his Zen practice. He regarded as dogmatism the uncritical notion in the West that the basis of logic lies in the subject-object dichotomy. Instead, he sought a "logical form" that would do justice to the reality of conscious-self (*jikakuteki jiko* 自覚的自己), a logical form that would embrace the thinkers themselves. Instead of trying to pinpoint "things" out there as the "objects" of our intellectual scrutiny, or of trying to explain the cognitive process in terms of organizing the known object according to a priori categories, he focused on the dynamic reality of self-awareness and self-reflection (*jikaku* 自覚).

In so doing he admitted that he came close to Fichte and the latter's idea of *Tathandlung* (action-fact—the self in its self-reflection producing itself). In the act of self-edifying self-reflection we regard our self as an object of thought, despite the fact that the self cannot be made into an objective thing "over there"—a contradiction in terms. Self-reflection takes place within us; moreover, that which reflects and that which is reflected are contradictorily one and the same, i.e., the conscious self. In time, however, Nishida parted with Fichte on the latter's concept of the Absolute Ego, which seemed one-sided to Nishida. His criticism of Fichte was that he did not develop the "outer" (social and relational) aspect of the Absolute Ego and remained focused only on its "inner unity," thereby rendering it something of an idealistic universal. That, held Nishida, would not explain the complex reality of unique, irreducible individuality.[17]

In his attempt to formulate the logic of *topos* Nishida took a hint from Aristotle's definition of the grammatical subject as that which never becomes the grammatical predicate. Nishida focused on the predicate aspect; in his view the self-conscious subject is that which predicates upon itself and which speaks about itself, and as such it is already within the predicate (or language, as Heidegger would say). The subject, by virtue of its self-consciousness, is a self-narrating being. Nishida termed Aristotle's logic "grammatical-subject oriented logic" in that it gave primacy to the grammatical subject (conceived objectively) of the judgment, S is P.

As for the Kantian logic of critique, Nishida never denied its value, but he had to point out its potential danger, namely, the tendency of thought to reify what are simply concepts. Moreover, Nishida was not happy with the tacit presupposition of the dichotomy of subject and object, the knower and the known, that underlay Kant's logic. He called Kantian logic "objectifying logic," in the sense that it discerns objects out there. In formulating his logic of *topos*, Nishida clearly allied himself with the "wisdom" traditions of the world, which invariably celebrate the unity of the knower and the known. The negation of objectifying logic is expressed in the words *neti neti* ("not this, not that") in the Upanishadic tradition, and in the form of the *via negativa* (the "path of negation") in medieval Christian mysticism. In this sense Nishida's philosophy of religion, the "theology of the logic of *topos*" (*bashoteki ronri no shingaku* 場所的論理の神学 [NKZ 11:399]), is squarely within the wisdom tradition.

The Logic of Topos and the Philosophy of Religion

Precisely because Nishida regarded religious awareness as something highly personal in nature, he felt that the only way to account for it was by way of the logic of *topos*, the logic of self-conscious selves and the world. It was upon this conviction that he based his philosophy of religion, the final formulation of which is found in his last completed essay, "Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan" 場所的論理と宗教的世界観 [The logic of *topos* and the religious worldview] (1945). His philosophy of religion centers on the relationship of individual humans to God, for it was his aim to clarify the "structure" of religious awareness. Indeed, it can even be speculated that his logic of *topos* was initially conceived in and through his reflection on the reality of the "real self" (*shin no jiko* 真の自己) that Zen Buddhism speaks of. It would not be surprising if Nishida's inquiry moved in the following direction:

> I see that there is a "larger self," the "original face" (*honrai no menmoku* 本来の面目), beyond the reality of my petty ego-ridden self. What then is the logical relationship between this "larger self" and the ego? My ego (or ego-consciousness) comes out of the larger self (or pure consciousness) and returns to it from moment to moment.

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[17] See Nishida's lecture "Genjitsu no sekai no ronriteki kōzō" 現実の世界の論理的構造; Shinano Tetsugakukai Kōen, 7–9 January 1935 (NKZ 14:228).

That must mean that my ego-self is within, i.e., embraced by, the larger self. This "larger" self (*taiga* 大我) is the *topos* (*basho* 場所), the matrix, in which our individual selves exist.

Nishida's philosophical world always included environment (be it nature or society). But it was not until he sufficiently formulated the logic of *topos* that he began to grapple with the problem of environment, or of the world. We as individuals are located in the world, and we in turn take active part in shaping the world. Nishida's contemplation of the world and the individual may be summed up in terms of four "foci," or four aspects: 1) the aspect of the individual self, whose awareness is open to the "original face" and who is endowed with creativity as one who moves "from the created to the creator" (*tsukurareta mono kara tsukuru mono e* 作られたものから作るものへ); 2) the interpersonal and social aspect of the conscious self, including the "I-Thou" relationship and various social relationships; 3) the aspect of the world as that constituted by numerous individuals; and 4) the aspect of one cohesive historical world that is in constant motion "from the created to the creating." Nishida viewed these aspects in terms of "One" and "Many," a terminology he adapted from scholastic Buddhism. In terms of our religious awareness, this cohesive historical world is none other than God. Nishida's reflection on this point may have continued in something like the following way:

> An individual self does not exist alone, but only in relation to other individuals and sometimes in conflict with such individuals! We are irreducible to any other. We individuals are the *topoi* of the world. Moreover, our selves are sustained and nourished by that which gives us life and consciousness. The source of life is the world, the *Topos*. The *Topos*, the groundless ground of the real self,[18] is God. Did I not experience some universal love welling up from the bottom of my heart when I witnessed the death of my little daughter, Yūko? Yes. That must have been my glimpse of the reality of infinite mercy.

Nishida's contemplation next turned to the question of the temporality of human existence and of the world, that is, to the problem of history:

What is God in relation to this historical world in which we are born, in which we work, and in which we die? When my wife Kotomi suffered a stroke in 1919 and became bedridden for the rest of her life, I was made keenly aware of the wretchedness of our temporal existence. Yes, we exist in time, and in that sense we are "historical" (*rekishiteki* 歴史的), or time-bound.

In fact, a few years after Kotomi's death Nishida wrote to Yamamoto Ryō-kichi describing his personal reflections following his wife's sudden illness:

> Human beings exist in time. Precisely because there is the past, such a thing as "I" exists. That the past is present in the present moment simultaneously constitutes that person's future. When my wife was suddenly paralyzed because of illness, I was overcome by this thought. It felt to me as if the important part that constituted my past had disappeared all at once, and it was also as if my future had disappeared with it. Even if there are joyful occasions, there is no one to rejoice with. Even if there are sad moments, there is no one to commiserate with.[19]

Nishida's inner reflections on time and history continue:

> Do we originally possess consciousness of time? No, we are made to become aware of time, and of our historical environment, by virtue of being in the world. The world is thus the source of self-consciousness. It follows, therefore, that when the world becomes self-conscious so does each individual. Inasmuch as the source of self-consciousness is God, this history-bound world is God's self-expression. Time and space, which are contradictory elements, come together in our consciousness and our self-existence; this contradictory unity of time and space can be seen as God's self-expression. What about the Zen saying that the mind and Buddha are the same?
>
> Does this mean we human individuals are identical with God? If we were, there would be no need to speak about God. The God-reality is something we can never see or become one with, except we know it and listen to it. We are never separated from it and yet are never identical with it. This is what Daitō Kokushi 大燈国師

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[18] The "ground" is groundless in that it is not some kind of substratum that exists beneath our self-existence. This groundless ground is utterly transcendent and yet utterly immanent, is that which, although not identical with our existence, nevertheless embraces our existence and gives life to each individual.

[19] Nishida's letter, 9 February 1927 (NKZ 18:321)

(1282–1338) so excellently expressed in his poem 億劫相別、
而須臾不離、尽日相対、而刹那不対、此理人々有之:

> Separated by an eternity, and yet not separated even for an instant;
> Face to face the whole day, yet not face to face even an instant.
> This is the principle according to which human beings exist.
>
> (Poem cited NKZ 11:409)

This is why Nishida holds that the logic of *topos*, or the "theology of the logic of *topos*," is not "pantheistic" (NKZ 11:399). Further, he claims that his view of the religious world is "neither theistic nor deistic, neither spiritual nor natural; rather it is [thoroughly] historical" (NKZ 11:406).

In this last essay Nishida introduced the term *gyakutaiō* 逆対応, "inverse correlation," to describe how God and humanity are related. In our moments of profound religious repentance, holds Nishida, we become aware of and enter into the presence of God. God responds and reaches out to us in our anguished desire for forgiveness, in our "dark nights of the soul." We can never plan for God to be there, nor can we go after God. Only when we drop all conscious effort and reach our wits' end does the ocean of compassion receive our desperate, exhausted souls.

Nishida did not fully develop a philosophy accounting for the evil that human beings are capable of (as shockingly demonstrated by, for example, the atrocities that occurred during WWII). But he saw humanity to be essentially sinners, as in the Christian story of the Fall of Adam.[20] In light of this Nishida understood the Incarnation of Christ as God's *kenōsis* in absolute compassion (*karunā*) for, and love (agape) of, humanity, and noted that followers of Pure Land Buddhism likewise believe that the Buddha saves even the most wicked by transforming "itself" even into a devil if need be (NKZ 11:436).

In the inversely correlative relationship with God, we humans are able to "witness" God only by means of "expression." This is why in the Christian tradition Logos, or Word, has been of paramount importance as God's self-expression. For Nishida, Logos is God's voice that calls us. He finds a similar testimony in Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), who said that the chanting of the holy name (*myōgō* 名号) of Amida Buddha was actually not his personal act but the Buddha's act of compassion (NKZ 11:442).

[20] Nishida understands the Fall of Adam as the "coming into being of humanity as the self-denial of God" or *kenōsis*. In Buddhist terms, it is the "sudden arising of thought" (NKZ 11:432).

Conclusion

Nishida's existential search for the solution to ultimate spiritual questions endowed his thought with the power to move and comfort readers seeking spiritual consolation. That philosophy can offer consolation is nothing new—the Stoic tradition, for example, is filled with wisdom of this kind. In this connection we may mention Boethius (ca. 480–524), who in his prison cell called upon "Lady Philosophy" to console him (GILSON 1936, p. 369). *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, which he wrote while he awaited execution, became a perennial favorite reading of Dante, Boccaccio, Chaucer, and numerous other medieval intellectuals, as well as political figures like King Alfred and Queen Elizabeth I. The popularity of the book is attributed to its "mingled melancholy, resignation to divine providence, and sense of the supreme value of the good in life...[which] appealed powerfully to the experience of those confronting the risks and disasters of medieval life," and brought comfort to those who sought it (KNOWLES 1967).

In Nishida's case the power to move seems to come not so much from a sense of the "divine providence" as from the existential source of his philosophical inquiry, "the center" of himself. Thomas Merton once said that he wrote for God, and not for personal fame or public acclaim. Merton's awareness seems to illustrate very aptly the source of Nishida's philosophical contemplation.

Nishida's later philosophy, because of its terminological sophistication and cosmocentric description, may make less transparent to readers the deep source from which he drew his personal and intellectual strength and inspiration. But when we look at his work as an integral whole, it is apparent that this source continued to supply him with the "water of life." His statement that "God is the central idea of religion; without God there is no religion" (NKZ 11:372) should come as no surprise. Nishida's philosophy of religion was, after all, neither a recasting of a conventional Zen worldview nor a superficial amalgam of Buddhism and Christianity, but the expression of his spiritual quest, of his sincerity, and of his serious engagement with the works of philosophers and great figures of faith, be they Christian, Jewish, or Buddhist.

As such, the question can be asked: Does Nishida's philosophy of religion offer a constructive direction between Christianity and Buddhism? Or is it to be considered a watered-down version of the "Zen-centric" worldview, and so without any practical application? I personally find that Nishida's philosophy of religion has much to offer. For instance, it takes us beyond the traditional

theistic interpretation of mystical experience, and makes it possible for humans to attain during their lifetime the fourth stage of love that Bernard de Clairvaux discussed as a reality only reserved for us in the afterlife.

Perhaps another question we may contemplate is why Nishida's thought continues to attract readers even towards the end of the twentieth century, more than half a century after his death. Might it be that our need for what Nishida has to offer is an indication of the kind of world we are living in today?

Abbreviations

NKZ   *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集 [The complete works of Nishida Kitarō], 3rd printing, 1978–80. 19 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

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The Bodily Manifestation of Religious Experience and Late Nishida Philosophy

AGUSTÍN JACINTO Z.

MOST RELIGIONS HAVE a tradition of concretely manifested religious lived-experience (*taiken* 体験). This concrete manifestation expresses itself through material things, through the body, and through signs and symbols. It would take us far beyond the scope of the present paper to consider all such expressive activity, even though, as Miki Kiyoshi points out, such activity is a very important aspect of Nishida's philosophy (MIKI 1968 10:424–26). I will thus restrict my treatment to the bodily manifestation of religious lived-experience. For Nishida, this manifestation is as characteristic of Buddhism (be it Zen, Jōdo Shinshū, Kegon, or Tendai) as it is of Christianity (10:438).[1]

Religious Experience

I would like to define "religious experience" as the human lived-experience (*taiken*) of the "spiritual fact" (*reiseiteki jijitsu* 靈性的事実) that Nishida describes in his "Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan" 場所的論理と宗教的世界観 [The logic of *topos* and the religious worldview] (1945), where the personal aspect is clearly emphasized.[2]

Nishida's writings about religion before 1944 talk not of the lived experience of a personal encounter with a personal absolute, but of the equivalent concept of a lived experience of Nothingness: "In religious consciousness we drop body and mind and are united with the consciousness of absolute Noth-

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[1] All references to *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* (NISHIDA 1978–80) are given with the volume number followed by the page number.

[2] I have analyzed the main elements of this "spiritual fact" in JACINTO 1989, pp. 115–254, 257–308.

ingness" (5:177). My reflections on the bodily manifestation of religious lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) will take as a basis Nishida's writings from 1925 on. First I will review what Nishida says concerning the body; second, I will consider the implications of the penetration of the consciousness of absolute Nothingness represented by the expression "to bodify absolute Nothingness" (10:70); third, I will present the main aspects of the religious lived-experience in late Nishida philosophy; and finally, I will outline the bodily manifestation of lived religious experience through expressive mediation as creative action.

The Human Body

The various aspects of the human body are expressed in Japanese by the differing words used to express them: *shintai* 身体 (human body), *karada* 体 (the body), *nikutai* 肉体 (flesh [5:296, 308] and that which is bodily or corporeal [*leibhaftig*; 5:461).

Already in 1920–23, in *Geijutsu to dōtoku* 藝術と道徳 [Art and morality], Nishida offers the view that "our body is a trace in the material world [in which] the whole of life flows" (3:272). When we reflect upon our body, we transform what is objective into something that is an expression (3:352). He also considers the body to be an expression, and an organ of expression, of a person's spiritual content (3:353). The unification of the manifold world of historical reality is to be found in our body (3:354).

Later in this same middle period Nishida regards the body as the expression—at the basis of our consciousness—of our active self (5:156). In this sense, our body "is made up of internal [metaphysical] matter; it is not something composed of mere [physical] matter" (5:285, 289). However, Nishida adds that "what we view as our body has diverse meanings" (5:272). Let us examine some of these meanings.

a) *The body as viewed from without*, as, for example, by the natural sciences (physics, physiology, and so on). Our body is seen "teleologically as a part of the natural world" (5:280), and as such is devoid of spiritual content (5:272). Our body seen from the outside is "that part that [our] will has cut out from the natural world" (5:279) through our bodily movement (5:284). It is both our body and the bodies of other persons that are seen as objects (5:308).

b) *The body as viewed from within* (5:279): the noematic aspect. When it is seen from within, the body has a twofold character: noematic and noetic. The noematic aspect (5:277) is evident in the body's capacity to serve as a tool of the conscious self when the body is seen as our irrational element, unreachable and lying at the depths of our personality (6:375). In this sense, our body "is nothing more than the irrational that can be seen in the self and that, being Nothingness, determines itself" (6:327). It is not only the body that is irrational, however: there is something irrational at the very bottom of our physical being (6:375), and, in addition, an historical irrationality (the irrationality of the Thou) at the very bottom of our individual self (6:416). From this point of view the body is seen as a passive tool, as "a mere organ of behavior" (6:78); it is, as in Bergson, "a tool of life" (6:360). In this sense, nature, when it becomes the body of the self, becomes the content of the self (5:271). At the same time, the self is bodily determined: it is determined *through* the body. The body thus underlies the self-determination of the self (5:271, 2721); moreover, as the "shadow of the idea"—that is to say, as "the noematic image of the intelligible self"—it determines our consciousness (5:275, 276, 280). But the body is not only the agent of self-determination but also the self-manifestation of the active self (5:276)—that is, it is the internal determination of the self (5:280).

c) *The body as viewed from within*: the noetic aspect. Here the body is seen to be not merely a passive instrument of the self; from being a factual body it becomes an active body (6:84). This means that "our body is a tool of self-realization of the self and, at the same time, it has an expressive meaning" (6:14, 78)—"without a body there is no personality" (6:375), and in our willful action we "bodify the world of objective facts" (5:277). It is in this active manifestation of our self-determination (5:273) that the noetic aspect of the body is evident (5:277).

The noematic aspect is subsumed under the noetic aspect. Nishida says that "our body has a metaphysical meaning" (5:156)—it is "the objectified image of our self" (5:280), and the true self can only be seen through its behavior (5:276). In every decision we stake our body and touch the true instant (6:290): a true decision "must be something that penetrates the body of the self" (5:278). In this sense we can, like

Schopenhauer, consider our body as "will" (6:269), and our bodily behavior as "an objectification of the will" (5:272). However, even though "action forms the maximum limit of the body" (5:293), my self and the self of others cannot, as bodily selves, directly touch each other (5:301, 308). That is, there is a gulf between my self and the self of others.

d) *The intelligible body.* In order to overcome this separation between self and self, "that which includes us as environment...must be the world of expression" (6:371). Nishida says that "in expression the self becomes the other, [our] self loses itself and every other [self] becomes [our] self. There we lose our own body and, at the same time, there everything signifies the body of the self" (6:326). When both our own activity and the activity of others are willful action and expression, it is possible for my self and other selves to come into mutual personal contact (5:302). That is to say, another manner of conceiving the body is as bodily activity seen both as action and as expression (5:274, 283). From this point of view, the bodily separation between our self and the selves of others can be overcome: when our body is an intelligible body, "the whole objective world becomes a world of expression" (5:301). Our body inhabits a world that has the aspects of expression and of action: such a world is for us what is most immediate and concrete (6:263).

e) *The body as that in which the self goes into the depths of its physical determination and achieves liberation from physical determination* (6:79). "When we truly penetrate the consciousness of absolute Nothingness, there is no ego, there is no God. And because it is absolute Nothingness, mountains are mountains and water is water" (5:182). When this happens, the self comes to the true self-perception of absolute Nothingness (6:79, 80), where we arrive "through what men of religion call 'the dropping off of body and mind'" (6:79). In this case, "what is considered as [our] body...can only be thought of as a determination of Nothingness with the character of *topos*" (6:196). According to Nishida, the body that is referred to as the "temple" of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) is our historical body, and "that which is considered flesh is nothing but an image of this body" (6:290–91).

This five-fold manner of conceiving the body, characteristic of Nishida between 1928 and 1932, develops into something much more articulated in the 1933–45 period, when Nishida says that we must take our point of depar-

ture from the world of historical reality mediating itself through things. Such a world must not be thought of either in terms of sense perception or of object logic—it can only be apprehended from the viewpoint of the historical, productive body (8:405). In order to conceive of that which is most immediate, that which is "before the separation of subject and object" (8:405)—the most concrete point of view—we must take our point of departure from bodily action, from the fact that we possess bodies (8:445). Even the dialectical character of historical reality can be apprehended by "starting from an analysis of the body, which is for us the most immediate fact" (8:271).

In his logic of *topos* the later Nishida saw the body as threefold in nature, constituting a biological body, an historical body, and a productive body (see JACINTO 1989, part 1, pp. 19–58). When Nishida talks of the body he refers primarily to the unity of body and mind, that is to say, to the whole human person. Our body originates from this world and is the "self-formative organ of this world" (11:311). Our body is the prototype of a particular form of the universe (11:352).

Our action originates in our reflection of the world through expressive and productive activity (9:179). In this sense, "our body is an organ of the self-expression of historical life" (8:336). *Poiesis* is not separate from technique, but involves the production of things using technique (9:279). As the self-expression of the world, *poiesis* is also the self-formation, or the *autopoiesis*, of the world (9:312). The activity of the historical body is the self-expression and self-formation of the world of reality, which is itself expressive (see 10:481). This is why the bodily self is a self-expressive point of the self-expressing world: the bodily self originates within this world, acts within it, and within it goes to its death (10:352). The world possesses a dynamic focus of self-expression and self-formation, and this focus is the human individual. This is why action is the result not only of our will but also of things in the historical world (see 8:402).

The historical body can be seen to have two aspects, one active (that which makes) and the other given (that which is made). In action there are two directions corresponding to these two aspects: the direction in which the historical body is active and is made (this is included in what Nishida calls "from the active to that which is made" [9:50]), and the direction in which the historical body is created and creates (which is included in what Nishida calls "from that which is made to that which makes" [8:477]). In the active aspect of the historical body, the bodily historical self is the self-expressive point of

the world (11:306), and as such it perceives itself (11:135). The body is the basis, the platform of action. Action "originates from the fact that we are bodily historical" (9:186). In its action the historical body is a point of self-determination of the world (11:202).

When we make things with our body there must be the mediation of unceasing historical development (10:106). Bodily action is the action of the *poietic* self (11:134), which perceives itself (11:25) as an active, creative self. This means that the bodily historical self perceives itself from the standpoint of that which is made (9:268). The self-perception of the bodily historical self is given from that which is made; the self is bodily constituted within the historical world (10:94). The historical body, which in formation is the self-formation and self-expression of the world, is the basis of our historical operation (10:255, 133). This is why Nishida insists that "in making things we must begin our thinking from the standpoint of the body. Without a body there is no making" (10:355). When we act we act bodily (9:240), we depend on the body (10:352), and the body is indispensable for us (10:134, 352, 355, 433).

From the viewpoint of *poiesis*, the world is corporeal (9:241). Its mediator is corporeal and expressive (8:162). Nishida does not think of the world starting from this bodily mediator; rather, he thinks of the body starting from the world. He thinks of the body starting from *poiesis* (9:260), from world-forming and world-transforming action that is, at the same time, the self-formation (*autopoiesis*) of the world. Even interpersonal relations are based on the historical body (11:235, 235–36). This means that action among persons must be action done from the unity of body and mind, action originating from active intuition.

All relations among persons are given in social historical reality, which has two poles: a transcendent pole ("the direction in which each one of our selves, as points of self-projection of the absolute, trans-subjectively forms one sole historical world" [10:248]) and an immanent pole ("the *poietic* direction, which has a bodily historical character" [10:247]). Social historical reality, as the self-identity of these two contradictory poles, is given with the character of active intuition (10:248). Both in the world of social relations and in the historical world in a broad sense, the action of the bodily historical *poietic* self must have the character of unity of body and mind, that is to say, it must have the character of *gyō* 行 (see 10:159). This *gyō* signifies the making of things with the character of "body equals mind"; it means to

act bodily historically taking our body as the self-identity of absolute contradictories (10:4–5).

In the next section I would like to summarize how this *gyō* character of the action of the bodily historical *poietic* self comes about. This will simultaneously provide an opportunity to see Nishida's philosophical formulation of the lived religious experience as related to the consciousness of Nothingness, mentioned above.

To Bodify Absolute Nothingness

The nature of Nishida philosophy as a philosophy of praxis can be summarized as follows.

Our ordinary praxis is that activity in which we make the world our body, in which we "bodify the world" (10:70). When we bodify the world, we construct historical reality and are, in turn, constructed by it. But the deeper horizon of this praxis is "to bodify absolute Nothingness" (10:70). In another possible translation, it is "to bodily manifest absolute Nothingness."

What is the meaning of "to bodify absolute Nothingness"? Nishida says that "the activity or praxis of our self as an individual that determines itself" is to be found "wherever it constructs a historical world" (10:70), wherever it is responsible for creating an aspect of the world (10:72). This is to make the world our body; it is "to bodify the world" (10:70). To bodify the world means "to negate the bodily historical in the depths of the bodily historical direction" (10:70), which leads us to the deeper horizon of "bodifying absolute Nothingness."

In his middle period Nishida came to regard the concept of absolute Nothingness, rather than that of God, as most appropriate for his philosophical discourse. So we find Nishida using the expressions "to penetrate into the consciousness of absolute Nothingness" (5:182) to signify lived religious experience. Nishida's "bodifying absolute Nothingness" may be summarized in the following four points.

1) "To bodify absolute Nothingness" is to experience in one's own historical body the total ungroundedness and a-substantiality of historical reality. It is to experience the *Ungrund* (1:190). We can have the bodily historical lived-experience of such a historical reality because we are "constructive elements of the historical reality" (8:562); we are creative elements of a creative world (8:317, 401, 405, 442, 446, 452, 466) and

live our everyday lives in such a reality. The lived-experience of reality is given in the deep and radical perception of the "basis of everyday life" (11:448), upon which depends the individuality of the self (11:450). This perception requires that we experience, in our own flesh, in our historical body, the roots and origins of the existence of the creative self. It is the lived-experience of the mutual interdependence and reciprocal existential implication among the absolute, the self, and the world.

2) "To bodify absolute Nothingness" is an action that is physically realized in immediacy, an action that is given before the split of historical reality into subject and object. But this should not be viewed from the standpoint of the intellectual self (8:368) or its intellectual activity (11:366), but rather from the apprehension of the foundation of action (8:558). That is to say, the "before the separation of subject and object" must be thought of together with the origin of action (8:368) whenever we dialectically make things (8:405) in the historical world together with other human persons (11:434). In this sense, the historical world is "*poietic*-ally mediated"; it is "technically mediated" (9:241). The historical world is a world "of the mutual determination of subject-object" (11:434) where their mutual opposition is historically determined (8:542). "To bodify absolute Nothingness" is an action that historically establishes (8:557) the opposition and mutual relation between subject and object in the social historical world (11:434).

3) "To bodify absolute Nothingness" is to transform creative reality while creatively transforming ourselves and our society: "We are born sociohistorically, we technically make things and through our making we make ourselves" (12:297). This is possible because "we become constructive elements of historical reality" (8:562), because we are "*poietic* elements of a *poietic* world" (9:9), and because our bodily historical selves are "creative elements of a creative world" (9:9, 53, 83, 142, 145; 10, 326, 531, 563; 11:403, 437; 12:296; see also 10:378, 404, 451, 465, 469). As a point in which the absolute projects itself, the self forms the historical world through active intuition (10:217–18).

4) "To bodify absolute Nothingness" is an action resulting from religious experience, and such an action has the character of *gyō*—it is religious praxis. Inasmuch as religious praxis involves the bodification of absolute Nothingness, it is a "nonactive activity" (10:57, 79, 114).

That is to say, it is the bodily historical manifestation of reality as lived-experience: it is the realization of absolute Nothingness. It is the activity of the active self that has bodily historically experienced the fountainhead of its own existence. In this sense it is creative activity—it is the heavenly action of an a-substantial self that has dropped off body and mind. It is the creative activity that emanates from, in Dōgen's expression, "a soft and flexible heart" (10:241). It is *gyō* (Letter 1757, 2/IV/43, to Suetsuna Joichi; 19:234).

Now I would like to explore from a different perspective the manner in which this penetration into the consciousness of absolute Nothingness comes to be an encounter with the personal Other.

Religious Experience in Late Nishida Philosophy

In late Nishida philosophy religious lived-experience is not merely the penetration of the consciousness of absolute Nothingness. On the basis of his articulation of the logic of *topos* (*toposu-teki ronri* トポス的論理; Letter 1648, 20/III/42, to Miyake Gōichi; 19:190), Nishida in his late period was able to treat both Buddhism and Christianity in a philosophical manner. For our purposes let us consider the following two points: God as the central concept of religion, and our encounter with the personal Other.

GOD AS THE CENTRAL CONCEPT OF RELIGION

Religion in Nishida's late period involves "the thorough penetration into the unborn heart of the Buddha" (10:123). The purpose of religion is to apprehend eternal life in our daily historical life (11:454) through an ungrounded apprehension of eternal life (11:454). Different religions are formed according to the manner in which the relationship between the self and the absolute is interpreted (10:163). All forms of relation between the self and the absolute are historically determined and are limited; this is why religions interpenetrate (11:142). For Nishida there are world religions and folk religions: the former have transcended the culture in which they originated, while the latter are still tied to it (11:455). In his last complete essay Nishida considers two world religions: Buddhism and Christianity.

For Nishida God is the central concept of religion: "If there is no God, there is no religion. God is the fundamental concept of religion" (11:372; see also 1:188). This is so within the religious dimension, where the personal

characteristics of both God and man are maintained. This is consonant with the logic of *topos*, in which the absolute, the individual, and the world are the three main concepts, totally interrelated but mutually nonreducible.

For Nishida, "philosophy must take its point of departure in the fundamental self-perception" (10:123) of the unborn heart of the Buddha. In his late period Nishida incorporates not only his mother's Shin Buddhism but also one of his early concepts of God: "God is the great personality that is the foundation of the universe" (I:182).

The early Nishida also wrote about the characteristics of God's personality in the essay "Kami no jinkakusei" 神の人格性 [The personality of God] (15:354 ff.), in which, just as in *Zen no kenkyū*, we can see the influence of John Richard Illingworth's *Personality: Human and Divine* (1894). Nishida relies mainly on the characteristics of personality that Illingworth finds in Kant: self-consciousness, free will, and love (1:183; ILLINGWORTH 1894, pp. 22, 23). Personality for Illingworth and for the early Nishida is a unifying power (1:151–52; ILLINGWORTH 1894, p. 29).[3]

But the late Nishida's view of God is not a mere regression to an earlier stage. After his middle period, in which he talks primarily about absolute nothingness even in reference to religion, Nishida viewed the absolute as personal in nature, both with regard to Christianity (which he saw as personalist [cf. 11:410]) and Shin Buddhism.[4] In his exposition he goes back again to Kant for the characteristics of personality (11:388). He mentions that personality is unique in history and does not repeat itself (11:395, 420), that it is creative (11:402, 400), and that it has will (11:405) and freedom (11:449) (even though Kantian free will contrasts with the absolute freedom spoken of by Rinzai [11:449, 451]).

Before continuing we should note that, for the late Nishida, it is only when we encounter absolute nothingness—or any other conceptual formulation of the absolute—as a personal Other and enter into a personal relationship with it that it becomes God for us. But even to recognize the absolute or absolute nothingness as our God is already a *metanoia*. It is to recognize our God in our neighbor: "We must stand on the faith that, as Kierkegaard says, 'the individual who is at my side is God'" (10:70). To enter the faith

3 The parallel texts in Illingworth's book and *Zen no kenkyū* are listed in appendix 1 of JACINTO 1984, pp. 147–57.

4 For a discussion of this point, see MARALDO 1988.

means to recognize the absolute Other in any of its manifold appearances; it is already to be reborn in the Pure Land (*Jōdo ōjō* 浄土往生). To recognize divinity in any of its "multifarious forms" (11:436; cf. Hebr. 1:1) is already the work of the personal Other: it is "the call of God or of the Buddha" (11:409). Such manifestations of God are for us a spiritual fact (11:372). It is this personal Other—philosophically characterized by Nishida as the absolute or as absolute Nothingness—who out of love and mercy calls us into existence, who keeps us in existence, and who invites us to enter into a personal relationship. And our response to this invitation is already the work of the personal Other (11:432). Thus the personal Other can be called "father God or mother Buddha" (11:407).

There are many characteristics of the absolute as personal Other: it is creative (11:396); it displays a "self-identity of absolute contradictories" (11:398); it is both immanent and transcendental and, in this sense, dialectical (11:398–99); it is merciful as opposed to imperious (11:439); it is the infinite center of an infinite sphere (11:406); it is all-knowing and all-powerful (11:398); and so on. There are, however, three characteristics in particular that should be mentioned in relation to the personal absolute.

a) *The true God is kenotic* (11:399)—it is capable of self-negation (11:397, 400, 404, 420, 458) and of descending even to the greatest evil (11:404). Nishida says, "It is extremely paradoxical, but the true absolute God must be, in one aspect, diabolical" (11:404). Negating itself, the absolute is immanent everywhere in the world (11:398). The utmost self-negation of God, in Christianity, is the Incarnation (11:436), the coming of the only begotten son into the historical world (cf. Philip, 2:7, *kenosis*). From an ontological point of view, Nishida sees *kenosis* as corresponding to what he calls "the determination of Nothingness" (Letter 882, 11/II/35, to Kumano Yoshitaka; 18:513), and as predicated—as Yagi Seiichi points out—on the Son.

b) *The true God is self-expressive*, and this is revelation: "The self-expression of this absolute can be considered, in a religious sense, to be the revelation of God" (11:403). The personal absolute, God, manifests himself in his own creative and saving word (11:443). The human self is constituted from this creative self-negation (11:411, 432, 436) and self-expression of God. The self-expression of the absolute takes place as the Word of God in the historical world, where it has the character

of a force that forms history (11:440, 441). The manifestation of this creative Word in the historical world is revelation (11:441). God's self-expression provides objective truth in the historical world, and for us to know this truth has the character of *kairos* (11:448).

c) *The true God is love.* "In every religion, in some sense, God is love," Nishida writes (11:435). "Love must be a total relationship with the character of the self-identity of contradictories, that is to say, between two opposing personalities" (11:435), between an I and a Thou (11:437). In Nishida we find love and mercy as characteristics of the personal Other (11:399. Cf. 1:194). It is absolute love: "Absolute agape must extend even to absolute evil" (11:405). In order to save his/her creatures, father God sends his only begotten son, or mother Buddha assumes various forms and produces out of herself even the demons (11:436).

THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE PERSONAL OTHER

Our encounter with the personal absolute originates in the self-expressiveness of the latter, in relations of self-negation, self-manifestation, and love. When such an encounter takes place we can speak of a mutual determination that has an expressive character (11:381): it is a relation between the self-expressive, creative personal absolute and the self that is created and that in turn creates (11:439). The self that enters into religious relations is "equal in the wise and in the ignorant, in the good and in the evil" (11:410). This characteristic of the self in religious relations is clarified through Shinran's dictum: "Even good persons are reborn [in the Pure Land], how much more the evil ones" (*Tannishō*, 3; 11:410; 1:192).

As mentioned above, the spiritual event, or spiritual "fact," of religion occurs when the self recognizes and faces the personal absolute, that is, when it faces God (11:396). This event involves the self's recognition of its own eternal death and, through this experience, its transcendence of eternal death (11:395–96). To enter faith implies a radical change in our existence (11:419), one in which we "entirely exhaust the self" (11:428) and die to self (11:396), and can be raised from the dead only by God (8:588). In the encounter with God the self does not unite with or become the personal absolute, and "this is why we must think about reciprocal correspondence" (11:415), which keeps the different as different and the contradictory as contradictory within a mutual relationship.

The encounter of the bodily historical self with God is both a total surrender and a total affirmation: on the one hand it is the existence of the self in reciprocal correspondence with God and the existence of the self as self-negation of God, and on the other hand it is the existence of the self as a separate personality with its own will that opposes absolute will. In the first aspect, entering faith means a return to the true existential basis of the self. In the second aspect, the rebellion against absolute will necessitates the negation of the self, the death of the self.

True religion is beyond both total self-surrender and total self-affirmation, which is why the viewpoint of religion transcends both other-power and self-power (1:408; 11:411). The encounter in which we recognize God is itself the work of God (or as Luther says, "Faith is the work of God within us, it renews us and causes us to be born from God, it kills the old Adam and turns us into a totally [new] person, and causes the Holy Spirit to accompany us" [11:140–41; cf. 11:424]) and at the same time it is human action (in Karl Barth's words, "It is for the human person, through his/her human decision, to follow God's decision" [11:427]). In this context, to be "embraced and never released" (*Tannishō*, Preface) is to be born in the Pure Land through the expression of the Buddha's great mercy and compassion. The invocation of the Marvelous Name (*nenbutsu* 念仏) is the religious practice that has been given to us through not only the compassion of the Buddha and also the human decision that emerges from a grateful heart (11:442–444). Such invocation must be done in the unity of body-mind.

The father God and the mother Buddha appear in the historical world in such a manner that the world is pregnant with the divine. Historical reality, just as it is, is already the manifestation of the divine, as is the natural action of the human person. Historical reality comes to have a *Mittel*: the creative Word of God, or the Marvelous Name of the Buddha. Thus the historical world becomes not merely a place where the individual lives and dies, not merely a biological environment, but rather the dwelling place of the divine Logos, the divine Word. This is the meaning of *jinnen hōni* 自然法爾, "the natural [what is, such as it is] is already the Dharma" (11:444).

Because of the immanence of the divine—God or Buddha—in everyday reality, the human person in his ordinary life is already immersed in religious relations (11:454). No one lacks this (11:418). In fact, in the encounter with God—that is, in religious lived-experience—there is nothing to be observed as an external object (11:424). Nishida finds that all we need is, in the words

of Rinzai, "an unattached everyday life" (11:424) and, in the words of Dōgen, "a soft and flexible heart" (10:241). We need "to drop off body and mind, and to drop off the body and mind of the Buddha" (11:141; 6:79). Then we become "the true man of no rank" (8:266) and attain "everyday mind."

For Nishida, "everyday mind" signifies that there is no special attainment in everyday life (11:424), and yet it cannot be lived as religious experience except as the actualization of the fundamental Vow of the Buddha (11:442). Historical reality is the place where in our everyday life we live the encounter with our God through the religious mediator: the Word of God or the Marvelous Name of the Buddha.

But there is another aspect of historical reality. The historical world is the place where we err concerning our existential foundation (11:407) and where we stray from our existential basis (11:419). This is obnubilation (*mayoi* 迷い), it is religious blindness, it is rebellion against our creator (11:410). In this sense it can be said that, because the individual originates "in the absolute self-negation of God, it is destined to be eternally thrown into the fire of hell" (11:411). The individual is basically a sinner, he is born in original sin (11:410, 432). Instead of penetrating into its own nothingness and into the foundation of sin (11:411), the individual sees its own objectified self as its true self. In this sense the human heart is the arena [*Tummelplatz*] of the battle between God and the devil (11:405). The individual cannot free itself from sin (11:432). It is only through our acceptance of a mediator—the revelation of God or the Buddha—that (as Shinran says) we can be freed from the weight of sin that deeply afflicts us (11:411).

This mediator, as the self-expression of the personal Other, as revelation, is expressive. In the last two years of his life (1944–45) Nishida called this expressive mediator the Word of God or the Marvelous Name of the Buddha. With this mediator a new dimension opens up in the meaning of expressive mediation (*hyōgenteki baikai* 表現的媒介) within the microcosm of religion, where it comes to bear a world-historical and cosmic significance. In what follows let us explore this interesting possibility in late Nishida philosophy.

The Bodily Aspect of Religious Expressive Mediation

When we say that a lived experience, a tradition, or a culture is expressed in styles that differ according to the ethnos and environment, we mean that we see expression as the *Mittel*.

According to Zen Buddhist tradition, letting the body-mind drop off (*shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落) is a fundamental aspect of religious lived-experience. In the encounter with the personal absolute we come to experience a radical change in ourselves as creative elements of the historical world, through spiritual training such as meditation with kōans (11:446) or the continual recitation of the Marvelous Name (11, 442). We come to know what religion truly is through religious discipline or training (*gyō*) in which we experience total *kenōsis*, as when we "drop off our body and lose our life" (9:332). Our practice in the historical world is the sustained religious practice (*gyōji* 行事) of Buddhas and Patriarchs (Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, "Gyōji" 行事), it is "to hear with the same ears and to see with the same eyes" as the Buddhas and Patriarchs (*Mumonkan* 無門關, case 1). It is for the self to forget itself and to be "attested to by the ten thousand dharmas" (*Shōbōgenzō*, "Genjō kōan" 現成公案; 11:424; see also 11:438).

Nishida interprets in two complementary ways the manner in which this aspect of religious lived-experience is bodily manifested:

1) The historical body-mind (bodily historical self) loses its self-based aspect of center and creator of the world, its place as point of origin of the coordinates of the world (11:38). In the first place, the bodily historical self comes to the experience that it is not its own existential foundation (11:445; Cf. 11:407, 409, 419). Secondly, when the bodily historical self loses its self-based existence it becomes a point of self-projection of the absolute (10:156, 158, 162, 164, 165, etc.) and of the transcendent (10:150, 154, 155, 157, etc.). It also becomes a dynamic focus of the self-formation of historical reality (8:433; 11:242, 282, 375, 378, 402, 403). And thirdly, this dynamic focus or creative self—as the point of self-projection of the absolute (10:168, 172, 174, 176, etc.), of God (10:432), and of the world (11:74)—creates the world but is, at the same time, created by this creation.

This triple structure is manifested in a change of the historical body-mind. The heart-mind loses its solidified viewpoint—it becomes unattached and can become "soft and flexible" (10:241). This is also expressed as "elevating the heart without letting it dwell anywhere" [*Vagrakkedikā*, 10c] (11:415, 423, 430, 431). And the body becomes the body of absolute nothingness, which is also expressed as "total activity" (11:448) or "absolute freedom." In this absolute freedom our self is the self-expression of the absolute (11:449). In short, there is a

complete unity of body-mind where the viewpoint of the absolute moment—the basis of everyday life (10:251)—obtains (10:251).

2) In the bodily manifestation of religious lived-experience "we do not hear the word of God abstractly from outside the world but rather from the depths of active intuition..., from the platform of experience. As creative elements of a creative world we hear the word of God productively" (9:142). In the historical world our active self is productive and creative (7:276). We come to true religious praxis only as *synaxis*, as the communal action, the *ecclessia* (*Kirche*), of those who have entered the faith. The practice of the Buddhas and Patriarchs is their practice and our practice is our practice, but at the same time our practice is the sustained practice of the Buddhas and Patriarchs. This, in a broad sense, is the meaning of the Christian concept of the communion of saints. It is a transhistorical tradition that is appropriated through great labor by each one of us in our body-mind manifestation of religious lived-experience.

The body-mind manifestation of religious lived-experience is the creative morphology (12:376) of the new man who is responsible for the formation of the global world (12:432). It is creative intuition: our body acts already as the "self-identity of contradictories" (8:472). It is creative self-perception that is not necessarily conscious of being such (8:332).

The religious lived-experience in its bodily manifestation becomes creative action, which is also conceptualized by Nishida—using an Aristotelian term—as *hexis* (10:141), the productive habit of the bodily historical social self in which the self forms itself. As *hexis* it is a productive power, a *virtus* (10:141). Understood as *hexis*, creative action is action intended for others and related to the concept of *dromenon* (10:183). *Dromenon* is communal action charged with emotion (10:201, 224), and is deeply rooted in religious relations; it is, in some sense, "the primitive process of social construction" (10:203). In the depths of social development "there must be something that has the character of *dromenon*, there must be the *sacré*" (10:207) as the basis of social organization (10:224).

The history of the world has the character of *dromenon* (10:210), originating in myth, ritual, and tradition. The *dromenon* is the paradigm of the activity of the historical species (10:216), the paradigm of social action (10:235). Such action originates from tradition and acts upon tradition, forming the matrix of world history (10:210). In this sense "that which is

manifest in the historical world is not *phaenomena*, but rather *dromena*" (10:205). That is to say, everything in the historical world should be studied as the activity of expressive mediation, as that which is socially done within a tradition.

In this manner we can see that with the appearance of the religious mediator new horizons are opened for expressive mediation.

Summary

Although here I have dealt primarily with the human body, the body forms only one of the three aspects of what I have called the theory of expressive mediation in Nishida philosophy, the other two being sign/symbol and historical expressivity. In this paper I have endeavored to present an exercise in the use of the logic of *topos* with the purpose of showing how the problem of the bodily manifestation of religious experience is philosophically treated in Nishida. In order to do this I have drawn from Nishida's concept of expressive mediation to clarify Nishida's concept of the body, his view of religious experience, and his ideas on how religious practice as the bodily manifestation of religious experience results in creative action. Perhaps the most important point to come to light in the discussion is that of the expressive mediator: the pervading activity of the Word of God or the Marvelous Name of the Buddha.

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Questions Posed by Nishida's Philosophy

FUJITA MASAKATSU

IN THE PRESENT ARTICLE I would like to clarify, as far as possible, the philosophical problems addressed by Nishida Kitarō, taking into consideration the historical context within which these problems arose. In doing so I hope to identify what Nishida saw as the limitations of Western thought, and show how he attempted to overcome these limitations. With this as a basis, I would then like to consider what questions Nishida's criticisms pose to us in our present historical context, and what direction his thought points us in. Our dual aim, therefore, is to situate Nishida in his context and let him speak to us in ours. Let us begin by looking at Nishida's critique of subject-object dualism.

Pure Experience and the Critique of Subject-Object Dualism

In *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 [A study of the good][1] Nishida explains "pure experience" in several ways. For example, in the opening paragraph he writes, "Pure experience is identical with direct experience. When one directly experiences one's state of consciousness, there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified"(IG, pp. 3–4). Several pages later he writes, "Without adding the least bit of thought, we can shift our attention within the state where the subject and object have not yet separated" (IG, p. 6, modified). In the book's final chapter, "Knowledge and Love," he writes:

> When we are absorbed in something the self loves, for example, we are almost totally unconscious. We forget the self, and at this point an incomprehensible power beyond the self functions alone in all of its majesty; there is neither subject nor object, but only the true union of subject and object. (IG, pp. 174–75)

[1] Translated into English as *An Inquiry into the Good* (hereafter IG), by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (NISHIDA 1990). Quotations in English from *Zen no kenkyū* follow Abe and Ives's translation, slightly modified in places.

In such phrases as "there is not yet subject or object," "before the separation of subject and object," and "the unity of subject and object," Nishida is undoubtedly criticizing any dualism that sets the subject and object over against each other. Nishida says the following concerning the subject-object opposition:

> With respect to seeing reality directly, there is no distinction between subject and object in any state of direct experience—one encounters reality face to face.... The distinction between subject and object is a relative form that arises when one has lost the unity of experience, and to regard subject and object as mutually independent realities is an arbitrary view. (IG, pp. 31–32)

Nishida refers to as an "arbitrary view" the outlook that posits both the "mind" (the "internal mind" or "consciousness") which projects the outside world and the "outside world" ehich is projected by this consciousness, and that then goes on to reify both sides of this duality. Nishida's view is that the opposition of subject and object arises only afterwards through the work of reflection; there is neither the distinction nor the opposition of subject and object in the original field of experience. This criticism of the subject-object opposition forms a central theme of *Zen no kenkyū*, which centers on Nishida's teaching of an experience "before the separation of subject and object."

It could be said that what supports the subject-object opposition is nothing other than our everyday manner of looking at things. In everyday life we do not see things as they are perceived, but rather we weave together our perceptions and our images of how the object would look in three-dimensional space. For example, if we view a coin at an angle it appears oval-shaped, and yet we reconstitute it as a round object with a certain thickness. In other words, we do not simply see things from our own immediate perspective, but also reconstitute the thing as it would appear from all possible angles. To use a different expression, we take the thing as it is perceived "privately," and reconstitute it by placing it in "public" space. Needless to say, natural science is founded on this kind of seeing things in the context of "public" space.

The duality of things as seen from my perspective (private things) and things as reconstituted in three-dimensional space (public things) creates the sense of an opposition between "consciousness" and "the external world," producing the so-called subject-object oppositional construct. One conclusion naturally drawn from this is that consciousness is a mere internal event,

with the content of consciousness being nothing more than a mental image or representation of the object existing outside of consciousness. A further conclusion is that sensations such as color and taste may be reduced to consciousness, while the object in itself exists in a world prior to sense, without color, taste, or smell. Further, this conclusion involves the idea that in the process of conceptualization the consciousness somehow alters the object, so that the contents of consciousness do not represent the object as it is in itself. Naturally, this process of alteration becomes a problem. By starting from this premise, numerous philosophers have found themselves stuck in the bottleneck of the mind-body problem, unable to move.

If we take the basic position of dualism to be 1) that on the one hand there is the world of perception and on the other there are objects in themselves preceding perception, 2) that the two are spatially separated, and 3) that they stand in a relation of representing and represented, then we can say that Nishida's critique of the subject-object opposition is directed at the discrepancy between this position and the reality of our experience. Our experience directly participates in the outside world. It is not the case that we taste something delicious or feel fear inside a consciousness separate from the outside world. The delicious food and the fearful object directly engage us. To put it the other way around, a thing does not present itself merely as an object, but from the beginning is presented as something delicious or something fearful. There is no separation between two worlds there. In other words, there is no "hidden back side" to a delicious apple or a fierce dog.

In the preface to the *Zen no kenkyū*, added in 1936, Nishida criticizes the abstractness of the concept of reality that posits a world of perception over against objects prior to perception. Quoting Gustav Fechner, he opposes "the colorless and soundless perspective of night found in the natural sciences" to the "perspective of the daytime, in which truth is things just as they are" (IG, p. xxxiii). When we are faced with a flower or a tree, we relate to it as "a plant alive with color and shape," not as a "purely material" entity. Moreover, we do not merely relate to it as an object of an intelligible perception. A flowering plant is also a thing that charms us and brings us serenity; in other words, "it is established through our feeling and willing" (IG, p. 49).

The fact that we are charmed, experience serenity, or see in the plant "living color and shape" is not for Nishida an internal event of consciousness. Again Nishida avoids as an "arbitrary view" the division of matters into internal mental phenomena and external material phenomena.

It is true that in *Zen no kenkyū* Nishida asserts that "phenomena of consciousness" are the true reality; indeed, the idea that "phenomena of consciousness are the one and only reality" is a central thesis of *Zen no kenkyū*. However, Nishida did not intend this as a notion of the internal consciousness of experience. Nishida explicitly rejects this interpretation as a misunderstanding. The expression "phenomena of consciousness" does not refer to mental phenomena as opposed to material phenomena. Nishida is pointing to the simple knowledge of reality as reality, before the arising of any thought of an external being or a subjective being. "If there is redness, there is just redness" (NKZ 15:180). The phrase "phenomena of consciousness" refers to the simple presencing of a thing. When one sees a red salvia flower, there the salvia flower itself is manifest. When one hears the maple leaves rustling in the wind, the leaves themselves are manifest. Reality is not away in some other place.

> In true reality...subjectivity and objectivity are not separate, and actual nature is not a purely objective, abstract concept but a concrete fact of consciousness that includes both subject and object. (IG, p. 72)

As mentioned above, we do not merely see things as objects of perception. We are moved by the beauty of something; we see one thing as bringing serenity, another as arousing fear. Just there the thing directly presents itself; we are not enclosed in the movement of our emotions or in the inside of our consciousness. The thing itself participates in the origination of our emotions. When the sound of a plucked chord moves our heart (心を揺さぶる), we are not moved by a thought associated with the sound or by an analogy drawn from it. The sound of the chord itself arouses our feeling.

In his "Junsui keiken ni kansuru dansho" 純粋経験に関する断章 [Fragments on pure experience] Nishida gives the example of "being struck by the feeling of impermanence at the sight of a white cloud passing through the wide open sky (NKZ 16:466). Let us consider here the following poem by Saigyō 西行:

> Smoke from Mt. Fuji
> Carried off by the wind
> Disappearing into I know not where
> So too my heart (わが思ひ).

No doubt many interpretations of this poem are possible. Surely, however, the poem is not to be read as a simple analogy between the wind-blown smoke and the emptiness (空しさ) of the self's existence. Nor is it simply a matter of the emptiness of the self being projected onto the vanishing of the smoke. Prior to any of this there is a direct feeling of impermanence aroused by seeing the smoke vanish without a trace into the infinite sky. Only here, in the unity of the smoke's fleeting momentariness and one's own feeling of emptiness, does the poem take on life.

It could be said that reality itself "has the power to move our feelings and will" (NKZ 16:468). In that sense, "feelings and will" have an "objective base" (IG, p. 50). Or it could be said that things have a kind of coercive power over the feelings and will. It is surely the case that the towering figure of a precipitous mountain impresses most people in a similar manner. However, it is certainly not the case that upon seeing the same thing we are all always affected in the same way. To use Nishida's example from *Zen no kenkyū*, everyone does not appreciate the stars in a nighttime sky as "rivets of gold," as did the poet Heinrich Heine (1797–1856). We don't all share Heine's sensitivity, but at least we can understand his manner of appreciation; we can empathize with him. And we could perhaps say that this is so because the stars of the nighttime sky have the "power" to let us empathize with this way of seeing.

As mentioned above, it could be said that, in the sense of including "feeling and will," that which "harbors both subject and object" (主客を具したる) is concrete reality (具体的事実). We must then say that any "purely material" thing prior to sensible perception is a product of thought which resituates this concrete reality in three-dimensional space, and in this sense "is that which is most abstract, in other words, that which is furthest removed from true state of reality" (IG, p. 69, modified).

The Logic of Fluidity

We can use "public" measurements for, and speak in "public" language about, things that have been resituated in three-dimensional space. But reality itself, which we experience directly before any separation of intellect, feeling, and will, can neither be measured nor communicated in such a "public" manner.

In *Zen no kenkyū* (part 2, chapter 8) Nishida expresses this point as follows: "We must realize (自得) the true state of this reality with our entire being rather than reflect on it, analyze it, or express it in words" (IG, p. 51). Nishida's critique of the subject-object opposition is at the same time a critique of the idea that truth can be grasped using "public" measures and "public" language.

Take, for example, the action of rotating one's arms in a circle or of swinging one's legs back and forth. A physicist could, of course, give a scientific description and explanation of these actions by measuring the position of the arms or legs and the amount of time elapsed. And yet this would not explain one's consciousness of the continuity or unity of the action. The emotions have a similar dynamic character. The emotion of sadness, for example, is not always the same in character—sometimes it moves in the direction of grief, sometimes in the direction of self-abandon, and sometimes in the direction of anger. Changing direction and varying in intensity, it moves continuously and without rest. We cannot capture this quality in the single word *sadness*; but neither can we grasp it precisely by categorizing it as grief or anger, for we would then lose sight of its integral quality.

We attempt the infinite division and detailed description of this kind of perpetually changing thing. We attempt to understand such fluid things by reconstructing the whole out of countlessly divided and rigidified parts. Or else we excise one moment from the perpetually changing thing and take that momentary aspect to be representative of the whole. And yet what we actually experience is not an accumulation of divided up and rigidified parts, but rather something dynamic in character that refuses to be apportioned. Faced with a thing of this nature, we can only (to use Nishida's expression) "realize it with our whole being" (自得する). Or, following Bergson, we must "intuit" it; we must "probe deeply into life, and in a kind of spiritual auscultation feel the pulse of the soul" (BERGSON 1959a, p. 1,408).

The year before the publication of *Zen no kenkyū*, the same year he assumed his post at Kyoto University, Nishida wrote an essay entitled "Beruguson no tetsugakuteki hōhōron" ベルグソンの哲学的方法論 [Bergson's philosophical method], in which he characterized Bergson's "intuition" as the only method capable of "seeing from the inside of a thing," "seeing a thing by becoming that thing itself," or "knowing the true state of a thing"(NKZ 1:319). The sympathy Nishida showed toward Bergson's thought[2] around

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[2] In the preface to *Shisō to taiken* 思想と体験 [Thought and experience] (1915) is the following passage:

> When I first came to Kyoto, my thought was influenced on the one hand by the position of the so-called "Pure Logic School" of Rickert and others, and on the other hand by Bergson's theory of "pure duratio." Through sympathizing with the latter, and gaining the power of reflection from the former, I benefited greatly from both. (NKZ 1:203)

the time of his move to Kyoto appears to have influenced his interpretation of the idea of "pure experience." In his notes for his lectures outlining philosophy, written around the end of the Meiji period, Nishida defines "pure experience" as "autonomous, qualitatively continuous change."[3] This definition is clearly influenced by Bergson's interpretation of "pure duration" as "nothing other than a succession of qualitative change, a melting together, penetrating one another, without precise contours, without any tendency to exteriorize oneself with respect to the other, without any relation to number" (BERGSON 1959b, p. 70). Actually, in these lecture notes Nishida refers to Bergson's idea of "pure duration" as follows:

> Reality is continuously changing; it does not stop for an instant. Yet the manner of this change is such that each moment points on toward the coming future state, and contains the already expired past state. Bergson's "internal duration, pure duration" expresses this. This is the state of our every experience, yet no amount of analysis from the outside, no matter how many thousands of words it employs, can ever exhaustively describe it. It can only be directly experienced from the inside. (NKZ 15:185)

If we compare this with the interpretation in *Zen no kenkyū*, the emphasis here on the dynamic nature of pure experience stands out. Of course, in *Zen no kenkyū* too "the manner of the formation of true reality" is conceived as the "differentiating development" (分化発展) or "development and completion" (発展完成) of and by a single thing. Underlying this notion of "development and completion" is, no doubt, Hegel's idea of *Begriff*. In comparison, the lecture notes interpret pure experience more in line with Bergson's "pure duration." In "Bergson's Philosophical Method," written about this time, Nishida uses the following expression: "Reality that is directly given to us is fluid (流転的), developmental; it does not come to rest for a moment; in other words, it is something alive" (NKZ 1:320).

Were this ceaselessly moving "something alive" to be made the object of division and analysis, it would no doubt "dry up and rigidify, lose its vitality, and be reduced to a kind of intellectual sign" (NKZ 1:326). In "Bergson's Philosophical Method" Nishida explicitly avoids as erroneous the approach in which one starts from a position of "knowledge by way of signs" (符号的知識)

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[3] Nishida gives this definition in English.

and proceeds from there to see things as a whole—in other words, the method of moving from analysis to intuition. Nishida regards the true philosophical method to commence with "experiencing directly from the inside" that which changes and flows—in other words, the method of moving from intuition to analysis. If we may apply the label "the logic of rigidity" to the method that infinitely divides its object and then attempts to understand the whole by reconstructing it from these separate pieces, then perhaps "the logic of fluidity" would be a good name for the method of Nishida and Bergson, which attempts to grasp the ceaselessly changing thing in its very dynamism.

Experience and Language

As noted earlier, for Nishida directly experienced reality cannot be thoroughly revealed in language; it must be "realized with our whole being." In *Zen no kenkyū*, pure experience is said to be "prior even to the judgement of what this color or this sound might be" (IG, p. 3, modified). Again, in "Fragments" he writes as follows:

> True intuition is prior to any judgment. If the wind "rustles" (風が ざわざわいへば), then this "rustling" is the reality of the intuition. There is no "the wind" as the subject of the event (風がということ もない). In reality there is neither <u>grammatical subject nor predicate</u>.
> (NKZ 16:283)

For example, let us consider the case where one sees a peony flower and makes the judgment, "This flower is red." In making such a judgment one grasps the color of the flower in front of one by way of a universal concept. <u>Such grasping of particulars by way of universal categories plays an important role in our everyday</u> life. According to Kurt Goldstein, there is a type of linguistic disorder in which the patient, while aware of the meaning of words themselves, is unable to grasp particular things in relation to universal categories, and is thus unable to answer the question of what a particular thing is (GOLDSTEIN 1957, pp. 69ff). For such patients it is not the inability to say the name of a thing but the inability to universalize particulars that no doubt leads to the most severe difficulties in everyday life.

Although it is thus extremely important that we be able to grasp things in terms of universal concepts, at the same time this involves ignoring the subtle differences between particular things. In other words, it involves doing vio-

lence to the individual phenomena. This is because particular things possess such subtle differences that they cannot be reduced into universal concepts. In this sense, to make judgments about phenomena is to engage in abstraction, since judgments capture only a single aspect of things. In Nishida's words, judgments—in comparison to primal experiences—are inevitably "something meager in content" (IG, p. 9, slightly modified). "The present consciousness of reality as such" is "the purest thing," holding the richest content.

<u>Furthermore, not only is a judgment "meager in content,"</u> but once it is made—once a universalization has taken place—words themselves come to <u>possess a singular power.</u> In short, attention is drawn away from subtle differences in individual things. As soon as one judges that "this flower is red," attention is no longer paid to the flower's uniqueness, to the color found only in this particular variety of peony. Or again, consider the fact that one is taught as a child that a rainbow has seven colors; due to this preconception one loses concern for those subtle shades that fall between the seven colors.

It <u>could even be said that our experience itself comes to take place only in a form adapted to the universal categories of language.</u> Earlier we claimed that emotions are originally something not set, that they move ceaselessly through a wide variety of intertwined aspects. However, when expressed in language this wide range gets shaved down. We become convinced that this shaved-down expression represents the essential substance of the intricate emotion we experience. Not stopping there, our emotions themselves become adapted to language; they become fitted to the mold of language. In a sense, emotions are made and classified within society. The framework of emotion-labels exerts a powerful influence, perhaps so much so that it becomes impossible to have emotions outside that framework.

And yet in most cases, despite this ordering and categorization, there are vibrant movements of emotion that exceed this framework. Or it might be that if we observed, without preconceptions, our everyday emotions just as they are we would find that they always have this quality of vibrant movement. Usually, however, this vibrancy lasts only as long as the moment of the experience, and is soon forgotten and lost. In the end, the intricate folds of emotion, which might readily be seen through preconceptionless observation, lie unrecognized to one who is bound by the ready-made molds for emotions.

We could say that when Nishida writes of the state "before any judgment is added," he is referring to the state before the content of experience is altered and its range of variety shaved down by the power of language. In his

later period he writes explicitly of the limits of language. In the 1939 essay "Keiken kagaku" 経験科学 [Empirical science]" he writes:

> For example...when we say "a horse is running there," we have rigidified our experience.... We have introduced a static something in place of an action. Language deviates from and solidifies a mere fragment of the living maternal body of experience. While serving the purposes of utility, this gives rise to something fundamentally different from experience. Compared with experience, language possesses in itself an essential limitation. (NKZ 9:232)

Nishida was keenly aware of the danger that, due to the utility value of language, the gap between language and experience would be ignored.

"Whatness" and "Thatness" (Mono to koto)[4]

We have already quoted Nishida's explanation of pure experience as occurring "before the addition of any judgment as to what this color or this sound is." Yet it cannot simply be said that our experience takes place before judgment, before language. For language always participates in experience right from the very beginning. The moment we see a cherry blossom, we see it *as* a cherry blossom. Even if we don't yet know its name, we at least see it as a flower. When we hear the gurgling of a stream, from the beginning we hear it as the gurgling of a stream. Naturally there are cases where we cannot immediately make a judgment, but even in such cases we perceive the unknown thing *as* something unfamiliar, or for example as something that "looks like a human figure" or "sounds like an explosion." It is not the case that first there is a primal experience free of judgment which is subsequently divided up by way of language. Rather, our acquired understanding of the world participates from the beginning in experience itself.

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[4] *Translator's note:* The Japanese words *mono* もの and *koto* こと are notoriously difficult to translate, particularly when written in the *hiragana* syllabary, which allows them the widest range of their many meanings. In this article the multiple meanings of the two words form the background of a particular meaning for each term developed here by the author (Fujita) drawing on the work of Kimura Bin 木村敏. The author suggested the German words *Washeit* and *Danheit* for *mono* and *koto* respectively, and I have somewhat hesitantly gone from there to the English words "whatness" and "thatness." Although particularly the latter may at first appear puzzling, the two terms should be taken in the following sense: "*What* it is is a painting. It is a painting *that* moves me to tears." These meanings are developed by the author in the following pages. Finally, it should be mentioned that the linguistic awkwardness unavoidable here in translation does not occur in the original.

And yet neither is it the case that things in our experience are arranged only according to various "as..." judgments. That is, we also see and hear things that cannot be fully captured in the "..." place of an "as..." judgment. For example, the particular color of a hydrangea flower cannot be fully expressed by the word "blue." Nor is it only things seen or heard that cannot be exhausted by language. We see a fountain pen as a fountain pen, but at the same time we might regard it as one *that*, though worn-out, still possesses a special writing quality that other fountain pens lack; or perhaps we remember *that* it was used to write an important letter at a particular time in one's life. To any "whatness" are tied countless "thatnesses." We could say that we do not merely perceive a "whatness" as a "whatness," but always perceive it together with its "thatnesses." Kimura Bin refers to this fact as "the coexistence of whatness and thatness" (ものとことの共生) (KIMURA 1982, pp. 20–21). This expression precisely reveals the nature of our experience.

"Thatness" is strongly tied to our feelings and volitions as well. The painful memory of a failed romance is brought back by the fountain pen used at that time to write a love letter. At the same time the pen conveys to one that this painful emotion is now changing into one of nostalgia. *That* I felt pain at that time and *that* I look back on those days with nostalgia (切なく思うこと、懐かしく感じること) are also "thatnesses" which accompany a "whatness." According to Nishida, such feelings and volitions are precisely what give concreteness to a thing (もの):

> Contrary to popular belief, true reality is not the subject matter of dispassionate knowledge; it is established through our feeling and willing. It is not simply an existence but something with meaning. If we were to remove our feelings and the will from this world of actuality, it would no longer be a concrete fact—it would become an abstract concept. (IG, p. 49)

We look at things in combination with numerous thoughts and feelings. In this sense, the things we see are filled with "meaning." They are full of "expression" (*hyōgen* 表現). In actuality there is no mere "whatness" stripped of these elements. Even if such a thing could be conceived of, it would be a mere abstract construct. Our world is "constructed upon feeling and volition" (IG, 49, slightly modified).

Language is unable to exhaust these kinds of "thatnesses." The word *nostalgic* is unable to express the full range of what I felt or am feeling. On this

point Kimura speaks of the "pollution" language inflicts upon "thatnesses." As we have already noted, Nishida claims that language does not express experience itself, but rather selects one aspect and rigidifies it. He points out an essential limitation inherent in language: that which can be expressed in language is merely an "abstract shell" of phenomena. More than this we can only "realize with our whole being." In order to communicate the "nostalgia" that I experienced, I can only appeal to the sympathy of someone who has had the same experience. The only way to finally convey the unique writing quality of my fountain pen is to have someone actually try writing with it.

However, this does not mean that truth is only in "thatnesses," and that words are mere appellations bestowed on these as accompaniments. Nor does it mean that "thatnesses" are of necessity "polluted" when expressed in the form of language. This is because there is no such thing as a pure truth existing before language. As mentioned above, our previously acquired understanding of the world, and thus language, participates in our experience from the very beginning. In other words, "thatnesses" do not stand prior to language, but are first experienced in conjunction with the workings of language. When we see a cherry blossom as a cherry blossom, at the same time we experience the brightening of our spirits. We could say that "thatnesses" exist together with language (「こと」は言葉とともにある); they "coexist" with language.

As we have said, on the one hand Nishida points out an essential limitation of language. We do not usually see things just as they show themselves. Through "the power of past experience"—that is, through "explaining" things by way of an already acquired understanding of the world—we are constantly "changing" things as we see them. In this manner our "internal nature" deeply participates in our perception and in the "phenomena of consciousness" as a whole. Nishida links this to the fact that in our "phenomena of consciousness," "intellect, feeling, and will" operate together without being divided (cf. IG, pp. 31, 47–48).

Secondly, we must not fail to point out that language not only rigidifies phenomena, it on the contrary also has the power to "bring to life" or "evoke" the full nature of a "thatness." Kimura himself notes this by way of reference to Basho's haiku:

> An old pond!
> A frog leaps in
> The sound of the water

In this haiku what is being expressed is not simply the literal, surface meaning of a frog jumping into an old pond. Rather, the poem expresses the event of a uniform stillness shattered by the sound of a frog's leap into the water. Further, this evokes a scene within us where, precisely through this shattering, the initial stillness is deepened into a more profound stillness, and thus is revealed to us in condensed form the nature from which we are alienated in our everyday activities. A mere seventeen-syllable poem cuts open and reveals such a world to us.

In this sense we could say that language, at the same time as it expresses "whatnesses," gives dwelling place within them to "thatnesses" in infinite number. When a word is listened to, these infinite "thatnesses" are evoked in the listener. To put it the other way around, the listener transcends the word to hear the "thatnesses."

We could also refer to this as going through and transcending language to enter into (*sannyū* 参入) the world of "thatnesses." Nishida's statement that true reality "is constituted out of feeling and volition" may point to what we have here spoken of as "thatnesses" coexisting with language.

Abbreviations

IG   *An Inquiry into the Good* (NISHIDA 1990).

NKZ   *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集 [The complete works of Nishida Kitarō], 3rd printing, 1978–80. 19 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

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The Language of the Kyoto School of Philosophy

Yagi Seiichi

IN THE FIRST PART OF THIS ESSAY I would like to show the problematic implied in the use of language by the Kyoto school, as represented by Nishida Kitarō. Through the examination of language use, I believe, we can minimize the possibility of misunderstandings. The key terms of Nishida's philosophy are *keiken* 経験 (experience), *jikaku* 自覚 (awakening to the Self), and *basho* 場所 (*topos*). Let us begin our examination of language with the understanding that Nishida's writings are the philosophical expression of his *jikaku*; they are, that is to say, the explication of the horizon of his *jikaku*, in which he tries to show exactly what this experience implies and to clarify the overall nature of the reality that manifested itself in and as his *jikaku*. He presented a picture of this reality observed not as an object, but as that within which he understood himself. In a sense he objectified the entire structure of *jikaku*.

On Language: Descriptive or Expressive?

It is generally held that language has three main functions: description, expression, and conation. Depending upon which function is dominant there are three types of language: descriptive (referential), expressive (emotive), and normative (conative). Let us look at the first two in some detail before considering the third in the final section of this paper.

Descriptive language is used when "we" exchange information about objectified matters in order to cognize, control, or utilize them. In our age the typical example is the language of the natural sciences in unison with the related areas of technology and economics. This language is meaningless, as is well known, when its referent cannot be identified or when its sentences cannot be verified or falsified. Furthermore, this language must be clear and univocal. Otherwise it cannot function as a conveyor of information.

Expressive language is used when "I" want to let others know realities in "me" that cannot be externally observed: feelings, emotions, experiences (not their object, but their content and mode), thoughts, images, and so on. This language need not be verified, but must be *understood*. Thus expressive language is meaningless not when it is unverifiable but when it is incomprehensible. If someone says, "I have a headache," I understand what this means for I know the term *head* (as *head* is a "descriptive language" word) and I understand the meaning of *ache* (as I can find in my own experiences something I also call an "ache," although I do not know if my "headache" and that of the other person are, as a sensation, the same). Thus if I can identify in myself the content of another person's statement I can understand it. I understand a story through the process of transforming the words I hear into mental images of my own. I understand another's thoughts when I translate them into my own thoughts.

The thesis of Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* is expressive. *Cogito* is not a description of one's thinking, but a simultaneous duality of the fact of one's thinking and one's awareness of it. This is the language of the reason that has awoken to itself. The whole language of Cartesian thinking is thus the language of the self-aware reason, or the linguistic expression of the reason's self-awareness. Therefore when Descartes "proved" the objective existence of God on the basis of innate ideas his language made a skip from the expressive into the descriptive—an unjustifiable transgression. This is the destiny of a rationalist philosophy that dares to speak of the transcendent on the basis of rational thinking alone.

Religious language is expressive, not descriptive, in nature. "It is no longer I who live: Christ lives in me," said Paul (Gal 2, 20). He did not *observe* Christ who lived in him. When we take into consideration another statement of his, "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21), we perceive his awareness that his whole existence is animated by the power that he identified with Christ, who had been revealed in him (Gal 1:16). We can compare "Christ" in these words with "the true man of no rank" of Lin-chi, the "formless self" of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, or the activated Buddha nature. That means that the Christian who is aware of the activity of Christ in himself cannot *eo ipso* objectify Him as the heavenly Christ, so as to posit him as an objective being. This would be also an unjustifiable jump from expressive to descriptive language, a jump that has given rise to many ambiguities in Christianity. It has, for example, prevented Christians from identifying "Christ" with the human Self.

It is important to note that poetic or literary language, which is expressive in nature, is not meaningless even if it "describes" an imaginary world. Although novels are generally written in a descriptive style, the language of novels is expressive in nature, so it is irrelevant whether they have actual referents or not. A romance is not a history. We must thus make a strict distinction between the form and the type of language. From this it follows that a philosophical construction of the horizon of *jikaku*, or the objectification of the structure of it, or the picture of reality seen from inside (*jikaku*) is not *eo ipso* an objective description of the reality in which we find ourselves. If it is asserted that the picture contains an objective cognition, one should demonstrate it through objective verification.

In his first work, *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 [A study of the good] (NISHIDA 1911), Nishida described reality in its manifestation "as" pure experience. He then asked what the subject of the description is—that is, what it is that thus sees and describes. He reflected on the nature of *jikaku* in an attempt to clarify it; he tried, in other words, to bring to self-realization what *jikaku* is. He attempted in this way to transcend all rationalities, to attain the ultimate *jikaku* that can objectify all partial or lower *jikaku*s. This ultimate standpoint he called the "transcendent predicative sphere" 超越的述語面—that which, grasps, wraps, and sustains one's entire subjectivity (NISHIDA 1930). At the last stage of his life he conceptualized it as *topos* (*basho*), in which all individuals act upon each other. As pointed out above, this is an explication of his *jikaku*, not a description of an objective observation that he made.

While Nishida often worked with the concepts of German philosophy, his students Nishitani and Hisamatsu wrote in a more genuinely Buddhist language. This was a natural development of the Kyoto school, insofar as it remained faithful to its Buddhist origin and nature. Thus Nishida's *basho* became in Nishitani the field of power in which all existences (beings as non-beings) interpenetrate, containing each other infinitely (NISHITANI 1987a). Though Nishitani as a philosopher did not deny that the structure of the field can be described as the unity of Logos (*ri* 理) and factual entities (*ji* 事), he, as a religious thinker, did not speak of the transcendent. The field was to him simply the field of mutual interpenetration (*jijimuge* 事事無碍) (NISHITANI 1987a, p. 169). Thus he used such genuinely Buddhist categories as *kū* 空 (*śūnyatā*) and *engi* 縁起 (*pratītya-samutpāda*).

One may say that this strategy is more acceptable to modern thinking. But if one maintains that mutual interpenetration is an objective fact, one should

verify it, for mutual interpenetration is primarily a cognition whose root lies in *jikaku*: I am I only in relation to others. The mutual interpenetration of objective entities is not to be denied, but for the sake of strictness one should show, in what sense, say, my glasses and the eraser on my desk penetrate each other.

Of course the starting point of Kyoto-school thought—i.e., experience, or immediate experience—is extraordinarily important. In its presence it becomes intuitively clear that our reason and language, the indispensable tools we use to order, shape, and manipulate incoming sensual data, reconstruct these data in their own way (YAGI 1995). Such reconstruction is done in order to make the data communicable. Therefore even descriptive language, far from being a faithful representation of reality, is a rational and linguistic construct. Thus we, the users of language, are separated from reality by a thick wall of rational verbalization, the breaking through of which reveals reality as it is.

We see then that subject and object are inseparable, that there is no substance called "I," that our being is constituted by our relations with other entities, that I am penetrated by the entities I encounter, and so on. Mutual interpenetration is above all a matter of *jikaku*, not of objective observation, though we can objectify it at the secondary level of cognition. It is true that we are enclosed by the wall of language, that we are prisoners of the cocoon of the virtual reality that is the verbalized world (cf. WITTGENSTEIN 1953). Kyoto-school philosophy is right in that it starts from immediate experience, that is to say from the breaking through of verbalized reality. But this experience can be communicated only by expressive language, not by descriptive language. There is no direct bridge from the former to the latter. The "description" of pure experience is to be *understood*, not *verified*. In this way the philosophy of the Kyoto school becomes the first step toward attaining reality as it is.

To Hisamatsu *jikaku* was simply the awakening of the Self to the Self. In his explanation of *jikaku* he seldom used the concepts of German philosophy but rather talked as a Zen master (though in his philosophical essays on *satori* he compared his views with those of European philosophy using Western conceptuality). His language was purely expressive. He did not, needless to say, speak of the transcendent God as an object over against us. The formless Self shows itself in, through, and as his *jikaku*. Of course one may reflect on it and—insofar as the process of reflection necessitates that it be objectified to the Immanent-Transcendent—one may speak of God as the Other. But

this is no longer the primary fact: God as the Other and God as the ultimate subject must be one (HISAMATSU 1949).

Hisamatsu restricted his language purely to the expression of his *jikaku*, avoiding the use of descriptive language in his religious discourses. His language was thus free of unjustifiable jumps from the expressive to the descriptive mode, and as such remains a stumbling block to those who reduce religion to objectivity.

On the Noun: Substantive or Verbal?

What are the referents of the language of the Kyoto school, given that it mainly uses expressive language? As shown above, it is not necessary for expressive language to have *substantive* referents. There are various kinds of noun: common nouns, material nouns, collective nouns, abstract nouns, proper nouns, and verbal nouns (gerunds and infinitives). A common noun generally has a real referent when used in descriptive language. This is also the case with material, collective, and proper nouns. And a Platonist would insist that this is the case with an abstract noun as well: beauty itself—an idea of the beautiful—exists in the noetic world apart from our empirical world, and this is the referent of the word *beauty*. Be that as it may, we will not discuss that here (though it is hardly imaginable, as Aristotle indicated, that beauty itself exists apart from the beautiful).

Let us examine the case of the verbal noun in a wider sense. The word *birth*, for example, is verbal in nature as it means to be born, and we do not claim that there exists an objective something—an entity—called "birth." Verbal nouns in general denote a dynamic state, not a thing. This is the case with the word *life*. What is "life"? In descriptive language it denotes a living thing as a unit of life: a cell or a living body. These are the primary objects of the science of life. In expressive language "life" primarily indicates our experience of *human* life, involving happiness, sorrow, struggle, success, and so on, something that is related in a biography or romance or discussed in philosophical or religious literature.

But does the word not mean something supernatural or spiritual, something invisible that, when it enters a body, animates it and, when it leaves, causes its death? But why do we have such a notion? When we understand the word not as a verbal noun but as a common noun used in descriptive language, we involuntarily assume that the word has an objective referent like all

other common nouns. This leads to confusion. Verbal nouns denote—even in descriptive language—not objective things but dynamic states. The word *life* means primarily "to live." But what lives? If we construct a sentence from the infinitive alone, we would say "A living thing lives." Here we make a distinction between the subject of the sentence (a living thing) and the predicate (lives). But the subject is not something that can be separated from the "living." The subject is the whole of the living thing in its peculiar form, unity, and continuity, and the predicate "describes" its dynamic state. This is true of all nouns that are verbal in nature. Between "birth" and "death" there are breathing, eating, sleeping, walking, laboring, thinking, writing, speaking, loving, suffering, hoping and so on, and there are nominal forms of such gerunds (to love—loving—love). We come to the conclusion: There are nouns that are verbal in nature. These nouns denote dynamic states, and lack the kind of objective referents that common nouns have.

Many religious terms are verbal in nature. One example from the New Testament is the above-mentioned sentence: "To me, to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21). The subject of the sentence is the infinitive of the verb "live" and "Christ" is the predicate. "Christ" is here neither a common noun nor a proper noun, but, as the identification shows, virtually a verbal noun. As far as this sentence is concerned there is no objective being or person called "Christ." "To me" suggests that Paul is using here not objective (descriptive) language but expressive language. Paul states here his awareness that his whole existence, his "life," is animated by the power he calls "Christ." When we combine this sentence with "I do not dare tell you those things which Christ did not accomplish through me" [i.e., the mission done by Paul himself] (Rom 15:18), we see that the mission of Paul was, in his awareness, the work of Christ. Paul is not the "instrument" of Christ, as many modern versions translate it—Paul's activity was at the same time the activity of Christ. It is important to note that this is oneness of *activity*, not of *substance*.[1] But this oneness is not that of a lord and his envoy, though this relationship is often used in the Old and New Testament, for the mission of Paul is, historically speaking, his own activity. Even so, his mission can still be seen as the activity of Christ—Paul's activity and the activity of Christ are one in the

[1] The Gnostics advocated the substantial oneness of God and human, something that, to the Christian consciousness, is impossible. Nishitani, discussing the *Einheit im Wirken* of Meister Eckhart, showed the difference between oneness of activity and that of substance (NISHITANI 1987b, pp. 34–53.)

sense seen in the words of I John 4:7,12: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.... If we love one another God remains in us." In love there is a unity of divine and human activity, not a unity of divine and human substance.

But why is this not also a unity of substance? Suffice it to say, metaphorically, that in my speech my bodily activity and my personal activity are one, though I, as a personal subject, am not immediately identical with my voice mechanism. In this way there is oneness of divine and human activity: "It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work" (Phil 2:13). Another example: the name of God, JHWH, has a certain relation to the name God reveals to Moses (Exodus 3:14): "I am that I am" (or I shall be that I shall be—Hebrew has two tenses, perfect and imperfect, and this verb is in the imperfect tense) (SEKINE 1979, p. 67). The nature of God is revealed in a verbal sentence: I am [with you (cf. Exodus 3:12)]. If God is with us, each of us, then God is the field of divine power that we call history.

This is also the case with Buddhism. Christianity very often makes transgressive jumps from the realm of expressive language to that of descriptive language (or rather New Testament language has often been misunderstood to be descriptive in nature). In contrast, Buddhists (Zen Buddhists especially) realize that their language is an expression of their self-awareness. There are occasional cases where the verbal nouns are mistaken for common nouns, so that they appear to denote substances. Hisamatsu rejected this interpretation—to him Buddhist language is purely an expression of Self-awareness, so that it is erroneous to objectify it.

Here I would like to point out that Hisamatsu's terms too are verbal in nature. This is the case with the "Formless Self" of Hisamatsu, for nothing formless can be denoted by a common noun—the referent of a common noun must have unity, a distinct, continuing form, and an objectively verifiable self-identity. Indeed, Hisamatsu himself stated that sentient beings (by which he meant human beings in this context) enter nirvana and become selfless subjects (in the selfless subject the Formless Self manifests itself). The selfless subjects (the Formless Self) "work and fly freely about practicing mercy. This is Buddha. There is no other Buddha than this true Buddha" (HISAMATSU 1949, p. 83). The Formless Self denotes a dynamic state, not a static entity. The Formless Self is, to my understanding, the activated Buddha-nature, activated in such a way that it becomes aware of itself. A linguistic analysis of the term "Buddha-nature" in Buddhist literature is beyond the

scope of this paper; as far as I know, the use of the term among contemporary Zen Buddhists is verbal, not substantive-nominal.

Nishitani says, "The relation of mutually penetrating [I translate the term *egoteki kankei* 回互的関係 not as "mutual penetration" but as "mutually penetrating"] is nothing other than the power that gathers and combines all things to oneness, nothing other than the power that makes the world the world. The field of this power is the field of *kū* (*śūnyatā*)" (NISHITANI 1987a, p. 169). If my translation is not wrong—for that which can be referred to as a "power" is not the static state of mutual penetratedness but the act of mutually-penetrating—then the "field" Nishitani speaks of denotes a dynamic-verbal state, not something static like geometrical space. If so, the word *śūnyatā* is in its nature not an abstract but a verbal noun: it denotes not an abstract-privative quality but a dynamic condition.

This is also true of the *topos* (*basho*) of Nishida. The world of individuals is understood to be the self-negation of the Absolute. The Absolute is truly absolute when it recognizes itself in the relative beings that are its negation. In this sense the Absolute and the relative are, in their opposition, one. Each and every relative thing reflects the Absolute in itself. This means that individuals work upon each other—they negate each other and in this negation they posit each other. Through this mutual negating and positing they—unique, independent individuals—form a unity. Again: in working upon each other individuals form themselves, and this self-formation of the individual is at the same time—in the manner of the identity of contraries—the self-formation of the whole, of the Absolute itself.

The *basho* of Nishida is like this (NISHIDA 1946, pp. 374–76, 396–99). Reality as a whole is verbal, not substantial, for "substantial" indicates the quality of having one's ground of being in oneself, apart from and independent of other entities. It is not the case with Nishida's *topos*, where beings are grounded not in themselves but in their relation with other beings, that is to say, in the self-negation of the Absolute. This is—this must be—primarily a verbal, not a substantive, way of thinking, rooted in *jikaku* and not in a logical analysis of ontological conceptions.

The Bible is principally the story of how God and humans act toward each other. In a similar way, Nishida tells us the philosophical story of the Self-negation of God, which is a synchronic picture rather than a diachronic history. However, it is often not clear whether Nishida is relating the acts of God in history or merely elucidating—despite his best intentions—the logical relations

of his major concepts. It seems to me that Nishida is not quite free from the Hegelian identification of thinking and being (facts). But his successors, Nishitani and Hisamatsu, appear to have overcome this problematic to make room for a genuinely Buddhist picture of reality in a purely religious language.

On Mood: Indicative or Imperative?

The third function of language is conation, which involves the use of orders, requests, threats, and other such verbal methods to affect the addressee. Note that descriptive and expressive language may be employed in this way, as in "Wolves are coming !" ("Attention!" "Help me!") or "I am very tired" ("Let me take a short rest"). We will see that the language of the Kyoto school, which is expressive in nature but which can objectify *jikaku* as a description (section 1 of this essay), is able to function as conative.

It is often alleged that Kyoto-school philosophy provides no ground for ethics. How justified is this criticism? Hisamatsu spoke of the Formless Self as the ultimate subjectivity of the enlightened. This does not mean that in Hisamatsu the "ego" was lacking. Hisamatsu, to be sure, uttered such startling statements as "I do not die" and "I have no defilements (*bonnō* 煩悩)" (HISAMATSU and YAGI 1980, pp. 4–7). On the other hand he also said, "As I am so old I may die at any moment. When I am dead, please make conversation with me who am in you" (HISAMATSU and YAGI 1980, p. 257). These words clarify what Hisamatsu meant. Humans are not mere egos; the Self can manifest itself in and to the ego, so that Self and ego, being two, are one (the oneness of activity). This means the "death and resurrection" of the ego. The person in and to whom this has taken place is enlightened; he is no longer a mere ego but is aware that his subjectivity is Self/ego (abb.: S/e). In an attempt to explain this I would like to use a simile. The relation between the Self and the ego is something like that between the captain and the steersman; the body can then be compared to the hull of the ship. The captain also represents the shipping company. (The Self, as the unity of the human and the divine-transcendent, represents the transcendent).

Different levels of religious language may be used even by the same person. The nonreligious ego (abb.: *m.e.* [mere ego]) uses ordinary language. The normal enlightened person (S/e) speaks on religious matters using religious language. In some cases of S/e the Self is maximized and the ego minimized (abb.: S; the pure S says nothing for it is speechless); the words of

such individuals are hardly comprehensible in everyday terms, as was the case with Hisamatsu. There is also the case in which the ego of *S/e* is maximized and the Self minimized (abb.: *e*). While one can say that as *S* such a person is free from sin, as *e* the same person can have a radical awareness of sinfulness. The difference relates to the level on which one stands: different levels have different perspectives. Thus Jesus, as *e*, says "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone," and as *S* tells a young man to sell all his property, give it to the poor, and follow him (Mk 10:18–21). A tax collector confesses his sinfulness as *e* (not as *m.e.*—it is impossible for *m.e.* to admit sinfulness) and Jesus as *S* declares the tax collector to be justified by God.

Jesus also teaches, "Love your enemy" (Mat 5:44). *M.e.* loves its friends and hates its enemies. Or rather, it loves its own *m.e.* first, then loves other humans if they are friends and hates them if they are enemies. It is entirely impossible for *m.e.* to love an enemy. *S*, on the other hand, has no enemy at all. To *S*, every human being encountered is the neighbor whom *S* loves. "The Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:30–37) is an example of such an *S*. Therefore the command to love one's enemy is meaningful only for *S/e*. For, although *S/e* finds it natural to love his or her neighbor, the command is necessary because *S/e* tends always to become *m.e.*

Ethics is the level of behavioral regulation proper to all egos, including mere egos. Thus the command of Jesus to love one's enemy is not ethics at all, but an injunction directed to *S/e* (though it may be called an expression of "religious ethics," as long as this does not cause one to regard it as a "higher" standard for all egos to follow). "Religious ethics" describes the normal behavior of *S/e* (indicative); in that it is normal it is at the same time the standard, the "ought" (imperative), as *S/e* is always inclined to become *m.e.* Mosaic Law, the so-called Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:2-17, Deut. 5:6-22), is written not in the imperative but in the indicative imperfect. This means—and it is often interpreted by Old Testament scholars in this way · (SEKINE 1979, pp. 53–54)—that it describes the conduct of humans standing in the right relation to God (indicative). But this standard became a norm, law, or commandment (imperative), as human beings are apt to go astray. If it had remained simply the description of human conduct written in the indicative mood of descriptive language, Judaism would have been criticized as a religion lacking ethics.

When Buddhists speak as *S* they describe mainly the normal state of humanity (indicative). They speak of, for example, the mutual interpenetra-tion of all things, including humans. In this case human society is perfectly integrated, with neither split nor oppression in it. To *S* all of reality is the world of activated and realized Buddha-nature. In contrast, Christians or Westerners in general are wont to speak as *e*, not to say as *m.e.* Though Paul (as *S*) could refer to the Church as the Body of Christ, an ideally integrated *communio sanctorum* in which each Christian has a status and role that the individual Christian fulfills of his/her own accord, Christians know that this is not the case in reality. In human society, including Christian churches, there are many who neglect, oppress, or take advantage of others. The Church as the Body of Christ is the invisible reality that exists in Heaven; the empirical churches remain only its shadow. That means that to the Christian the "normal" state is the standard, which "ought" to be realized. Ethics is therefore indispensable, as there is precious little mutual interpenetratedness that is realized in our human world. Again, it is something that *ought* to be realized. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor" is for them the Christian ethic (imperative).

While Jōdo Buddhists speak, as Christians do, as *S/e*, which is aware that it is not free from *m.e.*, Zen Buddhists describe what *S/e*, or rather *S*, looks like and what it does of its own accord (not in obedience to some authority such as the divine order). To recall the word of Hisamatsu cited above, the enlightened "work and fly freely about practicing mercy." This is the expression of the very nature of *S*. Mercy is what it wills, what it wants heartily, free from every "ought" and from all compromise with *e* or *m.e.* This is the testimony of *S* that reveals the very nature of humanity.

But it is necessary for the Kyoto school too to avoid the misunderstanding that it lacks ethics. It is necessary for the school to show that *S*, as the normal state of humanity (indicative), is at the same time the norm, the "ought," and therefore the "ethics" (imperative) for all *es* that still participate in *m.e.* For the sake of communication it should share the standpoint of ordinary humans, remaining aware that it can share the state of *m.e.* at any moment without losing sight of *S*. The Kyoto school should show that the mutual interpenetration of persons (indicative) is nevertheless the state that "ought" to be realized (imperative), not the state that realizes itself of itself in our society. This would be nothing other than the ethics of the Kyoto school of philosophy.

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Nishitani Revisited

JAN VAN BRAGT

THE "REVISITING" REFERRED to in my title is meant to carry a double meaning. One, that of going back, possibly for the last time, to a place one had lived for quite some time in order to come to a conclusion about the meaning it really had in one's life. Two, that of going back to reexplore a place one thought one knew well but about which one has heard others say things one was completely unaware of. My paper will thus have two parts. In part 1 I shall try to define my position toward that part of the thought of Nishitani Keiji with which I have had a long acquaintance, basically that of *Shūkyō to wa nanika* 宗教とは何か [What is religion?] (NISHITANI 1961).[1] In part 2 I shall reflect on the thought of the later Nishitani, of which I knew very little until recently. The question may be whether in its duality the paper still forms a kind of unity.

The Early Nishitani and the Philosophy of Śūnyatā

On review, my acquaintance with Nishitani's philosophy has not been a very satisfying one. Probably because of my Christian sensibilities and Western background, I have never really felt at home in it, and I have never been sure that I understood it sufficiently to define my own position towards it. I always regarded it as soaring high in the sky and never coming to roost near where I live. I might possibly say that, for thirty-one years now (ever since the time I first read *Shūkyō to wa nanika* and wrote down my impressions in a long review article [VAN BRAGT 1962]), I have been living with it as with a koan. When pressed by Western scholars to make my own position clear, I have always played a dilatory game. But now I feel that time is running out on me, and that the moment has come, if not to go to the Master with my provi-

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[1] Translated as *Religion and Nothingness* by Jan Van Bragt (NISHITANI 1982).

sional solution of the koan, at least to pinpoint, to the best of my ability and for my own peace of mind, where the sore spots and bottlenecks have been lying all the time. Let me borrow the words of another Western scholar who also struggled with Nishitani's thought to express why I want to bother you with these difficulties of mine: "I am hopeful that, by identifying where my unclarity and uncertainty lie, some of these here, who are more deeply acquainted with Nishitani's thought than I am, will be able to set me straight" (LITTLE 1989, p. 181).

Before proceeding further, however, a few remarks may be in order. First of all, my interest in Nishitani's thought has never been a purely philosophical one. In all these years my real concern has always been the compatibility of Eastern and Western ways of thinking and, within that framework, the possibility of a meeting of minds between Christianity and Buddhism. Secondly, I dare say that, in this connection, I have always held a "favorable prejudice" towards Nishitani's philosophy since it appeared to be genuinely religiously inspired and to promise an intimate view into the way the other half of the world thinks, and thus to offer the Christian theological tradition basic counterbalances to its traditional, culturally limited, categories. Thirdly, there is, of course, the question as to why it would be worth anybody's while to listen to my personal difficulties with Nishitani's philosophy. Being fully convinced that a considerable part of such difficulty is due to my lack of understanding, I cannot and do not pretend that my reservations faithfully reflect the real points of divergence between Western and Eastern ways of thinking, a problem with which the international community must come to grips now and in the future. Still, there is the possibility that my difficulties may reveal, here and there, certain aspects of this divergence. Moreover, experience tells me that most of my problems are shared by a great number of other run-of-the-mill Western minds and, to that extent, may be worth considering by those who want to introduce the thought of the Kyoto school (and maybe also of Buddhism) to the Western world.

So, why has there always remained a "glass wall," as it were, between the beautiful religious ideal painted by Nishitani Keiji in a majestic sweep of negation and my own everyday reality (including my religious needs) and that of human society with its many contradictory components? My search for the reasons may at times appear to be a self-confident criticism of Nishitani's philosophy (making Nishitani alone responsible for the existence of the wall) but, in truth, my only desire is to see the wall disappear.

Writing about his early years as a philosopher in "Watakushi no tetsugakuteki hossokuten" 私の哲学的発足点 [My philosophical starting point], Nishitani commented, "It then seemed to me that, in the experiences of the people called 'mystics,' there appears a peak wherein religion and philosophy interpenetrate and reach unity" (NKC 20:194). It is safe to say, I believe, that this unity always remained Nishitani's ideal. However, he tried to realize it not in mysticism but in philosophy, in a philosophy that embraces religion and can rightly be called an "innerly religious" philosophy. I, too, have always felt that "philosophy only" cannot deliver what the human kokoro 心 (heart and mind together) is looking for. Philosophy, I feel, must be "open" to religion (which does not necessarily follow the laws of philosophical reason), just as religion must expose itself ever anew to the light of philosophical reason. But can the respective natures of both partners be safeguarded when one speaks of a "unity" of religion and philosophy?

It has always seemed to me that, in Nishitani as well as in Tanabe, the nature of philosophy is somehow being done violence to by an appeal to a religious experience not obtainable or recoverable by philosophical methods. In other words, Nishitani seems to have wanted at work in his philosophy a prajñā that he nevertheless defines as "Great Wisdom, having the meaning of a transcendence of all ontology and epistemology" (NKC 14: 50), or as "a cognition that originates at the far side of the intellect" (NKC 16: 189). In this connection, the unmediated turnabout of absolute negation into absolute affirmation, so important in Nishitani's philosophy, has always seemed to me philosophically unwarranted, albeit religiously acceptable.

As to the integrity of the religious aspect, it was the study of Hegel's philosophy that originally alerted me to the danger inherent in an overly intimate relationship of religion with philosophy. In subsequent years this feeling has been strengthened by seeing the history of Buddhism reduced to a logical development of metaphysical and epistemological ideas. Attracted though I was by the affinity with philosophy shown by Buddhism (as compared to Christianity), I have never been able to believe that such was the "real" history of the Buddhist religion.

With regard to the relationship between religion and philosophy in Nishitani, my misgivings have taken an additional form. Nishitani clearly incorporates in his philosophy many insights from Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. But do not these insights necessarily change in nature by being thus transposed? Do not these "eminently pragmatic" insights become "ontologized" in the

process? Is emptiness as the deconstruction of the false views that lead to attachment and suffering identical with emptiness as the first principle of reality?

In addition, I must admit that, accustomed as I am to the luxurious flora and fauna of Catholicism, I have never been able to feel at home in the stark and disembodied religion that Nishitani advocates. I once expressed this unease in the following words:

> I cannot help experiencing the picture of religion which Nishitani… paints as "uncanny:" a religion of the hero, the superman; a religion that uproots one and sets one on the way, but in no sense becomes a home; a religion where the "form is emptiness" is pushed to its extreme without any visible return to "emptiness is form"; a religion of "barren heights," a moonscape. (VAN BRAGT 1992, p. 35)

It could first be remarked that in Nishitani's picture of religion one scarcely finds anything of what scholars of religion speak of when they treat their subject: the play of the imagination, bodily observances, rituals, religious community, "strong" places and times, and so on. But what I most sorely miss as a Christian is the role of the emotions, especially the "positive" ones: jubilation and thanksgiving, desire and love for God. The feeling has always remained with me that Nishitani tends to reduce all religion to a contemplative peak experience. By its very nature or structure, Nishitani's religion appears to relegate all other religious elements at best to the level of distractions. But does not Nishitani thereby forget about the path or ladder that leads up to the peak?

On several earlier occasions I have aired my difficulties with (or lack of understanding of) the notion of emptiness, or at least with the way it tends to be used. This difficulty hampers my understanding not only of Kyoto philosophy but also of much Buddhist thought. If I lay my problem before you it is really in the hope that you will "help my unbelief." So let me try to formulate it as succinctly as possible.

I do not understand how emptiness, in all the negativity of its form and function, can be considered to comprise in itself a perfect synthesis of negation and affirmation, of nothingness and being. It seems to me that emptiness is often presented as (simultaneously) a point of departure or point of arrival. I am unable to view it as either; I can only see it as an eminently necessary and salutary negative move, starting from an original immediate (one-sided)

affirmation and, in "combination" with this initial affirmation, leading to the right affirmation of *myō'u* 妙有, wondrous being. One will object here, I guess, that this is exactly how emptiness is always presented, but I cannot help feeling that the negative sweep of emptiness is often conflated with the felicitous result and made solely responsible for it. To put my difficulty in a rather lapidary form: the notion of an actively merciful, "nourishing" emptiness is beyond me.

Nishitani Keiji has, indeed, convinced me—something for which I will be forever in his debt—that emptiness has a capital role to play in philosophy and, more still, in religion. He made me see that consciousness and freedom are unthinkable without it; that only emptiness can ensure the newness needed for history and the "absoluteness" of the individual beyond genus and species; and that the central mysteries of Christianity—creation, the forgiveness of sins, death-resurrection, and incarnation with its "*kenōsis*"—cry out for it as an interpretative category. I am thus convinced that Nishitani's thought could be enormously salutary for Christian theology. However, a "solo performance" of emptiness is less than convincing for me. Nishitani has taught me to appreciate emptiness as a principle that breaks through the "totality" of world and history, but I cannot accept it insofar as it becomes, or is presented as, itself the totality.

Nishitani's thought (along with Kyoto-school philosophy in general and, indeed, the Buddhist Mahāyāna thought it draws from) is susceptible to the criticism that it is unable to come down again to concrete, everyday reality (especially social reality), and to endow it with sufficient intrinsic value to motivate serious commitment to it, say in the struggle for social justice. With Mahāyāna Buddhism this has been adequately pointed out (by Nishitani himself, to begin with), as it has with Kyoto-school philosophy, so I think it is unnecessary for me to further belabor the point. Could it be that the contradictions of human life, once spiritually transcended in the wisdom of emptiness, find it hard to resume their "rightful" status?

Old Mahāyāna lore has it that for Wisdom there is no other over against the self, but for Mercy the other is eminently real; that, for the bodhisattva (the being who reconciles in himself Wisdom and Mercy), Mercy is as determining of reality as Wisdom. Could the problem lie in the (putative) fact that, the ideal figure of the bodhisattva notwithstanding, Buddhist (and Kyoto philosophy) theory does not give Mercy equal status with Wisdom but tends to reduce it to Wisdom, often by the formula "Mercy is 'self and other not

two'" (*jita funi* 自他不二)? In other words, that in the dilemma of the bodhisattva, true reality is put on the side of Wisdom rather than on that of Mercy?

The practical applicability of Nishitani's philosophy has been put into question, for instance, in connection with the matter of human rights. In the article cited at the beginning of this paper, David Little—an author actively engaged in the international struggle for human rights—asks himself how the idea of human rights could be based on Nishitani's ideal view of human relations in emptiness: "What exactly would such a notion of human rights look like? (What articles would the new declaration of human rights include? Why would they be there?)" (LITTLE 1989, p. 186). The significant thing here may be that Nishitani's thought seldom goes in the direction of answering such concrete ethical questions. But, if I may be allowed a little excursus, I would like to use this occasion to put before you a particular bafflement of mine: Why is it exactly that, whenever he mentions human rights, Nishitani does not hide his aversion for the very concept? For example, at the end of *Shūkyō to wa nanika* Nishitani touches on human rights in a way that seems to set the tone for all further thoughts on them:

> True equality is not simply a matter of human rights and the own-
> ership of property. Such equality concerns man as the subject of
> desires and rights and comes down, in the final analysis, to the self-
> centered mode of being of man himself. It has yet to depart funda-
> mentally from the principle of self-love. (NISHITANI 1982, p. 285)

In other texts, human rights are further associated with the ego pushing itself on things (instead of letting things come to affirm the self) and with will, law, and power (instead of naturalness). It is also said that a stress on human rights appears in a society where love has disappeared (NKC 17:83–84). To quote one more text:

> Christianity... stands on the basis of law. It is based on the stand-
> point of will. It conceives of the relationship of God and human
> beings as of a matter of will. When religion is then gradually secu-
> larized, this gives rise to the human idea of basic human rights.
> (NKC 18:191)[2]

[2] Further references to the question of human rights can be found, for instance, in NKC 17:21–26, 84–85, 201, 270–71, 289; and 20:81–82.

In a word, human rights are put squarely in the camp of the self-centered ego. I must confess that I find this hard to understand, since I have always spontaneously felt them to be a matter, not of the rights of one's own ego, but of the "other" ego (Thou).

Where does this difference originate? Could it be that Nishitani basically sees the I-Thou relationship as a symmetrical one? In that case, of course, every promotion of the Thou becomes at the same time a promotion of the I, and true love demands the negation of the Thou (*tako no muga* 他己の無我) as well as of the I (*jiko no muga* 自己の無我). This is clearly suggested by the above-mentioned formula "love is *jita funi*"; this concept is not expressed as such by Nishitani, I believe, but can be detected in some of Nishitani's formulations, such as, "The self itself returns to its own home-ground by killing every 'other' and, consequently, killing itself" (NISHITANI 1982, p. 263); or again, "To be attested to by all things means to drop the body and mind of one's own self as well as of the other self" (NKC 17:36). I submit that the symmetry of I and Thou is a very misleading thing. There can be no doubt about the necessity and salutariness of the negation-relativization of the I, but the question whether the negation of the Thou, in whatever form or phase, can be religiously salutary demands at least a special investigation.

I agree, of course, with Nishitani that human rights are not the final word in human relationships and that love goes beyond the level of rights of self and other. But such love always presupposes the existence of rights, like true peace implies justice.

Finally, I want to mention an uneasiness that I have never been able to overcome in my contact with Mahāyāna theory and with the thought of the Kyoto school, and that may be the real root of all my difficulties. Namely, I always get the impression that in this way of thinking emptiness tends to claim absolute (ontological and axiological) priority over form, the one over the many, identity over difference and, indeed, wisdom over love. There seems to be at work therein the presupposition "that the final ideal, the peak of intellectual, religious, and mystical perfection (all in one) is 'absolute unity,' wherein all division, duality, multiplicity, relation, and interaction have been perfectly and finally overcome."[3]

I cannot really develop this theme here but, from the standpoint of my two

[3] I borrow this phrase here from MOMMAERS and VAN BRAGT 1995, where I treat this differ- ence in basic presupposition between Buddhism and Christianity more extensively (pp. 127–33, 186–96).

basic concerns, I want to make two points. For the East-West dialogue it may be important to remark that, to a Westerner, the superiority of undifferentiated oneness or unity does not necessarily appear as a self-evident truth that can serve as a basis of argument. This shows up, rather paradigmatically, in a reaction to Abe Masao's position by the (former) Chicago theologian Langdon Gilkey:

> Finally, a Westerner, whether Christian or humanist, cannot help but wonder why for Abe any hint of "dualism" is taken for granted as representing an objectively fatal problem for any viewpoint, however different from his own.... The assumption that duality in the sense of ultimate structural distinctions is universally a fault represents an aspect or implication of the Buddhist viewpoint itself and not an argument for that viewpoint. (GILKEY 1986, pp. 120–22)

And for the meeting of Christianity and Buddhism it must be pointed out that the Christian ideal of unity appears to be a "differentiated, complex, and transformative process" of unity; not a unity of total presence, but a unity that is always open to further enrichment by the other (and, finally, the Other). We appear to be faced, indeed, with a basic problem: "What is to be considered as final Reality: Being that finally reduces everything to the same, or Love that does not cease producing difference?" (MOMMAERS 1991, p. 90, note 7).

The Later Nishitani and "Transcendence in the Earth"

The preparation of this paper has been an occasion to renew my far from complete acquaintance with the later thought[4] of Nishitani Keiji. I never found occasion to study this later thought thoroughly, so that my present comments on it may seem rather presumptuous (even to me). But one thing that has long intrigued me about it was the question of whether this later thought shows any notable change or evolution over against the earlier "Nishitanean system." It is precisely this question that I would now like to put before you.

In fact, this question was addressed in last year's (1997) Kyoto Zen Symposium by Hase Shōtō, and my *status questionis* is totally based on Hase's enlightening paper. I had no access, however, to a transcript of the ensuing

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[4] Meaning, roughly, Nishitani's thought after the publication in book form of his magnum opus, *Shūkyō to wa nanika*.

discussion, which may have gone very deep into the question, but I submit that the question is important enough to merit further consideration. My treatment of the question will add to Hase's substantial insights only some random, and probably marginal, reflections. Hase formulated his conclusion as follows:

> In the thought of Nishitani's later years there appears an element that differs from his thought in the early and middle "nihilistic" periods. Here, alongside emptiness, one finds another major pattern of transcendence—namely, "transcendence in the earth" (*do ni okeru chōetsu* 土における超越), a transcendence finding form in what he called the Buddha Realm (*Bukkokudo* 仏国土), the Pure Land (*Jōdo* 浄土), and also the Kingdom of God. (HASE 1997, p. 66)

The first thing this reminds me of is the distinction, found in the science of religion, between "primitive" (or tribal) religions and world (or historical) religions. Tribal religions can be called "religions of the earth": the sacred is located in the primal ingredients of human existence on earth—blood and soil (family and *Heimat*)—and is thought to function there to give those ingredients reality (in the "earthy" sense of stability and reliability). The world religions, on the other hand, might be characterized as "religions of the sky," in that they stress transcendence of the things of the earth and point upward and inward. There can be no doubt that this "sky direction" endows them with an added spiritual depth and potency, but the question is whether they can do without the "earth direction." It would appear that they cannot truly take root in the human heart without incorporating somehow the "earthiness" of the original, primitive religions.

Incidentally, I have always considered Buddhism to be a more typical or radical world religion than Christianity, because in it (at least originally) the transcendence of blood (in the practice of *shukke* 出家, "home-leaving") and soil (in the "homeless" lifestyle) appears in a more central and clear-cut form. Christianity may have inherited some of the earthiness of its matrix, Judaism, that world religion which never cut the umbilical cord with its past as a tribal religion. It may be significant that in the Hebrew scriptures we encounter passages such as the following:

> Faithfulness will spring up from the earth, and righteousness will look down from the sky. (Psalm 85:11)

Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the skies rain down right-eousness; let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth, and let it cause righteousness to spring up also; I the Lord have created it. (Isaiah 15:8)

To me as a Christian it is significant that Hase seeks in the later philoso-phy of Nishitani a foundation for the Jōdo Shinshū concept of the Pure Land (HASE 1997, p. 68), because I have always felt that Shinshū was similar to Christianity in its divergence from the younger Nishitani's idea of religion. Indeed, if it can be said that both the early and the late Nishitani regard the Pure Land concept and the Christian myth to be *upāya* (though this is some-thing that, to my knowledge, he never says explicitly), this *upāya* nevertheless takes on a new meaning in the late Nishitani. Whereas before it had simply been an "expedient" means (basically pure imagination, without intrinsic truth), it now becomes an *upāya* founded in human existence as body and in the imagination as revealer of truth; an *upāya* possessing all the dignity of Buddhist "post-enlightenment Wisdom" and the "reality of Mercy."

As to the dual symbolism of sky and earth (a symbolism that plays a big role in the later Nishitani), it seems to me that the Shinshū thinker and older contemporary of Nishitani, Soga Ryōjin 曽我量深, was also inspired by it when he asserted that the real savior we need is not "the Eternal Tathāgata of Unhindered Light" but the "earthly" Dharmākara Bodhisattva.

> What is truly demanded by actual, present reality is not light in the sky, but the vessel of the Vow on the ocean of real human life. While all of the world's idealistic religions are "religions of heaven," our religion of salvation by Dharmākara Bodhisattva has the dis-tinction of being the only "religion of the earth." (SOGA 1970, pp. 410–11, 412)[5]

And, I think, basically in the same vein:

> The Tathāgata [Amida] is unhindered light shining in the ten direc-tions. Still, when I enter deeply into his breast, I see infinite dark-ness.... I see the Tathāgata as a limitless candle, but...the core of that light is limitless darkness. This darkness is the Original Vow of

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[5] A related idea is to be found on page 288 of the same volume: "The conscious self is only a wave on a great ocean. My totality lies in the unconscious. The faith of Other-Power has listened to the clamor of the unconscious self, adroitly brought it out, and exposed it to consciousness."

Great Mercy, [Amida]'s religious observance. If we consider Wisdom to be light, then Mercy is darkness.... The Tathāgata's darkness is truly the moving power behind his Wisdom. (SOGA 1970, pp. 317–18)

The last question I want to associate with our present problem is that of globalization and the influence it will have on us human beings, especially our youth. A discussion of this problem I heard the other day suggested to me that globalization may reveal in a new way the importance to us of body and earth. Theoretically speaking, globalization can only be regarded as a great gain: it frees human relations from the bonds of time and place; it allows us to transcend the bodily ties of family and neighborhood that we find our-selves in as givens at the time of our birth. It thus seems to go in the same direction as the transcendence of blood and soil found in the world religions.

By means of the Internet, for example, we can now freely choose, world-wide, the people we want to associate with—people with the same interests and projects. However, a serious question remains: presupposing that per-sonal relationships are essential for the identity of the self, will such freely chosen relationships suffice to build and uphold the identity ("reality") of the person, or does not human identity rather demand roots in the earth, in "bonded" relationships that always have an "over against?" Does it not require a synthesis of natural necessity and freedom, of *onozukara* and *mizukara* (cf. NKC 24:309)? Does it not involve what Nishitani once called "to be made to live from the back" (NKC 25:18)? It could be said that Nishi-tani himself struggled with this problem when he asked what it meant to be a Japanese, to have one's identity in the soil of Japan (NKC 25:18–19).

This may be the moment to say simply that I feel more affinity with Nishi-tani's later view of religion—a view that incorporates the earthy elements and "comes down from the peak to the foothills"—than with his earlier religious system. Before analyzing the difference, however, I want to ask the question of exactly what role emptiness plays in this new view of religion. Can we really speak of "two patterns of transcendence," and, if so, what is the relationship between the two?

There may be some ambiguity left on this point in Hase's paper. On the one hand, Hase seems to suggest that a new dynamics of transcendence, different from that of emptiness and in a sense replacing it, comes to the fore in the later Nishitani. "In his later years, Nishitani turned from the problem of emptiness to the question of *nature and the soil*" (HASE 1997, p. 75 [my italics]).

But, on the other hand, it looks as if the same dynamics of emptiness are still at work in the later view, only this time a somewhat differently conceived emptiness, an emptiness "profoundly related to the problem of the imagination" rather than to nihilism (HASE 1997, p. 66); an emptiness not remaining in the sky but descending, as the world of images, into body and earth; an emptiness not simply of the intellect, but an "emptiness within sentiment."

The problem might possibly be reformulated in the following way: Can we still characterize the religion of the later Nishitani as a "religion of the sky," or does the confluence of sky and earth that we now witness oblige us to look for a third term that no longer suggests an ascendancy of the sky over the earth? To reformulate again, for the sake of argument: Is Ueda Shizuteru justified in characterizing this new religiosity as "the smell of the sky?" I find an indication that maybe Nishitani himself would have hesitated to use that expression, in a text in which he compares seeing the sky and tasting rice:

These two experiences are slightly different. Tasting is a matter of the whole body, something that happens in the body. Sight can be said to be a higher sense than taste, but one that, as sense, is not directly connected with the body. Touch and taste, on the other hand, happen in direct connection with the body. (NKC 24:133)

Be this as it may, it seems important to me to clarify, if possible, the relationship between the two modes of transcendence, not only in the religion of the later Nishitani but also in religion in general. If, as I think, there is in the later Nishitani a greater possibility of a real meeting between a religion that starts from emptiness and religions that, like Christianity and Jōdo Shinshū, start from the opposite ("being") pole, the question remains what role emptiness does and must play in Christianity, in a syzygy with its earthy elements.

Presupposing that Hase's description of the evolution in the thought of the later Nishitani is basically correct, there may still be room to ask once more, in general: What exactly happened with the later Nishitani? What prompted him to move to a (greater) recognition of "transcendence in the earth?" And how, and where, does this change manifest itself apart from the direct treatment of Pure Land and Kingdom of God?

If, among the papers that Nishitani left behind at his death, no relevant personal note is found, we shall probably never know what lay at the basis of this change of direction in his thought. As it is now, we can only guess, and guessing is what I am going to do for a moment.

After the appearance of *Shūkyō to wa nanika*, Nishitani may have felt that a milestone in his philosophical career had been reached—that he was now in possession of a system of religious philosophy that was consistent and comprehensible (at least for an audience of Japanese intellectuals with a basic knowledge of Buddhism[6]). He could now, in a sense, "forget" the system and look at things anew from a certain distance. Did the feeling then gradually arise that he had not really been able, in his system, to give Jōdo Shinshū and Christianity the place and legitimacy they had in his "feelings"? Did earlier criticisms of his system now come to show themselves in a new, more cogent light? Or was there some decisive experience in his life that made him see that there was more in reality (specifically religion) than in his philosophy?

We—or, at least, I—do not know, but I must say that I am especially struck by the frequency and the force with which he now stresses the necessity for a strictly individual, very private, conscience relating to the individual self and to human relations. And it could be that he betrayed much of what bothered him and drove him on when he said, "We must grasp the meaning of the Buddha and of Buddhism anew through the problem of conscience" (NKC 17:287). (Incidentally, reliable sources have it that Nishitani once jokingly said to his friend, Mutō Kazuo, "You Christians have responsibility, because you have a self; I have no responsibility, because I am *muga* 無我, [non-self].")

How then can we characterize the evolution of Nishitani's later thought? I have been calling it a "change of direction," but is that not too strong a term? Would a "change of accent" be more accurate? Can we speak of a change in his way of philosophizing? I do not think so, although it can be said that he never presented his new insights in a systematic way,[7] and possibly did not feel pressed any longer to do so.

And where, and how, does the change manifest itself? Can we say that the later Nishitani pays attention to phenomena, or takes up problems, that he had tended to neglect in his earlier period(s)? In a certain sense we might be entitled to say so—that, for example, the many religious "forms" had not really found a place in his system. I think it might be more accurate to say that, in his later years, Nishitani devoted special attention to aspects of reality he had not accorded due weight to in his earlier system. But I am admittedly

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[6] I add this restriction because Nishitani often wanted to add some further explanation to the English translation, worrying that Westerners would not get his point.

[7] The nearest he came to this is possibly the essay singled out by Hase, "Kū to soku" 空と即 [*Śūnyatā* and nonduality] (HASE 1997, p. 69).

vulnerable to the objection that these aspects of reality (mostly those aspects I call "positive") are in fact fully there in his earlier thought, and it is just that I do not recognize them owing to my lack of understanding of Nishitani's system.

This possibility is, indeed, real enough. Still, I do not think that this objection does away with the real question. To put things a bit drastically, I find in the later Nishitani such a new and strong stress on these "positive" elements that I cannot but conclude that he himself realized that, although these aspects may have been logically present in the *soku* of negation and affirmation of his earlier system, it was not right to cover them with such a thick layer of (what at first sight appears as pure) negativity that they could not truly appear in their own "self-being" and could not be recognized as such by the ordinary reader. I have the impression that Nishitani himself suggests something of the kind when he says of Buddhism, "Buddhism is extremely other-worldly.... On this point, one has the impression that this [view and attitude] is somehow insufficient to think human life through in a radical way" (NKC 17:230–31).

It is mainly in the aforementioned stress on conscience that the "raw" individual person steps out from under the cover of his or her circuminsessional interpenetration with all others. Conscience appears now as that part of the self that is not accessible to others ("a closed chamber where others cannot look into"), known only to the individual self (though "open to heaven"); the place of a direct relationship with oneself, of a self-identity, permanence, and independence of the self, needed for its trustworthiness, and thus constituting the basis of all personal relations.[8] In this privacy and hiddenness, in this "each being absolutely alone" aspect of the self, the body plays a big role: "Having a body means showing oneself to others as containing something hidden" (NKC 17:196). In this connection it is interesting to note that, after stressing that "there is something permanent in the human person," Nishitani interprets this something as "Buddha nature" and says, "Without Buddha nature, true human relations do not come to be" (NKC 17:202–203).[9] It may also be noteworthy that Nishitani finds it necessary to have recourse to the term "substance" at this point, and speaks of "substantial (*jittaiteki* 実体的) relations" among persons (NKC 17:219).

Parallel with the independence of the self, the irreducibility of the Thou (the other self) steps to the fore in a much stronger way than before. In *Shūkyō to wa nanika* I and Thou are duly recognized as "absolutely two" on the level of personhood, but the overall thrust goes to the more original and authentic personal-*sive*-impersonal level where the two are nondual, and it is on this level that the real meeting between the two takes place. "On the field of *śūnyatā*, *Dasein* breaks down the total self-enclosure of *avidyā* and goes back to its original Form of the non-duality of self and other" (NISHITANI 1982, p. 265).[10]

Moreover, the relationship of I and Thou tends to be seen as a symmetrical one. "On the field of emptiness, there is no difference between self-directedness and other-directedness" (NISHITANI 1982, p. 262). In the later years, I find no trace anymore of the priority of the underlying unity of I and Thou, although the emptiness moment is still there, of course, as a structural element. Nishitani now stresses that what is needed is an independent "subjectivity that has at the same time a non-self nature (a 'non-ego-like subjectivity')" (NKC 17:193)[11]

> The relationship of self and other is one wherein both support one another at the basic level of being and being. This is truly possible only when each is absolutely independent. (NKC 17:268)

> A true meeting with a person is one in which the other really appears to the self as other. (NKC 17:12)

> The self becomes truly the self in making the other into an other. (NKC 24:93)

And the symmetry of I and Thou appears to be lost. They do not grow together or diminish together; on the contrary, the more the Thou gains in reality the more the I diminishes: "The real non-self way of being is the opening of a place in which the other is accepted in its reality" (NKC 17:12).

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[8] See, for example, 17:45ff, 55–56, 66–67, 196, 202–203, 205ff, 249–50, 256–58; 25: 22.

[9] I am reminded here of Hakamaya Noriaki's contention that Buddha nature does not fit emptiness.

[10] I like to think, though, that Nishitani did not go so far as Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎, who saw the "betweenness" as "an absolute totality in which self and other are not two."

[11] A formulation I am especially fond of. It seems to represent the necessary wedding of the Buddhist notion of non-self and the Christian (not modernity's) notion of person.

It can even be said, I believe, that Nishitani in his later years came to see reality—being itself—as "intersubjective." He extrapolates the real recognition of the personal Thou to the real recognition of things. We conceive of and meet with things in their reality only when we relate to them as to Thous that are in no way reducible to our consciousness but have an independent existence in themselves. "The things that confront us are radically as themselves, in themselves.... Such a quality of things is best expressed by 'Thou'" (NKC 24:111–12). At the same time, "things appear as being essentially interconnected," an interconnection that is now described as "things communicating among themselves" by "language" in its transcendental sense: they express themselves to each other, step out of themselves into the being of the other. "Truth" then becomes "the language of existence" (NKC 24:114–22),[12] and we encounter the strong statement that "the personal is the basic form of being (existence)" (NKC 24:109).

In his new emphasis on the body and the earth Nishitani appears to have become especially sensitive to the "dark," nondiaphanous sides of human existence: the given (e.g., NKC 24:61–66), the fortuitous (e.g., NKC 25:22), and the "necessary" that underlies freedom (as, for example, in the "natural relations" of family and country); in a word, to the reality that "comes to grasp us" (instead of the other way around), and, as it were, "establishes" its reality by being inaccessible to the light of self-awareness, reason, and the predicate, and is attested to only by the body. And something, that surprises one who knows the earlier Nishitani's "aversion" to "power" (and will): he now stresses that the idea of "being" is innerly connected with the ideas of "power" and "having" (NKC 16:183–85; NKC 24:203–207; NKC 25:23). It all reminds one somehow of Tanabe Hajime's struggle to catch "real reality" in his philosophy of species.

With regard to religion, Nishitani's statement that "when it comes to the religious way of being, the matter of the body has a very great importance" (NKC 24:211) seems to indicate a greater inclination to accept the (at first sight) irrational "bodily forms" (image-ing) in religion. It is true that he limits his consideration mainly to those religious "imaginary constructs" that directly imply the idea of "earth," such as the Buddha Realm, Pure Land, and Kingdom of God (in my incomplete check I found, besides these, only brief mentions of the role of community [NKC 18:171–72] and ritual [NKC

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[12] This strongly reminds me of the scholastic *veritas ontologica*.

16:186]). But it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that Nishitani was ready to recognize other religious forms relating to the body in its link with the earth. The role of food and communal eating in religion is, of course, directly connected with the earth as the nourishing ground of human existence (the role of rice in Shinto and the Eucharist in Christianity are prime examples). I can even imagine that the later Nishitani would agree with what Takeuchi Yoshinori wrote about the role of bodily directions in religion:

> It seems to me that in relation to humanity, God, or the transcendent, is indeed "up there," a reality dwelling above, or at least implying something that makes it inevitable so to symbolize it. In my view, as long as a human being is determined by bodily existence, we cannot but think of God as being "up there." (TAKEUCHI 1983, p. 132)

The last element of change in the later Nishitani that I wish to mention may have already been sufficiently indicated in the discussion so far, but here I would like to look at it from a somewhat different angle. I cannot escape the impression that, in his later years, Nishitani "bends backwards," as it were, to explain anew the meaning of some basic Buddhist expressions important to his emptiness philosophy in order to ward off certain common one-sided interpretations of them, interpretations that he may have felt he himself had held to a degree. In the new explanations the stress is always on the point that, although at face value these concepts are uniformly negative, they really express only one pole of a reality, of which the other (positive) pole is equally important.

In connection with the concept of *anātman* (*muga*, non-self), we have already seen how the later Nishitani interprets this term as "non-ego-like subjectivity," in which being a real independent self is just as important as negating the self to make room for the reality of the other. And, in an Otani University lecture in which he investigates the meaning of the Buddhist negation of the "soul" or self, Nishitani declares that Buddhism wants "to radically transcend the standpoint upon which one conceives of a soul. This is different, however, from the standpoint which avers that there is no such thing as a soul" (NKC 24:150). In his subsequent explanation it becomes clear that the *anātman* thesis condemns the usual soul concept as being an abstraction and substantialization of one particular side of the self (a side that is real enough as one aspect or pole: the "inner" side of the self as "a system with a closed

unity") and attempts to restore balance by stressing the other side (the "outer," trans-individual side that communicates with all others "in the earth").

Something similar happens to the Mahāyāna term *asvabhāva* (*mujishō* 無自 性, non-self-being). We may first remark that the later Nishitani appears to feel free to use the term *jishō* 自性 (self-being, own-nature) in a positive sense as expressing a real side of things, the side we honor when we treat a thing as a Thou. *Mujishō* then appears as a negative, counterbalancing, necessary, and salutary move, but not necessarily as the final and all-determining one: "The standpoint of non-selfbeing has the significance of once thoroughly empty-ing the self in its relationship with all things in this world" (NKC 17:33).

Thus *mujishō* too appears as a "second pole" that is not meant to do away with its antipode, for it is repeatedly stressed that it is important to recognize in a thing "a self-like self-being"; "without this, we cannot conceive of a thing" (NKC 24:315–16).

As a kind of conclusion, meant mainly for myself, I want to confess that—provided Hase's picture of later Nishitani thought is basically correct and my own random notes on it are not too far off the mark—I feel much more at home in Nishitani's later thought than in his earlier system. Indeed, most of the reasons for my earlier objections now appear to fall away. There is no longer any "solo performance" of emptiness; due place is given to what I like to call "being" or "the positive side of things"; disembodied spirituality no longer appears as the only authentic expression of religion; it is clear that emptiness does not do away with the reality and importance of worldly things; and human discriminating cognition—though certainly prone to a one-sided view of things that has to be constantly corrected by the emptiness view—is credited with an understanding of at least one true aspect of reality.

From this perspective I feel free to recognize more wholeheartedly the enormous importance that the negative move of emptiness, so splendidly rep-resented in Nishitani's earlier system, has for our grasp of reality, for the soundness of religion (Christianity certainly included), and for our spiritual freedom.

Abbreviation

NKC   *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū* 西谷啓治著作集 [Nishitani Keiji's collected works]. 1986–87 (vols. 1–13) and 1990–95 (vols. 14–26). Tokyo: Sōbunsha.

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Emptiness, History, Accountability

A Critical Examination of Nishitani Keiji's Standpoint

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IN AN AGE WHEN the history of Buddhism is increasingly the subject of scholarly research—indeed, in the entire span of Buddhism's history—Nishitani Keiji deserves recognition as one of the very few thinkers to have offered a Buddhist philosophy of history. His project was to throw light on Western, particularly Christian-influenced, conceptions of history and to present an alternative from a Buddhist perspective. His alternative, moreover, presents challenges to the most basic assumptions of modern secular historians, who long ago abandoned the Christian and Enlightenment conceptions of history. Even the array of postmodernist notions of history that Nishitani did not anticipate are called into question by his proposal. This essay represents my own struggle to come to terms with Nishitani's Buddhist conception of history with a particular problem in mind: the possibility of experiencing the world as a sequence of events and of rendering judgments about those events. I would like to take advantage of this opportunity, the occasion of the final Kyoto Zen Symposium, to think through this issue, guided by our memory of the clear voice that Nishitani Sensei once contributed to these sessions.

Let me begin by paraphrasing a point that Nishitani made as early as the mid-1950s, in essays that would later become chapters in his book *Shūkyō to wa nanika* 宗教とは何か [What is religion?] (NISHITANI 1961).[1] Writing about the fulfillment of time in history, Nishitani writes that historicity is able to realize itself radically only on the standpoint of emptiness [*śūnyatā*], the standpoint of the bottomlessness of each moment. Each individual moment of unending time possesses the very same solemnity that is thought in Christianity to be possessed by the special moments of the creation, fall, redemption, and second coming (NISHITANI 1961, pp. 238; 299–300; RN, pp. 217, 272). "In bottomlessly embracing the endless past and endless future, we

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[1] Translated as *Religion and Nothingness* (hereafter RN) by Jan Van Bragt (NISHITANI 1982).

bring to fullness each and every moment of time" (RN, p. 181). Whether one believes in the events of Christian salvation history or not, Nishitani's point here undermines the most basic assumptions concerning the experience of a historical world—assumptions about temporal sequence and about the relative importance of different events. Does the equivalence of moments proposed by Nishitani allow for any discrimination of value? Can such equivalence account for the experience of temporal events? What do equivalence, and the emptiness underlying it, have to do with history? These are the primary questions that I will develop in this essay.

My first task is to clarify the way in which Nishitani connects emptiness and history. The first part of the essay will attempt to reconstruct Nishitani's argument that historicity is able to realize itself radically only on the standpoint of emptiness. This expository part is necessary simply because of the difficulty of his work. His reasoning is rarely explicit and the nearly incessant excursions into various topics make the connections less than obvious.

Lest my own presentation display the same difficulties, let me mention the steps we will go through to answer the main question he poses. That question appears to be a more generalized version of the above question regarding the possibility of value judgments. Nishitani asks, "What is the contemporary crisis of religion and culture and how might Buddhist conceptions resolve the crisis?" My first step will be to define the crisis or problem and describe its nature. That will involve some explanation of the problem as a historical phenomenon. Then we will need to show how emptiness might resolve the problem. Those steps will require a connection between the conceptions of emptiness, time, and history. I will try to give the explanation in Nishitani's own terms, rather than subject the terms themselves to a critique. In many cases I will have to make connections and supply reasoning that are at best implicit in Nishitani's writing.

After we have reconstructed Nishitani's problem and solution, we will be in a position to examine my questions more explicitly. This part will offer a critique and will review some related critical treatments of Nishtani's work. My own critique attempts not only to point out a shortcoming in Nishitani's account of historicity, but also to identify the basic conditions that I believe are necessary for historical consciousness to emerge. It is only on the supposition of these conditions that Nishitani's account appears to be deficient; but in fact it was my struggle with his account that helped me better identify them as essential to historicity. Thus my statement of the elements of histor-

ical consciousness comes at the conclusion of my essay, and is the product of my exposure to Nishitani's penetrating thought.

Finally, my critique is meant to leave open some crucial questions for further exploration.[2]

A Reconstruction of Nishitani's Project and Problem

What has emptiness (*śūnyatā*) to do with history? Every student of Buddhism knows that emptiness is related to the nature of things: *śūnyatā* thought tells us that there is no inherent, lasting nature in anything. Every student also knows that in Buddhist schools the personal realization of this insight is regarded as part, if not all, of a liberation which today counts as religious (as opposed to, say, political). But it may come as a surprise to hear that the notion of emptiness also relates to history (outside of the obvious fact that *śūnyatā* is an "idea" or product of analysis that emerged during the course of the history of Buddhism). Nishitani's project, however, is not so much to explicate the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness as to address "the problem of religion and science" (RN, p. 46).[3]

For Nishitani this is the most fundamental issue facing us today (RN, p. 46), and requires for its solution an appropriation of the notion of emptiness. The problem itself is both a historical one, resulting from particular developments in world history, and a personal one, resulting from a crisis on the individual level. The name of this problem is "nihilism," which is also the title of a series of lectures published in book form in 1949 (NISHITANI 1949).[4]

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[2] The remaining questions should be investigated through the study of Nishitani's essays written after the original publication of *Shūkyō to wa nanika* in 1961, as well as in general studies of Buddhist conceptions of history. Articles by HASE Shōtō (1997) and Jan VAN BRAGT (1998) indicate the nature of Nishitani's later thought, although, of course, their aim is not directly to examine the question of history. We should note that, whatever new developments there are in the later essays, Nishitani did not alter his fundamental standpoint as expressed in *Shūkyō to wa nanika* when he assisted with and added to its English and German translations as late as 1980.

[3] Paul SWANSON (1996) shows that Nishitani's interpretation of emptiness or absolute nothingness in RN is orthodox Buddhism in its avoidance of the extremes of nihility and substantial being. Like Chih-i's threefold truth, *Shūkyō to wa nanika* offers a middle way. The recognition of the "middle," according to Swanson, "allows for the positive manifestation and even affirmation of the conventional, for the actual living out of compassion" (SWANSON, p. 107). The mentioned recognition would seem to provide a "metaphysical," or better, a meta-ontological, basis for the import of history, which after all has to do with the course of living in the conventional world. As we shall see, however, Nishitani's account goes beyond a basis for living in the conventional world.

[4] Translated as *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (NISHITANI 1990).

Nishitani's thought on the subject was obviously influenced by Nietzsche and Heidegger; like these philosophers, Nishitani sees nihilism as an event occurring in history. Modernity brought about the loss of meaning and values that gave human existence hope, spiritual sustenance, and the assurance that human efforts are not ultimately in vain. Such values and meaning, once supported by the notion of something transhistorical or supernatural, were eventually undermined by the scientific worldview, which depicts nature as wholly indifferent to human concerns. Ironically it urges, rather than obviates, the personal quest for the meaning that even the scientist seeks in the face of his or her own death. Modern science and technology exacerbate rather than alleviate our fundamental need to feel that life is not in vain. Nishitani's references reveal that he has predominantly Christianity in mind for religion, and the European (if now globalized) worldview for the scientific one. His book on nihilism suggests that modernized Japan fell under the sway of nihilism because of its absorption of Western values and loss of tradition.

Hidden behind his treatment of nihilism and the crisis of personal identity and values, then, we can discover the problem of Japanese national self-identity and values. The problem of nihilism, as Nishitani assumes it, definitely has its political side, although it encompasses more than Nishitani's own political crisis or that of his country. Let me indicate why, keeping in mind my objective to describe how both nihilism and its solution are historical.

In the context of his career, this problem might appear to be one urged upon him by the ravages of war, after the devastation and defeat of his country. During the war Nishitani participated in dialogues in which he proposed that Japan's mission was to awaken the world to a global, non-Eurocentric standpoint. Whether and to what extent Nishitani failed to recognize just how Japan-centered his vision was, is a question that has been explored elsewhere (see MINAMOTO 1995, MARALDO 1995, VAN BRAGT 1995, and PARKES 1997). In any case, Nishitani did not appear to be deeply disillusioned with his sense of the necessity to awaken humankind to an Asian (Eastern) way of addressing and solving the fundamental problem of the modern age. It is mistaken to see Nishitani as creating an apolitical philosophy of religion after he abandoned political writing.[5] His concern with the problem of religion and science both preceded and outlived his explicitly political essays that appeared

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[5] William Haver, for example, holds this view in his mention of "a continuity between Nishitani's wartime writings and his postwar exercises in an apolitical and thereby 'innocent' philosophy of religion"; see HAVER 1992, p. 630.

from the late 1930s intermittently to the early 1950s. This concern was evident even in his remarks in July, 1942, during the famous *Chūō Kōron* discussions entitled *Kindai no chōkoku* 近代の超克 (KC), "Overcoming modernity" (by which was meant "overcoming European modernity"). On that occasion Nishitani introduced a topic alien to most of the participants and seemingly remote from the problem of the Eurocentric worldview when he asked:

> What kind of religiosity will it take to give culture, history, ethics and so forth, all of which entail a complete affirmation of the human, the freedom to pursue their own standpoint, while at the same time insuring equal freedom of activity for the sciences, whose standpoint is one of indifference to the human, and then to unify the two standpoints? (KC, p. 23; cited in MINAMOTO 1995, p. 218)

Although Nishitani would alter his goal of unifying religion and science, he continued to pursue a solution to the global problem of the disparity between ethics, religion, and science—a problem that for him was deeper and broader than the political task facing Japan. At the time, in 1942, Nishitani thought the answer to this deeper problem lay in recognizing the nothingness of the subject or "the standpoint of subjective nothingness," a notion later expressed as the "field of emptiness." In 1942 he suggested to his Japanese audience that when they respond to the deeper problem through self-negation, at both the individual and the national levels, they begin to meet the political task facing the nation of Japan: the "establishment of a new world order," a just and truly global, non-Eurocentric, order (KC, p. 32; MINAMOTO 1995, p. 219). One might object that Nishitani fabricates this link between the deeper religious problem and the immediate political one, but the point is that for him there is a link between the religious and the political-historical.

Just as there is a religious undercurrent to his explicitly political thought, there is from early on a political dimension to his philosophy of religion, and even, it will turn out, to his appropriation of the doctrine of emptiness. Let me cite one example. On the last page of *Religion and Nothingness* he writes that "true equality is not simply a matter of an equality of human rights and the ownership of property," which, he says, reflect the "self-centered mode of being human" that lead to discord and strife. Rather, true equality takes place "only on the field of emptiness." Nishitani's lack of elaboration leaves it mostly to the reader to surmise just how emptiness ensures any political

sense of equality, and I am not going to second-guess him at this point. Similar statements about freedom are slightly more perspicuous and suggest that liberalism likewise reflects only subjective freedom and the self-centered mode of being, whereas true freedom is "an absolute autonomy on the field of emptiness, where 'there is nothing to rely on'" and where one makes oneself "into a nothingness in the service of all things" (RN, p. 285).

We would need to present an argument for these statements, or at least interpret them more fully, if our aim was to develop a political philosophy based on—or should I say undermined by—emptiness. Suffice it here to say that, in the context of the modern problem of nihilism, such statements assume that modernity is characterized by an increasingly widespread assertion of subjectivity, of individual subjects defined by their own wills. This is a problem that has arisen in a particular age of history; it does not merely reflect for Nishitani the relevance of the Buddha's insights for all historical ages equally. And if the problem is historical, so must the solution be. I have not clarified how a philosophy of emptiness might provide a "basis" for a political philosophy, but I will attempt now to explain how for Nishitani it provides an historical answer to the problem of nihilism.

The problem, once again, is that modern humans on a social (and even global) scale are consciously threatened with the meaninglessness of their existence. Nishitani recounts some historical ways in which various philosophies try to "save" history from being ultimately meaningless (RN, pp. 211–16). Christianity offered divine providence and the eschatological fulfillment of history at its end, the time of the second coming, when the transhistorical breaks into and ends the dimension of time and history. The European Enlightenment proposed an increasing reliance on reason and even a historical growth of rationality. Nietzsche imagined a principle of absolute becoming he called the Will to Power (his substitute for God) that explained why life is the way it is but rendered our values meaningful only if we totally affirm the eternal recurrence into which that nonhuman Will empties.

But these and other philosophies, insofar as they offered either a transhistorical guarantor or a prosthetic god in history, failed to ensure the meaningfulness of historical existence, since science and technology undercut belief in any transhistorical reality such as God's providence. The course of history itself—the ceaseless history of wars, for example—undermined the Enlightenment belief in cumulative rationality. And Nietzsche's eternal recurrence did not allow for something absolutely new to be created in time.

Although it is the closest of these philosophies to the Buddhist standpoint of *śūnyatā*, it does not undermine time enough to reach this standpoint of "time originating as truly bottomless time" (RN, p. 216). If we can no longer go above history and human time to establish meaningfulness, we must go beneath them, as it were, and undermine them even more. Time and history, in other words (in Nishitani's words, that is), require emptiness for their realization.

Nishitani's reasoning is less than evident, and the following attempt is no more than my tentative reconstruction of a possible argument. In order for history to have meaning, it must be possible to create something absolutely new in time (RN, p. 212), and only the emptiness of temporal moments can ensure that newness. Let me say why. Ordinarily the temporal moment we call the present is conceived to be constantly slipping away into the past, which is given and unchangeable. The future is at least partially determined by the present, as the present is by the past, but the future is not yet real. In ordinary conceptions, then, the impermanence of the present moment, the insubstantiality of the future, and the conditioning of both by what happens prior to them, all seem relatively obvious.

The difficulty lies more in the conception of the past. If the past is completely fixed in its nature, and if it determines the present, then only a transtemporal factor, something outside of time, could bring anything new into the present. But there is no such transtemporal factor—at least not one recognized in a nihilistic, scientific age. If, however, the past is equally impermanent and insubstantial—that is, if *all* temporal moments are "empty" of a fixed nature—then, first, there is no substantial difference among these temporal moments, and, second, there is no hindrance to incessant becoming, the coming to be of something new. No moment of time can be "contained" or definitively defined. I take this to be what Nishitani means in saying that "time originates as truly bottomless time" or that time "only comes about" by virtue of the "infinite openness" underlying it (RN, p. 222).

There is also a kind of argument by metaphoric association implied in Nishitani's text. It proceeds from his tacit Buddhist presupposition: in a world that emerges in terms of *pratītya samutpāda* there is no first cause and no final cause. Hence all things—not only things in time but also time itself as distinct if inseparable from beings—have no single cause or ground from which they can be derived or from which they originate. They are ultimately "groundless" (though they can still be caused or conditioned in multiple

ways). On this assumption Nishitani can say metaphorically that there is an infinite openness at the "bottom" of time, that, in other words, time has no bottom or ground. He can affirm mythological phrases such as "from the beginningless past" and can say more philosophically that "time must be conceived of without beginning or end." He can reason that each and every present time or "now" is novel, since it has nothing that completely determines it, and is impermanent, since there is nothing that sustains it (RN, p. 219). The emptiness of time entails "newness without ceasing" (RN, p. 221). The crux of this argument is the association of terms like "bottomless" and "infinite openness" with the idea of no ultimate "ground" or cause.

I will not try to draw out any more implications of the claim that the past is no more a fixed reality than the present or future—or more precisely, of the claim that we *should* not view the past in this manner if we are to let time originate and ensure our existence of meaning. (Nishitani's writing frequently slides back and forth between descriptive and normative statements, a style that may have do with his rejection of realism. The stress, I think, is on the "normative," that is, on an implied exhortation to *make* existence meaningful, whether by re- or de-conceptualizing or by the practice of *zazen*.) The claim, at any rate, would seem difficult to square with the idea of karma, which Nishitani treats at length. The idea of karma, he writes, "expresses an awareness of existence that sees being and time as infinite burdens for us."

The sense of inextricable necessity is the negative face of time, whose positive face is "one of creation, freedom, and infinite possibility" (RN, p. 221). In this respect, the meaning of the newness of time is ambiguous: it evokes both negative images of things vanishing like dewdrops and positive images of things moving forward unhindered as birds do through the air. Basically, Nishitani describes karma as an existential plight and not as objective causality. He also alludes to a realization that cuts through karma, and refers to the "field of emptiness" as transcending the "field of karma" (RN, p. 263).

The denial of any objective reality in karma may remind one of Nāgārjuna's analysis, but certainly the existentialist interpretation is different. Nishitani and Nāgārjuna differ "substantially."[6] Nāgārjuna's analysis dismantles

[6] A point of convergence, however, may be found in Nāgārjuna's answer to an objection in which he affirms rather than denies the connection between emptiness and origination: "By virtue of emptiness everything is able to arise, but without emptiness nothing whatsoever can arise." See *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* 24/14, quoted at the end of Nishitani's *Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (NISHITANI 1990, p. 180).

any real referent to the parts of time: past, present, future.[7] It is a challenge to our way of conceptualizing time and reality, ultimately loosening our hold on such conceptions. Nishitani's discussion is also a challenge to our conceptuality, primarily by being so difficult to understand. He presupposes the interdependent nature of the parts of time but undermines not so much our concept of time as our sense—or hope—that something outside time, particularly outside the present, will redeem the meaning of the present moment, will give it lasting meaning. Time and karma have to do with the way we live our lives; they are not merely mental constructions to be deconstructed. Nishitani takes time more seriously, and because he too is a product of the modern age with its acute historical consciousness, he takes the notion of history seriously.

Why does history need emptiness? More precisely, why is it that "historicity is able to realize itself radically" only "on the standpoint of *śūnyatā*"? (RN, p. 217). Nishitani once emphasized to me that he is talking about "historicity" [*Geschichtlichkeit*], not about history as a course of events. He seems to have in mind historicity not in the sense of historical factuality (e.g., the "historicity of the Buddha") but in the sense of the condition for the possibility of history, a sense that includes awareness of historical conditioning. He explicitly refers to historicity "as historical consciousness and as history become conscious" (RN, p. 211).

While we may need a Hegelian imagination to understand what it means for history to become conscious, the notion of historical consciousness is consonant with the Buddhist idea of the conditionedness of all things, i.e., with *pratītya samutpāda* taken as a correlate to emptiness. It follows that a recognition of emptiness could strengthen a sense of historical conditioning and vice versa. This recognition is a sort of subjective prerequisite for the realization of historicity.

More than historical conditioning, however, Nishitani stresses the newness needed if time and history are to be "actual." This emphasis points to another kind of prerequisite, one we might call ontological. It is the same as that for time. Time needs to be empty, each moment needs to be "bottomless" or without a containing ground, in order to move on; history needs to be free of predetermination in order to allow "new, once-and-for-all" events. In the

[7] See *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* 19 (STRENG 1967, p. 205). Nāgārjuna deconstructs time by showing that one cannot take the past and the future as separate; rather they must be taken as simultaneity.

end, Nishitani combines the two kinds of prerequisite in the way he speaks of realization, meaning both recognition and actualization.

The sense of recognition suggests how the "realization of emptiness" overcomes nihilism: it gives meaning to each moment of time, while not privileging particular moments or epochs. (I will come back to this point in the final, critical part of my essay.) The sense of actualization implies that Nishitani's notion of emptiness is normative, and not merely descriptive of (the lack of) the nature of things. We tend to think of the doctrine of emptiness as descriptive of reality, even if it entails a description that empties things of their reality. Empty (of independent, substantial being) is the way "things" (conventional designations) *are*. On the other hand, we acknowledge that, according to Buddhist teachings, release from suffering requires that such emptiness be recognized, even if this eventually entails a recognition that there is nothing to be released. Emptiness is an insight that we, whatever reality we have, *should* attain. A normative dimension is implied in the notion that one should undergo Nāgārjuna's analysis, for example, as well as in the notion of the path (*mārga*) in general. Nishitani's "logic" suggests that something truly new can come about, can be actualized, "when" we recognize emptiness.[8] From the standpoint of people acting in history, then, "realizing reality" is an ideal (and an ideal that, in religious terms, contrasts with the goal of *personal* salvation).

Nishitani's statement that "historicity is able to realize itself radically only on the standpoint of *śūnyatā*" also contrasts sharply with that of another spokesperson for Zen, D. T. Suzuki, who commented, "Zen does not affirm or negate temporal actuality. Actuality has historicity, with which the ultimacy of Zen has no dealings."[9]

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[8] Nishitani does not elaborate on what it means to actualize reality, much less emptiness, but he does give an example of the kind of realization he has in mind in his discussion of humans realizing the laws of nature. We not only discover and recognize such laws; we also utilize them in technology to bring about new things. We are both bound by them and freed by them, i.e., freed through technology from certain imposed conditions. We actualize the laws of nature by making use of them while being bound to them. The mistake is to suppose that we humans stand outside the laws of nature and can simply manipulate them to our own ends, or in general to imagine ourselves (or even "enlightenment") as outside of *pratitya samutpāda* (RN, pp. 79–88). I once asked a Shinshū priest what the Buddhist sense of sin is, and he replied, "acting as if one stood outside *engi* [*pratitya samutpāda*]."

[9] *Zen hyaku dai* [One hundred Zen topics], quoted without a page number in ICHIKAWA 1993, p. 7. Cited in IVES 1995, p. 20.

A Critical Appraisal of Nishitani's Philosophy of History

My reconstruction suggests that Nishitani's philosophy of history calls into question the experience of the world as a sequence of events and the framing of value judgments about those events. We in turn can question whether the kind of historicity that Nishitani affirms can salvage the sense of history that is demanded by contemporary (modern and postmodern) historical consciousness. Today, after all, historians and philosophers do not seek any teleology in history or any transhistorical ground of history. Nor do they worry about meaninglessness if humans bear the responsibility for historical events and for any evaluation of them. What they do seem to require is an account of how humans order the world temporally and find value in it. They simply take for granted that human beings do find a temporal order in the world, even if it is of their own making, and that human beings do expect to judge, if not to be judged. Nishitani seems to ask whether we must, and whether we should, conceive our life and live it according to these assumptions. But what happens to history in his own conclusions?

Let us first reflect on the question of judging importance in temporal order. According to Nishitani, historicity realized would give meaning to each moment of time, while not privileging any particular moments or epochs. It seems, however, that the human reckoning of history does in fact necessitate that we select and privilege certain times and events, ordering them in sequence, often in causal continuity. Nishitani amply appreciates the sense of continuity (in both its negative and positive aspects, that is, burden and freedom, respectively). But his discussion of causality is less developed. He does speak of "historical, causally conditioned being-at-doing [*samskṛta*]" and he fully recognizes nihilism as an event brought about historically, with causal factors giving rise to it. (Nishitani equally recognizes such a thing as nonkarmic action, which he calls "unconditioned non-doing"; RN, p. 271 and passim.) Even if we jettison strict notions of causality in history, as both historicism and postmodernist views of history do, I think we give up most if not all notions of history when we eliminate the privileging of particular moments or epochs.[10]

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[10] Interestingly enough, Nietzsche's eternal recurrence of the same can be understood as a great principle of selection and discrimination. In the discussion following the presentation of this essay at the Symposium, Graham Parkes pointed out that if Nietzsche is enjoining us to act now as if our actions were to recur eternally, then we need to select our acts with great care. Nishitani seems to overlook this possibility and criticizes Nietzsche's idea for precluding the newness of each moment that is requisite for true historicity.

In an interesting article on the ways that Zen history is conceived and written, Steven Heine suggests that postmodernist theories, while closer to Nishitani's conception of history in some respects, also pose challenges to it (HEINE 1994). Such theories consider as problematic the assumptions of linear, teleological time in efforts to define the origins or causes of things in the past and to seek progress in the future. They stress that events are not objective, substantive entities in the world but rather constructions of certain discursive practices. Because of their explanation of the structure of historical discourse, postmodernist theories, more than Nishitani's theory, could account for the historicity evident in Zen narratives (HEINE 1994, pp. 255; 262–63). I think it is true that Nishtani's account of Western conceptions of history does not include postmodernist views, but I think it unlikely that he would be interested in their discourse analysis since he is not writing or even invoking a narrative history of Zen or Buddhism. The relevant question for my essay is whether Nishitani could accommodate even a postmodernist notion of history that does not assume linear time, teleology, or historical causation.

Postmodernist critiques urge the nonobjectivity of events and the relativity of privileging particular moments or epochs, but they do not offer as an alternative a history of totally equi-valent moments. As Heine notes, postmodernist theories reveal that the "primary structure of historical discourse is narration, *which describes events selectively*" (HEINE 1994, p. 262; my emphasis). If events are narrative constructions and not objective realities, then the human discrimination among moments and the need for reflective evaluation are all the more necessary. Postmodernist theories, instead of eliminating the elements of history that Nishitani does, require them all the more.

We have been reflecting on the matter of judging importance in temporal order. The questions I would like to reiterate at this point may be put this way: in offering a refreshing way to understand each and every moment of time as equally new and infinitely open,[11] does Nishitani thereby (in my construction at least) undermine the discrimination among times that is a necessary ingredient of history? Nishitani himself assumes that there is something particular about modernity when he presents nihilism as an historical problem. Is the solution to nihilism, that is, the "standpoint of emptiness," a way of dissolving the problem by voiding the particularity of the modern era?

We can carry our inquiry one step further by considering the question of discerning values in historical actions, moments, and events. The emphasis here is more on the possibility of value judgments than on the discrimination among times. The general issue has been addressed by Thomas P. Kasulis and Masao Abe in their illuminating discussions of Nishitani's philosophy of history. Their examination and criticisms focus on the problem particularly as it is relevant for theologians and buddhologians, but what they write is also relevant to the problem of accountability in history.

Kasulis takes a comparative approach that both clarifies Nishitani's challenge to Christian thinkers and presents a limit to Nishitani's Buddhist view. Kasulis makes the point this way:

> In broadest terms, what Christians would assume and what Nishitani explicitly denies is this—spiritually speaking, some things are more important than others. The correlate of this principle for history is that some events are more important than others. (KASULIS 1989, pp. 273–74)

Christian theologians are challenged to explain how the world can be self-determining or auto-telic, as the modern worldview prescribes, if another, suprahistorical, source, makes some things and events in it spiritually more valuable than others.[12] Nishitani contends that only the spiritual equality of

[11] I have traced Nishitani's equivalence to Nietzsche's notion of the "supra-historical" in *Vom Nützen und Nachteil der Historie* (MARALDO 1995, pp. 356–61). Nishitani himself frequently cites Zen literature to relate the equivalence and equal appreciation of all moments: Yun men's "Every day is a good day" (RN, p. 182); Dōgen's "Every morning the sun ascends in the east, every night the moon descends in the west. Clouds retreat, the mountain bones are bared, rain passes, the surrounding hills are low.... Cocks crow at four in the morning" (RN, p. 188); and Hakuin's "Yesterday at dawn I swept the soot of the old year away. Tonight I grind and knead flour for the New Year's sweets. There is a pine tree with its roots and an orange with its leaves. Then I don new clothes and await the coming guests" (RN, p. 217). To the last verse he comments, "Hakuin's

words are enough to give us a glimpse of how radically *actual* time is in Buddhism."

[12] My paraphrase of points that Kasulis makes on pages 276–77. Kasulis notes that process theologians with their systematic hierarchies and Karl Rahner with his levels of explication in religious symbols address similar problems independently of Nishitani's challenge, but that current theological dialogue would be greatly enriched by a direct confrontation with it. It seems to me, however, that for most Christian thinkers the world or reality is precisely not auto-telic, but rather the world (or the human spirit, at least) is given purpose by a higher order and teleology that orients it. Although it may seem that "postmodern" theology disillusions us of this orientation, someone like Rahner would contend that the differentiation between salvation history and ordinary history is precisely what is needed to establish a standpoint for judging a history that includes events like the Holocaust. On the difference between salvation history and ordinary history, see the section "The history of salvation and revelation as coextensive [not identical] with the whole of world history" in RAHNER 1989.

all things, by virtue of their true emptiness, allows reality to be self-determining; yet his view cannot account for the orientation that lets some things count as intrinsically more valuable than others. This criticism of Nishitani could, and I hope will, be pursued by thinkers investigating the question of an ethics based on *śūnyatā*. In this essay, however, my focus is on whether it makes sense at all to speak of history, and historical accountability, if no events are more important than others.

Masao Abe raises a similar question in his explication of Nishitani's philosophy of history, but attempts to show in the end that *śūnyatā* can account for a difference in values. He notes that for Nishitani the origin of time and history lies in the infinite openness of the absolute present. Abe goes on to ask:

> Since [Nishitani's] standpoint is so strongly absolute-present oriented... do not his ontology and view of history tend to be weak in terms of an axiological approach (value judgment)? (ABE 1989, p. 291)[13]

Abe finds that axiology, or the study of values, is underdeveloped in Nishitani's identification of *is* and *ought* (see RN, p. 195):

> In my view, however, the standpoint of *śūnyatā* must be realized not only ontologically but also axiologically. This means that the identity of *being* and *ought to be* of all phenomena—this is a *conditio sine qua non* for the realization of *śūnyatā*—must be realized by including a possibility of *will not do* although *ought to do*. (ABE 1989, p. 297)

Abe finds ultimately that the *equality* of things and the *distinctness* of things are both preserved in *śūnyatā*. He claims that distinctness entails axiological judgment, and that therefore the standpoints of ontology and axiology go together. In his answer to Kasulis, Abe writes further that "each human being is more important in its distinctiveness than a rock," and the symbol of Buddha better preaches the Dharma than, say, refuse does. We are not told yet why some distinct things are more important than others, but Abe does consider the next question: more important to or for whom? Abe answers, "Each human being is more important than a rock *not to God nor to the human self,* but *to absolute nothingness*" (ABE 1989, pp. 297–98). Talk of importance, in

[13] Abe's criticism elaborates a point made earlier by Hans WALDENFELS (1980, p. 117).

other words, implies what we may call a dative of evaluation, but I do not understand how absolute nothingness can function as a dative of evaluation.

I also do not understand how distinctness entails axiological judgment, as Abe claims. On the contrary, it seems to me that we can distinguish between things without imputing relative values to them. It is evident that difference is required for the notion of equality; think of the concept of equal rights, which entails distinctly different people. But distinctness does not entail a hierarchy of values, a "better" or "more," a difference in quality.

Yet a difference in quality is something that Abe does recognize: humans are distinct from things like mountains and water, in that humans necessarily confront and must overcome the problem of *oughtness* in order to be realized (ABE 1989, p. 298).[14] Indeed, human beings are more important than things like rocks because they can realize the dynamic identity of *is* and *ought*, of the ontological and axiological dimensions (ABE 1989, p. 299).[15] But Abe's suggestion implies that the problem of "*will not do* although *ought to do*" exists precisely on the standpoint of will. In Nishitani's terminology, it is the field of consciousness, not of *śūnyatā*, that would account for a discrimination of values, an axiology. Yet the field of consciousness, the standpoint of will, is precisely what must be overcome if humans are to realize their suchness. To take *oughtness* as a problem, and *will* as a mode of being that must be overcome, is to say that values are not basic, that the axiological dimension itself must be overcome.[16] Talk of its identity with the ontological dimension turns out to be otiose, and my original conundrum reappears. It would seem that,

[14] Neither Abe nor Nishitani allude to the Buddhist mythology of the six realms of transmigration, the *rokudō* 六道, in which humans are envisaged as the only beings capable of aspirating to enlightenment. Abe might suggest that this is because only humans are confronted with moral choice.

[15] Thus to awaken to one's own suchness by overcoming the problem of *oughtness*, Abe writes, is simultaneously to awaken to the suchness of mountains, waters, rocks and plants. Dōgen writes differently, however: it is not that humans awaken to the suchness of all things, but rather that "the world and all sentient beings in it are awakened at the same time." "If we examine the matter closely, was it the layman [Su Tung p'o] who awakened, or was it the mountains and streams that awakened?" "If you yourself, who are the valley streams and mountains, cannot develop the power that illuminates the true reality of the mountains and valley streams, who else is going to be able to convince you that you and the streams and mountains are one and the same?" Adapted from the translation of *Keisei Sanshoku* by Francis Dojun COOK (1978), pp. 106, 103, 114.

[16] Abe writes of overcoming not only the problem of karma (as understood in Buddhism) but also of original sin, by which he means, I think, the consciousness of good and evil. His profound reading of original sin here is reminiscent of Bonhoeffer's interpretation in his *Ethics*.

basically, nothing is more important than anything else (no pun intended). There is, in this view, no history conceived as a progression (or narration) of events with inherently different qualities or degrees of importance. Historical judgments that discern qualitative differences, values, and ranks of importance are rooted in human convention, culture, and caprice. Human choice, human will, is the origin of historical discernment. But this view is precisely the problem of nihilism that Nishitani wanted to overcome. His notion of the equi-valence of all times seems to leave the problem intact. I do acknowledge that the same challenge is equally unanswered by most historical practice and particularly by postmodernist theory.[17]

Where, then, have we come in this inquiry? For Nishitani, the fulfillment of time in history, and the only possible ground for meaning in history, is the emptiness beneath each moment that ensures its absolute newness. The realization of this is the realization of historical reality. Does the realized human being simply appreciate a rock as a rock, and a person as a person, that is, a being confronted with decisions? Does such appreciation itself require a discrimination of values, over and above a discernment of distinctness among equal but different things? Does any historicity (that is, historical consciousness and history become conscious) require not only distinctness but also connection, and not only equivalence but also evaluation?

Conclusion: Three Elements Necessary for Historical Consciousness, and Three Questions that Remain

My essay has made the following points regarding the significance of newness for Nishitani's conception of history:

1) In order for history to have meaning, it must be possible to create something absolutely new in time (RN, p. 212).
2) History needs to be free of predetermination in order to allow "new, once-and-for-all" events.
3) Newness is needed if time and history are to be "actual."
4) The emptiness of time entails "newness without ceasing" (RN, p. 221).
5) The fulfillment of time in history, and the only possible ground for

[17] For Jean-François Lyotard, the preeminent theorist of the postmodern condition, the challenge appears in the form of the *differend*, or disparity, in rules of judgment, precisely when judgment is most called for—for example, in defining the victims of the Jewish Holocaust of this century (LYOTARD 1988).

meaning in history, is the emptiness beneath each moment that ensures its absolute newness.

I have criticized this conception for leaving unclarified the possibility of seeing historical times and events in sequences and as connected to one another, and for precluding a qualitative discrimination of different times and events. Such a criticism becomes cogent, however, only if those missing elements are essential to the emergence of true historicity. The challenge of coming to terms with Nishitani's standpoint leads necessarily to the task of identifying the elements that are essential to historical consciousness.

At the end of my examination, three such elements have become apparent: historical memory, storytelling, and accountability. In order for a sense of history to emerge, we must be able to retain the past in the present and to anticipate a future. This sort of retention and anticipation do not presuppose that time is linear; but they do require a discrimination of what has happened from what is happening and what might happen, as I elaborate in the last section of this essay. They require a retrieval of the past, as does the second element I have identified. In the activity of storytelling we give an account of the present in terms of the past, and toward the future; we thus lend a sense of continuity to human life. To the extent that our accounts recognize responsibility, that we hold ourselves accountable, our futures remain open. Insofar as we recognize that the present is the way it is because of our actions in the past, we can recognize the possibility of different futures. Fatalist views do not allow for historical consciousness.

How does it fare with Nishitani's view? First, where is the past retained, the future anticipated, in his conception? Secondly, where is there room for a sense of accountability, particularly where the field of karma, the effects of the past, is broken through? And thirdly, even if emptiness does not produce, or provide for, responsibility, we may ask what responsibility looks like from the standpoint of emptiness. These are the questions that remain. But the element of absolute newness that Nishitani names may be reconciled with the possibility of history in a kind of account that he did not anticipate, a phenomenological account.

We may find support from Husserl's phenomenology for the connection between the newness of each moment and the possibility of history. Historical memory is the point of convergence here. Both Husserl and Nishitani would, I think, agree that historicity requires that a sense of the past be

retained in the present.[18] Phenomenologically speaking, historical consciousness of the past requires that a *present* consciousness recognize the past precisely *as* past, and not as something presently being experienced. This holding of the past in the *present* moment of consciousness is what we call remembering. The memory of something past is a kind of repetition of the past experience, however partial and perspectival that repetition might be. What is remembered *as* past is held over against a stream of present consciousness, in order to be recognized precisely as past. The ever-present stream itself is never repeated; it is ever new. In other words, to have a sense of history, and of events as past, a retention or recollection of a part of conscious life must be layered on a temporal flow of unrepeated experience.[19] The unrepeating, living flowing present is the dimension that may be akin to Nishitani's idea of "newness without ceasing."

Valuing, like remembering, is a mode of consciousness that for Husserl requires a layering. In the case of valuing, an object or event is perceived in a way that adds to its merely sensual presence. Taking an object or event as valuable is not necessarily a second act, added after the first act of apprehension; the event or object can be immediately experienced with or without the valuing act. I have suggested that historical consciousness goes beyond indiscriminate historical memory by assessing relative values to events. The problem with Nishitani's conception of historical consciousness would then be that it seems to acknowledge only indiscriminate historical memory.

We may recall case 6 in the koan collection called the *Biyanlu* (Jap., *Heki-ganroku* 碧巖録 [Blue cliff record]) to illustrate the problem. Unmon says to the monks, "I don't ask you about before the fifteenth day; try to say something about after the fifteenth day." Unmon himself answers for everyone: "Every day is a likeable day" (adapted from CLEARY and CLEARY 1978, p. 37). After Unmon's *question* acknowledges a consciousness of succession in time, as well as a valuing of the special time that is the fifteenth of the month, when the moon became full, and the days leading up to this were increasing in

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[18] Nishitani makes this assumption explicit in an earlier essay, in 1949, "Hihan no ninmu to fashizumu no mondai" 批判の任務とファシズムの問題 [The duty to criticize and the problem of fascism]. There he writes that "the recent war must become a real question for us today. Otherwise we will not be able to think authentically about the present situation. In this sense, that past is a problem of the present" (NKC 4:461).

[19] This rough description of the phenomenology of memory is adapted from the account of Robert SOKOLOWSKI (1974, p. 155). The application to history is my own.

importance, Unmon's *answer* brings the focus back to the unrepeatable, ever-new present, day after day equally good. Taken alone, the phrase "every day is a likeable day" transcends historical consciousness. But taken together the question and answer present the two sides of historical memory: the recalled past (and anticipated future), and the unrepeatable present. Moreover, his past (and anticipated future), and the unrepeatable present. Moreover, his answer, which transcends valuing, is given only after the question sets up the expectation of value. Does Nishitani's account of emptiness and history bypass our positing of value, and give only one side of the story?

Abbreviations

KC   *Kindai no chōkoku* 近代の超克 [Overcoming modernity]. Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1979.

NKC   *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū* 西谷啓治著作集 [Nishitani Keiji's collected works]. 1986–87 (vols. 1–13) and 1990–95 (vols. 14–26). Tokyo: Sōbunsha.

RN   Van Bragt, Jan. *Religion and Nothingness*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

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The Problem of the Other in Self-Awareness

Hase Shōtō

IN THE PRESENT PAPER I would like to consider the significance of the philosophy of Nishida and Nishitani for contemporary thought via an examination of the "problem of the Other." Nishida—whose thought will form my chief area of concern—placed the problem of self-awareness (*jikaku* 自覚) at the foundations of his philosophical thinking, and his thought deepened and matured with this problem as its core. But what place does "the Other" have in the notion of self-awareness?

I have taken this issue as my focus of concern because "the Other" has become a major issue in contemporary thought, and I would like to explore the way in which Nishida's thought casts light on this problem. Such an exploration, moreover, provides us with a means of situating Nishida's philosophy in contemporary streams of thought. A similar concern seems to inform the position of such scholars as Nakamura Yūjirō 中村雄二郎, who base their criticism of Nishida's philosophy on its alleged failure to treat the problem of the Other. This view—no doubt influenced by contemporary movements in philosophical thought—appears at present to form the general consensus on Nishida's position, among both scholars who are critical of Nishida's philosophy and those who are sympathetic.

In section 1 I will first review the two reasons for turning our attention to the problem of the Other in Nishida mentioned above. I will then pursue the question of precisely where it is that the Other becomes a problem for us, that is, where it is that we encounter the Other. In section 2 I will take up the problem of the Other in self-awareness through an investigation of Nishida's treatment of this subject.

Section 1: The Contemporary Problem of Subjectivity

A recent trend in contemporary philosophical thought is the reemergence of concern with the subject, an issue that had been de-emphasized under the influence of structuralist and poststructuralist thought. The subjectivity

emerging anew is not, however, the autonomous subjectivity of modernity, but rather the ethical subjectivity treated in relation to the problem of the Other (as, for example, in the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas). Let us consider the conditions under which the problem of ethical subjectivity arose in contemporary thought.

The topic of subjectivity occupied the central place in modern philosophy—the subject as the ego or self was placed at the very foundations of all philosophical questions regarding the basis of knowledge, certainty, and action. This led to faith in the autonomous human being who rationally judges and acts. This human autonomy and subjectivity functioned as a principle in the formation of modern society and culture.

Questions regarding this subject did not fade away, however. Rather, they grew sharper and more thoroughgoing in existentialist philosophy, so that gradually the subject lost vitality, like a tree that remains standing even as its life-force ebbs away. Then one day it vanished from the stage of philosophy. The climate of philosophy had undergone an abrupt change, a change that crystallized the day the structuralist anthropology of Lévy-Strauss criticized Sartre's existentialism, leading to the replacement of existentialism with structuralism. The main point of the criticism was that, even prior to their conscious shaping through the efforts of the human subject, human culture and society were regulated by structures in the unconscious.

Structuralism held that the investigation of the structures harbored in the depths of the unconscious could explain and elucidate human action on a deeper level than could the examination of the conscious efforts of individuals. It took as its main terms not consciousness and subjectivity but the structures hidden within such domains as social structures, languages, and the unconscious. Viewing consciousness and culture as expressions of these structures, it undermined the existentialist stance of creative action and history.

Structuralism effected what might be called a methodological and epistemological revolution in the realm of knowledge, but the negation of modern anthropocentrism and subjectivity was not accomplished by the power of structuralism alone. Portents of the collapse of modern subjectivity were already present in the nihilism of Nietzsche, whose proclamation that "God is dead" indicated the hollowing out of the foundations of anthropocentrism and idealism. The "death of the subject," in Foucault's expression, brought on the collapse of the cathedral of this hollowed-out subjectivity, and was the final settling of accounts foretold in Nietzsche's writing.

The process from Nietzsche to Foucault may be described as follows. The modern subject, full of self-confidence, was gradually infused at its core with doubt and emptiness through the influence of nihilistic thought, and as this poison circulated, the subject gradually lost its self-confidence. Then, when partial paralysis had set in, structuralist philosophy arrived on the scene and proclaimed the death of the subject, uprooting and replacing the philosophy of subjectivity.

Poststructuralism denies the independence of the subject, but to the extent that it recognizes the working of the subject as a node of structure it is the critical successor of structuralism. The position of the subject is not completely denied. The deconstruction asserted by poststructuralism is an attempt to grasp, in the unconscious, the social structures that provide for consciousness and self-understanding, then to jar and deconstruct those structures so that the human possibilities which until then had been suppressed and distorted at the base of the structures might be exposed and brought to consciousness.

Poststructuralist philosophy differs from structuralism in this respect, and possesses a practical, subjective character. The salient characteristic of poststructuralist thinking, however, is a kind of scientism that maps a centripetal direction into the self and grasps the self through something external, and in this it continues the basic line of thinking of structuralism. Structuralism, because it remains a mode of reflection that reaches an end in the external, does not enable human beings to make a genuine return to the self and thereby attain the self-certainty indispensable to their existence—a failing that was revealed by hermeneutical philosophy. Poststructuralist thought labeled as "logocentrism" the standpoint of the self-confident modern subjectivity, and attempted to undermine it by indicting the violence that it harbored and by liberating the various possibilities that it suppressed. For its part, however, poststructuralism lacked the means for forming a self out of those potentialities and therefore could not save the self set adrift by the loss of certainty. Indeed, it increased even more the self's diffusion, so that the degree of nihilism was increased.

What remained after the collapse of the self-assured subjectivity of modernity was the impoverished and wretched contemporary self—a self that embraces self-disintegration, a self that is bereft of harmony, a self that holds in its depths the hollowness of nihility. It is not the subject as a self-confident and unperishing existence, but as a disconsolate existence shivering with cold

and running about in search of heat and light. It is the subjectivity that cannot be called subjectivity—Emmanuel Lévinas describes it with the term "vulnerability" (*vulnérabilité*); Paul Ricoeur grasps it as the "rent or lacerated cogito" (*cogito brisé*); Simone Weil calls it "anonymous matter" (*matière anonyme*).

It was religion that first discerned the bankruptcy of the modern subject. Religion did not, however, put to rest the questions directed toward the subject, but rather asked them from a different angle. What was requested of the bankrupt subject was no longer the "formation of a foundation"; rather, religion sought anew that which blows breath into the self, that which brings life to the self at its very roots. Questions of this type, in going beyond philosophy and its search for a beginning or foundation, made inevitable a return to what may be called a point prior to philosophy. Already the subject, when considered as the basis of the life of the self, is not in the self and must be looked for outside. What such a subject is faced with is the problem of the Other.

It is this type of subjectivity that is at issue after the collapse of the modern subject and the passing of nihilism and structuralism—a subjectivity that has its basis in the Other which transcends the self. This kind of subject apprehends the self as standing in interaction with, or in response to, the Other. It is subjectivity as response (or responsibility), subjectivity as an ethical subjectivity, that has come to be an issue in contemporary currents of thought. Ethics in this case is not simply one branch of philosophy but functions as the source of philosophical knowledge; it is ethics as primary philosophy.

Although the problem of the Other in contemporary thought has emerged against this backdrop, ethical subjectivity of this type is not new but has been pursued since ancient times as the fundamental philosophical issue of the quest for the good. Thus it is not unrelated to the philosophy of Nishida and Nishitani—indeed, it is possible to say that it occupies a central place in their thought. The issue of ethical subjectivity is addressed as the problem of self-awareness by Nishida and deeply linked to the problem of "the subject at its source" (*kongenteki shutai* 根元的主体) by Nishitani. Hence, in order to explore the significance and the possibilities that the philosophies of Nishida and Nishitani hold for the present, it is important to delve into the problem of how ethical subjectivity is grasped in their thought, and of how their philosophy clarifies this issue.

For Nishida, self-awareness was fundamentally apprehended in the interrelationship with the Other. He grasped self-awareness not as seeing the self

in the self, but as seeing the Other at the foundations of the self. In this sense, Nishida states that self-awareness possesses a social dimension. The investigation of the structure of this self-awareness was his chief concern in his late article "Watakushi to nanji" わたくしと汝 [I and thou] (1932) and in his last essay, "Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan" 場所的論理と宗教的世界観 [The logic of *topos* and the religious worldview] (1945).

The ethical subjectivity in contemporary philosophy is the subjectivity unfolded toward the Other in the form of responsibility (response). In Nishitani's words, the modern subjectivity is one that "breaks through its bottom" and undergoes a fundamental transformation. In *Kongenteki shutaisei* 根元的主体性 [Subjectivity at its source] (1940), he points out that where the bottom of this modern subjectivity is broken through, a "bottomless subjectivity" (*datteiteki shutaisei* 脱底的主体性) opens forth. While Nishitani's "subjectivity at its source" possesses a deep continuity with the ethical subjectivity of contemporary thought, it also includes a divergent element. Future investigations of what these two conceptions have in common and how they diverge may help illuminate the present philosophical significance of Nishitani's thought.

Nakamura Yūjiro's Critique of Nishida

Next let us consider the criticism of Nishida's philosophy by Nakamura Yūjirō (NAKAMURA 1997a and 1997b). Nakamura asserts that Nishida does not take up the problem of the Other, but the point of this criticism in fact lies elsewhere: it is to criticize Nishida's philosophy in relation to the Aum incident. A summary of the argument is as follows.

In the religiosity of the Japanese, the notion of sincerity (*shisei* 志誠) is dominant, and the permeation of the notion of sincerity in the hearts of the Japanese is the wellspring that gave rise to the Aum incident:

> This is because when sincerity (*makoto* 誠, *shisei*) is absolutized as a moral value, it is not impossible that, for its sake, lying or even murder becomes permissible. I have come to believe that there exists latently in the social life of the Japanese people a morality or mentality that considers it permissible, for the sake of "sincerity," to lie or commit murder.... At times in this chapter [chapter 3, "Zen" 善 [Good] of *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 (An inquiry into the good)], Nishida noticed that sincerity was placed as the highest

moral value, and considered this to be extremely problematic. (NAKAMURA 1997b, p. 20)

Nakamura discovers sincerity (*shisei*) at the crux of Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū*. He links the Aum incident, the religious mentality of the Japanese, and the fundamental nature of Nishida's philosophy through this concept, interpreting it in a rather distorted manner for the purpose of discrediting Nishida's philosophy.

My aim here is not to respond to Nakamura's rather arbitrary logic, but to examine his assertion that in Nishida's philosophy "there is no treatment of the problem of the Other." I will conduct my critique of Nakamura's views from the standpoint of the questions "Precisely where does the Other exist?" and "Where is it that we encounter the Other?"

Nakamura states that Nishida's philosophy is deficient because of its failure to treat the problem of the Other; he claims, furthermore, that this failure is related to a systemic inadequacy. This criticism implies that Nishida's philosophy stands upon the concept of "sincerity," and that because of this it is subjective and lacks the "objective spirit" seen in Hegel and the "structure" present in structuralism. However, that Nishida's philosophy lacks a treatment of the problem of the Other and that it is systemically inadequate are quite different matters. Although it is unlikely that Nakamura regards them as the same, he does not seem to realize that they are in fact utterly unrelated. We must ask whether it is indeed the case that the Other may be found in the objective spirit, in structure, or in system. Precisely where does the Other exist?

It is unclear what Nakamura intends by the concept of the Other. If, however, he takes it in the sense proposed by Lévinas, then the Other does not lie in system or structure, for the Other is apprehended as being either mediated by or crushed under the dominating power of system or structure. Beneath the holism of system or structure the Other is neutralized, and the Other cannot be encountered as the Other. The basis of the Other that we encounter as the infinite transcending our grasp lies beyond system or structure. The encounter with this kind of Other occurs face to face. To put it differently, the Other exists as the Other within the gaze of the subject that grasps it as the Other, so that we encounter the Other with a directness free of all mediation. This kind of gaze is self-awareness. Nakamura asserts that the Other does not exist in self-awareness, but if the Other is not encountered in self-awareness then where exactly would it be encountered?

Encountering the Other in self-awareness does not mean that the Other is known through the empathy of the subject, nor that the otherness of the Other is removed and the Other made into a reflection of the subject. The Other infinitely transcends the subject and cannot be grasped by it. What causes this Other to exist as the Other is the subject that apprehends the Other; the Other exists as the Other within the gaze that sees it as the Other. Again, a gaze of this type is none other than self-awareness. This means that the Other is seen in the depths of the subjectivity as something that has already entered the subjectivity. In this sense the Other does not lie within an objective system; before it can be located within such a system it exists in interaction with the subject. Herein lies the problem of the Other. For Nishida, self-awareness is the viewpoint from which the Other is grasped.

In order to clarify that the Other is a problem of self-awareness, I would like to quote Simone Weil, who indicates the delicate place where the Other appears as the Other.

> In everyone there is something sacred. But it is not that person's character; it is not human personality. It is extremely simply "he," this person.... For me, the sacred is neither his individuality nor the human personality within him. It is he, his whole. The arms, the eyes, the thoughts—everything. As long as I do not hesitate and vacillate endlessly, none of these are injured. If it were the human personality within him that was sacred, I would easily be able to gouge out his two eyes. Being blinded, he would continue to be a human personality as before. For I would not have touched his human personality at all. I would only have destroyed his eyes.... If it were permitted me to gouge out his eyes and it were interesting to do so, what precisely would prevent me from doing so?.... That which holds back my hand is my knowledge that, if he were to have his eyes gouged out by someone, because of his consciousness of having suffered evil at the hand of another, his soul would be rent. (Collected Works 2:454)

That which stays my hand, even if I were allowed to gouge out his eyes, is not the fact that his eyes are sacred. Rather, Weil states, "That which holds back my hand is my knowledge that, if he were to have his eyes gouged out by someone, because of his consciousness of having suffered evil at the hand of another, his soul would be rent." In knowing that "his soul will be rent through the evil done to him" one apprehends the absolutely inviolable or

the sacred, and it is only this knowledge that protects the sacred. We touch the inviolate sacred in this knowledge, and it is in this "knowledge" that the Other appears; it is not that the Other exists objectively apart from it. The basis of this knowledge is not within the self—it lies in the place where I transcend myself at the foundation of the self. This knowing is rooted where I am tied to him in the foundations of the self. In Nishida's words, it is based in "self-awareness." The knowledge established where the seer and the seen are one in myself Nishida calls intuition (*chokkan* 直感), and all objective knowledge is founded on this intuition. In this sense, the knowing that grasps "the Other" is not subjective but objective. Insofar as it is intuition, however, it is also in myself. Animals live unconsciously within this intuitive knowledge through their instincts. To the extent that it is unconscious, there is no self-awareness present. The point where this knowledge is clearly raised into the light of awareness, so that the Other exists as distinct from the self, is self-awareness.

Self-awareness transcends system, but in self-awareness system also possesses an important meaning. This knowledge emerges shining in a human being at a certain moment, but if the person does not desire to continue seeing, in the next moment it is forgotten. In our being capable of ignoring this knowledge and of pretending not to notice it lies the source of all human wrongdoing. For this reason, this knowing must be objectified and fixed within a system, for in this way it comes to possess durability and constancy, and one cannot so easily divert one's eyes from it.

Rights are the objectification of this knowledge. In this sense, rights are like houses; just as a house protects us from direct exposure to the forces of nature, so rights protect us from direct exposure to the various forms of violence that pervade society. Although human beings are surrounded by nature, they exist not directly in it but within society. Human beings in society are endowed with rights, and through this their personalities are formed. As Nakamura points out, herein lies the reason that we cannot ignore the problem of system as the environment in which human beings live.

However, personality in itself is not the Other; the Other transcends personality and never falls within a system. The kind of knowing that grasps the Other as the Other does not lie in a system; rather, it constitutes a self-awareness that is prior to the system. The task of philosophy lies in elucidating this knowing that enables the Other to exist as the Other. The investigation of self-awareness is none other than the investigation of the good—it is not without reason that Nishida titled his first work *Zen no kenkyū* [An inquiry

into the good]. There is a resonance between the contemporary problem of the Other and that which lies at the roots of the philosophy of Nishida and Nishitani.

Section 2: The Problem of the Other as Understood in Nishida's Thought

Let us now consider the problem of the Other as understood in Nishida's thought by tracing it in his writings. As stated earlier, the fundamental issues in Nishida's philosophy develop in relation to the problem of self-awareness, and self-awareness is inextricably bound to the Other. In his late articles "Watakushi to nanji" and "Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan," Nishida treats the problem of self-awareness in relation to the Other, which, as explained above, is understood as the core of self-awareness. On the basis of these two articles, particularly the latter, I will consider Nishida's treatment of the relationship between the problem of self-awareness and the problem of the Other in self-awareness.

THE STANDPOINT OF SELF-AWARENESS

Prior to "Watakushi to nanji" Nishida defines self-awareness as follows: "There are various notions of self-awareness, but as I have often stated, I believe that we must consider it to be the self seeing the self in the self" (NISHIDA 1987, p. 312). In "Watakushi to nanji," however, he rephrases this definition as: "That the self sees the self in the self means that the self sees the absolute Other in the self, and further, that the absolute Other is none Other than the self" (NISHIDA 1987, p. 312).

In other words, "seeing the self" in the self is understood anew as seeing "the absolute Other" in the self. Since Nishida takes the oneness of thing and I as intuition, the seeing "self" is also the "Other" that is seen; either may be considered primary. Late in life, however, Nishida shifted the weight of importance from the self to the Other. The self, in its depths, touches that which infinitely transcends its grasp, that is, "thou." This gradually came to hold great meaning for Nishida.

In Nishida's expression "the self sees the self in the self," "in the self" indicates that which embraces both the seer and the seen—"the universal of nothingness as the limit with nothing limiting it," or "the field (*basho* 場所) of nothingness." Hence, "the self seeing the absolute Other in the self" means encountering thou as the absolute Other in the infinite depths of the field of nothingness; late in life, Nishida calls it "hearing the call of thou."

What, however, is the "absolute Other" seen at the bottom of the self? Nishida understands it in various ways. Broadly speaking, it is that which cannot become the content of knowledge, as it transcends limitation by the self. In this sense it is the content of "emotion and will" (*jōi* 情意). It is what Nishida calls "thing" (*mono*). Nishida, however, advances beyond this to state:

> In self-awareness that sees the self within the self, that which is thought of as the absolute Other seen within must be another person and not a thing (*mono*). (NISHIDA 1987, p. 315)

> It must be, in addition to the absolute Other, that which possesses the meaning of making me be myself; in other words, it must be thou. That which is thought of as thou in relation to myself must be that which is thought of as the absolute Other. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 342)

In this way, Nishida grasps the absolute Other seen at the bottom of the self as the Other person, or as thou.

Thou must exist "outside myself" as that which is independent of myself. To recognize this thou is for myself to die. Further, when I am I through recognizing the thou, I die and yet live in the absolute Other. Concerning this, Nishida states:

> The self seeing the absolute Other in the bottom of the self holds the significance of contradicting that which, in the bottom of the self, absolutely negates the self. In this sense the absolute Other signifies that which kills the self, and at the same time—through the self seeing the absolute Other at the bottom of the self (in that it is indeed the self)—it signifies that which gives birth to the self. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 328)

Nishida restates this as follows:

> When the self sees the absolute Other in the self, through dying, the self lives; in this sense we may say that through recognizing another person the self becomes the self; at the depths of myself there is thou, at the depths of thou there is myself. In this dialectical determination that which is thought of as the Other seen in the self is not simply the Other but must represent the call of thou. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 324)

In this way, Nishida reaches the following conclusion:

> I and thou recognize the absolute Other in each Other's depths and mutually shift into the absolute Other; hence, I and thou are absolutely Other and at the same time, internally, mutually change into each other. I and thou mutually stand in a dialectical relationship. Therefore, I, through my personal response, know you, and you, through your personal response, know me. We recognize the absolute Other in our own depths and mutually shift out of our own interiors into the Other; this is the authentic act of the person in the mode of self-awareness, and in such action, I and thou mutually touch each other. In other words, through the response of act and act, I and thou know each other. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 318)

In this sense, Nishida states that

> the genuine self-awareness that sees the absolute Other within the self itself must be social [an aspect of social life]. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 318)

In this "seeing the absolute Other within the self itself," Nishida discerns "expression" (*hyōgen* 表現), "speaking together" (*katariau* 語り合う), "response" (*ōtō* 応答), and "responsibility" (*sekinin* 責任). These are bound together as one in self-awareness, and he expresses that which binds them together using the word "love" (*ai* 愛). For Nishida, "reality" (*jitsuzai* 実在) is not something impersonal. In the conclusion to the series of articles "Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei" 自覚に於ける直観と反省 [Intuition and reflection in self-consciousness] (1913–17), Nishida discerns "absolute free will" at the roots of self-awareness. From this we see that, for him, reality is personal. Here we must note that Nishida gives a special significance to "speaking together" or "addressing." What is said is not important—speaking without speaking is important. Here, the profound meaning of "expression" emerges. In the depths of speaking there is an emptying, or an exhausting, of the self. There is sincerity. There we find "expression." It is not possible to treat this matter here in detail; I will simply quote several passages in which Nishida discusses the "responsibility" that is grasped at the roots of self-awareness. He states:

> The absolute Other harbored in the bottom of the self possesses the significance of the absolute thou; hence, we feel infinite responsibility in the depths of the self, and it must be thought that the exis-

tence of the self in itself is evil.... Although we harbor nature in the depths of the self, and although we harbor rationality, such thoughts do not emerge. Furthermore, as long we consider the Other seen in the depths of the self as still the self, responsibility does not emerge. However, by the fact that I harbor thou in the bottom of myself and thereby am I, I possess infinite responsibility in the very depths of my existence. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 348)

This "responsibility" is tied to "speaking," and, deeper in its background, is linked to love.

I see you in the depths of myself; you see me in the depths of yourself. If we consider as genuine love the social determination that is the union of I and you as a noncontinuous continuity, then our determination in the mode of self-awareness is established through love. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 343)

Authentic love must be the seeing of myself in the absolute Other. Here, through dying in myself, I live in you. Through seeing the absolute Other in the depths of the self, that is, through seeing you, my self-awareness of absolute nothingness, which is that I am I, possesses in its depths the significance of love. (NISHIDA 1987, p. 349)

From this standpoint Nishida states: "We may consider that in the depths of reality there is that which is personal, and upon the personal, reality is established."

SELF-AWARENESS AND FAITH

As noted above, the later Nishida took self-awareness to be "the self seeing thou as the absolute Other in the depths of the self." Where this takes place, the absolute Other as thou is another person and, at the same time, is taken to be the transcendent or the absolute. Here we must not overlook the fact that Nishida sees the transcendent not outside the self but within its depths. From this perspective Nishida states: "God must always be that which works from our depths.... We see transcendence in our depths." (NISHIDA 1987, p. 353)

The structure of self-awareness that Nishida thus delineates may be said to be, in a sense, also the structure of faith. Soga Ryōjin 曽我量深, in *Hongan no Butchi* 本願の仏地 [The Buddha-ground of the Primal Vow] (SOGA 1933),

understands the relationship between "faith" and its object, Amida Buddha's Primal Vow, in a manner that very closely resembles the structure of self-awareness developed by Nishida in "Watakushi to nanji." Hence, by considering the structure of faith that Soga elucidates, it is possible to cast light on the structure of self-awareness in Nishida.

We know that Nishida read Soga's *Hongan to Butchi*; from a letter he wrote to Nishitani in August, 1942, it appears that he had borrowed a copy of the book from Nishitani and, finding it interesting, bought a copy for himself. He writes: "I find the book *Hongan no Butchi* rather interesting. Where is this book available? Where in Kyoto can books of this kind be found?" Nishida also heard about other works by Soga from Nishitani, and borrowed books by the Frenchman Félix Ravaisson.

It is not clear precisely why Nishida was interested in Soga's book. However, there is something in Nishida's view of self-awareness—"seeing the absolute Other in the depths of the self, and seeing this Other as the self"—that is in concord with the relationship Soga sees between faith and Vow. Soga grasps Amida Buddha's Primal Vow as lying deep within oneself. He states that Amida's Primal Vow, which is the object of faith, is not to be found outside of faith but is discovered within it, and that it is from there that faith unfolds. Soga thus subtitles his work, *The World of the Vow that Faith Unfolds from Within*.

When the term faith is used, people commonly think of the object of faith as similar to the object of consciousness and seek it outside of the self. This, however, is superstition or false faith according to Soga (in Nishida's words, it reflects "the stance of the self of desires"). True faith must seek its object within faith. Faith deepens within the self, and that which is discovered within the self is Amida Buddha's Primal Vow. Soga states:

In short, when faith works facing outward, it is superstition. Contrariwise, to pursue the source of one's faith within is true faith. Faith that seeks Buddha within one's own subjectivity is true faith, and the pursuit of Buddha outside of and apart from the self is false faith. Faith seeks the essence of faith, the basis of faith, within faith itself. Faith seeks the source of faith, the basis of faith as the meaning and the content of faith itself, within itself. Seeking in this manner is true, genuine, and pure faith. The experience of faith as pure is none other than faith itself; faith itself reflects on itself and seeks Buddha in itself, seeks the principle of the Buddha's salvation in

itself. In other words, faith is satisfied with faith itself, and through being satisfied, deepens itself. This is the true evidence of faith, and what the founder Shinran speaks of as the "faith of Jōdo Shinshū" is such faith. (SOGA 1970, p. 233)

Hence,

A person calls to mind the Buddha, calls to mind the Buddha's Primal Vow, calls to mind the Buddha's power of salvation apart from faith. Shin studies, when conceived of along such lines, should not be called Shin studies. (SOGA 1970, p. 235)

Soga poses the question of what genuine Shin studies is, and states that it is to progressively clarify the interior landscape of faith. In other words, religious faith is like a sealed jewel box. It is to confess openly about the box, to open up and disclose the interior face of true faith—what kind of mechanism it harbors within, what it holds inside—with the power of faith itself, with the discernment of faith that faith itself possesses. It is to clarify this path.

Soga further states: "There is, within faith itself, a mysterious content that should be illuminated by faith itself." He declares that this is what is called the Vow. Nishida speaks of this elucidation of the Vow as the content of faith from within faith as "seeing the absolute Other in the depths of the self." He also speaks of it as "hearing the calling voice of thou in the depths of the self."

SELF-AWARENESS AND IMMANENT TRANSCENDENCE

In his last essay, "Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan," Nishida calls the self's seeing the absolute Other in the depths of the self "immanent transcendence," and states, "Religion must always be immanently transcendent." Further, he states, "We must always transcend inwardly. It is immanent transcendence that is the path to new culture" (NKZ 11:461). What is important here is the clarification of the uniqueness of the relationship of self and Other in this immanent transcendence. Nishida expresses it with the term "inverse correspondence" (gyakutaiō 逆対応). This concept is extremely difficult to understand, but we should note that it accurately grasps the characteristic nature of the relationship between self and absolute Other in self-awareness or in the awareness of faith.

Nishida's concept of "inverse correspondence" expresses the opposite relationship from "object logic." In object logic the object exists outside of the self; if I approach it, it emerges in front of me, and if I go away from it, it dis-

appears from before my eyes. This kind of relationship is self-evident and familiar to us, and is one that dominates the ordinary world in which we carry on our daily lives.

However, there are also relationships in which that which is infinitely separated from us is closest to us, and that which is closest to us is infinitely far. In actuality, the world of such relationships is the world of the relationship of person and person, or the world of the relationship of person and absolute Other; it is the world of which it can be said that we are living in the true sense, the world that may be called interiority (naimensei 内面性), the world of emotion and will (jōi 情意). "Inverse correspondence" is the relationship that Nishida sees as governing this kind of world.

The depths of the world of inverse correspondence cannot be reached through even the most thoroughgoing conceptual analysis, so I would like to attempt a view from a different perspective. For example, I believe that one may see the world of inverse correspondence in the words of Nishitani about his teacher Nishida Kitarō. Nishitani states that on the occasion of his departure for Europe he received several shikishi (one-foot square stiff paper cards) with inscriptions from Nishida. Nishida writes:

On two shikishi were inscribed a poem in Japanese and a passage of Chinese verse. The Japanese poem read:

When the flowers bloom
Think of what spring is like
In your Yamato home of Yoshida.

And on another the Chinese poem:

Though apart ten thousand miles
We see the crescent moon over Ch'ang-an.

On two others he wrote:

Nanchuan says the everyday mind is the Way

and

Speak to heaven silently
Silently walk with heaven.

I suppose he chose these last two verses intending them to be maxims for me during my time in foreign lands. But as I think back on them now, they also seem to illumine the spirit of his own philosophy. (NKC 9:44–45; NK pp. 32–33)

At the close of his essay, Nishitani states:

In his later years, Nishida was fond of quoting Daitō Kokushi's words:

> To be apart from one another for millions of eons and not to be distant for a single moment
> To be together all day long and not together for a single instant.

Comparing this to the similar verse, "Though apart ten thousand miles / We see the crescent moon over Ch'ang-an," which he had presented to me some ten years before when I was about to depart for Europe, one notices a deepening in his state of mind, a profound grasp of human life that is very hard for modern Japanese to see and understand. (NKC 9:50; NK p. 38)

These words of Nishitani express the depths of the world indicated by "inverse correspondence," depths that become even clearer through a comparison with the line, "We see the crescent moon over Ch'ang-an." Using the image of the moon, this verse conveys the notion that, though we may be separated by ten thousand leagues, our minds are still in contact. Then the words of Daitō Kokushi break through any remaining boundaries of distance. Nishitani speaks of this as a "grasp of human life." This grasp resonates with the world of faith, of which it is said, "The Buddha's intentions are difficult to fathom."

The concept "inverse correspondence" indicates the nature of the world of self-awareness, and also the nature of the world of faith. Let us consider once more at the world of inverse correspondence, this time from Soga's perspective. Soga, asking himself "What is the summons of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow?", remarks that it is not a voice calling from someplace distant or outside, like a parent calling a child. Soga says that the voice of a child calling his parent in his heart is the voice of the parent calling the child. The vow or aspiration of the source within us is the voice of Amida Buddha calling us. Soga states that, in the world of pure faith, "there is no voice of the parent calling the child apart from the voice of the child calling the parent."

In other words, our "mind of aspiration" or "mind aspiring for birth in the Pure Land," in which we are deeply mindful of Amida Buddha, is "the voice of Amida Buddha summoning us." Thus there is no "call of Amida Buddha"

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apart from our "mind aspiring for birth," and we are left completely alone in a world of absolute solitude. What there is is only my voice, only a tautology. But this tautology is the sole means by which we touch the absolute. Soga states this as follows.

> There is no voice of Amida Buddha calling to us apart from our voice calling Amida Buddha. From a certain viewpoint this may seem an extremely lonely notion. Although I call and call, my parent does not answer. [But] the voice in which I call my parent, who does not know, is the voice of my parent calling me. When we realize this, we are genuinely able to receive the true wonder and preciousness in the depths of loneliness. (SOGA 1933, p. 244)

When we fail to grasp this tautology, we either remain enclosed in an atheistic world or we advance to a pantheistic world. When we grasp it correctly, however, the world of faith—the world of "those whose birth in the Pure Land is truly settled," the world of "inconceivable birth," or simply the "inconceivable world"—opens forth. Ueda Shizuteru states that Nishida's "inverse correspondence" is well expressed in the *myō* 妙 (marvelousness) spoken of by D. T. Suzuki; the inconceivability of "those truly settled" may be called "marvelous." In *Kotoba no jitsuzon* 言葉の実存 [The existential reality of language] (UEDA 1997), he states, "If one speaks of salvation, salvation is not there in the way of speaking of *is*." Inconceivability should be understood in this way. True faith is to genuinely understand this tautology. Soga calls the world that opens forth when faith is truly grasped the "symbolic world."

SELF-AWARENESS

The world of self-awareness understood through the terms "inverse correspondence" and "immanent transcendence" may be said to be also the world of faith, and Soga terms this a "symbolic world," explaining it with the strange expression "the Primal Vow as watershed" or "great divide." He states that "the Primal Vow as watershed" is that which manifests "the Vow of the truly settled."

What Soga indicates by this expression is the connection established by means of a severance. This kind of relationship represents the structure of "the truly settled." Self and Other, the world we live in and the transcendent world, must be joined in such a way that they are separated by a watershed. In other words, the two are not identical—only through being separated by

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an absolute divider is it possible for the two worlds to be joined. Even as we carry on with our lives in the world, we can, at the same time and within this very world, live in a world that transcends this world. This is precisely because the two worlds are divided by a watershed, which which makes it possible for the transcendent world to be reflected in the world we live in. Soga calls this kind of world the "symbolic world." This is not a monistic world in which self and Other are nondual, but a dualistic world that includes "the non-monism of self and Other." It might also be called a "doubled world."

Self and Other, this shore and the other shore, are absolutely divided. This is because the Other, or the other shore, is formless and does not belong to our world. The Other has no form or shape. The Other that we touch and speak to is something familiar, but must not be considered as having form—what we see in the Other is formless and infinite. For this reason, Lévinas states that the visage that we see in the Other is not an object of perception. The visage constantly eludes a form that becomes an object of perception and reflects within itself that which is formless; this that is formless is infinite. The Other is infinite; hence it does not belong to this world.

Lévinas states that the formless infinite descends to where we are and reflects itself in a visage. Since the infinite reflected in the visage does not belong to this world, it appears in this world secretly taking invisible form. It appears in the form of a widow or orphan, in the form of a foreigner. That which is highest appears in the world in the lowest place. It appears in the plea, "Please do not kill me!" Hence Lévinas states that it is the glory of the infinite that, in touching violence, it expresses in its visage the plea, "Please do not kill me," and that in response to this we bear infinite responsibility.

In Lévinas the concept of visage later deepened into the concept of trace. Trace refers to the indication that something not belonging to this world has passed through it. It is the mark of the passing of something that cannot be grasped, cannot be seen, something that is mysterious. Lévinas understands the concept of trace in relation to the problems of time, history, and aging. Time, aging, or the wrinkles of a visage leave traces with us, and these are seen as proof that the infinite has passed by. Lévinas thus seeks to open a path in time connected with that which is beyond time. For this reason he states that "goodbye" (*adieu*) is "to God" (*à Dieu*) or "in God." Lévinas's concepts of "visage" and "trace" were developed in a different context, but they possess points in common with the world that Nishida grasped as "inverse correspondence" and "expression."

The world, however, that Lévinas sought to indicate through the concept of trace is also related to the world that Nishitani speaks of in "Kaze no koko-ro" 風の心 [The heart of the wind] (NKC, vol. 20). The absolute Other (called the *tathāgata*), like the wind that blows in the sky, is invisible to us. The human being as the Other is like this. We cannot reach the wind that blows in the innermost depths of the heart of the self itself. However, the wind that blows both in the universe and in our hearts leaves its traces. In this essay there is a passage that speaks of hearing in the whisper of the leaves of trees in a school courtyard the quiet that may be called the wind that flows through the cosmos. In a different passage Nishitani records the following poem by a fifth-grade schoolgirl about seeing the wind in a single autumn leaf.

> This year again I had forgotten all the same.
> Something forgotten by the wind.
> I had forgotten that it had green color.
> In the autumn leaf there is the color of red.
> In the ginkgo leaf there is the color of yellow.
> I had forgotten the color of each.
>
> (NKC 20:vi)

As Nishitani discerns in the wind, the empty sky as the formless infinite—though it is in a different context—is apprehended within a person's heart as the absolute Other, and from the perspective of the responsibility for protecting it, the problem of self and subjectivity is faced. Here, the problem that Heidegger pursued with regard to the humn relationship with nature is pursued in regard to the human relationship with society. This is the path that Lévinas, who resisted Heidegger, sought to open. In the thought of Nishida and Nishitani these two directions are included simultaneously. Herein lies the richness and originality of their philosophy.

Abbreviations

NKC   *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū* 西谷啓治著作集 [Nishitani Keiji's collected works]. 1986–87 (vols. 1–13) and 1990–95 (vols. 14–26). Tokyo: Sōbunsha.

NKZ   *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集 [The complete works of Nishida Kitarō], 3rd printing, 1978–80. 19 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

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Practising Philosophy as a Matter of Life and Death

GRAHAM PARKES

From the very outset life is at one with death
(NISHITANI, *Religion and Nothingness*)

MY CHOICE OF TOPIC comes from the experience of attending the Kyoto Zen Symposium (the second and second-to-last meetings), and from reflection on that experience. It has to do with the quiet presence here, in this beautiful site, of Hirata-roshi and Sasaki-roshi and their colleagues from Ten-ryū-ji, as well as with the earlier presence of Nishitani Keiji and his later absence. It comes also from reflection on a main theme of the symposium—the place of religion and philosophy in the modern world—with a view to furthering and deepening the dialogue between Western philosophy and Zen thought.

Focus for a narrower theme stems from a feeling of alienation from the profession of philosophy as it is practised in the United States and Europe, and from a sense that this practice is for the most part not authentic. On the personal level it is prompted by an experience of alienated labor (in the Marxist sense), a disconcerting awareness that a split is developing between my work as a philosopher and my life as a human being. This raises the question of what philosophical practice is—or can be—today. We know what it means to speak of someone's practising Catholicism or Buddhism, or practising a profession such as law or medicine, but what about practising philosophy? (The fact that we have a field today called "applied philosophy" suggests that the discipline has lost its connection with life, such that it now has to be *applied* to life's problems.) This topic is, of course, far too large for a conclusive treatment here, and so what follows is intentionally open-ended, consisting more of suggestions for future lines of inquiry than statements of theses or conclusions.

I want to begin by following Heidegger in his emphasis on the need for a step back (*der Schritt zurück*) if we are to make progress along the path of

thinking. The kind of step back I have in mind would grant us a broader perspective on the historical traditions in the West from the context of which a more fruitful engagement with Zen thought might be undertaken. My own efforts in this area up to now, inspired by the work of Nishitani, have been directed toward points of contact between Zen and such modern thinkers as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Some scholars—like Ueda Shizuteru—have followed Nishitani in reaching farther back in the Western tradition to draw illuminating parallels with the thought of Meister Eckhart. But there has not, to my knowledge, been much exploration of earlier Western philosophies in this context.

In the essay "Zur Seinsfrage" (1955) Heidegger advocates the cultivation of what he calls "planetary thinking," a precondition for which will be "dialogue between European and East-Asian languages." But he goes on to emphasize that "neither of them can by itself open up and ground this realm" for possible dialogue (HEIDEGGER 1967a, p. 252 [1958, p. 107]). In his 1953 essay "Wissenschaft und Besinnung" Heidegger writes that every meditation on the present situation must be rooted in "our historical *Dasein*" by way of "a dialogue with the Greek thinkers and their language." He then adds, pregnantly: "This dialogue has hardly even been prepared yet, and remains in turn the precondition for our inevitable dialogue with the East-Asian world" (HEIDEGGER 1967b, 1:39; 1977, p. 158). Some twenty years later in his famous *Der Spiegel* interview, Heidegger, discussing the possibility of attaining "a free relationship to the world of technology," makes a comment about Zen Buddhism that is remarkable for being his only published pronouncement on Zen:

> I am convinced that it is only from the same part of the world in which the world of modern technology arose that a reversal can come about, and that it cannot happen by way of an adoption of Zen Buddhism or any other Oriental experience of the world. In order to think differently we need the help of the European tradition and a reappropriation of it. Thinking is only transformed by a thinking that is from the same descent and provenance.
>
> (HEIDEGGER 1988, p. 106)

As a dismissal of a naive substitution of Eastern wisdom for Western thinking, this passage is clearly unobjectionable. However, the point of Heidegger's earlier (and several later) remarks on this topic is precisely that a proper "reappropriation" of the European tradition would occur by way of a "step back out of that track" and an opening toward an "other great beginning"—

and that at this point in its history European thinking requires the injection of ideas from an *other* source.[1]

Let us simply overlook the exclusivity suggested by the phrase "thinking from the same descent and provenance" in favor of Heidegger's earlier talk of the desirability of a bilateral approach involving East-Asian thought.[2] This would amount to suggesting that contemporary thinking might be transformed by way of a reappropriation and recuperation of neglected features of the Western tradition that resonate with East-Asian thinking. What I want to focus on is the notion of philosophy as *practice*, but after a preliminary digression on the relation of philosophical discourse to practice and experience.

Two related questions tend to occur to Western readers when engaging philosophical texts from the Zen tradition. Is it necessary to have undergone certain experiences in order fully to understand this philosophy? And, if so, is it necessary to engage in certain practices in order to have such experiences? An affirmative answer to both questions has prompted some critics to accuse Zen (and especially Kyoto-school) philosophy of complicity with *Nihonjin-ron*, or of "reverse Orientalism," on the grounds that it is predicated upon particular, culturally developed practices and experiences. Such criticisms seem to me misguided, since for one thing non-Japanese are able (in the United States, at least) to become accredited Zen masters—and there are in any case numerous Western philosophies that are predicated upon a particular experiential basis.

I doubt, for example, whether one can understand the climax of Diotima's discourse in Plato's *Symposium*, in which the lover is finally granted the experience of "contemplating the vast ocean of Beauty," without having had some experience to which these words might plausibly be applied. Or what Plotinus writes about the One, without having undertaken in some measure "the flight of the alone to the alone." Or the moment as what Kierkegaard

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[1] On the necessity for a *Schritt zurück*, see Heidegger's open letter of 1963 to Kojima Takehiko: "The step back does not mean a flight of thinking into bygone ages, and least of all a reanimation of the beginnings of Western philosophy.... The step back is rather the step out of the track in which the progress and regress of *Bestellen* take place" (BUCHNER 1989, p. 224). In the 1959 essay "Hölderlins Erde und Himmel" he writes of the "great beginning" of Western thought as follows: "It is opening itself to the few other great beginnings that belong with their Own to the Same of the beginning of the infinite relationship, in which the earth is included" (HEIDEGGER 1958–60, p. 36).

[2] These are discussed in the section "Ambivalence over East-West Dialogue" of my essay, "Rising Sun over Black Forest" (PARKES 1996).

calls "an atom of eternity within time" without having enjoyed some extraordinary temporal experience. Or Heidegger's discussion of *das Nichts* without having undergone the experience of *Angst*. In all of these cases, it seems that some special kind of experience is necessary—or an extremely robust imagination at the very least—for a full appreciation of the relevant philosophical ideas. In the case of Heideggerian *Angst*, there is nothing one can do to induce the experience (except be "open" to it); but nearer the beginnings of the Western tradition there is a close association between philosophical thinking and practices designed to induce a transformation of one's experience.

While such practices are hardly to be found any more in contemporary philosophy in the West, mainly as a result of its over-professionalization, they were formerly a key feature of a number of currents in the ancient philosophical tradition—especially in the form of what the French philosopher Pierre Hadot has called *exercices spirituels* (see HADOT 1995). In the spirit of Hadot's investigations, I should like to draw attention to some figures in early Western philosophy (between the third century BCE and the second CE) whose ideas and practices seem interestingly comparable with Zen thought. To develop such comparisons further, delineating the relevant parallels and divergences, would be an illuminating exercise that would enhance our understanding of both sides. But my immediate, more practical aim is to recommend to Western thinkers interested in Zen (as well as to philosophers in Japan suffering from a surfeit of speculative or analytical philosophy) that they consider the practices that were associated with philosophy in the Hellenistic period.

In view of the influence on the Zen tradition of the two great classics of Daoism, the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, an in-depth comparison of their ideas with those of the Pre-Socratic philosophers, and of Heraclitus in particular, would be an illuminating way to set the stage. But it is when Greek philosophy becomes established in Athens through the activity of Socrates that the emphasis shifts to spoken philosophical discourse as a vital engagement between two or more persons, and away from the writing of philosophical poems or prose pieces.

Socrates shares with Buddhist teachers a concern with "seeing into one's own nature" and with the right conduct that flows from that insight. In the *Apology*, he defines his "practice of philosophy" in quite existentialist terms: "trying to persuade [every Athenian citizen] to concern himself less about what he has than about what he is, so that he may make himself as good and

as reasonable as possible" (*Apology*, 36b). (It would be enlightening in this context to inquire into the difference between the "reason" advocated by Socrates and the virtue of "wisdom" in the Buddhist tradition—an inquiry that would surely benefit from a study of Nishitani's essay "Hannya to risei" 般若と理性 [*Prajñā* and reason] (1979). In spite of Socrates' love of dialogue, he appreciates the limits of language and emphasizes that a full understanding of ideas must be lived out. According to Xenophon, he once said: "If I don't reveal my views on justice in words, I do so by my conduct" (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 4.4.10).

It is nevertheless clear, in spite of Socrates' mania for cross-questioning pretentious pedestrians on the streets of Athens, that the ecstatic trances for which he was famous served the purpose of balancing this practice with contemplation. Further, his technique of leading his interlocutor along a path of thinking, through relentless questioning, to the point of complete *aporia*, in which the mind has been cleared of all prejudices and unexamined presuppositions, surely has features in common with the "great doubt" (*daigi* 大疑) that Zen masters like Hakuin consider a *sine qua non* of "seeing into one's own nature." Socrates wrote nothing because he had no wisdom to teach: his primary concern was to help his fellow human beings to a deeper and more direct understanding of their own lives.

When we turn to the philosophical schools that arose in Athens during the third century BCE and flourished there and in Rome over the subsequent few centuries, we find the Stoics and Epicureans of greatest relevance to the topic of practice. We face a twofold difficulty here, however, in that a large number of the original texts have been lost—and that these were in any case philosophies that were practised primarily in oral discourse, and only secondarily committed to writing (often by scribes, or disciples of the founder, and for the use of members of the school rather than for a general audience). As Pierre Hadot has emphasized, in those days to philosophize was "to choose a school and convert to its way of life," and such a conversion (*metanoia*) was usually effected by practising the "spiritual exercises" that had been developed by the master(s) of the school (HADOT 1995, p. 60). These exercises were primarily intellectual and imaginative, and tended to lack the physical or somatic features that distinguish Buddhist meditation practices—which seems to be the major difference between practice in the two traditions.

The Stoics and Epicureans are in accord with Buddhist views in holding that a major source of human suffering is the desire to acquire or keep pos-

sessions that one may lose or fail to obtain in the first place. They also ascribe "unnecessary desires" and "partial value judgments" to social conventions and advocate getting rid of them in order to attain a less anthropocentric standpoint. The result is that the world appears astonishingly new—as evidenced by these words of Seneca: "I contemplate wisdom with the same stupefaction with which, on other occasions, I look at the world—this world that I quite often feel I am seeing for the first time [*tamquam spectator novus*]" (Seneca, *Letter to Lucilius*, 24.6). Many exercises in the Stoic and Epicurean traditions aim at a transformation of experience by broadening the human perspective on the world, which is conditioned by our desires, to a "natural" perspective that situates every event within the context of universal *phusis*. The practice of this kind of "physics" is the aim of Seneca's admonition concerning "plunging oneself into the world (*toti se inserens mundo*)" (Seneca, *Letter to Lucilius*, 46.6).

Although such plunging may sound more like what Dōgen would call "delusion" than "realization" ("carrying ourselves forward and experiencing the myriad things" rather than "letting the myriad things come to us and experience themselves"), the transformations of experience attained through the "vigilant tension" of the Stoics and the "total exertion" (*gūjin* 究盡) advocated by Dōgen may be fruitfully compared (Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, "Genjō kōan" 現成公案). It would be illuminating to investigate the correspondences between the Stoic understanding of the human being's place in the cosmos and Dōgen's understanding of the totality of being as "Buddha-nature."

The two main Hellenistic schools part company, however, when the Stoics emphasize universal reason, or divine providence, in contrast to the Epicureans' denial of teleology. Through contemplation of the Stoic *logos* that governs the unfolding of cosmic processes, we are able to transcend the limits of our individuality to realize our participation in the reason-animated cosmos. Epictetus, for example, speaks of "the divine government of things," and recommends to his pupils that they "keep their will in harmony with it." Through practising such a discipline they will "learn to desire that everything happen just the way it *does* happen" (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.12.8, 15, 17). And yet just as Dōgen emphasizes that sitting *zazen* is simply an expression of our true nature, so the Stoics regard the contemplation of nature as a natural development of natural processes. According to Epictetus,

> The human being should begin where the nonrational animals do and end where nature has ended in our case..., [namely] at studying

and attending to things, and a way of life in harmony with nature. See to it then that you do not die without having studied these. (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.6.22)

The *indifferentia* cultivated by the Stoics is less an attitude of detachment from the world (though, like the Buddhists, the Stoics recommend avoiding attachment to emotions and passions) than a refusal to make value judgments about it. For Marcus Aurelius, such abstention affords one a cosmic perspective that is similar to what the Daoists call "seeing all things in the light of Heaven [*tian* 天]":

> You have the power to strip off the many superfluous things that are obstacles to you, and that depend entirely upon your value judgments; you will open up for yourself a vast space by embracing the whole universe in your thoughts, by considering unending eternity. (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 9.32)

Like the Daoists, Aurelius claims that there is no valid distinction to be made between what is repulsive and what is pleasant, since nature itself makes no such distinctions (see Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 9.1.9). In the *Meditations*, he writes to himself:

> Everything comes from above, whether it has originated immediately in that common directing principle, or whether it is a necessary consequence thereof. Thus, the gaping jaws of a lion, poison, and all kinds of unpleasant things, like thorns and mud, are byproducts of those venerable, beautiful things on high. Don't imagine, therefore, that these unpleasant things are alien to that principle you venerate, but rather consider that *source* of all things. (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 6.36.2)

The difference between this and the Buddhist view is the emphasis on the "directing principle" from *above*, which appears to be a hangover from the Platonic tradition with its notion of a transcendent source of value. But if *everything* is to be venerated as "coming from above," then it seems that the naturalism of Aurelius's Stoic philosophy exposes it to charges of ethical quietism, of the kind that are often leveled at Daoism and Zen—and at any philosophies that advocate going beyond value judgments of good and bad. If one renounces recourse to a transcendent norm of what is good or right for human beings to do, where does one find grounds for intervening in

natural processes? For if we adopt a nonanthropocentric perspective from which what is important is "the flourishing of the whole" (rather than the flourishing of human beings alone), how is such flourishing to be assessed? As I have suggested elsewhere, a great contribution of the East Asian philosophies is their insistence on considering the particular, concrete situation in the context of the relevant organized totality—an emphasis that we find also in Stoic philosophy (see PARKES 1997).

What is interesting in Aurelius, however, is his move away from idealistic aesthetics toward a more realist, immanental stance that is similar to the Zen standpoint.

> In the case of very ripe olives, it is precisely their proximity to decay that adds to them a certain beauty. The same is true... with the foam spuming from the mouths of wild pigs, and many other such things: if we look at them in isolation, they are far from being beautiful. Nevertheless, because they are incidental by-products of natural processes, they add to the beauty of these processes.
> (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 6.3.2)

Although it is rare for a Western philosopher to find beauty in "proximity to decay," it is relatively common in transience-based philosophies in the East-Asian traditions, which give rise to worldviews tinged by *mono no aware*. To appreciate the aesthetic qualities of "foam spuming from the mouths of wild pigs" as a "natural process" requires the kind of broadening of perspective that Dōgen encourages when he emphasizes Buddha-nature (in which the element of *shō* 性 would resonate with the "birth-growth-decay" connotations of the Latin *natura*) as "whole-being" (*shitsu-u* 悉有), as an organized totality (Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, "Busshō" 仏性).

If we turn to the Epicureans, we are struck at once by the practical-therapeutic aspects of their thinking. Epicurus is concerned, as the Buddha was a few centuries before him, with developing a therapeutic psychology: "We must concern ourselves with the healing of our own lives." Through banishing needless worries and fears, and satisfying only the necessary desires, one can return to the simple joy of existing. Just as the Daoists (and many Zen thinkers) advocate following *tian dao* 天道, or the way of nature, so Epicurus advises: "We must not resist nature but obey her. We obey her if we satisfy the necessary desires and also those bodily desires that do not harm us." This way of life is not as difficult as it might seem, since "blessed nature... has made what is necessary easy to obtain, and what is not easy unnecessary" (Epicurus,

"Vatican Fragments" 64, 21; fragment 469 [Usener]).

Physics—in the sense of perceiving the world as *phusis*, that incessant movement of birth and growth by which things manifest themselves (what Spinoza will call *natura naturans*)—is a key feature of Epicurean spiritual practice. But the Epicureans differ from the Stoics in seeing no rational directing force in the universe. As Lucretius puts it: "Nature is revealed as rid of haughty overlords, as the free autonomous agent of everything, without the participation of the gods" (Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 2.1100). The Epicureans take delight in constant contemplation of the genesis of worlds in the infinite void, the results of which Lucretius describes in the most vivid terms:

> The walls of the world open out, and I see activity going on throughout the whole void.... At these things some godlike delight seizes me and a shuddering of awe, to think that nature is thus made so clear and manifest, laid open and unveiled in every part.
> (Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 3.16–17, 28–30)

Because of the radically contingent nature of the Epicurean universe, meditation cultivates an appreciation of the "once-only" character of existence, so that one comes to celebrate each moment as a unique miracle. The overwhelming emotion is thus one of gratitude: through contemplation, writes Epicurus, "one cultivates profound gratitude to nature for granting us the gift of life" (Epicurus, "Vatican Fragments" 19, 69, 75). The Epicurean emphasis on friendship and community brings their way of life closer to the Buddhist ideal of *sangha* than is the case with more individualistic philosophies: "Meditate on these things and things like them," Epicurus recommends, "by day and by night, alone or with a like-minded friend... and you shall live like a god among men" (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 135b).

There is an interesting sense in which the Stoics and Epicureans share with the Zen tradition an appreciation of attaining a "bird's-eye view" of things, although an examination of this image may reveal significant differences in their broader philosophical views. In the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions, the flight of the soul often denotes a complete transcendence of the body and all earthly things. But the Stoics tend to employ the image of flight more as a means of gaining perspective on what is "human, all-too-human." In the words of Seneca,

> The soul takes flight and penetrates the recesses of nature.... It cannot despise riches before it has been all around the world, and casting

a contemptuous glance at the narrow globe of the earth from above, says to itself: "How ridiculous are the boundaries of men!" (Seneca, *Natural Questions*, I, preface 7-9)

Marcus Aurelius concurs in the advantages of height when contemplating human existence:

Look upon earthly things below as if from some vantage point above them.... Look from above at the spectacle of myriad herds, myriad rites, and manifold journeyings in storm and calm; diversities of creatures that are being born, coming together, passing away. (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 7.47; 9.30)

In discussing Nietzsche's ideal of being "free as a bird" (*vogelfrei*), Nishitani draws attention to the importance of "the way of the bird" in the Zen tradition: "A hidden bird sings volubly and flies out of the clouds into the distance of mountain peak upon mountain peak."[3] The image of the bird is distinctly different from that of the soul in flight: although a bird soars above the earth it is nevertheless an animal subject to gravity; it is unable to maintain the bird's-eye view indefinitely, and must return to earth occasionally for sustenance and rest. The Platonic soul, by contrast, with its heritage from the Orphic and Pythagorean traditions, is not at home in the body and comes from a "higher source" to which it longs to return by severing all connections with the earth.

Tanabe Hajime represents a widespread view when he characterizes the main difference between "Western" and "Eastern" philosophy by saying that, whereas the former is concerned mostly with *being* and life, the latter is focused more on *nothingness* and death (TANABE 1959, 1964). As a generalization this works fairly well, but there is a strain of thinking about death in the Western tradition (one that passes through Stoic and Epicurean philosophy) that has significant resonances with the Zen understanding of death. In fact the East Asian and Western traditions appear to start out with similar conceptions of the interdependence of life and death, if one compares, for example, the ideas of Heraclitus and Zhuangzi.[4] The divergence occurs with

[3] Nishitani Keiji, with reference to Dozan (*Keitoku dentōroku* 景德傳燈録, T. 51, no. 2076) and *Daitōgoroku* 大燈語録 (T. 81, no. 2566), in NISHITANI 1990 (p. 92).

[4] Zhuangzi: "Simultaneously with being alive one dies"; "recognize death and life as a single strand"; "death and life have the constancy of morning and evening" (chapters 2, 5, 6). Heraclei-

Socrates and Plato. While Socrates' famous characterization of the philosophical enterprise as "practising dying" can be understood as encouraging a separation of soul from body by dying to one's individuality and passions, the Platonic tradition has tended to take it more as a dying away from the world of the senses in order to be reborn in the intelligible realm. But with the Epicureans' reaction against Platonism comes a denial of transcendence, and with it a different understanding of death.

Although Epicurus famously observed that "while we exist, death is not present, and when death is present, we no longer exist," his overall attitude is informed by a distinctly existential sensibility. "Against other things," he writes, "it is possible to gain security. But when it comes to death, we human beings all live in an unwalled city." (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 125; "Vatican Fragments" 31). The poet Horace expresses a quintessentially Epicurean sentiment when he writes, "Persuade yourself that every new day that dawns will be your last one. And then you will receive each unhoped for hour with gratitude" (Horace, *Letters*, 1.4.13). Insofar as the Epicureans understand the universe as radically contingent, their appreciation of the finite nature of existence focuses on the instant, which, in miraculously succeeding the preceding one, assumes infinite value. So, for mortals living in an unwalled city, totally exposed to a world full of accidents, the end can come not just any day or hour, but at any moment. The Stoic thinking of Marcus Aurelius coincides with the Epicureans on this point: "Let your every deed and word and thought be those of one who might depart from this life this very instant" (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 2.1).

Such an attitude has affinities with Zen, and especially with the thought of Dōgen, who emphasizes that "life arises and perishes instantaneously from moment to moment [*setsuna shōmetsu* 剎那消滅]." The rising and falling of the breath and the arising and subsiding of thoughts—a primary focus of beginning practice in *zazen*—are mimetic of the continual birth and death that constitutes existence. Birth-and-death (*shōji* 生死) is thus not something that forms the frame for human life but rather constitutes its very core.

There is birth in death, and there is death in birth.... This is not so because you make it so, but because Dharma [cosmic law] is like

tus: "The same: living and dead, and the waking and the sleeping, and young and old. For these transposed are those, and those transposed again are these" (Diels, fragment 88; see also fragments 21, 36, 48, 62).

this.... There is birth-and-death in each moment of this life of birth-and-death.... Birth does not obstruct death, death does not obstruct birth. (Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, "Yuibutsu-yobutsu" 唯仏与仏, "Shinjingakudō" 身心学道)[5]

The idea that death not only does not hinder birth but vivifies life and makes it fully vital recurs frequently in the Zen tradition, and especially forcefully in a practical type like Suzuki Shōzan. Witness his famous exhortations to "rouse death energy [*shiki* 死気]" and concentrate on the character *shi* 死 (death): "Make the one graph *death* master in your heart, observing it and letting go of everything else" (BRAVERMAN 1994, pp. 30, 61). This is reminiscent of the Stoics, for whom the full and constant awareness of death banishes unessentials, so as to allow one to live life genuinely. As Epictetus exhorts his students: "Keep before your eyes every day death and exile, and then you will never have any abject thought or excessive desire" (Epictetus, *Manual*, 21). The Epicureans similarly appear to put into practice Shōzan's directive to "live having let go of life," insofar as their detachment still allows them to live in the world rather than exist in a state of transcendence.

Shōzan's focus on death is taken up by Hakuin, who similarly recommends "investigating the word *shi*" and undergoing the "great death" (*daishi* 大死) as a way to experience "the decisive and ultimate great joy" (YAMPOLSKY 1971, pp. 135, 219). "Seeing into one's own nature" for Hakuin involves being prepared to "let go one's hold when hanging from a sheer precipice, to die and return again to life."

The most remarkable parallels to this way of life are to be found in a thinker in whom Stoic and Epicurean ideas are powerfully synthesized: Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592). Just as Dōgen emphasizes the proper understanding of birth-and-death, so Montaigne has "the voice of nature" impress upon his reader: "Death is the condition of your creation, it is a part of you.... This being of yours that you enjoy is equally divided between death and life.... You are in death while you are in life...during life you are dying" (FRAME 1958, 1:20). And as Shōzan speaks of "learning death" (*shi o narau* 死を習う), so Montaigne advocates cultivating a familiarity with it: "Let us rid death of its strangeness, come to know it, get used to it. Let us have nothing on our minds as often as death.... Knowing how to die frees us from all sub-

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[5] For a fuller comparison of Dōgen, Shōzan, Hakuin, and Nishitani with Montaigne, Nietzsche, and Heidegger on the topic of death, see PARKES 1998.

jection and constraint." He appears, finally, to be a consummate executor of the movement described by Hakuin in which one dies and returns to life: "I unbind myself on all sides.... Never did a man prepare to leave the world more utterly and completely, nor detach himself from it more universally, than I propose to do." But the remarkable effect of such detachment—as practised by one for whom "death mingles and fuses with our lives through-out"—is that he finds himself come back fully to life: "When I dance, I dance," he says; "when I sleep, I sleep" (Montaigne, *Essays*, 3:13).

Indeed, when it comes to philosophy as a matter of life and death, nobody in the Western tradition has put it more succinctly than Montaigne, who writes, simply: "It is all over."

— Well, perhaps not quite over, yet, without a cursory summing up.

It seems to me that Western thinkers stand to gain a better understanding of Zen thought if we approach it from a broad historical base in our own philosophical tradition. Part of such a base is to be found in figures in the Epicurean and Stoic traditions, to whom little attention has been paid in comparative approaches to Zen. For these thinkers philosophy consists not only in ideas about the world and the human being's place in it, but also in the practice of a way of life, and in the transformation of one's life by means of "spiritual exercises" that are passed down from master to disciple. As in the Zen tradition, participation in the natural world is a major factor in this trans-formation, even though rationalist tendencies from the Platonic tradition sometimes pull the Stoics away in the direction of a philosophy of transcendence.

When it comes to the philosophy of death that goes along with the philosophy of life, these tendencies result in an overemphasis on detachment, such that the awareness of death grants serenity but impedes the living of life to its fullest. Just as a reappropriation of Stoic and Epicurean philosophical practices would help to inject some real life into current Western philosophy, attention to Zen's focus on the physical and somatic aspects of practice might help us acquire the difficult knack of returning to our real lives after having let go of them.

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Gyakutaiō and *Gyakuen*

Nishida's Philosophy, Nishitani's Philosophy, and Zen

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T HE PRESENT PAPER REPRESENTS a provisional attempt to clarify some of the defining characteristics of the respective philosophies of Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 and Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治. A full consideration of this matter would, of course, require a thorough study of the thought systems of both Nishida and Nishitani, but in the present essay I would like approach the problem primarily from the standpoint of Nishitani, examining how he himself interpreted the generational and historical differences between him and his teacher and how he situated his thought within that framework. I will begin with a brief consideration of several points of difference between the two thinkers respective systems of thought.

Zen and the Philosophies of Nishida and Nishitani

As the philosophies of both Nishida and Nishitani are fundamentally related to Zen Buddhism, any exploration of the two systems must take this factor into account. It is well known that before Nishida formulated his personal philosophical standpoint of "pure experience" (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験) he underwent many years of Zen training, beginning at the age of twenty-seven. In August 1903, when he was thirty-three, he had his first experience of Zen awakening while studying under Kōshū Sōtaku 廣州宗澤 (1840–1907), master of Daitoku-ji in Kyoto. The direction that this training was leading him in, however, appears to have been toward a career not in religion but in philosophy. For example, in September 1906, three years after his initial experience of self-awakening (*kenshō* 見性) and at about the time he was completing "Nishida-shi jitsuzairon oyobi rinrigaku" 西田氏 実在論及倫理学, the thesis that formed the basis of his first book, *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 [A study of the

good],[1] Nishida wrote the following letter to D. T. Suzuki, then residing in the United States: "It is my intention to continual religious training until the end of my life, but I feel that, as far as my work is concerned, academics is the most appropriate field. What do you think?" And it was in fact during this period that Nishida began the philosophical studies that established his reputation. Thus Nishida's career as a thinker may be characterized as one that moved in the direction of "from Zen to philosophy."

Nishitani, while fully aware of the nature of his teacher's religious training, had a quite different experience of the tie between philosophy and Zen. For Nishitani, "the study of Western philosophy led to the practice of Zen" (NISHITANI 1988, p. 29). Nishitani's approach to Zen was, in other words, "from philosophy to Zen," the precise opposite of that of his teacher. Let me here summarize Nishitani's early encounter with Zen, a subject I treat at greater length in Zen Buddhism Today 14 (HORIO 1997).

Nishitani early approach to philosophy was rather radical in nature, beginning with an investigation of fundamental evil or "original sin" (kongen aku 根源悪) through the thought of the German Idealist philosophers, particularly Schelling, and proceeding to a study of Western mystics like Plotinus and Meister Eckhart. Yet with the deepening of his studies he came to sense "a great voidness inside myself," as though "my feet were not solidly on the ground" and "something like a thin veil [separated the soles of] my feet from the surface of the earth."

This feeling led to a fundamental distrust of the very standpoint of philosophy. The vita contemplativa of Aristotle and and the Denken des Denkens of Hegel, though representing the highest expressions of the philosophical path, seemed to Nishitani to be based on theoria, in which the philosopher positions himself a step back from the direct, living reality of things and observes them from an abstract, ivory-tower realm. He doubted whether any "reality" perceived in such a manner could be anything but a sham construct. This fundamental sense of Skepsis toward the entire philosophical endeavor led Nishitani to the practice of Zen, in which he "set speculation aside for a while and just sat." This was in 1936, when he was thirty-six years old.

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[1] Hereafter abbreviated as ZK. Translated into English as An Inquiry into the Good (hereafter IG), by Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (NISHIDA 1990).

"Pure Experience" and the "Realization of Bottomlessness"

The second point of difference between Nishida's and Nishitani's respective systems of thought involves the fundamental nature of the self-awareness out of which they emerged.

In that the philosophies of both Nishida and Nishitani are formulated on the basis of a fundamental breaking-through of the standpoint of Descartes's naturale rationis lumens—a breakthrough rooted in the practice of Zen— they may be characterized as "mediated" systems of thought. Nishitani often characterizes such systems as "existential" in nature, as they come into contact with a living reality far more direct than that of the ego. In that sense these forms of speculation possess the nature of praxis.

However, the philosophical insights underlying the respective systems are quite different. Nishida's philosophy was informed by the realization that "it is not that experience exists because there is an individual, but that an individual exists because there is experience. I thus arrived at the idea that experience is more fundamental than individual differences" (NISHIDA 1979, p. 4; 1990, p. xxx). Nishida's realization was, in short, that of "pure experience." Nishitani's realization, in contrast, was that of the "bottomless" (脱底) nature of things, which he explains as follows:

> At its most fundamental ground the notion that "I am" is something utterly without foundation. At the very ground of our life there is absolutely nothing to set our feet upon. Indeed, life is life precisely because it stands where there is no-thing to stand upon." (NKC 1:4)

In a certain sense, Nishitani's "realization of bottomlessness" grew out of the same soil that Nishida's "realization of pure experience" did, and both philosophers may be seen (in a manner of speaking) to have "awakened from the same bed." Nishitani, for example, says of his sense that his "feet were not solidly on the ground":

> I had, of course, read Professor Nishida's Zen no kenkyū, so in a manner of speaking I knew what "direct experience" referred to. Nevertheless, I hadn't directly understood the meaning of direct experience. (NISHITANI and YAGI 1989, p. 60)

Nevertheless, the difference between Nishida's "pure experience" and Nishitani's "bottomlessness" was not merely terminological, but involved the very

nature of their respective philosophical standpoints. Drawing a hint from the "waves and water" simile so often encountered in Mahāyāna thought,[2] we might say that Nishida's philosophical awareness was like the waves which arise from the bottomless depths, while Nishitani's philosophical awareness was like the bottomless depths upon which the waves arise. This dissimilarity in character may be related in part to the respective characters of the two philosophers' Zen training and insight, but I see the fundamental cause as lying in historically determined distinctions in the way their respective experiences manifested themselves in self-awareness.

Gyakutaiō and Gyakuen

The third difference in the two philosophers' systems of thought relates to these differing historical factors. In conversation Nishitani once explained the historical situation of Nishida in comparison with that of his generation using the metaphor of a *sandō* 参道, the road leading to a Shinto shrine

> In Prof. Nishida's times the road to the shrine led straight to the sanctuary. In our times, though, the road crumbled before reaching the sanctuary steps, so we couldn't reach the inner shrine as people before us could. At best we had to approach by way of a roundabout route.

Nishitani had set his feet upon the same path as Nishida, but found that it could no longer be traveled—neither his existential problem nor his historical circumstances permitted it. "The road [had] crumbled before reaching the sanctuary steps." This situation itself became a topic of inquiry for him, for he was forced to accept as his own existential dilemma the sense of nihilism that characterized the historical age in which he lived. The "roundabout route" of which he speaks is the path of "overcoming nihilism *through* nihilism," which was to comprise the central theme of his lifelong philosophical and spiritual search. The fact that Nishitani, unlike Nishida, could no longer walk the road leading straight to the sanctuary meant that he had to approach it from the back (*Hintergrund*). Nishitani hinted at this once dur-

[2] Seen, for example, in the *Tacheng qixinren* 大乗起信論 [Treatise on the awakening of faith in the Mahāyāna], where the waves represent thoughts while the water represents the underlying mind. The simile originates in early Vedānta thought, in which it signifies a relationship that is simultaneously one of nonduality and nonunity.

ing a conversation in which the subject of Nishida's *gyakutaiō* 逆対応 was being discussed. "In my case it was *gyakuen* 逆縁," he commented. Let us examine the respective implications of these two terms.

The term *gyakutaiō*, "inverse correlation," originally comes from the field of mathematics, where it indicates the inverse of the correlation $a \to b$, that is, $a \leftarrow b$. In Nishida's philosophy *gyakutaiō* not only retains this original meaning but also signifies the inverse of the entire relationship between a and b (that is, a correlation based on the self-negation of both factors). For example, in the case of the correlation "mind is Buddha" (*shin soku ze butsu* 心即是佛), we have not only the usual inverse correlation of "Buddha is mind" but also an inverse correlation that involves both "mind" and "Buddha" themselves. The realm in which such a relationship obtains might be called "the world of absolutely contradictory self-identity in which affirmation is negation."

Nishitani's word *gyakuen*, which might be translated "inverse causality," is originally a Buddhist term indicating a situation in which usual or expected causal relationships are reversed; it stands in opposition to the term *jun'en* 順縁, or "consonant causality." For example, the situation in which a child (a) holds memorial services for a parent (b) is one of *jun'en* ($a \to b$), while the situation in which a parent holds memorial services for a child is one of *gyakuen* ($a \leftarrow b$). In a rather different sense, it is *jun'en* when obeying the teachings of the Buddha leads to entrance into the Buddhist Way; it is *gyakuen* when *dis*obeying the teachings of the Buddha leads to entrance into the Buddhist Way. In the first example the two elements in the $a \to b$ relationship are simply reversed, while in the second example the entire relationship itself is turned inside out (from one of obedience to one of disobedience). What the two meanings of *gyakuen* share is their reversal of expected causal relationships.

Thus *gyakutaiō* and *gyakuen* do not always stand in a relationship of perfect contradistinction with regard to background and meaning-content. When Nishitani identified his path as one characterized by *gyakuen* rather than by his teacher Nishida's *gyakutaiō*, he was not drawing a distinction in meaning-content. What he was pointing to was a difference between the existential circumstances of Nishida's age (*jun'en* circumstances that allowed his teacher to walk straight along the shrine road and up the steps to the inner sanctuary; that allowed him, in other words, to explain religion through the logical construct of "inverse correlation") and the existential circumstances of

his own age (*gyakuen* circumstances that presented him with a shrine road destroyed by the "death of God" and a host of related philosophical problems). There was, in a manner of speaking, a basic change in the way that the relationship between God and humanity was perceived. In Nishida's time the orthodox religious standpoint still obtained: God was present and could be approached by way of the traditional "shrine road." By Nishitani's time, however, God was no longer to be found—the shrine road had crumbled away, and with it the sense of support that the divine presence had provided.

Nishitani's situation was one in which he had no choice but to descend into the nihility that had destroyed the road and feel his way along step by step. This was the "roundabout way" of which Nishitani spoke, and the "approach from behind" that comprised his philosophical quest.

Nishitani's View of the Place and Significance of Nishida's Philosophy

An in-depth analysis of how Nishitani situated and interpreted the thought of Nishida would require a detailed examination of how Nishitani's views on this subject evolved with the progressive development of his own philosophical system, but this is clearly beyond the scope of the present paper. Thus I would like to confine myself to a consideration of a few of the more essential aspects of the problem.

NISHIDA'S PHILOSOPHY IN WORLD INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Nishitani saw the notion of "pure experience"—the starting point of Nishida's philosophy and its ground concept throughout Nishida's career—as playing an important role in the development of world intellectual history. The development of modern science compelled the European world to revolutionize the cosmology that had prevailed since medieval times. The philosophical theory of mechanism, with its view that all phenomena can be explained on the basis of mechanical principles, ushered in a new worldview in which the universe was no longer "ein Deus visibilis" (Kepler) but a dynamic, impersonal realm. As clearly seen in the thought of Descartes (whose influence on mechanism was stronger than that of any other thinker), with the coming of modernity matters relating to God were relegated to the province of the individual soul. At the same time the modern "two-world theory" (*Zweiweltentheorie* [二世界説]), which posited the this-worldly realm of the senses and the other-worldly realm of the intellect, faced the danger of

collapse owing to the shift of psychology from the pale of philosophy to that of empirical science and to the rise of psychologism under thinkers like Wilhelm Max Wundt (1832–1920). Nishitani summarized the nature of the problem and the solution as he saw it as follows:

> The conflict between the standpoints of science and religion spread to the whole of the interior life (NC 9:104 NK p. 73)

> The problem called for a philosophy that would keep its feet firmly planted in immediate and pure experience (in the sense described above) and yet be able to offer new answers to the same fundamental questions that the old metaphysics had addressed (NC 9:108 NK p. 77).... And it seems to me that there were only two philosophers capable of doing so. One was Bergson..., the other was Nishida. (NC 9:110 NK p. 79)

NISHITANI'S CRITIQUE OF NISHIDA'S PHILOSOPHY

Despite Nishitani's perception of the importance of Nishida's thought for modern philosophy, Nishitani was not unaware that certain problems remained in Nishida's system. From a relatively early age Nishitani alludes to the possibility of critiquing Nishida's philosophy from various philosophical standpoints; of the problems he saw, the following (expressed by Nishitani in 1936, when Nishida was still alive) may be regarded as the most fundamental in Nishitani's eyes:

> Nishida's philosophy has not yet found a way to assess the importance of the process dialectic [of Hegel] and make adequate use of it even as it goes beyond it. In other words, Nishida's dialectic of place has not reached the point where it can confront the dialectic process through a negation-in-affirmation. (NKC 9:202 NK p. 204)

In Nishida's philosophy, that is, there is a clear stress placed on an outlook characterized by Nishitani in the following words: "A higher stage of reality becomes a postulate of intellection by which to account for lower stages of reality; *we look at the lower from the higher*, as it were" (NKC 9:202; NK p. 204; emphasis mine). This is also reflected in comments like "The fundamental mode of reality is...the self-development of a single entity" (ZK, p. 86 [Iwanami 1979]; IG, p. 57).

Of course, we must keep in mind, as Nishitani does, that "in the sense that philosophy aims at a fundamental grasp of phenomena by delving into ultimate essences, it follows as a matter of course that" the type of viewpoint which looks "at the lower from the higher" would appear. Nevertheless, "we must not forget that in so doing we have driven a wedge between the reality of such lower stages and the postulates of intellection" (NKC 9:202; NK p. 204). Nishitani stresses the necessity of the opposite standpoint, in which the higher is looked at from the lower. The above-mentioned wedge signifies "an act of resistance, a revolt against perfection"; in order to see the positive significance of "imperfect things" in general, "we need to conform to *their* standpoint and to follow them in their development to the point where they exhibit the self-contradiction stemming from their nonabsolute absoluteness and then negate themselves" (NKC 9:202–203; NK p. 205)

Nishitani pursues this problem from a slightly different angle in the course of a discussion of criticisms of Nishida's philosophy by Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 (1885–1962), Nishida's successor at Kyoto University. This critique is significant in that it was written in 1951, fifteen years after the passage cited above, when Nishida had passed away and all of his works were available to Nishitani. Fundamentally, Nishitani's view of the central weakness of Nishida's philosophical system remained the same:

> For Nishida, traditional philosophy had not broken away from the standpoint of the conscious ego with its opposition of subject and object, but continued to use the terms of an object-subject logic (that is, a logic of the grammatical subject), while his own thinking begins from a standpoint of radical realism that surpasses the tradition entirely to establish itself on a logic of place (that is, a logic of the grammatical predicate). This is a standpoint in which one breaks through the conscious ego and thinks about facts by becoming the facts that one is thinking about. It does not merely philosophize, as has been done in the past, but *becomes* philosophizing. It practices philosophy from the standpoint of which Nishida says, "Becoming a thing, think it; becoming a thing, do it." (NKC 9:243; NK p. 180)

Yet, Nishitani says,

> looked at the other way around, did this insight not at the same time create a problem for Nishida's philosophy?.... For the stand-

point of the conscious self, however inverted and removed from the truth it may be, is still one that the ordinary person falls into quite easily—not that people deliberately opt for this standpoint, but that they slide into it unwittingly and hence have a hard time extracting themselves from it.... One of the great facts of life is that we usually position ourselves on a standpoint of "discrimination," far from the true facts of things. The same holds true of our penchant for delusion. (NKC 9:248; NK p. 184–85)

Nishitani points out that, in stressing "a standpoint that requires one not to stop at philosophizing but to *become* philosophizing," Nishida

> seems to have lost sight of the fact that ordinary people do not think of things by becoming them, and hence he does not provide an answer to the questions of precisely how this inversion takes place and what its essential features are. (NC 9:248; NK p. 185)

Furthermore,

> for all its concern with problems of religion, morality, science and so forth, what significance practicing philosophy has for these problems and what place it holds among them did not seem to be questions that Nishida put systematically.... [Nishida's approach, in which] one engaged in philosophy by identifying with philosophizing, [may have] hindered him from philosophizing about philosophy itself. This is particularly apparent in the fact that in taking up the religious worldview philosophically by way of his logic of place, he made no mention of the momentous question of the relationship between religion and philosophy. (NC 9:249; NK p. 186)

The crux of Nishitani's critique concerns the very source of Nishida's philosophy, expressed by Nishida in the famous words of his preface to *Zen no kenkyū*: "I wanted to explain all things on the basis of pure experience as the sole reality (ZK, p. 4; IG, p. xxx). Nishitani points to a problem fundamental to this stance: the lack of self-verification (*jiko kenshō* 自己検証) in the "looking down from above" perspective of pure experience and in the "*become* philosophizing" character of the thought that emerges from it. This critique, of course, was not restricted to Nishida's philosophical system, but also involved the issue that, in Nishitani's view, lent Nishida's philosophy its particular historical relevance for the modern age—that is, the issue of separation and conflict between science and religion (or, to express it differently,

the issue of nihilism and the overcoming of nihilism *through* nihilism). Nishida's view of science may be discerned in the following passage.

> At the root of scientific knowledge must be an attitude of "becoming a thing, see it; becoming a thing, hear it." There must be [Dōgen's] stance of "all things advancing forward to practice and confirm the self." In this too, as the self-determination of the absolute present, we must employ the will of the self in obeying the will of God. (NKZ 11: 438)

Attractive as this viewpoint may be from an idealistic standpoint, it is not in accord with the reality of the scientific worldview. The standpoint of modern science is one of intellectual comprehension (discrimination), not that of, in Nishida's words, "becoming a thing, think it; becoming a thing, see it." The problem of nihilism, the rise of which was integrally connected with the development of modern science, cannot be understood in a fundamental way through of the type of *topos* logic Nishida offers in the passage above. Such an understanding demands a viewpoint that integrates the "from above" and "from below" perspectives,

NISHITANI'S STANDPOINT AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF NISHIDA

Nishitani's evaluation of the historical significance of Nishida's philosophy and of the nature of its unresolved problems shaped the development of Nishitani's own philosophy. Nishitani's evaluation of his teacher's philosophy vis-à-vis his own may be discerned in Nishitani's above-mentioned observations that, though walking the same shrine road that his teacher had, he was forced to approach the inner sanctuary by a roundabout means, and that, as opposed to Nishida's "inverse correlation," his way had been one of "inverse causality." The central problem that defined the difference between the two philosophers' systems of thought was that of nihilism, that is, of the existential situation of modern man—a problem that extended to the death of God, the Eternal Face. "Overcoming nihilism *through* nihilism," the task that Nishitani adopted as his philosophical mission, involved the development of a philosophy that would transcend the limitations of the "from above" orientation of the philosophy of pure experience in such a way as to enable the incorporation also of a "from below" viewpoint. Nishitani's statement that "philosophy must effect a real unity of these two perspectives" may thus be seen as an expression of how he situated his thought with regard to that of Nishida.

Even when considered only from the rather circumscribed standpoint of scholastic philosophy, the process of unifying the "from above" and "from below" viewpoints involves three elements. That is, 1) the "upward transcendence" (*ue e no tettei* 上への徹底) that breaks through Nishida's standpoint of "philosophy from above" must, at the same time, 2) incorporate a "downward transcendence" (*shita e no tettei* 下への徹底) that gives full life to Hegel's "philosophy from below," while 3) the integrated standpoint that results must maintain the attitude of fundamental self-criticism that constitutes the self-identity of all genuine philosophical activity. Near the end of his life Nishitani commented as follows during a lecture at Ōtani University:

> To return to that which is nearest oneself involves, in the case of intellectual inquiry, an attitude which delves deeper regardless of how profound a philosophical system has been attained.... In a sense, the problems we see on the surface will not reveal their true nature as problems unless we dig down much deeper than we have thus far and consider them in a more fundamental way.

The above-mentioned necessity to unify the "from above" and "from below" viewpoints becomes an explicit theme in Nishitani's philosophy only in the philosopher's later years, that is, from the time of the publication of *Shūkyō to wa nanika* 宗教とは何か [What is religion?][3] in 1961, after he had arrived at a fundamental resolution to the problem of "overcoming nihilism *through* nihilism" via his realization of the "standpoint of *śūnyatā*" (*kū no tachiba* 空の立場). There is always a cause underlying the inner need that drives someone like Nishitani to take on a task like this unification; the measure of how thoroughly the inner need has been met by the accomplishment of the task is the degree to which this underlying cause has been resolved. In this regard Nishitani's late essays "Hannya to risei" 般若と理性 [*Prājña* and reason] (1979) and "Kū to soku" 空と即 [*Śūnyatā* and nonduality] (1982) are of particular interest, in that they comprise a thoroughgoing self-examination and verification of the "standpoint of *śūnyatā*." I have discussed the place of these two essays in Nishitani's philosophy of *śūnyatā* in the last issue of *Zen Buddhism Today* (HORIO 1997), so here I will restrict myself to a consideration of their significance for situating the philosophy of Nishitani vis-à-vis that of Nishida.

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[3] Translated into English as *Religion and Nothingness* by Jan Van Bragt (NISHITANI 1982).

The more relevant of the two essays in this respect is probably "Hannya to risei." This thesis, which employs a critique of Hegelian thought in order to bring about the above-mentioned "self-examination and verification of the standpoint of *śūnyatā*," demonstrates that Nishitani has overcome the problems associated with Nishida's "*become* philosophizing" approach and attained the standpoint of "philosophizing about philosophy itself." As such it indicates something of the manner in which the "from above" and "from below" standpoints are integrated and points to the character of the resulting philosophical standpoint.

Hegel's standpoint of dialectical reason overcomes the limitations of regulative understanding (*kōseiteki gosei* 構成的悟性) and breaks through to the standpoint of "things in themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*), but for Nishitani a fundamental problem remains: Hegel's dialectical reason has yet to get rid of its own conceptual nature in an absolute sense. This means, first, that Hegel's "unmediated knowledge" (*Sachlichkeit des Wissens*)—that is, the direct understanding of things-in-themselves (*die Sache selbst*)—remains incomplete, despite having overcome the intellect to a certain degree; and second, that the substantive notions of "absolute being" arising from the intellect's primal drive toward self-affirmation are not thoroughly transcended, resulting in limited realization of the absolute freedom that can arise only when the mind has freed itself of all dependence and all restriction through a process of absolute negation. The transcendence of speculative cognition and the manifestation of original intelligence can be accomplished only by subjecting the mind to the thoroughgoing dynamic of absolute negation. The intelligence that emerges *as* this dynamic and as the *self-awareness* of this dynamic—in other words, that emerges as a result of the thorough self-negation of the self and, simultaneously, of all things—is the *prajña* wisdom representing the dialectic identity of absolute being and absolute nothingness.

In this way Nishitani clarifies the nature of *prajña* wisdom as that which appears through the self-examination and verification of the standpoint of *śūnyatā*. Yet the *true* "self-examination and verification" begins at this point. Using two Zen koans to illustrate his point, Nishitani stresses that there must be a further examination of the very standpoint of *prajña*. This point, again, is discussed in greater detail in volume 14 of *Zen Buddhism Today*, but let me here summarize the main points.

Nishitani's position is similar to that of Zen, which does not recognize as true *satori* the understanding of one who has reached the Buddha's state of oneness (the state expressed in Chinese Buddhism as "heaven, earth, and I have the same root; the myriad things and I are a single body)—Zen compares this to a kind of dream-realm that must be broken through for true *satori* to appear. Nishitani stresses that *prajña* wisdom too remains a dream of sorts as long as it emerges from a *śūnyatā* that is still at the level of "form is emptiness, emptiness is form"—that is, from a *śūnyatā* that remains aware of itself as *śūnyatā*. This standpoint, corresponding to that of someone who has realized the Buddha's state of unity, must be broken through and the world of everyday reality recovered or the person will remain in this dream. What is necessary at this point is the emptying, the thoroughgoing self-negation, of the very standpoint of *śūnyatā* itself. Only with such a self-negation can there emerge the true "standpoint of *śūnyatā*," of true *prajña* wisdom, or of the true state of "things-in-themselves."

What Nishitani's "self-examination of *śūnyatā*" reveals to us, then, is that Nishida's standpoint of absolute nothingness (the "from above" way of looking at things) must pass through an absolute self-negation—as in the Zen call to "transcend Buddhahood" (*Butsu kōjō* 仏向上)—before it can truly resolve the problems remaining in Hegel's standpoint of reason and attain a genuine state of immediacy (the "from below" way of looking at things). In this we see the workings of the "inverse causality" characteristic of Nishitani the philosopher, who, though trying to follow the same road as his teacher Nishida, was forced to reach his destination by a roundabout path.

Abbreviations

IG   *An Inquiry into the Good.* NISHIDA 1990.

NK   *Nishida Kitarō: Sono hito to shisō* 西田幾多郎―その人と思想. Nishitani Keiji, 1985. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō.

NKC   *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū* 西谷啓治著作集 [Nishitani Keiji's collected works]. 1986–87 (vols 1–13) and 1990–95 (vols 14–26). Tokyo: Sōbunsha.

NKZ   *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集 [The complete works of Nishida Kitarō]

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Afterword

THOMAS KIRCHNER

THIS YEAR'S KYOTO ZEN SYMPOSIUM, the fifteenth of these annual gatherings, marked the conclusion of the series held under the auspices of our long-time sponsor, the Taniguchi Foundation of Osaka, Japan. Looking back, the seventeen-year period covered by the symposia seems very brief indeed. Yet, as mentioned in the Afterword of last year's *Zen Buddhism Today*, the series continued considerably longer than initially planned. When the series was first conceived by Rev. Hirata Seikō (Chief Abbot of Tenryū-ji and former president of the Institute for Zen Studies) and the late Prof. Nishitani Keiji (professor at Kyoto and Ōtani Universities), plans called for a ten-meeting series—it was believed that by the end of this time the Taniguchi Foundation, founded by the late industrialist Taniguchi Tōyōsaburo, would have reached the end of its resources. As noted in last year's Afterword, "the Taniguchi Foundation...never intended itself to be a permanent organization, having been established for the sole purpose of financing the various symposia envisioned by the founder, Taniguchi Tōyōsaburo, as international forums for small groups of scholars to gather together for a week of scholarly presentations, collegial discussion, and informal exchange." It was Taniguchi's intention to let the Foundation conclude its activities when resources came to end.

This has remained one of the organization's guiding principles throughout its existence; the Foundation's unexpected longevity is attributable largely to the Japanese yen's remarkable strength during the past two decades and the consequent increase of the Foundation's assets. With the Foundation now scheduled to conclude its activities in 1999, most of the other symposia sponsored by the organization will hold one final meeting. The Kyoto Zen Symposium, however, has decided to mark the occasion not with a meeting but with the publication of a book of Japanese translations of a number of the most notable papers presented during the first ten years of the series. This, it is felt, will ensure the greatest dissemination in Japan of the most

interesting ideas discussed at the symposia. Work on the volume has been underway for several years, and is scheduled for completion in spring, 1999.

The activities of the Kyoto Zen Symposium over the past seventeen years have coincided with—and in some cases fostered—a number of important developments in the study of Kyoto-school philosophy, the diverse system of thought that has always constituted the Symposium's central source of inspiration and direction. Academic interest in the Kyoto school prior to the 1980s was largely confined to a small number of scholars like David A. Dilworth and Valdo Viglielmo, who during the 1960s and 1970s laid important groundwork for Kyoto-school studies by translating central texts like Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 [A study of the good], *Geijutsu to dōtoku* 藝術と道徳 [Art and morality], and "Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan" 場所的論理と宗教的世界観 [The logic of *topos* and the religious worldview]. They also began the work of analysis with several articles in journals like *Monumenta Nipponica*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, and *Philosophy East and West*.

In 1982, the year before the first Kyoto Zen Symposium, Jan Van Bragt published *Religion and Nothingness*, his translation of Nishitani Keiji's magnum opus *Shūkyō to wa nanika* 宗教とは何か, which in many ways marked the beginning of widespread Western interest in Kyoto-school thought (perhaps because many scholars, like Bernard Stevens in the present issue, found Nishitani's writings "more accessible to Western ways of thought than those of Nishida, [and thus] more appealing to the European reader" [p. 2]). Initial interest was largely in the spiritual aspects of the Kyoto school, but, in concert with developmental trends in the Western philosophical academy, attention was increasingly directed toward the political implications of the Kyoto school teachings, and of the pronouncements and activities of the Kyoto school philosophers themselves. This shift in interests is reflected in the themes addressed by the Symposium, which in the latter part of its history has devoted more attention to the problems of modernity and political accountability:

1) 1983 Zen Buddhism: Humanity and Religion in the Contemporary World
2) 1984 Zen and Mysticism in the Contemporary World
3) 1985 Zen Buddhism: The Significance of Meditation and Samādhi in the Contemporary World
4) 1985 (August) Zen Buddhism in the Contemporary World—The Encounter between Religion and Our Age
5) 1987 Religion and Natural Science in the Contemporary World
6) 1988 Religion and the Human Sciences in the Contemporary World
7) 1989 Nature, Life, and Human Being
8) 1990 Religion and Ethics in the Contemporary World
9) 1992 Religion and Culture in the Contemporary World
10) 1993 Religion and the Modern World
11) 1994 Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism
12) 1995 Tradition and Change: Religion and Modernity in Japan
13) 1996 Tradition and Change: Traditional Doctrine in the Modern Age
14) Religion and the Contemporary World in Light of Nishitani Keiji's Thought
15) Nishida's Philosophy, Nishitani's Philosophy, and Zen

The overall design of the original ten meetings was explained by Prof. Horio Tsutomu in the Afterword to *Zen Buddhism Today* 10:

> The committee divided this ten-year period into three sections dealing with various fundamental aspects of the problem of religion from the perspective of the modern age. The first section, covering the first three symposia, comprised a critical examination of the basic standpoint of religion from the perspective of the present age. Following the fourth symposium, which was a summing-up of the first three, the second section (the fifth to seventh symposia) investigated the nature and depth of the gulf that separates religion and science. The third section, comprising the eighth and ninth meetings, was an attempt to clarify the relation between religion and the structural aspects of human existence (culture, ethics, etc.).

Continuing with this general framework, the eleventh Kyoto Zen Symposium examined the increasing criticism of the Kyoto school's wartime activities and discussed charges that Kyoto school thought was fundamentally nationalistic. The symposium committee hoped that by bringing together the two sides in the discussion—those scholars interested mainly in the transcendent, spiritual side of Kyoto philosophy and those concerned primarily with the school's political ideas—a broader perspective on the totality of the Kyoto school's activities and contributions could be achieved. It was an ambitious undertaking; the reader may refer to the proceedings, published as the book *Rude Awakenings*, to judge the results.

The increased awareness of the political implications of religious and philosophical thought exerted a certain influence on the subsequent symposiums, each one of which contained presentations examining issues related to this topic. The twelfth and thirteenth gatherings focused on the response of various religious traditions (primarily in Japan) to the challenges of modernity. The fourteenth meeting reexamined Nishitani's legacy and its significance for the present world, with presentations on his philosophy and political outlook and on the potential contributions of his thought in areas such as environmental studies. This year's symposium broadened the scope of inquiry to include Nishida Kitarō, the teacher of Nishitani and in many ways the father of Kyoto-school thought.

The various questions relating to the Kyoto school are far from resolved, but if anything the ongoing discussion is a sign of the vitality of Kyoto school studies both in Japan and the West. With regard to this as well as the broader questions considered over the years the Symposium Committee has striven to provide—to borrow Nishida's term—a *basho* (place) for the exploration of all aspects of whatever issue it is that is being explored. And (as I believe the contents of *Zen Buddhism Today* amply demonstrate) it has succeeded in this, creating an atmosphere conducive to a frank exchange of opinion between scholars of greatly different viewpoints. The Symposium may be seen as a legitimate successor to the work of Nishida Kitarō in its attempt to define the lines of an alternative, Mahāyāna-influenced logical framework for examining religion, culture, ethics, technology, and many other issues in the contempory world.

The following scholars presented papers at the 1998 Symposium:

FUJITA Masakatsu	Professor of Japanese Philosophy Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan
HASE Shōtō	Professor of the Philosophy of Religion Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan
HORIO Tsutomu	Professor of the Philosophy of Religion Ōtani University, Kyoto, Japan
JACINTO, Augustín Z.	Professor of Tarascan Culture and Japanese Philosophy, The Center for the Study of Traditions, El Colegio de Michoacán
MARALDO, John C.	Professor of Philosophy University of North Florida, U.S.A.
PARKES, Graham	Professor of Philosophy University of Hawaii
STEVENS, Bernard	Assoc. Prof. of Philosophy University of Bruxelles, Belgium
VAN BRAGT, Jan	Prof. Emeritus of the Philosophy of Religion Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan
YAGI Seiichi	Professor of Theology Tōin University of Yokohama, Japan
YUSA, Michiko	Professor of Japanese and East Asian Studies Western Washington University, U.S.A.
UEDA Shizuteru	Prof. Emeritus of the Philosophy of Religion Kyoto University, Japan

Participating as specially invited discussants were:

BLUM, Mark	Director of Japanese Studies Florida Atlantic University, U.S.A.
KIRITA Kiyohide	Professor of Education Hanazono University, Kyoto, Japan
MINAMOTO Ryōen	Professor Emeritus of Japanese Intellectual History, Tōhoku University, Sendai, Japan
MATSUMARU Hisao	Professor of the Philosophy of Religion Dokkyō University, Tokyo, Japan
MORI Tetsuro	Assoc. Prof. of the Philosophy of Religion Kyoto Sangyō University, Japan

The daily schedule during the four-day gathering was as follows:

March 9 (Mon.)	Paper by Prof. Maraldo; discussion
March 10 (Tues.)	Papers by Prof. Jacinto, Prof. Yusa, Prof. Fujita, and Prof. Horio; discussions
March 11 (Wed.)	Papers by Prof. Stevens, Prof. Parkes; discussions; excursion; reception hosted by the Taniguchi Foundation
March 12 (Thurs.)	Papers by Prof. Hase, Prof. Van Bragt, Prof. Yagi, and Prof. Ueda; discussions
March 13 (Tues.)	General concluding discussion; farewell party

Committee Members of the Fourteenth Kyoto Zen Symposium

HIRATA Seikō (Chairman): Chief Abbot of Tenryū-ji Temple
UEDA Shizuteru (Advisor): Professor Emeritus at Kyoto University
HORIO Tsutomu (General Secretary): Professor at Ōtani University
IWAMOTO Akemi (Secretary for Administration): Ph.D. candidate, Kyoto
    University
KIRCHNER, Thomas (Information Secretary): Nanzan Institute for Religion
    and Culture

As mentioned above, the Fifteenth Kyoto Zen Symposium was the final meeting to be held under the sponsorship of the Taniguchi Foundation. The members of the Symposium Committee would like to extend their sincerest thanks to the Foundation for its long-continued support, and for its willingness to let the Symposium develop in a way that permitted the broadest exploration of what were often complex and controversial subjects. Thanks in part to this the series has acquired a certain momentum, and has come to serve a function unfulfilled by any other meeting. The Symposium Committee, in conjunction with Tenryū-ji, is presently exploring avenues for the possible continuation of the gatherings—and of *Zen Buddhism Today*—on a reduced scale.

Finally, the Symposium Committee would like to express its gratitude to the many scholars and students who over the years have taken time from their busy schedules to help with the planning, administration, and execution of the meetings. Without their efforts and support these gathering could not have been held.

The address of the Kyoto Zen Symposium Committee remains:

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Volume 6, 1988

Religion and Human Science in the Contemporary World

Volume 7, 1989
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