REVIEW ARTICLE

On the Brink of Postmodernity

Recent Japanese-Language
Publications on the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō

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FUJITA Masakatsu 藤田正勝, ed. *Gendai shisō toshite no Nishida Kitarō* 現代思想 としての西田幾多郎 [Nishida Kitarō as contemporary philosopher]. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998. 228 pp. ¥1,500 paper, ISBN 4-0625-8138-8.

FUJITA Masakatsu, *Kyoto gakuha no tetsugaku* 京都学派の哲学 [The philosophy of the Kyōto school]. Kyoto: Shōwadō, 2001. x + 332 pp. ¥3,300 cloth, ISBN 4-8122-0116-0.

KOSAKA Kunitsugu 小坂国継, *Nishida Kitarō o meguru tetsugakusha gunzō* 西田幾多郎を巡る哲学者群像 [Portraits of philosophers surrounding Nishida Kitarō: Religion and modern Japanese philosophy]. Kyoto: Minerva Shobō, 1997. xiii + 338 pp. ¥3,200 cloth, ISBN 4-0625-8138-8.

KOSAKA Kunitsugu, *Nishida tetsugaku to gendai: Rekishi, shūkyō, shizen o yomi toku* 西田哲学と現代―歴史・宗教・自然を読み解く [Nishida Philosophy and the present: Understanding history, religion, and nature]. Tokyo: Minerva Shobō, 2001. v + 271 pp. ¥3,000 cloth, ISBN 4-6239-0358-1.

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After decades in which Nishida scholarship was dominated by discussions about the role Nishida Kitarō and his fellow Kyoto school philosophers played in the nationalism and militarism of Japan prior to and during World War II, there has been a renaissance of Nishida scholarship in Japan in recent years. While the discussion of the political role and implications of Kyoto school philosophy has had a lasting effect on Nishida scholarship, scholars have turned their attention to applying Nishida philosophy to contemporary issues. Besides the well-known, brilliant, and innovative interpretation of Nishida philosophy by Ueda Shizuteru, a host of new voices are presently making their mark on Nishida scholarship in Japan. Titles as varied as Ōsawa Masato and Tajima Naomi's *Nishida for Beginners*, Kume Yasuhiro's *Nishida Philosophy: Its Formation and its Traps*, Nei Yasuyuki's *Contemporary Philosophy and the Humanities: Using Nishida Philosophy to Read Foucault and Derrida*, and Hattori Kenji's *Nishida Philosophy and the Leftists* introduce Nishida philosophy to a wider audience beyond the traditional circle of Kyoto school philosophers and commentators.

At the center of the wide spectrum of current scholarship stand Ueda's successor at Kyoto University, Fujita Masakatsu, and Kosaka Kunitsugu of Nihon University in Tokyo. A more controversial yet no less imposing presence in present-day Nishida scholarship is Nakamura Yūjirō, who received his training in contemporary French philosophy at Tokyo University, but then shifted his interest towards Nishida philosophy in the second half of his career. The recent publications of both Fujita and Kosaka not only introduce a complex picture of the Kyoto school, which includes lesser-known students and colleagues of Nishida such as Tosaka Jun, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, and Takahashi Satomi. They also explicitly apply Nishida philosophy to "contemporary thought" (*gendai shisō* 現代思想). On the other hand, Nakamura represents a small group of scholars who have begun to stress echoes between Nishida philosophy and postmodern thought.

This article will discuss a selection of recent works within the area of Nishida scholarship, and will devote attention to the project of Fujita and Kosaka to transform Nishida philosophy into a contemporary philosophy in order to introduce some of their ideas in the English language. Of particular interest, however, will be the exploration of the significance of Nishida philosophy to contemporary thought and its tenability in a postmodern age.

The Kyoto school

Within a period of four years Fujita and Kosaka both published introductions to the philosophy of Nishida and his successors. KOSAKA's *Portraits of Philosophers Surrounding Nishida Kitarō: Religion and Modern Japanese Philosophy* appeared in 1997, and FUJITA's *The Philosophy of the Kyoto School* in 2001—the same year in which James HEISIG's *Philosophers of Nothingness* was published. Although both Fujita and Kosaka propose to introduce the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō and the thinkers in his sphere of influence, they differ immensely in their scope and approach. Fujita takes a comprehensive approach in that he edits excerpts by and commentaries on eight representatives of the Kyoto school. In contrast, Kosaka focuses on Nishida's philosophy of "absolute nothingness" and its reception by five of his critics and disciples. It goes without saying that each of these approaches has its own merits and faces its own particular challenges.

FUJITA: *THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE KYOTO SCHOOL*

As is so often the case, the strength of Fujita's work, its diversity and scope, is also its weakness. However, once the reader accepts that an edited work introducing eight different philosophers can only provide a certain amount of depth and coherence, s/he will find an extraordinary wealth of information and ideas that simply whets one's appetite for, as unlikely as it may sound, more Kyoto school philosophy. Most importantly, however, Fujita does an exceptional job grounding and contextualizing the eight essays introducing Nishida and his disciples through three essays: his "Preface," KOSAKA's "The Kyoto school and the problem of 'overcoming modernity,'" and John MARALDO's "Various problems concerning the identity of the Kyoto school as seen from the European and American standpoint." Although Fujita's "Preface" is short, it is effective in setting the tone of the subsequent 330 pages. Outlining the difficulty of defining the membership in the Kyoto school, Fujita decides on a narrow definition. He follows that of Shimomura Toratarō, who limits the membership of the Kyoto school to those who "received direct personal influence" (cited in FUJITA 2001, p. ii) and entered a "bilateral relationship" (FUJITA 2001, p. iii) of mutual influence with the founders, Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime. Consequently, he excludes Takahashi Satomi, who graduated from Tokyo Imperial University and taught for the most part of his career at Tōhoku Imperial University, as well as Kuki Shūzō and Watsuji Tetsurō who, while teaching at Kyoto University developed a philosophy less directly connected to that of the founder figures. In addition, to this formal criteria, Fujita identifies as a further characteristic of Kyoto school philosophy the common project to use "Western philosophy" and "Buddhist thought, especially Zen thought" (FUJITA 2001, p. iii) in order to go beyond these conceptual frameworks. Finally, Fujita explains, all Kyoto

school philosophers had to deal with and formulate some kind of response to the political situation of their time, that is, to the nationalism and militarism of the early Shōwa period. While this characteristic was common to all Kyoto school philosophers, it seems to be indicative of their shared historical context rather than their adherence to the same school and/or commitment to a specific philosophical project. Nevertheless, it constitutes the third theme (in addition to the bilateral relationship of each member to the founding fathers and the comparative project), which connects the thinkers discussed in the present volume. Fujita allocates a special place for this theme in a separate essay by Kosaka.

Maraldo and Kosaka pick up and develop these three themes in the appendix of the volume. Maraldo dedicates his essay to the exploration of the identity of the Kyoto school, whose name was coined by Tosaka Jun in 1932 to distinguish Nishida philosophy from Kyoto philosophy (HEISIG 2001, p. 3) and, as Maraldo remarks, to "indicate [its] leanings towards right-wing politics" (MARALDO 2001, p. 310). Expanding on Fujita's outline, Maraldo identifies six criteria for defining the Kyoto school: connection to Nishida; connection to Kyoto University; concern with "Japanese" or "Eastern" philosophy—Maraldo remarks that "the thinkers connected to the Kyoto school creatively received the literature and insights of the [East] which are opposed to Western thought" (MARALDO 2001, p. 314); a response to Marxism, nationalism, and the Pacific war; "a predilection towards the Buddhist tradition and religion in general" (MARALDO 2001, p. 315); and "a propensity for the concept of 'absolute nothingness'" (MARALDO 2001, p. 316).

The concept of "absolute nothingness," which demonstrates and summarizes the "concern with 'Japanese' and 'Eastern' philosophies," the response to "Western thought," and the general "predilection towards the Buddhist tradition and religion" is a particular characteristic of Kyoto school philosophy. The concept of "absolute nothingness" is also not disconnected from, as Kosaka argues, the Kyoto school's response to "nationalism, and the Pacific war," which became symbolized and represented by the phrase "overcoming modernity" (J. *kindai no chōkoku*). In general, the slogan "overcoming modernity" signified a response to "rationalism, idealism, capitalism, liberalism, democracy, and so on" (KOSAKA 2001a, p. 287). Thus, "modernization" was identified with "Westernization" and, subsequently, "overcoming modernity" was interpreted to be "anti-European" (KOSAKA 2001a, p. 289). Philosophically, this slogan signified a response to the dualism of Cartesian philosophy and Kantianism, which was seen as representative of "Western thought." This "modernity was to be overcome by Nishida's notion of "absolute nothingness," which reverberated Buddhist themes and was thus stylized as representative of "Japanese," if not "Eastern," thought. Politically, this philosophical project translated into a variety of responses from representatives of the Kyoto school, ranging from the "positive" attitude towards the war effort expressed in "Japan

and the Standpoint of World History"[1] to the "negative" attitudes towards the war of Nishida and Miki and the quietism[2] of Tanabe (KOSAKA 2001a, pp. 304–5). These considerations provide the context for eight wonderful essays on the philosophy of "absolute nothingness" as it was expounded in its philosophical and political dimensions by the various members of the Kyoto school, including lesser known members such as Tosaka Jun, Shimomura Toratarō, and Kimura Motomori. Unfortunately, I will have to pass over these essays for the sake of brevity. I also wish to avoid repetition since Kosaka discusses four of the eight thinkers introduced by Fujita.

KOSAKA'S *PORTRAITS OF PHILOSOPHERS SURROUNDING NISHIDA KITARŌ: RELIGION AND MODERN JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY*

Kosaka takes a slightly different approach in his introduction to Kyoto school philosophy. His focus is clearly Nishida's philosophy, and even his discussions of Nishida's colleagues and students seem to use them, first of all, as counterfoils for the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō. The book is divided into two parts: an elaboration of Nishida's philosophy as "logic of religious self-awareness," and a discussion of "absolute nothingness and dialectics" in the philosophies of Nishida and his dialogue partners. While Fujita focuses on the interaction between Nishida and his students and colleagues at Kyoto University, Kosaka devotes his full attention to bilateral intellectual exchange regardless of institutional affiliation. He justifies his choice of dialogue partners in rather general terms: "The Japanese philosophers and their thought discussed in this book possess some points of contact with, and were strongly influenced by, Nishida philosophy" (KOSAKA 1997, p. iv). Since both Fujita and Kosaka stress a bilateral relationship and mutual influence between Nishida and his successors, the difference in their selection with regard to the thinkers affiliated with Kyoto University seems difficult to fathom at first. However, the key to Kosaka's selection may be found in his statement explaining the purpose of his comparison. He aims to "elucidate the way in which the philosophies of the representatives of contemporary Japanese philosophy intersect with Nishida philosophy and, at the same time, clarify what areas these philosophers find problems in Nishida's philosophy and (investigate) how these problems can be overcome" (KOSAKA 1997, p. v). Kosaka thus admits that his choice of dialogue partners was driven by his desire to elucidate and develop Nishida's philosophy, that is, by conceptually constructive rather than historical criteria. For this reason he included Takahashi Satomi, who had a stimulating exchange with Nishida on

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1. "Japan and the Standpoint of World History" constitutes, at best, a highly ambiguous statement, which proclaims that "[w]e believe in the truth of Japan, which presently continues to spread vividly by means of war and, at the same time, we are certain that the present distortion of this truth will be rectified" (cited in KOSAKA 2001, 305).

2. Kosaka's wording is "Tanabe kept entirely quiet" (KOSAKA 2001, 304).

his *Inquiry Into the Good*, and excluded one of Nishida's main disciples, Nishitani Keiji. His exclusion of Nishitani is as surprising as his strategy to use a comparison with Spinoza's pantheism as a heuristic tool to elaborate Nishida's "religious philosophy." While he explains the reason for Nishitani's exclusion only indirectly, however, Kosaka cites two major reasons for comparing Nishida to Spinoza. Firstly, there is his own interest in formulating Nishida's philosophy as a religious philosophy. Secondly, there is the fact that Nishida's "absolute nothingness," which can be conceived of as "absolute self," is not only "fundamentally different" from Søren Kirkegaard's conception and the mainstream Christian and Jewish conceptions of god as "absolute other," but also shares "many commonalities" with Spinoza's "god-qua-nature" (KOSAKA 1997, p. ii). The purpose of this comparison is, then, to provide a model to develop ethical implications of Nishida's "philosophy of religious self-awareness." Kosaka follows this strategy consistently and the result is an exciting exploration of Nishida's philosophy of absolute nothingness as religious philosophy and a stimulating discussion of its promises and challenges.

NISHIDA PHILOSOPHY AS PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS SELF-AWARENESS

In the first section of the present volume, Kosaka sets out to construe Nishida philosophy as a "logic of religious self-awareness." To accomplish this goal, he proceeds in three steps. In the first step, he interprets Nishida's philosophical system as a rejection of three forms of dualism, namely the dualisms of subjectivity and objectivity, of individual and universal, and of theory and practice. In the second step, he argues that Nishida's dialectical logic of "self-negation," the "eternal now," "one-qua-many," and "non-dual oneness" (*ittai funi* 一体不二) constitutes not only the "logic of reconciliation" but also a "religious self-awareness" similar to Spinoza's pantheism. In the third step, Kosaka compares Nishida philosophy to what he calls *Spinozismus* in order to formulate criteria for a "logic of self-awareness."

According to Kosaka, Nishida and Spinoza meet on at least four planes. Firstly, they both negate dualism in favor of the universal principle "god." Secondly, Spinoza's "intellectual love for god" can be matched with Nishida's conception of the "self-awareness of absolute nothingness." Kosaka states, "the self-awareness of absolute nothingness expresses the self-awareness of absolute nothingness, but, at the same time, our selves express the self-awareness of absolute nothingness as well" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 36). In short, he compares "god's love" and the "intellectual love for god" in Spinoza to Nishida's "self-awareness of absolute nothingness expressing itself" and the individual "self expressing the self-awareness of absolute nothingness" respectively. Since both Nishida and Spinoza maintain, as Kosaka proposes, that god and humans are not different in nature, this comparison does seem to be warranted. Nevertheless, as I will show below, Kosaka

does not lose sight of the differences between Nishida and Spinoza despite their obvious and, by his account, compelling similarities. At any rate, this comparison between Spinoza and Nishida allows Kosaka to treat Nishida's notion of the "self-awareness of absolute nothingness" as religious self-awareness.

A third point of comparison between Spinoza and Nishida, Kosaka notes, can be found in their conception of time, or better, timelessness. Kosaka argues that both transcend the everyday notion of linear time, which he dubs *sub species durationis*, in favor of a notion of discontinuous time, Spinoza's *sub specie aeternitatis* and Nishida's "eternal now." It is in his discussion of their respective notions of temporality, however, that Kosaka recognizes two fundamental differences between Nishida and Spinoza. Spinoza's notion of time subsumes the individual under god's perspective, whereas Nishida maintains the particularity of the individual moments. In addition, Spinoza's conception of temporality privileges necessity, whereas Nishida emphasizes the ongoing process of creation, which is propelled by the creativity and the freedom of the individual moment. Nishida cements the notion that individuality is irreducible when he adopts the Leibnizian conception of the individual as microcosm of the universe and the crucial role the I-Thou relationship plays in Nishida's system. Of course, insofar as Kosaka's notion of "non-dual oneness" denies duality in favor of a oneness, it seems to connote more an "undifferentiated oneness" of Spinoza's monism than Nishida's non-dualism. The latter, despite its acknowledgement that god and human share a common nature, never dissolves the individuality of particular moments and persons into the universal principle of god. The difference between Nishida and Spinoza lies in Spinoza's formula of "one-substance-two-attributes" (actually infinite attributes), which privileges the oneness of the substance as the overriding principle of Spinoza's system. On the other hand, Nishida, as Kosaka correctly observes, rejects the tendency to privilege either the oneness of the universal (Nishida avoids the language of substance and attribute), or the differences among individuals and between the one universal and one individual. Yet, I remain unconvinced that the term "non-dual oneness" accommodates this distinction. Nonetheless, it seems that Kosaka chose the terminology of "non-dual oneness" precisely to underline Nishida's commonality with Spinoza rather than their differences, even though its use may disguise one of the key elements of Nishida philosophy.

Be that as it may, the fourth major similarity Kosaka addresses is the most crucial for his argument. Kosaka finds a parallel between the moral ascension of the individual in Spinoza and the three-step process of "self-development" of Nishida's "pure experience." He takes this parallel as a jumping board to argue that Nishida's philosophy possesses the potential for an ethics similar to Spinoza's in that it is based on a similar conceptual basis of "non-dual oneness;" his emphasis on the role of the individual would make such an ethics even stronger. What Nishida's philosophy lacks is a concrete historical philosophy—Kosaka

complains that Nishida's "I and Thou" is too "abstract"—and a theory "which explains how morality can develop from religion" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 76). Thus, Kosaka looks to some of Nishida's strongest critics for clues on how to make Nishida's "logic of religious self-awareness" relevant historically and ethically.

CONVERSATIONS WITH NISHIDA

Kosaka's discussions of Tanabe, Takahashi, and Miki Kiyoshi proceed almost uniformly in five steps. In the first step, he begins by citing Tanabe, Takahashi, and Miki in their deference to Nishida as their teacher and most significant intellectual influence in their lives. Tanabe, who was called to Kyoto University by Nishida and became his successor, noted that "the first half of my philosophy developed along the lines of the thought of Professor Nishida, while I formulated the second half in opposition to him" (Tanabe cited in KOSAKA 1997, p. 123). Takahashi, as he acknowledged in his second criticism of Nishida, namely his "Concerning Nishida's Philosophy" (TAKAHASHI 4, pp. 183–220), received his strongest philosophical influence from Nishida; Kosaka goes so far as to say that "Nishida philosophy became the guidelines along which Takahashi philosophy developed" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 162). Miki decided to study philosophy at Kyoto University and make philosophy his career upon reading Nishida's *Inquiry Into the Good.*

In the second step, Kosaka cites the similarities in their conceptions with Nishida's "absolute nothingness." Tanabe and Nishida agreed on the need to develop a concept of "mediation" between the opposites of "being" and "non-being." Takahashi shares with Nishida the recognition of the ceaseless and, in some sense, relentless, dialectics of the opposites, which leads Kosaka to observe that "[t]his (Nishida's conception of the mutual determination of the individual *qua,* the self-determination of the universal) is similar to Takahashi's basic structure of totality that includes a (dialectical) development as well as its counter-development" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 181). Miki especially welcomed the contribution of Nishida's logic of *basho* to "remedy the shortcomings in Western philosophy" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 219).

More interesting than these similarities, however, are the criticisms Tanabe, Takahashi, and Miki advance against Nishida philosophy. These constitute the third step in Kosaka's discussions. According to Kosaka, all three thinkers combine to take Nishida to task for his over-emphasis of the standpoint of self-identity, which they all interpret to disclose a monistic tendency inherent in Nishida's philosophy.[3] Subsequently, Kosaka continues, Tanabe and Miki sug-

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3. In the case of Takahashi, Kosaka turns the criticism around and suggests that more than Nishida, Takahashi's conception of the "absolute" as "the one which envelops and transcends" (*hōetsu itsuzai* 包越一在) shows monistic tendencies and closeness to Spinoza's pantheism despite his "dualism of immanence" and "dualism of potentiality" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 198).

gest the moment of otherness to different degrees by claiming the "standpoint of other-power." For some reason, Kosaka passes over this commonality, which is particularly striking because Takahashi also claims the "standpoint of other-power" (TAKAHASHI 1973, vol. 5, p. 29) and suggests the notion of otherness even less indirectly than Tanabe and Miki in that he defers notions such as "absolute," "eternity," "unity" into the eternally distant future and reduces the matter of religion to immanent concerns. However, Tanabe and Miki assign Nishida's "absolute nothingness" a more central place in their philosophies.

In the fourth step, Kosaka unites Tanabe's, Takahashi's, and Miki's criticisms of Nishida in their conviction that Nishida failed to develop a concrete historical philosophy. This was something Tanabe tried to remedy with his notion of "species," and Miki with an exploration of Shinran's view of history. Due to his interest in the religious philosophy of Nishida Kitarō and his colleagues, however, Kosaka focuses on Takahashi's notion of the "one which envelops and transcends" (hōetsu itsuzai 包越一在), rather than on his emphasis on temporality and religion, which focuses on the realm of 'life and death" (seishi 生死).[4]

In the final step, Kosaka evaluates the positions of Tanabe, Takahashi, and Miki and argues that Nishida's standpoint envelops both the philosophies of Tanabe and Takahashi, while Shinran's philosophy of history, on which Miki relied to some degree, is incapable of further developing Nishida's philosophy. At times, however, it seems highly ironic that in response to the claims of Tanabe and especially Takahashi, the founder of "enveloping dialectics" (hōben shōhō 包弁証法), that their philosophical standpoint was deeper and more encompassing than Nishida's, Kosaka correctly asserts that the opposite is the case from Nishida's perspective. The reason for this phenomenon is, of course, that all three thinkers utilize the dialectical principle, which allows each to subsume the philosophy of the others under his own standpoint. Of more consequence, however, is Kosaka's critique that Takahashi abandoned the standpoint of "absolute nothingness" in favor of the "one which envelops and transcends," which moves Takahashi philosophy into the vicinity of Spinoza's monism. At the same time, Kosaka concedes Tanabe's point that Nishida's logic of basho simply "assumes the mediating reality of absolute nothingness" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 131) without providing a proper rationale as to why the question of "how the reality of basho and its activity of self-awareness can be mutually and dialectically mediated" has to be answered by any proponent of Nishida philosophy.

In short, according to Kosaka the main question is "How can one recognize

4. In this sense Takahashi maintains that the religion he advocates is not one of "becoming Buddha in this body" (sokushin jōbutsu 即身成仏) but one of "not becoming Buddha in this body" (sokushin hijōbutsu 即身非成仏, TAKAHASHI 1973, vol. 5, p. 28), that "the problem of salvation is a problem of the present" (TAKAHASHI 1973, vol. 5, p. 20), and that "the determined will not reach the undetermined" (TAKAHASHI 1973, vol. 5, p. 9).

that the reality of *basho*, which encompasses everything, functions as mediation in self-negation?" The clue to the answer, he seems to imply, lies in the "absolute dialectic" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 152), which negotiates and reconciles the various pairs of opposites the commentator encounters in his/her discussion of Nishida and his colleagues. In his final chapters Kosaka utilizes his discussions of Watsuji Tetsurō and Hisamatsu Shin'ichi to apply Nishida's very "standpoint of absolute nothingness" and "absolute dialectics" to social ethics (Watsuji) and a religious philosophy (Hisamatsu).

At the end of his discussion, Kosaka arrives exactly where he promised the reader he would at the beginning of his book, in the sense that he presents Nishida philosophy as a "logic of religious awareness." When such a philosophy of "religious self-awareness" is given proper ethical and historical significance, it is capable of functioning successfully as a philosophy for today. The wider questions of how this philosophy of "absolute nothingness," regardless of whether it is presented in the form of Tanabe's "philosophy of metanoetics," Miki's humanism, or Hisamatsu's "oriental nothingness," applies to contemporary issues, and the application of that philosophy are issues which must be discussed if the philosophy of nothingness is to be considered a "contemporary philosophy," and not simply an interesting philosophical movement of the past.

Nishida and Contemporary Thought

Kosaka and Fujita address this question of whether or not Nishida philosophy can be understood as "contemporary philosophy" in *Nishida Philosophy and the Present: Understanding History, Religion, and Nature* (KOSAKA) and *Nishida Kitarō as Contemporary Philosopher* (FUJITA). The key to both applications is expressed explicitly by Fujita, who stresses that the significance of Nishida's project is that it "overcomes the dualisms" of modernity in the above-mentioned sense. Kosaka applies this philosophy, which overcomes dualism, to environmental ethics, while Fujita applies it to a philosophy of language.

NISHIDA PHILOSOPHY AS ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

In effect, Kosaka argues that Nishida philosophy provides a logic to express the Japanese view of nature, which, in contrast to the dualistic view in the "West," can be characterized by the principle of "non-dual oneness." The problem with the "Western" perspective lies, unsurprisingly, with the Cartesian approach, which replaced the Greek notion of "physis," that is, "an organic nature which produces the fullness of life" (KOSAKA 2001b, p. 182) with a notion of nature that "is thought to be autonomous and constitutes a world of dead objects" (p. 184). Kosaka argues that this conception encouraged a process in which nature was increasingly regarded as an instrument. However, a "nature which is continu-

ously used and infinitely throttled by the technical and instrumental reasoning of humans gradually loses its organic unity and begins to dissolve slowly. By losing its capability of self-generation and of being an environment, this nature gives rise to the grave environmental problems we can observe today" (p. 186). He links this attitude, which tends to objectify nature, with an individualism that degenerated into egotism and Descartes's "dualism of subjectivity and objectivity" (p. 228). He sees the same dualism between "humans and nature" (p. 227) as functioning in "Western" modern ethics such as British utilitarianism and Kant's deontology. Kosaka contends that both systems are not only equally subjective and anthropocentric, but, more importantly, result in a separation of the "moral world" and the "natural world." He argues, however, that the Japanese attitude is different. Drawing from the writings of Shinran and Dōgen, he constructs a Japanese view of nature that portrays it as de-centered and organic rather than posited as a static construct by a seemingly transcendental subjectivity. On the contrary, Dōgen and Shinran do not conceive of the self as independent but, rather, as connected to a "Thou" (*nanji* 汝) and to the four elements (*shidai* 四大); in other words, "the self and the universe comprise a non-dual (and, one could add, organic) oneness" (p. 199). Nishida philosophy reflects this organic "Japanese view of nature" in that it espouses the view that "the true self is the substance [*sic*] of the universe" (p. 217), and insofar as it proposes to ground philosophy on the principles of a "non-dual oneness" and of the "one-qua-many, many-qua-one" (p. 220).

Nishida philosophy not only reverberates and systematizes the "Japanese view of nature" in the sense that his philosophy postulates the interconnection of the self and the cosmos without sacrificing the individuality of the human person. It also integrates this "Japanese view" into what can be construed as an ethical theory. In this sense, one could say that Nishida develops the "Japanese view of nature" into the basics of an "environmental ethics." Kosaka argues that just as Nishida overcomes the duality of self and nature, he also undermines the duality of ethics and metaphysics. He does this by proposing that the "inquiry into the most fundamental reality" (p. 217) and the "inquiry into the basic principles of ethics and morality" (p. 218) are inextricably intertwined. This is important to Kosaka because only a philosophy that unifies ontology, self-cultivation, ethics and, subsequently, theory and practice into a holistic worldview can function as the basis for an ethical theory that integrates self and world, theory and practice. The alternative would result in the absurdity that the ethical and the cognitive subject are separated. In short, Kosaka contends that in order to function, such an environmental ethics must fulfill the following requirements: it must "reject the utilitarian attitude" (p. 236) that objectifies nature and, in some sense, the self as well; it should have the capability to transform the individual person from a person who holds a dualistic view to one who embraces what Kosaka calls "non-dual oneness;" and it must emphasize the

standpoint of totality against an unbridled anthropocentricism. According to Kosaka, Nishida philosophy fulfills all these criteria and manages to reconcile the totality of nature with the individuality of human beings in that it proposes that the universality of nature and the individuality of humans comprise a "non-dual oneness." Therefore, he holds, it is uniquely qualified to provide an ethical theory that is capable of solving one of the most urgent problems of our time.

WORDS AND EXPERIENCE

Following along similar lines to Ueda's *The Reality of Words*, Fujita argues that Nishida philosophy can aid in resolving the relationship between language and experience. Unlike Ueda, however, who uses the problematic of the relationship between "words" and "experience" to espouse and apply Nishida's philosophy of *basho*, Fujita discussed this problem in order to develop a philosophy of language based on Nishida's philosophy. The structure of his argument is surprisingly similar to Kosaka's in that he sets up the dualism between words and experience in what R. N. Ghose calls "contrary-to-fact-assumptions."[5] He then undermines this and replaces it with a concept akin to Kosaka's "non-dual oneness." Fujita commences with an analysis of the everyday conception, which differentiates between "experience" and "words." Experience is "usually" conceived of as direct, concrete, and pre-linguistic whereras words and language are indirect, abstract, and universal. Fujita, however, proceeds to demonstrate that this dichotomy is untenable for three reasons. First, language does not constitute merely a set of symbols or a tool, but rather "the expressive activity of thought. Based on language, thought perfects itself....The real world is nothing but the world which is expressed through language" (FUJITA 1998, p. 100). Second, experience is not opposed to language but rather is clarified through language and "is given a form when we express it in the form of proposition" (p. 95). Even more generally, "words are necessary for knowledge" (p. 102). Finally, Fujita cites Nishida's comment that experience is not "undifferentiated" and maintains, to the contrary, that there are two layers to experience; the "original experience," and language which constitutes but "one part of experience" (p. 121). They constitute "two sides of one event" (p. 24).

Fujita also recognizes two dimensions of words and their dimension as "one part of experience" on the one hand, and a plethora of meaning hidden behind their surface on the other. The key to this understanding is Fujita's concept of *fukurami*, literally "bulge," which indicates that words are pregnant with mean-

5. In his article on Nāgārjuna's argument, R. N. Ghose refers to the strategy of setting up a false dichotomy for the purpose of deconstructing it as "contrary-to-facts-assumptions" (GHOSE 1987, 288).

ing. He uses two heuristic devices to illuminate his argument. The first one is not unlike Maurice Merleau-Ponty's strategy of using clinical accounts to develop a philosophical position. For example, Merleau-Ponty uses Kurt Goldstein's report of the famous Schneider case to differentiate between an abstract and a concrete form of engagement of people with their ambiance, and subsequently between an intellectual and a practical modality of knowledge. Similarly Fujita relies on Goldstein's account to distinguish abstract and contextual knowledge as well as between fixed and one-dimensional[6] vocabulary on the one hand, and fluid and three-dimensional expressions on the other. The second device Fujita uses is Kimura Bin's account of a patient suffering from depersonalization in order to distinguish between the two concepts of *mono*, signifying individual object, and *koto*, referring to the events that contextualize them. While "individual objects" can be designated by words, their "events" and context are referred to by a plethora of meanings lurking in the shadow of individual expressions. Fujita cites Basho's famous haiku, "See the ancient pond—a frog takes the plunge—the sound of water," to explain that *koto* expresses the context of the individual object and its connection to the totality of things, which constitutes, in some sense, the ultimate context of the particular. To use Nishida's language, *koto* is the place, *basho*, of individual linguistic expressions.

Recognizing this *fukurami* in the shadow of words, Fujita accomplishes three goals. First, he collapses the dichotomy between words and experience, thus resolving tension that is created when the experience of thinking and uttering words is considered to be different from an allegedly undefiled,[7] pre-linguistic experience. This also resolves the tension created when experience is believed to be directly graspable even without the use of words, regardless of the plethora of meaning that lurks in their shadow. This problem is, in some sense, related to the methodological conundrum concerning the subject that separates itself from nature in order to reflect upon it, which Kosaka has brought to our attention. In both cases, a part—as mentioned above, Fujita refers to "words" as individual parts of experience—is separated from totality in order to account for the process of reflection, which requires the principle of differentiation. Second, Fujita provides a linguistic theory, which accommodates not only clinical cases of pathological behavior but also the aesthetics of haiku and Zeami (I have omitted a discussion on aesthetics for the sake of brevity). He thus proposes to widen the spectrum of traditional philosophy of language. Third, and most importantly, Fujita develops the basis for a philosophy of language based, not unlike Kosaka's environmental ethics, on Nishida's principles of "one-qua-

6. Fujita uses the term "flat" (*heiban* 平板) to describe the one-dimensionality of abstract vocabulary.

7. I am using the term "undefiled" deliberately to distinguish it from Nishida's "pure experience," which does not exclude language.

many, many-qua-one" and "two-dimensions-one-reality."[8] Such an extension of Nishida philosophy promises to be very fruitful not only because it contributes greatly to the contemporary philosophical discourse on language, but also because it paves the way for further comparative projects between Nishida philosophy and philosophers in the so-called Continental philosophical tradition, such as Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida, and Julia Kristeva, who explore the tension between the limitation and the ambiguity of words.

TOWARDS A NEW PHILOSOPHY

The preceeding investigation has demonstrated that both Kosaka and Fujita argue for a transformation of Nishida philosophy into a "contemporary philosophy." The result is the development of a new environmental ethics that overcomes the alienation of humans from nature on a metaphysical and metaethical level on the one hand, and of a contemporary philosophy of language that considers pathological and religious experience on the other. In other words, they both agree and argue that Nishida philosophy is highly relevant for the solution of philosophical problems today. In addition, both offer concrete suggestions on how Nishida philosophy might be transformed into contemporary philosophy. Kosaka argues that a "new view of reality" (*atarashii jitsuzaikan* 新しい 実在観) has to be rooted squarely in Nishida's philosophy of *basho* in order to be capable of providing the principles of "one-qua-many" and "non-dual oneness," which emphasize "self-negation" and are essential for overcoming the dualistic standpoint. The latter theme is especially important because it reminds the philosopher that the dualisms characteristic of "Western modernity" center on the notion of the self-conscious self; that an overcoming of this dualism requires, as Michel FOUCAULT (1970) also argued in his *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences,* that the concept of the self-conscious self be destabilized and undermined; and that Nishida attributes the moment of self-transformation to his primary principles such as "pure experience" and "absolute nothingness." It is this principle of self-transformation that distinguishes Nishida's philosophy from any kind of monism or essentialism.

At the same time, however, Kosaka advocates a shift in terminology, reminiscent of Nishitani Keiji's suggestion to interpret Nishida's "nothingness" in the light of the Mahāyāna Buddhist notion of *śūnyatā*, from "the standpoint of absolute nothingness" to the "standpoint of absolute emptiness" for three reasons: first, to distinguish between two forms of nothingness, namely "relative nothingness" that opposes being, from "absolute nothingness;" second, to overcome the dichotomy between absolute and relative; and third, to respond to Tanabe's criticism that Nishida philosophy lacks a mature principle of mediation. Fujita

8. Fujita explains that "original experience" and words constitute "two dimensions of one reality" (*hitotsu no kotogara no nimen* 一つの事柄の二面, FUJITA 1998, p. 124).

follows a slightly different route when he points out the similarities between Nishida philosophy and the philosophy of deconstruction and, to varying degrees, the philosophies of Richard Rorty and Merleau-Ponty. This is a relevant comparison in that Nishida also criticizes and overcomes the epistemic prejudices of modernistic philosophy, challenges not only the subjectivity-objectivity dichotomy but also the centrality of transcendental subjectivity, and points towards the abyss of silence and ineffability, which is signified by Fujita's notion of *fukurami*, that lurks behind the surface of language. Furthermore, Fujita argues, Nishida "is not simply a forerunner of contemporary thinkers, but we can also find a unique standpoint in his philosophy" (FUJITA 1998, p. 213). In other words, Nishida discloses a conceptual and thematic affinity with contemporary philosophy and, at the same time, provides a standpoint that indicates the potential of his philosophy to make a unique contribution to contemporary thought. Despite their different stratifications, both Kosaka and Fujita agree on the necessity of complementing the discussion of Nishida and Kyoto school philosophy in the context of Neo-Kantian and Hegelian philosophy with an application of Nishida philosophy to contemporary issues. In addition, Fujita implies that the application should be extended to contemporary thinkers.

Besides these necessary contemporary reflections, however, their application of Nishida's principle of self-negation to Nishida's own philosophy—Kosaka in that he deepens Nishida's standpoint into the "standpoint of absolute emptiness" and Fujita in that he suggests the presence of a moment of deconstruction in Nishida philosophy—seems to comprise not only an interesting exercise but also a heuristic device necessary for the project of developing a contemporary transformation of Nishida philosophy. This methodological device is especially important since the philosophy in itself definitely reflects the philosophical movements and mindset of Nishida's time to some degree. When Kosaka suggests that the standpoint of Nishida's philosophy be deepened, his approach resembles that of Tanabe and Takahashi, who propose, albeit each in his own way, that Nishida strengthens the notion of mediation in his philosophy and, subsequently, advocates a new and "deeper" philosophical standpoint. Takahashi goes one step further and applies Nishida's principle of "self-negation" to Nishida philosophy itself in that he includes the moment of "anti-dialectics" (*hibenshōhō* 非弁証法) into what he conceived to be Nishida's "dialectics of basho" (*basho no benshōhō* 場所の弁証法) in order to develop an "enveloping dialectics" (*hōben shōhō* 包弁証法). In short, Takahashi implies, though not without a hint of irony, that to deepen the standpoint of Nishida philosophy the commentator of Nishida philosophy has to dialectically sublate the opposition between Nishida philosophy and his critics.

Similarly, in his *Deconstruction of Nishida Philosophy*, Nakamura follows the theme of deepening one's standpoint. He proposes not only the standpoint of

"meta-dialectics" (*meta benshōhō* メタ弁証法) which transcends and envelops dialectics but also, as the title of the work vaguely suggests, a profound similarity between Nishida philosophy and postmodern thought. Specifically, Nakamura argues that Nishida philosophy discloses the three fundamental characteristics of postmodern thought, which are what Nakamura calls the anti-philosophical tendency—this is his way of asserting that both Nishida philosophy and post-modernism critique of the modernistic approach to philosophy; a recognition of the "deep-layers of human knowledge;" and a notion of knowledge which is "decentralized" and "not systemic" (NAKAMURA 1987, pp. 15–24). Be that as it may, the application of the principle of "self-negation," which Nishida himself utilizes to destabilize concepts such as "*basho*" and "absolute nothingness" in order to prevent them from being interpreted as essences, to Nishida philoso-phy is necessary to avoid the possibililty that his philosophy and the commen-taries thereof slide into the very essentialism Nishida rejects. He rejects this for two reasons. First, as Takahashi's rhetoric of the dialectics of dialectics and "anti-dialectics" indicates, any juxtaposition of Nishida's "standpoint of absolute nothingness" to other philosophical standpoints creates a fundamen-tal, methodological conundrum, the cause of which lies in the very definition of Nishida's philosophical position as "the standpoint of absolute nothingness" itself. I would like to clarify this predicament by using Kosaka's argument as an example. When comparing Nishida philosophy to the thought of Spinoza, Takahashi, Watsuji, and so on, Kosaka uses binary categories that contrast Nishida's standpoint of "seeing god in the self" with Spinoza's "seeing the self in god" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 58), his "philosophy of nothingness" with Takahashi's "philosophy of being," and his "noetic negation" to Watsuji's "noematic nega-tion" (KOSAKA 1997, p. 277). These binary categories are immensely helpful in order to understand the differences (which are undeniably differences) between Nishida philosophy and other philosophies, and are, due to the nature of com-parisons, inevitable. However, they do violate Nishida's very sentiment that "absolute nothingness" does not have any opposite but itself and, concomitantly, its direct implication that the standpoint of "absolute nothingness" cannot have any opposition but itself. This rhetoric naturally causes the fundamental methodological dilemma of how Nishida can be compared to other obviously different positions. I think the solution to this conundrum lies in the concep-tion of "self-negation" which includes the principle of difference within Nishida's non-dualism. One of the reasons why Nishida's philosophy is rather difficult to interpret as a system is that he attempts to formulate the most fun-damental philosophical standpoint, which encompasses all philosophical standpoints. This is almost reminiscent of Edmund Husserl's "first philosophy."

Now, if Nishida's philosophy is contrasted with the thought of other thinkers, his philosophical standpoint, that is the standpoint of "absolute noth-ingness," is compromised and relativized over and against a particular counter-

foil. Consequently, every comparison requires a further deepening of Nishida's position in the sense in which Nishida himself transformed his philosophical standpoint in response to the criticisms of Takahashi as well as Tanabe. In the same sense, Kosaka suggests the standpoint of "absolute emptiness" to accommodate and reconcile the differences between Nishida on the one hand, and Spinoza, Takahashi, and Watsuji on the other. In addition, in the same way in which Nishida contends that the process of "differentiation" (*bunka* 分化) infinitely deepens his notions of "pure experience" and "absolute nothingness," any comparison that provides a (constructive) binary typology and its subsequent dialectical sublation cannot but deepen Nishida's standpoint of "absolute nothingness." Second, and not unrelated to this methodological problem, the principle of "self-negation" if applied to Nishida's philosophy discloses, as Fujita and Nakamura seem to imply, a deconstructive element in Nishida's philosophy. As I have argued elsewhere, this means that Nishida introduced the moment of "self-negation" to his conceptual structure in order to prevent a reification of these concepts. Practically, this means—to paraphrase Fujita—"concepts are necessary for knowledge." But while concepts are necessary, their reification, especially vis-à-vis their opposites, cuts off their *fukurami* and compromises their function to express and clarify experience. In this sense, philosophy can only, to paraphrase Martin Srajek, approach its subject matter asymptotically but cannot grasp it completely and, subsequently, has to include the principle of "self-negation" as its own corrective function. In other words, the strength of Nishida philosophy is that it provides a heuristic principle, namely the concept of "self-negation," which allows the commentator to apply Nishida philosophy to new problems, to adapt formerly alien notions into it, and to transform it into contemporary philosophy while remaining faithful to its conceptual core, and to Nishida's own project. In the final section, I will discuss three challenges the commentator of Nishida philosophy has to deal with in order to transform it successfully into a contemporary philosophy.

Challenges to Nishida Philosophy

The preceding discussion leaves little doubt that the non-dual principle can be considered as the most fundamental core of Nishida philosophy, the foundation for an environmental ethics, the underpinning of a philosophy of language along the lines that Fujita recommends, and, more generally, a basis for the transformation of Nishida philosophy into a contemporary philosophy. Nishida's terminology of "*basho*" and "self-identity," however, seems to frequently encourage an interpretation of Nishida philosophy as monism. This is amply demonstrated not only by the criticisms of Tanabe, Takahashi, and Miki, but also by Nobechi's rejection of Nishida philosophy. Even Kosaka's notion of "non-dual oneness" does not seem immune to this kind of criticism. However,

these monistic interpretations of Nishida philosophy find a challenger in
Nakaoka Narifumi. In my survey of recent literature on Nishida, his *Nishida
Kitarō: In Order to Encounter the Self*, which for the most part is written as an
emminently readable and accessible introduction to Nishida philosophy
including glossaries and short biographies on the people who influenced
Nishida, contained the biggest surprise. On the final pages of his discussion of
Nishida's conception of the self, Nakaoka suddenly pauses and declares,
"Kitarō [*sic*] dismisses the thought of identity and dependency and embraces
the thought of difference and resistance" (Nakaoka 1999, p. 43). To make sure
the reader understands his point, Nakaoka includes a definition of identity and
difference, where he observes: "The West prioritizes the belief that ideas and
reality do not change but remain eternally self-identical. On the other hand, that
which changes, that is, difference, is secondary in that it becomes possible on the
foundation of self-identity....Contemporary thought (especially Nietzsche, struc-
turalism, and Derrida) has raised severe doubts (about this philosophy of self-
identity)....Kitarō's [*sic*] logic of nothingness can also be thought to stand
decisively against the Western logic of being (the thought based on the princi-
ple of the transcendent), to recognize the moment of difference clearly, and to
express it" (Nakaoka 1999, p. 53). Given that one of Nishida's basic concepts is
the "absolute contradictory self-identity," Nakaoka's observation is somewhat
surprising. However, while his generalization has its own problems, it does
emphasize one important point, namely, the link between the principle of being
and the concept of identity as well as the connection between the moment of
difference and the notions of change and the lack of an essence. To clarify this
point, Nakaoka does not deny the dualistic tendencies of mainstream "West-
ern" philosophies on the one hand, or Nishida's notion of "absolute contradic-
tory self-identity" on the other. He simply points out that the concept of "identity"
in some sense implies permanence and being, while the notions of imperma-
nence and non-being require the moment of difference. In doing so, Nakaoka
not only indicates the similarity between postmodernism and Nishida philoso-
phy that Fujita and Nakamura have pointed out, more importantly he also
reminds the reader that Nishida never completely dissolved the moment of dif-
ference in his various conceptions of identity, starting from his concepts of
"pure experience" and "*basho*" to his "absolute contradictory self-identity."
This recognition of this moment of difference, in addition to the well recog-
nized importance of "identity," can not only provide the non-dualistic princi-
ple needed for Kosaka's environmental ethic and Fujita's theory of *fukurami*, it
also prevents one's interpretation of Nishida philosophy from falling into a
static monism or a web of contradictions. In other words, if the principles of
identity and difference are reconciled in such a way that they do not slide into
an absurdity, which would render language meaningless, Nishida philosophy

can become the contemporary philosophy Kosaka and Fujita have promised us in their remarkable works.

To develop a philosophy on the non-dual principle and to negotiate the principles of identity and difference, the commentator of Nishida philosophy has to steer clear of three traps. Obviously the emphasis of difference over and against identity has to be avoided because it leads to the dualism Nishida and, subsequently, Kosaka and Fujita strive to overcome. By the same token, as discussed in the above paragraph, a philosophical system which privileges the notion of identity runs the risk of falling into a monism. However, as problematic as the temptation to simply collapse the opposites is, it seems necessary to elaborate what it means to pronounce the non-duality of identity and difference if Kyoto school philosophy is supposed to have an impact on the philosophical discourse outside of the, relatively speaking, marginalized field[9] of "Asian," and particularly "Japanese," philosophy. This is because most philosophers will reject the equation of the proposition (A) with its negation (-A). Unfortunately some commentators interpret Nishida's non-dualism to do just that. For example, Nobechi Tōyō, a proponent of Takahashi philosophy, rejects Nishida's dialectics on the grounds that contradictions are untenable. While NAKAMURA takes pains in his *Basho (Topos)* to make Nishida's "logic of *basho*" palatable to an audience unfamiliar with non-dualism, his explanation could easily be read to suggest that Nishida proposes that (A) equals (not-A) despite his careful wording.[10] It is, thus, important to take seriously challenges like the one by NOBECHI, who implies in his *A Critique of Nishida Philosophy: The System of Takahashi Satomi* that a philosophy which collapses mutually exclusive opposites cannot avoid falling into contradictions.

Despite his predilection for paradoxical expression, it is hard for me to believe that Nishida would really assert—he never does so explicitly in his writings anyhow—the identity of the contradictories (A) and (-A) and the absurdities this assertion would imply. If the propositions (A) and (-A) were really identical it would follow that, for example, the propositions "there is a VCR in this

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9. I am using the modifier "marginalized" deliberately, since there are still only few instances where scholars of Asian philosophy have been included in allegedly non-sectarian discussions of so-called universal philosophical issues and not merely assigned the special niche of "non-Western" or comparative philosophy. While there is presently a movement to integrate various philosophical traditions that has begun to impact on philosophy textbooks and dictionaries in recent years—Gene Blocker, for example, has made a compelling case for a "World Philosophy"—this process of integration is far from complete.

10. It seems to me that Nakamura is careful to avoid this conclusion. However, his discussion of Nishida's "*basho*" leaves open this interpretation when he ascribes to what he calls "paleologic" the proposition that "A can not only be (equated with) B=not-A, but also that, A and B=not-A are located in the same place at the same time" (NAKAMURA 1988, p. 199) and later suggests that Jung's Analytical Psychology and Nishida's logic of *basho* are connected (*musubitsuku* 結びつく) to this thinking. The bulk of the chapter however, is dedicated to interpret the logic of *basho* in ways that do not necessarily invalidate the logic of non-contradiction.

room" and "there is no VCR in this room" are simultaneously valid. Rather, it seems to me that Nishida's non-dualistic principle as expressed in his enigmatic "one-qua-many, many-qua-one" and "absolute contradictory self-identity," which I would dub, following the *Mādhyamika* rendering, as "neither-one-nor-two" rather than as the "non-dual oneness" or "two-dimensions-of-one-reality," are motivated by two key concerns.

First, when Nishida suggests overcoming Aristotelian logic he does not intend to eliminate the principle of non-contradiction but rather contends that the principle of non-contradiction in particular and Aristotelian logic in general are not sufficient to either validate themselves or to elucidate the construction of knowledge and thus point beyond themselves. In short, to Nishida, the foundations of knowledge lie paradoxically outside of the realm of knowledge.[11] To illuminate this conundrum Nishida formulates his "logic of *basho*" and a three-level epistemology that distinguishes between, to use Nishida's terminology, "the world of judgment," "the world of self-awareness," and the "world of intelligibility." The "world of judgment" identifies the world of individuals, objects, and difference, which we perceive, construct, and understand. This world is ruled by Aristotelian logic. It is opposed to the "world of self-awareness" which signifies the world of concrete experience, activity, and oneness. At best this world can be described by a phenomenology à la Merleau-Ponty. However, while experience can be clarified, as Fujita observes, by language, concepts, and theories, the world of experience itself escapes our grasp, reasoning, and language. The third dimension of this epistemic model primarily suggests that the previous two realms are neither separate nor identical. In some sense, this formula implies that, as Fujita has argued, words and abstract concepts are experienced as well and our experience has to be comprehended through language and, thus, cannot be separated. More generally, it maintains simultaneously the irreducibility and the interrelatedness of both epistemic dimensions; that is, subjectivity and objectivity, experience and abstraction. Most importantly, however, this model does not reject the principle of non-contradiction, but rather contextualizes[12] and sublates it.

The second key concern is that the non-dual principle expresses the insight that the most fundamental philosophical problems, such as the problem of personal identity or, as Kosaka points out, the problem of environmental ethics, cannot but require the two mutually exclusive moments of identity and difference, universality and individuality. On the one hand, we are part of nature and not separate from it; on the other hand, our individuality is irreducible not only

11. Robert J.J. WARGO calls this conundrum the "completeness problem" (WARGO 1971, p. 208).

12. One of Nishida's major criticisms of existing epistemologies is that they are based on unproven presuppositions. Nishida's epistemology successfully undermines these assumptions and suggests a conception of knowledge that is inherently unstable and contains, as I have discussed above, a self-corrective principle.

vis-à-vis other individuals but also vis-à-vis the totality of nature itself.[13] However, as Takahashi has demonstrated in the above-mentioned article "Concerning Nishida's Philosophy," there is a huge difference between the assertion that human beings are equally identical to and separate from nature and the proposition that (A) equals (-A).

In short, the difference is threefold. First, what distinguishes the possible responses to the question of whether or not there is a VCR in my room from the observation that human beings are equally identical to and separate from nature is that the former concerns a particular problem in a particular given space at a particular given time, while the latter assumes the totality as its horizon. With regards to particular problems, there are only two possible answers— *tertium non datur*; Takahashi argues, however, that matters of totality involve an infinity of alternatives and, subsequently, assumes, as Kosaka would say, the standpoint *sub specie eternitatis*. Second, the question concerning the VCR assumes a specific perspective, while the question regarding human nature does not. The paradoxical statement that "humans are equally identical to and separate from nature" indicates, on the contrary, that a satisfying answer to this question has to assume a multiplicity of perspectives. Third, in addition it is possible—even though I am not sure whether Nishida intended this interpretation or not—to argue that expressions such as "time is contradictory" imply, not unlike Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamādhyamikakārikā* and Derrida's deconstruction, that the concept "time," like all concepts, is inherently unstable and limited. It is in order to express this existential conundrum, which involves the moments of identity and difference, as well as the above-mentioned complexity of the human epistemic predicament, that Nishida employs the non-dualistic principle. In some sense, the necessity of paradoxical expressions indicates, furthermore, that concepts and logical rules are limited and restricted to the "world of judgment."[14] The challenge is now, as Kosaka and Fujita maintain, to apply the non-dual principle to individual problems such as environmental ethics without either privileging one of these two fundamental aspects of identity and difference or collapsing them into the contradiction, better, the absurdity, that (A) equals (-A).

A final challenge facing the philosophy of the Kyoto school and, especially, Nishida, is that its commentaries still contain traces of the orientalist dichotomy between "East" and "West" and the *Nihonjinron* search for a "Japanese essence."

13. The real problem, of course, is that in general we do not relate to the totality of nature but rather to nature as the outside world that I encounter. The notion of "totality," to the contrary, comprises, as Takahashi has argued, a limited concept insofar as the totality of nature, which consists of infinite parts, ironically, can never be reached, even though we live in it.

14. Nāgārjuna argued already almost two millennia ago that concepts are inherently contradictory. Nishida adds the notion of the "world of judgment" as the place or context where concepts work to illuminate their function and limitations.

Ironically, not only have the stereotypes of the orientalist rhetoric and the ideology of *Nihonjinron* become untenable in recent decades, they also stand in direct contradiction to the philosophy of the Kyoto school itself. If one assumes Nishida's simultaneous rejection of all forms of dualism and the notion of essences, the bifurcation of the world into the imaginary abstracts "East" and "West" and the search for an essence of "Japanese culture" (or the essence of any particular culture) becomes impossible if not absurd. More importantly, however, I believe that these remnants of the rhetoric of orientalism and *Nihonjinron* do a great disservice to the Kyoto school project insofar as they provide an easy target for critics and detract from the core of it's argument. In addition, the extension and generalization of one thinker's text or ideas to all of Japanese thought throughout history seems extremely fragile because it begs for counterexamples, raises a host of methodological issues, such as the definition of "Japanese thought" (that is, the question is "Japanese thought" defined by geography, the ethnic or national identity of its author, or by an ahistorical essence—either option is equally problematic),[15] and evokes ideological overtones I am sure most contemporary authors would try to avoid. In this sense, Kosaka's extension of Shinran's and Dōgen's thought to the "Japanese view of nature" does not seem necessary (in both meanings of the word) and rather distracts from Kosaka's core argument, which in itself is convincing, and his emminently important project of how Shinran and Dōgen's religious thought can provide a view of nature which overcomes the problems posed by a self-nature dualism.

Conclusion

If these challenges are met, Nishida philosophy and, more generally, Kyoto school philosophy will have the potential to provide an exciting alternative approach and a unique contribution to the general philosophical discourse outside of the fields of comparative philosophy and philosophy of religion to which it has heretofore been confined. An inclusion of an applied Kyoto school philosophy in present day discourses such as those on, for example, environmental ethics and philosophy of language, would enrich these discourses as well

15. This problem, of course, raises a host of questions that cannot be answered in the framework of a review article. It seems interesting, however, that the categories "Anglo-American philosophy" and "Continental philosophy" are used as synonyms for philosophical methods, the former to signify empiricism, pragmatism, and, since the first half of the twentieth century, "analytical philosophy," and the latter rationalism, idealism, and, since the first half of the twentieth century, what could be called "phenomenology and its successors." In this sense, it is possible for American, German, and Japanese individuals alike to practice "Anglo-American" or "Continental philosophy." By the same token, "Japanese philosophy" could be used as synonym for certain types of Buddhism, Confucianism, and, since the first half of the twentieth century, the philosophical methodology of the Kyoto school. Then, however, it should be possible for American, German, and Japanese individuals alike to "do" "Japanese philosophy."

as Kyoto school philosophy equally. I applaud Kosaka and Fujita for their vision and their tireless contributions to Nishida scholarship and its transformation into a contemporary philosophy, and await with anticipation their future work.

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