



Peter Suarez, *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel: Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe Remake the Philosophy of Spirit*

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SUARES'S first book-length publication on philosophy fills a conspicuous lacuna of scholarship on the complex relationship between Hegel and the philosophers of the Kyoto School. The uptake of Hegel's thought in Japan has been addressed by scholars in articles, book chapters, or in passing within the context of other subjects; but given the pervasive influence of Hegelian philosophy on Nishida and Tanabe in particular, Suarez's in-depth treatment of the Kyoto School's "takeover" of Hegel is a needed addition to the existing comparative studies on this topic.

Suarez makes a compelling and well-documented argument demonstrating that Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe all rely heavily on Hegel's ideas and methodology in fashioning their own positions, despite their harsh criticisms of certain views they attribute to him. Suarez does a convincing job of showing that though the Kyoto scholars unanimously reject what they take to be the central tenets of Hegel's philosophy, namely his "dogmatic Christian theism, the promotion of being to the central category of reality, and rigid rationalism," these "ostensibly Hegelian features are in fact nowhere to be found in his philosophy" (190). Not only do the Kyoto scholars misinterpret Hegel in their critiques of him, Suarez argues, they actually incorporate Hegel's thought in significant ways such that their own philosophies must be considered Hegelian in many respects. This idea itself is not new, however, and Suarez acknowledges that others have made similar observations. The contribution made by this book is its thorough demonstration of this fact, with trenchant reasoning and clear explanations of the many confounding formulations employed by these thinkers.

The book consists of a short introduction and five chapters. Besides a brief chapter on "The Danish Parallel" which addresses Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel and his stance on faith in relation to reason, the author primarily examines and critiques the thought of Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe. While dimensions of Hegel's philosophy are discussed at length throughout the volume, the book focuses on the work of the Kyoto School philosophers and the presence of Hegel's ideas therein. This being the case, the reading of Hegel adopted by Suarez is not worked out in conversation with current developments in Hegel scholarship. This may be a disappointment to those who come to the subject well versed in those debates since the reader must simply accept the author's interpretation of Hegel in order to follow him through

his comparative enterprise. This disappointment is far outweighed, however, by the original insights offered. Soares's analysis of the uptake of Hegel in Japan illuminates issues germane to Hegel studies and the history of philosophy broadly. In fact, this volume's account of how the Kyoto scholars "remake" Hegel's philosophy of spirit addresses important issues in Hegel scholarship that have not been probed this deeply until now. For example, the in-depth analysis of Hegelian contradiction given within this context provides a lucid explanation of perhaps the most notorious dimensions of his philosophy—the inner workings of his dialectical method. With the Kyoto scholars as Hegel's conversation partners, the nature of dialectic and the movement of spirit in self-consciousness becomes clearer than it could have been had it been treated exclusively within the European and American context.

The first chapter, which comprises roughly half of the book, is devoted to Nishida and surveys the development of his thought throughout his life. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first describes the "anatomy of subjectivity" and the "world within," situating Nishida's conception of self-consciousness within the context of Western philosophy. Here Nishida's notion of pure experience and his logic of place are examined alongside Hegel's developmental model of self-consciousness, in addition to the models put forth by other notable figures such as Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hölderlin, and Josiah Royce. The second section confronts "the objective dimension" which delves into the finer workings of "the dialectical formula" operative in both Hegel and Nishida and addresses Nishida's attempts at sociopolitical thought in relation to history. Nishida's notion of *jikaku* 自覚, or self-awareness, establishes the continuity of the chapter in that it encompasses both the subjective and objective components of reality in one two-fold activity. The most notable strength of this discussion lies in its analysis and explication of the form of Nishida's logic in relation to Hegel's. The analysis Soares gives is highly technical, providing an account of paradox, contradiction, and negation in the work of both authors. Soares tackles their perplexing dialectical maneuvers with uncommon precision and clarity, relating them at times to their possible counterparts within certain Buddhist strands such as *Mādhyamika* and Pure Land.

In addition to the analysis of the logical forms employed by Hegel and Nishida, one of the most provocative elements of Soares's discussion—and one which warrants further debate—is his investigation into the limits of rationality for these thinkers, a theme that continues throughout the remaining chapters of the book. Despite the close analysis of the logical structures shaping the thought of each, the question remains as to whether a fully rational account of reality and experience is possible. Soares writes of Nishida, "The reconciliation of the rationality of everyday life with the transrational level of consciousness at the base of reality is the central problem with which he will struggle until the end of his career" (12). This struggle is evident in Nishida's simultaneous commitment to rational, philosophical discourse and his use of utterly paradoxical language to formulate his position. This tension points to a deeper issue not specifically taken up in the book, which is the

possibility that contradiction and paradox are themselves forms of rationality, both operating within and pointing beyond the laws that define them. For both Nishida and Hegel, self-consciousness and the reality it grounds exist through dialectical conflict. For Hegel, as Soares points out, “Contradiction is the motor of life” (57). And for Nishida, remaining true to the convolutions of the self in its ordinary and ultimate character requires articulations that conjoin antithetical terms. Nishida’s notions of the eternal now (*eien no ima* 永遠の今), the continuity of discontinuity (*hirenzoku no renzoku* 非連続の連続), and the self-identity of absolute contradictions (*zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一) are examples. Prompted by the author’s comparison of the ways these thinkers conceive of contradiction, the reader is led to question the nature of logic itself and to confront how dialectical reason challenges common notions of rationality.

The limits of reason discussed within the context of Nishida’s philosophy are taken up in different ways, both directly and indirectly, in the following chapters on Nishitani, Tanabe, and Kierkegaard. In the chapter on Nishitani, his “postulate of emptiness as enhancement of being” as a means to counter the problem of nihilism is examined through his accounts of “original nature” and emptiness as “double exposure.” Nishitani’s notion of double exposure in particular proves to be a useful tool for explaining how seemingly incompatible views can be held at the same time. This also provides a useful point of comparison with Hegel’s logic, elucidating similar conundrums therein, shedding light on the issues related to rationality just noted.

Soares’s general approach in each chapter is to lay out his chosen thinkers’ critiques of Hegel and proceed to show whether or not they successfully avoid the pitfalls into which they perceive Hegel to have fallen. In each case he concludes that they are either unsuccessful in clearing themselves of the same charges that they level against him, or that their criticisms reject claims that Hegel cannot be proven to have actually made. In Tanabe’s case, these failures are particularly pointed, Soares argues, since his adoption of numerous Hegelian features in his own work clashes harshly with his stringent critique of those same features in Hegel’s philosophy. In addition, Tanabe rejects certain ideas that he incorrectly attributes to Hegel. For Tanabe, Hegel is both a well of inspiration and a foil he continually pits himself against, and, as Soares aptly shows, that ambivalence has problematic consequences that come to bear in the anti-philosophical position Tanabe eventually adopts.

Overall, Soares’s study is well-documented with an extensive bibliography divided into sections according to subjects for convenient reference. Textual references to Hegel and the Kyoto scholars make use of both translations and the sources in their original languages, providing guidance for readers at various levels of expertise. There is one reference, however, that must be flagged. On page 69, Soares cites a passage from David Dilworth’s translation of Nishida’s final essay, “The Logic of Nothingness [Place] and the Religious Worldview,” in which the philosopher says of his logic that it “is illustrated by Nāgārjuna’s logic of the eightfold negation” and “is decidedly not a dialectic of substance in the Hegelian sense.” Michiko YUSA (1988),

in her review of this translation, makes the important observation that in the original text Nishida makes no direct mention of either Nāgārjuna or Hegel here, and charges Dilworth with having been excessively interpretive at this point in his translation. This pivotal passage bears upon a number of themes dealt with in Soares's book, so readers should consult the original text, mindful of its disputed translation.

The book's thesis, succinctly put forth in the conclusion, emphasizes the closeness of the principal views held by Hegel and the philosophers of the Kyoto School. Soares, in fact, finds no significant difference between the notion of absolute spirit delineated by Hegel and the Japanese philosophers' notion of absolute nothingness. Though he voices good reasons to support this view, not enough analysis of Hegel's notion of spirit is given to prove this particular point. But whether or not this point is proved, the final assessment of the relationship between Hegel and the Kyoto scholars given in the conclusion presents a new reading of Hegel informed by the ways his thought has been adapted by Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe. The convergence of their various dialectics opens new ways of understanding Hegel, in addition to bringing together and clarifying the ideas that have shaped philosophical thought in Japan. In this respect *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel* is a model work of comparative scholarship and makes a highly valuable contribution to the field. All in all, this work boldly charts exciting frontiers in world philosophy, demonstrating the potential fruit that may come from thorough and intelligent cross-cultural comparative studies.

REFERENCES

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