



Agustín Jacinto Zavala, ed., *Alternativas filosóficas. Investigaciones recientes sobre Nishida Kitarō, fundador de la Escuela de Kioto*

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TO MARK THE hundredth anniversary of the publication of Nishida Kitarō's maiden work, *A Study of the Good* (1911), Agustín Jacinto Zavala, one of the pioneers of Nishida scholarship in the Spanish-speaking world, invited leading specialists from around the world to contribute to a volume of essays which he published under the title *Philosophical Alternatives*. In addition to contributions by Ōhashi Ryōsuke 大橋良介, Matteo Cestari, Jacynthe Tremblay, Bernard Stevens, Bret W. Davis, and Arisaka Yōko 有坂陽子, Jacinto includes three of his own essays. Taken together, these three pieces give a good idea of Jacinto's approach, which consists of a detailed examination of Nishida's texts, an exposition of the key terms Nishida uses in his writings, and a culling of primary sources on which he drew, whether explicitly mentioned in the texts, alluded to in his diaries, or deduced from annotations in books from his private library.

In "Fragments on Nishida's idea of Pure Experience," Jacinto synthesizes thirty-four fragments from Nishida's notes composed during the time when he was working out the idea and later included in volume 16 of his *Complete Works* (1966–1967, 267–572). Jacinto observes that there are certain differences with the final version that appeared in *A Study of the Good*, and concludes that if Nishida had spent more time polishing his prose he would have ended up with a different book and a fuller account of the world of pure experience than the one he had found in William James' 1904 essay, "A World of Pure Experience."

His second essay, "The Place of Kant's "Consciousness in General" in Nishida's Philosophy," reconstructs twenty years of Nishida's intellectual journey in the light of his epistemological ruminations on Kant's *Bewusstsein überhaupt*. In it, Jacinto attempts to clarify Nishida's dialogue with Neo-Kantian thought and to assess the extent to which the idea of "consciousness in general" represented a "port of entry" (229) to his own theory of *basho* first outlined in 1926.

Finally, Jacinto's "Concluding Reflection: The Notion of Philosophy in Selected Texts of Nishida" lays out three aspects of Nishida's understanding of philosophy, namely, its critical function, its relation with religion, and its service as "the world's self-expression of historical reality." This latter aspect is singled out as "a response to the problem of the forgetfulness of being in Western philosophy" (364), by which he means the failure of philosophy to pay attention to reality by not wrestling with the question or doing so with an inadequate methodology, or by locating reality in

subjectivity, substantiality, and dualistic modes of thought. Nishida's remedy to this situation, Jacinto argues, was to bring "being" into a dialectical relationship with absolute nothingness.

Ōhashi Ryōsuke's "Techné: Obverse and Reverse Seeing in Nishida's Philosophy" is a translation of a Japanese article that first appeared in the annual journal of the Institute for Japanese-German Studies, *Bunmei to tetsugaku* 文明と哲学 (Culture and philosophy; vol. 3, 2010). Along with his own reading of Nishida's philosophy, Ōhashi tries to develop a point of view that was only implicit in Nishida's writings, one that he dubs a "phenomenology of 'reverse seeing'" (92). Simply put, in working out his logic of *basho*, Nishida might have developed a "field of obverse seeing," that is, the viewpoint of unity or the "true mode of being," but he would not have developed the correlative viewpoint of persons who adopt an ego-centered mode of seeing, "the field of reverse seeing." On this basis, Ōhashi shows us not only the "Copernican revolution" that Nishida effected through his way of posing the question of science and technique—*techné* in the sense of the self-determination of the world and that which constitutes human beings as well as the technical nature of science—but also that he was unable to achieve a "revolution of the Copernican revolution" by attending to the contradictions perceived by a vision of *pathos* or reverse seeing.

The Italian scholar Matteo Cestari asks whether Nishida's logic of *basho* succeeded in overcoming the standpoint of metaphysics and hence the hierarchy of concepts. This leads him to a carefully documented consideration of the theoretical implications of negation and the idea of absolute nothingness in Nishida's logic.

Jacynthe Tremblay also takes up the logic of *basho*, but does so from a meticulous analysis of Nishida's language, in particular, the way he uses "enveloping" verbs and idioms of place. Once again this distinguished Canadian scholar demonstrates her deep understanding of the Japanese language and Nishida's philosophical style, showing us how the two overlap and shape one another to enable the articulation of a logic of "location."

The Belgian philosopher Bernard Stevens proposes setting up a dialogue between Nishida's philosophy and the phenomenology of Michel Henry by focusing on the notion of life. For Stevens, Nishida's way of examining consciousness draws his philosophy close to phenomenology, in particular to Henry's approach to the "self-revelation of life" and the crucial role it plays in the body, without slipping into Henry's epistemological disjunction.

The volume is rounded off by contributions from Bret W. Davis and Arisaka Yōko which place Nishida's philosophy in a global context. Davis centers in on certain intercultural elements in Nishida's thought that might serve as practical bridges for a true dialogue among cultures in our times. In doing so, he submits to critical examination a number of problematic points stemming from Nishida's political thought, contrasting them with ideas of culture proposed by Kōyama Iwao 高山岩男 that can help us better understand his teacher's views regarding the place of Japan in

an international context. Arisaka raises the question of philosophy's "universalism" by looking at the definition of philosophy itself and contrasting the European universalism that was called on to justify colonial expansion with universalist elements in modern Japanese philosophy and Nishida in particular. She concludes by noting the responsibility of philosophers to judge Nishida's political views by taking into account the way in which the idea of philosophy he subscribed to was decisive in the way he wrote about history.

In editing the volume, Jacinto chose not to unify the papers in terms of method of citation, bibliographical reference, or the inclusion of Japanese characters. This, together with the various typographical errors that were passed over, suggests that the work would have benefited from a careful, final editing. Readers will appreciate the listing of translations available in Spanish but will also wish that more had been done to justify the translation of certain terms such as "self-perception" for *jikaku* 自覚 (112, 244, 350) and "=" for *soku* 即 (102, 257), not to mention rather clumsy Spanish neologisms like *topos-ica* (103) and *logos-ica* (349).

These quibbles aside, the collection represents an important new contribution to the study of Nishida's philosophy in the Spanish-speaking world. Interest in Kyoto School philosophy has grown considerably over the past years as witnessed by the organization of international seminars, courses at the graduate and undergraduate level, and the number of doctoral dissertations submitted in countries like Spain, Mexico, and Colombia. Spanish readers interested in Nishida have gained access to the original texts principally through two versions of *A Study of the Good*, translations of "On Beauty" and "The Logic of *Basho* and the Religious Worldview," and Jacinto's own translations. In addition, one can turn to the comprehensive overviews of Japanese philosophy prepared by the late Jesús González Valles, James Heisig's work on the Kyoto School, and a recently published translation of Bernard Stevens's book on Nishida's thought. The picture is rounded out by articles appearing in academic journals, a first translation of selected writings of Ueda Shizuteru including one focused on Nishida's philosophy, and more and more specialized studies from a wide spectrum of viewpoints (389).

One can only applaud this latest contribution to the study of Nishida's thought and hope that Jacinto will continue his impressive and pioneering output, join hands with the young generation of Mexican scholars working in the field, and bring the results to the attention of mainline publishers where it might receive the wider audience it deserves.

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