

ORIENTAL NOTHINGNESS

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In this short paper, I would like to explain briefly about the philosophy of Nishida, Tanabe, Nishitani and Hisamatsu.

1. NISHIDA'S PHILOSOPHY OF ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS

Although Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945) is one of Japan's greatest Zen Buddhist philosophers, his idiom and style of thought-organization are difficult for Western readers to follow.

Typical of Mahayana Buddhism is his emphasis on the contradictory aspect of phenomenological reality, which is finally "nothingness" or "voidness." . . . Everyone who is familiar with Indian and Buddhist philosophy knows the difficulty of rendering into Western terms and concepts those Oriental views which are ascetical ways of approaching salvation rather than philosophical concepts and therefore defy analytical examination. Nishida, though, tried with the help of Western philosophy to find a new logic which would also incorporate such views. No wonder, then, the difficulty in understanding him, and his constant complaint that he was never understood even by his best pupils, Orinetsals though they were, familiar with his cultural background. . . . the fact remains that Nishida is the most demanding thinker Japan ever produced. To understand him the reader must bring, in addition to a competent knowledge of Western and Eastern philosophy, a willingness to try to see "the beyond" which is Nishida himself. The crux of the matter is, I think, that Nishida wants to be a universal thinker. To put it better, though Nishida wants indeed to give his logic to Oriental culture, his aim is also to place it in a world culture, to make it universal. It is this bold attempt much more than his poetical style or his overly-repetitious accumulation of dialectical negations, which gives rise to the complexity of Nishida's thought and the reader's difficulties.¹

In his book, *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, there are three essays: "The Intelligible

World," "Goethe's Metaphysical Background" and "The Unity of Opposites." The first of these analyzes the Mind which contains all reality according to Mahayana thought. The title, "*The Intelligible World*,"² refers to the images and concepts present within the Mind. According to Nishida, the Mind is composed of four separate levels, each supported by the next, in the same way, to use his words, as a fine kimono is lined with silk. From the outermost level to the innermost, we have: the Universal of Judgment, the Universal of Self-consciousness, the Universal of the Intelligible World, and then a level called Nothingness. One fundamental aspect of Nishida's philosophy is that being supported by or having a "place" in the Universal of the mind is a necessary prerequisite for the state of "being."³

The innermost level of Nothingness, although it supports all the others, does not itself rest on anything, so Nothingness cannot be said to have any "being" and therefore must be "nonbeing" or Nothingness. As such, Nothingness is the undistorted mirror of the Mind, reflecting all finite objects.⁴ The "external world" of personality and individuality are included in the Universal of Judgment. All definable phenomena are "predicates" of the Universal, and among these is that of self conceived of as an individual thinker. What is the subject (thinker) of these predicates, and how does the concept of an individual self come forth? we can answer these questions by proceeding to the second level of the Mind, the Universal of Self-consciousness.

On the second level, consciousness of the self as "something thinking" rather than "something thought" occurs.⁵ If these first two levels of the Mind were all that existed, we might think there was a definite and inherent difference between thinker and thoughts, or between subject and object, but exploring further, we discover the Universal of the Intelligible World, where these divisions are erased.⁶ At this level, subject and object are combined and indistinguishable from each other. However, there is an apparent contradiction in this Universal, because, like Plato's world of ideas, there is some incongruity between

what is and what ought to be. At this level, "in the degree in which the conscience sharpens, one feels more guilty."⁷ Arriving at the innermost level of the Mind, Nothingness, even moral contradictions cease to exist. At this level, any distinction between values, like good and evil are understood as meaningless.

Existence of the moral Self means consciousness of one's own imperfection, and an infinite striving towards the ideal. In the degree in which the conscience sharpens, one feels more guilty. To solve this contradiction, and to see the true depth of the Self, means to reach religious salvation. Man comes to know the real bottom of the Self, only by denying himself completely. In this state of mind, there is neither good nor evil. By transcending even the intelligible Self in the direction of noesis, one frees oneself even of the free will. There is no more Self which could sin. Even the idea of the good is the shadow of something that is without form.⁸

In the end, reality is this formless Nothingness, in which there is no difference between good and evil, no conception of the self as an individual, no distinction between subject and object, nor among all the particular predicates of the Universal of Judgment.

The essay, "*Goethe's Metaphysical Background*," was written to show that Goethe had an intuitive understanding of Nothingness.

To depict eternity, Greek artists used perfection of form, but Oriental art is "formless"⁹ with eternity a part of the background, which "embraces all things from behind."¹⁰ It has also been said that Goethe's poetry is formless, communicating a feeling of individuality against a background of Nothingness. Nishida says:

... Goethe's pantheism encloses individuality everywhere. Nature, in Goethe's sense, does not deny individuality, but produces something individual everywhere. This nature is like an infinite space which, itself formless, produces form everywhere. Like the moonlight in "An den Mond", like the sea in "Der Fischer", and like the mist in "Erlkonig", Goethe's "nature" is essentially something that harmonizes with our heart.¹¹

Goethe's Nature both produces and encloses individual forms at the same time in the pantheistic sense, and as such cannot be distinguished from Buddhist Nothingness.

Goethe's universalism does not, like Spinoza's, reduce everything to the one substance, denying man; he sees all things in man. ... For Goethe, there is no inward and no outward; everything is as it is; it comes from where there is nothing, and

goes where there is nothing.

And just in this coming from nothingness and going into nothingness there is the gentle sound of humanity.

Yes, Goethe's universalism is just the opposite of that of Spinoza. His philosophy of life, based on this kind of universalism, does not remind us of the intellectual love of the Stoic sage, but of the love of Maria, the Eternal-Womanly.¹²

In the following lines from Faust, Nishida finds indications of the Nothingness constituting Goethe's metaphysical background:

"All earth comprises
Is symbol alone;
What there ne'er suffices
As fact here is known;
All past the humanly
Wrought here in love;
The Eternal-Womanly
Draws us above".¹³

In his essay, "*The Unity of Opposites*", Nishida discusses the philosophy of Nothingness as it applies to problems such as the apparent difference between past and future, and between one and many. These seemingly antithetical concepts are formed in the unity of real experience. The past consists of events already fixed and unchangeable, while in the future, an infinite number of potential new forms can be conceived to exist. In an abstract sense, history progresses from past to future, but in actual reality, there is only the present. One can exist neither in the past nor in the future, yet information on the concretely determined past and expectations of the nebulous future are opposites which are conjoined only in the unity of the moment of experience.

This present is a point without duration. Even an infinitely short movement in any direction will take us into the past of future, both of which are beyond the realm of actual experience: we dwell only in the durationless present. The "World" proceeds from present to present. The point where the indefinite future turns into unchangeable past is the moment of "forming" and is called the present. Thus, history is the movement from "formed" to "forming" experienced in the timeless present. The forming (present) includes both the formed (past) and the unformed (future) and is therefore a unity of these opposites. Nishida says:

In the world as unity of opposites, moving from the formed towards the forming, past and future, negating each other, join in the present; the present, as unity of opposites, has form, and moves, forming itself, from present to present. The world moves, as one single present, from the

formed to the forming. The form of the present, as unity of opposites, is a style of the productivity of the world. This world is a world of poiesis.

In such a world, seeing and acting are a unity of opposites. Forming is seeing, and from seeing comes acting. We see things, acting-reflecting, and we form because we see. When we speak of acting, we begin with the individual subject. But when acting, we are not outside the world, but in the world. Acting is essentially "being acted". If our acting is not merely mechanical or teleological, but truly forming, then the forming must be, at the same time, a "being formed". We are essentially forming, as individuals of a world which forms itself.¹⁴

The unity of opposites present another aspect in the seeming antithesis between one and many. Zen scholars affirm the reality of a world of plurality and individuality while acknowledging the identity of all things. This would appear to be an unresolvable paradox but the Zen scholars view it as a mere abstraction. In the durationless present, the whole (one) contains the parts, (many) and the parts make up the whole. "The world where innumerable individuals, negating each other, are united, is one single world which, negating itself, expresses itself in innumerable ways."¹⁵

To express it differently, the Buddha Mind produces a multiplicity of images and realizes itself in all of them, but knowing its ultimate unity, recognizes that even the reflection of itself as a separate, individual entity destroys its all-inclusive oneness. Calling the one "God" and the many "men," Nishida depicts the paradox which the supposedly individual human being senses when confronted with the reality of an indivisible God of which he is an expression or manifestation.¹⁶ The crisis of "conversion" occurs when the ego which had conceived of itself as an individual faces this "God" which melts all individuality into oneness, and surrenders its individuality. The Buddha Mind, or Nothingness, is realized when this abandonment of empirical self occurs and the identity of the true self with God is acknowledged. Nishida says:

The world of unity of opposites has its unity and self-identity, but not in itself. Identity, as unity of opposites, is always transcendent for this world. That is why self-formation of the world, as determination without a determining one, is spiritual. The fact that the world has unity and identity in absolute transcendence, means that the individual many are confronted with the transcendent one, and that the individual is individual because it confronts transcendence. By confronting God, we have and are personality. The fact that we, as personal Self, are confront-

ing and opposing God, means on the other hand, at the same time, that we are joined with God. God and we are in the relationship of absolute unity of the opposites of the one and the many.

As individuals of the world of unity of opposites, we are in the depth of our origin in contradiction with ourselves. This contradiction does not diminish with the evolution of culture; on the contrary, there it becomes more and more obvious. In the world of unity of opposites which has its unity in the transcendent, the process of action-intuition and poiesis from the formed towards the forming, is essentially a human progress. In this direction, too, we do not join the absolute, God.¹⁷

The past and the future are united in the instant of present experience, and in the same way, the one and the many are conjoined within the unity of that moment. The one recognizes itself in the many who are identical to it in the durationless present of experience.

In spite of certain obscurities and seeming vagaries, Nishida's thought has much merit for the student of Buddhist philosophy. First of all, there is the interaction between a mind committed to Zen Ideas and the terminology of Western philosophical thought. The most important aspect of Nishida's philosophy is that he has framed all his ideas using the Western way of thinking and manipulating concepts, expanding them to their furthest extension and breaking through their limitations. No Eastern thinking or specifically Eastern ideas have been allowed, and Western logic is always adhered to, but Nishida's philosophy can be said to be basically Eastern. Nishida does not attempt to criticize or interpret Western philosophy through pre-existing Eastern concepts, nor does he seek to combine or synthesize Eastern and Western schools of thought.

The significance of Nishida's philosophy consists in the fact that he was the first Japanese who discarded the work of being only a popularizer of Western philosophy and tried to build up a system of his own. This system, though including the method of Western philosophy, is still thoroughly Oriental in its theme and fundamental approach. . . . Naturally, Nishida is not the only one who aspired to be more than a purveyor of Western philosophy, nor is he unique in his Oriental approach. Nevertheless, he must be singled out for his perseverance in the task and his positive accomplishment.¹⁸

We can say that he has surrendered himself to a characteristically Western way of thinking, and thus placing himself in the nonexistent, so that he is able to transcend Western philosophy, making it the

object of his embracing acceptance. This can be done only when the fundamental guiding principle is Absolute Nothingness, and it is only in this way that a true synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophical thought, as opposed to superficial eclecticism can be achieved, fundamentally at least. G. K. Piovesana says:

No doubt, Nishida, the "absolute nothingness" is a much more profound expression of religious experience than Western formulations, because there the universe is swallowed up and the ego too has disappeared, only however, to emerge again in another instant of this dazzling obscurity, in a kind of Zen Buddhistic enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhism too says that "the concrete reality is the void, and the void concrete reality". . . . For Nishida two ways of knowing-things are possible: one being the direct apprehension of the object, the other the knowledge which we can have through self-consciousness. . . . In order to avoid any kind of judgment which could leave opposition between subject and object, or too much "being" in the judgment, Nishida thinks of the predicate, as having nothing of the entitative nature of the subject. Therefore, it is a transcendental predicate which precisely as applicable to subjects without distinction can be called nothingness.

This type of dialectic, then, equips Nishida with a logic able to express the meaning of Oriental culture, based as it is upon the voidness of reality. This voidness, it must be insisted upon, is not the ontological nothingness of Western philosophy, which is usually rendered in Japanese by *kyomu*. It is, rather, what is called *mu* in Japanese, the absolute present with all its inclusive processes and contradictions, which even in its most religious nuances has nothing to do with a Christian conception of God as a transcendent and personal being.¹⁹

Second, there is a clear indication of the basic compatibility of Nishida's and Hegel's philosophies. The essence of Mahayana Buddhism is non-rationality, and Zen is particularly so; in this respect it resembles mysticism: since the essence of Mahayana Buddhism transcends language, it is an immediate ↗

Christianity

God For the Christian, God is Being. (Tillich's God is Being itself.)

The Christian's God represents eternal life.

For the Christian, God is absolutely other.

and inexpressible experience. The goal of this experience is enlightenment, and its fulfillment is Nirvana. Zen Buddhist statements are primarily indirect and paradoxical, a method equally important in German mysticism. This leads us to the idea that Hegel reveals a great mystical heritage in his dialectical method. Japanese philosophy, and specifically Nishida's philosophy employ paradoxical and dialectical logics, but Nishida does not particularly use the process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

Nishida views judgment as being formed by analysis of the intuitive whole. For example, the judgment that horses run is formed by having actually seen a horse run. The truth of a judgment depends on the truth of the source from which it was drawn through the dichotomy of subject and predicate or subject and object. To establish the truth of a judgment through its dichotomy, we must refer back to intuition, which is considered a self-developing whole, similar to Hegel's Notion (Begriff). Nishida says "All reality is intuition," or "All reality is immediate consciousness" in the same way as Hegel says, "All is Notion," or "All is Judgment," and this is the pretty much the meaning of Nishida's dictum "Consciousness is the Unique Reality." Professor Matao Noda says:

Thus, pure experience comes to cover actually the whole range of knowledge, physical, mathematical, and metaphysical. The "purity" of it, in part, means ultimately to be free from egocentricity.

Here Nishida's thought is akin to the dialectic of Hegel. Nishida's pure experience proves to be a spontaneously developing totality which includes even reflective thinking as its negative phase, and in the end pure experience is identified with ultimate reality. The title of one of the chapters in his "Study of the Good" characterizes Nishida's position somewhat crudely as "Consciousness is the Unique Reality."²⁰

Third, Nishida's writing show how Christian terms, like God, creation, conversion, *agape*, etc. can be used by Buddhists to communicate ideas totally opposite to those of orthodox Christianity. We can compare the above terms in both religion as follows:

Buddhism

The Buddha awakened to the Suchness which is beyond Being and non-Being.

The Buddhist accepts the life-death cycle.

For the Buddhist the true self is the Absolute Self.

<p><i>Creation</i> The creation of the world is not a movement of God in Himself, but a free <i>opus ad extra</i>, finding its necessity only in His love, but again not casting any doubt on His selfsufficiency: the world cannot exist without God, but if God were not love (as such inconceivable!). He could exist very well without the world.</p> <p>From Karl Barth, <i>Credo</i>.²¹</p>	<p>The world is: neither generative nor extinctive, neither continuous nor discontinuous, neither one nor many, neither coming nor going.</p> <p>From Buddhism Sutra, "Nagarjuna"²²</p>
<p><i>Conversion</i> Act of total or global faith by which man recognizes Christ as the Lord of his life, and, in answer to the Gospel, accepts the Kingdom which is the Church. Conversion to Christ coincides with justification.</p>	<p><i>Kie</i> is a very old word. It is related to the sanskrit <i>paravritti</i>, defined as "the twining about or sudden revulsion at the deepest seat of consciousness which is the Buddhist moment of conversion" (Christmas Humphreys, A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism, N. Y., 1963, p.146).</p>
<p><i>Agape</i> God's love for man; divine love.</p>	<p><i>Jihi</i>, compassion, is emphatically a Buddhist concept. <i>Ji</i> means "to bring joy to other;" <i>hi</i> means "to take other's suffering away."</p>

In fact, *Jihi* and *agape* are similar in that they are both a perfect victory over the ego. Buddhist tradition has understood that compassion is the criterion of wisdom, much as Christian gnosis tells us that wisdom without love is but like "blaring brass or crashing cymbal." (1 Cor. 13: 1)

Grace

Religion is that which inspires man. It is an inspiration and a self-awareness which comes to man from an absolute being. It is the spirit of God, the love of God, the mercy of Buddha. In what way can man approach the Absolute? He can rely on the guidance which comes to him from absolute spiritual beings in several ways such as grace, the gospel, revelation or Buddha's mercy, his merit and his Vow. Man, however, cannot find this religious truth in himself, it must be communicated to him by the Absolute. Hence our meeting which this Absolute calls for a selfless heart and a humble attitude willing to inquire after the truth.

The *Nembutsu* (the invocation of the name of Amida Buddha) is the central practice of the *tariki* (Other Power)—way. However, it is not the *Nembutnu* practice but faith that flows from Amida's name which assures salvation. Salvation by "Other Power" (*tariki*) is that the Original Vow is the only cause of faith which is a altogether the gift of Amida. On the *tariki*-line man seeks oneness through the extinction of the Ego before the overwhelming superior Other Power, whereas in the self power (*Jiriki*)—way he tries to break, through the Ego into the Absolute. In both cases the transition into the Absolute signifies oneness, which comprises self-exertion and grace.

In Christian theology, needless to say, this unity is guaranteed by the fact that ultimately grace as well as freedom are founded in God, and that thus, in the words of Saint Paul, "God is all in all." In Buddhist understanding too, deliverance or salvation leads into the sphere of absolute Oneness.²³

Throughout Nishida's works is the basic assumption that the "Oriental religion of Nothingness" teaches that the soul is Buddha.²⁴ However, he reminds us that "'All is one' does not mean that all are one without differentiation"²⁵ Nishida writes about the outside world, nature, biological and social evolution, the physical sciences, individual human beings, etc. as if they were objectively real, but this seeming differentiation is merely the separation of individual thoughts within a single mind. Just as he insists on individuality, he emphatically denies any real distinction between subject and object, and asserts that all things are identical in the Buddha Mind. He says :

The oriental religion of Nothingness teaches that it is the soul which is Buddha. This is neither spiritualism nor mysticism. Logically it is the unity of the opposites of the many and one. "All is one" does not mean that all are one without differentiation. It is, as unity of opposites, essentially that One by which all that is, is. Here is the principle of the origin of the historical world as the absolute present. We, as individuals of the world of unity of opposites, are always in touch with the absolute, although we may not even say that we are in touch with it. It is said : "He who sees and hears in the present instance only what is to him clear and distinct, does not cling to a certain place, but moves freely in all ten directions". In the depth of selfcontradiction absolutely to die and to enter the principle "all is one", —this, and nothing else, is the religion of "it is the soul which is Buddha". It is also said : "You who are listening to my preaching, you are not the four elements, by you can use your four elements. When you are able to understand this, you will be free to go or to stay". This does not mean the conscious Self, which is merely an illusionary accompanying one ; there must be an absolutely denying conversion. Therefore, this is an absolute objectivism, in contrast to spiritualism or mysticism. This absolute objectivism is the basis for true science as well as for true morality. "Soul" does not mean subjective consciousness. "The inward, too, cannot be grasped". And "nothing" is still a relative "non-being" which opposes "being".²⁶

The soul or self is the Buddha Mind : all differentiation occurs inside it. Even though the Zen philosopher may discourse learnedly on the reality of a concretely differentiated world, it is ultimately nothing more than a world of differentiated ideas in the one all-inclusive Buddha mind, which is after all only the essential self of the thinker of ideas. "All objective being has its foundation in the Self."²⁷

It is appropriate to close this section with G. K.

Piovesana :

If we take Nishida as an example and consider his evolving philosophical thought, we can determine that his general inspiration stems from the background of Mahayana Buddhism and Zen. Nonetheless, this background does not give even a hint why Nishida in his study of Western thinkers started from James and Bergson, went through Fichte and Hegel, and produced in the end a "logic of nothingness" which, though inspired by many other ideas, is finally Nishida's own formulation. In other words, we cannot explain the flowering of a great philosopher by pointing to the cultural soil in which he is rooted. We must go much further and consider who tilled that soil, what rains fell upon it, and— most important of all— what was the inner quality of the seed, namely the creativity and novel approach of the great thinker.²⁸

2. PHILOSOPHY OF HAJIME TANABE

Born in Tokyo, Hajime Tanabe (1885-1962) was invited to Kyoto University in 1919, and there became Nishida's most illustrious disciple. Eventually, he established the so-called Kyoto School of Philosophy.

I would like to discuss how Nishida and Tanabe differ as follows :

A) Nishida emphasizes action-intuition, while Tanabe stresses the significance of action-faith in religious existence.

B) Action-intuition assumes that we exist as an element in the creative world. In addition, Tanabe also considers the problem of dialectic only in relation to the historical world. But for Nishida, the idea of a creative element in a creative world leads to a historical viewpoint, where the perspective of the whole changes at every moment and can be seen anew from a different angle. For Tanabe, on the other hand, the pathway through the historical world is like a blind alley at every point, and it is with decision and courage that one must proceed in order to find his way out. To put it another way, Tanabe stresses the infinitesimal in contrast to Nishida's integral.

C) For Tanabe, the ethical viewpoint is predominant, and even in his later years he devoted himself to the study of many religions from an ethico-social viewpoint, seeking to reconcile the truth of the Pure Land Sect with the Zen Sect in Buddhism as well as with the truth of Christianity. However, the immediate realization of Absolute Nothingness, taken from Zen Buddhism, is the basic influence in all Nishida's thought from beginning to end, so the question for us would be : What is faith according to Tanabe ?

If faith is taken in terms of Christian understanding, then the question of Tanabe and Nishida could be refined to the objection that is Nishida's system, since

he ignore the most basic fact in Christian belief, there is no room for faith in the full Christian sense. In other words, it could be said that the same question arises between Tanabe and Nishida as between Buddhism and Christianity, which do belong to two different religious structures, and which cannot be reconciled with each other unless one side renounces its claim to absolute truth.

Tanabe did not become a Christian. He mentions that since he was influenced by Nishida, he leaned toward Zen intuition, and therefore his particular interest in Christianity naturally remained superficial. He studies the conversions of Pascal, Newman, Augustine and Luther, and read Barth's *Credo* as well. He also studied Kierkegaard, but even then he was forced to confess that he felt it was one of his weakest points that, as a teacher of philosophy, he was unable to gain a true understanding of Christian thought.

He also mentions that he realized that Catholicism deserves special attention. He explains by nothing that Protestantism has a tendency to turn away from objective reality, stressing the interior world and subjective faith alone, while Catholicism unites the supernatural world of the spirit with the natural world, and thus faces history through this unity and interpenetration. He obviously had difficulty grasping Protestant discussion, especially that of Wrede, Barth, and particularly the discussion of the relationship of Paul's image of Christ and the historical Jesus. Therefore, in the end, he says "I don't believe; please help my unbelief."²⁹

3. PHILOSOPHY OF SHIN'ICHI HISAMATSU AND KEIJI NISHITANI

Before studying under Nishida, Nishitani (1900 -) was already attracted by Nietzsche and Dostoevski, the Holy Scriptures and St. Francis of Assisi as well as the two famous Zen masters Hakuin (1685-1768) and Takuan (1573-1645). The fact that he studied under Heidegger in Freiburg im Br. before World War II can be deduced from his publications, the most important of which is *What is Religion?* (1961). This is one of the most brilliant philosophical works to come out of Japan in years.

I would like to consider his comprehensive articles:

1) Nishitani³⁰ calls the final reality "emptiness" and not "absolute nothingness," thus it is understood that he considers it different from (a) any form of nihilism, (b) Tanabe's concept of absolute nothingness, and (c) that which he purposely associates with the *sunyata* (emptiness) idea of Nagarjuna; in other words the traditional Zen interpretation of nothingness.

2) Nishitani admits that certain trends in Christianity, particularly German mysticism, lean toward the true absolute nothingness. However, his intuitions of the doctrine of creation, in addition to his feeling that from an orthodox viewpoint, Eckhart must be considered a heretic, prevent him from dealing

effectively with ordinary main-stream theology, which, throughout the centuries, showed a deep concern for negative theology through its best representative.

To discuss the relationship between God and absolute nothingness, the following argument is basic: If something is possible which is not God, or which includes God, then that which was called "God" before is not God at all, since no matter what detailed explanations we might attempt, *ex definitione* it is impossible for anything to exist which is either further beyond or closer within, either further away or nearer, and at the same time is not God.

3) Nishitani's philosophy has another strong point: his attraction to religious practice. Nishitani is linked with several groups of scholars who make an effort to include religions, particularly Zen practice. In this connection, the name of Shin'ichi Hisamatsu (1889-1980) must be mentioned. Graduating from Kyoto University, he too became a disciple of Nishida. However, on Nishida's advice, Hisamatsu practiced Zen in addition to studying philosophy. He taught Buddhism at the University during the same period of time as Nishitani. Hisamatsu wrote on Oriental nothingness, and an English translation of his article called *The Characteristic of Oriental Nothingness* is useful in understanding both Nishitani and Hisamatsu.

The characteristics of Oriental nothingness, according to Hisamatsu, are six.³¹

1) "The 'not a single thing' nature of Oriental Nothingness means that as regards that which is generally said 'to be' there is in and for Oriental Nothingness not one single such thing" (II, 76).³² "Nothing whatever wherever being Myself and Myself being nothing whatever wherever is Oriental Nothing" (ibid.).

2) It is "like empty-space" (II, 80), but "it is not the same as empty-space, which has neither awareness nor life. Oriental Nothingness is the One who is 'always clearly aware.' Therefore it is called (Mind, 'Self,' or the 'True Man' (II, 82).³³ It is without obstruction, omnipresent, impartial, broad and great, formless, pure, without beginning and without end, the voiding of being and the voiding of void.

3) It is Mind-in-Itself: It is "in no sense inanimate like empty-space. Not only it is living, it also possesses mind. Nor does it merely possess mind; it possess self-consciousness." (II, 86).³⁴ "The true Buddha is not without mind, but possesses mind which is 'without mind and without thought,' is not without self-awareness, but possesses an awareness which is 'without awareness'—an egoless ego, is not without life, but possesses life which is ungenerated and unperishing." (II, 87).³⁵

4) It is Self: "Speaking in terms of 'seeing,' this Mind is the 'active seeing' and not the passive 'being seen'.....But when I say here that this Mind is 'active,' I mean that this Mind does not obtain as object, but obtain as subject.

It does not mean that such a Mind is simply the aspect of 'the active' in separation from 'the passive.' In this Mind there is no duality of active and passive." (II, 88).³⁶

5) It is the completely free subject. (II, 91)³⁷ . . . True liberation in Buddhism is to be thoroughly—Oneself—this freedom. In this, true liberation in Buddhism differs from state of salvation of religions like Christianity. Even such a Buddhist sect as the *Jodo Shin* Sect which, in the external aspect of its state of salvation, resembles Christianity, is different from Christianity to the extent that as a Buddhist sect it, too, must have its ultimate base in the freedom nature of Oriental Nothingness. I should like to call this freedom nature of Oriental Nothingness subjectively—subjective freedom, that is, absolutely subjective freedom. (II, 93)³⁸

6) It is "creative" (II, 94)³⁹ . . . Oriental Nothingness is this Mind which is to be likened to the water as subject. The creative nature of Oriental Nothingness is to be illustrated by the relation between the water and the wave, in which the water is forever and in every way the subject. If one were to make a subject of the wave which is produced and disappears, this would be the ordinary self of man. It is in such an ordinary subject's reverting back from wave to water—that is, returning to its source and re-emerging as the True-Subject of True-Self that the characteristics of Oriental Nothingness must be sought and are to be found. (II, 97)⁴⁰

4. SUMMARY

Many Japanese philosophers did much more than simply spread Western ideas. The most creative thinkers among them determined to supply what they felt was the biggest lack in the Oriental philosophical tradition: a new logic which would allow them to compete with Western philosophers on their own ground. Toward this goal, the best minds, like Nishida, Suzuki, Tanabe, Hisamatsu and Nishitani have spent and are spending a great deal of time and energy.

To emphasize the quest for a new logic as a characteristic feature of contemporary Japanese philosophy is to invite the objection that this is in direct conflict with the often-repeated idea that the Japanese are almost congenitally averse to logical thinking. Hajime Nakamura has included a long chapter in his *The Ways of Thinking of Eastern People* on the "Non-Rationalistic Tendencies" of the Japanese people. These tendencies can be summariz-

ed as follows:

In short, the Japanese language has had, at least in the past, a structure unfit for expressing logical conceptions. Consequently, when the Japanese adopted the already highly advanced conceptual knowledge of Buddhism and Confucianism, they made no attempt to express it in the original Japanese language, but used Chinese technical terms without modification. Again, in translating the concepts of Western learning, the Japanese used Chinese characters and did not render these concepts into Japanese directly. Consequently, even today, any marked tendency to logical expression is hardly apparent in the Japanese language.⁴¹

The Japanese people, however, in their characteristic way of thinking, are inclined to grasp this order or law in relation to human relations rather than as a law of objective things. This tendency has been strengthened especially through the non-logical character of the Japanese language. Consequently, the thinking of the Japanese people has not been developed in an objective and logical direction.⁴²

As far as his religious views are concerned, it is clear that Nishida preferred pantheism to pantheism and to the Christian understanding of God as transcendent.⁴³

Religious philosophers, rather than specialists in philosophy of religion, like Nishida, Tanabe, although undeniably influenced by Christian existentialism, are more inclined to a type of Buddhist nothingness as presented in the cultural Japanese heritage. Nishitani Keiji, too, is definitely a purveyor of an Oriental type of philosophy of religion. . . . Nishida, for instance, qualifies his position as "pantheism" and thereby does disassociate himself from any traditional type of pantheism. It must be confessed, however, that the more one probes Nishida's mind the more one would like further clarification on this key concept. But Japanese thinkers like Nishida refuse to enter into these ultimate problems and transmit them to religion. And here we enter into a field which is not easily dealt with in Western philosophical categories, which, it must be said in passing, cannot easily cope even with Western religion.⁴⁴

Thus, it is easy to ascribe to an Oriental mood any thought which has greatly influenced their philosophy of religion. It must also be admitted that a Western reader will notice many nonlogical aspects in their way of thinking.

NOTE :

1. Gino K. Piovesana, *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought, 1862-1962 : A Survey* (Tokyo : Enderle Bookstore, 1968), pp.89-91. See also, cf. Hans Waldenfels, *Absolute Nothingness-Foundations for a Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*, trans. by J. W. Heisig (New York : Paulist Press, 1980), pp.35-46.
2. G. K. Piovesana says that "Nishida's *Intelligible World* stemmed from Rickert's *Dis Erkenntnis der intelligibelen Welt*" *Ibid.*, p.76.
3. Kitaro Nishida, *Intelligibility and the philosophy of Nothingness*, trans. with introduction by R. Schinzinger (Honolulu : East-West Center Press, 1966) pp.31-32. 34. 76. 89.
4. *Ibid.*, p.138.
5. *Ibid.*, p.71.
6. *Ibid.*, p.83.
7. *Ibid.*, p.126.
8. *Ibid.*, p.126.
9. *Ibid.*, p.146.
10. *Ibid.*, p.146.
11. *Ibid.*, p.149.
12. *Ibid.*, pp.157-158.
13. *Ibid.*, p.156.
14. *Ibid.*, p.186.
15. *Ibid.*, p.187.
16. *Ibid.*, pp.234ff.
17. *Ibid.*, pp.234-235.
18. Piovesana, op. cit., pp.88-89.
19. *Ibid.*, pp.108-110.
20. Matao Noda, "East-West Synthesis in Kitaro Nishida," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.IV, No. 4, 1955, p.347.
Cf. David Dilworth, "Nishida's Early Pantheistic Voluntarism," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.20, No.1, 1970, pp.35-49.
Cf. David Dilworth, "The Initial Formations of 'Pure Experience in Nishida Kitaro and William James," *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.24, No.1-2, 1969, pp.93-111.
21. Karl Barth, *Credo*, (New York : Charles Scriber's Sons, 1962), pp.31-32.
22. Cf. Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener (Honolulu : East-West Center Press, 1964), p.55, p.61.
23. Cf. H. Dumoulin, "Grace and Freedom in the Way of Salvation in Japanese Buddhism," in *Types of Redemption*, ed. by R. J. Zwi Werblowsky & C. Jouco Bleeker (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1970), pp.98-104.
24. Nishida, op. cit., p.237.
25. *Ibid.*, p.237.
26. *Ibid.*, pp.237-238.
27. *Ibid.*, p.89.
28. Piovesana, op. cit., p.245.
29. Cf. Hajime Tanabe, "Memento More," *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol.I, 1959, pp.1-12.
Cf. Hans Waldenfels, "Absolute Nothingness," *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.21, 1966, pp.371-382.
30. Cf. Keiji Nishitani, "What is Religion?," *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol.II, 1960, pp.21-64.
See also, cf. Hans Waldenfels, *Absolute Nothingness-Foundations for a Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*, trans. by J. W. Heisig (New York : Paulist Press, 1980), pp.49-117.
31. Shin'ichi Hisamatsu, "The Characteristic of Oriental Nothingness," *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol.II, 1960, pp.65-97.
Cf. Hans Waldenfels, "Absolute Nothingness," *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol.21, 1966, pp.385-386.
32. *Ibid.*, p.76.
33. *Ibid.*, p.82.
34. *Ibid.*, p.86.
35. *Ibid.*, p.87.
36. *Ibid.*, p.88.
37. *Ibid.*, p.91.
38. *Ibid.*, p.93.
39. *Ibid.*, p.94.
40. *Ibid.*, p.97.

(Received January 17, 1984)