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ETHICS AND POLITICS IN THE EARLY NISHIDA: RECONSIDERING *ZEN NO KENKYŪ*

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In recent years there has been a definite resurgence of interest in the Kyoto School of philosophy. In particular, there is the genesis of a movement calling for the school to be taken more seriously for its philosophical merits, rather than dismissed for its putatively ultranationalist leanings.[1] While it is certainly the case that the religious and even metaphysical writings of the key members of this school, such as Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962), and Nishitani Keiji (1900–1991), have received considerable attention, scholars have found it very hard to engage directly the political thought of these philosophers. One of the major problems has been the difficulty of depoliticizing the work of thinkers who have been so explicitly associated with the rise and maintenance of Japanese imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s.[2] Part of this problem has been the easy tendency to conflate political thought with political action, and thus to concentrate one's attention on the heavily ideological wartime writings of the Kyoto School at the expense of their earlier (and later) philosophical writings. Even leaving aside the fact that these wartime writings were often censored and rewritten by the authorities before they reached publication, these texts are among the most philosophically derelict of all the Kyoto School writings.[3] While the social and historical importance of the fact that such texts were written should not be overlooked, it is simply bad scholarship to treat them as representative of the political thought of a major philosophical school.[4]

The question of why critical attention has focused on the political tracts of the wartime period is offered a number of solutions. First, and most obviously, the low-level philosophical content of the wartime writings makes these texts more accessible. Indeed, making abstract ideas into readily comprehensible propaganda was the explicit purpose of the editorial authorities during the 1940s. Even those scholars who are willing to dig around in the foundations of Kyoto School thought find it obscure and difficult. Second, historians of political philosophy are often confounded by the apparent lack of political thought in Kyoto School texts that predate the 1930s. To some extent, this apparent dearth of sources reflects the relative absence of key words (such as "nation" or even "politics") in the titles of prewar manuscripts in contrast to their profusion in wartime titles. Even sympathetic commentators like John C. Maraldo state: "Up to 1930 Nishida developed a philosophy of consciousness that had little to do with the social and historical world."[5] In the cases of Kyoto School thinkers who survived the war (such as Tanabe and Nishitani), it is clear that they quickly shifted away from utilizing political terminology after 1945, focusing instead on religious vocabulary. However, it should not be as-

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sumed that the absence of explicitly political titles indicates an absence of political thought—especially when one considers the characteristically hazy line between politics, ethics, metaphysics, and religion for the Kyoto School thinkers.[6]

In the case of Nishida Kitarō himself, the acknowledged originator of the Kyoto School, the tendency to consider his wartime writings as both the pinnacle of his career and his only political treatises is even stronger. With regard to the former, Nishida died in the closing months of the war in 1945, which made his wartime writings the product of his mature thought. On the other hand, Nishida's great masterpiece, *The Logic of Space and the Religious Worldview*—the last work completed before his death—was almost exclusively religious in content, with only the last couple of pages making any reference to the nation.[7]

The idea that Nishida's wartime writings represent his only political texts is lent great strength by the fact that his contemporaries (including other members of the Kyoto School) criticized his earlier writings for being insufficiently social.[8] Nishida himself is said to have made a deliberate "turn" in the early years of the 1930s, at least partly in response to these criticisms.[9] *Prima facie* the "turn" seems substantive—there was a shift in Nishida's output toward essays with explicitly political themes. However, a definite question should be raised about whether there was any real shift in the content or concerns of Nishida's thought, or whether the import of the change was mainly terminological. It is undeniably the case that the late Nishida utilized the vocabulary of political thought in a manner rather divorced from his pre-turn writings. Nonetheless, some commentators have seen the genesis of all Nishida's thought in his earliest writings,[10] and Nishida himself would frequently refer his audience back to his first work, *Zen no kenkyū* (1911), for a more complete explanation of his standpoint.[11] Valdo Viglielmo suggests that there was no real "turn" in Nishida's thought, but that "there is only the ever more luxuriant flowering of the buds that emerged in *Zen no kenkyū*. Quite often the terms change, but the substance does not."[12]

If we are to concede the possibility that Nishida's "turn" in the 1930s was more cosmetic than substantial, then we must also consider the possibility that his earlier writings (and *Zen no kenkyū* in particular) contained at least the seeds of a political philosophy. Because these early writings predate the advent of fascist politics in Japan—and certainly Nishida's involvement in state politics—they are liberated to some extent from the contextual embarrassment of his later writings. Hence, *Zen no kenkyū* provides a special opportunity to discover the political thought of Nishida before the dark clouds of ultranationalism cast their shadow over the social discourse. It will be seen that not only does a close reading of Nishida's first publication provide a fresh and innovative philosophy of politics in its own right, but that it also sheds new light on the substance of his philosophically weak and ideologically suspect wartime writings.

The Nishida of Zen no kenkyū, *1870–1911*

It has become a commonplace in the defense of Nishida against charges of his complicity in the ultranationalist cause to state that he was quite disinterested in

politics. In his diaries, we see very little mention of domestic or international political events; Nishida writes mainly about his experiences of Zen training, about his problems finding employment, and about his evident emotional angst.[13] Lothar Knauth notes that there is a visible shift toward political commentary in Nishida's diaries (presumably reflecting increased political involvement) after his retirement from Kyoto Imperial University in 1928.[14] The general story painted by the revisionist literature is that Nishida was dragged into the political arena against his natural tendencies—his hand forced by the domestic and international happenings of the 1930s. Evidence does exist suggesting that this was how Nishida himself felt: after the invasion of China in 1937, for example, Nishida wrote to Kōsaka Masaaki that he had not previously had the time or inclination to consider the "essence of the state" but that events had led him to see its importance.[15]

Such an approach to Nishida's biography is supported in the secondary literature by an overwhelming focus on the religious content of his early work, especially *Zen no kenkyū.* Some highly visible commentaries almost go so far as to suggest that *Zen no kenkyū* could be read as a philosophical inquiry into Zen Buddhism (rather than into *zen* [the good]).[16] Abe Masao, in his enlightened introduction to the second English-language translation of *An Inquiry into the Good,* makes not a single mention of politics. To some extent this bias reflects the fact that the Kyoto School was introduced to Western academe through the field of comparative religions[17]—its political copybook already blotted by the public dismissal of prominent members (such as Kōyama Iwao [1905–1993] and Nishitani Keiji) from their teaching positions after the war.[18] Having died a few months before the end of the war, Nishida (and his apologists) can at least be thankful that he was not subject to the *kyōshoku tsuihō* (academic purges).

Painting Nishida as the naïve, unworldly philosopher may seem plausible and convenient, but that does not make it accurate or helpful. Ignoring the political aspects of Nishida's thought (and personality) is certainly not an adequate defense of his apparent complicity in the official politics of the 1940s. The fact is that Nishida was actively involved in political activities in his youth, that he maintained a strong commitment to certain political ideals throughout his life, and that he conceived of little distinction between religion and politics in his philosophical system. Counterintuitively, it is the content of Nishida's politics (rather than its absence) that could turn out to be his salvation. The time has come to take Nishida seriously as a political thinker.

Nishida's Politics before 1911

The Nishida biographer is lucky that Nishida kept a diary (at least intermittently) from 1897 to 1945. Despite the absence of some entries and some notable gaps, the forty-eight volumes provide an interesting portrait of the man and his thought. The picture is indeed one of a young philosopher completely (and almost exclusively) obsessed with his work, family, and Zen practice. However, Nishida was already twenty-seven years of age when he made his first diary entry, just embarking on

(and obsessing over) his academic career. His formative school years, his time at Tokyo University, and more than half the politically tumultuous Meiji period (1868–1912) are completely absent. It should not really be surprising that an intelligent young man, sharing classes with people of exceptional ability and perceptiveness and living in a time of exciting sociopolitical change should become interested in politics.

Thankfully, despite the absence of a diary from this early period, biographers have discovered a number of useful resources—such as correspondence between Nishida and his eminent middle-school classmate, Yamamoto Chōsui.[19] What is striking about the Nishida of this period is his passionate attachment to Meiji liberalism and his interest in progressive thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901).[20] A brief account of a couple of significant incidents may prove enlightening.

Along with his classmates at the Ishikawa Senmongakkō, Nishida was thrilled by the political changes that appeared to be taking place in the late 1880s. A group of students, including Nishida, celebrated the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in February 1889 by photographing themselves making a pledge to defend liberty and freedom.[21] However, Nishida (perhaps following the example of Yamamoto) quickly became disillusioned by the new political regime. He lamented the increasing influence of the Satsuma-Chōshū (Satchō) clique, which he thought was endangering the seeds of liberalism in the new constitution. The contradiction between political ideals and political practice seemed stark. Like Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nishida was appalled by the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, believing that the conservative Confucian values enshrined therein would be obstacles preventing "Japanese society from achieving self-independence."[22]

The Imperial Rescript made such a lasting impression on Nishida that even in 1942, in the midst of war and domestic repression, he could recall the changes that took place in his friendly, family-like *(kazokuteki)* school when it was converted into the Shikō (Fourth Higher School) in 1890.[23] Nishida recalls that he had followed Yamamoto when he quit the school in protest shortly after the change. Nishida thought that he would get a better education through independent home study than in the militaristic *(budanteki)* atmosphere of the new school. Flexibility and freedom in education were the most important factors—beliefs that would stay with Nishida throughout his later career as a university professor.

In the end, Nishida paid a painful price for his political convictions: by leaving the Shikō before graduation, Nishida condemned himself to the lowly position of *special student* when he entered Tokyo University, a status reserved for students of questionable academic quality. However, to some extent, the poor treatment Nishida received at Tōdai as a young undergraduate served to underline his commitment to self-independence in the academic realm: he was forced to educate himself.[24] At the same time, his personal and academic isolation made him withdraw further and further from the social and political happenings of the time. Nishida became increasingly interested in Zen, and he spent some time training at the Engaku-ji in Kamakura. Hence, by the time he had graduated from Tōdai and started his diary in 1897, Nishida's interest in politics had been transformed from an active, social

involvement into a passive, intellectual pursuit. In the parlance of Zen Buddhism: Nishida had turned his light around.

However, his political ideals can be seen (almost unaltered since his departure from the Shikō) throughout the course of his diary.[25] In this context, Nishida's increasing interest in religion (particularly Zen) during and after his time at Tōdai can also be seen to reflect his commitment to the political ideals of individual self-independence. Nishitani Keiji, in his reminiscences of his teacher, suggests that Nishida was attracted to Zen because of the courage it gave him to be an individual even in the face of adversity. Later in his career Nishida would seek to "inspire an independent spirit in his students so that they might go their own ways and not be fettered to their teacher's ideas."[26]

It is in this context that we should view the politics of Nishida's earliest works, especially *Zen no kenkyū,* which so successfully and influentially achieved a synthesis of ethical, political, and religious thought. It is not necessary to go so far as to claim that Nishida's youthful enthusiasm for Meiji liberalism (at least in the educational sphere) should reinform our understanding of his later wartime nationalism, but it is certainly clear that reading such a rightwing agenda back into his earlier works would be both unjust and unscholarly.

Zen no kenkyū should be read as the intellectual product of a developing philosopher who had replaced his youthful zeal for political protest with a new enthusiasm for the value of ideas and ideals in their own right. This stance is clearly reflected in the manuscript itself.

Structuring Zen no kenkyū

Both the structure and the content of *Zen no kenkyū* suggest that ethics and politics were two of Nishida's central concerns. The text is in thirty-two chapters, divided into four sections: Pure Experience *(Junsui keiken);* Reality *(Jitsuzai);* The Good *(Zen);* and Religion *(Shūkyō).* Although most commentators have focused on the first and second parts of the book,[27] since these set out the foundations of Nishida's metaphysical system and introduce key concepts such as *pure experience (junsui keiken)* itself, the structure of the book suggests that these areas were not the primary goal of the inquiry. While Nishida himself did acknowledge that the second section, "Reality," was "the core of the book," he goes on to explain that the third (and longest) section, "The Good," represented the development of the basic ideas from section 2 into a self-sufficient ethic (pp. xxix–xxx). In fact, Nishida wrote sections 2 and 3 first, only adding 1 and 4 afterwards—his introduction suggesting that readers skip the first section and proceed directly to 2 and 3 (p. xxix).

The first chapter of section 2 is revealingly titled "The Starting Point of the Inquiry," and the first line draws an instant connection between the role of philosophy and practical issues of social conduct: "Philosophical views of the world and of human life relate closely to the practical demands of morality and religion, which dictate how people should act and where they can find peace of mind" (p. 37).

It is clear from the outset that Nishida is aware that philosophy (and his philosophy in particular) has political meaning; any attempt to develop rules for moral conduct has implications for political inquiry. In the first lines of section three of *Zen no kenkyū,* Nishida explicitly states: "I will now consider such practical issues as what we ought to do, what the good is, and what the basis of human action ought to be. I believe we can subsume the various phenomena of the practical human realm within the category of conduct" (p. 87). In other words, in a manner that will later come to be seen as characteristic, Nishida begins his inquiry by subsuming abstract divisions (such as politics, morality, and religion) into contradictory unities (in this case, "conduct"). For Nishida, conduct (or willed action) is at once a political, moral, and absolute act. With this in mind, the third section, the "independent ethic," can be read as Nishida's first political text—and the earlier sections of *Zen no kenkyū* can be seen as preparing the ground for Nishida's political ethics.

Pure Experience and Personality-Junsui keiken to jinkaku

The first two sections of *Zen no kenkyū* set out Nishida's concept of pure experience and its relation to absolute reality. There is no space here for a detailed discussion, but, at its most basic, pure experience refers to one's experience of the undivided reality that lies at the base of everything. It is prior to abstract thought and even to the ego. Indeed, pure experience gives rise to our perception of self, rather than vice versa. The individual ego is in no way fundamental, but is rather an abstraction—it is a contradictory self-identity, existing simultaneously as a particular form and as the undivided absolute reality. This appears to be a philosophical expression of the Mahāyāna doctrine of *hongaku shisō* (original enlightenment). Accordingly, all everyday things are self-contradictions, since there are no real (or absolute) distinctions even between apparent particularisms. To realize one's true self or personality *(jinkaku)* is to experience the undivided ground prior to the deliberation of conscious/rational thought—true self and absolute reality (and, as we will see, the good) are located in this place *(basho)* of pure experience. In Zen Buddhist–influenced language, Nishida refers to this genuine self-knowledge as a moment of "existential realization" *(taitoku)* (p. 126). Personality is thus a multilayered *(jūsō)* location *(basho)* for Nishida. At its most superficial (or abstract) it corresponds with the ego—that is, it is a psychologism defined by the negation of the everyday Other. At its most profound it corresponds with absolute unified reality—that is, it is defined by absolute self-negation. This is the location of "absolute nothingness" *(zettai mu),* as realized in pure experience. This "nothingness" is a different order of negation from that experienced in everyday terms—echoing Mahāyānist conceptions of the negation in *śūnyatā.*

Conceivably, there are an infinite number of intermediate locations between the individual ego and the absolute, defined by differing levels of negation—one such location will turn out to be the nation. Crucially, all of these levels of unity through contradiction are simultaneously the self. The *true self* is an "absolute unity of contradictions"—not merely the negation of the everyday Other, but an absolute

self-negation. Nishida calls the "insight into this single reality" *chiteki chokkan* (intellectual intuition), and he suggests that "it is an extremely ordinary phenomenon," occurring in every disciplined action *(jukuren seru kōdō)* (p. 32). It is like an everyday *kenshō*. Clearly, such a view of the self has profound implications for political ethics. In particular, the coincidence of personality and reality acts to collapse the distinction between internal and external actions. Hence, the key unit of moral behavior is seen as "conduct" *(kōi),* which is defined as "willed-action" *(yūiteki dōsa).*

The nonduality of the self and the absolute also has implications for our understanding of the process of history. While for Kant history should be the story of humankind's gradual (if spasmodic) perfection (since nature would not have given us potentials that could not be fulfilled), for Nishida, following the Mahāyāna tradition, humankind is already perfect—it has simply forgotten its true nature. To some extent, this leads to a counterintuitive relative de-emphasizing of the nation in Nishida: while Kant suggests that we will never attain perfection in our lifetime but only in the species,[28] Nishida is clear that we are individually able to realize our true natures spontaneously at any time (in the right sociopolitical conditions). Somewhat like Bergson, Nishida's conception of the self makes politics into a "machine à faire des dieux."[29] It is a radical kind of individualism.

Nishida seems fully aware of the problems associated with attempting to develop a moral political system from these ostensibly Zen Buddhist *(hongaku shisō)* foundations—in which neither good nor evil appears to have "the slightest superiority or inferiority" in any ultimate sense (p. 102).[30] Because he takes the self seriously as a multilayered location, Nishida dedicates four chapters of *Zen no kenkyū* to an analysis of existing philosophies of social and political ethics (in Europe) in an attempt to model a concrete ethic for everyday life and absolute satisfaction simultaneously. For Nishida, "these are the most important problems we face" (p. 103) if we are to accept his view of the self. Effectively, Nishida is attempting to resolve the *hongaku shisō* dilemma of antinomianism through a reading of European moral and political philosophy.

Zen no kenkyū *as Political Criticism*

Nishida divides the existing corpus of (mainly European) moral and political philosophy into three broad theoretical categories—intuitive *(chokkaku setsu),* heteronomous *(taritsuteki ronri gakusetsu),* and autonomous *(jiritsuteki ronri gakusetsu)*—and he provides a critique of each. Finally, his own conception of political ethics, rooted in the Japanese tradition, is presented as the best solution.

Intuitive Ethics

Perhaps surprisingly, given the penchant of scholars to group Nishida with Bergson as an "intuitive" thinker, intuitive theories are dismissed quickly. For Nishida, an intuitive theory of ethics is one that claims that "the moral laws that regulate our

conduct are intuitively clear and have no reason apart from themselves'' (p. 104). Nishida is willing to admit that some moral principles do seem self-evident (drawing on his Confucian heritage, he cites loyalty and filial piety), but he notes that such principles often contradict each other in specific circumstances, and that people often disagree about which principles should take priority (p. 105). Such inconsistencies demonstrate to Nishida that (at least on the level of everyday experience) intuition cannot provide knowledge of universal morality. In today's society, intuitive theories of morality amount to little more than indulgent hedonism (at best) or anarchy (at worst). At this stage Nishida chooses not to pursue the idea that the pure experience of an ''existentially realized'' personality is functionally identical to perfectly intuitive morality. Such a standpoint would suggest that before intuitive ethics can become moral, humankind must become enlightened, or, at least, moments of genuine morality must coincide with moments of *kenshō*. In Nishida's terms: ''intellectual intuition'' opens the door for truly moral action, which is the unity of true insight and spontaneous action (or ''action intuition,'' *kōiteki chokkan,* to use the term favored by Nishida in his later works). There are some clear resonances here with the ethical dilemma of Shinran, who suggested that genuinely moral action was essentially a post-faith condition—humankind glimpses enlightenment and then executes a ''turnabout'' *(honshin ikkai)* back into everyday life.[31] For Nishida, however, it was not a question of faith but of pure experience—he formulated his ''turnabout'' in terms of empiricism rather than religion or even intuition in the conventional sense.[32]

Heteronomous Theories

In his discussion of heteronomous ethics, Nishida explicitly takes on the political philosophy of Hobbes and (via Hsün-tzu) Confucius. Nishida's treatment of this issue is particularly salient when one considers his school-time experiences and his later attitude to the militarization of Japanese society.

For Nishida, heteronomous theories derive morality ''from the commands of that which has absolute authority and power over us. . . . Good and evil are determined by the commands of the authority figure'' (pp. 107–108). This was self-evidently true for Hobbes, who argued that citizens of a state are obliged to conform to all laws of their monarch's making (even if these laws seemed to insult their dignity) simply because being subject to law was better than being subjected to anarchy. Any law, even bad law, was better than no law. Morality was determined by the will of the monarch.

One consequence of heteronomous theories is a focus on the moral energy *(moralische Energie)* of the state, since each nation becomes a moral entity with an independent moral code. In the international state of nature, there is no moral arbiter that can mediate the various moral claims of different nations—hence, the international state of nature is a state of war. Heteronomous theories produce radical moral relativism (often with pretensions of universalism), but no universal code of conduct. Hence, for Nishida, heteronomous theories amount to little more than intuitive theories—neither can provide universal ethics on the level of everyday experience.

While intuitive theories indulge the individual, heteronomous theories indulge the nation.

Nishida points out that there are two kinds of heteronomous theories: monarchical *(kunkenteki kenryoku setsu)* and divine *(shinkenteki kenryoku setsu).* While the two do not really differ in principle or function, Nishida seems (idealistically) willing to acknowledge that divine rule might be more able to produce universally "moral" laws than monarchical rule.[33] His immediate purpose seems to be to make a distinction between the Confucian Mandate of Heaven and Hobbes' Leviathan; however, looking back from the standpoint of the 1940s, one can perceive the beginnings of the idealism that drew Nishida into Shintō propaganda.

Nevertheless, even if he concedes that the laws of conduct generated in a (divine) heteronomous system could be objectively moral in an ideal world, Nishida still refutes the idea that the social system itself would be moral. It will be recalled that conduct, for Nishida, was defined in terms of the will, not exclusively in terms of action. Hence, being coerced by external forces (the legal apparatus of a state) into performing "the good" does not constitute moral conduct at all. Unlike Rousseau, Nishida does not believe that people can be forced to be free.[34] Only actions that are the completion of moral intention can be considered truly moral. Heteronomous morality is actually an obstacle to genuine morality, since it prevents the individual from acting in a genuinely self-willed moral manner: in heteronomous theories/societies, people obey the law because they fear the consequences of not doing so—fear, not morality becomes the internal aspect of good social conduct.[35]

This ethical stance was clearly in evidence in Nishida's thinking as early as 1890, when he abandoned the Shikō and criticized the new government because of its shift away from its fledgling liberal tendencies toward a more authoritarian stance. Nishida lamented the loss of educational freedom (i.e., the freedom to pursue one's studies in a self-willed manner) as it came to be replaced by a strict and compulsory system. For Nishida, all the merits of education disappeared when his will to learn was no longer relevant to his education. He chose to leave the school system and educate himself. Throughout his career, Nishida would remain a passionate defender of this kind of academic liberty. His motto, like that of Kant's enlightenment, appears to have been "*Sapere aude!* Have courage to use your *own* understanding!"[36]

In broader terms, Nishida believed that heteronomous/social morality was the polar opposite of true knowledge, because the former rewarded most those who were least enlightened. Anyone who behaves in a certain way because of a genuine self-realization runs the risk of being condemned as immoral (or criminal) if he/she contravenes social laws—this is, of course, the perennial problem of the antisocial Zen master. "It would follow, then, that for humans to progress and develop, they must rid themselves of the restrictions of [heteronomous] morality as soon as possible" (p. 109). In these terms, one might have expected that Nishida would have become a fierce critic of the military regime of the 1930s and 1940s, which manifested itself as a strictly heteronomous regime.

Autonomous Theories

The ethical theories in the final group discussed by Nishida are autonomous theories. He outlines two main subdivisions: rational and hedonic. According to rational theory, right and wrong (in morality) are identical with truth and falsehood in knowledge. Nishida identifies this view with Socrates. Unlike intuitive theory, rational theory makes its claim to being universal by basing its foundations on ostensibly objective reasoning about the nature of the world rather than on subjective feelings. Because all people are capable of being rational, freedom and morality exist in the perfection of the rationality of each individual. Here Nishida appears to take Hegel and Kant as the models for the rational theory.

However, Nishida is not convinced by rational ethics: "If abstract logic were the motivation of the will, then those who are most adept at reasoning would be the best people. No one can deny, however, that ignorant people are sometimes actually better than those who have knowledge" (p. 113).[37] Nishida's critique of rational theory goes much further than the obvious allusion to Zen and Daoist sages. In the first place, Nishida suggests that although rational theory helps us to take the idea of universal morals more seriously (because it is couched in the "value-free" language of logic), such a theory cannot offer any positive wisdom about the content of that morality. On the one hand, rational theory simply mistakes *must* for *should*—rational laws are about compulsion, not obligation in the moral sense. The application of reason to morality involves a critical epistemological fudge. Rationality may be able to explain why we *must* stay in contact with the ground—but that does not make flying immoral, only impossible. Furthermore, (like heteronomous theories) rational theory does not provide a model of morality at all, because the incentive for action is not premised in ethical insight but in the rational calculation of outcomes: in an ideally rational world, nobody would try to do anything that they couldn't—which is quite different from the ideally moral world where everything everyone does is the good.

More fundamentally, Nishida is simply skeptical about the ability of rationality to teach us the truth about the world. For Nishida rational thought is hypothetical or abstract.[38] It is a creation of the consciousness designed to help the individual to live in the everyday world. Hence, it is quite incapable of making insights into or making sense of true reality, which lies prior to conscious activity in the realm of pure experience. Rationality may be universal in an abstract sense, but it is certainly not fundamental. Indeed, Nishida is even skeptical that rationality is a universal system, and he ties it quite firmly to the development of European societies.[39]

The hedonic theories of Epicurus and Bentham are dismissed almost out of hand, since they seem to combine the faults of all the previous models. Nishida admits that hedonism (unlike rationalism) does not confuse *can* for *ought,* and thus provides a valuative reason to engage in one act rather than another, but he finds it (like intuitive theory) rather arbitrary. Because it is impossible to construct an accurate standard of pleasure (upon which there could be universal agreement), there is no consistent solution to the problem of what to do when people's pleasures conflict.

Bentham's political solution (utilitarianism), which states that the action bringing pleasure to the highest number of individuals should be considered more moral, is refuted by Nishida. Like heteronomous theories, utilitarianism seems to impose the arbitrary standards of an authority figure on the assessment of the pleasures of the people. Somewhat like Rousseau, then, Nishida seems to foresee no necessary coincidence between majority opinion and the General Will.

Furthermore, as we might expect from a man deeply engaged in Zen training, Nishida is simply not convinced that humans should act only out of a desire for personal pleasure. He does not seem to doubt that there is a kind of "false altruism" in which individuals engage for their own happiness, but this does not mean that "true altruism" is nonexistent: "to regard pleasure as the sole objective of life does not truly accord with the facts of actual human life. We can in no way be satisfied by pleasure. Anyone who takes only pleasure as the goal of life acts against human nature" (p. 121).

Even more profoundly, the concept of the self that lies at the base of the philosophy of Epicurus and Bentham is quite alien to Nishida's system. For Nishida they are obsessing over the demands of the individual ego and thus actually prescribing a social order that hinders individuals from realizing their absolute personality. One crucial philosophical delusion that is fostered by hedonic theory is that morality exists in the results of one's action—any behavior giving rise to pleasure is good. For Nishida, of course, such a crisp distinction between the motivation, actualization, and implications of conduct was completely misconceived—conduct is willed action, and its value exists within itself.

From his discussion of the main currents in moral philosophy (as he saw them), it is clear that Nishida recognizes three major problems in the discourse. First, none of the existing theories seemed to provide a genuinely universal basis for moral conduct, free from arbitrary impositions. Second, existing theories failed to understand properly the idea that conduct is willed action—that is, that motivation must be consistent with (or unified with) action. Finally, Nishida points to a profound problem in the existing corpus: the misconception that the self is located in the abstract realm of thought rather than simultaneously in the fundamental space of pure experience. In the next chapters, Nishida attempts to provide solutions to these problems within the framework of his own philosophy.

Unity of Personality and Satisfaction (Manzoku) *as the Good*

Given his encompassing view of the self, it should be no surprise that Nishida's ethic is also an autonomous theory. However, because Nishida's conception of the self is not limited to individual personalities, the distinction between autonomous and heteronomous theories is rather hazy. To some extent, it is a false distinction. For Nishida everything exists within the self—which is identical with saying that everything (including the self) is without the self. Nonetheless, Nishida introduces us to his ethic via a discussion of another autonomous theory: energetism *(katsudō setsu).*

Energetism (or activity theory) acknowledges that the nature of the will is crucial

to our understanding of moral conduct. Nishida cites Plato and Aristotle as advocates of the idea that the will is the fundamental unifying activity of consciousness and that "when such unification reaches completion—when ideals are realized—we feel satisfaction. . . . Accordingly, the good is the realization of our internal demands, our ideals; it is the development and completion of the will" (p. 123).[40]

Nishida is careful to draw a distinction between the "satisfaction" *(manzoku)* that lies at the root of energetism and the "pleasure" *(kairaku)* that is the basis of hedonism. Satisfaction is not the same as pleasure, since it is located in completion rather than in abstraction. Although satisfaction is internal to the self, it is not arbitrary in the same way as pleasure. One can be satisfied even while suffering.

Aristotle uses the term *entelechy* to describe the beauty of an entity that has completed itself, true to its own nature (or to describe the latent power of an entity to do so). For Nishida, this idea of beauty approaches the good: "The highest good, in other words, is for our spirit to develop its various abilities and to achieve a perfect development" (p. 125). However, for Nishida the good transcends Aristotle's idea of beauty because it is ultimately divorced from particular manifestations. Nishida's "self" is, finally, universal rather than (as well as) particular. In the end, "the concept of the good coincides with the concept of reality" (pp. 125–126). If the good is considered to be the unification of self with the true reality, then the laws of morality are ultimately included in the laws of reality—as in the Mahāyāna idea of dependent co-origination *(pratītya samutpāda):* "The view of existence and value as separate comes from an act of abstraction that distinguishes objects of knowing from objects of feeling and willing; but in concrete reality existence and value are fundamentally one" (p. 126). Hence, Nishida develops a form of transcendental energetism, which he suggests is consistent with both Plato's stance (that the good is the foundation of reality) and with the Upanishads of India (in which the good is the realization of reality). The model seems to encompass solutions to the three problems of universalism, unity of will and action, and contradictory selfhood. The good is ultimately located in the realization of the unity of self and reality, but functionally it exists in conduct that moves in that direction. At this stage in his inquiry, however, Nishida is not yet clear about what would constitute good conduct in the world of everyday life. Nishida's ethic seems to lack a concrete politics, although it does imply one.

Unlike energetism, which is entirely focused on the self, political ethics must encompass conduct toward others. Like Bentham before him, Nishida makes the leap from one to the other by attempting to derive a standard by which competing "demands of consciousness" may be judged. In keeping with his emphasis on unity (and again following Plato and Aristotle), Nishida explains that "a particular demand becomes good only when it is related to the whole. . . . [T]he good is primarily a coordinated harmony—or mean—between various activities" (p. 128).[41]

The crucial question is how the mean can be comprehended. For Plato the mean cannot signify a quantitative order because consciousness is a single unified system, not a collection of sequential events. Hence, it is the systematic activity of ideas that is essential to mean/harmony—for Plato this system of ideas is reason itself. For the good to be done, reason must control our emotions and desires—living in accord

with reason is the good. In the *Republic,* Plato makes the leap from the organization of human consciousness to the organization of political society: a state that governs its citizens in accordance with reason manifests the highest political good.

While Nishida agrees with Plato's diagnosis of the need to deduce a systematic activity of ideas, he parts company with the Greeks because he does not believe that the system could be reason. Clearly this will have serious repercussions for the content of morality and the shape of good politics. Nishida argues that reason cannot be the unifying or systematizing power behind consciousness because reason is a product of consciousness and is in no way prior to it. Plato's reason and even Kant's *pure reason* are intellectual abstractions that provide "merely a formal relationship with no content whatsoever" (p. 130).[42]

Because the harmonizing principle is prior to reason, it cannot be analyzed with reason: like art or music, it "must be intuited and realized in oneself. If we regard this unifying power as the personality of each individual, then the good resides in the maintenance and development of personality as this unifying power" (p. 130). We have already seen how "personality" has a special meaning for Nishida; it "is not an assortment of highly subjective hopes that functions as the center of each person's superficial consciousness. Such hopes may express the individual's personality to some extent, but the true personality comes forth when a person eradicates them and forgets his or her self" (p. 130). In other words, the reality that is revealed to us by pure experience, prior to the activity of our intellect or reason, should be our guide to moral conduct. In order to understand it, we must experience it by moving beyond our attachments to subjectivity and reason. There is a clear Zen influence here: *to know the true reality of the self and the good means to have an existential realization.* Good conduct is that which unifies the abstract individual with the internal demands of the absolute self. It occurs at Shinran's moment of "turnabout," in Dōgen's "falling away of self," and in Nishida's "action intuition."

One concrete act that can never be moral is deceit or insincerity—since to deceive others is to reinforce the contradiction between self and truth. For Nishida, rather idealistically, the imperative of sincerity should act as a check on the behavior of those who seek to abandon recklessly the standards of society in the name of a greater truth. There are some parallels here with rules of the Buddhist *sangha,* where the most serious of crimes is held to be lying about one's level of spiritual attainment. For the *sangha,* there are other crimes that infringe on either another's or one's own ability to attain realization, such as murder and stealing. Somewhat like Kant, Nishida appears to be suggesting that there is a moral imperative not to interfere with the freedom of others: ultimately the good lies in the unification (harmonization or negation) of all opposites.[43]

Following the form if not the content of Plato's argument in the *Republic,* Nishida makes the leap from individual consciousness to political society as a simple shift in scale (or contradictory location) (pp. 129–130). Good conduct involves not only the individual self but also other people in society (since it is the unity of will and action). Nonetheless, because the chief satisfaction of individuals is found in their self-actualization and because that actualization is the absolute good, the

responsibilities of the state are largely limited to protecting individual freedoms. As we have come to expect, Nishida is careful to draw a distinction between the liberties guaranteed by rational societies and those provided by his ideal moral society. Health, happiness, and even knowledge are to be valued, but they should not take precedence over satisfaction. In other words, the state does not exist to mediate or guarantee the self-interested desires of its individual citizens; rather it should seek to provide a social environment that supports individuals in their quest for self-actualization. Because conduct is goal-oriented by the will, citizens must be free to choose (and realize) their own goals rather than be forced to follow the dominant political ideology. In crude terms, this means that everybody should be valued for their unique skills and abilities rather than forced to develop the abilities prescribed by an authority as important. Nobody can determine what talents are necessary for somebody else to achieve self-satisfaction; this determination is made in the consciousness itself:[44] "In short, absolutely good conduct is conduct that takes the actualization of personality as its goal, that is, conduct that functions for the sake of the unity of consciousness" (p. 133).[45]

In political terms, Nishida is advocating a radical individualism (although for him the "individual" is an absolute self-contradiction). He differentiates between his individualism and conventional individualism by claiming that the latter is really a form of egoism, and thus completely at odds with the idea of community (p. 131). In Nishida's terms, individualism and communalism are quite complementary, since the latter extends and encompasses the former: "it is only when individuals in society fully engage in action and express their natural talents that society progresses. A society that ignores the individual is anything but a healthy one" (pp. 137–138). In a manner of speaking, Nishida is formulating society as a human analogy: society is most healthy and most satisfied when its constituent parts are also healthy and complete.[46] Like the individual, society is a self-contradictory identity; it exists in the space between the individual and the absolute. A fundamental political aspect of the good exists in the fact that, for Nishida, the idea of society is already subsumed into the concept of self—it is simply a larger scale of unity.[47]

However, Nishida's radical individualism does not simply amount to anarchy. The integrity of society is saved by the fact that he takes the nation seriously as a personality in its own right. Not only does it constitute a personality in the sense that it is a self-contradictory identity; Nishida also suggests that a nation can be considered as "constituting one living entity" (p. 138). He draws on the biological argument that humans pass on their cells to their descendants to argue that the cellular makeup of a nation remains relatively constant (assuming a stable population). Furthermore, "when humans live in a community, a social consciousness necessarily functions to unify the consciousness of its members. . . . [A]t the next level beyond the family, the nation unifies the entirety of our conscious activity and expresses a single personality" (pp. 138, 140). In everyday terms, the personality of a nation is expressed through its language, manners, culture, religions, and laws—each of which is unique to that particular location. Hence the nation and the individual exist in a dialectical relationship of mutual contradiction, affirmation, and development.

Clearly, there is potential danger in such an organic view of the state and the reification of national cultures. The fascist regimes in Europe were constructed along just such lines, and Nishida's work would be called into the service of the Imperial Japanese state in the 1940s. Nishida is not unaware of this kind of danger, and in *Zen no kenkyū* he expresses his understanding of international relations without the vocabulary of *kokutai* (national polity) and *kyōeiken* (co-prosperity sphere), which would be introduced later.

Zen no kenkyū *and International Relations*

Nishida is very explicit that "the nation is not the final goal of humankind," but rather it is something that is necessary for the fulfillment of "humankind's mission" (p. 141). As we are aware by now, the mission of humankind is the realization of its personality, which will ultimately embrace all differences and contradictions. Because the nation is a personality in its own right, it is subject to the same moral laws as individuals. This means that it has obligations to other nations, just as citizens have obligations to each other.

The goal of Nishida's nation is not, therefore, the accumulation of material power to ward off (or threaten) other nations, as was the case for Hobbes. The material property of a country and its citizens is not (should not be) the historic concern of the nation. Neither is its purpose to protect the individualist liberties of its citizens, as advocated by Rousseau. Rather the purpose of the nation is to extend the expression of our personality to greater levels of unity. The nation is just a temporary stage between the individual and the absolute; hence, its function is to take the next step toward genuine reality: "At present, the nation is the greatest expression of unified communal consciousness. But the expression of our personality cannot stop there—it demands something greater: a social union that includes all humankind" (p. 141).

Later on, Nishida would use the term "particular world" *(tokushuteki sekai)* to label the next level of social union,[48] which would include regional groupings of nations. In the 1940s, the term "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" *(Daitōa kyōeiken)* would come to be used interchangeably with "particular world."[49] Although the step between Nishida's ethical formulation of transnational unities and militarist empires seems logical to us in hindsight, it is far from obvious that it should have been clear to Nishida in 1911, when nobody could have predicted the wars to come. Indeed, Nishida is quite specific when he states:

> Genuine universalism . . . does not require that each nation ceases to be. Rather, it means that each nation becomes increasingly stable, displays its distinctive characteristics, and contributes to the history of the world (p. 141).

Such an argument is quite consistent with his clear views about morality in domestic politics—where the primary obligation of the state is to respect the essential individuality of every citizen. The health of the nation depends on the satisfaction of its citizens; so the health of a transnational grouping depends on the health

of its constituent nations. International politics should be about cultural synthesis and the expression of communal (ultimately universal) consciousness, not about conquest and war. The Japanese empire of the 1940s, premised on the enforcement of a (divine) heteronomous political system, was clearly in violation of Nishida's political ethics as expressed in *Zen no kenkyū.* Nishida acknowledges the evident idealism of his view when he states that the "good" will not easily be actualized in this "age of armed peace" (p. 141). This interpretation of Nishida's politics is consistent not only with his moral philosophy but also with his self-proclaimed philosophical project. It should be remembered that by writing philosophy Nishida was operating in a relatively new intellectual sphere for the Japanese at the turn of the century. Philosophy was still seen as a Western construct and to some extent alien to the cultural and intellectual requirements of Japan. Nishida was quite happy to acknowledge the value of philosophy, but he was also keen to preserve the value of traditional Japanese culture. In order to do both, Nishida attempted to open up "a single, boundless world embracing both East and West, and informed by a principle not simply *either* East *or* West, but transcending both East and West alike."[50]

Clearly, the idea of development through synthesis speaks directly to this project, and it made Nishida the intellectual forerunner of today's political constructivists, who argue that each nation operates according to a logic that it creates for itself. For Nishida, all knowledge (including Western rationalism and philosophical method) is tied to a specific culture: "knowledge, morality, and aesthetic taste all have social significance, and even the most universal learning does not escape social convention. . . . It is for this reason that at present each nation has its own academic tradition" (p. 138). As a Meiji Japanese, Nishida was directly involved in the meeting of two great intellectual traditions, and was deliberately attempting to synthesize them into a system that could encompass them both without destroying either of them.

There is also some evidence to suggest that even when Nishida began to employ the language of the ultranationalist regime in the 1940s, he still meant to inform that language with his earlier permissive, culturally relativist ideas. Compare the following description of the co-prosperity sphere (spoken in 1944) with the previous quotation from *Zen no kenkyū*:

> [I]t is definitely not imperialism. For it to be a co-prosperity sphere, everyone in the sphere must be satisfied. If [Japan] arbitrarily decided on the nature of the sphere and if it coerced the other members, that would violate the free will of all the regions [including Japan]. That would not be a co-prosperity sphere. . . . If it were a true co-prosperity sphere, others would ask Japan to create it for them. If that is not the case, we cannot talk of a Holy War.[51]

Conclusion

It is not the purpose of this essay to apologize for Nishida's wartime conduct, but merely to suggest that the shadows of that conduct should not be permitted to ob-

scure a potentially valuable legacy for political and moral philosophy. It is clear that Nishida was quite seriously engaged in political thought from early in his career, and that this philosophy turned out to be rather consistent with both his public behavior and his intellectual project.

To some extent, the fact that Nishida was not entirely politically naïve, even as early as 1911, means that his alleged political innocence cannot be used to excuse his later complicity in the ultranationalist cause. The very fact that he was engaged in political thought confers a much greater burden of responsibility on him during the war years.

On the other hand, Nishida's political philosophy is extremely idealistic. To the extent that political naïveté should be judged by the degree of political skepticism (or Realism) employed in one's thought, Nishida must still be viewed as unworldly and naïve.[52] Somewhat like that of Henri Bergson, Nishida's solution to domestic and global conflict rested on the realization of a fundamental shift in the intellectual (internal) processes of humankind.[53] Because he provided none of the external checks on behavior that Western political philosophers have been so keen to put in place, his system is wide open to exploitation. However, there is an important (if hazy) line between suggesting that Nishida's thought was exploited by the militarist government and claiming that his thought justified that regime. In his early years, at least, Nishida constructed a philosophy of ethics and politics highly critical of imperialism and ultranationalism.

Although there are still many debates to be addressed concerning the politics of Nishida Kitarō, I hope that this essay has made it clear that the debates are fruitful and important. At a minimum, Nishida provides a fresh and sophisticated critique of the corpus of political ethics. Furthermore, he makes a serious attempt to build an independent ethic on the foundations of his influential conceptions of self and nation.

Notes

The author gratefully acknowledges the careful and critical readings of an earlier version of this essay made by the anonymous reviewers of *Philosophy East and West.*
For the reader's convenience, parenthetical page references and quotations from *Zen no kenkyū* appearing in this article are taken from the Masao Abe and Christopher Ives translation of Nishida Kitarō, *An Inquiry into the Good* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Other translations are my own. The original text of *Zen no kenkyū* was reprinted by Iwanami Shoten in 1991 and 1997, it also appears in volume 1 of Nishida's collected works. References to the *Nishida Kitarō zenshū (NKZ)* are to the 1965–1966 Iwanami Shoten edition, in nineteen volumes.

1 – See for example, Graham Parkes, "The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy," in *Philosophy East and West* 47 (3) (July 1997): 305–336; David Williams, "In Defense of the Kyoto

School: Reflections on Philosophy, the Pacific War and the Making of a Post-White World," in *Japan Forum* 12 (2) (Winter 2000); various in James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, eds., *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994); and also my own "A Lost Tradition: Nishida Kitarō, Henri Bergson and Intuition in Political Philosophy," *Social Science Japan Journal* 5 (1) (2002): 55–70.

2 – John C. Maraldo, in "The Problem of World Culture: Toward an Appropriation of Nishida's Philosophy of Nation and Culture," *Eastern Buddhist* 27 (2) (Autumn 1995), suggests that Nishida's political thought can only be taken seriously in a depoliticized context.

3 – The classic example is Nishida's text "Sekaishinchitsujo no genri" (Principles for a new world order), which was written in 1943 at the request of the military authorities. In the end, Nishida's draft was considered too abstract and difficult for general consumption, and it was carefully rewritten (and de-philosophized) by a pro-military acquaintance of Nishida, Tanabe Juri. Nishida complains about this in letter #1784 to Watsuji Tetsurō, 23 June 1943 (*NKZ* 19 : 245).

4 – In one of the few English-language articles to confront directly some of the questions about Nishida's political thought, Pierre Lavelle confusingly claims to deal with Nishida's political thought but actually discusses the reception of his wartime writings in wartime Japan. While the essay is a fine analysis of the latter, its ostensible claims to the former are misleading (Pierre Lavelle, "The Political Thought of Nishida Kitarō," *Monumenta Nipponica* 49 [2] [1994]).

5 – John C. Maraldo, "The Problem of World Culture," p. 185.

6 – Some European thinkers, such as Nishida's great inspiration, Kant, have been victim to the same tendency, since their political ideas emerge under titles such as "The Metaphysics of Morals." Some commentators have even renamed a number of Nishida's later works, apparently to side-step this problem. For example, Nishida's *Tetsugaku ronbunshū dai-yon hoi* (Supplement to the fourth collection of philosophical essays) (*NKZ* 12 : 397–434), is conventionally referred to as *Kokutai* or *Kokutairon* (On the National Polity).

7 – Nishida Kitarō, *Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan,* in *NKZ* 11—available in translation: David Dilworth, trans., *Nothingness and the Religious Worldview* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987).

8 – Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) and Miki Kiyoshi (1897–1945) were particularly vocal critics, from the Marxist perspective.

9 – See Woo-Sung Huh, "The Philosophy of History in the 'Later' Nishida: A Philosophic Turn," in *Philosophy East and West* 40 (3) (July 1990): 343–374.

10 – For example, David Dilworth ("The Range of Nishida's Early Religious Thought: Zen no kenkyū," in *Philosophy East and West* 19 [4] [1969]: 409–421) and others emphasize the importance of *Zen no kenkyū* as the source of

Nishida's philosophical system—although there is no sense in which it is considered a political text.

11 – For example, in a public lecture, "Rekishiteki shintai," given in Nagano on 25 September 1937, Nishida explains exactly this point, recommending that the audience read his first book to best understand his thought. This lecture included in *NKZ* 14.

12 – Valdo H. Viglielmo, "Nishida Kitarō: The Early Years," in D. H. Shively, ed., *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 509. Viglielmo suggests that Nishida's thought was already formed as early as 1906, when the first sections of *Zen no kenkyū* were published.

13 – Nishida's diaries are published in the annex *(bekkan)* to *NKZ* (vols. 13–14) along with other unpublished works and letters. An English-language account of them is provided by Lothar Knauth, "Life is Tragic: The Diary of Nishida Kitarō," *Monumenta Nipponica* 20 (3–4) (1965): 334–358.

14 – Ibid., p. 347.

15 – Letter #1120, 29 June 1937 (18 : 608–609). A long essay bearing the title "The Reason of the State" *(Kokka riyū no mondai)* appeared in 1941 (*NKZ* 10).

16 – Shibata Masumi, in "The Diary of a Zen Layman: The Philosopher Nishida Kitarō," *Eastern Buddhist* 14 (2) (Autumn 1981): 121–131, provides a fascinating narrative concerning Nishida's involvement in Zen Buddhist training "before he wrote his first work, *A Study of the Good*" (p. 121).

17 – A great deal of the early translation work and commentary was done within the covers of *The Eastern Buddhist,* a journal established by D. T. Suzuki with the express purpose of communicating Japanese religious sentiment to the Western world. Indeed, *The Eastern Buddhist* has been called the unofficial vehicle of the Kyoto School.

18 – Subsequently, the English-speaking public received only cursory and dismissive treatments of the school in historical or political contexts—Graham Parkes ("The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School"), for example, takes particular issue with Najita Tetsuo and H. D. Harootunian's presentation of the school in their influential "Japanese Revolt against the West," in Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan,* vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). An interesting survey of the changing currents of attitude toward Nishida is provided by Yusa Michiko, "Reflections on Nishida Studies," *Eastern Buddhist* 28 (2) (Autumn 1995): 287–296.

19 – An excellent account of this period of Nishida's life is provided by one of Nishida's eminent students, Kōsaka Masaaki, *Nishida Kitarō Sensei no shōgai to shisō*, (Tokyo: Kōbundō Shobō, 1947). An English-language account (which draws heavily on Kōsaka) is Valdo H. Viglielmo, "Nishida Kitarō: The Early

Years." Both sources detail the list of "distinguished men of modern Japan" who shared classes with Nishida in the *Dai-shi Kōtō Chūgakkō* (Fourth Higher Middle School) in Ishikawa. See also Ueyama Shumpei, "Nishida Kitarō," in *Kindai Nihon no shisōka* (ed., Kuwabara Takeo, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1963). The Iwanami researchers for *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* also collected together some correspondence from this time, and some essays of recollection written by Nishida later.

20 – Nishida's interest in Fukuzawa's notion of *dokuritsushin* (spirit of self-independence) was symptomatic of his Meiji liberalism and would later become quite consistent with his own ideas of self-actualization *(jitsugen),* which he would identify with the good *(zen)* in *Zen no kenkyū*. Indeed, Nishida's lasting respect for Fukuzawa is reflected by the fact that Nishida laments his death in his diary entry for 7 February 1901: "Fukuzawa Sensei is dead. Great men must be like him—they should always maintain their independence."

21 – They held a banner (Standing Free Atop Heaven) expressing an interesting mix of Liberal and Confucian images.

22 – Takashi Koizumi, "Morals and Society in Japanese Philosophy," in Brian Carr and Indira Mahalingam, eds., *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2001) p. 794.

23 – Nishida's 1942 essay, "Yamamoto Chōsui Kun no omoide," which he wrote after hearing of the death of his longtime friend, is reproduced in *NKZ* 12 : 245–251. Together with the correspondence with Yamato, this essay provides much of the valuable biographical information on the early Nishida. It is discussed in Viglielmo, "Nishida Kitarō: The Early Years," pp. 518–519.

24 – The problems of being a "special student" did not end with graduation—his search for work was long and hard, and he was continuously passed over in favor of people with "normal" degrees. Each of Nishida's biographers suggests that this only fueled his motivation to become a great philosopher. However, I might suggest that it also served to fan his suspicion of institutions and to promote a form of anti-establishmentarianism.

25 – Nishida's diary and correspondence reflect the fact that the eradication of (Satchō) clan rule and military-style governance remained one of the few issues of practical politics that consistently attracted his interest. According to Viglielmo, such views were even evident after Nishida's retirement from Kyōdai in 1928 ("Nishida Kitarō: The Early Years," p. 525).

26 – Nishitani Keiji, *Nishida Kitarō* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 24.

27 – A notable exception is David Dilworth ("The Range of Nishida's Early Religious Thought"), who concentrates on section 4.

28 – See the first and second propositions of Kant's "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, 1999), p. 42.

29 – Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1932, 1997), p. 338. For a comparison of Bergson and Nishida, see Jones, "A Lost Tradition."

30 – Nishida uses the will to kill as an example.

31 – See Nishida Kitarō, *Gutoku shinran,* in *NKZ* 1, esp. pp. 407–408, translated in Dennis Hirota, "Nishida's 'Gutoku Shinran,'" *Eastern Buddhist* 28 (2) (Autumn 1995): 242–243.

32 – Nishida's distance from Shinran on this front is illustrated by his choice of term to describe the mind when it acts morally. For Shinran the term is *shinjin* (believing mind), while Nishida employs *anjin* (peaceful mind), *mujin* (no mind), or more usually *shinjin* (true mind) as used by Rennyo and Takuan.

33 – At least the idea of divine law helps us to take the idea of universal morality more seriously.

34 – Although even Rousseau concedes that while the state can force people to behave correctly, it suits human dignity better if people freely choose to behave well: "Truly human dignity emerges in the conscious choice of the general will over the private" (Allan Bloom, "Jean-Jacque Rousseau," in Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy,* 3d ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], p. 570).

35 – We might presume that a society governed by a genuinely self-actualized ruler would manifest rules that were all consistent with genuine morality—assuming that genuine morality is static. There are resonances here of Hegel, who argues that a state with rational laws permits individuals to obey their own reason and thus to realize themselves perfectly.

36 – Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What Is Enlightenment?'" in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, 1999), p. 54. Kant's "enlightenment" was, of course, rather different from that of Nishida.

37 – Not only does Nishida reveal his affinity for Zen sages and the tradition in which they exist, but also he seems to suggest that technical knowledge of the world (which was heavily associated with the West during the Meiji period) does not necessarily constitute superiority over those who lack such knowledge (i.e., Japan).

38 – Nishida first uses the term *kateiteki shisō* (hypothetical thought) to describe rational thought in *Zen no kenkyū,* p. 43.

39 – Nishida develops this idea in a number of later essays, including "Nihon bunka no mondai" (The question of Japanese culture). A partial translation exists in Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (Columbia University Press, 1958, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 355–356. I note that this translation is taken from the book version of the essay, reprinted in *NKZ* 12, and not from the text of the 1938 lectures, reprinted in *NKZ* 14.

40 – To some extent, this reading of Plato and Aristotle is anachronistic: while they spoke of volitions and desires, the idea of "will" is not explicitly discussed. This anachronism is Nishida's.

41 – Of course, harmony *(wa)* in Japanese intellectual tradition is very important. However, Plato and Aristotle were also advocates of the belief that harmony/the mean was good—Aristotle's ethics, for example, suggest that courage is a virtue because it is the mean of violence and timidity.

42 – See Nishida's critique of rational theories, above.

43 – For Kant this imperative is the "Universal Principle of Right," effectively the political formulation of his categorical imperative: *every action which by itself or by its maxim enables the freedom of each individual's will to coexist with the freedom of everyone else in accordance with a universal law is right.* See Immanuel Kant, "The Metaphysics of Morals," in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant: Political Writings,* p. 133.

44 – There are resonances between this view and Nishida's opposition to the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890.

45 – Nishida notes that standard categories of social good (wealth, honor, health, skill, knowledge, etc.) are only goods to the extent that they accord with the demands of individual (and collective) personalities. Otherwise they become evils. In other words, there is nothing intrinsically good in a socially constructed category.

46 – Nishida maintains this organic imagery in his later work. See "Sekaishinchitsujo no genri" (1943), *NKZ* 12 : 430: "Just as in the case of an organism *(yūkitai),* the unity of the whole requires that each part become truly itself *(kakuji ga kakuji jishin to naru),* and each part becoming truly itself requires the unity of the whole."

47 – The converse of this is that Nishida views the individual as essentially social—although he quotes Aristotle (people are social animals) approvingly, his real perspective is closer to the fundamental concept of *ningen* in the (later) work of Watsuji Tetsurō.

48 – Nishida, "Sekai shinchitsujo no genri," *NKZ* 12 : 434.

49 – Nishida would invariably omit the prefix *"dai"* (greater), presumably because particular worlds / co-prosperity spheres afforded no hierarchy in his schema.

50 – Ueda Shizuteru, "Nishida's Thought," *Eastern Buddhist* 28 (1) (Spring 1995): 29—originally "Nishida Kitarō no shisaku," in *Keiken to jikaku: Nishida tetsugaku no basho o motomete* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994), p. 1.

51 – *NKZ* 12 : 471.

52 – For a classic account of the damage caused by idealistic political thinking in the interwar period in Europe, see E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1939, 1981).

53 – Henri Bergson, in *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932; reprint, Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), explains how "L'humanité gémit, à demi écrasée sous le poids des progrès qu'elle a faits" (p. 338) and how peace is only to be found in the abandonment of reason for intuition.