



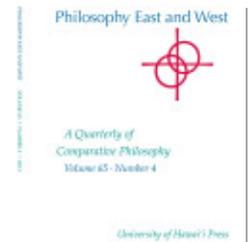
PROJECT MUSE®

Embodied Implacement in Kūkai and Nishida

John W. M. Krummel

Philosophy East and West, Volume 65, Number 3, July 2015, pp. 786-808
(Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: [10.1353/pew.2015.0076](https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2015.0076)



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pew/summary/v065/65.3.krummel.html>

EMBODIED IMPLACEMENT IN KŪKAI AND NISHIDA



John W. M. Krummel

Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Krummel@hws.edu

Two Japanese philosophers not often read together but both with valuable insights concerning body and place are Kūkai 空海 (774–835), the founder of Shingon 真言 Buddhism, and Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), the founder of Kyoto School (京都派) philosophy. This essay will examine the importance of embodied implacement in correlativity with the environment in the philosophies of these two preeminent intellects of Japan. One was a medieval religionist and the other a modern philosopher, and yet similarities inherited from Mahāyāna Buddhism are to be found in the way each conceives of the interrelationship between self and environment via the body. Both figures emerged in Japan when the nation was undergoing radical changes in its appropriation of foreign influences. Each in his own way, great and small, reflected—and contributed to—the environing world as it underwent creative alterations. What both recognized, albeit each in different ways, was the central significance of the body vis-à-vis the world and of the environing *wherein* of embodiment.

A look at Kūkai's concepts, such as *sokushinjōbutsu* 即身成佛 and *hosshin seppō* 法身說法, and Nishida's concepts, such as *kōiteki chokkan* 行為の直観 and *rekishi-tekishintai* 歴史の身体, will show that for both thinkers embodiment is an essential facet of one's being, implacing¹ one within the world to constitutes one's identity in interaction with the environment. Both conceive of a mutual mirroring between the microcosm of the individual self and the macrocosm of the environmental whole as played out via the bodily interrelations of self and world. In this relationality, the body is, moreover, non-substantial. This non-substantialism defines their conceptions of the body in distinction from other views: The body for both is empty. We can say that the body, in its very emptiness, plays a significant role for both Kūkai and Nishida, by implacing us in the world and making room for our interrelationality both within and with the webwork of the cosmos, that is, in both the horizontal and the vertical dimensions. Moreover the body as such, for both, serves as a microcosm that reflects the very world in its interactions with us. That is, both thinkers point, in addition to the individual human body, to an empty body in its cosmological dimension that in its emptiness makes room as for the myriad beings of the world. I am referring here to what Kūkai calls the *hosshin* 法身 (the body of the dharma) and what Nishida of the 1930s and 1940s calls the infinite sphere of the world. I want to suggest that the place of the myriad beings that is the world, in both thinkers, is in some sense a "body" with which our own bodies are in inter-resonance, chiasmatically intertwined, and a "body" that in addition is an empty place. Before we proceed let me first explain what I mean here by *chiasma*.

Chiasma is a term used in anatomy and in genetics, and in general refers to a “crossing.” It derives from the Greek *chiasma* (*khiasma*), meaning “crosspiece,” “crossover,” or “X-shape.” It also comes from the Greek *chiazein*, meaning “to mark with an X,” and the Greek letter *chi* (X, χ). I use *chiasma* and chiasmatic to refer to the cross-configuration or intersection between the horizontal interrelationality among beings and the vertical interrelationality between beings and that which embraces or encompasses them (whether as dharma, Buddha, *dharmakāya*, emptiness, world, absolute, nothing, place, etc.). As interrelationality also means nonduality in Buddhism, nonduality is in this sense chiasmatic. An English dictionary usually distinguishes the two words *chiasma* and *chiasmus*. And of course in philosophy there is Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of *chiasm*. These terms are all related and overlapping in meaning but not exactly the same. *Chiasmus* is a figure of speech based on an inverted parallelism, whereby the order of terms in parallel clauses is reversed in one of the clauses (e.g., “one should eat to live, not live to eat”). This comes close to Merleau-Ponty’s sense of *chiasm* as the paradoxical form of a whole composed of parts that interrelate in inverse structural order. I take *chiasma*, however, to be inclusive of the meaning of *chiasmus*—perhaps including the Merleau-Pontyan *chiasm*—in that the multi-layered criss-crossing would also involve a kind of reciprocity and multiple inversions, albeit with disjunction between the terms. For example, Kūkai’s statement concerning the interrelatedness of mind and matter that “the subject is the object, the object the subject; the seeing is the seen, the seen the seeing” (*shiki sunawachi shin, shin sunawachi shiki. . . . chi sunawachi kyō, kyō sunawachi chi* 色すなわち心, 心すなわち色. . . . 智すなわち境, 境すなわち智) (KKZ 2, p. 234 / H, p. 229), as his notions of *nyūga ganyū* 入我我入 and *kaji* 加持—both of which we shall discuss below—seem to approach the vicinity of what Merleau-Ponty may mean by *chiasm*.²

The *chiasm*, or *chiasmus* within the *chiasma*, is also evident in Nishida’s notions of dialectical interdetermination, such as between individual and environment or in the universal’s determination of the individual and its reverse determination by the individual, and in the inverse correspondence (*gyakutaiō* 逆対応) between absolute and finite. In any case, the meaning of *chiasma* and chiasmatic should become clear in our discussion of the two thinkers. I hope that the figures provided (1 and 2) will be helpful in this regard, and I encourage the reader to consult them while reading this essay. I shall begin our discussion with Kūkai, followed by a look at Nishida, and then will conclude with some general remarks.

Kūkai

The concept of the body (*shin* 身) in Kūkai’s Buddhism possesses a manifold and universal significance. Kūkai explains the term in his *Sokushinjōbutsugi* 即身成仏義 as referring to one’s own body, the bodies of other sentient beings, and the bodies of other types of beings. It can mean the entire cosmos (Skt. *dharmadhātu*; Jpn. *hōkai* 法界) as the embodiment of truth (Skt. dharma; Jpn. *hō* 法) (i.e., Skt. *dharmakāya*; Jpn. *hosshin* 法身), which Kūkai identified with the cosmic body of the “Great Sun”

Buddha (Skt. *Mahāvairocana*; Jpn. *Dainichi* 大日).³ And it can also mean the various manifestations of this cosmic Buddha-body, as well as the various “bodies” involved in ritual practice symbolizing the dharma, such as Sanskrit letters, *mudrās* (*ingei* 印契, body-postures and hand-gestures), and *maṇḍalas* (*mandara* 曼荼羅, geometrical diagrams or patterns) (see *KKZ* 2:246–247 / H, p. 232 / I, pp. 212–213). These senses are all interrelated in multifarious ways to comprise one cosmic web-work, one body, that is at the same time many. While the “body” here is the body of the Buddha *Dainichi*, the embodiment of truth (*dharmakāya*), we may also understand “body” to designate the very materiality or “stuff” of the world and of things, including one’s self. It will become clear in the discussion of the six elements below that “body” (*shin*), as explained in Kūkai’s *Sokushinjōbutsugi*, is understood broadly to encompass not only the physical but the mental as well, as “body-and-mind” (*shinshin* 身心) for both sentient beings and for the cosmic Buddha. I will show in the following that this “body,” that of the Buddha and sentient beings, the cosmos and its inhabitants, involves a multi-layered criss-crossing between the terms—a relationship that I call *chiasma*, whereby the cosmic body and the manifold bodies are co-constitutive.

Kūkai expresses the religious significance of embodiment with his motto “*sokushinjōbutsu*,” meaning “the attainment of Buddhahood/enlightenment in this very body.” He used this to differentiate his own “esoteric” (*mikkyō* 密教) brand of Buddhism from the other “exoteric” (*kengyō* 顯教) schools of Buddhism in Japan at that time.⁴ His claim was that esoteric teachings, as direct revelations from *Dainichi* himself expressing his enlightenment, enable the immediate realization of one’s own innate Buddhahood. What is the nature of such direct revelation? Kūkai’s contribution to the Mahāyāna notion of “original enlightenment” (*hongaku* 本覺) here was to explicitly connect it to embodied existence, which relates one to the rest of the cosmos, including its very materiality. The reference is to the idea that all sentient beings have an original potential for enlightenment (Buddhahood) due to their inherent though unrealized Buddha-nature (*bushshō* 佛性). Here we might consider the Mahāyāna doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* (Jpn. *nyoraizō* 如来藏) (“womb of the realizer of suchness,” i.e., “womb of the Buddha”) that becomes the source of the notion of Buddha-nature, that is, potential Buddhahood, in Japanese Buddhism.

Garbha (*zō* 藏) in the Sanskrit *tathāgatagarbha* can mean “womb” or “matrix” as well as “embryo” or “seed.” As the seed to realizing reality (hence enlightenment) it would signify the universal potential for Buddhahood. But on the other hand, as matrix it could mean the very cosmos wherein we are embedded and evolve, like a womb that nurtures our growth. As seed, the *tathāgatagarbha* is within each of us, but as the cosmic womb we are within it. And if that womb is that of the body of *Dainichi*, there is implied here a reciprocity between the monk and the Buddha or between man and cosmos. The potential for enlightenment is within my body but I am within the cosmic embodiment of enlightenment. I exist within the living cosmic body but the very potential for realizing that truth (dharma) is *alive* within me. Kūkai expresses this in his notion of *nyūga ganyū* or “Buddha enters me and I enter Buddha” (*KKZ*

4:41). In this way the Mahāyāna notion of inherent Buddhahood is reworked so as to underscore the very bodiliness of our nonduality with the Buddha and the entirety of the cosmos.

For Kūkai (in his *Sokushinjōbutsugi*), the cosmos, identified with the universal body (*dharmakāya*; Jpn. *hosshin*) of the Buddha Dainichi, is made up of six elements (*rokudai* 六大): five material elements (earth, water, fire, air/wind, and space) and consciousness or mind (see *KKZ* 2:231, 235 / I 202, pp. 205–206 / H, p. 229). The *dharmakāya* is the Buddha Dainichi’s body (i.e., “body-and-mind”), which embraces all dharmas (thing-events) of the cosmos composed of these elements and interfused in different ways.⁵ All material bodies, then—each in its own way—manifest this *dharmakāya*. The dharma (truth),⁶ therefore, cannot simply be a truth conceived by the mind. For reality, as the “body” of truth (that is, *dharmakāya*), comprises that which is material as well as mental. It involves both mind and matter, knower and known, subject and object, as interdependent “nondual” aspects of reality, *always already* encompassing and permeating all, including the body-and-mind of each of us and constituting the body-and-mind of the Buddha Dainichi (see *KKZ* 2:236, 242 / H, p. 231 / I, pp. 206, 209). In other words Kūkai here aims to bridge duality in a threefold manner: the duality within each of us (mind-body), the duality in each of our relations with other things (mind-matter, subject-object, self-other), and the duality in each of our relations with the very cosmos wherein we exist (individual-universe).

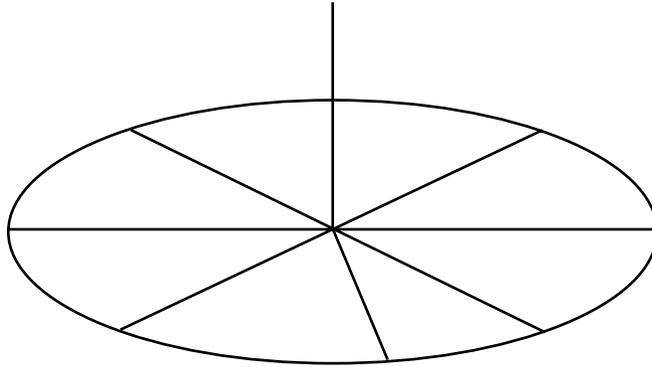
Now the six elements comprising the Buddha’s cosmic body are said to be interdependent (*rokudai engi* 六大緣起, “codependent origination of the six universals”) and mutually non-obstructing (*rokudai muge* 六大無礙, “non-obstruction among the six universals”). The dharma (“truth”) they manifest is the “suchness” (Skt. *tathatā*; Jpn. *nyojitsu* 如実) of their interdependent origination, which has already been equated by the Chinese Huayan (Jpn. Kegon 華嚴) and Tiantai (Jpn. Tendai 天台) Buddhists with the “emptiness” (Skt. *śūnyatā*, Jpn. *kū* 空) of all. Because each thing is relative to, dependent on, contingent on other things, nothing is substantial and everything is empty. And the very elements that make up the materiality of all are themselves empty. The entire cosmic web of interdependence and mutual non-obstruction, then, means universal⁷ emptiness—a sea of changing conditions correlative to each other, without any substantiality to guarantee permanence or stability.⁸ Kūkai inherited this Mahāyāna notion, especially the Huayan development of it in cosmic terms as the *dharmadhātu* (*hōkai*) of mutual non-obstruction, both horizontally (among thing-events, *shishi wuai*; Jpn. *jiji muge* 事事無礙) and vertically (between thing-events and their universal “patternment,” *lishi wuai*; Jpn. *riji muge* 理事無礙)^{9,10} (See figure 1). Identifying the *dharmakāya* with this *dharmadhātu* would then mean that universal emptiness underlies or permeates this cosmic body.¹¹ Put differently, the *dharmakāya* itself is non-substantial and its essence (called the *svabhāva-dharmakāya*) is this universal emptiness or “vast space.”¹² The cosmic body, then, embodies the truth of all while itself being empty. The ontological ground of beings is then an empty abyss that engulfs all without end. I prefer to call this (un)ground *an-ontological* as opposed to ontological or meontological because it

The dharma as kū 空 (emptiness); hosshin Dainichi 法身大日 as the cosmic body.

Hosshin seppō 法身說法 via sanmitsu 三密

Vertical Line: non-duality via mutual non-obstruction between dharma (universal emptiness) and dharmas (thing-events, beings); between Buddha and sentient beings.

Sokushinjōbutsu 即身成佛 via sangō 三業



Horizontal plane: mutual non-obstruction and interdependence amongst thing-events/beings).

Figure 1. Kūkai

is prior to, and encompasses, the very distinction and relationship between being (or *on*) and nonbeing (or *mēon*). This is in accord with the general middle path of Mahāyāna, which avoids the reification of being as well as of nonbeing.

This universal (and anontological) emptiness, for Kūkai (in his *Sokushinjōbutsugi*, *Shōji jissōgi* 声字実相儀, and *Unjigi* 吽字儀), is the “unborn,” “unproduced,” or “non-arising” aspect of the perpetually “born” and co-arising thing-events (KKZ 2:249–250 / I, p. 214; KKZ 2:273 / H, p. 239; KKZ 2:305 / H, p. 249).¹³ On one side of the coin, the *dharmakāya* is the source of being (and knowledge), but on the other side it is the space of universal emptiness allowing for the interdependent origination of beings. Kūkai thus quotes a passage from the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (Jpn. *Dainichi-kyō* 大日經) in his *Sokushinjōbutsugi* implying that the Buddha’s preaching and enlightenment is the “playful striding of great emptiness” (KKZ 2:223 / H, p. 226 / I, p. 198). Being and emptiness are hence nondual (*funi* 不二) via their cosmic embodiment. The difference between being and nonbeing, affirmation and negation, is thus made on the basis of that original anontological nonduality. And this also means the nonduality between Buddha and beings. How so? If *Buddha* means an enlightened being who has realized that emptiness, inclusive of the nonduality between knower and known, in his realization he no longer experiences himself as a distinct being. He has realized his nonduality with the empty sea of the cosmos.

And yet the absorption of the many into an undifferentiated oneness or the annihilation of all beings into nothingness is precluded as Kūkai treads the middle path inherited from Mahāyāna in this very nonduality, which avoids the extremes of ontological reification and utter nihilism, realism and idealism, pluralism and monism. Emptiness means neither of these extreme positions but rather points to their nonduality (*funi*), that is, emptiness in embodiment (see Figure 1).

We might say that in its emptiness as “great space,” that is, in its very non-substantiality, this cosmic body of the Buddha serves to make room for the multifarious interrelations that comprise reality. On the horizontal level beings arise interdependently so that all are equally endowed with the originally enlightened body of truth or *dharmakāya* (*hongaku hosshin* 本覺說法) (KKZ 2:293 / H, p. 245). On the vertical level beings are constituted in their mutual differentiation from their source (the Buddha/dharma) of emptiness.¹⁴ But this vertical non-obstruction also means the mutual constitution of identity via this relation of difference, hence a nonduality in the mutual mirroring between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic. The interrelationality thus obtains cross-dimensionally, both horizontally and vertically, as a *chiasma* (see Figure 1).

Through the elements of the universe, the Buddha *dharmakāya* is continuously omnipresencing everywhere and everywhen. Kūkai characterizes this as the *dharmakāya*'s expounding of the dharma (*hosshin seppō* 法身說法). And this makes it possible for sentient beings, in recognizing this universal Buddha-nature and omnipresence of the dharma, to realize their own inherent Buddhahood. Put simply, all phenomena, as dharmas (elemental thing-events), are true expressions of the dharma (the truth) of universal emptiness. Original enlightenment, for Kūkai, has to do with this universal revelation of the dharma via the Buddha's omnipresencing. Other Buddhist schools allegedly based their teachings on the preaching of Śākyamuni that accorded to the specific needs of the time and the place. Kūkai, however, claimed in his *Benkenmitsu nikkyōron* 弁顯密二教論 that his own “esoteric” brand of Buddhism is based directly on the eternal dharma as preached by Dainichi, the timeless *dharmakāya*, of whom Śākyamuni is an historical manifestation (KKZ 2:149 / H, p. 151). Dainichi's preaching occurs through all sensible phenomena, material and mental, encompassing bodily, verbal, and mental media, which are configurations, resonances,¹⁵ and patterns permeating the cosmos.

The *dharmakāya*'s preaching, then, is a dynamic process involving the cosmos' continual transformation as the *karmakāya* (“body of action”). Kūkai explains how all thing-events serve as the “voice” of Dainichi's preaching and as “letters” of his cosmic text, that is, the cosmos as the original embodiment of the *Dainichi-kyō* (*Mahāvairocana Sūtra*).¹⁶ The *mantra* used in Shingon practice symbolizes this vocalization of the *dharmakāya*'s preaching (also equated with its controlled breathing in meditation), immanent throughout the universe as the audio vibrations produced by the colliding and fusing of the material elements, from out of which syllables, names, words, and their meanings originate via mutual difference¹⁷ (see KKZ 2:272–273 / H, p. 239; KKZ 2:293 / H, p. 245). They constitute a cosmic language, which requires deciphering if one is to be enlightened. Depending on how one “reads” or “hears” them, they can lead one to enlightenment or deceive one into delusion (see

KKZ 2:279 / H, p. 242) The trick would seem to be to avoid reifications by noticing their inter-referentiality, which for Kūkai, however, requires ritual meditative practice for experiential verification. That is, the practitioner, according to Kūkai in the *Sokushinjōbutsugi*, must experientially realize the Buddha's threefold cosmic activities of body, speech, and mind, called the "three mysteries" (Skt. *tri-guhya*, Jpn. *sanmitsu* 三密),¹⁸ through his own body, speech, and mind, if he is to become a Buddha (KKZ 2:240 / H, p. 230 / I, p. 208).

Implaced within the cosmic body of Dainichi, we *already* participate in its movements, making experiential verification of our Buddha-nature possible. So Buddhahood is not achieved as something one previously did not possess, but rather is *realized* as something that was always inherent. In its emptiness, our body-and-mind *already* mirrors the Buddha's *dharmakāya*. The practice prescribed by Kūkai thus involves a "symbolic mimesis" of the three modalities of the cosmos, through the "three acts" (Skt. *tri-karma*; Jpn. *sangō* 三業) of our own body, speech, and mind: taking on certain bodily postures (including *mudrā/ingei* making¹⁹), engaging in specific oral-verbal utterances (*mantra* incantations, *dhāraṇī* recitations²⁰), and performing certain mental exertions (including *yoga*, *samādhi* concentration, and *maṇḍala* visualization) (KKZ 2:137 / H, p. 220; KKZ 2:240–241 / H, p. 230 / I, p. 208). *Sokushinjōbutsu*, or "attaining Buddhahood in this embodied existence," then entails such *realization* through bodily and mental mimesis. The point is to put one's own microcosmic body-and-mind in inter-resonance with the macrocosmic body-and-mind of the *dharmakāya*, thus to learn to read the cosmic (con)text in its phonic, gestural, and graphic languages, which intone the dharma. One thus realizes the empty-mirror nature of one's own body-and-mind in mutual inter-mirroring with the "great mirror wisdom" of Dainichi (see KKZ 2:241, 253 / H, p. 231, 234 / I, pp. 209, 215), whereby "Buddha enters me and I enter Buddha" (*nyūga ganyū*) (KKZ 4:41). And the advanced are to practice this even outside its usual ritualized context, "without form" (*musō* 無相)²¹ in every bodily movement, vocal utterance, and thought as spontaneously mirroring the *dharmakāya* in his/her everyday life.

This dynamic correspondence between the Buddha's "three mysteries" and the practitioner's "three acts" is also expressed by the term *kaji* 加持 (Skt. *adhiṣṭhāna*), referring to the "mutual empowerment" or "empowerment and response"²² between the two. It means the mutual encountering of the Buddha's compassion bestowed upon the unenlightened and the latter's faithful effort and aspiration in practice. *Ka* 加, literally "addition," designates the compassionate power of Dainichi, which illuminates the practitioner's mind like the rays of the sun; and *ji* 持, literally "retaining" or "holding," designates the practitioner's faithful effort to keep that compassionate power, like the water that absorbs and reflects the rays of the sun. *Kaji*, then, as the mutual non-obstruction and inter-mirroring between the macrocosmic *sanmitsu* and microcosmic *sangō*, the point of encounter between the Buddha's downward helping and the aspirant's upward striving, unfolds to manifest the *already* accomplished vertical nonduality between *dharmakāya* and sentient being, making *sokushinjōbutsu* possible (see KKZ 2:240–241, 245–246 / H, pp. 230, 232 / I, pp. 208, 212; KKZ 4:26–27, 34).

In Kūkai’s scheme, we find ourselves implaced within a cosmic (con)text, the meaning of whose letters can only be discerned in their dynamic correlativity and interdependence with the rest of the cosmos. We are embodied within this cosmic body, which is non-substantial and whose elements, including ourselves, are non-substantial. Take the graph for emptiness, *kū* 空. On the one hand this was the Chinese translation for the Sanskrit *śūnyatā*, which means non-substantiality, the lack of inherent nature or independent being (*svabhāva*). All things are empty of ontological independence by virtue of their interdependent arising. But this graph in Chinese and Japanese also means sky as well as space. We might then say that in its emptiness as great space, this cosmic body of the Buddha makes room as a place for the *chiasma* of interrelations. On the horizontal level, beings arise interdependently, all equally endowed with the originally enlightened *dharmakāya* (*hongaku hosshin*). On the vertical level, beings are constituted in their differentiation from that dharmic source. However, this constitution of identity via mutual difference also means their non-duality with the Buddha via mutual non-obstruction. Altogether this means the interrelationality among beings as well as between beings and their dharmic source by virtue of universal emptiness. Yet “source” is perhaps not the right word here if the terms are truly co-constitutive. It would depend on what exactly we mean by dharma—Dainichi as the absolute, which might lead to the charge of a reifying metaphysics, or emptiness as deconstructive of even that absolute.

In any case, the (un)ground of being, then, is emptiness, and its embodiment is a hollow body, an empty place wherein beings emerge in their correlativity. Each bodily being implaced within this cosmic body-place, as its microcosmic mirror, is likewise an empty place that allows for its non-obstructed interrelations with other beings and with the cosmos itself. The non-obstruction between thing-events and the *dharmakāya* obtains cross-dimensionally both vertically and horizontally, making a *chiasma* (see Figure 1). The empty place that is the cosmos makes room for this cross-dimensional (chiasmatic) interrelationality, horizontally among thing-events (dharmas) and vertically between thing-events and the Buddha, as this very cosmic body-place of emptiness (the dharma). By virtue of this embodied emptiness or empty bodiliness, man and Buddha and cosmos for Kūkai are hence nondual.

Nishida

Over a millennium later, in the first half of the twentieth century, Nishida Kitarō appropriated Western philosophical terms and concepts while inheriting much of Buddhist thinking. The final product in his later years came to be called “Nishida philosophy” (*Nishida tetsugaku* 西田哲学) and spawned the Kyoto school of philosophy. The concepts of “place” (*basho* 場所) and “contradictory self-identity” (*mujunteki jikodōitsu* 矛盾的自己同一) are the often noted major themes of his philosophy of this later period. The significance of the “body” (*shintai* 身体), however, cannot be ignored, especially from the 1930s on. As for Kūkai, the real for Nishida involves the interrelationality of self and world, a complex *chiasma*, presupposing not only the place of their correlativity but also the body as their medium.

Nishida repeatedly tells us in his later works, most notably in *Ronri to seimei* 論理と生命 (Logic and life), that there can be no self without the body (Z 8:328 / LL, p. 136; Z 14:273 / HB, p. 42). True self entails the “oneness of body-and-mind” (*shinjin ichinyo* 身心一如) (Z 11:168). Self-identity is established only through one’s relations with the surrounding environment, involving mutual activity and passivity. Nishida focuses on the body as our implacement within this world that shapes our being. The medium is appropriate in that it can be viewed from different angles. While belonging to the self as its vehicle of expression, action, and knowledge, the body is also one thing among other things, born of the world of things (Z 8:316 / LL, p. 129). It is both seer and seen, subject and object, active and passive (Z 8:326, 345 / LL, pp. 135, 146). As *subject*, one is subjected to the world’s conditions but simultaneously actively manipulates them and consumes them. But as *object*, one is acted upon by these things of the world. As epistemological subjects, we *receive* information from the world through the body’s senses, and as instrumental subjects, we *act* upon the world with the body. But the body as one object among other objects can itself be an object of cognition and action. One possesses these opposing aspects through one’s embodiment. Therefore, embodiment as the fusion point of various oppositions (active-passive, subject-object, epistemological-instrumental) plays the role of mediation between self and world, a unity, however, that is ontologically prior to their bifurcations (see Z 3:245–246 / AM, p. 205). The body is nebulous, and Nishida sees this as a self-contradiction deep within ourselves as bodily beings in relation to the world (Z 8:299, 359 / LL, pp. 119, 154).

In this mediation with the environment, the body is formative. Nishida views production or making to be the exemplary mode of human interactivity with the environment. Man alters the environment; he makes things but in turn is made by what he makes (Z 14:271 / HB, pp. 40–41). Human productivity vis-à-vis the environment is hence also man’s self-creative *poiesis*. We ourselves are made in the very process of making. Our body is hence formed and forming, *creata et creans* (Z 8:306 / LL, p. 123; Z 11:144 / PR, p. 44). We act upon some material to give it form, but then in turn are acted upon by the product. This also means that the world is making us as we participate in its creative dynamism. We are operative and formative elements *within* the creative world (*sōzōteki sekai* 創造の世界), working through our embodied actions as we shape that very world wherein we dwell (Z 8:324, 347 / LL, pp. 134, 147; Z 14:282 / HB, p. 48). The subject-object differentiation in world-production cannot clearly be made in this case—for as embodied beings, we are both the subjects and the objects of the world’s formation. Nishida calls this world in its dynamism the “historical world” (*rekishiteki sekai* 歴史の世界) (see Z 14:271 / HB, p. 41).

As *homo faber*—rather than as mere *homo sapiens*—we make things to refashion the world wherein we dwell, and for this purpose we make tools. And we also employ our bodies as tools and as means of production (Z 8:346 / LL, p. 146). The body becomes a means or tool for handling other tools to transform the world technologically (see Z 8:283, 329 / LL, pp. 109, 137). Furthermore, as additional means

of production or operation, tools become incorporated into the body. They become its extension (Z 8:292, 351 / LL, pp. 115, 149). We can think of examples here, such as the blind man's cane, a skillful driver's car, the painter's brush, or a sculptor's chiseling and carving tools. The instrumentality of things that is so much a part of human existence is inconceivable without the body. And yet just as these tools are also objects, as one tool among other tools, the body can be objectified as well. Furthermore, even the world as means to our ends, and hence as a "tool," becomes an extension of our body (see Z 8:322 / LL, p. 133). So again the ambiguity of embodied existence is carried over here, as the body is not simply the user of the tool (as subject) but neither a mere tool (as object) employed by a separate soul-substance, as Plato or Descartes may have it (see Z 8:306, 323–324 / LL, pp. 123, 134). Perhaps in ways comparable to Merleau-Ponty's notion of *chiasm* and flesh (*chair*), to Heidegger's notion of the human being-(t)here's (*Dasein*'s) relation to its environment, and to Watsuji's discussions of the human relationship to its milieu (*fūdo*), for Nishida there is no clear or static demarcating wall separating the self as embodied and its surroundings.²³

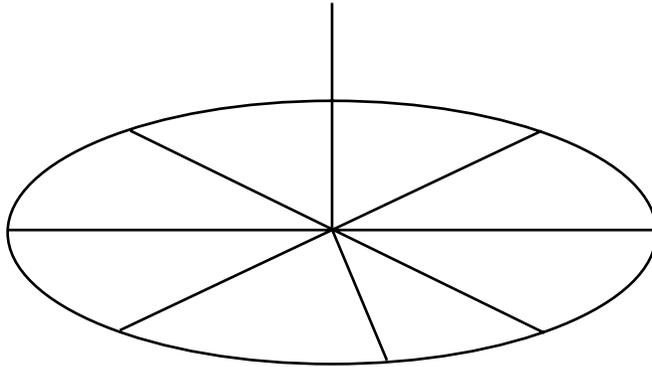
But this also means that like the human body the environing world is also ambiguous or, in Nishida's terms, "self-contradictory" (*jikomujunteki* 自己矛盾的). For it is both the *condition* of events and also the *sum* of things within it (Z 8:117–118); it is both the *place* and *product* of its motions. While we form it, we are also implaced within it to be determined by it. Our body is thus the medium of our forming and being-formed vis-à-vis the world, and it is both the subject of this formation and its means, both for ourselves and for the world. It is in this multifarious sense of being user and used, manipulator and instrument, that the human body for Nishida is "technological," *techne*-bearing (*gijutsuteki* 技術的), in the formation of the world, distinguishing us from mere animals²⁴ (see Z 8:292–293, 304, 317–318, 351 / LL, pp. 115, 122, 130, 149).

The world for Nishida develops historically "from the world of matter to the world of living beings, and . . . to the world of man" (Z 9:172 / R 3:33 / UO, p. 190). The creative world, encompassing not only the natural environment but also man's artificial environment, goes on forming itself via its formative elements, that is, ourselves, forming things (see Z 8:324–325 / LL, pp. 134–135). The interrelation of man and world can be reduced neither to one of mechanistic materiality nor to one of teleological ideality. It rather involves the dynamic interactivity between matter and ideal. As neither merely subject nor merely object of formation, the world dynamically forms itself as a "historical world" (*rekishiteki sekai*), and our embodied activities participate in this self-formative dynamism (see Z 8:84; Z 12:405–406 / NP, p. 83; Z 14:282 / HB, p. 48).

This creative world, according to Nishida, is a world of interaction (*aihataraki* 相働き) between individuals that are simultaneously active and passive, affirmative and negative toward each other. Our embodied existence is influenced by others as something made (*tsukurareta mono* 作られたもの) but simultaneously influences others as something creative (*tsukuru mono* 作るもの). And this reciprocal interrelationship among individuals on the horizontal level is simultaneously expressive

Zettai mu 絶対無 (absolute nothing) as an undetermined basho 場所 (place) that self-negates to make room for beings.

Vertical Line: gyakutaiō 逆対応 (inverse polarity/correspondence) and zettai mujunteki jikodoitsu 絶対矛盾的自己同一 (absolutely contradictory self-identity); mutual self-negation between nothing and beings, absolute and co-relatives, one and many, place and implaced.



Horizontal plane: co-relativity of beings. This plane is both temporal and spatial since the interdependence amongst thing-events entails both diachronic and synchronic relationships.

The place of absolute nothing (zettai mu no basho 絶対無の場所) is non-distinct from the place of beings (yū no basho 有の場所) and not transcendent to it. Beings are interdependent both diachronically and synchronically, thus temporally and spatially. When seen vis-à-vis absolutely nothing (as delimited by it or as its self-determination), this place is a circle, or rather a sphere, without periphery or center.

Acting-intuition (kōiteki chokkan 行為的直観) of the historical body (rekishiteki shintai 歴史的な身体) dialectically moves “from the made/created to the making/creating,” expressing the horizontal interrelationship between individual self and environment of other individual things and persons, but also expressing the vertical interrelationship between the self-forming world and individuals as its formative elements.

Figure 2. Nishida

on the vertical level of the world’s own self-formation (see Z 8:299 / LL, p. 119; Z 11:118, 122–123 / PR, pp. 24, 28). (See Figure 2.)

This dynamic process of the world’s creativity in its temporal unfolding is expressed by Nishida in the phrase “from the created to the creating” (*tsukurareta mono kara tsukuru mono e* 作られたものから作るものへ), that is, things that have been made in turn come to make things (see Z 9:173 / R 3:34 / UO, p. 191; Z 10:197, 277; Z 11:123 / PR, p. 28). This dynamism of contradiction becomes accentuated in the position occupied by humans as simultaneously bodily and conscious beings who, born out of their organic interrelationships with the environment, go on to alter it to create their artificial world. But at the same time, our bodies in forming the world are themselves expressive of the world’s self-formation (see Z 8:299 / LL, p. 119;

Z9:173 / R3:34 / UO, p. 191; Z11:118, 122–123 / PR, pp. 24, 28). Our embodied existence is, hence, both a function (as forming) and an expression (*hyōgen* 表現) of the world (as formed) (see Z9:173 / R3:34 / UO, p. 191). Both human embodied existence and the world as a whole are therefore simultaneously making and being made, active and passive, and mirror one another in their respective self-contradictions. So it is the body in its contradictory aspects of being subject and object, user and used, maker and made, conscious and thingly, that grounds man's inter-resonance with the world. Through embodied existence, human creativity touches upon the endless depths of the world's self-expression.

With the emergence of the human historical world, our bodies come to function as what Nishida calls the “historical body” (*rekishiteki shintai* 歴史的身体) (see Z8:345 / LL, pp. 19, 146). As a “historical body,” we act not merely as separate individuals and no longer merely on the basis of animal instinct, but now in ways that pertain to the human collective and its history, whether as society or nation or race (see Z8:336, 345 / LL, pp. 141, 146; Z9:186 / R3:48 / UO, p. 204; Z12:424–425 / NP, p. 94). As such our bodies are truly creative, *poietic*, in distinction from the merely biological and the merely material. This historical body is the product of a history of dialectical tension between the enviroing set of conditions and the human desire to overcome them, moving from the created and merely biological to the creative, historical-bodily (*rekishiteki-shintaiteki* 歴史の身体的) beings that we are. It is as the historical body that humanity thus comes to bear *techne* and *logos* to refashion the world through technology and language (see Z8:320–321 / LL, p. 132). And yet as *historical body* humanity is still partaking in the world's *own* re-formation of itself as itself a historical-bodily world (*rekishiteki-shintaiteki sekai* 歴史の身体的世界) (see Z8:325 / LL, pp. 134–135; Z8:180; Z11:134–135 / PR, p. 37).

Another important concept that Nishida develops in his later works that pertains to the body is “acting-intuition” (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為の直観). According to Nishida, seeing or intuiting is not merely passive but involves the body's creative activity. It is not the passive vision of a detached and disincarnate observer—as in Sāṃkhya's *puruṣa*—but involves our world-forming activity (see Z8:342–343 / LL, p. 145; Z9:174 / R3:35 / UO, p. 192). As we make things, we come to see the world around us in a different light. In acting we see a thing by shaping it, but simultaneously it acts upon us to determine our intuition of it (see Z8:131; Z8:334–335, 338–340, 365–367 / LL, pp. 140, 142–143, 158; Z11:135 / PR, p. 38). So, seeing as such is also informed, determined by what is out there. Seeing/intuiting and acting are thus mutually implicative, and “acting-intuition” refers to this union of different but inseparable aspects of our embodied existence, whereby we act upon the world but are also on the receiving end of its activity²⁵ (see Z8:297 / LL, p. 118).

At its deepest level, acting-intuition is a “seeing without see” (*miru mono nakushite miru* 見るものなくして見る). What is implied here is a sense of self-awareness (*jikaku* 自覚) *not* as a distinct substantial *ego cogito* as in Descartes or *psychē* as in Plato, detached from body and world, whether as passive spectator or as active controller, but as a created and creating, embodied and implaced, historical-bodily being in dynamic involvement with the world's self-formations. Nishida

declares that there is no I without such acting-intuition (Z 8:347–348 / LL, p. 147). At the bottom of our embodied existence, our identities are constituted in correlativity with the webworking of the world *via* our acting-intuition: “I exist because I intuit by acting” rather than Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” (Z 8:359 / LL, p. 154). So that which from the standpoint of the creative world is its formative function, from the standpoint of the human self is then its acting-intuition²⁶ (see Z 8:334–335 / LL, p. 140). We act and see as creative elements of the creative world. We are born as acting-intuiting beings in our reception of the world’s formativity, in turn to serve as focal points for the world’s self-expression, mirroring the world as it forms itself. And through our acting-intuition, the world in turn sees itself in its self-expressive self-formations (see Z 8:188; Z 8:303–304, 354, 358 / LL, pp. 122, 151, 153). Thus, in its acting *cum* intuiting, the body serves as a receptacle for the world’s self-formations whereby the world can make itself *seen*. The body is the chiasmatic focal point within the field of the world’s self-formations.

The inseparable simultaneity of acting and intuiting reflects the ambiguity of man’s embodied existence as created and creating, passive and active, in relation to the world. In acting-intuition, our contradictoriness mutually mirrors and expresses the same contradictoriness of the world (Z 8:366 / LL, p. 158; Z 12:406 / NP, p. 83). For the world itself in its “dialectic” of self-formation entails the simultaneity of its forming and being-formed, its universality and particularity as one and many (see Z 8:329, 383, 385–386 / LL, pp. 137, 168, 169–170). Acting-intuition concretizes this dialectical *poiesis*. That is to say, via our embodied existence of engaging in acting-intuition we are in “contradictory identity” with the self-contradictory world (see Z 8:369 / LL, pp. 159–160). This contradictory identity involves a mutual self-negation (*jiko-hitei* 自己否定). As one acts upon and intuits the environment, one affirms oneself and negates the environment. But simultaneously the self must also be negated in its delimitation by the environment that shapes its activity and its seeing. The individual’s self-affirmative act thus is also its self-negation vis-à-vis the world’s acting upon the individual (see Z 11:118 / PR, p. 25). Such self-negation in acting-intuition mirrors an absolute nothing (*zettai mu* 絶対無) that underlies the world’s self-formation. It mirrors the self-negation of an abysmal place lying behind the world that allows for the emergence of correlative beings²⁷ (see Z 11:397 / R 3:327–328 / LW pp. 68–69). While each embodied self is a unique focal point of the world, its individuality is non-substantial and interdependent with the rest of the world, avoiding inter-obstruction via mutual self-negation. Its affirmation is obtained paradoxically only with its desubstantialization, that is, self-negation.

The acting-intuition of man’s historical body is a concrete focal point for the interactivity (*aihataraki*) in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions, that is, among individuals and between individual and “universal” (or world). The human body, both individually and collectively, in its self-negation serves as a “place” for its horizontal interrelations with other beings and for its vertical correlativity with the absolute nothing, which in self-negation operates behind the world’s self-formations. Nishida’s thematization of our historical body and its acting-intuition reveals embodied existence to be non-substantial as it involves us in interrelation with the world

via mutual self-negation. The criss-crossing of interrelations through the horizontal and vertical planes, and both in each individual body and in the world as a whole, constitutes a *chiasma* (see Figure 2). At the intersection of the horizontal and the vertical, embodiment serves as an axis or *chiasma* uniting inner and outer, self and environment, a medium manifesting a space for one's interrelations and interdependence with the world. Lacking the substantiality that would obstruct such interrelations, the self-negating body for Nishida, then, is itself an open place, mirroring the placiality of the world, to make possible its horizontal relations with others and vertical relation with the self-forming world.

Conclusion: Body and Chiasma in Kūkai and Nishida

Both thinkers recognized the ontological significance of the body in its dynamic interrelations with the world as a whole. The body for both is where microcosmos and macrocosmos touch and mirror one other in a chiasmatic crosssection that mirrors and opens to the envining world. Human embodiment for both is the medium of implacement within the greater body or place of the world, which in turn in its emptiness or formlessness makes room for the presencing and absencing of beings. Implaced within the macrocosm, individual bodies serve as locales for the world's formation. For Kūkai, the Buddha's cosmic body is the place for its "preaching" of the dharma. Mirroring this cosmic body and implaced in it, our bodies participate in that dharma or buddhahood. For Nishida, the world's self-formation is accomplished through the acting-intuition of historical bodies, moving in dialectical tension with the environment. Our embodied being mirrors and participates in this self-formative process of the world.

Furthermore, a de-substantializing undertow is present, for both thinkers, to undermine any metaphysics of static presence or totality: emptiness *cum* dependent origination in Kūkai and absolute nothing *cum* contradictory identity in Nishida. The body for both thus remains unfulfilled in terms of substance or essence. The body is empty, open: on the microcosmic level it is what it is only in its implacement within the cosmic webworking of interdependent empty bodies, and the macrocosm itself is empty, open, as this very webwork of empty bodies. This is in marked contrast to more substantialist ways of conceiving the body or the cosmos. Cartesian dualism separated the mind and the body and viewed them as distinct sorts of substances—thinking and extended—but, in doing so, failed to explain their connection. This problem gets inherited by modern epistemology, which puzzles over the relationship between subject and object. Spinoza's monistic substantialism, on the other hand, conceived of the entire cosmos, equated with God, as one substance, with thought and extension as its two distinct attributes, of which our minds and bodies are modes²⁸ (*Ethics* I, prop. XV, XVI; II, def. I, prop. I, II). Through the dynamic movements of minds and matter, God as cosmos for Spinoza is both a determining one and a determined many. While this sounds similar to Nishida, Nishida found fault with Spinoza's substantialization of God's oneness, for the sake of which the individuality of the many would be sacrificed (see Z 11 : 119–120, 122 / PR, pp. 25–26,

27). By inheriting the Buddhist middle, Nishida's thinking precludes the absorption of the many into the one. Both the one cosmos and the many individuals are de-substantialized by Kūkai and Nishida for the sake of a standpoint that recognizes the radical relationality of reality, what I call *chiasma*. That is, both thinkers tread a middle path that avoids the reification of individuals as well as their absorption into a universal totality or their annihilation into utter nothingness. Hence, the "holism" of their philosophies, as founded on the Buddhist "middle," must be differentiated from the monism of someone like Spinoza or Śāṅkara.²⁹

A proper comprehension of their non-substantialisms is thus a key to understanding their notions of embodiment. For neither thinker is the body to be reified, whether as material or as ideal, whether as monistic whole or as isolated monad. Instead it must be understood to be empty of substance and formed in its interrelations. Embodiment for both thinkers entails implacement within the cosmic web-work of interrelations, the mediation of vertical and horizontal correlativity. The body, then, empty in its interrelationality, is a place of intersection, a *chiasma*. The body in its emptiness proves to be a locus for the chiasmatic happening of a cross-dimensional nonduality, encompassing both the vertical and the horizontal, involving both the micro and the macro, to mirror the self-formation of our enviroing cosmos. The human body serves as the microcosm of the *dharmakāya* that is empty for Kūkai and of the place that is nothing for Nishida. The body as such is the chiasmatic vector of the cosmic *chiasma*, the web of codependent origination for Kūkai and the world of interactivity for Nishida. And we might say that the body as living or lived (*Leib*) then extends beyond its merely corporeal limits (as *Körper*), which by comparison constitute a "dead" body.

It is this significance of the body that leads both Kūkai and Nishida, as distinguished from someone like Plato, to recognize the inseparability of *theoria* and *praxis*. Both acknowledge the importance of a bodily *praxis* that is essential for self-realization. We see this more obviously in Kūkai's prescriptions of ritual behavior, whereby the microcosmic body's inter-mirroring with the macrocosmic body is to be realized. But we also see this in Nishida's discussions of acting-intuition as a kind of self-authentication (*jisshō* 自証) in its original attunement to the world in the depths of our bodily being (see Z 8: 391 / LL, pp. 172–173). The difference between them in this regard would be that Kūkai the religionist provides an elaborate *system* of *praxis*, while Nishida the philosopher is not concerned with coming up with a set of detailed prescriptions that lead to self-authentication. Nishida's discussion of acting-intuition, hence, lacks any explicit prescription of exactly *how* to experience acting-intuition as the *self*-realization of the absolute via the world's creativity. Nevertheless their underscoring of the ontological and epistemological significance of bodily interactivity with the environment distinguishes them both from Plato.

Our discussion thus far of non-substantialism and bodily interactivity is also relevant to how one might understand the concrete nature of the enviroing *wherein*, which is described by both thinkers. Kūkai looked to the cosmos as the body of the Buddha Dainichi. Yet that *dharmakāya* is empty and Dainichi is only a personification of that dharmic truth of emptiness. Nishida, as well, especially in his very last

work *Bashoteki ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan* 場所的論理と宗教的世界観 (The logic of place and the religious worldview) (1945), came to speak of the world as the manifestation of the transcendently immanent God (*kami* 神) or absolute (*zettai* 絶対). Yet “god” as such is nothing but the indeterminable place of absolute nothing (*zettai mu no basho* 絶対無の場所) that implaces the world. Both the dharma for Kūkai and the absolute for Nishida are *embodied* in the enviroing world—human and non-human—that is the *concrete* terrain and region wherein we dwell. Both Kūkai and Nishida, each in his own way, attempted to counter the tendency toward abstraction and absolutization within their respective fields of inquiry. Hence, I would like to emphasize that concrete indeterminacy of our surroundings—that non-contextualizable context—that both thinkers point to as *that wherein* we are implaced in our embodiment. In both there is a certain tension between metaphysics and anti-metaphysics. The divinized Buddha Dainichi and his cosmic body is deconstructed as but a personification of the dharma of emptiness in Kūkai, and the absolute or God in Nishida likewise as but the place of absolute nothing, the place of the world’s dialectic. In both there is a deconstructive undertow that works to counter tendencies to abstraction, substantialization, and absolutization. Any apparent metaphysics on the surface may thus be toppled by a non-substantialism at the core of their respective doctrines.

As we near the end of this essay, it may be helpful to compare the two Japanese thinkers by means of the diagrams included here (see Figures 1 and 2) representing the chiasmatic intersection between vertical and horizontal in each case. In Kūkai’s case (Figure 1) the horizontal plane represents the mutual non-obstruction and interdependence among the myriad individual thing-events or dharmas. The vertical line represents the relationship between those individual beings of the world and the transcendent *hosshin* Dainichi, the *dharmakāya* Mahāvairocana, through—from the top down—Dainichi’s preaching (*hosshin seppō*) via the three mysteries (*sanmitsu*), and, correspondingly but in the reverse direction—from the bottom up—the trainee’s becoming Buddha in this very body (*sokushinjōbutsu*) through the three activities (*sangō*). And yet, from another (enlightened) perspective, that vertical movement of transcendence is also an occurrence immanent in the very world in the sense that the dharma that is embodied in the *dharmakāya* (*hosshin*) and personified in Mahāvairocana (Dainichi) is the truth of this very world, that is, its emptiness.

And there is a similar collapsing of the vertical into the horizontal in Nishida (Figure 2): The horizontal plane represents the diachronic and synchronic interrelationships and interactivity (*aihataraki*) between individuals (or thing-events) within a field that is ultimately nothing to give them space. The historical body of humanity through acting-intuition (*kōiteki chokkan*) interacts with this world of other things—human, living, and inanimate—while being made and making at the same time. The vertical line represents one’s relationship with the absolute (*zettai*), a relationship that Nishida explicates in the 1930s in terms of absolutely contradictory self-identity (*zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一) and in the 1940s in terms of inverse correspondence (*gyakutaiō*). Therein the absolute negates itself in a creative act that births the world of the many beings; in reverse direction, the individual, in order

to touch the absolute, must paradoxically negate itself. And yet that vertical line of apparent transcendence is also immanent in the world in that the absolute or “god” for Nishida is the nothing (*mu* 無) that in self-negation is the very place of the world of beings. In both cases there is an intrinsic moment of de-transcendentalization that precludes the abstraction of the absolute or truth. The transcendent is collapsed as immanent into the concrete world. And for this the concrete reality of the body proves significant for both.

In summary, on the basis of the thinking of both Nishida and Kūkai, I think that we can develop an appreciation of the ontological (and practical) significance of the body along the following lines: (1) as a medium of our interrelationality or “nonduality” with the environing world, ontologically more primordial than the bifurcations between subject and object, mind and body, spirit and matter, self and world, individual and universe, et cetera; (2) as non-substantial, without a self-containing essence that would obstruct its relationality; (3) as “open” or, in other words, relational and shaped accordingly on the basis of its correlativity and interdependence with others; and (4) as a place for the intersections of such interrelations on both the horizontal and vertical dimensions.

Clear insight into the issue of one’s place within the world/cosmos cannot be obtained without taking into consideration this issue of embodiment. For the body mediates one’s relation to everything else out there in the world in a dynamic matrix. In being bodily one is part of the living world. The body, both microcosmically and macrocosmically, cannot be understood, then, as mere dead matter—*Körper* in German—but instead is lived and is living, *Leib*. We *ex-sist* always already *beyond* corporeal limits. The body is the vehicle of one’s implacement within the vaster “body” of the world, fitting one amidst others into the nexus of interdependencies. To recognize the fundamental significance of the body in its implacement of one’s self in the world seems crucial to overcoming the existential crisis befalling contemporary human beings in regard to their identity. A mind-body dualism that attempts to dislodge the self from the world or from embodiment ignores the existential fact of our implacement. Both Kūkai’s and Nishida’s discussions of embodiment speak to us today in our struggles to escape the yoke of modernity, the hubris of its subjectivity, amidst its crumbling principles, by showing our bodies to be ephemeral yet concrete places of intersection within a cosmic webwork.

Notes

Abbreviations are used in the text and Notes as follows:

- AM Nishida Kitarō. *Art and Morality*. Translated by David A. Dilworth and Valdo H. Viglielmo. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1973.
- H Hakeda, Yoshito, trans. *Kūkai: Major Works: Translated, with an Account of His Life and a Study of His Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.

- HB Nishida Kitarō. "Historical Body." In *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents*, translated and edited by David A. Dilworth and Valdo H. Viglielmo, with Agustin Jacinto Zavala. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998.
- I Inagaki, Hisao. "Kūkai's *Sokushin-jōbutsu-gi*." *Asia Minor* 17, part 2 (1972).
- KKZ *Kōbō Daishi Kūkai zenshū*. 6 vols. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1983–1986.
- LL Nishida Kitarō. "Logic and Life." In *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays by Nishida Kitarō*, translated by John W. M. Krummel and Shigenori Nagatomo. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- LW Nishida Kitarō. *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, translated by David A. Dilworth. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.
- NP Nishida Kitarō. "On the National Polity." In Dilworth, Viglielmo, and Zavala, *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy* (see above).
- PR Nishida Kitarō. "Towards a Philosophy of Religion with the Concept of Pre-Established Harmony as Guide." Translated by David A. Dilworth. *Eastern Buddhist* 3, no. 1 (June 1970): 19–46.
- R 3 *Nishida Kitarō tetsugaku ronshū* (Philosophical essays of Nishida Kitarō). Vol. 3. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000.
- UO Nishida Kitarō. "The Unity of Opposites." In *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness: Three Philosophical Essays*, translated with an introduction by Robert Schinzinger. Tokyo: Maruzen, 1958.
- Z *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* (Complete works of Nishida Kitarō). 19 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965–1966.

When deemed appropriate, quotations of translations may have been slightly altered.

- 1 – I use the spelling *implacement* as opposed to *emplacement* throughout this essay not for any significant reason other than that I first became aware of this concept in the late 1990s while reading Ed Casey's *Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). In that book Casey uses the spelling *implacement*. Both forms of spelling—*implacement* and *emplacement*—can be found in scholarly works, and I do not consider *implacement* to be necessarily unconventional, nor is it my own neologism.
- 2 – See his *The Visible and the Invisible* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1968). And for convergences between Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism in general, see Jin Y. Park and Gereon Kopf, eds., *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism* (Lanham, KY: Lexington Books, 2009).
- 3 – Kūkai's Shingon Buddhism modified the traditional *trikāya* ("three bodies") doctrine of Mahāyāna in regard to the embodiment of the Buddha. The traditional Mahāyāna theory was comprised of: (1) *Dharmakāya* (*hosshin*) as the abstract "body of truth," the embodiment of the truth of enlightenment *per se*,

that pervades the cosmos; (2) *Sambhogakāya* as the Buddha embodied in celestial forms (such as Amida) in a “rewarded body” symbolizing the fruits of enlightenment and bodhisattva practices and apprehended through meditation or prayer; and (3) *Nirmāṇakāya* as the Buddha’s incarnation in a “transformed body” as a historical figure (such as Siddhartha Gautama). In Shingon Buddhism, the *dharmakāya* is personified as Mahāvairocana (Dainichi), whose embodiment is identified with the cosmos itself. This also means that Dainichi’s enlightenment is originally presencing throughout the universe as the original enlightenment (*hongaku*) of sentient beings. In Shingon this one embodiment of the Buddha is in turn manifest in four forms: (1) the “self-nature body of truth” (*svabhāva-dharmakāya*; Jpn. *jishō hosshin* 自性法身) as the *dharmakāya* itself presencing throughout the cosmos; (2) the “rewarded body of truth” (*sambhogadharmakāya*; *juyū hosshin* 受用法身), corresponding to the *sambhogakāya* in the *trikāya* doctrine and further divided into (a) “self-rewarded body” (*jijuyūshin* 自受用身) and (b) “rewarded body for others” (*tajuyūshin* 他受用身); (3) the “transformed body of truth” (*nirmāṇa-dharmakāya*; *hengehosshin* 变化法身), corresponding to the *nirmāṇakāya* in the *trikāya* doctrine; and (4) the “emanating body of truth” (*niṣyanda-dharmakāya*; *tōru hosshin* 等流法身), equated with Dainichi’s omnipresencing throughout the cosmos in each and every of the manifold forms of thing-events. On this see *KKZ* 2:247 / H, p. 232 / I, p. 212. Also see I, p. 199 n. 19; Adrian Snodgrass, “The Shingon Buddhist Doctrine of Interpenetration,” *Religious Traditions: A Journal in the Study of Religion* 7–9:53–81, at pp. 73–74 n. 7; and Thomas P. Kasulis, “Reality as Embodiment: An Analysis of Kūkai’s *Sokushinjōbutsu* and *Hosshin Seppō*,” in Jane Marie Law, ed., *Religious Reflections on the Human Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 166–185, at p. 175. Kūkai argues that while the teachings of the other Buddhist schools are traceable to the *nirmāṇakāya* Śākyamuni’s teachings, which were modified in ways appropriate to his audience, and while the *sambhogakāya*’s teachings are appropriate to the bodhisattvas in celestial realms, Mantrayāna (Shingon) teachings manifest truth as it is coming directly from the *dharmakāya*. Counter to the traditional Mahāyāna understanding, the *dharmakāya* as a universally preaching being, Dainichi Nyorai 第日如来 (the “Great Sun Buddha”), then, is not merely an abstract principle but an embodied and concrete personal being. However, as we shall see below, via an appropriation of the Buddhist “middle,” this great cosmic being is further de-substantialized as empty of substance.

- 4 – What he called *mikkyō* was the specific form of *Vajrayāna* or *Mantrayāna* Buddhism that he studied in China (called *Zhenyan* 真言 in Chinese) and imported back to Japan.
- 5 – This composition of the *dharmakāya* by the six elements is called *rokudaihosshin* 六大法身, “*dharmakāya* of the six elements.”
- 6 – Here the reader should be alerted to the different senses of the Sanskrit word *dharma* (corresponding to the Japanese *hō* 法. When in plural, *dharma* usually

means the atomic elements or events that together constitute things in general and the universe as a whole. But often when in the singular, as in this sentence, *dharma* also has the sense of “the truth” discerned in Buddhism or preached by the Buddha.

- 7 – That is, “universal” not in the merely conceptual sense of a universal concept in distinction from but related to its particular objects, but rather in the “holistic” sense, as an emptiness that belongs everywhere, underlying all thing-events in their very lack of essence or substance.
- 8 – In fact, the very name that Kūkai took on when he converted to Buddhism means “the sea of emptiness” or “empty sea.”
- 9 – “Patternment” or *li* (Jpn. *ri* 理), which is often misleadingly translated as “principle,” for the Huayan Buddhists referred to the very emptiness underlying everything as their mutual non-obstruction.
- 10 – The influence on this notion of the *dharmadhātu* as the world of mutual non-obstruction, traceable to Huayan Buddhism, can also be traced to the Indian metaphor of a cosmic net of an infinity of inter-reflecting jewels in every direction that appears in the “Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra” chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, which became the main scripture of the Huayan school. The metaphor envisages ultimate reality as a tower consisting of an infinity of jewels, each in turn containing the infinite reflections of all the others. Hence, “all is in one and one is in all.” The metaphor was taken up and developed with the notion of non-obstruction (*wuai*; Jpn. *muge* 無礙) by the systematizers of Huayan, such as Fazang 法藏 (643–712 C.E.). In Shingon this becomes further combined with Mantrayanic notions. That is, the interdependent origination of all becomes equated with the meaning of the *mantra* A (simultaneously as their origin, their negation or emptiness, and their non-origination due to there being no substantial cause). This *mantra* is the *mantra* of the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana, whose body is the cosmos (the *dharmakāya*) itself and who preaches the dharma (*hosshin seppō* 法身說法) in its omnipresencing cosmic emptiness. The dharma or truth here equals A, meaning emptiness. Thus, the horizontal interrelationship of interdependent origination is equivalent to the vertical interrelationship of Dainichi’s preaching of the dharma in a *chiasma* of vertical and horizontal.
- 11 – “Permeation” here should *not* be understood to mean that what was initially not there comes to be there, for emptiness is *always already* there. Any semblance or sense of a shift or alteration from “not being there” to “being there” belonging to “permeation” should rather be understood as showing a perspectival shift on the part of the sentient being who moves from an unenlightened to an enlightened state.
- 12 – The same Chinese character 空 is used to designate both “emptiness” and “space.” That its “essence” is emptiness also means that its “essence” is “essencelessness.”

- 13 – This “non-arising” character of emptiness is symbolized by the Sanskrit letter “A,” standing for *ādyanutpāda* (Jpn. *honpushō*, *honfusei* 本不生), meaning “originally unborn.”
- 14 – As such, they are called “seals of the *dharmakāya*’s wisdom of differentiation” (*shabetsu chiin* 差別智印) (*Dainichikyō kaidai* “*hokkai joshin*,” as cited in Abe, Ryūichi, *The Weaving of the Mantra: Kūkai and Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 287).
- 15 – Kasulis, “Reality as Embodiment,” p. 181.
- 16 – The text comprised of Sanskrit signs is only a derivative translation of this cosmic body-text into human language.
- 17 – On this, see Abe, *Weaving of the Mantra*, pp. 282, 298, and 299.
- 18 – Also translated as the “three secrets” or the “three intimacies.” These acts of *dharmakāya* are undecipherable even for bodhisattvas, and hence they are “secrets” or “mysteries.”
- 19 – These are special hand gestures with intricate positionings of the fingers.
- 20 – *Mantras* are vocal formulas and *dhāraṇīs* are verses and hence longer than the former, although Kūkai employs *dhāraṇīs* as in themselves *mantras*. The Japanese term “*shingon*” (“true word”) translates this Sanskrit word *mantra*. As *mantras* symbolize the preaching voice of Dainichi, reciting them in the correct posture and right mental framework attunes one’s body-and-mind to the vibrations or resonances of the universe. But this also means that all phenomena are *mantras* as the omnipresencing of the enlightened universe embodying the dharma (KKZ 2 : 274 ff. / H, pp. 240 ff.).
- 21 – As opposed to “with form” (*usō* 有相).
- 22 – This has also been translated as “power,” “grace,” “blessing,” etc.
- 23 – See the following: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962); Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*; and Watsuji Tetsurō, *A Climate: A Philosophical Study*, trans. Geoffrey Bownas (Tokyo: Government Printing Bureau, 1961).
- 24 – In this respect, even *logos* is seen as *techné* as well. While the traditional Western philosophical view was that a human being is distinct as a speaking or rational animal, Nishida views *logos* as a formative aspect of the world inseparable from our embodiment implacing us in the world. See Z 8 : 309–310 / LL, pp. 125–126; Z 14 : 276–277 / HB, pp. 44–45.
- 25 – Nishida thus states, “a merely passive intuition that negates acting is perhaps thinkable as an abstract concept, but it does not exist in the world of reality”

(Z 9:174 / R 3:35 / UO, p. 192), and “intuition, separated from acting, is either merely an abstract idea or mere illusion” (Z 9:190 / R 3:51 / UO, p. 208). I have slightly altered the English translation in the first quotation.

- 26 – In what Nishida regards as “concrete-logical” terms, this is also described as the self-determination (*jiko gentei* 自己限定) of the “dialectical universal” (*benshōhōteki ippansha* 弁証法的一般者) as a “concrete universal” (*gutaiteki ippansha* 具体的一般者) (Z 8:352 / LL, p. 150; Z 9:198 / R 3:60 / UO, p. 217).
- 27 – This self-negation of the absolute is a self-inversion of nothing into being. As nothing, self-negation is the only characteristic belonging to the absolute. The absolute is nothing (*mu* 無) because it is “cut off” (*zetsu* 絶) from any opposition (*tai* 対); that is, it is not delimited or determined as a *thing* by anything *beyond* itself. Or, in other words, it is not relative, which is the literal meaning of the term *zettai*, translated as “absolute.” So the reader must keep in mind the sense of “absolve” in the English rendering of Nishida’s *zettai* as “absolute.” Nishida’s point is that a true absolute must not be de-limited by anything opposing it outside itself, and as nothing it must contain its own opposite *within*, rather than without, itself (Z 11:397 / R 3:327–328 / LW, pp. 68–69). In order to allow for its self-contradictions, the world at its core must be such an absolute nothing (*zettai mu*). So the historical world can be seen in this wider context as the self-determination of absolute nothing. When “absolute” becomes equated with “God” as in Nishida’s even later writings, especially those from the 1940s, the self-seeing of the world would then be God’s self-seeing. However, one must remember that this seeing is still a “seeing without seer,” for this “God” is still absolutely nothing. In one of his last works, “Towards a Philosophy of Religion with the Concept of Pre-established Harmony as Guide,” from 1944, Nishida equates “God” (*kami* 神) with both *die Gottheit* of Western mystics and *sūnyatā* of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (Z 11:131 / PR, p. 35). Like Kūkai’s *dharmakāya*, “God” here is one designation for what on the other side of the coin is without substance. Nishida also likewise uses Buddhist parlance to call this “the wisdom of the great perfect mirror,” of which all forms are shadows or images (see Z 11:119 / PR, p. 25).
- 28 – The world of extension and bodies for Spinoza runs parallel to the world of thought and reason, and their correspondence is guaranteed by the fact that each body is a finite modification of God’s cosmic body and each mind is a finite modification, as idea, of God’s infinite mind/idea. Extension and thought are two of the infinite attributes belonging to the infinite substance that is God, and the finite things of the world are finite modes of these attributes. As mind and body, we are then modal expressions of God, according to Spinoza. See Daniel Garber, John Henry, Lynn Joy, and Alan Gabbey, “New Doctrines of Body and its Powers, Place, and Space,” in Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 553–623, at pp. 591–592.

29 – Hence, to compare the so-called “mysticism” of Spinozistic monism with Buddhist meditational experience, as Jon Wetlesen purports to do, is not as fruitful as it may seem at first (see Wetlesen, “Body Awareness as a Gateway to Eternity: A Note on the Mysticism of Spinoza and its Affinity to Buddhist Meditation,” in Siegfried Hessing, ed., *Speculum Spinozanum: 1677–1977* [London: Routledge, 1977], pp. 479–494). Not only is the applicability to either Spinoza or Buddhism of the moniker “mysticism” questionable, the alleged affinity between the two would be founded on a gross misunderstanding of Buddhism that occludes this middle standpoint, which is a de-substantializing one. This cannot but be contrasted with Spinoza’s substantialism, which is of a *one* while Buddhism’s de-substantialism (nondualism) is of a “one and yet many.” What the Buddhist aims to realize in meditation is emptiness, dependent origination, and the “middle.” Each of these precludes any sort of substantialism.