

## KYOTO SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY IN RELATION TO NEO-CONFUCIANIST METAPHYSICS

Makoto OZAKI<sup>1</sup>

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### КИОТСКАЯ ШКОЛА В ОТНОШЕНИИ К НЕОКОНФУЦИАНСКОЙ МЕТАФИЗИКЕ

Макото ОЗАКИ

**Abstract.** Is Kyoto School Philosophy of modern Japan truly original? Some answer from the critical side: it is a creative syncretism or eclecticism. In the Aristotelian scheme of potentiality and actuality, a dynamic unity of potentiality and actuality in the movement results in the full self-realization of essence in appearance, i.e., *entelecheia*; and in the Whiteheadian formula, a new actual entity takes place in the concrescent unity of real potentiality as the past being and pure potentiality as eternal objects or universal forms *à la* Plato towards the future aim in the creative advancing process. As even Hegel and Heidegger cannot avoid the Christian origin from which their speculative and metaphysical versions of the same content come out, so Kyoto School Philosophy might also be a variation of the Neo-Confucianist metaphysics in the modern context encountering and struggling with European thought in the traditional habit of thinking to integrate all other elements into a hybrid form. For Tanabe a possible unification of relativity and quantum physics or between Buddhism and Christianity is attempted from the standpoint of Absolute Nothingness, and this project may be a technical combination of the past knowledge. Nishida's main idea of Absolute Nothingness as *Topos* might be the metaphysical reflection of the Japanese agricultural society based on the natural immutable substratum of the land, and his basic concept of the self-identity in absolute contradistinction might be in affinity with the Buddhist logic of non-duality as well. Watsuji's ethics is based upon the principle of Absolute Emptiness and its self-development in history in terms of essence and activity in analogy to Neo-Confucianist metaphysics. In fact, in the pre-modern feudal period Neo-Confucianist metaphysics is imported and recognized as the orthodox ideology by the militant regime, and this tradition continues explicitly and implicitly to the modern age as the underlying stream in its framework of thinking exerting its influence on the succeeding period. Kyoto School Philosophy pioneered by Nishida, Tanabe and Watsuji might be a sort of creative syncretism or eclecticism in dialogue and comparison with western thought on the basis of Neo-Confucianist metaphysics which is *per se* a new form of syncretism or eclecticism of Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian ideas, exhibiting enormous competence in construction of novel thoughts by means of refine arrangement of discrete ideas into a consistent system. In a metaphor, referring to the Japanese intelligent habit of experience – as if it were an improvement of technology.

**Keywords:** Kyoto School Philosophy (Nishida, Tanabe, Watsuji), Neo-Confucianist Metaphysics, Primordial/Absolute Nothingness, Syncretism, Agricultural Society, Totality.

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<sup>1</sup> Sanyo Gakuen University, Okayama, JAPAN.

**Резюме.** Является ли Киотская школа философии современной Японии действительно оригинальной? Некоторые отвечают с критической стороны, что это творческий синкретизм или эклектизм. В Аристотелевской же схеме потенциальности и актуальности – динамическое единство потенциальности и актуальности в движении приводит к полной самореализации сущности во внешнем проявлении, т.е. энтелехии; и в формуле Уайтхеда новая актуальная сущность имеет место в сращении и единстве реальной потенциальности как прошлого существования, так и чистой потенциальности, в качестве вечных объектов или универсальных форм (в духе Платона), устремленных к будущей цели в процессе творческого продвижения. Поскольку даже Гегель и Хайдеггер не могут избежать христианского происхождения, из первоисточника которого выходят их умозрительные и метафизические версии одного и того же содержания, то и философия Киотской школы также выступать разновидностью неоконфуцианской метафизики в современном контексте, и которая сталкивается и борется с европейской мыслью, делая в своем традиционном порядке объединения все осмысливаемых элементов в некую гибридную форму. Для Танабэ возможное объединение теории относительности и квантовой физики, или объединения буддизма и христианства предпринимается с точки зрения Абсолютного Ничто, и этот проект может быть искусной комбинацией прошлых знаний. Идеи Нишиды об Абсолютном Ничто как Топосе могут быть метафизическим отражением японского сельскохозяйственного общества, основанного на естественном неизменном субстрате земли, и самоидентификации в абсолютном противоречии, также в соответствии с буддийской логикой недвойственности. Этика Ватсудзи состоит из принципа Абсолютной Пустоты и ее саморазвития в истории с точки зрения сущности и деятельности по аналогии с неоконфуцианской метафизикой. Фактически, в досовременный феодальный период неоконфуцианистская метафизика импортируется и признается ортодоксальной идеологией воинствующим режимом, и эта традиция явно и неявно сохраняется в современную эпоху как основной поток в ее структуре мышления, оказывающей влияние на последующий период. Философия Киотской школы, впервые предложенная Нишидой, Танабэ и Ватсудзи, может быть своего рода творческим синкретизмом или эклектизмом в диалоге и сравнении с западной мыслью на основе неоконфуцианской метафизики, которая сама по себе является новой формой синкретизма или эклектизма буддизма, даосизма и Конфуцианских идей, демонстрирующего огромную компетентность в построении новых мыслей посредством тонкой организации дискретных идей в единую систему. В метафоре, ссылаясь на японскую интеллектуальную традицию к переживанию опыта – это как совершенствовать технологию.

**Ключевые слова:** Киотская школьная философия (Нишида, Танабе, Вацудзи), неоконфуцианская метафизика, изначальное/абсолютное ничто, синкретизм, сельскохозяйственное общество, тотальность.

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## Introduction

History has the duality: one is the horizontal line from the past through the present to the future, open endlessly, and the other the vertical dimensions of the past strata superposed in consciousness explicitly and implicitly contracted in the present, remembering the nostalgia for the forgotten past. In modern astrophysics our universe is traced back to nearly 13.8 billion years ago, i.e., the so-called big bang origin, as far as we can observe, and in the comprehensive Buddhist text of the Lotus Sutra the historical Buddha reveals his own infinitely distant past event of becoming enlightened far above and beyond our image any more. Compared to this story, Kyoto School philosophy is still confined to the mundane world affairs reverting to the primal agricultural society within the limit of historical time. Even Heidegger's scope of time is restricted to human history begun with the Geek origin over 2500 years ago, and Hegel's eternal divine essence is unfolded and self-manifested in human history, reaching the state existence of the constitutional monarchy, as well.

As one of the distinguishing characteristics of Japanese intellectual history, the mythical God symbolic of the sun in the primitive society is regarded as the source of the self-identical succession of emperors system in the self-reflective mode of consciousness of the religious authority in the direct link to politics, reviving even in the modern age of restoration of the old monarchy as the imitation of the western political system. In the pre-modern Tokugawa period, instead of Buddhism, Neo-Confucianist metaphysics as a variation of the former served as the conservative ideology of the military regime, whilst at the same time permeating to intelligentsia at large. On such historical substratum, Kyoto school philosophy flourishes in new encounter with western thought in the transition from the Buddhist-Confucianist syncretic tradition to the west-centered modernization basically relied on the universal principle of Primordial or Absolute Nothingness in terms of the intellectual habit of integrating different elements into a higher complex unity.

Even so, however, while Nishida represents the longstanding primary agricultural society by his main notion of metaphysical *Topos* as Absolute Nothingness together with the Buddhist and Neo-Confucianist tradition taken place in the agricultural society, Tanabe stands by free subjective action of negative conversion of the existing substrative society into a new phase of history as a result of the social change undertaken by the dynamic movement of industrialization in the modern era. The divergence between Nishida and Tanabe, however, may be a contrast in identity appearing on the same socio-historical substratum of creative syncretism or eclecticism as the habitual experiential expression of Japanese intelligence.

### 1. Interpretation

There are the antinomic theses concerning the sentence "Alteration between the negative and the positive is the Dao" in the *Book of Change* with the advent of new Confucianist metaphysics in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in China: The Dao is change, or, the Dao is the ground of change. The former is Lu's interpretation, and the latter Chu's. Which is correct? Chu's one might be deeper than Lu's literal one in terms of the interpretation of the literature represented by G. Gadamer, according to which the

interpretation is to disclose the hidden meanings in the depth of the matter. T'ien-t'ai, the prominent exponent of Buddhist philosophy in the 6<sup>th</sup> century China, too, appraises the bright person who respects for reasoning to elucidate the profound meanings hidden in the deep dimension of the literature, whilst the dull persistently sticking to the superficial reading of letters.

## 2. Neo-Confucianist substratum

Change from the negative to the positive, and vice versa, incessantly occur in the phenomenal world in distinction from the noumenally underlying substrative principle of the ultimacy of Nothingness in Chu's perspective in which the logic of essence and appearance, or substance and activity, plays the central role. Though in the *Book of Change* the term "essence/substance" is not mentioned but only activity/operation, it is introduced as the pair conception of explanation of the phenomenal world from the Buddhist source by Chu attempting to synthesize Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist thought in a creative way appropriate for the age. Even so, however, Chu's neo-Confucianist metaphysics was not employed in his time but in the next Min dynasty, and subsequently was imported into Japan as the authoritative ideology in support of the feudal system during the Tokugawa period of approximately 300 years just before the dawn of modernization of Japan with the abrupt advent of western philosophy and culture. Along with this tradition Nishida, Tanabe and Watsuji at Kyoto University made to effort to create a kind of synthesis of eastern and western thought as a new intellectual form of modernizing Japan.

Particularly, Watsuji's (later affiliated with Tokyo university) systematic ethics may be the typical exemplar of such blend of neo-Confucianist and the Hegelian monistic logic according to which the principle of Logos is unfolded and self-manifested in the socio-historical realms of the phenomenal world. For Watsuji, the basic principle of human existence is Absolute Emptiness or Negativity as the Totality that is perpetually to be actualized in the gradual process of history as the self-manifestations, and this is carried out under the guise of the cooperation of essence and appearance or substance and activity through the mediation of human practical action in society. As Eugen Fink points out, for Hegel, everything finite in the world is regarded as good in the end as the result of reconciliation of God and human beings, and this is also true for Watsuji who claims that there is no bad which is never turned out to be good in the last resort. In this respect, Chu also takes the optimistic position of human nature as originally good in agreement with the Christian tradition to which Hegel owes. In effect, the logical scheme in which the fundamental principle *qua* essence is activated in operation in the actual world may be common to all of them.

Neo-Confucianist metaphysics based on the ultimate principle of Nothingness as identical with the Buddhist principle of Emptiness might be conceived of as the historical prototype of the Japanese syncretism of Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism in general, and this line of integrity of different ideas may continue to the modern age in confrontation with western thought, with the result of Nishida's, Tanabe's and Watsuji's struggles for constructing the new forms of westernized

conception. So, it is very important to discern the underlying concealed framework of thinking in their thought-structure, despite their ostensible outlooks in the western style and manner.

### 3. Essence and Appearance

For Watsuji, the individual existence and social totality are alternately changed into each other through self-negation in the historical development, arriving at the state existence, and the truth of the individual and society is essentially Emptiness as ultimate reality; the individuality and totality are concrete appearances of the same essence in the socio-historical dimensions. This logical scheme may bear the resemblance to the Neo-Confucianist concept of ultimacy of Nothingness which might be the hybrid of Daoist and Buddhist ideas of Nothingness and Emptiness in terms of the change from negativity to positivity, and vice versa. The logic of the self-identical essence appearing in the different forms can apply to every stage of the historical development of human society, for instance, the mythical God in ancient Japan is considered as the transformation of the same essence of the Buddha in the specific cultural circumstance. This logic might be relevant to Hegel who asserts that essence appears in the phenomenal world, the Absolute is to be self-manifested in the relative beings in history, leading up to the state existence as well. It might be no accident that there is a parallel among Hegel, Watsuji, and even Chu in their logical scheme in the end.

The full self-realization of essence in appearance corresponds to the Aristotelian concept of *entelecheia* as a dynamic unification of potentiality and actuality in the self-realizing movement. This might be applicable to the logic of the same essence appearing in a diversity of forms in terms of the perpetual self-negating activity of Absolute Nothingness or Emptiness in the field of historical development. Hegel's immanent logic, according to which God appears in history, might be much influenced by Aristotle, and we may see the striking similarity between western and eastern ways of thinking on the relation of essence and appearance, substance and activity, the Absolute and the relative, as a variety of the self-manifestations of one ultimate reality in the discrete linguistic and cultural environments.

### 4. Agricultural background

In addition, with respect to the generative basis of the ontology of change as the self-reflective consciousness of the specific folk's or race's experience in China, Tanabe acutely enough remarks its origin as stemming from agricultural society in which the philosopher politics by wise kings governs the state and people in accordance with the heavenly laws as the subordinate order of the harmonious society, in contrast to the antagonistic opposition and conflict between God and demon in the Judeo-Christian tradition and to the artistic representational type of Greek spirit based on the relation of matter to form. This is the reason why Watsuji places the emphasis on social totality rather than the individual eventually, and even Nishida stands on the metaphysical place of Absolute Nothingness *qua* the noumenal essence as the latent and implicit self-reflection of the society inherited from the

ancient agricultural style of living on the stable land. This is also the reason that even in today's Japan people are still subject to the larger social organizations, typical of the political power of the state, in majority of their mentality, despite the folly politics in the ostensibly democratic juridical society. This may be the shadowy trace of the fact that the emperor system has remained in Japan as the habitual pattern of experience established along with its long traditional history.

In the early Tokugawa period, the representative Confucianist of the military regime Razan Hayashi articulates that God is the root of heaven and earth and the essence of all things, being identical to Emptiness as well as non-Emptiness without color and form, and the principles of time with the beginning and the end and of eternity without beginning and end, in terms of syncretism of Shinto and Confucianism based on the Buddhist logic of Emptiness. Watsuji regards the mythical God in ancient Shintoism as playing the mediating role to the indefinite God, not as the infinite Being as such, and this role of the mediator might be parallel to the negative element subordinate to the positive element in change, not as the diametrical opposite to the positive, from Tanabe's perspective. In the agricultural society ruled by the periodic repetition of four seasons and sustained by the invariable place, the priority is given to the hierarchical order of the society over individuals suitable for maintaining the feudal system, and this socio-historical underlying structure of the living world may contribute to the formation of mentality as the self-reflective consciousness of the experience peculiar to its own natural geometrical circumstance. This agricultural foundation as the basic pattern of experience of the particular people may be the matrix from which the Japanese syncretism arises.

### **5. Duality of the Absolute**

According to Watsuji, the ultimate One is not limited by any finite God but Absolute Nothingness as the infinitely deep origin of all determined Gods who can become Gods as the mediators to that Absolute One. Hereby we may see the parallel to the Vedantic distinction between the supreme Brahman beyond any form and the subsidiary lower level Brahman emanating into the actual world as God. The double structure of the Absolute may be found out in the Buddhist Lotus Sutra in which the penultimate eternal Buddha as the result attained immensely long eons ago and the genuine eternal Buddha without the beginning and the end as the original cause hidden in the depth of the former. Hence, Watsuji's conception of the duality of ultimate reality as Absolute Nothingness and its determined form of God in respect of the Japanese God as the ancestor of the subsequent emperors might be in line with the eastern tradition. The parallelism might be seen in Heidegger's ontological difference between Being itself in the pre-Socratic age and beings in the post-Socratic era and the distinction of the first beginning from the other beginning concealed in the primordial ground of the former to be revealed in the future as the arrival of the last God. The difference between the Dao as change and the Dao as the ground of change may also correspond to the dual structure of the Absolute.

Even as regards the Christian Trinity, the Incarnation of God in the human form of Jesus occurred in the dimension of the second person of the Son of God but not in

the first person of the God Father may be in some way analogous to the Absolute One contained of difference within itself. The eternal unity of God and man has become historical reality in Jesus as the Christ, according to Paul Tillich, and this eternal unity in a state of pure essentiality or potentiality can become actualized through free action of human existence in the dynamic process of history. Whereas Jesus is eternalized as the pre-existence by Karl Barth with the result of attenuation of eschatology on the historical horizon, the eternal pre-existence of the historical Buddha is adumbrated to trace back to the primordial origin in the Lotus Sutra with the concomitant turn into the messianic anticipation of the Bodhisattva in the eschatological future.

## 6. Totality

The distinction between potentiality and actuality may refer to the distinction of finite totality from the absolute totality in the endless process of self-emptying activity of Absolute Emptiness as Absolute Totality in the spatial and temporal extension of human intersubjective active relationships in the alternate forms of the individual existence and social community in the formation of history, in Watsuji's view. For him, the priority of social totality over the individuals, though never exhausting the absolute totality itself in any finite form of totality, leads to that the Japanese emperor is the expression of the integrity of the whole state on the ontological status of the highest totality in history, though finally aiming at the world-wide state beyond nation states as the ideal unity of humankind after the war. Tanabe also conceives of the emperor as the symbol of Absolute Nothingness *qua* the integral totality of all people of Japan, likewise Watsuji. The totalitarian tendency of the Japanese society may be intimately linked with the emperor system established in the ancient agricultural society in connection with the mythical God as its prototype of the subsequent lineage in which the emperor is regarded as the presently manifest God, though being negatively converted into the symbolic human existence of the state as a whole after the defeat of the world wars. This immortal past may be still effective even in the present as the implicitly underlying stream of the society.

## 7. Syncretism

Behind Tanabe and Watsuji, including Nishida, there has been the kind of syncretism or eclecticism as the blend of different ideas with the entailment of even the synthesis as a result of dialectical development in history. So, it might be not surprising that Tanabe attempts at a possible synthesis of Japanese Buddhism, Christianity and Marxism in anticipation of the second religious reformation from the standpoint of the self-development of the triadic logic of dialectic. The Kyoto School philosophy of modern Japan should be reviewed in the context of the Japanese intellectual history as the accumulated inheritance of a wide range of ideas originating from the diverse cultural regions. Especially, Neo-Confucianist metaphysics is of special significance in elucidation and analysis of thoughts represented by Nishida, Tanabe and Watsuji in comparison to western thought as the historical prototype of any sort of synthesis or syncretism of Buddhism, Daoism and

Confucianism, or even Shintoism as well. Another philosopher Satomi Takahashi contemporary with them also proposes the position of the whole as transcendence in controversy with Tanabe concerning the Logic of Species from the Tendai Buddhist perspective vis-à-vis Zen which influenced on the taking place of Neo-Confucianism in China and on its later widespread in Japan as well.

### 8. Subject of Negation

Watsuji's emphasis on totality rather than the individual may come from the metaphysical principle of identity, entailing syncretism or integration of many ideas in terms of indefinite and unlimited Absolute Nothingness/Emptiness as the fertile matrix. According to him, Emptiness empties itself in the historical process, and this signifies that Emptiness is the subject of its own emptying activity in history, in the same token as the Hegelian subject of God, Spirit or Reason in history, instead of the human existential subject. This connotes Emptiness as absolute totality towards which history proceeds and human beings are predicated as the secondary rank. In my view, however, on the contrary, the subject is rather human beings who perpetually empty their individualities and social entities in alteration through their subjective free actions on the socio-historical plane of the world. Emptiness does not move on its own but is rather moved to be emptied by human subjective free action, and therefore, when human subjective action ceases to negate the existing individual self and social entity any more, it turns out to be bad as against the realization of its own essence as Emptiness in its endless course. In other words, goodness is no other than the self-negating activity to realize Emptiness as essence in appearance and its actualized result. Once actualized, both the individual and social entity cannot remain *status quo*, but further strive to realize Emptiness without stopping at any point of time, otherwise it regresses into badness. This is the other side of the species in which the universal genus is once actualized; the species as good must not remain as being devoid of self-emptying/negating but go a step further to negate itself for the purpose of actualizing Absolute Negativity in the finite phenomenal world endlessly. For Watsuji, the fundamental principle of human existence is Absolute Emptiness/Nothingness as the subject of self-negating activity in history, as in the case of Karl Barth's theology in which God is the subject of history, and not *vice versa*. But the subject of self-negating/emptying activity is borne by human existence endowed with freedom to activate its own essence in the forms of individuality and social entity as finite totality in a reciprocal self-negation in the space-time extension of the actual historical world.

### 9. Identity of End and Beginning

As Hegel holds, the same essence appears in different forms, and this is also true for the Buddhist logic of Emptiness entailing its opposite aspect of being in turn as a result of its self-negating activity. This principle of self-identity in difference might be valid to the Buddhist view of the ancestor God in Japan as another trace of the Buddha in the different place and age in terms of essence and appearance, and to syncretism, eclecticism, or any type of unity of the diverse ideas on a higher level.

For Heidegger, identity is a fundamental characteristic of Being as the ground of beings, and the essence of identity is a property of the event of appropriation (*Ereignis*) as the active nature of the self-vibrating Being. Being occurs as event of its own, not static as such but active in nature, and this might be the remnant of the Incarnation of the eternal God in human history. For Hegel, the end is the beginning as the result of the self-moving completion of Being, i.e., the absolute Idea, in a historical return to its original beginning with its fully developed fullness. Being becomes present in the manner of a transition to beings as the difference in its self-negating dialectical movement, though not leaving its own place and go over to beings but retaining the differentiation of them within itself. The identity of the end and the beginning in a circular movement is true for the Buddhist view of cyclic time in which at the penultimate end the Bodhisattva returns to the primordial beginning with the attainment of completed fulfillment of original essence, i.e., the Buddha, corresponding to the *entelecheia à la* Aristotle (Nichiren: *The Principal Image of Contemplation to begin with the Fifth Five Hundred Years After the Buddha's Extinction*). The identity of the end and the beginning also pertains to Confucianism and Daoism as the ontological principle of time reflective of the agricultural background based upon the periodically repetitive time rather than a merely linear temporality.

## 10. Tradition

The logical schema represented by Hegel and Heidegger might be relevant to the Buddhist way of thinking in terms of the Emptiness principle undergoing change in self-negation into beings as the various appearances of the same essence in the phenomenal sphere. In fact, this took place in the Japanese modes of syncretic or synthetic integration of discrete thoughts in speculation with the Kyoto School philosophy as well as the previous hybrid Neo-Confucianist metaphysics involving Shintoism. As Hegel and Heidegger are inevitably bound up with the Cristian tradition, so the Kyoto School philosophers are also inescapable from the bondage of the cumulatively superposed strata of the antecedent intellectual tradition of Confucianist, Daoist and Buddhist frameworks of thinking and conceptions. Hence, it may be superficial to describe their thoughts only from the western philosophical perspective, without inquiring into the deeper structure of the Japanese intellectual historical context. This may be tenable in terms of the Whiteheadian conception of the immortal past which is still actual in its objectivity as the causal power influencing upon the present, particularly remarkable in Nishida's main ideas of absolute self-identity in contradistinction derived from the Buddhist concept of non-duality and duality and Absolute Nothingness as the ultimate underlying substrative principle of all actual entities, sharing with Tanabe and Watsuji as well.

As W. Pannenberg elucidates, the presence of the Kingdom of God is not yet ultimately manifest in the world but still in the future and the second advent of Christ brings forth the completion of God's reign, the expectation of the second coming of Christ is so fundamental as the full arrival of God on earth. This scheme of orientation towards the future is so vital that Heidegger cannot escape from the

Christian messianic tradition as his historical background, as his expectation of the last God in the other beginning suggests.

### 11. The divine State as an Illusion

Watsuji's priority of a social totality over the individuals might directly be much influenced by Hegel's stress on a political community over the individuals on the higher level of actuality *à la* Aristotle, entailing the identification of the state and the hereditary monarchy, i.e., the concrete personality of the state existence as divine. Both Watsuji and Tanabe, likewise Hegel, conceptualize the given actuality of the state existence in their time as ideality, i.e., the realization of the principle of Absolute Emptiness *qua* Totality in the actual state existence, though they immediately after the world wars modify the absolutization of the state in such a way that the state also has the duality of good and evil as the expediently oscillating being, not absolute as such but relative, involving repentance for evil *à la* Tanabe, with the view of the emperor as the symbolic expression of the nation as a whole *à la* Tanabe and Watsuji.

Although they seem to be influenced by Hegel's view of the 19<sup>th</sup> century state image as the theodicy on the surface, nevertheless, their totalitarian tendency is deeply rooted in the Japanese homogeneous society inherited since the ancient times with the establishment of the divine emperor system, corresponding to the Hegelian monarchy-state. They failed to anticipate the ideal future state existence under the given circumstances beforehand but were engaged in justification of the state *status quo* by means of technical combinations of the existing ideas directly applying to the historical actuality, as if flying owls in the evening afterwards. As a matter of fact, they were all participating in the consultation with the educational bureau of Japan government during the war times.

### 12. The Absolute becoming others

In comparison to the Heideggerian Christian religious origin, Nishida, Tanabe and Watsuji do not stand on the apocalyptic messianic horizon proper to the desert type of cultural zone but on the warm and wet land type of the agricultural mode of social production. In view of the socio-cultural diversity, there is no expectation of the Messiah to save people in the future in the agricultural society based on the invariable land with the repetition of the same, except for the Lotus Sutra Buddhism represented by Nichiren who predicts the new appearance of the Buddha in the last era of history, analogous to the second coming of Christ or the last God in Heidegger.

For Hegel, the Absolute becomes the others as its self-estrangements, whilst maintaining its self-identity by its eventual return to itself in the self-developing whole. In other words, the Absolute is inclusive of the relative difference within itself through its self-manifesting movement as the self-negating activity in the world history. In the Lotus Sutra, too, the eternal original Buddha is able to take the multiplicity of forms for the purpose of saving all living beings in the entire cosmos, becoming other figures with the different names as the expedient means, i.e., as the self-alienation with the result of returning to its original beginning to attain its own self-identity in the event. This is feasible by reason of the ceaseless self-negating

activity of the principle of Absolute Emptiness; the eternal Buddha can assume the multitude of appearances in the phenomenal world, even in tree and grass besides the different personalities in the other cultural zones. In fact, the other Buddhas in many worlds in the multiverse are described in the sutras. So, it might be no accident that Hegel and Buddhism are in some way coincident with each other in the eternal light of the Absolute One containing self-separation and self-differentiation in correspondence to the different cultural areas or other worlds.

### 13. Direct Identity

In Japanese intellectual history, Original Enlightenment thought arose within the Tendai Buddhist circle in the early medieval onward regarding the self-identity of human nature and Buddhahood as a climax of absolute monism of non-duality with the propensity for affirmation of actuality *status quo*. As an extreme extension, human beings are regarded as the Buddha already without practice due to their identity, discarding its opposition phase. Even if so, however, this is the mistaken identity in confusion of potentiality and actuality on account of its one-sided emphasis on non-dual identity simply, lacking the moment of necessity on the plane of practical action in negative mediation. Behind this kind of hasty identification, there might be the naïve feeling of affirmation of the given actuality since antiquity without the moment of self-negation, and hence, the Buddhist concept of Emptiness as the principle of negation originated in India is absorbed and transmuted into the indigenous spirit, quite contrary to its original meaning. In the medieval the reaction to this trend took place in the new forms of Buddhist thought, the so-called the new Buddhism in the Kamakura period, represented by Honen, Shinran, Dogen, and Nichiren out of the same ambit of the Tendai school based on the Lotus Sutra. While both Honen and Sinran advocate the Amitabha Buddha residing in the pure other world, Dogen concentrating on Zen meditation imported from China, Nichiren deepens the implications of the Lotus Sutra in the eschatological time in which the novel arrival of the Buddha is anticipated by the return to the eternal origin.

It is necessary in terms of the structure of time to mediate the past in the present to the future. In the Lotus Sutra, in the first half of which true reality of all phenomena is analyzed in terms of the ten categories, i.e., appearance, nature, essence, power, activity, cause, conditions, result, reward, and the self-identity of all elements, parallel to the Aristotelian and Kantian categories. In the second one, the eternal origin of the historical Buddha is disclosed from the triad perspective of original cause, original effect, and original world, suggesting the future advent of the hidden Buddha in the proleptic form of the Bodhisattva as the eternal return of the same *à la* Nietzsche.

### 14. The Secular World

Even though Watsuji takes the Lotus Sutra into consideration, both Nishida and Tanabe mainly lean towards Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, as their disciple Iwao Kouyama criticizes. This tendency may be derived from the fact that Neo-Confucianism was imported by Zen Buddhists. Even in China after the gradual

decline of Tendai Buddhist school Zen school instead rises as the main stream, and this historical changing situation exerts a strong influence upon Japan, ensuing the adoption of Neo-Confucianism as the official ideology by the Tokugawa military regime due to its social institutional character as opposed to quietism. This mundane character is well fit to the Japanese general mentality in favor of actual fact rather than abstract truth, and consequently Nishida starts from the pure experience instead of deductive speculation on the basis of universal principle and Tanabe also does not presuppose any precedent being, like the transcendent God, but begins with the given fact as the result from the end, admitting the unknown origin of the world. Their attitudes are oriented towards the facts without presupposing the general principle onset, as the common distinguished characteristics throughout the Confucian cultural zone.

Neo-Confucianism might be a concrescent unification of Buddhist, Daoist and Confucianist ideas on the foundation of Absolute Nothingness immanent in the multiplicity of phenomena, though being transformed into the Japanized manner suitable for the political policy of the closed country incommunicative to foreign countries with narrow mind. Even if so, however, Kyoto School Philosophy opens up the window for western thought on the concealed basis of Neo-Confucianist metaphysics within the purview of the secular world, and this endeavor should be continued to promote a further development in the exchange of ideas and enhancement of systematic construction of thought in view of the world-wide spread of universal principle of Absolute Nothingness applying to a diversity of human intellectual activities in general upon the necessary request of the world history from the neo-Aristotelian bio-cosmological standpoint as well.

## Conclusion

As the Kyoto school Marxist Jun Tosaka criticizes Tanabe's philosophy for its character of creative syncretism or eclecticism, Kyoto School philosophy might be involved in the general tendency towards the kind of syncretism or eclecticism of Japanese intellectual history, particularly, in the guise of a new synthesis of eastern and western thought on the neo-Confucianist substratum prevalent in the pre-modern age. Over against the Buddhist belief in the other world represented by the Amitabha Buddha in the medieval, the mundane world view peculiar to Neo-Confucianism was adopted as the prevailing ideology in service of maintaining the social order under the auspices of the Tokugawa regime. In the background of the antecedent historical situations, Kyoto school philosophy based on the central concept of Absolute Nothingness may be well understood as a creative construction of metaphysics in confrontation with western thought. On the Neo-Confucianist basis, Nishida, Tanabe, and Watsuji strive to make up the new integralist systems of thought by positively taking the western ideas, especially Hegel's dialectic in respect to the Buddhist idea of Emptiness and its historical application.

Furthermore, as Nishida himself explicates, concepts are the products abstracted from the concrete facts of human experience in correlation to natural environment as the self-reflective style of social production in general. So, it is very important to

inquire into the specific style of social production of things in each cultural area beyond the mere reading of literature on the surface as its original root. In this respect, the primary agricultural society in Japan might be highly significant to take into consideration Nishida's last notions of Absolute Nothingness as the metaphysical Place or *Topos* and the self-identity in absolute contradistinction as generated from the homogenous self-identical social experience in addition to the Buddhist logic of non-duality. Tanabe also succeeds in the establishment of the triadic logic of dialectic in the forms of individuality, species-like society, and universality on the same bases of Absolute Nothingness with the different connotation as the shadowy trace of the industrial urban society in change. Watsuji further construes a systematic ethics in terms of the fundamental principle of Absolute Emptiness and its concrete self-development in the socio-historical fields, by using the Hegelian dialectics. Even so, however, under the ostensible westernized manner of conception, there might be the real potential strata inherited from the preceding eras prevailed by Buddhist and Neo-Confucianist ways of thinking as the immortal past effectively operating in the constitution of a new occurrence of actuality *à la* Whitehead. In short, Kyoto school philosophy is to be reviewed from the historical perspective of the potential past influences upon the present.

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