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CRITICAL COMMENTS ON NISHIDA'S USE OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), Japan's foremost thinker of the twentieth century, frequently invoked the Buddhist tradition in his later years in order to illustrate his own philosophical position. In fact, his use of Buddhist texts and ideas highlights an interesting development in his thought. While Nishida persisted in the same endeavor, namely to formulate a systematic, non-dualist philosophy, throughout his career, the foundational paradigm, on which he based his philosophical system, changed quite frequently. In his first monograph, *Inquiry into the Good* (Japanese: *Zen no kenkyū*, hereafter abbreviated as "*Inquiry*"),¹ released in 1911, Nishida based his philosophical system² on the concept "pure experience"³ (Japanese: *junsui keiken*). Discontented with what he took to be fundamental flaws in this concept,⁴ Nishida supplanted it with a series of technical terms: those that echo the idealisms of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Plato (428/7–348/7), and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) such as "absolute will" (Japanese: *zettai ishi*) in 1917, "place" (Japanese: *basho*) in 1925, "dialectical universal" (Japanese: *benshōhō no ippansha*) in 1933; and his own neologisms such as "acting intuition" (Japanese: *kōiteki chokkan*) in 1937 and the "self-identity of absolute contradictories" (Japanese: *zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu*) in 1939. After 1939 he relied increasingly on Buddhist terminology to illustrate his non-dualism and even attributed his final two paradigms, "the depth of the everyday" (Japanese: *byōjōtei*), introduced in 1939, and the "inverse correlation" (Japanese: *gyakutaiō*), coined in 1945, to the Buddhist tradition. Nishida's own terminology seems to imply that no other philosophy is more akin to, and illustrative of, his own non-dualism than "Buddhist philosophy."⁵

While Nishida uses the term "Buddhism" well over a hundred times throughout his collected works, the number of Buddhist sources he actually cites or refers to is rather limited. Takemura Makio identifies Nishida's sources of Buddhism as "Zen" (Chinese: *Chan*),

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“Shinran” (1173–1263), and “other Buddhisms”; the latter category includes the *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Chinese: *Dashengqixinglun*, Japanese: *Daijōkishinron*),⁶ hereafter abbreviated as *Awakening of Faith*), Tiantai (Japanese: *Tendai*), and Huayan (Japanese: *Kegon*) Buddhism. However, even this list seems to suggest a deeper knowledge of Buddhism than Nishida’s writings reveal. Nishida knew True Pure Land Buddhism (Japanese: *Jōdōshinshū*) from the religious practice of his mother and Zen Buddhism through his own practice of *zazen*. The Buddhist texts he cites are limited to the *Diamond Sūtra* (Chinese: *Jingangjing*, Japanese: *Kongōkyō*),⁷ the *Awakening of Faith*, the *Gateless Barrier* (Chinese: *Wumenguan*, Japanese: *Mumonkan*),⁸ the *Linjilu*,⁹ *Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*,¹⁰ and the *Tannishō*.¹¹ While his usage of the *Tannishō* reflects a greater familiarity with the text, he confines references to the other text to occasional quotations of well-known passages such as Linji Yixuan’s (Japanese: *Rinzai Gigen*) (810/15–866/7) “have a shit/take a piss”¹² and *Dōgen’s* (1200–1253) “to know the self is to forget the self.”¹³ Most of his academic or semi-academic knowledge of Buddhism probably came, as his diaries and correspondence reveal, from his life-long friend D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), who wrote commentaries on selected Buddhist scriptures such as the *Diamond Sūtra* and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (Chinese: *Huayanjing*; Japanese: *Kegongyō*).¹⁴ Nishida’s exposition of the thought systems of Tiantai and Huayan is limited to a few references to “three-thousands worlds in one thought” (Chinese: *yiniansanqian*, Japanese: *ichinensanzen*), the “non-obstruction of the principle and phenomena” (Chinese: *shiliwuai*, Japanese: *jirimuge*), and the “non-obstruction among phenomena” (Chinese: *shishiwuai*, Japanese: *jijimuge*); and his description of the philosophical systems exposed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature (Chinese: *Banruoboluomijing*, Japanese: *Hannyagyō*) is limited to Suzuki’s phrase “logic of *sokushi*” (Chinese: *jifei*).

These observations raise a couple of crucial questions: What is the purpose of Nishida’s selective citation of Buddhist texts? What hermeneutical method does Nishida apply to these texts? In this article, I will explore Nishida’s usage of the above-mentioned Buddhist concepts. The goal of this study, however, is not to comment on or examine texts such as the *Diamond Sūtra* and the *Wumenguan* but rather to reveal Nishida’s philosophical strategy and agenda.

NISHIDA AND HUAYAN BUDDHISM

The exact relationship between Nishida and Huayan Buddhism is hard to discern. Nishida mentions the term “Huayan” only a few times

in his collected works, including his diaries and correspondence. In most of these cases, the term “Huayan” is accompanied by references to Tiantai Buddhism and functions to symbolize the thought of Chinese Buddhism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, or East Asian thought in general. Only on three occasions does Nishida actually refer to some of the key concepts representative of the philosophy of these Buddhist schools. In his lectures on the “Logical Structure of the Actual World,” he suggests Tiantai as a model for the principle of one-and-yet-many (Chinese: *yijiduo*, Japanese: *issokuta*) when he assigns to Tiantai the view that “the individual is the universal, the universal the individual, and the one is the world.”¹⁵ At the same time, he uses the main philosophical concepts attributed to Huayan Buddhism as a token of a philosophy of interconnectedness when he comments that “a lot of things relate to each other mutually in the relationship described by schools like Huayan.”¹⁶ In *The Problem of Japanese Culture (Nihon bunka no mondai)*,¹⁷ he attributes the concepts of the “non-obstruction among phenomena” and the notion of the “one-and-yet-all” (Chinese: *yijiyiqie*, Japanese: *issokuissai*) to Huayan Buddhism. Finally, in his letter of November 25, 1939, to Mutai Risaku (1890–1974), Nishida correlates “the Buddhist logic of one-and-yet-all all-and-yet-one” to “Huayan’s non-obstruction of individuals” and the notion of the “three thousand worlds in one thought” from Tiantai Buddhism to the “form of one-and-yet-many many-and-yet-one.”¹⁸

Nishida interprets Huayan thought in the light of his own philosophical terminology, including one of the key concepts of his later philosophy, “one-and-yet-many.” What Nishida fails to mention, however, is that the concept “one-and-yet-many” itself belongs to the Huayan tradition. To be exact, of its eighty-four occurrences in the *Taishō*, sixty-nine are to be found in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and its Huayan Buddhist commentaries; in addition, it appears eleven times in Tiantai Buddhist texts. Nishida, on the contrary, seems to trace the concept “one-and-yet-many” to Hermann Cohen (1842–1918). He first develops the various forms of the dialectic between the one and the many in his rendition of Cohen’s notion of the “Einheit der Vielheit” as “*ta no itsu*” in *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (Japanese: *Jikaku ni okeru chokkan to hansei*).¹⁹ Later, in his *The Fundamental Problem of Philosophy* (Japanese: *Tetsugaku no konpon mondai*)²⁰ and his *Philosophical Essays* (Japanese: *Tetsugaku ronbunshū*),²¹ he applies this concept to his philosophy of history. Nishida’s silence about the Buddhist origin of “one-and-yet-many” is extremely puzzling. Did he, against his usual practice, deliberately hide the origin of this key concept of his later philosophy or was he simply unaware of it?

Even more puzzling, however, is that most scholars choose not to comment on Nishida's oversight as well. Suetsuna Joichi introduces Nishida's notion of acting intuition into his discussion of Huayan thought²² and loosely implies a correlation between Nishida's self-identity of absolute contradictories and the Huayan view of the dharma worlds. Takemura takes Suetsuna's comments one step further and assumes a conceptual affinity between Nishida philosophy and the concept of mutual non-obstruction in Huayan Buddhism. Steve Odin, who has published on both Huayan Buddhism and Nishida philosophy, declares that their respective philosophies of time disclose major similarities.²³ Neither, however, refers to the occurrence of "one-and-yet-many" in both philosophical systems. Ōhashi Ryōsuke, a contemporary member of the Kyoto school, ventures so far as to say that "one-and-yet-many" constitutes a "philosophical formula that originated in the thought of Huayan."²⁴ Only Nakayama Nobuji points out that both Nishida and Huayan Buddhism use similar terminology, only to equate their respective philosophies, without exploring the link between their terminologies nor examining why Nishida failed to identify this link.²⁵

The question that needs to be addressed is: How does Nishida use Huayan thought? Nakayama and Odin identify Nishida's conception of "circular time" (Japanese: *enkanteki jikan*) as the link between Nishida philosophy and Huayan thought and suggest that the resemblance between these two thought systems lies in their common criticism of the linear conception of temporality in favor of the notion of simultaneity. While there are certainly affinities, terminological and otherwise, between these two philosophies, it seems to me, as I have argued elsewhere,²⁶ that Nishida does not use the concept of "circular time" to erase the notion of continuity or causality but rather to supplement an exclusively linear and causal conception of temporality and history with the aspect of discontinuity and free will. Rather, the textual evidence suggests that what intrigues Nishida about Huayan philosophy, or should I say, the concepts that he associated with Huayan thought, is that they express the dialectical dynamic of the historical world. To my knowledge, Nishida uses Huayan terminology almost exclusively to signify the dialectical relationship between individual phenomena and thus identifies the idea of the "non-obstruction among individuals" as the major intellectual achievement of Huayan Buddhism.

While, as Takemura points out, the terminological affinities between the Huayan concepts "*shishiwuai*" and "*shiliwuai*," on the one side, and Nishida's "mutual determination among individuals" and "mutual determination of individual and universal," on the other, are striking, it is interesting that Suetsuna, on whose work Takemura's

argument is based, does not share this sentiment. To put it more succinctly, it is almost surprising that even Suzuki and Suetsuna Joichi, two interpreters of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* who display an unabashed and above average sympathy for Nishida's cause, refrain from drawing quick connections between Nishida philosophy and Huayan thought. To be exact, they neither compare the conceptual system of Nishida to that of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* nor do they analyze Nishida's use of Huayan terminology. The reason for this hesitation seems to be twofold. First, the terms “*shishiwuai*” and “*shiliwuai*,” which Nishida identifies as the essence of Huayan thought, do not appear in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; when they do appear in the commentaries, their purpose is to negotiate the relationships among the various Buddha and Bodhisattva worlds. Second, and this seems to be more relevant for the present discussion, Nishida interprets all Huayan terminology exclusively in his own terms without any recourse to the language, thematic, or symbolism of either the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* or its commentators. It seems therefore appropriate to say that Nishida neither develops nor analyzes Huayan philosophy. While it may well be that he was, in some sense, influenced by the ideas of “*shishiwuai*” and “*shiliwuai*,” his writings do not indicate that he had any deeper academic interest in the philosophy of Huayan Buddhism.

Nishida's interest in Huayan terminology, despite its ideological side benefits,²⁷ is largely motivated by his desire to propose a non-dual worldview. Nishida is not interested in the soteriological and metaphysical questions raised by the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; rather, what is important to Nishida is to construct a conceptual framework that neither errs on the side of universalism nor on the side of individualism, neither on the side of absolutism nor on the side of relativism. To Nishida, the terminology of the mutual non-obstruction among individuals, on the one hand, and between individual and universal, on the other, constitutes a way of asserting the integrity of individual and universal without sacrificing their intimacy.²⁸ To this purpose, Nishida takes the concepts of “*shishiwuai*” and “*shiliwuai*” out of their original contexts and reinterprets them as “the world of one-and-yet-many, where I and Thou are formed in the dialectical universal” and where “unity and variety are one.”²⁹ Later in his career, when the notion of the dialectical universal had made way for the self-identity of the absolute contradictories, Nishida applies the Huayan terminology of the mutual non-obstruction of phenomenon and principle to his own self-identity of absolute contradictories. He explains “[i]n the principle of the self-identity of contradictories, the concepts of individuality and identity are unified; the truth of individual phenomena and the eternal truth are equally one. . . . There is no eternal truth independent of individual phenomena as there are

no individual phenomena apart from eternal truths.”³⁰ Elsewhere, he suggests that “the principle is the phenomenon and the phenomenon the principle.”³¹ Nishida thus lifts the phrases “*shishiwuai*” and “*shiliwuai*” out of their original contexts and introduces them seamlessly in his own system. In doing that, he interprets “*li*” as universal and the principle of oneness and “*shi*” as particular and the principle of individuality and manyness. While the concepts of “*shi*” and “*li*” may in some sense be applicable to the terminology of “individual” and “universal” and the issues it addresses, Nishida’s uncritical introduction of Huayan Buddhist concepts into what qualifies more or less as post-Kantian philosophy seems rather haphazard from a methodological perspective. On the positive side, Nishida does succeed in mapping out a non-dualist philosophy and in driving home his point of the non-duality of universal and individual. To negotiate these two principles, however, Nishida preferred the notion of “*sokuhi*” over the concepts he had gleaned from Huayan Buddhism.

THE LOGIC OF SOKUHI

Nishida discovered the notion of “*sokuhi*” late in his career. In fact, it appears only in three letters he wrote to Suzuki on March 11, March 18, and May 11 of 1945 and his last finished work, *The Logic of Basho and the Religious Worldview* (Japanese: *Basho no ronri to shūkyōteki sekaikan*).³² In his letters to Suzuki he identifies the logic of *sokuhi* as equivalent to the logic of self-identity of the absolute contradictories, and in his last finished opus, he uses it almost exclusively to describe the relationship between the absolute and the relative. In the following sentences, I will cite all occurrences of “*sokuhi*” in *The Logic of Basho* in order to exemplify Nishida’s reasons for using this term. This “logic” expresses that the absolute qua god “negates itself and exists in the world” or, to put it differently, “simultaneously exists and does not exist inside the world”³³; that god “constitutes the self-identity of the absolute contradictories that includes the negation of the absolute inside of itself”³⁴; that the absolute constitutes “that which includes absolute negation in itself and mediates itself as self-identity of absolute contradictories”³⁵; that “the absolute is absolute being insofar as it is absolute nothingness and remains in absolute rest because it moves absolutely”³⁶; that “in the self-identity of the absolute contradictories of self and the world, individual and totality all minds are the Buddha, all Buddhas are the individual,”³⁷ “all Buddhas and the individual are one”³⁸; and that the phrase “the mind is this Buddha and the Buddha is this mind” has to be understood as

“the self-identity of the absolute contradictories of mind and Buddha.”³⁹

While these comments are extremely terse and loaded with heavy-handed terminology, Nishida's main point is rather simple. In order to make Nishida's argument more intelligible, I would like to remind the reader that Nishida uses concepts such as “god” and “Buddha” merely to symbolize the absolute and terms such as “self” and “world” to designate the realm of the relative. Such a reading reveals that the topic of these citations is the relationship between the absolute and the relative. In short, Nishida tries to formulate a philosophy that does not define the absolute vis-à-vis, in other words, relative to, relativity. If the absolute were defined that way, it would cease to be absolute. Nishida needs the conception of the absolute that contains the relative as its negation inside itself in order to ground a non-dualism that does not reject dualism and thus falls into the very trap of dualism itself. In short, Nishida uses the term “*sokuhi*” to identify the relationship of the absolute to what is relative, the world to the self, and Buddha to the mind. Subsequently, the term “*sokuhi*” functions as the non-dual principle that allows Nishida to conceive of the absolute and the relative, the one and the many as neither separate nor identical and thus to construct a philosophy that eschews all forms of dualism.

Even though Nishida claims the *Diamond Sūtra* as the source for what he calls “the logic of *sokuhi*,” his version of this concept seems to differ significantly from its original. A first glance at, for example, Kumārajivā's (Chinese: *Jiumoluoshe*, Japanese: *Kumarajū*) translation of the *Diamond Sūtra* already discloses that in this text the term “*sokuhi*” does not function as a technical term but rather constitutes the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit “*saiva a*” (is not).⁴⁰ Accordingly, most sentences and passages that contain the expression “*sokuhi*” or a related phrase express some kind of negation. A closer reading of these passages reveals five different kinds of negation. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly explore these different types of negation in order to illustrate the way in which the term “*sokuhi*” is used in Kumārajivā's translation of the *Diamond Sūtra* and to underline the idiosyncracies of Nishida's rendition.

The first type contains simple negations such as “the Buddha said ‘the perfected wisdom is not perfected wisdom’⁴¹ and ‘the perfected body is not the perfected body.’”⁴² Taken out of context these passages are confounding and seem paradoxical. However, when read in the wider and original context of the *Diamond Sūtra*, they take on a different meaning. For example, the negations of the second type introduce an epistemological dimension to the simple negations of type 1. An example of such a negation is “[t]he Buddha explained that

views about the self, human beings, sentient beings, and longevity are not views about the self, human beings, sentient beings, and longevity; therefore we call them such.”⁴³ In short, type 2, which can be given the form “A is not A, therefore we call it A,” adds two significant aspects to the negations of type 1: the objects of the negations are philosophical positions; to be exact, views about selfhood and reality; further, this type of negation also comments on the nature of our views and philosophical positions; they are, to paraphrase a common Mahāyāna sentiment, “but names devoid of reality.”

The discussion of the remaining three types only reinforces these observations. Negations of the third type do not negate entities or construct contradictions but rectify mistaken or false views. This type includes comments such as “if bodhisattvas possess selves, persons, and sentient beings, they are not bodhisattvas”⁴⁴ and “the so-called Buddha-dharma is not the Buddha-dharma.”⁴⁵ While statements of type 1 may be formalized as “A is not A,” statements of the third type render the form “what is called ‘A’ is not A” or “if conceived such, A is not A.” In these passages, the author of the *Diamond Sūtra* corrects misconceptions the reader might have on central Buddhist topics such as Bodhisattvas and the Buddha-dharma. At the same time, it seems more important to the author to identify possible false assumptions on the part of the reader than to teach the correct view. Type four, which is exemplified by passages such as “what is sometimes referred to as ‘all dharmas’ are not all dharmas, therefore they are called ‘all dharmas,’”⁴⁶ takes type 3 one step further and comprises the quasi-syllogism of the form “what is referred to as A is not A, therefore it is called A.” Type 4 thus emphasizes the emptiness of and temporariness of all philosophical positions. Type 5, finally, provides the explanation as to why all positions are empty: Positions are empty because reality is ungraspable. As the *Sūtra* observes with regard to the totality of the cosmos: “The Buddha explained that the totality is not the totality; therefore we call it ‘totality.’ The totality is unexplainable.”⁴⁷

Finally, it is hard to imagine a discussion of Nishida’s adaptation of the term “*sokuhi*” that does not include Suzuki’s approach. Suzuki not only coins the term “logic of *sokuhi*,” he also gives it its logical form: “when we say A is A we mean that A is not A, therefore it is A.”⁴⁸ To formulate this logic, Suzuki creatively reinterprets the above-cited comment about the nature of perfected wisdom to read “the Buddha said that perfected wisdom is not perfected wisdom; we call it perfected wisdom.”⁴⁹ The central characteristic of the *Diamond Sūtra* is, to Suzuki, its paradoxical logic. He even uses the famous Zen saying “mountains are mountains, mountains are not mountains, mountains are really mountains”⁵⁰ to illustrate the logic of *sokuhi*. Overall, Suzuki

focuses on the applicability of the logic of *sokuhi* to Zen rather than on the *Diamond Sūtra* itself. His goal is to construct a “logic of the spirit,” and the logical structure of the self-identity of contradictories as well as “seated meditation” (Japanese: *zazen*). The result of his study is the famous formula “A is not A, therefore it is A.”

This short comparison between the Kumārajivā's translation of the *Diamond Sūtra*, Suzuki's logic of *sokuhi*, and its reinterpretation in Nishida's later philosophy reveals three different approaches. While Suzuki is interested in developing a “logic” based on the principle of contradiction, the *Diamond Sūtra* seems to be more interested in a correction of false views and what could be called a phenomenology of signification. If interpreted in such a way, the use of *sokuhi* in the *Diamond Sūtra* echoes the general Mahāyāna doctrine of emptiness (Sanskrit: *sūnyatā*). In addition, such an interpretation could also hint at nominalistic tendencies in the *Diamond Sūtra*; in other words, such an interpretation would evoke the general Mahāyāna correlation of emptiness and the criticisms of false views. This is not to deny the fact that the *Diamond Sūtra* contains paradoxes and logical contradictions, but the fact that the overall discourse seems to entail a criticism of false views for soteriological purposes does place the paradoxes in a context different from the logical contradiction “A equals not A.” Finally, the focus on the mediation between the transcendent and the immanent, between the absolute and relative gives Nishida a new and idiosyncratic interpretation of the logic of *sokuhi*.

Even though both Suzuki and Nishida not only use the phrase “the logic of *sokuhi*” but also equate it with the self-identity of absolute contradictories, they define these terms differently: the former uses these terms to indicate a logical contradiction, the latter the mediation between transcendence and immanence. It is for this reason that Nishida restricted his use of Suzuki's logic of *sokuhi* to the mere term, which he mostly paraphrased as the “*sokuhi* of the *hannya*”—the term “*hannya*” refers to the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature in general. Not only did Nishida ignore Suzuki's logical formula, but he also correlated the “logic of *hannya sokuhi*” with the “logic of *hannya* emptiness,” which, if pursued consistently, would bring him closer to the thought of the *Diamond Sūtra* than to Suzuki's interpretation thereof. Of course that does not mean that he imported the meaning of *sokuhi* given to it by the *Diamond Sūtra*. On the contrary, not only did he adopt Suzuki's treatment of “the logic of *sokuhi*” as a technical term, he also completely redefined it as the relationship between the transcendent and the immanent. However, to fully describe this relationship, the term “*sokuhi*,” or the logic of *sokuhi* does not suffice; instead, he coined phrases that suited his conception of this relationship more, namely, *byōjōtei* and *gyakutaiō*.⁵¹

THE DEPTH OF THE EVERYDAY

These terms “*byōjōtei*” and “*gyakutaiō*” are characteristic of, and central to, Nishida’s very late philosophy, which he develops in the second half of his *The Logic of Bashō*.⁵² Both of them constitute the most radical expressions of Nishida’s non-dualism; the former term referring to the non-dualism between the absolute and the relative, the latter to the non-dualism between transcendence and immanence. As Ueda Shizuteru suggests, “*gyakutaiō* expresses the religious relationship, *byōjōtei* the religious standpoint.”⁵³ However, the irony with regards to *gyakutaiō* and *byōjōtei* is that, despite the fact that they are frequently associated with Zen Buddhism and even the True Pure Land Buddhism,⁵⁴ they are, as Ueda and James Heisig have pointed out,⁵⁵ essentially Nishida’s own creations. Nishida himself suggests an affinity, if not an etymological linkage, between his *gyakutaiō* and Buddhism⁵⁶ as well as between *byōjōtei* and the variations of the term “everyday” in the Zen tradition. Ultimately, he seems to imply that both terms embody the spirit of Buddhism, or, at least, the spirit of selected Buddhist texts and ideas. However, since he merely invokes the Buddhist spirit for his term *gyakutaiō* but claims a Zen Buddhist origin of his term “*byōjōtei*,” I will focus on the latter in the remainder of this section. In particular, I will examine two cases from the *Wumenguan* and two passages from the *Linjilu*.

In the same sense in which the concept of “*byōjōtei*” is characteristic of his later philosophy, his use of it is symptomatic if not symbolic of his relationship with Buddhism. From its first occurrence in the second to last paragraph of “Empirical Science” (Japanese: *Keikenkagaku*) (1939) to its last occurrence in the last section of *The Logic of Bashō*, Nishida associates his term “*byōjōtei*” etymologically and semantically with two passages each from the *Wumenguan* and the *Linjilu*: “the everyday heart is the way”⁵⁷; “this mind is the Buddha”⁵⁸; “[t]he Buddha dharma is not useful nor does it accomplish anything; it constitutes nothing but the everyday and the ordinary; have a shit take a piss; put on your clothes, eat and drink, retire when tired”⁵⁹; and “a red lump of flesh contains the true person of no rank.”⁶⁰ Doing so, he claims the terms “*pingchangxin*” (Japanese: *byōjōshin*), “the everyday mind,” and “*pingchangwushi*” (Japanese: *byōjōbuji*), “the everyday and the ordinary,” as the source for his terminology, while, simultaneously, delineating his own terminology from them.

In “Empirical Science,” Nishida defines “*byōjōtei*” as the “foundational operation” of the world and of philosophy.⁶¹ In a second step he likens it to Nanquan Puyuan’s (Japanese: *Nanzen Fugan*) (748–834/5) “the everyday mind is the way” and not to the “everyday

mind” itself. The reason for this is, of course, that Nishida does not want to dissolve the “way” in the “everyday,” that means, the transcendent in the immanent. Similarly, Nishida supplements Linji’s “everydayness and ordinariness” of bodily functions, eating, etc., with phrases that assert that *byōjōtei* is transcendent-and-yet-immanent rather than merely immanent itself. In fact, he remarks that it would be “a big mistake” to identify “*byōjōtei*” as “indifference or lack of concern.”⁶² It is obvious that Nishida chooses his terminology of “*byōjōtei*” rather carefully. It evokes the aspect of everydayness but is not exhausted by it. The frequency with which Nishida cites Linji’s admonition to seek the Buddha-dharma in the basics of life, meals, sleep, and physical relief illustrates that Nishida was fascinated by the vulgarity of this everydayness that prevents an elevation of the absolute into utmost transcendence. At the same time, however, the depth of the everyday is embodied by the “religious heart” (Japanese: *shūkyōshin*) rather than by the everyday mind. In some sense, this depth of the everyday and the religious heart express two opposite aspects of it, the everyday and religion. This definition of *byōjōtei* recalls the Mahāyāna slogan *samsarā*-and-yet-*nirvāṇa* and the above-cited dictum of the *Diamond Sūtra*, “this mind is the Buddha, this Buddha is the mind.”

To illustrate Nishida’s hermeneutic, I would like to briefly introduce the passages he identifies as the “sources” of his *byōjōtei*. As inspiration for his notion of “*byōjōtei*,” Nishida mentions the nineteenth case of the *Wumenguan*.

Zhaozhou⁶³ asks Nanquan “what is the way?” Nanquan responds “the everyday mind is the way.” Zhaozhou asks “should I attempt to seek it?” Nanquan responds “if you attempt to seek it you will go off in the opposite direction.” Zhaozhou asks “how can I know the way if I do not strive towards it?” Nanquan responds “the way is not a matter of knowing or not-knowing. Knowing is delusion, not-knowing confusion. If you truly reach the way without any trace of doubt, you will reach an emptiness unlimited and vast. How can we search it in one way or the other.” Upon hearing those words Zhaozhou became enlightened.⁶⁴

On this *Wumen Huikai* (Japanese: *Mumon Ekai*) (1183–1260) comments that Nanquan did not have a good explanation to Zhaozhou’s question and suggests, in a subsequent poem, that if the mind is free of unnecessary thoughts, every season is enjoyable. Without a deeper analysis of the case and *Wumen*’s interpretation, it seems that Nishida leaves out major segments of this *kōan* (Chinese: *gongan*). There is, of course, the question of how enlightenment is reconcilable with the everyday mind, if its condition is lack of doubt and a mind free of unnecessary thought and if the goal or verification of this enlighten-

ment is a vast emptiness. Nishida also does not address the epistemological issue of the limits of knowledge, the question of intentionality even if it is the intention to reach *satori*, or, what Akizuki Ryōmin identifies at the real issue at stake, the question of self-cultivation.⁶⁵ Even if these questions were not central to the *kōan* itself, they would necessarily arise in Nishida's reading thereof.

In a similar vein Nishida interprets his other sources of *byōjōtei*. The thirtieth case of the *Wumenguan* presents a brief conversation between Mazu Daoyi (Japanese: *Basō Dōitsu*) (709–788) and Damei Fachang (Japanese: *Daibai Hōjō*) (752–839), in which the former responds to the latter's question "what is this Buddha" with "this mind is the Buddha." Wumen's comments on this case are rather ambiguous and point to an inherent soteriological conundrum. On the one hand, he suggests that comprehending these lines results in Buddhahood; on the other, he contends that a person of understanding would run away upon hearing these same words. His closing poem mirrors this ambivalence when he says that "asking what the Buddha is amounts to bowing down with stolen goods in one hand."⁶⁶ Nishida's use of the phrase, however, does not reflect this ambiguity but once again focuses on the non-duality of transcendence, symbolized by the Buddha, and immanence, symbolized by "this mind," without addressing the epistemological and soteriological issues this *kōan* raises.

The same is true in the case of Nishida's citations from the *Linjilu*. Interestingly enough, Nishida concludes that the comment "[t]he Buddha dharma is not useful nor does it accomplish anything; it constitutes nothing but the everyday and the ordinary" is not as non-dual as "the Buddha is this mind." In his opinion, it requires modification by means of statements such as "[t]he heart of the dharma has no form; it traverses the ten directions; when it is in the eye, we say we see; when it is in the ear, we say we hear" and "the wise person and the fool are one."⁶⁷ This, however, is puzzling because the author of the *Linjilu* himself follows up the above citation with a poetic version of Nishida's own corrective addendum when he observes "the fool laughs at us, wisdom knows this." This ambiguity, or, should I say, non-duality, of transcendence and immanence Nishida sees reflected in his second citation from the *Linjilu*, "the red lump of flesh contains the true person of no rank." In general the reading of these sections from the *Linjilu* serves Nishida as a source for his comments about the ambiguous, or even paradoxical, nature of the Buddha-dharma, the non-duality of which Nishida understood to be the "symbol of human life."⁶⁸ What he is interested in is simply and exclusively the fact that the words "the everyday mind is the way" seem to echo and symbolize his idea that the foundation of reality is immanent-and-yet-transcendent.

What is probably as significant is the fact that Nishida does not enter the discourse of the *kōans* he cites. Like in most *kōans*, the form of the text is dialogical—John McRae refers to *kōans* as encounter-dialogues⁶⁹—and the content describes the route of a disciple from doubt to understanding under the auspices of a presumably enlightened, or knowing, teacher. These encounter-dialogues are placed in a long tradition of encounter-dialogues and an intertextuality in which commentaries and presumed source texts are layered on top of each other. This intertextuality is especially evident in the case of the *Wumenguan* where you have three layers in the text—the case, *Wumen's* commentary, and a concluding poem—and an implicit fourth layer, namely, the content of the dialogue, which in most cases refers to some text, saying, or concept with relevance to the interlocutor's practice. Even though the literary genre of the second part of the *Linjilu*, "Instructing the Assembly," is more that of a sermon given to an assembly of practitioners, the *Linjilu* participates in this tradition of intertextuality, drawing on the same common tradition of texts and aphorisms. The section "Ascending to the Hall" does not only constitute the same style of encounter dialogue but also shares with the *Wumenguan* a similar *imaginaire*,⁷⁰ that is, a similar mythological context of the master-disciple encounter, the importance of lineage and the notion of dharma-tradition, and the quest for enlightenment. The latter may be defined as simple knowledge or as a life-altering experience of transformation. Yet, Nishida neither enters the *kōan* tradition, the encounter-dialogue, nor the discourse of doubt, transformation, and enlightenment. While it is possible to argue that the Zen tradition and the discourse on enlightenment is assumed in Nishida's text, an assumption that is hidden in the text cannot be used as a heuristic device. Ueda makes the case that Nishida's "I and Thou" (Japanese: *watakushi to nanji*) lends itself to *mondō*-like discourses.⁷¹ While it would be a valuable enterprise to construct such a philosophy of encounter-dialogue based on Nishida's dialectical if not dialogical model of knowledge, Nishida himself does not engage in this project.

CONCLUSION

It is abundantly clear that Nishida does not engage in any kind of exegesis, textual-critical, conceptual, or otherwise, of the Buddhist texts he cites; he does not even attempt to read the concepts he uses in their context. Rather, he uses sayings from memory or, to use his own image, he raids these texts for terms that echo his ideas, such as "the everyday heart is the way," "*saṃsarā*-and-yet-*nirvāṇa*," and "this

mind is the Buddha, Buddha is this mind,” or that he interprets in the light of his own philosophical terminology, such as Linji’s “everyday and ordinary” and the “mutual non-obstruction of phenomena” in Huayan thought. Nishida does not cite Buddhist ideas or texts to analyze, interpret, or apply them, but to illustrate his own philosophy and to claim the Buddhist tradition as his heritage. His hermeneutical method is selective and based on similarity by terminology, regardless of the historical or semiotic context. The primary reason for this identification is the conceptual affinity and kinship he felt, albeit without providing any argument in favor of it, between the fundamental paradigm of his later philosophy and key concepts and slogans of Mahāyāna Buddhist non-dualism. He was not interested in the different metaphysical and soteriological motivations and projects the authors of the *Diamond Sūtra*, the Huayan commentaries, the *Wumenguan*, and the *Linjilu* were engaged in; rather, he felt that these philosophical schools provided a terminology which, when applied independent from their original contexts and situations to his own conceptual framework, expressed the paradigm which he found most foundational to his philosophy.

Nevertheless, Nishida’s reading of Buddhist texts makes two fundamental contributions to the field of comparative philosophy. First, even though his methodology is fraught with problems, Nishida does introduce Buddhist terminology into the discourse of mainstream academic philosophy. Moreover, his hermeneutic creates a network of terminology, which, when developed carefully, can function as the model for an intercultural philosophy.⁷² In some small way, Nishida even applies Buddhist concepts to questions framed within academic philosophy and vice versa. Second, Nishida formulates a systematic non-dualism within the discourse of academic philosophy. Regardless of whether or not his non-dualism has an equivalent within the Buddhist traditions, this fact alone makes a critical reading of Nishida philosophy rewarding and relevant at the same time.

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ENDNOTES

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1. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 1–200.
2. Nishida outlined his agenda as the attempt “to explain everything by means of the concept ‘pure experience.’” Nishida kitarō, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 1, p. 4.

3. Nishida borrows this term from William James, however, not without significantly changing its meaning. To Nishida, pure experience denotes “direct experience” and “the unity of subjectivity and objectivity.”
4. Nishida admits that the term is too “psychologistic” (Japanese: *shinrishugiteki*).
5. Even though Nishida follows the Japanese convention to reserve the term “philosophy” (Japanese: *tetsugaku*) for the philosophical traditions of Western Europe and North America in general, he occasionally does employ the term “Buddhist philosophy” (Japanese: *būkkkyō tetsugaku*) (Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 12, pp. 363, 365, 366, 367 and vol. 16, p. 477).
6. T32n1666.
7. T08n0235.
8. T48n2005.
9. T47n1985.
10. Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō, edited and translated by Kōshirō Tamaki (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1993).
11. T83n2661.
12. Victor Sōgen Hori, *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Kōan Practice* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), p. 101.
13. Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō, vol. 1, p. 94.
14. T09n278.
15. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 14, p. 466.
16. *Ibid.*, vol. 14, p. 467.
17. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 12, pp. 275–385.
18. *Ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 92.
19. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 101. The one exception is a quick comment in his *Inquiry* that reality is “many and, at the same time, becomes one, one and, at the same time, becomes many” (*ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 69).
20. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 7.
21. *Ibid.*, vols. 8–11.
22. Suetsuna Joichi, “Sunshin sensei no omoide” in *Nishida kitarō: dōjida no kiroku*, edited by Shimomura Toratarō (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1971), pp. 201–204; *Kegonkyō no sekai* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1957), p. 113.
23. Steve Odin, *Process Metaphysics and Hua-yen Buddhism: A Critical Study of Cumulative Penetration vs. Interpenetration* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982).
24. Ōhashi Ryōsuke, “Nishida ni okeru issokuta” in *Issoku issai: nichidoku tetsugaku korokuiumu ronbunshū*, edited by Tsujimura Kōichi (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1986), pp. 163–180, p. 165.
25. Nakayama Nobuji, *Bukkyō to nishida tanabe tetsugaku* (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1979).
26. Gereon Kopf, *Beyond Identity* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), p. 161.
27. In *The Problem of Japanese Culture* and in “The Dialectical World” (Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 7, pp. 201–453), Nishida uses particularly the concepts of Huayan and Tiantai Buddhism that I discuss here in order to construct the quasi-entities of the “East” and the “West” and to argue that the role of Japan is to create a synthesis of these cultural antinomies. For a discussion of the problems inherent in this argument, see *Rude Awakenings*, edited by James Heisig and John Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
28. This word choice was inspired by Thomas P. Kasulis’ *Intimacy and Integrity* (Honolulu: Hawaii Press, 2002).
29. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 14, pp. 467–468.
30. *Ibid.*, vol. 10, pp. 413–14.
31. *Ibid.*, vol. 12, p. 368.
32. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, pp. 371–465.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 398.
34. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 405.
35. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 420.
36. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 423.
37. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 430.
38. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 431.

39. Ibid., vol. 11, p. 446.
40. Takemura Makio, *Nishida kitarō to bukkyō* (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 2002), p. 166.
41. T08n0235_p0750a14.
42. T08n0235_p0751c07.
43. T08n0235_p0752b18–20.
44. T08n0235_p0751a13–14.
45. T08n0235_p0749b25.
46. T08n0235_p0751b02–04.
47. T08n0235_p0752b12–14.
48. Suzuki Daisetsu, *Suzuki daisetsu zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968), vol. 5, p. 381.
49. Ibid. vol. 5, p. 380. Ikebe Ayumi has pointed that Suzuki’s version differs from Kumārajivā’s translation.
50. The full version is cited in Dōgen’s “Sansuikyō” (Dōgen’s, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 1, pp. 405–434).
51. Takemura goes so far as to declare these two terms the “pillars of Nishida’s philosophy of religion” (Takemura, *Nishida kitarō, to bukkyō*, p. 217).
52. While the term “*gyakutaiō*” occurs only in the last four sections of the *Logic of Bashō*, “*byōjōtei*” also occurs in the *Philosophical Essays* volumes three, four, and five.
53. Ueda Shizuteru, *Nishida kitarō to wa dare ka* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002), p. 251.
54. Ueda points out that Nishida himself attributes the term “*gyakutaiō*” to the Zen Buddhist tradition, to be exact, to the *Sayings Daitō Kokushi* (Japanese: *Daitōkokushigoroku*) (Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 11, pp. 409, 415, 421), and not to Pure Land Buddhism (Ueda, *Nishida kitarō to wa dare ka*, p. 249).
55. Ibid., p. 249. James Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p. 103.
56. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 11, p. 449.
57. Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 303–4, and vol. 11, p. 424. T48n2005_p0295b14.
58. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 11, p. 446. T48n2005_p0296c28.
59. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 333, 11:424, 446. T47n1985_p0498a16–18.
60. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 333. T47n1985_p0496c10–11. T48n2003_p0201b28-c01 (Chinese: *Biyānlù*, Japanese: *Hekiganroku*).
61. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 303.
62. Ibid., vol. 11, p. 424.
63. His full name is Zhaozhou Congshen (Japanese: Jōshū Jūshin) (778–897).
64. T48n2005_p0295b14–18.
65. Akizuki Ryōmin, *Mumonkan wo yomu* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2002).
66. T48n2005_p0297a06–07.
67. Nishida, *Nishida kitarō zenshū*, vol. 9, p. 333.
68. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 303.
69. John McRae, “The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism” in *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, edited by Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 46–74.
70. Mohammed Arkoun. Lecture on the *Fundamentals of Islam*. Temple University, Philadelphia, Fall 1989.
71. Ueda Shizuteru, 1986. “Zen ni okeru ‘issokuta’ to ‘mondō’” in *Issokuissai: nichidoku tetsugaku korokuūmu ronbunshū*, edited by Tsujimura Kōichi (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1986), pp. 123–135.
72. Rolf Elberfeld argues that Nishida philosophy provides the basis for “Interkulturelle Philosophie” as well as for a “Philosophie der Interkulturalität” (*Nishida kitarō (1870–1945): Moderne japanische Philosophie und die Frage nach der Interkulturalität* [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999]).

JAPANESE GLOSSARY

bensh ōh ōteki ippansha 弁証法的一般者	jijimuge 事事無礙	jirimuge 事理無礙
gyakutaiō 逆對應	junsui keiken 純粹經驗	kōan 公案
by ōj ōbuji 平常無事	kōiteki chokkan 行為的盲觀	mondō 問答
by ōj ōshin 平常心	sokuhi 即非	zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu 絕對矛盾的自己同一
by ōj ōtei 平常底		
ichinen sanzen 一念三千		
issokuta 一即多		
issokuissai 一即一切		

CHINESE GLOSSARY

jifei 即非	shishiwuai 事事無礙
pingchangwushi 平常無事	yiniansanqian 一念三千
pingchangxin 平常心	yijiduo 一即多
shiliwuai 事理無礙	yijiyiqie 一即一切