Ryukoku University Afrasian Research Centre

In Search of Non-Western International Relations Theory: The Kyoto School Revisited

非西洋型国際関係理論の可能性 —京都学派との関係において—

Symposium of the Japan Society for Intercultural Studies
12th Annual Conference

Edited by
Kosuke Shimizu, Masako Otaki, Takumi Honda and Tomomi Izawa

龍谷大学アフラシア多文化社会研究センター
Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University (Phase2)
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Omiya Campus, Ryukoku University

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PANEL PRESENTATIONS
Abstract

Karatani Kōjin, in his book, "Senzen” no Shikō ("Pre-War" Thinking), discusses the tensions, contradictions and aporias within the established notions of national and transnational “imagined communities” in the age of global capitalism. In the course of this discussion, Karatani touches in passing also on the political philosophy of Nishida Kitarō, and its relation with what Karatani calls a “Leibnizian logic.” In my paper, I will use Karatani’s remark on Nishida as a point of departure for a closer examination of this relationship, and its significance. The focus of this examination will lay in Nishida’s oxymoronic definition of his later philosophical stance as that of a “dialectical monadology.” By means of an analysis of this stance, and its logical conundrum, I will attempt to formulate a critique of Nishida’s later political philosophy, and of its cornerstone, i.e. Nishida’s notion of the nation. I will demonstrate, that the logic of this political philosophy has to be seen as the expression of a romantic disquiet in the face of the universalist claims of rationalism, and I will argue that Nishida’s philosophy is significant, not as a solution for the aporias of capitalist modernity, but rather as particularly striking ramification of the alienated conditions in capitalism.

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In this paper, I present some preliminary reconsiderations on the interconnection between Nishida Kitarō’s later logic and his political philosophy. These reconsiderations will form the core of an essay in which I intend to use Karatani Kōjin’s remarks concerning a certain “Leibniz-syndrome” in twentieth-century political thought as a starting point for a more in-depth inquiry into Nishida’s philosophy, as an expression of the contradictions and aporias of global capitalist modernity. Others have discussed, Nishida’s reading of Leibniz and the nexus between his logic and his political philosophy, before, and the word “reconsiderations” in my title indicates my dissatisfaction with the discussion thus far. However, at the present stage of my project, at which I am still struggling with analyzing my primary sources, I cannot do adequate justice to the existing research and confine myself to an attempt at
organizing my preliminary notes on some of the basic primary texts into a readable form (if not otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author).

* 

Karatani Kōjin (1994), in the first chapter, “Teikoku to Nēshon” (Empire and Nation) of his book, “Senzen” no Shikō (“Pre-War” Thinking), discusses the tensions, contradictions, and aporias within the established notions of national and transnational “imagined communities.” Later in this chapter, Karatani speaks about the significance of Luther’s translation of the Bible into the German vernacular and the subsequent reform of religion (such as the individualization of belief and the dissolution of transcendence by means of the privacy of inner language) in the emergence of a German national consciousness. In this context, Karatani also introduces Leibniz as a thinker, who, as Karatani points out, is known for his monadology and for his attempt at creating a universal sign language of logics. However, as Karatani remarks, these inventions were not merely philosophical endeavors, but have to be also regarded in relation to the attempt to form a logic capable of recreating European unity consequent to its disintegration caused by the religious schism. The monad, as Karatani writes, which mirrors the whole, is the image of a unity, within which “each monad (individual) is neither merely isolated, nor integrated into the whole in a totalitarian way” (Karatani 1994, 18-19). One can discover such a logic of a “soft empire” in the EU today, but it also existed in the 1930s, for example, in the writings of Paul Valéry, or, last but not least, in the political philosophy of Nishida Kitarō (Karatni 1994, 22). Karatani quotes a lengthy passage from the latter’s “Principle of the New World Order” (1945), which I condense slightly as follows:

… [T]he fall of the world into [a state of] fierce struggle was just inevitable. This is the case, because today, due to the advance of science, technology and economy, each state-building nation (kokka minzoku, Nishida’s rendering of the German word, Staatsvolk) has entered one single and tight global space. The only solution here is that each of them awakens to its global mission, that each of them remains in strict conformity with itself, and yet transcends itself and contributes to the formation of one global world. … Saying that each state-building nation transcends itself and contributes to the constitution of one world has nothing in common with any so called national autonomism such as that of Wilson’s League of Nations, according to which all nations are simply equal and recognize each other’s independence. That kind of world does not transcend the narrow horizon of the abstract world ideal of the 18th century. The current world war is proof enough of the fact that with this ideal, it is impossible to meet the requirements of the present day. Each state-building nation has grown out of its distinct historical ground and has its distinct world-historical mission, and therefore, each of them has a particular historical life. That all state-building nations … constitute one global world can only
mean that each of them transcends itself by first constituting a particular world of its own in accordance with its local traditions, and that then, due to the unification of these particular worlds, … the whole world as one global world [i.e., as a world of worlds, sekaiteki sekai] comes into existence. … This is the ultimate ideal of the historical development of humankind, and this ideal has to be the principle as well of the new world order the current war is calling upon us. Our country’s ideal, as it has manifested itself in the words, the whole world under a single roof (hakkōichiu), must have a similar meaning (Karatani 1994, 20-21; Nishida 1978-1980a, 430).

In the context of wartime Japan, as Karatani points out, Nishida’s notion of a “world of worlds” was not more than an exegesis of the ideology of Japanese imperialism. However, and regardless of its strong Hegelian taste, Nishida’s “Principle of the New World Order” is, at the same time, yet another manifestation of the Leibnizian ideal of a “soft empire,” as Karatani writes, before he concludes, “The Leibnizian model, as a ‘form,’ is always effective. Philosophically, as Althusser has pointed out, this is the case because this form as such does not have any meaning of its own. In this respect, any future philosophical signification of such a ‘community’ too can arguably only be a Leibnizian one. This applies already to the European Union, and a similar logic will be probably proposed in the case of the formation of an economic union of East Asia” (Karatani 1994, 21-22).

* Thus, Karatani, after having read into Leibniz’s logics a certain political intention, applies a reverse strategy when he divides Nishida’s “Principle” into an explicit political content and an implicit general logical form, which he then qua homology identifies as Leibnizian. Let us move away from discussing Karatani at this point and attempt a substantiation of his useful, yet vague, hint by further distilling this logical “essence” from Nishida’s earlier essay, “The Self-Identity and Continuity of the World” (1936); there, Nishida writes as follows:

If the many does exist, then there must be individual, independent things. If these are one, then they cannot be independent and individual. That the many is the one is a contradiction. … If something does exist, which as a real contradictory unity is identical with itself, then the individual has to be individual through and through, and the whole has to wholly be the whole. That the individual is individual through and through means that it determines itself and is not determined by others. That the whole is wholly the whole means that it encompasses and determines the individual beings, or at least that it mediates individuals with each other. ... In any case, continuity has to be thought of as the unity of the contradiction between the individual, independent things, and the universal, it has to be thought of as the self-identity of absolute contradictory things. ... In particular, Hegel’s dialectics have to be something like this (Nishida 1978-1980b, 7-8).
These lines highlight the difficulties Nishida faces in formulating a view that integrates the multitude vis-à-vis the unity of the world. These difficulties result from the interplay of two axiomatic presumptions: on the one hand, the presumption that there are individual things, which, as such, might seem to be rather unproblematic and evident, or, at the least, in accordance with our everyday experience; and, on the other hand, the presumption that, nevertheless, this fragmented and manifold reality is in fact a unity, and thus one. Under this second presumption of the unity and oneness of the world—which is not evident at all—the status of the individual becomes a problem. The unity and oneness of reality was Nishida’s point of departure in his first book, *Zen no Kenkyū* (An Inquiry into the Good) (Nishida 1911), where he tried to grasp what he calls “true reality” by means of his concepts of “immediate,” “pure,” and “religious experience.” However, the fact that allows us to distinguish the above quotation from Nishida’s earlier writings, in a study of his later philosophy, is that in the quotation, Nishida tries his luck with dialectics (a fact that is not apparent to the readers of his “Principle of the New World Order”). This shift toward dialectics might indicate his growing (and in a certain way more “this-worldly”) concern with the status of the individual vis-à-vis the universal, and thus, a more problematic understanding of the relationship between the two, so that we should consider specifying our rendering of Nishida’s question: how to logically and conceptually integrate the multitude vis-à-vis the unity of the world, in a way that is, however, not hierarchical and allows him to defend the status of the particular against the totalizing claims of the universal. This phrasing, indeed, puts a certain limit on the extent to which one can expect Nishida to have been a proponent of any empire, (even if it were a “soft” one) rather than a nationalist (or better still: perhaps he was a proponent of a “soft empire” precisely because he was a nationalist). Moreover, Nishida’s explicit reference to Hegel’s dialectics also limits the extent to which one can expect his logics to be really Leibnizian.

Thus, let us examine the details more closely.

* 

When Nishida discusses the question of what the individual actually is, then his reasoning occasionally oscillates between two thinkers: Aristotle and Leibniz. “I always think,” as Nishida writes, “that the one who defined the individual logically for the first time was, as a matter of fact, Aristotle. Leibniz’s definition of the individual too is, undoubtedly, based on the Aristotelian one” (Nishida 1978-1980c, 69-70). Thus, let me start with Aristotle, and then move on to Leibniz.

Aristotle’s name for the individual thing, “hypokaimenon,” means “the underlying,” that is, the “base,” or in other words, that what is “at the root.” In his *Metaphysics*, he explains, “-the hypokaimenon is that thing, of which all the rest is said, but which itself is not predicating something else.” According to Aristotle, the hypokaimenon is distinguished from the accidents, that is, the predicates attributed to it or its general properties, because it is the cause of these accidents, because, in contrast to these, it is an individual thing, and as such an individual thing, it is “separate” and “independent.” The hypokaimenon, accordingly, is the
individual thing as the “first essence”; logically speaking, it is the last subject of everything that can be predicated, and, ontologically speaking, it is the substance, that is, an independent being, which “carries” the secondary, accidental being and, in this sense, is “underlying” it (Aristotle 1991, 9, 376-377).

Let us examine Aristotle’s definition: if something universal (the predicate) is said about something individual—for example, “Aristotle was a teacher of Alexander the Great,” or “Aristotle was a human being,” or “A human being is a living being”—it means that the complete notion of the individual would result from the sum of all predicates that can possibly be attributed to it. However, a problem occurs here in that however many predicates one attributes, it seems as if, according to Aristotle’s own definition, the individual always has to remain separate from, and beyond, its own properties, and, thus, can never be reached by means of predication. Aristotle’s logic relates all predicates to the hypokaimenon, but the hypokaimenon as such seems to always remain in the dark beyond the horizon of predication, or, in other words, of language and thinking. Seen from this perspective of predication, it appears to be a kind of irrational leftover, and here, Nishida steps in; he concludes that Aristotle’s individual is a threshold value: “Aristotle’s individual is just something that has been defined right up to the utmost limit of the abstract universal” (Nishida 1978-1980d, 212). In this sense—that is to say, because the “individual, which is always the subject and never becomes a predicate must be that what transcended the abstract universal” (Nishida 1978-1980e, 356)—Nishida speaks of the individual also as the “transcendental subject.”

So far, so good. Yet, Aristotle’s hypokaimenon poses a problem not only with regard to the limits of predication, but also with regard to the status of the individual vis-à-vis the universals (the predicates). According to Aristotle, the individual is subsumed in the universals, and, therefore, the independence that Aristotle’s definition grants the individual in the first place is canceled out. If the individual shall be really independent and identical with itself, then it must be regarded as a thing that determines itself, or, in other words, it has to possess or contain within itself all the predicates that can possibly be attributed to it—and precisely at this point, Nishida brings Leibniz into play as follows: “Leibniz argues that it is not sufficient to define the individual by saying that it is the subject and never becomes a predicate. All predicates must be contained within the subject. That what can be thought of as something that causes everything that ever happens to it by itself and to which nothing ever happens because of something else, that is an individual” (Nishida 1978-1980c, 70). However, how can one possibly agree with this objection against Aristotle right after one has defined the individual as a “transcendental subject”? At this point, our exercise becomes somewhat complicated. In order to determine precisely where our problem lies, we should have a closer look at Leibniz’s views.

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We saw that Karatani considered Leibniz to be the thinker who, besides his monadology, is known for a project that Leibniz himself described as follows: “If one could find characters
and symbols, which are capable of expressing our thoughts as purely and as strictly as arithmetic expresses the numbers, or analytical geometry, the lines, then one obviously should be able to do with regard to all subjects, which are subject to reason, what one does in arithmetic and geometry” (Leibniz 1999a, 6), where, as Leibniz writes elsewhere, “every mistake of the calculus proves itself to be a mistake of thinking” (Leibniz 2000, 19). Karatani, as we have seen, regards this project as being driven also by the wish to restore European unity. In the first place, however, Leibniz’s project is driven by the very baroque intention to discover the language of a *scientia universalis*, namely, the universal language of calculating reason. As a result of this effort, Leibniz invented the logical calculus, the elements and combinations of which are represented by symbols, which stand only for themselves and do not signify anything else. Hence, the calculus “is valid not only for numbers and quantities, but also for other things” (Leibniz 1960, 68), such as, for example, the law of identity:

\[ A = A \]

If we interpret the letters of the calculus as numbers and quantities, then we have math; yet, if interpreted as concepts, then the calculus can also express, for example, Aristotelian syllogistics.

Leibniz’s disagreement with Aristotle, as underscored by Nishida in the aforementioned quotation, lies with the fact that concepts can be interpreted in two different ways, namely, either with regard to their *extent*, or with regard to their *intent*. Let us take, for example, the sentence (cf. Schupp 2003, 244-245): “All human beings are living beings.” In extensional interpretation, this means that all individuals, who come under the concept “human being,” are contained in the group of individuals, which comes under the more encompassing concept, “living being.” From the intentional point of view, however, a being, which is not a living being in the first place, can—impossibly—qualify as a human being. However, to be a living being is a prerequisite to being a human being. Thus, in intentional interpretation, the same sentence would rather mean that, by contrast, the concept of the “human being” always encompasses or “includes” that of the “living being.” Traditional, as well as modern, logics are biased in favor of the extensional point of view (*ibid.*). The logic of Leibniz is one of the exceptions, as the following passage from his *Metaphysische Abhandlung* might illustrate (this passage has probably informed Nishida’s aforementioned statement).

If several predicates can be attributed to one and the same subject, and if this subject itself is not a predicate of anything else, then it is probably correct to call this subject an individual substance; but this is not sufficient, such an explanation is just an explanation of the word. Accordingly, one has to consider what it means that something can truly be attributed to a certain subject. As a matter of fact, every true judgment is grounded in the nature of things, and if a sentence is not identical, that is,
if the predicate is not explicitly included in the subject, then it has to be at the least virtually included in it. The philosophers call this, in esse (Leibniz 1991, 17).

Therefore, as Leibniz continues, the subject always has to include the predicate, so that somebody, who comprehends the subject completely, could also decide if a certain predicate can be attributed to it or not. Accordingly, the “essence of a complete substance, or subject, respectively, consists in a concept so complete that it would be possible to comprehend and deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which this concept belongs” (ibid., 17-18). In other words, Leibniz does not distinguish between necessary judgments such as “the sum of the angles of the triangle is 180 degrees” and a contingent one such as “Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great.” Indeed, a limited line of argumentation would suffice in order to prove the law of Pythagoras, whereas the line of argumentation would have to be endless in the case of a contingent statement (cf. Schupp 2003, 252). The difference, however, is not a fundamental one, as Leibniz would argue, but one that simply derives from the limitations of our cognitive faculties:

If, on the other hand, God conceives the individual concept [...] of Alexander, then He would see therein at the same time the ground of, and the cause for, all predicates that really can be attributed to him—for example, that he will conquer Darius and Porus; he would even know a priori (and not only from experience), if he died a natural death or by poison, which we can only know from history. And if we consider properly how everything is related, then one can say, that in Alexander’s soul are always repercussions of everything which will ever happen to him, and even traces of each and everything that ever takes place in the universe (Leibniz 1991, 18).

Leibniz’s name for such an individual substance is “monad.” The monad is considered to be indivisible, and thus, has to have no extension. Since a monad has no extension, it must be disembodied and spiritual. Moreover, as an absolute, independent substance, it is “windowless,” that is to say, no determination can emerge from, or enter into, a monad. Monads, nevertheless, are in a permanent process of change, driven by an inner urge to achieve completeness (cf. Leibniz 1982a, 27-31). In this process, each monad experiences the restrictions imposed on it by all the others, and thus, perceives its relation to them like a geometrical point at which countless angles converge. That a monad is “windowless” but, nevertheless, related to all others and “knows” their states, means, as Leibnitz writes, “that every monad is a living mirror, which is capable of inner activity, reflects the universe from its own point of view, and is organized in the same way as the universe” (Leibniz 1982b, 5). This universe, that is, the world as a whole, is like a puzzle composed of monads, and thus far, the formal resemblance between this puzzle and Nishida’s above notion of the nations as “distinct worlds of their own,” which are “in strict conformity with themselves” and yet constitute a “global world” (cf. the above quotation from Nishida’s “Principle of the New
World Order”), is, indeed, quite striking. I say “thus far” since we still have to add dialectics to the picture.

* 

Graph

\[
\begin{align*}
M & \text{ i.e. } A = E \\
\text{m} & \text{ i.e. } a = e \\
E & = \sqrt{M} \\
& \text{(Absolute contradictory self-identity)} \\
A & = -\sqrt{M} \\
& \text{(Einzelmäßigkeit)} \\
& \text{(Einzelbestimmung)} \\
& \text{(Allgemeinbestimmung)}
\end{align*}
\]

Nishida’s interest in Leibniz developed in the 1920s, and subsequently, he refers frequently to the latter. Eventually, Nishida referred to his own philosophy as a “dialectical monadology” (cf. for example, Nishida 1978-1980d, 96); and perhaps, it was his study of Leibniz’s works that also motivated Nishida to append “graphical explanations” to a couple of his later philosophical essays. Leibniz occasionally illustrated his own logical considerations by means of the so-called “Eulerian Circles” (Eulersche Kreise), and we can find something similar in Nishida’s collections of philosophical essays as well. The following graph is a more complex example of such graphical explanations (Nishida 1978-1980f, 221).

At first glance, instead of enhancing our understanding of the matter in question, this illustration might be rather discouraging. However, it presents this whole matter in a compact form, and its main elements will be discussed in the following pages. Let us start with Nishida’s own explanation of the graph:

In light of the above graph, for the first time a world becomes thinkable in which the independent individuals affect each other. A world of individual beings \([m, \text{ arguably for monad}]\) affecting each other must have this logical structure. This is what I call a “dialectical universal.” Whatever kind of real world \([M_1, 2, 3, \ldots, \text{ for example, the “world” of human beings, of mammals, of living beings \ldots}]\) we may conceive of, we always have to think of it as being an aspect of the dialectical world \([M]\). This world is… the world of historical reality. This world… has its poles in the direction
of self-determination of the individual, E, as well as in the direction of self-determination of the universal, A (ibid.).

This explanation of Nishida’s graph can be read as a paraphrase of the above quote on page three of this paper: “If something does exist, which as a real contradictory unity is identical with itself, then the individual has to be individual through and through, and the whole has to wholly be the whole … it has to be thought of as the self-identity of absolute contradictory things,” and so on. In light of such statements, however, it is obvious that Nishida, when designating his own philosophy as a “dialectical monadology,” not only expresses his intellectual indebtedness to Leibniz, but underscores, at the same time, the difference between his point of view and that of Leibniz. First, Nishida’s world, in which everything real is a coincidence of the two contradictory principles of the “self-determination of the individual” (in the illustration, E, from Einzelbestimmung) on the one hand and the “self-determination of the universal” (A, from Allgemeinbestimmung) on the other, seems to be fundamentally at odds with Leibniz’s concept of truth, according to which “we assess everything as false, which contains a contradiction, and as true everything, which is opposed to falsehood, that is, to that, which is contradictory” (Leibniz 1982a, 41). This is one of Leibniz’s renderings of Aristotle’s law of non-contradiction.

Leibniz’s interpretation of the law of non-contradiction is mainly concerned with the relation between subject and predicate in a proposition, and in this respect, it is different from the classical Aristotelian one; however, this difference is not of interest to us. At this point, three things are important: (i) that the law of non-contradiction presupposes a strict ontological dualism (such as subject and predicate and self and other); (ii) that the law of non-contradiction is a derivative of the law of identity (A = A); and, last but not least, (iii) that this law is the essence of Leibniz’s monadology (and the ultimate reason why the monads have to be “windowless”). According to Leibniz, identity is the identity of the indistinguishable, or, in other words, the indistinguishableness of the identical, and hence, two otherwise completely identical things are still two distinct things and therefore not identical. Identity, thus, is always self-identity, in the strict tautological sense of the expression A = A. A seasoned dialectician’s views about this might become clear in light of the following remark, which Hegel adds to arguably the most famous chapter of his Greater Logic:

In this remark, I will have a closer look at identity as the law of identity, which is commonly referred to as the most fundamental law of thinking. This law in its positive expression, \( A = A \), is, first of all, not more than the expression of the void tautology. Therefore, it has been rightly stated that this law of thinking is without content and does not get us any further. Thus, it is the void identity, to which those adhere, who, as such, take it as something true, and who always claim that the identity is not the difference, but that identity and difference are different. They
don’t realize that they, already by claiming this, say that identity is something different... (Hegel 1969, 41).

Leibniz is one of those, and accordingly, seen from a Leibnizian point of view, such a thing as a “dialectical monadology” is by itself a contradiction in terms, and, arguably, as nonsensical as a Zen-Buddhist kōan. Of course, Nishida did not regard himself as an “anti-Leibnizian”. Otherwise, he would not have called his own philosophy a “dialectical monadology”; and yet, not only does he not hesitate to call his monadology “dialectical,” he also does so with an explicit reference to Hegel: “Leibniz’s world of pre-established harmony must be Hegel’s world of the dynamic idea” (Nishida 1978-1980c, 94).

* The problem that Leibniz’s model poses for Nishida is the fact that it allows for the monadic independence of individuals, but not for any real interaction or “co-operation” between them. As windowless as monads are, they are capable of an “inner activity,” but not of really “affecting each other,” as required by Nishida’s aforementioned graphical explanation. Leibniz’s monads, as Nishida writes, “are merely intellectual and therefore have no effects. But something which has no effect is not a real individual” (ibid., 101). Kant points this out in criticizing Leibniz’s rationalist lack of empirical sense as follows:

Leibniz’s monadology has no other reason, than that this philosopher thought of the difference between inside and outside only in relation to the intellect. The substances as such must have something internal (etwas Inneres), which is free from all external circumstances, and, accordingly, also from composition. Thus, the one-fold, singular, uncomplex (das Einfache) is the basis of the interior of the things as they are. The interior of their condition (das Innere ihres Zustandes), however, cannot be position, shape, contact, or movement either (because all of these determinations are external relations), and so, we can attribute to the substances no other inner condition than that by which we determine our own purpose (Sinn) internally, namely, the condition of the perceptions (Vorstellungen). This way, the monads were made up, which are supposed to be the elements out of which the universe is built, but the active power of which consist only in perceptions, so that they are effective only within themselves. For the same reason, however, his principium of the possible community of the substances could have only been a pre-established harmony, and not any physical influence. ... (Kant 1968, 295).

The term “pre-established harmony” is Leibniz’s answer to the question of understanding how and why the “windowless” monads can serve (like the stones of a mosaic) as the building blocks of the world as a whole, and in his Théodizee, Leibniz defends this mosaic as chosen by God as the best of all possible worlds (see also Leibniz 1982a, 51-53).
Nishida’s “dialectical universal,” on the other hand, is supposed to exist without such an intervention from God. In contrast to Leibniz’s world, Nishida’s “dialectical universal” is meant to be “not a world of pre-established harmony, but a world that creates itself,” and in this respect, he also distinguishes his “dialectical monadology” from that of Leibniz’s by calling his own a “creative” (sôzôteki) one (Nishida 1978-1980c, 96-97). I wonder, however, if Nishida does justice to Leibniz, whose God, arguably, is not much more than a concession to his contemporaries’ expectations. Often enough, Leibniz does not seem to require God at all, but contents himself with an almost Darwinist “metaphysical mechanism” owing to which only the strongest and fittest of everything that is possible becomes real: “From here, one can perfectly understand in which way a divine mathematics or a metaphysical mechanism is at work. ... In this way, a world emerges, which gives rise to the most ample production of what is possible” (Leibniz 1966, 42-43). Indeed, as a “metaphysical mechanism,” or a “divine mathematics,” God has almost completely dissolved into pure abstraction and is needed only as a sufficient reason as to why there is something in the first place and not just nothing (cf. Schupp 2003, 259). The principium rationis sufficientis is yet another inalienable article of the rationalist creed, and since God can serve as a sufficient reason for practically everything, other rationalists eventually came up with some proof for the existence of God (cf. ibid., 260). God—or “divine mathematics”—is the mortar, so to speak, that keeps the stones of Leibniz’s monadic mosaic together and in place, without really being part of the mosaic.

In Nishida’s aforementioned graph, we find a broken line in place of God. It represents the “universal of all universals” (the extensional “pole” of Nishida’s world), which is always predicate and never becomes a subject. Since it never becomes subject to any predication, it remains as transcendent to predication as the already mentioned “transcendental subject” (the intentional “pole” of Nishida’s world), and accordingly, Nishida also calls it the “transcendental predicate.” As the “universal of all universals,” which contains all other universals and, thus, can never be contained itself, it must be vast and empty in an absolute sense (cf. for example, Nishida 1978-1980g, 272-289). Therefore, Nishida, in a certain period of the unfolding of his philosophy, also spoke of it as an “absolute nothingness” and occasionally insinuated a connection between this concept and certain Buddhist ideas. He even promoted it as a unique contribution of the “East” to the “Western” tradition of philosophy, which, as he declared, conceived of the world from the standpoint of “Being” instead (cf. Nishida 1978-1980h, 429-430). The nimbus of a putative “Eastern-ness” of Nishida’s philosophy has met, and still meets, the expectations and desires of many of his readers, who stare more or less exclusively into the abyss of this “Eastern nothingness,” forgetting, not only that its putative Eastern-ness was invented on the stage of global modernity, but also that this nothingness is only one of two “poles” in between which Nishida’s world “creates itself” (see the above graph). Nishida’s main concern is this real, auto-poetical “world of individual beings affecting each other.” As the “transcendental subject” that is not more than an infinitesimal point, and as real as the zero in the center of Nishida’s graph, the infinite “universal of all universals” too, is a limit value. It is not part of
the “real world,” and hence, in Nishida’s graph, its horizon is marked not by another continuous line but merely by a broken one. Similar to the other pole of the “transcendental subject,” language and reason can approach it asymptotically but never reach it, and thus, it can be postulated but never known objectively. For this reason, one might feel tempted to see in Nishida an anti-rationalist. Yet, as Nishida argues, reason itself dictates the postulation of this other pole, so that between the two of them, the logical matrix can unfold itself, in which everything real, including language and reason, must be logically “rooted” (cf. the graph, $\sqrt{-1}$). Thus, this other pole, which is as empty and abstract as Leibniz’s “divine mathematics,” is Nishida’s logical *conditio sine qua non* and his sufficient reason, and hence, one might argue that Nishida was perhaps not as much of an anti-rationalist as I have just insinuated. Perhaps, he was both romantic and rationalist at the same time and, thus, as self-contradictory as the term “dialectical monadology.”

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I have highlighted how far Nishida’s “monadology,” which according to Nishida himself is rather “like Hegel’s dialectics,” is at odds with Leibniz’s monadology. However, this is just one side of the problem. We also have to understand how far Nishida’s “dialectical monadology,” as a “monadology,” is at odds with Hegel’s dialectics. In fact, Nishida, who on the one hand criticizes Leibniz’s monadological incapability to grasp the world “dialectically,” on the other hand criticizes Hegel’s dialectics and argues “monadologically” that in light of Hegel’s logic “the true individual is inconceivable” (Nishida 1978-1980i, 447). Hegel’s notion of the “identity of the identical and the non-identical” overcomes the dualism of A and non-A. Yet, Hegel presumes knowledge as the absolute (the “absolute idea” of Hegel’s *Logic*), the unfolding of which is governed by a strict teleology, which does not allow for grasping the relation of the many and the one in any other way than that of a logical subsumption of the former into the latter. Hegel, as Adorno complains, “presupposes from the start positivity as all-comprehensibility,” and in the end “he rakes in the prey of the primacy of logics over the meta-logical” (Adorno 1997, 162); such a standpoint of positivity, of Being, as Nishida points out, “does not represent the logic of the real historical world” (Nishida 1978-1980i, 447) either. In contrast to Hegel’s system, Nishida’s “historical world” is designed as an open, infinite, a-genetic, and a-teleological “place” (*basho*), which allows the individual beings, just as they are, to relate to each other by contradicting each other. “A and B exist independently from each other,” as Nishida points out (emphasis added), and he continues, “therefore, correctly speaking, neither does A exist due to A itself, nor B due to B itself. A and B do not exist without being related to each other. A exists due to the fact that it is in opposition to B, and B exists due to the fact that it is in opposition to A” (Nishida 1978-1980b, 88). We can probably translate this statement of Nishida into the following formula, thereby using one of the symbols in the legend to Nishida’s aforementioned “graphical explanation”: 

\[
\begin{align*}
\end{align*}
\]
\[(A = A) \equiv (B = B)\]

I could have used the symbol \(\leftrightarrow\) instead of \(\equiv\), but in the above graph, Nishida uses the latter. In propositional logics, both symbols signify a so-called material equivalence and have to be read as “if, and only if”; hence, the calculus reads “A is A, if, and only if B is B (and vice versa).” I think this formula makes it easier to grasp Nishida’s objective. He sides with Hegel to overcome the Leibnizian model, according to which \(A = A\), and \(B = B\), and the only possible relation between the two is that of a prefab harmony, fixed and determined by the intervention of an artificial, rationalist deus ex machina. Yet, on the other hand, he sides with Leibniz, to prevent his “dialectics” from taking off and forsaking the independence and self-identity of the individual. \(A\) and \(B\) relate to, and “affirm” each other, and they constitute and “affirm” the “world” by contradicting or “negating” each other and the “world”; they contradict each other and the “world” precisely because they are independent and self-identical individuals, and they are independent and self-identical individuals precisely because they contradict each other and the “world.” Thus, Nishida’s “world” is not dialectical in the strict sense, but rather a sort of coincidentia oppositorum, which does not overcome, but rather confirms and emphasizes the difference of identity and difference and the abovementioned implications of the law of contradiction, namely, the ontological dualism of subject and predicate and self and other, among others. “Each monad” as Nishida writes, “originates itself by expressing itself; and yet, it expresses itself by negating itself and expressing the world. The monads are thus co-originating, and form the world’s perspectives; they form the world interexpressively through their own mutual negation and affirmation” (Nishida 1987, 58).

* Nishida’s point of view poses several philosophical problems that need to be addressed urgently. Yet, I think we have eventually done enough work to follow Nishida on his descent from the wintry plateau of logical abstraction back down into the depressions of political philosophy. These depressions, we should remind ourselves, were particularly depressing at a time when the modern capitalist Japanese state, like fascist Germany or Italy, externalized its internal economic and social contradictions and conflicts ideologically by presenting itself as a young, global revolutionary, facing the unjust and out-dated world order of the old, “bourgeois” Anglo-American capitalist democracies. Accordingly, many intellectuals also embraced the war as healthy refreshment for an allegedly decadent, disintegrating modern Japanese society. This, in summary, is the context of Nishida’s above quoted “Principles of the New World Order.”

Nishida’s frequent use of the word “self-negation” may raise the expectation that any political order that he could possibly have envisioned must be one based on selfless mutual “affirmation” and respect, as harmonious and peaceful as life in a Zen-Buddhist monastery. Yet, in light of the work we have done so far, it should not surprise us too much that such
expectations do not materialize. They actually evaporate completely in light of statements such as the following passage from a text in which Nishida, for the first time, uses Tanabe Hajime’s term “species” (shu), which in Nishida’s later writings, serves as the terminus technicus for “minzoku” or People (in the sense of the German word, volk), emphasizing “gemainshafte” or community (German: gemeinschaft) as opposed to “shakai,” society. Nishida writes as follows:

What I call world is not an abstract, universal world of world citizens. To become individual (koseiteki) does not mean to become an individual person (kojinteki). Reality is in every respect determined, and yet, historical reality exists where the self contains within itself self-negation, and transcends itself, and goes from [one] reality to [another] reality, and this can only mean that in every respect a species asserts itself from its own standpoint as a species, and that within the same environment multiple species oppose each other and struggle with each other. This is what I call the world of historical reality. The world is a place of contradictory self-identity, where the one is the many, and the many is the one. For this reason, I understand the present day, which is commonly regarded as the most nationalist period of history, as the most international one. Never before was there a period as real as our own. Because the world is real, every country has to be nationalist. Today, the world is not outside of the country, but inside of it. To say that the world is just outside is like saying that there is no world at all. Once, Rome’s conquest turned Europe into a singular world. Today, one can say that British capitalism has turned the world into a singular world. To become individual (koseiteki) does not mean to become particular (tokushuteki). It means to become, in historical reality, a bearer of the times. This, however, does not mean to lose one’s particularity, but to make one’s particularity truly particular, that is, to become a living species. One can think of the particular as the concrete, but something truly concrete and particular must embrace self-negation, that is to say, it has to be individual (koseiteki). Individuality is a quality, which only those have who determine themselves dialectically, it is the power of living beings. As long as one merely faces other, unrelated persons as intellectual objects (chiteki taisho), then individuality too is not more than just an object of understanding (ryōkai no taisho). Yet, individuality is a power, which is at work within the self. One may regard the self as being merely speculative (shiiteki), but, in any case, it is the formative function (keisei sayō), which is at work within the historical, corporeal self (Nishida 1978-1980j, 519-520).

I have quoted at length because I think that this passage serves as a stable bridge between our previous analysis of Nishida’s “dialectical monadology” and his initially quoted “Principles of the New World Order.” First, Nishida’s distinction between a merely abstract, merely “intellectual” individuality on the one hand and the true individuality of a “living species” on the other clearly resonates with his previous critique of Leibniz’s monads as
being “merely intellectual” and therefore having “no effects.” This distinction also underpins Nishida’s critique at the beginning of this passage of the notion of an “abstract, universal world of world citizens,” which, again, resonates with his critique in his “Principles” of Wilson’s League of Nations, “according to which all nations are simply equal and recognize each other’s independence. That kind of world does not transcend the narrow horizon of the abstract world ideal of the eighteenth century,” namely, the horizon of rationalism and of the Enlightenment. Furthermore, we can clearly understand here what “self-negation” and “affirmation” of the other really mean, namely, to end one’s eighteenth century style “windowless” existence, to crack one’s shell, to go out, and to become a true “historical, corporeal self” by engaging and grappling with the real world, which is a dialectical battlefield, on which “species and species don’t connect immediately. Between them there is always only struggle (tōsō). ... The historical world as contradictory self-identity is a world of struggle (tōsō no sekai), in which species and species wrestle with each other for ever,” as Nishida confirms (1978-1980k, 320). In addition, elsewhere he writes, “Heraklitus says that opposite things unite, that from difference, the most beautiful harmony arises, and that war is the father of all things. ... In the self-identity of completely diverging, oppositional things, in disharmonious harmony: there is life, and the appearance of this disharmonious harmony, of this contradictory self-identity, is the species. In the mutual opposition and conflict of individual versus individual, the formation of the species takes place” (Nishida 1978-1980c, 100-101).

I said earlier that Leibniz’s “metaphysical mechanism” seems to give the Leibnizian universe a certain Darwinian spin, and, arguably, something similar can be said about Nishida’s “historical world.” Alternatively, one might think of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand,” which inspired Darwin’s theory. In any case, Nishida’s “world” is a “Heraclitean world,” as he himself repeatedly emphasizes, and, as I would like to add, a pretty Hegelian one as well: “a volk ... as a particular, individual entity ... is exclusive of other, similar individuals,” and for this reason, “the conflict between them becomes a relationship of violence, a state of war,” as Hegel asserts in his argument against Kant’s idea of a “league of princes” for achieving a state of “eternal peace” (Hegel 1986, 345-346). Of course, Heraclitus’ “war” is just a metaphor, and Nishida’s “struggle” too does not necessarily have to be interpreted as physical war. Yet, it certainly does not imply any Kantian League of Nations either (cf. the preamble of the League) or any order based on what Nishida’s disciple Nishitani Keiji occasionally called the “dubious ideal” of a unity of individuals respecting each other in their freedom and equality: “the recognition of the freedom of the other ... has in mind only the empty, abstract ‘human being,’ respectively the empty abstract ‘nation’ ... Accordingly, any such order of freedom and equality must remain merely formal” (Kōsaka 1943, 84). Such a merely formal, artificial order, as Nishida points out in his “Principle,” has no effect on reality. His own “new world order,” by contrast, is supposed to be one that emerges spontaneously and organically out of the natural “struggle” and the free, unhampered interplay of the internal “powers” and inner potentials of the “living species”; this order, as I would like to conclude, is quite a romantic and utterly reactionary political vision. This, however, probably also
explains the popularity, which Nishida enjoys today, especially in certain neo-romantic academic circles, which, in the shadow of the neo-liberal morph of global capitalism, are likewise obsessed with “cultural difference” and “identity.” Reactionary times feature reactionary ideologies.

References


Abstract

In this paper, I shall examine how Nishida Kitarō constructed his “political” logic which worked to eliminate “politics.” According to my understanding, although Nishida grasped the moment of “contradiction” (mujun) which should make “politics” occur, he could not problematise the “politics” itself properly in his political or politico-cultural philosophy. To put it more concretely, positing culture as a totality which could subsume individuals, Nishida did not pay attention to conflicts or antagonism which would happen in the contradictory relationship between totality (or unity) and individuality. This is the elimination of politics, and this elimination was underpinned by the philosophisation of culture as an a-political principle which mediated and unified individuals despite their differences. Then, Nishida discussed the emergence of a meta-culture which could mediate differences between each culture and therefore sustain multi-cultural international order, and argued that particularly Japanese culture could play this role. Finally, his politico-cultural philosophy intersected with the political discourse of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere in which Japanese culture and Japanese National Polity were glorified as the central principle. I will elucidate these problematiques by looking at the topics “tekhnē” (gijutsu), which Nishida discussed as a key-concept in the process of subjectivation.

Introduction

Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) is one of the most contentious philosophers because of his involvement with war-time politics. He published politico-philosophical works, such as “The Problem of Japanese Culture” (Nihon Bunka no Mondai) (Nishida 2004b) and “The Principle of the World New Order” (Sekai Shin-chitsujo no Genri) (Nishida 2005), which could be interpreted as glorifications of the Emperor-centred Japanese culture (or Japanese spirit) and the ideology of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (Dai-tōa kyōei-ken). Furthermore, his disciples, the so-called thinkers of the “Kyoto School” (Kyoto gakuha), actively addressed the necessity to overcome the “imperialistic” Western modernity through the war waged by Japan. In particular, they participated in the symposium sponsored by Chūō kōron, which
played a crucial role in spreading the dictum of “Overcoming Modernity” (Kindai no Chōkoku). For example, Nishitani Keiji, a senior member of the Kyoto School, argued that the Western imperialistic subjectivity could be overcome only by the subjectivity based on the traditional Oriental philosophy of “nothingness” (Mu-teki shutai), and this was precisely the purpose of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (Nishitani 1979). The notion of “nothingness” (Mu) was clearly conceived under the strong influence of Nishida’s philosophy. As a scholar of Chinese literature, Takeuchi Yoshimi, argues (Takeuchi 1979, 274) that “Overcoming Modernity” was a buzzword that strongly appealed to intellectuals because, as the critic Yamada Munemutsu points out (Yamada 1975, 65-67), the discourse of “Overcoming Modernity” provided many students with a compelling excuse to resolve their internal struggle with the question, “Why should I go to the battlefield?” by legitimating the war waged by the Japanese as being for the emancipation of Asian countries from the modern Western imperialist powers.

Nishida has been denounced as an accomplice of the wartime ideologues, such as ultra-nationalists (chō-kokka-shugi sha), militarists, or Asianists (Ajia-shugi sha). By the same token, there have also been many attempts by the followers of Nishida and members of the Kyoto School to refute such denouncements. His followers argue that Nishida’s intention was not to justify ultra-nationalist and militarist ideology, but rather to try to dissent from them. According to them, although Nishida shared the same ideological terms, such as Shin-chitsujo (New Order), Hakkōichiu (the Eight Corners of the World under One Roof) or Kōdō (Imperial Way), with ultra-nationalists or militarists, the reason why Nishida used these terms was that he tried to modify the direction in which Japan was forced to go by them, re-interpreting dominant political concepts from his philosophical standpoint. This is the so-called semantic “Tug of War” (Imi no sodatsu-sen), referred to by Ueda Shizuteru (Ueda 1995). From this point of view, Nishida’s involvement with wartime politics should be understood as a dissent from the social and political trends at the time.

In this paper, I shall examine Nishida’s political discourse in terms of “politics” because, in my opinion, his political discourse strives to eliminate “politics” and this contributed to the reinforcement of the existing order. Considering Nishida’s personal sentiment, I shall argue that he has a strong aversion to wartime policies and that his initiatives were usurped by militarists and ultra-nationalists. It is easy to verify this fact by browsing through his diaries, written during the 1930s and 40s. In fact, Nishida tried to construct a logic which did not legitimate any violence or atrocities enacted on Asian people by Japan in the name of great causes like the World New Order. However, his attempt worked to hide or repress the conflict or dispute which was necessarily caused by political settings. In other words, Nishida’s logic eliminated any possibility of politics, in Jacques Rancière’s sense, which would necessary occur in the moment to build a political order. This is what I have referred to as the elimination of politics and, because of this elimination, Nishida’s political discourse cannot be seen to be critical of the existing political order or to posit a reality beyond the existing order.
1. Poiesis and Praxis

In order to elucidate how Nishida eliminated politics, I shall first of all look at his discussion on the state. According to Nishida, the state must be underpinned by a rational principle which he refers to as the “reason of state” ( kokka-riyū). This is the translation of raison d’état or Staatsräson. Nishida borrowed this notion from Mainecke’s The Idea of Reason of State (Die Idee Der Staatsräson). As Nishida translates reason as “riyū,” he believes that the state should have a rational reason for existence—“why the state should exist.” In other words, for Nishida, a state which has such a rational reason can legitimate its existence. However, the question is, what is the rational reason for the existence of the state?

This is the central question Nishida raises in his essay titled “The Problem of Reason of State” (Kokka-riyū no Mondai), published in 1941, three months before the start of the Asia-Pacific War. This question leads Nishida to contemplate the problem of the relationship between subject and tekhnē and he examines the problematique of praxis and poiesis in order to elucidate the relationship. As a result, Nishida reaches the conclusion that subject is the subject of praxis (practice) and that the subject practices poiesis (making or producing) in his/her praxis, believing that tekhnē is necessary to ensure this praxis and poiesis.

Prior to the publication of “The Problem of Reason of State,” Nishida discussed the problematique of praxis and poiesis in the essay titled “Poiesis and Praxis” (Poieshisu to purakushisu) (Nishida 2004a) in 1940. In this essay, Nishida argues that praxis and poiesis have a seemingly contradictory relationship, because while praxis is based on a transcendent principle, poiesis is based on an immanent principle. Nishida defines praxis as the practice of doing something according to rationality or reason. As reason is the faculty that facilitates the positing of a generalising principle, which transcends and codifies concrete experiences, for Nishida, praxis is the practice of creating, codifying or ordering according to such a transcendent and generalising principle. By contrast, Nishida is convinced that poiesis has to be immanent to concrete experiences, because to make or produce something means to understand what has to be made. For example, if you want to make a good house, you have to know what kind of house you need at the time. Furthermore, the house you need will determine what kind of materials you have to use to build it. Therefore, poiesis, as the practice of making or creating something, is to understand the concrete condition or context in which you are embedded and going to take action.

Although Nishida understands that praxis contradicts poiesis, he thinks that in the process of praxis the subject necessarily has to pursue poiesis. This is because Nishida is convinced that praxis is the practice through which the subject realises his/her true individual character (shin no kosei). According to him, the individual defines his/her subjectivity by ordering or codifying the world and through the formation of his/her subjectivity the individual expresses his/her true individual character. As the practice of creating, ordering or codification has to follow the reason or generalising principle, Nishida claims that the individual subjectivity has to be formed or defined according to the generalising principle and that the true individual character is also expressed by following the generalising principle.
This process is the essence of praxis. Therefore, Nishida defines praxis as the practice of realising the true individual character according to the generalising principle. However, Nishida also argues that the true individual character can be expressed through concrete experiences. In particular, the experience of making something is more likely to express the individual character of the subject who made it. In this sense, the true individual character of the subject is more likely to be expressed through poiesis. This true individual character, expressed through poiesis, is likely to deviate from the generalising principle because poiesis, based on concrete experiences, will produce diversity or plurality, which cannot completely be defined by the generalising principle.

Thus, despite their apparent contradictory relationship, praxis necessarily involves poiesis. Nishida believes that this contradiction is the moment at which a totality emerges: a totality which could subsume each true individual character. According to Nishida, this totality is embodied as the state. Nishida claims that the state establishes the general order according to which people interpret the world: that is, the state provides the generalising principle for praxis. At the same time, Nishida argues that the state consists of the concrete life of each individual: that is, within the state, people create something new in their concrete lives and thereby express their true individual characters in diverse ways as their particular or unique poiesis. Nishida is convinced that the state can reflect the diversity or plurality produced through each person’s poiesis in the general order, because the totality embodied by the state is constituted by this diversity or plurality.

In short, the state emerges as the mediation or dialectic of the contradiction between praxis and poiesis: the state mediates the transcendent generalising principle and the immanent diversity or plurality and therefore becomes both the concrete realm, where the true individual character of each subject is expressed and the generalising principle which defines the true character of each subject. In other words, in the state, the individual becomes the subject of praxis and poiesis: the subject who codifies the world according to the order provided by the state and creates something new, which becomes a constitutive element of the totality embodied by the state. Of course, he does not argue that any state can mediate the contradiction. For him, there is a particular state which can mediate the contradiction and only this type of state upholds “reason of state”. However, how is it possible to envisage a state that upholds “reason of state”? To answer this question, we have to focus on Nishida’s concept of tekhnē and culture.

2. Tekhnē and Culture: Elimination of Politics under the Name of Culture

One may well ask whether it is possible to construct a state that is underpinned by “reason of state.” In order to consider this question, Nishida discusses the concepts of tekhnē (gijutsu) and culture. According to Nishida, a state, underpinned by “reason of state,” has to be grounded on culture, because culture is precisely the totality which can mediate the contradiction between praxis and poiesis. In other words, the state is an institutional system based on a culture and tekhnē is necessary to establish such an institutional system. Nishida is
convinced that the aim of politics is to establish a state underpinned by “reason of state” and, in order to achieve this aim, politics needs tekhnē as the art or technology to establish an institutional system which reflects culture.

In “The Problem of Japanese Culture,” which was published as a book in the Iwanami Shinsho series in 1940, Nishida states:

In human society, according to [the dialectic of] the contradictory self-identity of the one as totality and the many as individuals, each individual sustains him/herself; [in human society] the prosperity of the species leads to the prosperity of [each] individual, and vice versa. … Thus, the formation of human beings [in species as ethnic society] is something called [the formation of] culture; [the formation of culture is] the formation of species [as ethnic society] and of [the individual who has the sense of] the self in species; species [as ethnic society] is the world [developing] according to [the dialectic of] the absolute contradictory self-identity [between human beings]. Hence the formation of human beings is the self-formation of the historical world, and it must mean the creation [of the historical world] (Nishida 2004b, 45).

According to Nishida, the dialectic between praxis and poiesis forms culture as a species (shu). Culture is the totality which mediates the contradiction between praxis and poiesis, and therefore the totality has “the contradictory self-identity of the one as totality and the many as individuals [who are the subjects of poiesis].” Nishida is also convinced that the formation of culture is the formation of species and that such a cultural species is realised as an ethnic nation (minzoku). Thus, as an ethnic or national culture, as the totality is formed, the individual becomes the subject, both to codify the world and to reproduce the world through creating something new in the world. The reproduction of the world makes history and Nishida therefore emphasises the formation of “the historical world” (rekishi-teki sekai) through the formation of culture.

As culture is the ethnic or national culture, a state based on such an ethnic or national culture, is the nation-state. Therefore, tekhnē is the art or technology to establish a nation-state as an institutional system underpinned by “reason of state.” However, what is tekhnē in concrete terms? For Nishida, it is law (hō), or more precisely, the institutional system underpinned by law. Nishida argues that, to establish the nation-state, means to establish the legal institutional system (hō-sei). In other words, the nation-state is established as the institutional system and the framework of the institutional system is underpinned by law. While law is the code according to which people understand the world, law has to reflect or be subject to people’s concrete experiences through which they create something new. In this sense, law is the appropriate tekhnē to establish the nation-state, which mediates the contradiction.

Nishida also discusses the problem of the legislator (rippō-sha), but it does not matter for him who the actual legislator in the institution is. For him, if the mediation or dialectic
between *praxis* and *poiesis* operates correctly, it is not necessary to ask who has the real power to decide on the law. Therefore, Nishida discusses only sovereignty and actually never mentions the sovereign (*shukensha*). By avoiding attributing sovereignty to a concrete person, he posits sovereignty as the prerogative of the state itself, because the state, as the embodiment of the mediation between *praxis* and *poiesis*, has the legitimacy to exercise the prerogative. In this sense, the legislator is merely an agency of the state.

According to Nishida, the nation-state also has its own individual character (*kokka no kosei*): that is, the nation-state also expresses its true character. As Nishida puts it, the nation-state “must be a world which has individual characters” (Nishida 2004c, 336), and hence “the polities of states cannot be exchangeable” (*ibid.*). Here, we must pay attention to the fact that Nishida interprets the “national polity” (*kokutai*)—one of the most ideological concepts in modern Japan in relation to the Emperor-centred regime—as the individual character of the state. In particular, a pamphlet titled *Fundamentals of the National Polity* (*Kokutai no Hongi*) was published in 1937 (Ministry of Education, 1937), which glorified the national polity as the incomparable Japanese principle. Through his interpretation, Nishida might have tried to relativise the concept, which functioned as the absolute Imperial principle in the modern Japanese political context. For Nishida, the national polity is not a principle unique to the Japanese nation state, but each nation-state, which establishes the legal institutional system and mediates the contradiction, has its own “national polity” or its own individual character. In this context, *tekhnē* is the principle that establishes a state, which has an appropriate and rational “national polity” as the expression of its true individual character.

Thus far, we have seen how Nishida argues that *tekhnē* is necessary to establish the nation-state based on a culture. For Nishida, politics needs this *tekhnē*. He even claims that politics is *tekhnē*. Considering the argument we have developed so far, we should pay attention to the point that Nishida is convinced that the contradiction between *praxis* and *poiesis* does not cause any conflict or dispute or, to put it more precisely, any conflict or dispute would consequently be mediated by the totality. For Nishida, the aim of politics is to establish a nation-state where conflict or dispute does not occur and *tekhnē* is needed to establish the institutional system that removes any dispute or conflict by allocating an appropriate part to each individual. Nishida envisages culture as the totality that defines each individual as a subject to reproduce the world and this means that the particular part each individual plays as the subject can be culturally defined: the part of man, woman, student, teacher, father, mother, the Emperor. …This is what Jacques Rancière calls the system of distribution of “police.” He puts it thus:

The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise (Rancière 1999, 29).
In Nishida’s discussion of the nation-state, tekhnē is used by politics to establish this “police” according to culture. As a result, the nation-state can be established as the system in which there is no dispute or conflict.

However, we should understand that the totality or the system of police may become possible by suppressing the conflict or dispute and culture may help to hide this suppression. In other words, it is possible that by arguing that culture can mediate the contradiction between praxis and poiesis, the nation-state tries to suppress dispute or conflict caused by the contradiction. Hence, we need to ask, in order to criticise and dissent from this possibility, what kind of strategy should be adopted? The answer to this question is very simple: that is, we should “agree” with Nishida’s assumption that a totality like culture, which can mediate the contradiction, can emerge. Then, if we think that this mediation does not work adequately, we can protest that there is a gap between what the state argues and what we feel. Although the state argues that culture mediates the true individual characters we wish to express, we believe that cultural definitions of our true individual characters are actually not the true individual characters we want to express. In short, we can provoke “disagreement” and, thereby, we can create dispute or conflict caused by the apparent contradiction. This is “politics” in Rancière’s sense. As Rancière argues, politics is the activity of identifying the point at which “disagreement” occurs and in order to evoke disagreement, there must be agreement. He puts it as follows:

We should take disagreement to mean a determined kind of speech situation; one in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying. Disagreement is not the conflict between one who says white and another who says black. It is the conflict between one who says white and another who also says white but does not understand the same thing by it or does not understand that the other is saying the same thing in the name of whiteness (ibid., x).

In short, disagreement occurs in the situation where the “interlocutors both understand and do not understand the same thing by the same words” (ibid., xi). Thus, disagreement needs the agreement that they share the same thing and the same words and, in this sense, politics needs the shared or common concern.

From Rancière’s point of view, Nishida’s discussion on the nation-state establishes the field in which politics can occur through disagreement. Nevertheless, Nishida himself is convinced that existing cultures, such as the Japanese culture, can successfully mediate the contradiction and therefore that there is no possibility that the contradiction causes dispute or conflict. Nishida seems to ignore any possibility of conflict within culture. As a result, the nation-state which Nishida believes should be established according to tekhnē—this is the aim of Nishida’s politics—eliminates politics. Nishida argues that politics is tekhnē, but this tekhnē as politics is the tekhnē to eliminate politics.

As we have already seen, Nishida’s theories could be developed to promote politics. This possibility was developed by several thinkers. For example, So In-shik, a journalist and thinker who actively published critiques from the 1930s to the 40s on the Korean Peninsula, discussed the possibility of the world order which was critical of Japanese colonial imperialism, under the strong influence of Nishida’s philosophical logic. Nishida’s theory can thus be interpreted as an anti-imperialist theory of the world order and actually Nishida intended that his theory should be envisaged as such. According to Cho Kwanja, So envisaged a multi-centred world (ta-chūshin no sekai) that can mediate each individual equally. Such a perspective can be understood as the correlative of Nishida’s discussion on culture as the mediation of the contradiction between praxis and poiesis. According to Nishida, through praxis, each individual tries to become the subject who creates order and this means that each individual strives to become the central subject. However, this attempt is only to be realised through poiesis, which produces the diversified or pluralistic world. As a result, each individual becomes the multi-centred subject mediated by culture. Thus, Nishida’s theory underpins So’s idea of a multi-centred world. Of course, So’s intention was to criticise Japanese Imperialism, which caused the inequality and conflict between the coloniser and the colonised and Nishida’s theory may also be seen as criticising Japanese Imperialism.

However, Nishida does not develop this possibility adequately because he envisages Japanese culture as the meta-centre, which can mediate the multi-centred world. Nishida claims that culture can mediate the contradiction and particularly, that Japanese culture can mediate the contradiction between each individual culture. In short, he believes that Japanese culture can operate as the meta-culture or as the meta-centre. Considering So’s intention, this idea cannot be compatible with So’s idea of the multi-centred world because, if Japanese culture were posited as the meta-culture, it would occupy the ultimate centre. In this sense, So’s argument should be understood as the attempt to provoke disagreement with Nishida: they share the idea of a multi-centred world, but disagree on the point of whether Japanese culture could play the role of a meta-culture. In other words, So made politics work against Nishida.

Nishida’s assumption of Japanese culture as the meta-culture/centre led to the vindication of the superiority of the Japanese national polity, which dismissed any chance of criticising the attempt to put the Japanese nation-state at the centre of a new order. In order to examine this problem, I shall first look at “The Problem of Japanese Culture” again and then examine “The Principle of the World New Order,” written in 1943. According to Nishida, Japanese culture could play the role of mediating the East and the West. As he puts it:

In the Japanese spirit…the spirit of Oriental culture is made to live most fully, and at

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1 On the detail of So In-shik’s arguments, see Cho (2007).
the same time it may possess something which can also combine directly with the spirit of…Western culture. In this sense a point of union between Eastern and Western culture can be sought in Japan. Further, therein perhaps we can foresee the future of history, which, as a contradictory self-identity… (Nishida 2004b, 67).²

According to Nishida, because Japan has adopted various cultures, “while it is said to be quick to take in and clever in understanding and adopting the cultures of various foreign countries, in ancient times, the cultures of China and India and after Meiji, Western culture, [Japan] is nonetheless spoken of as not [being] original”³(ibid., 59). However, Nishida believes that this opinion cannot be validated. In other words, Nishida is convinced that “the Japanese have a way of seeing things and a way of thinking, peculiar to themselves and even while absorbing from Chinese and Indian cultures, the Japanese have come to create their own culture”⁴(ibid.), and, for Nishida, the peculiarity of Japanese culture is the receptiveness which can absorb any culture.

Because Japanese culture initially adopted Chinese and Indian cultures, it developed as Oriental culture. However, thanks to its receptiveness, Japanese culture could adopt Western culture after the Meiji Restoration and, consequently, it could fuse and mediate Oriental culture and Western culture. Thus, Japanese culture became the medium between Oriental and Western cultures and, in this sense, Nishida is convinced that Japanese culture could play the role of a world culture (sekai-bunka) as a meta-culture. Here we understand that this meta-culture is the same as the meta-centre. This is the reason why he believes in the superiority of the Japanese national polity. As we have seen in the last section, Nishida regards the national polity as the individual character of the nation-state and the nation-state is established by tekhnê to ensure culture. Therefore, he believes the quality of the national polity also reflects the culture on which the nation-state is based and is convinced that the Japanese national polity, reflecting Japanese culture as the mediator between Oriental and Western cultures, has to be superior to any other culture. Predictably, Nishida argues that the Japanese nation-state has to take the initiative of making the Co-prosperity Sphere and the World New Order: the new world order in which each nation-state can be mediated and express its own individual character. In fact, this is the main argument in “The Principle of the World New Order.”

In “The Principle of the World New Order” Nishida argues that the current ideal of the new world order is underpinned by the collusion between ethno-centrism and abstract cosmopolitanism. It is envisaged and promoted by the strong countries (that is, Western countries) and suppresses or ignores the concrete perspective of the world of Asian people, who were colonised as the result of Western imperialism. Thus criticising the current situation underpinned by Western imperialistic logic, Nishida argues that it is necessary to envisage a new world order, which respects the individuality of each nation, including Asian people. The

² I have adapted the translation in Tsunoda et al. (1958, 872).
³ I have cited the translation from ibid., 869.
⁴ I have cited the translation from ibid.
war (he claims) demonstrated that the world order is in a state of crisis in which principles such as Wilsonian idealism cannot work adequately anymore. Nishida states:

To say that each state or nation, by transcending itself, constructs a single world is not, as in the Wilsonian League of Nations, merely to advocate the self-determination of people whereby each nation’s independence is recognised equally. Such a world is nothing more than the eighteenth-century abstract world ideology. The present Great World War is demonstrating that the solution to today’s actual historical problem is impossible in terms of that ideology⁵ (Nishida 2005, 445).

Therefore, Nishida believes that the new world order has to be general in the true sense: it has to be accepted by both Western and Asian people so that no one will be suppressed. In this new world order, each regional or local culture, as the basis of each nation-state, has to be upheld and each nation-state can thereby express its own individual character: their own “national polity.” Nishida believes that such a new world order could be established only by referring to the world culture and that only Japan could play the central role in such a mission. From this standpoint, the aim of the establishment of the Co-prosperity Sphere is also reinterpreted as the creation of a new world order based on a world culture. After arguing that the “fundamental principle of the world new order” is “being demanded by today’s Great World War” (ibid., 445), Nishida states:

If the problem of today’s Great World War is as stated above—and the basic principle of a new world order is also as I have stated—then the basic principle of the East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere must naturally emerge from this as well. In the past, because of the imperialism of European nations, the East Asian nations have been oppressed and colonised, and their own world historical missions have been wrested from them. Now the various nations of East Asia must awaken to their own world-historical mission as East Asian nations: they must all transcend themselves and construct their own distinct world, thereby achieving their own world-historical mission as East Asian nations. This is the basic principle of the construction of the East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere…for such a particular world to be constructed, there must be that which becomes its centre and undertakes its task. In East Asia today, that centre is none other than our country, Japan… today’s East Asian War deciding the direction of world history for future generations (ibid., 446).⁶

In short, Nishida argues that the war had to become the moment to establish the Co-prosperity Sphere where East Asian nations anticipated the realisation of the new world

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⁴ I have adapted the translation in Dilworth et al. (1998, 74).
⁵ I have adapted the translation in ibid., 74.
order and that Japan, which is a nation-state based on Japanese culture as the world culture, has to take the initiative to establish such an order.

Thus, Nishida states that Japan has to constitute itself as the subject to spread the principle of a world culture embodied in the Japanese national polity.

The fundamental policy of the intellectual guidance, learning, and education of our nation must be grounded thoroughly and deeply in the underlying principle of our National Polity, and it must be founded in a grasp of historical reality and by the principle for forming the World as worlds. The reason we must reject the Anglo-American thought is that it derives from imperialism, whereby, with a sense of the Anglo-American people’s own superiority, it views East Asia as its colony\(^7\) (ibid., 447).

Nishida argues that the principle embodied in the Japanese national polity has to be spread by Japan as the principle to establish the new world order. Here, Nishida rephrases the new world order as the “world as worlds” (sekai-teki sekai). By this Nishida attempts to describe the new world order as a totalised world which mediates each state or culture as a small, particular world.

Thus far, we have examined how Nishida discusses Japanese culture in a wartime context. From the angle of the proponents of Nishida’s semantic tug of war, these discussions can be understood as a criticism of the gap between the ideal of the Co-prosperity Sphere and the reality of the war waged in the name of the Co-prosperity Sphere. Proponents argue that, even if Nishida glorifies the “Imperial House” (Kōshitsu) and the “Imperial Way” (Kōdō) as the “principle of world formation” (ibid., 446-447), they have to dissent from the wartime ideology. However, even if this understanding is correct, Nishida’s discussion inevitably involves a paradox: to establish a normative perspective which criticises the imperialistic conduct of the Japanese Empire he endorses the ontological and historical narrative which justifies Japan as an imperialist empire.

Nishida’s logic clearly lacks the possibility of criticising the trajectory which led to the present status of the Japanese Empire as an imperialist nation-state. For Nishida, Japanese culture has succeeded in mediating any conflicts and the presence of the “Imperial House” and the unbroken lineage of the Emperor has to be understood as the evidence of the successful history of Japanese culture. Nishida thinks that this is the distinctive characteristic of Japanese culture and he can therefore argue that only Japanese culture can play the role of a meta-centre or meta-culture, which can mediate each culture at each centre. Although Nishida is critical of Japanese imperialistic conduct during the war, by idealising Japanese culture, he suppresses the conflicts which should have occurred through Japanese imperialism as the process of Japanese modernisation and thereby eliminates politics within the Japanese Empire. Thus, Nishida cannot maintain a critical standpoint towards Japanese colonialism as

\(^7\) I have adapted the translation in ibid.
the history of the Japanese Empire. This point becomes seriously problematic when we consider the continuity between Japanese colonial imperialism and the Japanese invasion of East Asian countries during the Asia Pacific War. This is because there is the possibility that this paradox could resonate with justification of the invasion as emancipation.

Conclusion: How to Dissent from Depoliticisation?

As we have seen above, Nishida developed the logic of eliminating politics or depoliticisation. What could Nishida have done to avoid this logic and criticise Japanese imperialism more thoroughly? We have already seen the answer to this question. Nishida did not have to abandon his assumption that a totality like culture, which can mediate the contradiction, can emerge, but he should have argued that, despite Japanese culture, the Japanese Empire has never succeeded in mediating the conflicts between the coloniser and the colonised, or between Japan and others. This would be a way to radicalise Nishida’s philosophy and thereby enhance the possibility of the politicisation of his philosophy.

References


Transcending Hegemonic International Relations Theorization: 
Nothingness, Worlding, and Balance of Relationship

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Abstract

The paper compares the Kyoto School of Philosophy (KSP) with two other competitors—postmodern Worlding and the Chinese balance of relationships (BoR)—in their shared campaigning for alternative International Relation Theories (IRT). For the sake of convenience, the country of historical practice of each alternative IRT is used to illustrate respectively how different IR theorization is plausible. Accordingly, Japan will be the exemplified case for the KSP, Taiwan for re-Worlding and China for the BoR. The paper particularly focuses on discussing the scientific principles derived from the KSP. First of all, it predicts that no present order will hold in the long run. Secondly, it allows nation to make judgments that will affect systemic behavior. Thirdly, it tackles both purposes and their systemic consequences of all different types of nations while other theories focus primarily on major powers.

Introduction

The Kyoto School of Philosophy (KSP), which originated in Taisho, Japan (1912-1926) and named during the Showa Period (1926-1989), appears to have received atavistic attention in the past two decades. The Philosophy of Place (PoP), initially composed by Nishida Kitarō, the founding father of the KSP, has specifically aroused curiosity about the new possibilities of arranging alternative international relations (IR) for the 21st century. The KSP’s cultural sensibility and anti-hegemonic character, which sought to overcome the Europeanization and Americanization of the world prior to World War II (WWII), meets the normative call for multiple voices in the contemporary studies of IR. Most revisits to the KSP conceive of the PoP exclusively as a normative theory regarding how world politics could improve (Davis, Schroeder and Worth 2011; Wilkinson 2009; Goto-Jones 2007). Nishida himself was explicit about his ontological appeal to pure experience, as well as his epistemological quest for universality, indicating a potential for scientific inquiry. The literature therefore owes him a scientific, vis-à-vis normative, appreciation.

In fact, other theoretical attempts to counter the perceived hegemony of the
Anglo-Saxon International Relations Theory (IRT) are typically both scientific and normative. An example of this is the emerging trend to reworld subaltern subjectivities by striving to demonstrate how world politics differ from the understanding presented in mainstream IR literature (Tickner and Blaney 2012). Scholarship on worlding explores normative world politics versus actual world politics. Reflecting the widely shared perception on the rise of China in within that country, an additional nascent struggle against the mainstream arises from the anxious efforts to establish a Chinese School of IR (Noesselt 2012; Wang 2013). Its followers draw from Chinese cultural resources to present a different ideal of world politics (Zhao 2009). Scientific endeavors to explain how nation states interact in different ways from those explained in mainstream IRT, particularly pertaining to the practices of mutual relationships, dominate their research agenda (Qin 2009; Yan 2011). In brief, no scientific project can grow without some normative consideration. The current normative challenges to mainstream IRT typically have scientific explanations of world politics, which makes the revisit of the KSP incomplete without exploring the scientific implications of the PoP at the same time.

The following discussion compares the KSP with two other competitors—postmodern worlding and the Chinese balance of relationships (BoR)—in their shared campaign for alternative IRTs. For the sake of convenience, the country of historical practice for each alternative IRT is used to illustrate how different IR theorization is plausible. Accordingly, Japan will be the exemplified case for the PoP, Taiwan for reworlding and China for the BoR. The remainder of the paper argues that the three alternatives complement each other and depict a different world than mainstream IRTs when combined. In addition, the paper particularly focuses on the scientific principles derived from the PoP.

### 1. Three Anti-Hegemonic Attempts

The theory of “hegemonic international relations” refers to the style of world politics dominated by a single discourse. This is essentially war and peace premised on state-centrism and undergirded by one superpower and other major powers, primarily the United States and Western European countries. Hegemonic international relations contradict with and transform non-Western world orders elsewhere, including the relevant cases Japan, Taiwan and China, causing them to be ambivalent towards their pasts. The PoP painstakingly sheds light on the identity puzzle of Japan and other nations with a similar problem by asking the question of how it is possible for a nation to be both East and West at the same time, leading to a non-Western, non-territorial, or non-centrist position (Shimizu 2009). The puzzle points out the wish for the normalcy of in-betweenness by Japan, which is, in itself a statement of alienation from hegemonic IR.

Japan’s place is presumably a place of nothingness or a non-place where Nishida wished differing nations could meet, exempt from mutual naming or judgment. Idealistically, Japan exemplifies a civilizational bridge that enables the East to meet the West and vice versa. The assumption of the PoP is that neither the East nor the West should expand or conquer the
other. Their commonality must not lie in the teleological historiography because preservation of their difference is the spirit that guarantees all are included in a universal world, hence the World History Standpoint (WHS). Where this is the case, their route to mutual appreciation can only be traced to a shared root where all come from and each flourishes upon its own condition. The root that lies deeper than the consciousness of difference is by definition the place of nothingness. The PoP is accordingly connected to the origin of the universe and practically coupled with Japanese Shinto, which provides a metaphor of the origin of Japan.

The philosophy of nothingness trains people to withdraw from the sitedness of their existential experiences in order to exercise re-entry. One has to consider “place” as a metaphor of identity, along with the notion of site. The exercise of withdrawing from a specific “place” to a “no place” enables the imagination of freedom from either one’s own past or an intruder’s domination. It also allows further imagination of re-entry from nothingness into many potentially differing sites, including the intruder’s. Nothingness exclusively provides the capacity to see the limitation of all sites, including the alleged hegemony and all strings of universalism, and leads to the celebration of an emerging world history that accommodates and transcends all sites.

The PoP breaks “place” into four different types (Ng 2011; Huang W. 2010). First, a place of being/identity is an absolute place trapped in false rationalism and universalism. Second, a place of relative being/identity is a relative place that resists universalism; reworlding belongs here. A typical formulation of relative being is postcolonial hybridity. Imagined nationalities, as well as aboriginality, are even stronger versions of a relative identity. Third, a place of relative nothingness is a transcendental place to connect or permeate places, as well as relative places; the BoR is such a place. One example is Chinese Daoism while another could be Jawaharlal Nehru’s non-alignment. Finally, a place of absolute nothingness is where time and space meet to make the other three places thinkable and seeable.

(1) Relative Identity
The place of relative identity uses the emerging, contemporary IR expression of “Worldliness.” Creating worldliness of a site is essentially worlding it. In the past, worlding was a geo-cultural project of global capitalism/hegemony to monopolize meanings (Petman 1996; Spivak 1985). Therefore, resisting this project is known as reworlding, a self-worlding which arising out of a supposedly subaltern site for and by the self. It is a discursive reclaim of the lost soul through excavating, retrieving, reviving, and rejuvenating a narrative of the past. Sited reworlding amounts to a declaration that a hegemonic power cannot monopolize either ontological or epistemological resources. Such sited worlding critically assessed any hegemonic attempt to reproduce dominance over subalterns. It resists, undermines or revises a hegemonic division of work through uncontrollable fluidity caused by the incongruent schemata of the subalterns, their ideological inconsistency, opportunism, self-denial, and self-assertion (Paolini, Elliott, and Moran 1999).
The methods of reworlding must be multiplied and improvised as both recast memories of various forms, and their reinterpretations are methods to reach testimonies to differences, aimed at thinking back on hegemonic arrangements of lives at the subaltern sites, writing and acting back to provincialize hegemonic order. In other words, worlding incurs the site-centric methodology and aims at breeding a counter perspective in the face of an overwhelming hegemony. The editors of the Routledge Worlding Beyond the West Series declare that:

The aim of worlding is to explore the role of geocultural factors in setting the concepts and epistemologies through which IR knowledge is produced. In particular, it seeks to identify alternatives for thinking about the “international” that are more in tune with local concerns and traditions outside the West (Tickner and Waever 2009, Blurb).

In this view, hegemony should be impossible in a worlding scheme. Victimized people reincarnate by looking back through an imagined subjectivity belonging exclusively to the site, which is not subject to universalism.

(2) Relative Nothingness
The place of relative nothingness also has a parallel in the nascent IR literature, i.e. the Chinese School. Few Chinese schools invest in Chinese cultural resources that formulate general theories of IR so Daoism, Confucianism, and Legalism are employed to examine the coexistence of differences, relational reciprocity, and hierarchical stability. Together, they point to a shared longing for an order that is able to transcend the self-interests of individual nations. As a result, the quest for a relational order subscribes to no specific institution or value. An example can be found in the arrangement between the Chinese dynastic court and its neighbors, which was flexibly designed to meet the differing conditions of each tributary state which the two sides build their relationship (Liao 2012). Not only was each bilateral relationship different, but the rules that governed China over the generations were hardly ever the same; Chinese thought accepted an imagined cycle of governability and chaos accepted as typical (Jiang 2012). If the spontaneity of cycles discontinues because of rationalist intervention, governability will lose its trajectory and might never resume, leaving brutal force as the only viable solution to anarchy. Therefore, the BoR pragmatically adopts a laissez-faire approach to deal with the domestic chaos of a partner.

When domestic cycles and international relations are disconnected, any multilateral arrangement to channel intervention or synchronic value to justify it would be redundant. If IR can be reduced to a combination of bilateral relations, other universal learning is no longer necessary since the source of good governance today can become the source of chaos in the next cycle and vice versa. After all, what would be the excitement in forcing a change in a subaltern site when one knows that nothing will remain the same in the long term? Anything that fades in the present can return to consciousness given the right cue. Ultimately, only reciprocal relationships are practical and transcendent (Hwang 2012) and if China cultivates
positive long-term relationships, others will always reciprocate when capable. Values and ideologies become irrelevant once the relationship is stabilized and subsequently, domestic problems are not the duty of others to resolve. When given enough time, solutions eventually will be found domestically. Patience, instead of forced transformation, is the main characteristic in the BoR in Chinese IRT (Shih and Huang C. 2012) and is known as the “Great Way” in Chinese discourse, the Great Way on which all strangers supposedly walk together peacefully alongside the self-cultivating prince (Ames and Hall 2003).

(3) Absolute Nothingness

The place of absolute nothingness is exempt from all these cultural maneuverings that maintain relational stability and transcendence replaces resistance (Nishitani 1983). All of the encounters with differing societies in the past, as well as the future, the vicissitudes experienced in one’s own society, and the transcendent attempts to move beyond sited limitations, take place here. The place of absolute nothingness provides both peaceful and violent unpredictable clues, and calms all conflicts, with or without justice. It contains the sources of cycles, prompts new cycles, or reversely represses them. Hegemonies are possible but never permanent or universal. Multi-sited worlding and reworlding never stops, however they guarantee no single result or success. The lack of duty is even greater than in the place of relative nothingness because, while relative nothingness breeds little sense of duty toward others, in absolute nothingness, one could lose the sense of duty toward one’s own society (Heisig and Maraldo 1995; Hubbard and Swanson 1997).

Table 1 lists the PoP’s categories of places into the following: place of absolute identity; place of relative identity; place of relative nothingness; and place of absolute nothingness. Synchronization should be considered as enactment of place of absolute identity as synchronicity is the derivative of rationalism and universalism and informs most general theories in IR. It refers to the simultaneously executed or promoted diffusion of a pattern of rational thinking embedded in an idea, an institution, a collective identity or a perceived arrangement of material force. Synchronization is presumably a process whereby unrelated national actors conjunctionally fulfill their self-assigned functions to interact rationally. Accordingly, it is the exact opposite of absolute nothingness.

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Table 1: The PoP Conditions of Identity
2. From Normative Failures to Scientific Inquiries

2.1. Normative Failures
Multi-sitedness, worlding, place, nothingness, sovereignty, agency, subjectivity, Asia, and China-centrism are popular, yet estranging, concepts that celebrate their strengths and weaknesses and can turn into unilateralism, or even hegemonism, when incurred by power. This is what overcame the KSP before WWII, as their suggestion to take local/national differences seriously led to the expansion and colonialism of their government in Asia (Williams 2004). The existence of “Others” is potentially dangerous, because sited identity can be used to justify internal cleansing or external expansion, as well as invite conquest.

While reworlding is a path for the self-perceived subaltern to reclaim subjectivity, nothingness uses self-perceived in-betweenness to transcend the false universalism of the hegemony and reach true universalism. The epistemological caveat lies in the shared anxiety of the loss of existence at a particular moment. It is this obsessive adherence to a certain inexpressible, but invincible, sense of space, as the shelter or the identity, that reproduces the imagined and re-imagined possibility of being controlled, monopolized, brainwashed, invaded, intruded, raped, suppressed, exploited, and so on (Sun 2003). If anyone is naturally different in an exclusive self-ontological site, it would be equally natural for another with a similar same anxiety toward invasion or corruption of a perceived difference to desire overtaking that site. In fact, an imagined difference can easily arouse the desire of a major power to conquer the exotic but in theory, only those considered possessing a different site can be the target of occupation.

It is possible for a transcendental site to be different from an exclusive self-site. Note that loss, merge, disappearance, death and any other transcendental form of perishing are no less natural. In addition, since sitedness is not necessarily physical, fixed, or enclosed, it does not have to be individualized or differentiated. Rather, sitedness can be shared, in nothingness, as well as in the place of identity. Imagine a woman that marries into a nameless condition embedded in a patriarchal network. She watches her sons becoming independent or anticipating her bone buried in a graveyard completely alienated from her origin. However, she can still enjoy her life or control her men, even though she has no tangible site to claim. If she would claim a site, she may lose her power, which she may or may not enjoy. Could the subaltern’s obsession with an exclusive self-site, however defined and enacted, actually collude with the imagined or practical hegemony by making it discursively possible and psychologically tempting for the hegemonic power to have an object to conquer (Mizoguchi 1999)? In short, resistance generates, if not invites, the desire to rape.

Even worse, if sitedness and identity are two sides of the same coin, invasion of the site can only take place by raping the people. At these hegemonic moments, each invasion symbolizes the collection of another fresh trophy. Worse still, multi-sitedness challenges the hegemonic instinct to rape as many as possible while encouraging no united resistance due to the consciously cherished differences from one other. In fact, the U.S. has invaded and destroyed civilizations and human lives in the name of synchronizing the world into one
liberal system. Asserting differences by the subaltern could inadvertently attract the unwanted attention of countries with an absolute identity and precipitate the silencing sanctions to fall upon the subaltern. Other worlding practitioners, in frightened conditions, must resort to a balance of relationship to cajole the hegemonic power or to self-silencing as a more viable form of worlding.

2.2. Scientific Inquiries
Normative failures differ from scientific failures. Both worlding and the BoR have scientific potentials. Worlding is a method to trace how empiric learning and practicing of hegemonic role assignments in world political economy proceed at a particular site. Simply describing the enactment of the roles and their meaning to the subaltern site is a normative challenge to the hegemonic discourse. Despite the fact that there is no conscious attempt at resistance, or even capacity to resist, the sited understanding, rooted in sited knowledge, suggests how hegemonic order suffers revision, and hence subversion (Scott 1990). Similarly, the BoR can enlighten scientific research of IR through its explanation on how nations transcend power politics and maintain long-term, reciprocal stability. The BoR does not have to be normatively preferred to be effective as it parallels the balance of power and influences IR where the balance is ambiguous or impossible to formulate balancing strategies. Balancing strategies alone are rarely successful in the majority of cases.

The PoP could be scientific, similar to worlding and the BoR, however, a scientific mode of PoP is rarely attempted. The PoP is a solution to the unavailing anti-hegemonic projects through the generation of scientifically hypothesized processes of transcendence that in-between societies undergo to recall hegemonic imposition. This hypothesized process pertains to the capacity of a society to store suppressed or unwanted identities in a subconscious state, which are awakened when the conditions are ripened for their revival. It also includes the capacity to acquire new perspectives in the future. The place of absolute nothingness is a philosophical site to store all those alternatives temporarily in oblivion. Amnesia is a plausible contingency in the aftermath of ideological, institutional, and identity conflicts making societies in-between civilizations a practiced adaptor to conditions. As a result, no value, ideology, institution, or identity can be permanent. Cyclical and inconsistent self-understandings are the archetypical pattern in the long run and worlding or BoR research will be able to predict this scientifically. According to PoP, the following three propositions are worth serious consideration:

(1) The Nothingness Proposition. It is always possible for aborted identities to return in the future; no identity can be permanent. International relations based upon the existent identities between nations are inherently unstable. This proposition is derived from the PoP ontology that synthesizes space and temporality to accommodate various possibilities and make a repertoire of identity strategies. Aborted identities are not consciously accessible, but proper triggers could recall them to serve as principles of IR for a certain time. This
proposition portrays drastic turns to different IR principles by those nations torn between incongruent identities. Their seeming incapacity for compromise at any moment is in line with their capacity for a drastic turn. Silent cooperation of domestic constituency in support of such turns testifies to the inexpressibility of absolute nothingness.

(2) The Worlding Proposition. Identities that can provide evaluative perspectives on dominant identities are more likely to stay or return over the course of time. International relations cannot proceed with one dominant identity in the long run. Derived from the worlding epistemology, this proposition suggests the chance to recall an identity from the subconscious condition exists could potentially critically assess the present hegemonic circumstance. This proposition is particularly germane to weak nations engrossed in an encountered hegemonic influence. Such nations reify the condition of relative identity to resist by excavating and appropriating cultural resources not currently in use. The PoP explains how epistemologically it is possible for these nations to resort to memories or utopia not shared by the encountered hegemony.

(3) The BoR Proposition. If the choice of identity is contingent on the context, identity switching would be rather easy. The balance of relationships is more likely arranged through bilateral rather than multilateral negotiations. This premise is derived from the BoR epistemology that nations live together more easily when disregarding their differences in identities or values, therefore all cultural resources should be made ready anytime to comfort a particular target. Conscious transcendence over encountered difference reifies the condition of relative nothingness. Relative nothingness is particularly germane to nations that face an extensive and expansive scope of encountering that disallows enforcement of any synchronized value or institution. It is also sensible for a declining hegemony to engage relative nothingness by jettisoning the extant synchronic values to appease allies. To consciously avoid specific positions in a multilateral setting, but instead rely on different identity strategies in a variety of bilateral settings, illustrates the condition of relative nothingness.

3. An Empirical PoP

3.1. The Three Cases
The hegemonic order may appear inapplicable if the hegemonic power is itself ambivalent. In the 21st century, for example, all the anti-hegemonic schemes in East Asia began to compete over the Senkaku Island/Diaoyu Island/Diaoyutai. The dispute took place between Japan, Taiwan and China, with the U.S. not stating a clear position. Each contender has its discursive weapon: Japan had the philosophy of place; Taiwan used the double-worlding
scheme; and China used the balance of relationship. They all acted in cycles, as a hegemon, and on behalf of hegemony against one another or against one’s own pursuit of identity. The sources of confrontation and their resolution arose from both the implicit and yet powerful pressure of hegemony to synchronize the mutually excluding sovereign order and the capacity of all the three nations to improvise. The scientists of the PoP made specific predictions about the policy predisposition—Japan’s alienation from Asianism, Taiwan’s from coalition with China, and China’s from an unambiguous solution, while at the same time tracing, and therefore awakening, agency for decision, change, and inaction.

Japan. The place of absolute nothingness is expected to provide endless retrieval, recombination and creativity that ensure the unstable nature of IR for any self-searching country caught between incongruent identities, such as Japan. Being positioned on the territorial dispute reveals the impossibility of being Western, Asian and Japanese at the same time. The Japanese must suppress the other possibilities for the time being.

Taiwan. The place of relative identity continues, out of the epistemological necessity of self-becoming for a self-perceived subalternation in a place, such as Taiwan, to host the desire for worldliness, as opposed to hegemonic synchronicity. Seeking independence from China, Taiwan cannot accept any form of coalition with hegemonic China, even though without a similar coalition Taiwan itself could not stop Japan from unilateral declaration of sovereignty over the disputed island. Worlding requires Taiwan first to choose the hegemony from its layered history.

China. The place of relative nothingness mediates between relative identity and absolute nothingness for a country which is experiencing expansion, such as China, and the resulting undecidable pragmatically to dissuade, accommodate or urge an emerging identity in various kinds of relationships. The Chinese pursuit of a harmonious world and peaceful coexistence would be satisfied by Japan’s acknowledgement of the existence of a dispute and not simply of Chinese ownership of the disputed island, however ambiguity is preferred to clarity in this case.

3.2. Japan and the Nothingness Principle
Aborted pre-WWII ideas of Asianism have returned to Japanese IR thinking in various versions. East Asia was once such a crystal notion in support of Japan’s quest for worldliness before the war. As the place of absolute nothingness, Asia inspired a philosophy to overcome the compulsive Western modernity or the inevitable Asian backwardness. This perceived superior Western modernity returned after WWII through U.S. occupation forces in Japan. In addition, the image of a backward Asia lingered on in China’s estranging Socialist identity. For some time, the Fukuzawa solution of “Departing Asia, Joining Europe” reappeared to overshadow Asianism, which was rendered notorious by the war. Various other takings of Japan’s proper identity, e.g. liberal democracy, peace maker, profit maker, and development aider have arisen alongside Asianism (Li 2008; Huang C. and Shih 2009). In contrast to this, the silenced socialist and left-wing perspectives of the war time, revived in the academic circles after the war, lost appeal again in the new century. Politically incorrect views each had
their turn in history and waited for another opportunity after being silenced by conditions. Cycles of political (in) correctness, which are not uncommon in subaltern societies, (Parham 1989) attest to the place of absolute nothingness as a depot of subconscious identity.

Politically silenced socialism during the Showa period left Japan but stayed alive in the remote but hopeful land of Manchukuo, the origin of civilization for Shiratori Kurakichi, the founder of the Tokyo School and a Shinto absolutist. It was tantamount to the place of nothingness, being the common root of all civilizations, and was designed as the princely land of all nationalities. Manchukuo appeared to be the reification of the place of absolute nothingness (Shih and Huang C. 2011). Socialist intellectuals, after their politically correct “turns” to Shinto in the Fascist condition, gathered at the Research Department of the Southern Manchurian Railway Company, avoiding a left discourse in their class-related research on land property and conventions of village life in Northern China. Living on imperialism disallowed them to engage in conscious politics of the subaltern. However, their anti-imperialist activism resumed atavistically after the U.S. occupying troops liberated them from political incorrectness, culminating in the mass demonstration in 1960 against Japan’s signing of the Security Pact with the U.S. Their views on Socialist China were sanguine and hopeful but the end of the Cultural Revolution sent them into silence once more. While their place has always been opposite of those on the right wing, they share a vicissitude style of career (Shao 2009).

A parallel vicissitude submerges Euro-Asianism in Russia, first appearing in the 1920s, then acquiescing under the Communist Party rule for 70 years, and finally re-emerging in the 1990s to assist in the pursuit of an integrated statehood of Russia (Laruelle 2008). Similarly, the pursuit of statehood in 21st century Japan by the right wing, supported by Premier Abe (2013), was an attempt to move Japan beyond an occupied territory of the U.S., qua the West. To embark on a journey toward statehood, Japan could not challenge U.S. leadership directly but instead, demonstrated its ability to face and overcome the rising China on its own, despite the hegemonic order that was shaken by China was under the U.S. leadership. A Japan that is no longer under the U.S. protective umbrella but still is able to provide, as the U.S. fails, a civilizational model for neighboring China to emulate, would make a contemporary pledge to the WHS.

The dispute over the Senkaku Islands and the demonstration of military strength by Japan against China in the beginning of 2013 has won the support of the Japanese general public, the right wing in particular. The pursuit of statehood, justified by the need to protect Japan’s claimed territory of the Senkaku Islands, parallels similar attempts to overcome modernity prescribed for Japan by the lessons learned from Europe since the Meiji Restoration. The Hegelian designation of the Orient needed to be overcome, as the stagnated civilization testified by both the advanced Europe and the backward China. Japan believed they could transcend their own Oriental backwardness by confronting China; the return of the Senkaku Island dispute has been the single most significant confrontation between China and Japan in the 21st century.

The struggle began in 1876 when Japan kidnapped of the king of Ryukyu, a Chinese
protectorate near Senkaku. Former U.S. President Grant mediated between Japan and China to ensure peace but Japan was reluctant and did not accept the compromise in Grant’s proposal to preserve Ryukyu as a Chinese protectorate. Japan defeated China twenty years later in 1895 and Russia thirty years later in 1905, resulting in a successful Westernization that placed Japan on the world’s radar. However, Japan felt restrained by the West and decided, half a century after the Ryukyu kidnap, to exercise the WHS by grouping the entire East Asia to challenge the West. Japan’s dilemma of being indebted to both China and the West in its quest for national identity occurred in both Meiji Japan and in the 21st century. Modern statehood reflects a state that does not live under the protection or shadow of any Western country. In the 1920s, this meant that Japan should not succumb to the Washington Treaty system that downgraded Japan’s status to a secondary power in East Asia. In the 21st century, it also means that Japan should no longer be satisfied as an occupied nation where U.S. troops are stationed.

Transcendence of Western civilization was first enacted by demonstrating that Japan was the only capable actor of modernizing Asia in the mid-20th century. In the 21st century, Japan is similarly demonstrating that they are the only country capable of curbing and transforming China. Transforming China into a civilized nation is a task Japan feels confident they can accomplish, so they must be neither the West nor China, or conversely, both China and the West. This statement is true for Japan in the 2010s and the 1920s, and embodies the spirit of the WHS rooted in the PoP and coming out of the KSP (Goto-Jones 2005). Absolute nothingness is so embracive that other forms of Asianism in stock similarly cannot be silent forever without returning to service after an interlude. In fact, the metaphor of Manchukuo inspires different versions of Asianism once hoped for by Takeuchi Yoshimi (1967) to be a method of self-denial and by his contemporary disciple of East Asianism, Hirano Kenichiro (1982), a student of John K. Fairbank, as a method to transcend sovereign order. China, in general, additionally inspires a different form of Asianism in the Japanese intellectual circle, which is an Asianism that advocates peace, as exemplified by liberal Asianist Iriye Akira (1979), another disciple of Fairbank.

3.3. Taiwan and the Worlding Principles
Taiwan is an exceptional place to practice the philosophy of nothingness due to its uncertain and layered political history. Its political regimes have constantly changed, each migrating from another greater regime originally outside of the island. As historical Japan consciously floats between Europeanness and Chineseness, contemporary Taiwan floats consciously between Chineseness and Japaneseesness and, after WWII, Americanness as well. Early suspicions that Taiwan was in a position of in-betweenness arose during the conflict between China and Japan in the 1930s and 1940s. Confucian and colonial Taiwanese intellectual Tsai Peihuo borrowed from the Japan’s imperialism the notion of East Asia to resolve such an inner confrontation. In actuality, Taiwan was a devout and sincere practitioner of the KSP, more so than Japan. Proclaimed as “son of East Asia” while remaining loyal to the Japanese Emperor, Tsai was able to imagine Taiwan belonging to neither Japan nor China. Tsai’s East
Asian stance was by all means mimicry of WHS (Huang C. and Shih 2009). Tsai was imprisoned by the Japanese authorities for potential harm to the combating morale of the Japanese military through his self-surrendering to an identity of nobody.

The political powerlessness of Tsai during WWII and the shaky regime in Taiwan that followed the war confirm the principles, rather ironically, that the faithful following of the KSP is possible for the subaltern only. Subaltern people usually suffer from an incapacity to change the world around them, but this incapacity can enable deeper reflections as motivates learning. This first requires withdrawal from one’s own condition and then entering another condition to acquire different experiences or knowledge.

In contrast, a stronger power practicing the WHS would be like constructing a civilizational bridge. When a strong disciple of WHS preaches lessons urging mutual learning to different parts of the world, this may become a burden of nothingness. Both the partial West and backward China were legitimate targets of transformation under the quest of the WHS. Japan undertook this mission during the war but did not find success in Taiwan, first as Japanese colony and later as asylum for the defeated Chinese Civil War regime of the Kuomintang. Nevertheless, the intellectual capacity to deposit the inexpressible feeling of in-betweenness in the subconscious condition and launch an atavistic revival many decades later validates the power of nothingness as a mode of self-identification.

The unavailing appeal to epistemological tranquility and ontological equality of Tsai was followed by the Kuomintang takeover after WWII and furthered by American intervention in East Asia, where the containment of a Communist China imposed a strategic and ideological role on the Kuomintang regime. However, the Kuomintang had their own Civil War agenda, and as a result, Taiwan was neither another Vietnam, nor another base of containment. Chiang Ching-kuo, the last Civil War leader, struggled to establish his own platform making the coexistence of the Cold War and preparation for a post-Civil War alternatively possible. The former was through confrontation, while the latter was through the imagination of restoration.

Similarly, post-colonial Taiwan had its own independent agenda differing from the ruling Kuomintang’s. Although it may have appeared that the suppressed colonial worldview lost its utterance under Kuomintang rule, in reality Lee Tenghui was eventually able to capitalize on the decline of the Kuomintang in accordance with a retrieved colonial platform (Huang Y. 2013). Lee was ready to revive colonial legacy only after the conditions matured without him contributing to them. His alienation from China awaited its turn to replace his Chineseness transplanted by the Kuomintang. While the first hidden agenda was Chiang Ching-kuo’s attempt to bypass hegemonic Cold War, the second agenda that has carried post-colonial alienation from the Kuomintang was hidden from the ruling Kuomintang. This second agenda was suppressed by Lee for four decades due to the perceived negligence of the anti-Chinese identity powerfully bred by Japanese colonialism.

The unique double hidden agenda was compromised of hiding between the Kuomintang’s China and U.S. Cold War, and the Taiwan’s post-colonials and Kuomintang’s Civil War. The double hidden agendas empirically give life to the philosophy of nothingness.
Worlding is the proper method to excavate these hidden agendas to recognize the agency that resist the ruling regimes coming to power consecutively. The first hidden agenda made use of U.S. Cold War resources for Chiang Ching-kuo’s own purposes, in addition to the role assigned by the U.S. The second hidden agenda was completely unattended and was no more than an affective memory without utterance ensuring the alienation from China did not incur alert. Therefore, in post-colonial Taiwan, becoming related to the incumbent power is always more imminent than any platform of rationalism. Each hidden agenda empowers the subaltern in question by means of a ready subjectivity to act incompatibly with the hegemonic expectation despite whether they judge their hegemonic leader positively, as in the Kuomintang’s case toward the U.S., or negatively, as in post-colonial Taiwan’s case toward the Kuomintang. By critically reflecting on the hegemonic discourse, the hidden agenda is ultimately on the world agenda, hence worldliness.

Taiwan’s uncertain and layered political history prepares its residents for accepting arriving regimes so efficiently that the society does not intend to recollect politically incorrect history for its present time. Those self-suppressed conditions can usually persevere in the sub-consciousness, to be retrieved only when the condition has matured for re-emergence. The PoP articulates the condition of layered sub-consciousness in a consistent rationality of hidden resistance. Taiwan’s condition of double worlding also provides a more sophisticated case of worlding. The post-colonial agenda, which came to power suddenly upon the demise of the Civil War generation, thrives on a pro-Taiwan independence discourse. Worlding is no longer just sheer resistance to the one hegemony. Instead, it could be cycles of hidden agendas, recalled to service from a long-term, albeit subconscious, memory to resist a substituting, albeit imagined, hegemony.

The coexistence of perceived contradicting positions towards the Diaoyu Islands should not be surprising under this layered circumstance. The Kuomintang changed its position from being the true representative of China that would regain the islands, to a non-Chinese nation only caring for a peaceful resolution. The pro-independence force even supports Japan’s claim of sovereignty. Partially plagued by Chiang Ching-kuo’s Chinese image, however, the U.S. is continuously worried that a pro-independence Taiwan would desire cooperation with China.

3.4. China and BoR Proposition: Relationship as Conscious Place

When the self-perception of China was at the center of the world during the dynastic period, the application of its tributary system was hardly synchronic. The Qing court, for example, arranged tributary relationships with its neighbors, each according to their conditions. There was no single formula they followed, in fact, exemption from a rigid model was the only formula that was applicable in all cases. This explained why the kidnapping of the King of Ryukyu did not immediately incur a military reaction from the presumably militarily stronger China at the time. For the Qing court, muddling through President Grant’s proposal was far more rational if the purpose was no more than saving China’s nominal suzerainty over Ryukyu. Abortion of Grant’s mediation later only led the Qing court’s decision not to take
any action with the hope that such inaction would first, avoid the embarrassment of the Chinese fighting with a small neighbor over a much smaller land and, second, camouflage the embarrassment that China was uninterested in its suzerainty.

BoR’s relative negligence towards principles or values is in contrast with worlding in the sense that the latter philosophy seeks to overcome the subaltern’s heavy dependence on hegemonic sanctioning of economic, political and ideological partnerships. By presenting Taiwan’s maneuvering of the U.S. partnership in its own battle with China, a worlding method for Taiwan brings to surface the subaltern’s agency hidden in its mimicry of hegemonic discourse. Worlding is not in China’s favor, though. Instead, BoR is a method for China to bypass the containment of a rising China contrived by the hegemonic forces. By stabilizing reciprocal relationships on a bilateral basis with as many neighboring countries as possible, China is able to offset the challenge of containment. This means that China has to disregard the domestic institutional, ideological and religious characteristics of its neighboring countries. BoR is valuable for any newly emerging nation, any rising power in face of increasingly expansive and complicated encountering of the world, and any declining hegemony relaxing on synchronizing imposition to appease allies. All of them face a kind of IR full of contradiction. To survive or to proceed, the nation could better manage its uncertain environment by avoiding synchronizing relationships which proliferate in its expanding scope of negotiation.

China on the rise faces precisely this challenge of proliferated relationships. Its influence expands to exert a strong presence in all its neighbors and reaches far over into Africa. As a result, the existing hegemonic U.S. and its allies feel the threat of the newcomer to trespass the boundaries that used to restrain its sphere of influence. To defend its rise in world politics from rebalance of power by the hegemonic U.S. and to soothe the anxious neighbors are apparently very different tasks. In addition, a watching Europe that is composed of the self-regarded moral superpower in West Europe, a post- but anti-communist Eastern Europe, and a competitive and yet somewhat conveniently allied Russia all require soothing as well. These are not the most complicated, however, when compared with anti-unification Taiwan, recalcitrant North Korea and assertive right-wing Japan.

Exemplifying relative nothingness, China’s difficulty in handling all these very complicated relationships does not arise from its own confused identity, but from too many incongruent roles expected of China by countries from all over the world. In the case of Japan, its international environment has had no significant change except that the rise of China again has led Japan to be caught up in an identity puzzle forcing Japan to choose either the West or East to align with. This internal puzzle compels Japan into choosing a conservative side which might send other less conservative sides into acquiescence, repeating a familiar cycle. In comparison, China’s rise proceeds with the art of relationship management. In East Asia, this means that China has to cope with a Taiwan painstakingly asserting its worldliness at the aforementioned two levels, a U.S. anxiously applying some synchronic values/institutions to co-opt China, and a Japan ambivalently switching between a member of Asia, a junior ally of the U.S., and a normal state in the world.
The cycles of right-wing identity in Japan are drawn from the depot of all historical identities, as well as the worlding strategy of Taiwan to distance itself from Chinese identification, answering primarily to the call for a clear self-identity under globalization embedded in the hegemonic order as well as the multi-cultural sensibilities. This quest for difference brings Taiwan and Japan closer in portraying an estranging China that rises on illiberal politics opposed by them. Taiwan’s quest for independence requires no more than a statement of difference, while Japan’s adherence to Western synchronic values imposes a duty on Japan to transform China. China has to concede to Taiwan’s liberal arrangement to demonstrate that Taiwan’s return to China would not cause any serious adaptive problems for Taiwan; however, China would resist any liberalization proposed by either Japan or the US in order to rectify what China’s sees as inappropriate interventionary style of their China policy. In other words, the BoR requires China to treat liberalism in an incompatible light contingent upon who promotes it.

The BoR serves as a bridge between the PoP and Worlding because BoR’s power of relating threatens to bypass situated identities and pushes for alternative situated identities to be recollected from memory. Confronting China’s BoR, for example, Taiwan recollects a dormant colonial identity to support re-Worlding of an exclusively non-Chinese Taiwan. Nevertheless, China’s BoR can also support a pro-China identity in Taiwan to enhance its political correctness. In the same vein, the BoR of China can appease a worlding strategy of Taiwan by accommodating the asserted identity of the latter with some qualification regarding the context. For example, China can give concur with Taiwan’s pledge to the sovereignty of Diaoyu Islands, given that Taiwan willingly continue to represent China. When a pro-independence Taiwan meets with right-wing Japan, confrontation can be avoided by enlisting the BoR between them. That means that any incongruent identities, once sharing a common target, i.e. China, could resort to the BoR and compromise on their incongruent sovereign claims. Japan and Taiwan, for example, empathize with each other’s anti-China perspective, making Japan’s cyclical retrieval of a colonial identity and Taiwan’s quest for independent sovereignty not irrevocably confrontational in their encountering.

4. The KSP as IR Systemic Theory

The PoP propositions do not predict the actual foreign policy or the necessity of nations to behave in certain patterns, given the context of international structure. They do not even make predictions on how nations will generally behave but all three PoP propositions do make predictions about how the system behaves in the long run. Other similar theoretical attempts that are familiar to IR disciples all originate from contemporary schools of thoughts. One noticeable realist example include John Mearsheimer’s (2001) prediction of confrontation during hegemonic transitions as one of the most discussed systemic theories that predicts inevitability of confrontation between the existing and the rising powers. Liberal IR scholar Robert Keohane’s (1984) theorization on institutional functionalism similarly predicts continued support for the hegemonic order after the hegemonic power loses the
capacity to cover for the free-riders of its order. There is a similar string of constructivist IR represented by Alexander Wendt (2003), who predicts that the system will move toward the world government upon rational nations learning together. In comparison, the PoP theorization tackles the stability of the system.

There are three specific features of the PoP theorization making it different from mainstream IR theorization. First, it is not a study of how order between major powers can be established or explained; rather, it cares about how nations adapt to major power politics by joining, resisting, appropriating, reconciling, avoiding, transcending, or even defeating them. In short, it predicts that the order is never orderly. Secondly, the PoP theorization specifically allows nation to make judgments that will affect systemic behavior. Unlike the majority of IR theories preoccupied with structural argument, the PoP theorization demonstrates how the structural explanation can accommodate judgmental factors and demonstrate how nations are capable of thinking and choosing under undecidable circumstances. Third, the PoP theorization confronts both purposes and their systemic consequences of all different types of nations, while other theories focus primarily on major powers.

Summary

In summary, the IR theorization, in accordance with the PoP, relativizes major power politics and their quest for order composed of synchronic values or institutions. There is no pretension of either a destiny or a destined fate. The PoP IRT explains how nations influenced by major power politics judge their conditions and rely on combining existing cultural resources to make sense of their place in world politics. The PoP predicts that IR systemic stability cannot be maintained over a set of congruent identities because history’s longevity allows for previous politically incorrect identities to either return in due time with proper clues or emerge from creative recombination’s of old and extant cultural resources. The PoP specifically predicts that nations caught between different identities will experience cycles in their IR; nations with an expansive scope of IR or declining from the hegemonic status will adopt the BoR; and less influential nations will practically reinterpret hegemonic order to meet their otherwise inexpressible motivations.

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Politics of the “Individual” and the “Self”: Reflecting Personal Narratives in International Relations?

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Abstract

In the age of progressing globalisation and extremely integrated economy, there seems to be a growing attention to the Kyoto School philosophy. This is not confined to Japan, but also around the world. This popularity is presumably because of the wide spread perception that there are some similarities in terms of problems of the world between the present where non-Western IRT literature is attracting growing attention and the era of the Kyoto School philosophers who developed their discourse of the Philosophy of World History against the Western philosophy (Kōsaka et al. 1943), and many of the specialists seem to strive to learn what the Kyoto School philosophers thought in their philosophical engagement as a clue to the solution for the present instable international order (Shih 2012; Shimizu 2011). However, it is rare among the specialist of the Kyoto School to focus on the critique of the Kyoto School, which presumably also gives us wider perception to the comparative study of the present and the inter-war period. This paper is to extract a cautionary tale for the present IR out of the experience of the Kyoto School philosophers.

Introduction

Kyoto School philosophy has recently come to be seen as one of the sources of the original formulation of international relations (IR). Chris Goto-Jones’s prominent work on Nishida’s philosophy (Goto-Jones 2005) and Graham Gerald Ong’s application of “emptiness” to IR theory (Ong 2004) are good examples. Chih-yu Shih’s examination of Nishida’s philosophy is also worth noting as it attempts to put Nishida’s “place of nothingness” into the context of contemporary IR (Shih 2012).

Although their location of Kyoto School philosophy in contemporary IR is remarkable, what is commonly missing in these works is the contextualization of the Kyoto School. This task is essential in reconciling contemporary IR with Kyoto School philosophy. Specifically, Nishida and his disciples were deeply involved in the wartime regime in the 1940s, thus their
philosophy risks justifying and reinforcing the prevailing order of their time, in which marginalized voices of ordinary citizens in Japan and in the colonized areas were hardly ever heard. Indeed, their involvement in the wartime regime has been regarded as the “dark-side” of the Kyoto School’s history, and it is barely acknowledged in IR except by those currently working on Japanese IR (Tosa 2009; Shimizu 2011).

This task seems to be particularly important in contemporary IR literature because Nishida’s philosophy has often been interpreted as a “post-modern” discourse (Araya 2008, 10), and, in fact, it was an attempt to “transcend” Western intellectual deficiencies, the same as contemporary non-Western IRT (International Relations Theory) discourses striving to provide an alternative to Western IRT. Thus revealing and clarifying why the mainstream Kyoto School philosophers were involved in the wartime regime is essential to discovering the meaning of the emergence of the non-Western literature of IR in the present.

As their formulations of political philosophy were to overcome the boundaries and deficiencies of the “Western modernity,” it is worth analyzing what potentialities their philosophical discourses might have in relation to contemporary IR, for which mainstream Kyoto School philosophy contains important implications.

This paper strives to clarify the Kyoto School philosophy’s boundaries and deficiencies and analyses the philosophical discourses of those who tried to transcend them. In order to achieve this goal, this paper begins by summarizing the current discourses of non-Western IRT and its relation to the Kyoto School. Second, it briefly explains the Kyoto School’s discourses of philosophy with specific attention to the concept of “coincidentality” and its political implications. This will be followed by concluding remarks in which I attempt to develop important ideas relevant to contemporary non-Western IRT.

**Non-Western IRT and the Chinese School**

Contemporary international relations as an academic discipline is characterized by the emergence of non-Western IRT literature. Non-Western scholars’ critical perception of modernization and civilization in non-Western areas, which was exclusively formulated in terms of appearance rather than underlaid by philosophical principles, permeates the literature. Thus modernization and civilization ostensibly took place in the form of objects and concepts such as buildings, roads, and airports as well as through the introduction of such institutions as political representation and the market economy (Khatab 2011; Nakano 2011). In this sense, the technologies and sciences introduced under the name of civilizational development were exclusively instrumental in orientation. The importation of instrumental technology made it possible for many non-Western nations to assert a different soul, culture, and history, which supposedly has characteristics distinct from Western civilization (Kang 2007; Zhao 2012).

The obsession of elites in the non-Western nations and regions with the difference from the Western civilization is closely related to the ontological perception of the world. Because non-Western nations, and Asian nations in particular, have allegedly different and indigenous
cultures and histories, they have a unique ontology of world affairs. One example of such non- or anti-Western ontology is the “Chinese School” discourse, which places a special emphasis on the tributary system (Kang 2007, 2010), a system of ancient Chinese governance (Zhao 2006; Yan 2011) or the Chinese concept of relationality, guanxi (Qin 2010, 2011). There are many who are currently engaging with this new academic enterprise of the Chinese version of international relations; the most influential among them is most likely Zhao Tingyang, who recently developed the theory of tianxia. Tianxia is the traditional Chinese concept of “the world all under heaven” (Zhao 2012; Yan 2011). By applying this ancient Chinese concept to contemporary international affairs, his framework comes close to what is traditionally called World Society theory in the context of the English School in that it transcends the borders of nation-states (Buzan 2004, xviii). Tianxia embraces all people and communities “under heaven” as there is no concept of foreign countries, but they are “theoretically taken-in sub-states” (Zhao 2006, 35). This is because Zhao’s interpretation of Chinese philosophy is based on a specific ontology of “relations” rather than individual things (ibid., 33). This relationality is the reason why the Chinese political system focuses more on social order than on individuals, the main target of Western philosophy. Their articulation of world order is not just theoretical but always practical because, as Zhao contends, theory in this context is not just about what is but also about what is expected (ibid., 30). In this way, their perception and interpretation of the world is tremendously different from Western international relations, and this different perception of China should form the core of the future of world affairs.

A similar argument can be found in David Kang’s assertion that there was a long-lasting peace under the Chinese tributary system from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. He argues that East Asia had enjoyed peace and order before the violent arrival of Western imperialism. In contrast to the Westphalian system of interstate relations, which was defined by its formal equality and incessant interstate conflict, the East Asian tributary system was characterized by formal inequality and “centuries of stability among the core participants” (Kang 2010, 201). This logic depends on a Sinocentric view, asserting that what is good for China is good for East Asia, and when China is strong and stable, order has been preserved (Kang 2007, 201; Callahan 2012, 41).

Qin Yaqing (2011) focuses on the context of guanxi, relationality. He argues that Asian international relations are better explained by relationality than by formal rules and institutions. Qin illustrates Western individualism as “bundles of rice straws in the paddy fields,” while he describes the Chinese social structure as “continuous circles of ripples on the lake” each of which “is connected in one way or another” (Qin 2009, 7-8).

What permeates their non-Western theories of international relations is the persistent contradiction in their arguments between the purpose of transcending the Westphalian system and their insistence on a Sinocentric formulation of future IR. They are understandably enthusiastic in criticizing the violent character of Western modernity and the system of the nation-state, but they articulate an allegedly new system of world order based on tianxia as a superior system to the Westphalian order, on top of which China, as the rising nation-state,
resides. In this sense, their version of international relations theory shows little difference from Japan’s Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Area (Chen 2012, 477). In fact, the concept of tianxia comes close to Nishida Kitarō’s theory of world history, which was later deployed by Japan’s imperialist government (Nishida 1950a; Shimizu 2011). The most similar point is that both theories are supposed to be inclusive for all nations and cultures. They were designed to be multicultural from the beginning of their theoretical articulation. For the sake of multiculturalism, they see the nation-state only as the main obstacle to their theorization. In fact, they both cast doubt on the concept of the nation-state per se as a product of Western civilization, and they try to provide a different framework of governance for the Asian continent (Nishida 1950a; Zhao 2006). Another similarity is that both theories are based on a presumption of hierarchal order, and their nation-state is granted sole responsibility to maintain order (Nishida 1950b; Zhao 2006). In Nishida’s case, the subtle and ambiguous balance of multiculturalism and Japan’s role as a supposed leader of the region was completely destroyed by the military government as the latter overwhelmed the former, and as a result, Nishida was regarded as an apologist for Japan’s war against the West despite his initial intention to contribute to world peace (Shimizu 2011).

This contradiction between the idealized harmonious world society without borders and the powerful influence of the concept of the nation-state over scholars’ perceptions is not limited to the Chinese School. The alleged “Japanese School” (Chen 2012) and the “Korean School” (Cho 2013) are no exception. Because they articulate the world in terms of the nation-state, despite their enthusiastic engagement in renewing IR, they take the West as their only reference point (Chen 2012, 477). This means that the discourses of non-Western IRT should be understood in the context of unceasing confrontations and incessant competition among nation-states.

The Kyoto School and “Coincidentality”

Graham Gerald Ong suggests that his articulation of the implications of the Kyoto School’s philosophy to the contemporary IR was totally based on James W. Heisig’s book “Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School” (2001) by quoting Heisig’s confession about the importance of a secondary reading of the Kyoto School (Ong 2004, 39-40). Although this confession sounds unreasonable to ordinary IR scholars, who usually regard the access to the primary source as the indispensable principle, Ong’s confession was inevitable, if not preferable, given that Nishida’s writing is extremely complicated and confusing even to those whose mother tongue is Japanese.

The remarkable interpretations of such Kyoto School analysts as Heisig (2001), David Williams (2004), and Goto-Jones (2005) will surely help the study of the discourses of Nishida and the Kyoto School philosophers, but it is not unreasonable to say that depending exclusively on these readings runs the risk of missing imperative points in these philosophical discourses.

Analysts’ interpretations of Nishida’s philosophy have rarely concentrated on his
adherence to the concept of time. This point has recently been taken up by Japanese academics (Kobayashi 2013) but has rarely been the focus of the existing IR literature on the Kyoto School. This is presumably partly because the concept of time does not appear in Nishida’s early writings, which most IR researchers of the Kyoto School rely on in their investigations, and partly because Nishida himself did not put much emphasis on this concept in his political writings even in his later years.

However, Nishida’s concept of time may have had a substantial impact on the existing research of the Kyoto School as well as on IR in general in that there is an indispensable contradiction between his articulation of time and his political writings, and this may prove his unwillingness to become involved in the wartime regime, which is the core issue when one studies any aspect of the philosophy of the Kyoto School.

So, what is time in Nishida’s philosophy? Time is obviously a confusing concept. Nishida argues that the present is eternal and will never be past or future; it is neither determined by past incidents nor controlled by future plans. Time is generated in the form of the self-determination of the eternal present. It appears ubiquitously and disappears everywhere (Nishida 1948, 342; Nishizuka 2010, 107-108). Therefore, Nishida’s concept of the eternal present appears to have a remarkable discontinuity from the past and the future. Nevertheless, time appears continuous from the past through the present on to the future in the form of history. As a result, Nishida defines time as the “continuity of the discontinuity” (Nishida 1948, 342).

The definition of time as the “continuity of the discontinuity” is in no way easy to comprehend. He began his philosophy with the concept of “pure experience” and later developed it into the “place of nothingness.” Now his focus is on the “eternal present.” It appears that his philosophy encountered some discontinuities during his philosophical life. However, some argue that his philosophical investigation is consistent. Kobayashi (2013), for instance, contends that these concepts of Nishida’s philosophy stay essentially the same throughout his life. What characterizes them is Nishida’s pursuit of openness with others and his willingness to accept coincidentality. The “eternal present” is, by definition, remote from the past or present, and is never controlled or determined by them. This means that the present is open to anything, thus ready for coincidence. It does not exclude the possibility of anything taking place. Thus the present is presumably inclusive and exposed. It is the period of time in which the “pure experience” takes place.

Obviously this concept of time forms an indispensable contradiction with his political writings, which many Kyoto School researchers regard as conservative and nationalistic. If Nishida was an advocate of Japan’s imperial and expansionist government, how could he have developed such an open-minded philosophy of inclusivity? The military expansion of Japan was clearly exercised on the basis of a planned strategy, and this surely meant the present was controlled by the future. At the same time, the legitimacy of the, at the time, present government was largely drawn from the past, namely Japanese imperial history, and this suggested the determination of the present by the past. In this way, there are many indications of inconsistency in his philosophical and political writings, and this may signify
his intention, although it was by no means successful, to highjack the foreign policy of Japan through his philosophy of coincidentiality.

**The Cautionary Tale of the Kyoto School**

Nishida’s effort to highjack the foreign relations of Japan and to change its course to a more harmonious and peaceful world ended in disastrous failure. An article he wrote specifically for Prime Minister Tojo was abused and substantially edited without Nishida’s permission in order to justify the aggression of the Japanese army over the Asian continent. Nishida was extremely disappointed to hear Tojo’s speech and later died in sorrow. His reputation is marred even now, as he is generally regarded as an intellectual war criminal. So, what went wrong with his engagement in politics? One possible explanation is provided by Kobayashi (2011): The Japanese of Nishida’s generation had much admiration for the emperor, and Nishida was no exception (ibid., 335-356). In fact, there are numerous writings of Nishida’s on the emperor and his predecessors, which prove his extraordinary attachment to the emperor. Nishida believed that the imperial household had a symbolic existence, and this resonated with his philosophy of the “place of nothingness” and the “eternal present.” In a sense, Nishida idealized and romanticized the emperor by drawing him into his philosophical picture.

However, the emperor was by no means the representation of nothingness as Nishida presumed. The emperor was in fact the representation of being, being of an aggressive sort in Japanese politics of the time (ibid., 341). The emperor represented the reification of the nation-state of Japan, which was naturally constructed upon the notion of the legitimate use of violence granted by the Westphalian regime. Ironically, one could suggest that Nishida’s articulation of the emperor materialized in the form of the imperial household of the post-war period as a symbolic existence without political power (ibid.).

What can we say about the non-Western IRT literature based on our understanding of the Kyoto School’s experience? First, the notions of inclusivity and openness are definitely the goals to pursue. However, it is naïve to say that these norms will materialize by claiming that they are the norms. As Nishida’s experience suggests, knowledge and intellect are always in danger of abuse by the prevailing power. It seems particularly so when the romantic ideas of peace and inclusivity are articulated in defense of a particular and present nation-state. Nevertheless we are obliged to pursue norms and prescriptions, because, as E. H. Carr suggests in his *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, norms and morals are indispensable aspects of international relations (Carr 1946). Without them, the world would certainly become a space of endless conflicts. In order to avoid this, we have to balance the realist and utopian understandings of world affairs.
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Kobayashi, Toshiaki. 2013. *Nishida Tetsugaku wo Hiraku: <Eien no Ima> wo Megutte*


PANEL DISCUSSION
PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussed about Non-Western International Relation Theory and implications of Kyoto School. Two discussants, Dr. Ching-Chang Chen of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University and Dr. Takeshi Hamashita of Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University gave comments on the presentations.

Dr. Ching-Chang Chen’s Comment

I want to start from Dr. Shimizu’s presentation. I will try to go through some points he mentioned in his presentation. If I start from the very beginning, he indicate that Non-Western discourses on International Relations or International Relations Theory run a risk of being co-opted into the enlightenment project, which those discourses seek to criticize. These examples of these seemingly critical discourses may include the Kyoto School in the 20th century and also more recent attempts to build up National IR Schools outside west in the 21st century.

My first question for Professor Shimizu is what does it mean by criticality? In his view, is it always tied to a Eurocentric legacy stinging from the European enlightenment or are there other definitions and treatments of criticality?

The second point is about the relationship between Non-Western IRT and Kyoto School. In his presentation, he indicate that these discourses, they share some similarities in terms of the international political economic circumstances. My question here is that are there additional ways to reflect on the relevance of the Kyoto School to Contemporary Non-Western IR Discourse? If Japan was rising in the first half of the 20th century, it makes sense to study indigenous theory-building in Chinese IR as his mentioned. For example, the ancient and Chinese notion of Tianxia or “All-under-heaven” sought to promote social harmony without converting differences into sameness, which is quite compatible with Kyoto philosophers’ call for multiple historical worlds.

I will then start some comments on Dr. Kawamura’s paper. In his paper, he pointed out that Nishida’s discussion on politics in fact is quite apolitical, so it became possible for the regime to use it to reinforce the existing order. So, this point can be actually used to reinforce arguments made in Dr. Shimizu’s paper.

Now, the paper by Dr. Uhl. His main idea is that even in Nishida’s philosophy itself there exists contradiction. So it’s not just about his observation of the history, but also we see in his theory there is contradiction between rationalism and romanticism. This kind of clash also exists in his theorizing. The point we can relate to the previous two presentations is that because the kind of romantic criticism actually still work to the reproduction of some aspects
of capitalist modality. And that is something Nishida tries to criticize but in fact he was still reinforcing that logic. That also helps explain why Kyoto School philosophers, they end up with being coopted by the wartime regime.

The final comments on Dr. Shih’s papers, he doesn’t just deal with the Kyoto School but also try to identify four types of IR, so it is like Alexander Wendt argued three types of international entity and whether they should try to develop a 2x2 table which shows that there are four different possibilities. My quick question here is that it seems sometimes on some agents there could be state or non-state actors. They may be facing the possibility that they can choose between different types of international relations. For example, Taiwan could have chosen to deal with other factors following the relative identity or following the logic of balance of relationships. What are the mechanisms or conditions on those actors they would follow? When they can have choice, what kind of mechanism or foundation can help them to make the judging?

**Dr. Takeshi Hamashita’s Comment**

In general, by hearing all presentation talking about Kyoto School, I think it’s not much non-western, very western in Japanese intellectuals history.

For me, thinking about “Toyo” or orient from historical perspective, Kyoto University started “Toyoshi,” Oriental Studies in 1911 by emphasizing not Sinocentric or Sinology-centred study of Asia or China studies including Central Asia or Southeast Asia, but other surrounding area of China. This kind of perspective by passing through Europe, returning back to Asia, we need to remind again because post-war Japan or post-war Asia not much intellectuals joined or participated to re-establish the framework of East-Asia, because that period was a sort of Cold War and also completely different sort of values.

The intellectuals in Asia or in Japan, in particular, the role of intellectuals in Asia in postwar period is how to reexamine this procedure and then how to put the agenda in the long historical context. I am working on economic history like “World’s System Theory” by Immanuel Wallerstein or “Reorient” by Gunder Frank criticizing west-centred world. We are starting some much more long-term and also interrelated idea of region and also beyond state or besides nation state what is the real relations among regions. Particularly, under globalization situation we find the local is reemerging, Nation State-Based International Relations or Theory of International Relations are facing new task.

Return back to the idea of “Toyo,” this idea is from China. It includes Korea, Japan, and Ryukyu. Then Japan started to take the idea of “Toyo” to put some distance with China and then introducing west sale to contrast Japan-centred “Toyo” and “West.” East-West relation for Japanese intellectuals is by keeping distance from China.

Talking about west, we need to remind this kind of channel to reach west and to compare Japan and China of modernization. We tend to emphasize Japan modernized by following the western model or by introducing west into Japan than China.

Hearing today’s lectures or talks, I try to returning back to Kyoto School and the
positioning of Kyoto School and these overall recollection of post-war and even each period or 1920-1930 period to present; so maybe from now on by putting Kyoto School in a wider structure of the discussion of so-called “Non-Western International Relation Theory.” From both sides as international relation theory itself, we can also go back to reexamining. Also, Kyoto School itself also by Asian perspective or by actually Kyoto perspective, we can try to reach the historical sort of position of Kyoto School more appropriately.

Presenters’ Responses

Kosuke Shimizu: Actually I better put my emphasis on one point, which Dr. Chen asked me about what is criticality of International Relations. I can’t provide he any universalized answer but what I can answer is that we’ve got some kind of influence or power forcing us to see things according to particular concept and rules and regulations. That is nation-state system.

When we talk about culture, then we always territorialize the time and sometimes forget the concept of time; sort of assuming that we’ve got everlasting territorialized culture, that means the Chinese culture and Japanese culture of course. And because of that, sometimes we are misled to finding the sort of contradictions in terms of geographical division instead of chronological division. I am more interested in the chronological division instead of geographical division. That’s the reason why I am more interested in postmodern or poststructuralist idea of international relation.

At the moment, the interpretation of criticality which I can come up with at the moment in the limited time and space is some kind of poststructuralist idea which deconstructs the idea of nation-state as well as east and west division. That is in the context of Non-Western International Relations. Definitely, that’s one of the things we have to focus upon.

That relates to Dr. Hamashita’s comments that actually Non-Western IRT is very much western in a sense that if we are focusing upon critical engagements in international relation, that is pretty much Kantian philosophy of critical rationalism.

But still, we are tempted to sort of distinguish west and non-west in order to construct our ideas, our identities, which actually we sometimes try to fortify ourselves. That is really tempting, but we have to get used to a sort of moving, flexible, maybe sort of ever-changing idea of identity which is definitely needed in moving towards a new era of international relations.

Christian Uhl: Before we went on the panel, we had a discussion of our papers, a brief one, and we figured out that sort of all these papers kind of are like a planetary system that is circling around the centre of gravity, which is sort of a black hole.

We all have different names for this centre of gravity and perceive it in different ways. This one certainly that keeps these papers kind of together and I am very thankful for Dr. Hamashita’s mentioning of Immanuel Wallerstein’s World-Systems Analysis. This is certainly another way of addressing this black hole. Wallerstein in a recent publication, which is an
introduction to his *World-Systems Analysis*, says that the modern world, the world we are living now has always been a world economy.

The system in which we are living now has always been a capitalist world economy. I think we all can agree about that, sort of, this hegemonic totalizing thing, which we may call a capitalist world system is sort of the center of gravity around which our papers as well as Nishida’s and the Kyoto School Philosophy and perhaps also the idea of a Non-Western IRT are circling around.

**Chih-yu Shih:** Well, I don’t have much to add except I have to agree with Dr. Hamashita’s comment on this “Western/Non-Western IR.” I think if we talk about Kyoto School without discussing the notion of East Asia, then it’s quite western; we have to bring Asia back to Kyoto School in order to tackle the non-western dimension of the IR theory.

Regarding the question raised by Dr. Chen, I think there are many mechanisms that he can think of. I think an event is one, an international event that will trigger different thinking. I think theoretical access to different mode of IR is important. I think choice made by national leaders is also important. I can think of event, theoretical access, and a choice for the time being, but I am sure there are others.

**Satofumi Kawamura:** My question that our attempt is just try to have safe effect, safe nation, because I feel that even that west or east, that kind of dichotomy itself will be produced by the system surrounding me, us, like capitalism or the kind of international relation system. So, even if we try to envision it as a kind of non-western something, but it’s already always second by the western idea. Of course, as in this sense, our attempt to become the fundamental, looks like a western attempt but is it possible to go out, to go beyond that kind of aspect? Our attention is how we can criticize that kind of imagination.

**Question from Audience**

**Audience:** Dr. Uhl, would you shortly re-explain the scheme “A equal A” for us to understand the reality of the commodity as an extreme contradiction in today’s globalized capitalism?

**Christian Uhl:** I try to point out that there is a relation between Nishida’s struggle with a contradiction in the tradition of logic, which was Aristotle versus Leibniz or the extensional versus intentional understanding of the relationship of subject and predicate and his political philosophy.

Now, in a contradiction you always have the reference to a higher genus, which allows for the contradictory relationship. This is the epistemic surplus of contradiction in contrast to opposition. Now you have referred to the notion of *guanxi*, well the *guanxi*, Nishida would be here.

The use of this character is expressing the relationality of two individuals which we can
identify as “A is A.” Another one is “B is B” or “non-A is non-A.” But they are not standing just next to each other without having any relationship as it would be in Leibniz’s Monadology where you would then need God and the creation of the whole as a pre-established harmony that is kind of put together from above so to speak.

But here we have a kind of world that is constituting itself by the individuals being related to each other, by insisting on their particular individuality. This character in propositional logics is expressing what is called a material equivalence and that is read as—if we read that out, it means “A is A” if and only if “non-A is non-A” and vice versa.

Nishida tries to insist on the individuality of the individual, and at the same time he would like to stress the relationality of the individuals. In other words, this reformulation of Leibniz’s formula is another expression of what it means when it says dialectical Monadology. Well, and the political relevance of this is clear. It is a wonderful logic if you want to create a world of particular nations and particular nation-states in which each nation, as Nishida says, lives its own historical life and yet at the same time cooperates with all other nations to form a “world of world (sekai-teki sekai).” Well, this is a political translation of this dialectical Monadology.

This is Nishida’s kind of critique of universal hegemony. But that makes Nishida’s whole project self-contradictory and rather problematic; so, instead of expecting answers from Nishida, therefore I regard Nishida’s significance in his philosophy being an expression of a very fundamental connoisseur of the modern human being. And modernity, again, or capitalism, I would not define as western; I would define it as modern and would like you to remind of the fact that Europeans have been overwhelmed historically by capitalist modernity or the capitalist world system as everybody else was, and that we have inequality in Europe as well. Most of the Europeans are not dominating the world; they are as subject to a social domination as many people in East Asia.
PROGRAM

Time: 15:00 – 17:00
Venue: Toko 103, Omiya Campus, Ryukoku University

Modulator: Junya Takiguchi (Lecturer, Ryukoku University)

Opening Remarks
Pauline Kent (Professor, Ryukoku University)

Presentations:

Christian Uhl (Professor, Ghent University)
“Nishida’s Logic, and the Notion of the Nation: A Footnote to a Remark by Karatani Kōjin Concerning a Leibniz Syndrome in 20th Century Political Thought”

Satofumi Kawamura (Research Fellow, The University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy)
“Tekhnē, Culture and New Order: Elimination of Politics by Nishida Kitarō”

Chih-yu Shih (Professor, National Taiwan University)
“Transcending Hegemonic International Relations: Nothingness, Worlding, and Balance of Relationship”

Kosuke Shimizu (Director, Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University)
“The Self and Individual: A Study on Tosaka Jun’s Theory of ‘Moral’ and its Relevance to the Contemporary International Political Economy”

Panel Discussion

Discussant: Takeshi Hamashita (Research Member of Group 3, Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University)

Discussant: Ching-Chang Chen (Associate Professor, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University)
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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Pauline Kent
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