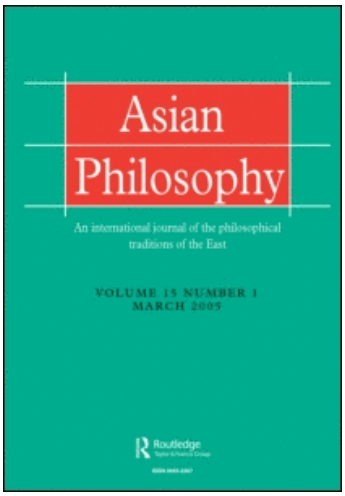

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Nishida, Agency, and the 'Self-Contradictory' Body

Joel W. Krueger

In this essay, I investigate Kitarō Nishida's characterization of what he refers to as the 'self-contradictory' body. First, I clarify the conceptual relation between the self-contradictory body and Nishida's notion of 'acting-intuition'. I next look at Nishida's analysis of acting-intuition and the self-contradictory body as it pertains to our personal, sensorimotor engagement with the world and things in it, as well as to our bodily immersion within the intersubjective and social world. Along the way, I argue that Nishida develops a rich and exceedingly current way of thinking through different facets of embodiment and interpersonal relatedness. I further argue that Nishida's work provides compelling reasons to foreground the mutually implicative, co-emergent nature of embodied self and world in our theorizing about the nature of self and experience.

1. Introduction

Like most of the major figures in the phenomenological tradition of western philosophy—including thinkers such as Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and James (who is not normally included in this tradition, of course, but who nonetheless prioritizes the first-person perspective in his writings)—the Japanese philosopher Kitarō Nishida has much to say about the lived body. In fact, his insights into the nature of action and embodiment are substantial enough to call him a 'philosopher of the body'. However, this crucial dimension of Nishida's work has yet to receive the focused analysis it deserves.[1] Given the priority of somatic analysis in Nishida's thought, especially his later work, it is therefore important to draw out Nishida's treatment of the body and to investigate how his conception of the body connects up with other prominent themes in his corpus.

In this essay, I investigate Nishida's characterization of what he refers to as the 'self-contradictory' body. First, I clarify the conceptual relation between the

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self-contradictory body and Nishida's notion of 'acting-intuition'. I next look at Nishida's analysis of acting-intuition and the self-contradictory body as it pertains to our personal, sensorimotor engagement with the world and things in it, as well as to our bodily immersion within the intersubjective and social world. Along the way, I argue that Nishida develops a rich and exceedingly current way of thinking through different facets of embodiment and interpersonal relatedness. I further argue that Nishida's work provides compelling reasons to foreground the mutually implicative, co-emergent nature of embodied self and world in our theorizing about the nature of self and experience.

2. Acting-Intuition and Sensorimotor Skillfulness

To understand Nishida's conception of the body, we need to first acquaint ourselves with a general account of 'acting-intuition'. As with most of his core ideas, Nishida uses a number of different definitions of acting-intuition throughout his writings. However, the core of the idea can be simply put. For Nishida, acting-intuition (Jap: *kōiteki chokkan*) refers to the body's primary mode of relatedness to the world. As he puts it:

> In our standpoint of action, what is outside is inside and vice versa . . . we 'see' things by acting, and things determine us and at the same time we determine things. This is action-intuition. We say that experience is the foundation of knowledge, but this is because experience is understood as action-intuition in this sense (Quoted in Arisaka, 2001, p. 206).

Acting-intuition denotes 'the structural relationship between self and world'—which is, 'more than anything else, a bodily relation to that world-space' (Yuasa, 1987, p. 55). But for Nishida, the embedded, world-engaged human body is not simply the sum total of its biological parts or even its physical capacities. Rather, it is a fluid and open-ended 'functional structure', as he puts it, which both penetrates and is penetrated by the world in which it moves and acts.[2] This 'world' includes both the body's immediate biological environments as well as the more encompassing cultural and historical contexts that contour our actions and self-understanding. 'Acting-intuition' for Nishida thus captures the active–passive circuit of relatedness through which the body both enters into and receives its world. This circuit of relatedness is a bodily phenomenon, a function of our situated agency. Importantly, it can be cultivated such that we realize a nondual or 'pure' (Nishida, 1990) experience of the world. Self and world are thus, to use Nishida's pregnant term, 'co-implicative' (Nishida, 1998, p. 44). The point is simply put: mind, body and world are interwoven within the forms of our embodied agency. How this is so will be explored in more depth as we proceed.

Acting-intuition is in this way the cornerstone of what we might refer to as Nishida's model of the social body. As Gereon Kopf (2001) notes,

> Nishida, like Merleau-Ponty, proposes the interconnectedness of action and perception, which he refers to as *acting-intuition* (Jap: *koiteki chokkan*), comprising

> the activity of acting directed towards the world, as well as the passivity of experiencing. He also identifies this form of existential engagement, comprising the 'unity of acting and seeing' [], with the human body (Jap: *shintai*) that is the living body (p. 72).

Put differently, acting-intuition is Nishida's attempt to articulate the phenomenologically ambiguous structure of the acting, world-engaged body, a structure that enables the body to serve as the 'union point'[3] within which self, other, and world are intermingled. But what enables this convergence of self, other and world is not reflective consciousness or discursive thought. Rather, it is the body's capacity for a nonconceptual *felt* integration with its world: a connectedness, Nishida insists, which emerges from 'affective feeling [which] can be described as a unity underlying various intellectual forces' (Nishida, 1978, p. 223). In other words, the acting-intuitional body—'an a priori of a priori' (Nishida, 1978, p. 223) operative beneath the binary subject–object structure of reflective consciousness—is the vehicle for realizing a nondual mode of relatedness with the world and things in it. Understood in this light, for Nishida the animate body thus becomes the foundation of mind, experience, and moral relatedness. Understanding the body's ambiguous or 'functional' structure, as well as its capacity for a prereflective, affective coupling with its world, is crucial for understanding Nishida's insights into the nature of the embodied self.

So what exactly does Nishida say about the ambiguity of the body and how does it relate to his development of acting-intuition? In what follows, I want to differentiate what I think are two critical phenomenological aspects of Nishida's acting-intuition, insofar as this idea pertains to the lived body. I will consider acting-intuition on the (1) animate or sensorimotor level, and (2) the intersubjective and social-historical level. Discussing these two levels in turn will then culminate with an analysis of how acting-intuition, as the bodily realization of a nondual relation with the world (what Nishida (1990) terms 'pure experience'), enables the cultivation of an other-directed ethical *ethos*: an affectively-charged mode of sociality.

To begin with the sensorimotor dimension of acting-intuition, we can first note that Nishida echoes both William James and anticipates Merleau-Ponty when discussing the structural ambiguity that is perhaps the body's defining feature. James insists that 'our body itself is the palmary instance of the ambiguous' (James, 1996, p. 153). He develops this claim by drawing attention to the Janus-faced nature of the body-in-action. It is an utterly unique entity, James insists, in that it can be taken both as subject and as object. In fact, our experience of being an embodied self emerges, according to both Nishida and James, from the dialectical interplay of the body-as-subject and the body-as-object. James captures this ambiguity when he notes: 'Sometimes I treat my body purely as a part of outer nature. Sometimes, again, I think of it as ''mine'', I sort it with the ''me'', and then certain local changes and determinations in it pass for spiritual happenings' (James, 1996, p. 153). Taken as 'mine', the body becomes subject. As subject, the body is not an object *of* or *for* perception. Rather, it is lived through and experienced from the inside.

Marking the distinction between body as subject and as object—and echoing one of Nishida's crucial insights, as we will see shortly—Merleau-Ponty focuses on the *malleability* of the subject-body. Certain everyday 'perceptual habits' extend the subject-body beyond epidermal boundaries (or the limit of the body as object). He writes:

> . . . every habit is both motor and perceptual, because it . . . sets boundaries to our field of vision and our field of action. Learning to find one's way among things with a stick . . . is equally an example of perceptual habit. Once the stick has become a familiar instrument, the world of feelable things recedes and now begins, not at the outer skin of the hand, but at the end of the stick . . . . It is a bodily auxiliary, and extension of the bodily synthesis. (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, pp. 175–176)

The perceptual habits and skilled coping making up most of our everyday prereflective activity enables the subject-body to regularly extend itself beyond its epidermal boundary. But something as simple as banging one's shin on a coffee table, looking in a mirror, or feeling the lingering stare of a stranger abruptly shifts the balance of this ambiguity towards an experience of the body as *object*: a 'skin-bag', in Dōgen's colorful language, situated amongst other skin-bags and physical objects in the world.

According to Nishida, this structural or 'functional' ambiguity of the body means that the body has a fundamentally 'self-contradictory' structure. In a sense, it is both itself and, simultaneously, not-itself. He writes:

> The very life of our selves, which are possessed of *historical bodies* and are acting-intuitional, is self-contradictory. Historical life itself is self-contradictory. It cannot be the case that what knows is what is known. Our self-awareness is self-contradictory. Our body is also a thing. Things are what is seen. But our body is what sees at the same time that it is what works . . . . (Quoted in Kazashi, 1999, p. 113)

Again, the self-contradictory nature of the body, for Nishida, lies first with the fact that the body is simultaneously both subject and object. Consider Merleau-Ponty's similar remarks in his essay 'Eye and Mind', when he writes that 'The enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side of its power of looking"' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 162). The experience of an embodied self, situated in and interacting with a dynamic world, emerges from the dialectical movement between the subject and object poles of the body's phenomenologically ambiguous structure.

Though he does not always draw out these claims as explicitly as one might like, I suggest Nishida argues that this phenomenological ambiguity is significant for a number of reasons. First, it points to the *fluid* and *provisional* nature of the self which arises from our experience of the world. There is no necessarily fixed substantive self continually standing behind our activities. Rather, there is simply 'a dynamic unity of acts' (Nishida, 1978, p. 225) that emerges from the body-world relation. The dynamic, processual coherence of our world-directed activity itself constitutes a provisional self—or self-in-action—that transforms with the arising of each different activity-situation. Put differently, this fluidity or provisional dynamic unity discloses

the fundamentally *impermanent* nature of selfhood while, secondly, hinting at possibilities for creative self-transformation that *arise* from the fluid and impermanent nature of the self. Our skilled coping with tools of various sorts is a prime example of this fact. To return to Merleau-Ponty's example, the act of incorporating a tool into our bodily-perceptual skillful repertoire (such as a blind person's cane, Heidegger's famous hammer, a golfer's golf club, a bicycle, or an artist's instrument) enhances the bodily self by opening up new forms of experience and possibilities for action. Simply put, things in the world augment and enhance my body by allowing it to do things it could not otherwise do. They do so by inhabiting the phenomenological space of my bodily self. By becoming incorporated into repeated activity-cycles, they transform my bodily structure and, by extension, my experience of embodied selfhood and its action-potentials. Thus, we come to feel a bodily *empathy* for things in the world and, by engaging with them skillfully, 'the self expands, [and] a larger and deeper self' emerges (Nishida, 1978, p. 228).

Additionally, skilled activities hint at the potential for the bodily cultivation of *selfless* action—an important category of action, for Nishida. For example, the pianist on intimate phenomenological terms with her piano—an intimacy realized by cultivating the relevant skill-set needed to play the piano in an expert way—is capable of greater performances than is the novice for whom the piano is an imposing thing, somewhat strange and unfamiliar in its unforgiving density. While absorbed in her expert playing, the skilled pianist is not a substantial or even reflective self simply manipulating a lifeless object. Rather, there is a thoughtless or selfless bodily intelligence at work. The piano enters into the pianist's 'lived body space' (Nagatomo, 1992) and enables the pianist to literally play without thinking. In this skillful mode of engagement, artist and instrument come together *as a single enactive unit* within the extended structure of the music-event. Bodily self and piano are therefore 'co-implicated' in the process of making music. As Nishida writes in *Art and Morality*, 'aesthetic creativity in this sense is an active dialectical unity of internal and external planes' (Nishida, 1973, p. 46) in which subject and object binary distinctions are uprooted and dissolved. The malleable structure of the bodily self expands to encompass phenomenologically salient parts of the world and, in doing so, dissolves the sense of a fixed cognitive or discursive subject as over against a world of fixed objects.

According to Nishida, this highly refined sensorimotor skillfulness is a form of perceptual 'sensitivity acquired through discipline' (Nishida, 1973, p. 32). In other words, it can be progressively cultivated. Nishida insists that this activity 'is not mere mechanical habit' (Nishida, 1973, p. 32). Rather, it is adaptive and context-sensitive. In his first major work, *An Inquiry into the Good*, Nishida already speaks of the unitive structure of some practical actions. He writes:

> Just as ordinary perception is thought to be only passive, so too intellectual intuition is thought to be only a passive, contemplative state. But true intellectual intuition is the unifying act itself in pure experience; it is a capturing of life. That is, it is like a *skillful knack* or, in a more profound sense, it is the spirit of the arts. For example, there is a unifying something operative behind the complex function

> wherein the artist is engrossed and the brush moves itself . . . . Here there is a state in which subject and object are not differentiated and the intellect and will are merged. It is a state in which the self and things are *mutually responsive* to each other; things do not move the self nor vice versa. There is only one world, one scene. (Quoted in Yuasa, 1987, p. 69, emphasis mine)

Prereflective bodily action is here offered as a paradigmatic example of how one realizes a nondual relation with the world, but as he is still working from within the psychologistic language of *Inquiry*, the 'unifying something' Nishida speaks of is ultimately conceived as 'primordial consciousness' (Nishida, 1990, p. 13).

Twelve years later, however, Nishida's language has changed. The animate body is now the primary focus. Nishida summarizes his shift of emphasis this way:

> In the case of a painter painting a picture, he, of course, does not follow conceptual judgment; but his painting is not merely spontaneous movement, either. His movement must have the self-awareness of power. It is not reflective self-awareness, but self-awareness in action. 'Style' is such a self-awareness in action. (Nishida, 1973, p. 32).

The somatic 'style' of acting-intuition is a mode of relationality in which 'consciousness . . . has become nothing' and 'is not hindered by action' (Nishida, 1973, p. 32). It is emptied of its usual dualistic subject–object structure, but once again, dissolving this binary relation does not mean that acting-intuition is blind. Functionally speaking, the knowing body actually becomes more *intimately integrated* with its world and the things in it, and is subsequently able act in a more situationally-appropriate, creative and responsive way. Sensorimotor skillfulness is a deeper *affective* mode of relationality than is cognitive-intentional reflexivity, according to Nishida. This is because, within the ambiguous structure of the body as 'union point', self and world are coupled together more intimately than is possible within the mode of reflective or conceptual consciousness, which functions precisely by establishing dualistic and asymmetrical separation between experiencer and experienced. As Gereon Kopf notes, 'Nishida suggest that the *cogito* constructs a world consisting of individual, seemingly real objects, which have an essence or self-nature, are clearly identifiable, and possess attributes' (Kopf, 2001, p. 213). However, 'pure feeling has its own intentional structure' (Nishida, 1978, p. 233), according to Nishida. That intentional structure is the prereflective structure of acting-intuition. It is 'dynamic, and . . . is spontaneously accompanied by the activity of the body' (Nishida, 1978, p. 233), he insists. At the prereflective level of our sensorimotor engagement with the world, intelligent bodily action unfolds 'without the slightest crack . . . for thinking to enter' (Nishida, 1990, p. 6). Thus 'there is no fundamental distinction between internal and external in [pure] experience, and what makes an experience pure is its unity, not its kind' (Nishida, 1990, p. 7). This mode of affective relationality is operative *prior* to the reflexive *cogito*, and is thus not specified by a dualistic or binary structure. Here, self and world are one, symmetrically related and mutually interpenetrating within the sensorimotor dynamic of acting-intuition.

Clarifying Nishida on this point, Yasuo Yuasa writes that, within the skillful phenomenology of acting-intuition

> . . . the body loses its heaviness and becomes unopposed to the mind's functioning. The body qua object is gradually made, as it were, subjective. At the same time, my mind comes to lose it character of being a subject opposed to objects. In this way, the body as object is subjectivized and mind as subject loses its opposition to objects; it gives up being an ego-consciousness . . . . By saying acting-intuition 'becomes a thing and exhausts it', Nishida claims that the ambiguity between subjectivity and objectivity disappears. (Yuasa, 1987, p. 72)

To sum up this first point: The sensorimotor 'style' of acting-intuition Nishida here speaks of is bodily-perceptual skillfulness. Put differently, it refers to a noncognitive bodily *ethos* or affective comportment enabling one to realize a nondual mode of engagement with the world and things in it. Importantly, it is a form of embodiment that can be progressively cultivated. Nishida's acting-intuition thus suggests the possibility of a deeper mode of nondual (selfless or 'pure') relationality with the world than is attainable merely through reflective analysis or the conceptual machinations of the *cogito*. Once more, it is the acting body, in virtue of its ambiguous 'self-contradictory' structure, that becomes the vehicle for realizing this kind of nondual relationality with the world.

3. Acting-Intuition, Intersubjectivity and the Social-Historical World

According to Nishida, acting-intuition—as a nondual mode relationality—originates at the prereflective level of our bodily engagement with the world. But neither its significance nor its efficacy ends there. Rather, the sensorimotor level of pure experience opens up into an intersubjective level of activity that imbues acting-intuition with an important social and ethical significance. In other words, the human body, for Nishida, is what discloses otherness and intersubjectivity (Kopf, 2001, p. 223). Again, the structural ambiguity of the body—and not the self-reflexive *cogito*—is what enables this other-directed openness.

In his essay 'Logic and Life',[4] written in 1936 (or 25 years after *Inquiry*), Nishida deals extensively with the social nature of acting-intuition. He reiterates the body-based nature of his analysis when he writes that

> There is no ego without a body . . . . Even our own bodies are seen from the outside. Yet our body is that which sees as well as that which is seen. There is no seeing without a body. (Quoted in Yuasa, 1987, p. 51)

The previous section looked at how these insights relate to this 'self-contradictory' nature of the living, active body, which can assume the role of both subject and object. This is an important phenomenological insight, and both James and Merleau-Ponty, in addition to Nishida, have much to say about it. However, this passage is significant for understanding how Nishida moves away from these thinkers in developing the interpersonal and relational significance of the body in its modality

of acting-intuition. To see how this is so, note that Nishida's characterization of the body as 'that which sees as well as that which is seen' stresses the following important fact: *subjectivity* always co-arises alongside *intersubjectivity*. In other words, 'Nishida implicitly presupposes the existence of *others* in the life-space' of the human world (Yuasa, 1987, p. 51). The body-as-object is more often than not seen by *other* subject-bodies, for whom I become an object-body. Of course, as a subject-body, I can see my own body-as-object by simply examining its various parts or by looking in the mirror. Even the experience of pain (such as with a sprained ankle or a severe cut), despite its vivid phenomenal quality, highlights my physicality in a way normally 'hidden' behind the more common experience of my body-as-subject, or as lived from the inside. In pain experience, I am acutely aware of my body as a 'broken' object, but when I experience my body as 'that which is seen' by others, indeed *everybody*, I am abruptly brought into the intersubjective matrix of my relatedness to other animate bodies. Since I am not only *embodied* but also *embedded*, my subjectivity *as* a bodily self is always co-constituted through my encounter with the otherness of other bodies. In short, my bodily self is dependently conditioned by every other bodily self. It is the 'self-contradictory' phenomenological structure of the embedded body that discloses this fact.

James, too, makes this observation, but whereas for James this observation tells us a number of interesting things about the social or extended nature of the bodily self and the irreducibly spatial nature of experience, Nishida imbues this fact with profound ethical significance. For James, Merleau-Ponty, and other phenomenologists, the bodily self's dependence on others is a phenomenological given. Nishida parts ways with James and other phenomenologists with his insistence—again, stemming from the Zen Buddhist themes at play in his work—that this relational aspect of our somatic nature can in fact be *cultivated*. This is a key point. Put differently, our bodily existence, according to Nishida, including its intersubjective aspects, is an *achievement*.[5] Embodiment can thus be developed. We can alter the very structure of our embodied relationship to the world and other people, and in doing so cultivate a perceptually and affectively charged *ethical ethos* that deepens the various modalities of our relatedness. The form of our intersubjectivity can thus be transformed and refined.

To see how this is so, it is important to note that, once again, the idea of bodily cultivation, or creative enactment, is particularly important here. For Nishida, 'acting-intuition is the structure and dynamic of all creative activity' (Takeuchi, 1982, p. 198). This creative activity includes how we relate to other people and the world as a whole, and the things that we do and make to facilitate these relationships. Nishida's phenomenological analysis of the structures of our everyday situated existence in this way characterizes our worldly existence as 'an existence which, in its relational orientation, is fundamentally ethical' (Mayeda, 2006, p. 23). This relational orientation of the living body is a function of the body's situatedness. In his essay, 'The Unity of Opposites', Nishida writes that 'we usually call reality the place where we are with our body' (Nishida, 1958, p. 170). Our every experience of the world is always contoured by the bodily perspective we take on the world. Our active body is

the immediate point of contact with worldly things and provides the profile from within which things in the world disclose themselves to us, but our body is always embedded in shifting biological and cultural contexts that both sustain and constrain our activities, as well as giving them meaning and significance. Moreover, the different forms of our worldly engagement become the vehicles by which we *achieve* embodiment in all its dimensions, including a rich ethical *ethos*. According to Nishida, the embodied self is always rooted in the 'social-historical world' (Nishida, 1958, p. 170) of everyday experience. He continues:

> The historical-social world is essentially 'from the formed towards the forming'. Without the social element, there is no 'from the formed towards the forming', there is no 'poiesis'. The standpoint of our thinking is necessarily in the historical-social world. (Nishida, 1958, p. 170)

A short while later, he writes:

> The individual is essentially acting, and determining itself. Action means negation of the other . . . but it also means, on the other hand, that the Self denies itself, and becomes a part of the world. (Nishida, 1958, p. 171)

These passages then culminate with another definition of 'acting-intuition', which according to Nishida means that 'activity, contradicting itself, is contained in the object' (Nishida, 1958, p. 172). Later, he adds that 'the reality of acting-intuition is always the place of contradiction' (Nishida, 1958, p. 193).

These excerpts (and indeed much of 'The Unity of Opposites') are not entirely clear, but some things we have already discussed can help make what Nishida is trying to say here less opaque. In short, Nishida's claim is that the bodily self and 'historical-social world' are co-constituting. Their relation is one of creative interpenetration and structural reciprocity. We make our world and, simultaneously, it us. Intersubjectivity (including culture, which is intersubjectivity *writ large*) thus becomes an enabling condition for subjectivity-constitution—and vice versa. Therefore, the process of bodily cultivation—the *enactment* of our embodiment within the world—is, in virtue of our situatedness, at the same time a modification of the 'historical-social world', an environmental modification which then redounds back onto us and shapes our subsequent engagements with and modifications of the world, and so on and so forth. In the language of 'The Unity of Opposites', we 'negate the other' when we act and, in our acting, affirm ourselves and our agency, our existence, but when we act, the acting self at the same time 'denies itself, and becomes a part of the world'. This self-negation in action releases us into the world of otherness. Our situated agency—our active existence within the 'social-historical world'—in this way highlights our 'self-contradictory' or ambiguous nature not just on a prereflective sensorimotor or phenomenological level, but on a broader and more encompassing intersubjective and social level as well. Social existence is an ethical meeting in which an interdependent 'in-between' identity is realized, for Nishida, not neatly captured by dualistic terms like 'self' and 'other'. This is acting-intuition's *second-personal* significance.

To further clarify the import of this claim and Nishida's discussion of acting-intuition more generally, it is helpful to note that with this later essay—and especially both the already-referenced 'Logic and Life' (1936), as well as 'The Historical Body' (1937)—Nishida insists that he has 'returned to the concept of everyday experience' (Nishida, 1998, p. 37). Nishida is quick to add that, although the language of bodily 'acting-intuition' perhaps suggests a sharp break from the psychologism of *Inquiry*, there is in fact continuity to his thinking. For Nishida says that 'the idea of ''pure experience'' set forth in *Zen no kenkyu* [*An Inquiry into the Good*] was the first manifestation of what I have come to refocus in my later concept of ''everyday experience''' (Nishida, 1998, p. 38). What this amounts to, then, is that Nishida feels he has finally found the phenomenological vocabulary to articulate the experientially-grounded insights of his early formulation of 'pure experience' without falling back into the solipsism and psychologism that hindered that analysis. In other words, he has taken his analysis out of the mentalistic categories of *Inquiry* and has now placed it within the bodily-perceptual structures of our situated agency—which are only truly understood in conjunction with the 'world of human activity', or the 'world in which we are actively involved' (Nishida, 1998, p. 39).

The essay 'The Historical Body' is thankfully a much clearer exposition of Nishida's intent with 'The Unity of Opposites' and provides a great deal of clarity about Nishida's thoughts on situated agency and the intersubjective and social-historical dimensions of acting-intuition. I want to focus on this essay more carefully for a moment. In this essay, Nishida returns to an analysis of the body. He suggests that we need to redefine the term 'body' to foreground the structural ambiguity that is its nature, noting that 'the problem of the body has not been sufficiently considered in philosophy' (Nishida, 1998, p. 42). His analysis of the bodily basis of acting-intuition is thus offered as a corrective to this relative neglect. He reaffirms that 'without our body, our self does not exist' (Nishida, 1998, p. 42), but he then adds a bit later: 'if we push farther ahead, the meaning of our body turns out to be broader than only the meaning of the biological body that has been thought up to know' (Nishida, 1998, p. 44). His analysis must thus go beyond the sensorimotor, person-centered structures of acting-intuition. So what is this new 'broader' body Nishida is trying to disclose with his phenomenological analysis and how does it connect back up with his discussion of acting-intuition?

For Nishida, our body is literally a *social* or *extended* body, whose structure consists of both (bodily) self and world co-existing in a relation of interpenetration and reciprocity. It is the body considered not simply in its first or third personal aspects, but in its *second*-personal relatedness. The everyday animate body is thus a dynamic process that is both formed and informed by the world and other bodies. Nishida insists that we must think of the body not simply as 'the physiological . . . animal and the biological body' (Nishida, 1998, p. 44) but instead in terms of its world-engaged 'function'. The body is not merely a *thing* that relates to other things. Rather, it is *relatedness itself*. As relation, the extended body consists of both biological and nonbiological parts. Nishida's functional analysis of the body—already implicit in his phenomenological characterization of its 'self-contradictory' nature—now expands

to encompass the fact that 'environment and life are co-implicative' (Nishida, 1998, p. 44). What this means, in short, is that body and world create one another within their dynamic coupling. Our acting body is very much a 'historical' body, constituted within the coupling-relation linking self and world (understood to encompass both biological and cultural, or 'social-historical', contexts).

Nishida's argument for this model of the social body emerges from a theme characteristic of his mature philosophy: an analysis of human activity. As Yuasa notes, 'Nishida's theory of acting-intuition grasps human being-in-the-world as originally having the character of *action*; the essential mode is to act on the world, and not to cognize it' (Yuasa, 1987, p. 68). Nishida insists that human action 'is various, and irreducible to a merely physical or chemical substratum' (Nishida, 1998, p. 45). To offer a purely reductivist or materialistic account of human activity overlooks the *creativity* that is its defining feature. Nishida would also insist that it is a distorting reification, in that it mistakenly reduces the complex structure of our embodiment to single category: the object-body. Nishida furthermore urges that one must always account for the *situated* nature of our agency. He says that any analysis of 'human activity raises the question of what place it has in relation to the whole—or of what work [the body] performs in relation to the whole' (Nishida, 1998, p. 45) of its encompassing environments. He continues: 'The activity which the body has in relation to that whole—that is, to the historical world—I also think can be clarified in the functionality which the body possesses' (Nishida, 1998, p. 45). Put differently, the body is, once more, the union point where self and world are co-constitutive. Thus, to understand the nature of the world in which the body is *embedded*, we must first look at how this world emerges from the unique forms of our situated *embodiment*, or the body's 'functionality'. In fact, the forms of our embeddedness linking us to our world are actually *constitutive* of our embodiment as world-engaged agents. The sensorimotor dimension of acting-intuition already established the malleability of the subject-body, or our inside-out experience of embodied selfhood. Now, Nishida will argue that the object-body—as a point of contact with the physical world—is *itself* transformed and constituted (at least partially) by its activity in the world. The world is very literally part of the body, just as much as body is part of world.

Characteristically, Nishida turns to his favored 'paradigmatic case' (Nishida, 1998, p. 40) of activity—aesthetic creativity—to argue more carefully for this point. He notes that all 'human activity is productive activity' (Nishida, 1998, p. 39), but activity is not simply an inside-out process involving thought and will (or processes just on the subject-body side of the subject-body/object-body dialectic). According to Nishida, this voluntarist rendering of activity mistakenly characterizes activity 'as merely subjective behavior' (Nishida, 1998, p. 39). Instead, Nishida insists that 'activity in the true sense . . . has an objective component as well' (Nishida, 1998, p. 39). For example, the carpenter who builds a house sees 'his activity . . . objectively embodied in the form that the house is actually built' (Nishida, 1998, p. 39). A similarly situation holds for 'the output of the poet, the artist, and so on' (Nishida, 1998, p. 39). The creative output of human activity—such as a painting, a poem, a house or a cultural institution—exhibits a material structure that reflects the

sensorimotor capacities of the agent who created it. In short, all things created by humans are recognizable as being created by human (object-) bodies.

The key point comes next. For Nishida, 'an art work [or any output of human activity] combines both—the subjective activity and objective result. It is not that the artist just acts subjectively; rather, from the objective side, *he is also acted upon by the thing*' (Nishida, 1998, p. 39, emphasis mine). A bit later, he continues this line: 'The artwork is realized from a mutual transaction—or reciprocal transaction—of subjectivity and objectivity . . . . Therefore, in this mutual transaction, we are—so to speak—*made* by making' (Nishida, 1998, p. 40). Again, self and (social-historical) world are co-constituting. Nishida says just this when he writes that 'Previous conceptions of the world have been of a world that has stood over against the self; but the real world is a transactional world that we simultaneously make and by which we are in turn made' (Nishida, 1998, p. 40).

Nishida's analysis of language—which he suggests 'first develops in a bodily mode' (Nishida, 1998, p. 47)—can be fleshed out a bit to offer a particularly effective example of his point here about the co-constitutive relation of self and world. Nishida's actual remarks about language are brief, but some creative interpretation draws out an intriguing—and remarkably current—model of the relationship between embodiment and language. In short, Nishida suggests that language, or rather the holistic structure of an entire language game *as played*, is a kind of creative tool. It creates both a social-historical world *as well as* the bodily inhabitants of that world, since 'the body is a creative element of the world' (Nishida, 1998, p. 48). How is this so?

When we use language, we do not simply invent semantic tags that we use to represent other things. Rather, language becomes an external information-bearing structure that we bodily engage with. Nishida insists that the social matrix of a situated language game is, very literally, an extension of our body: a practical augmentation that socializes our biological body and opens up new avenues of thought and creative action. The functional structure of the world-engaged body is thus *extended* by our progressively more skillful participation within a local language game, leading to more sophisticated modes of self understanding and interpersonal relatedness. Therefore, Nishida writes that 'It is not that a man understands his body from within it but rather from its interaction with the external world' (Nishida, 1998, p. 47). Language facilitates our interaction with the world and other people and thus facilitates deeper self-understanding. According to Nishida, participating in a language game is an enactment of our embodiment. Because the body is not prefigured by its biological boundaries but again is a fluid structure or socially extended system—it has a 'self-contradictory' nature, in other words—it is amenable to this sort of extension. It *emerges* through the forms of its worldly adaptation and engagement. Language, as a constitutive aspect of the body's functional structure, is an example of how this occurs.

Andy Clark (1997, 1998, 2006), a prolific proponent of 'extended' approaches to cognition, has recently defended a similar view of language that can be used to further explore Nishida's point here. According to Clark, language should be seen as

transcranial 'scaffolding' that literally externalizes some of an agent's cognitive processes such that they loop out into the world and become proper objects of perception and manipulation. Language thus very literally extends certain aspects of the mind beyond the head. The term 'scaffolding' for Clark 'denotes a broad class of physical, cognitive and social augmentations—augmentations which allow us to achieve some goal which would otherwise be beyond us' (Clark, 1998, p. 2). As an external scaffolding, language 'make[s] available concepts, strategies, and learning trajectories which are simply not available to individual, un-augmented brains' (Clark, 1998, p. 10). This view (which I am also attributing to Nishida) respects the *materiality* of language-as-external-scaffolding—language as action—and not simply language's semantic or representational properties. Thus, Clark insists that 'words and sentences may form part of the process of thinking, and . . . they do so not merely in virtue of the contents but also in virtue of their very materiality: their physical existence as encountered and perceptible items, as sounds in the air or as words on the printed page' (Clark, 2006, p. 2). Simply put, we extend our embodied capacities—and open up new forms of thought, reason, and action—by manipulating publicly-available linguistic scaffoldings. Language enables minds to leave their heads and to converge out in the world. Additionally, this view points to a more subtle (but no less important) aspect of language: its ethical significance. Under this rendering, language shapes both my being in the world as well as the comportment of others participating in the same language game. Language plays a constitutive role in shaping identity, and in contouring different forms of interrelatedness. And language-in-action is further a mode of access to the other by which I literally enter into them. Speaking is an empathic penetration of other people.

Clark offers several cases that he argues shows language's 'externalizing' propensity. As my interest here is in clarifying Nishida's thoughts on these matters, I will only mention a few of them, passing over the particulars of Clark's argument. One important example involves *memory augmentation*. By using the 'artifactual world of texts, diaries, notebooks and the like as a means of storing large and often complex bodies of data', we enhance the capacities of our 'on-board' biological recall (Clark, 1998, p. 7). A note on a mirror or the refrigerator, or a reminder inscribed in the text program of a computer, PDA, or cell phone serves as an external memory aid: linguistic scaffolding that we bodily engage with and manipulate to prompt our biological memory.

Another example Clark mentions involves *environmental simplification*. Quite obviously, affixing linguistic labels to things in our world enables us to perceptually navigate environments that are often exceedingly complex. Thus, 'signs for the cloakroom, for nightclubs, and for city centers all fulfill this role' (Clark, 1998, p. 7) of easing our cognitive burden by introducing predictability and constancy to our life-world—environmental properties that then redound back onto the body by giving our bodily *comportment* in these environments a more confident, economical and efficient expression. Linguistic scaffoldings make our environmental transactions more successful by enhancing our sensorimotor skillfulness. Construed in this way, language affects both structures of world *and* body.

The production of poetry—an example Nishida also uses—also affirms the world-constituting character of language. Clark notes that, 'In constructing a poem, we do not simply use words to express thoughts. Rather, it is often the properties of the words (their structure and cadence) which determine the thoughts that the poem comes to express' (Clark, 1998, p. 11). The materiality of poetry—the lyrical structure of the verses when read, the cadence of the words, resonances of meter and rhyme, the vividness of poetic images—blooms with a perceptual affect that (potentially, at least) refines our sensorimotor skillfulness. For instance, one cannot read Rilke's 'The Bowl of Roses' (Rilke, 1984, p. 193), I suggest, without then seeing real roses in an entirely new light. Poetry becomes an exercise in transformative phenomenology that changes how we experience the everyday world. In this way, poetic language—as an aspect of the 'social-historical' world, to return to Nishida's phrase—alters the sensorimotor structure of the body's worldly engagement. Once a poem (or indeed, any other form of writing) is committed to the page, we can then 'inspect and re-inspect the same ideas, coming at them from many different angles and in many different frames of mind. We can hold the original ideas steady so that we may judge them, and safely experiment with subtle alterations . . . . In these ways . . . the real properties of physical text transform the space of possible thoughts', reasons, and forms of our world-directed activities (Clark, 1998, p. 11). To return to Nishida: in this sense, then, does 'an artistic production . . . becomes an objective *work* independent of the artist himself' (Nishida, 1998, p. 40), a work that, as part of the dynamic structure of the social-historical world, transforms the bodily-perceptual experience and capacities of agents embedded in that world.

One does not have to adopt Clark's cognitive scientific treatment of embodied mind and language to see how else language games—or linguistic 'scaffoldings'—simultaneously shape both social-historical world and the situated body. More immediate examples abound. For instance, consider how the oppressive weight of sexist language in the office is noticeably transcribed within the timid, restless movements of the secretary waiting for the next uncomfortable encounter with her boss or co-worker. The language that has textured this social-historical world also shapes the woman's bodily-perceptual comportment within it. Liberated from this environment, however, a new somatic self emerges. Suddenly timidity is transfigured into a confident posture and measured, self-aware movement while back home or among friends. Movement through different social-historical worlds in this way is often accompanied by the emergence of new bodily selves.

There are certainly other ways to generalize Nishida's claims about the co-constitutive nature of the body–world relationship, such as with the linguistic and ritualistic scaffoldings that make up familial, political and religious micro-worlds, to name three. These micro or 'social-historical' worlds inscribe themselves differently into the bodily comportment of those who come to inhabit them, but the examples discussed above are sufficient to understand Nishida's following remark, which encapsulates his claim about the reciprocity of body and world: 'Bodily existence consists in the fact that it functions in relation to the historical world . . . . And therefore such a thing as human society as well, *which is an extension of the body*

in the widest sense, should be said to be a historical body possessing bodily characteristics' (Nishida, 1998, p. 51).

Nishida's broader claim, then—again, implicit in his category of 'acting-intuition'—is that the human body arises within an active–passive circuit of relatedness to the living world. The body is not merely a thing but is instead a *relation*. As such, it both enters into and is penetrated by the world. Society and culture are extensions of the body whose character is determined by the ethical function of the body via acting-intuition. In this way, it is constituted by 'this dynamic relation of subjectivity and objectivity' (Nishida, 1998, p. 48), having both a personal phenomenological existence as well as a socially-distributed or extended existence. Not only is the body constituted by the dialectical interplay of the subject and object poles of its self-contradictory phenomenological nature, then. Additionally, it is constituted by the public, nonbiological 'scaffoldings' (such as language and cultural institutions, among other things) of its social-historical world. The body's 'self-contradictory' nature thus manifest on a prereflective sensorimotor level as well on a culturally-embedded, intersubjective and social-historical level. For Nishida, the movement between the personal and social dimensions of reality is 'life', understood in its broadest sense: 'Life, too, always illustrates this fact of contradictory identity. Life is precisely what connects these contradictory dimensions' (Nishida, 1998, p. 53). The self-contradictory poles of the life of the body are united within the dynamics of our agency. Self, world, and other meet within the body.

4. Conclusions

In this essay, I have argued for a particular reading of Nishida on agency and the 'self-contradictory' nature of the animate body. For Nishida, this self-contradictory nature manifests on both an individual, sensorimotor level, as well as on a broader intersubjective, social-historical level. Nishida's notion of 'acting-intuition' is important for understanding the nature of this claim. We have seen that, for Nishida, acting-intuition refers to the fact that the body harbors an ambiguous structure within its being. It is both active and passive: it acts upon the world and extends itself into it while, at the same time, passively opens up to the world to allow the world to enter back into itself. I showed how this relational circuit of activity and passivity emerges from the phenomenological ambiguity of the animate human body, which can assume the role of both subject and object.

Perhaps one of the most salient points is that, as we have seen, Nishida's agency-based model of the body and intersubjectivity stresses the primacy of somatic *affectivity* for understanding the nature of our worldly embeddedness. That is to say, it is not the intellect but rather affectivity—the feeling, active body—that melds us to the world in a nondual (i.e. active-intuitional) manner. Nishida writes that our affective relatedness to the world flourishes when the body 'is entirely focused into one activity—when the self is one with its world' (Nishida, 1978, p. 227). Thus, this

affectivity is a kind of knowing or, better, *intuition*. It exhibits its own adaptive, context-sensitive intelligence, and once more the body is the vehicle for this affective and empathic connection to the world and things in it. As Nishida puts it, 'While we *empathize* with the movement of the tightrope walker, we do not *think* we are the tightrope walker. We become one with his activity in the transcendental realm' of somatic affectivity (Nishida, 1978, p. 233).

On a personal sensorimotor level, this affective relationality emerges when we lose ourselves within our skilled coping with the environment, such as when playing an instrument or participating in a sport. On a more encompassing intersubjective or social-historical level, our affective relationality manifests within our unthinking engagement with the linguistic scaffoldings constituting different language games (and their corresponding micro-worlds), or the way that these different micro-worlds transcribe themselves into the affective tonalities of our bodily comportment—such as with the secretary working in a hostile office, children engaged in spontaneous play, or worshippers adopting a shared posture of prayer. The body's affective tonalities allow us to 'feelingly' negotiate our continually-changing world and the different interpersonal relationships that structure our communal existence. Nishida's analysis reminds us, therefore, of the central role that bodily dynamics play in developing our sense of self. Moreover, it foregrounds the rich, multi-dimensional nature of these bodily dynamics. For Nishida, the body is no mere object but rather a rich complex of living narratives—some of which I create, many more of which, authored by others, I simply come to inhabit and live through.

Notes

[1] Yuasa (1987) and Kopf (2001) are two notable exceptions. I borrow freely from their insights throughout this paper.

[2] Nishida uses the term 'functional structure' in his essay 'The historical body' (1998), discussed below.

[3] In an early essay entitled 'The union point of the true, the good, and the beautiful', Nishida defines the human 'person' (Jap: *jinkaku*) as the 'union point' (Jap: *gōitten*) within which self and world, subject-body and object-body are brought together. See Kopf (2001, p. 267, fn 23).

[4] This essay is not yet translated into English. Therefore, I note the various sources from which I borrowed relevant quotes from this essay.

[5] For more on the idea of embodiment as achievement, see Yuasa (1987), including Kasulis's introduction.

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