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The Controversial Cultural Identity of Japanese Philosophy ⓐ

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses controversies surrounding the cultural identity of Japanese philosophy. Often presented as offering the first "non-Western universalism" over against Eurocentrism, authors have struggled to establish its distinctness, and this endeavor has been mired in questions of essentialism, Japanese imperialism, and cultural nationalism. The exemplary case of Nishida Kitarō's New World Order essay is examined, and issues surrounding the identity of Japanese philosophy are analyzed historically as well as in the contemporary context of global neo-colonialism. The last section offers an alternative interpretation of Nishida, by way of a first-person approach, in order to produce an existential critical theory aiming at a "decolonized world order."

Keywords: Japanese philosophy, universalism, cultural particularity, colonialism, neo-colonialism, nationalism, Eurocentrism, Nishida, essentialism, Nihonjin-ron

As our global awareness grows, Japanese philosophy has also become more visible in academia over the past twenty years. If one is a newcomer to the field of Japanese philosophy—whether one comes from the non-Western, cultural, or comparative philosophy route or through Buddhism or Zen—one may be surprised to learn that the very field of "Japanese philosophy," and in particular the "Kyoto School," remains today shrouded in controversy. Or, one may have learned about modern Japanese philosophy in the context of mostly American critiques of Japanese imperialism and cultural nationalism during the Pacific War, as a philosophy to be critiqued and rejected. At any rate, beyond the technicalities of its discourses, one cannot pretend today that Japanese philosophy is "merely" a philosophical tradition that developed in Japan.

Universalism, Particularism, and Developmental Thinking

Before exploring the controversial case of Japanese philosophy on the topic of its "identity and distinctness," let me begin with a reflection on today's global intellectual context in order to situate the discussion. Even today, the term "Japanese philosophy" raises some eyebrows in the company of Euro-American philosophers—the veiled question, often not asked out of politeness, is: "But is it really *philosophy*?" Obviously, when one speaks of "philosophy" in the United States or Europe, the referent is clear: it unambiguously and unproblematically means the history of Western philosophy, and, in the Anglo-American context, "philosophy" most often means "analytic philosophical methods and traditions." In any case, so-called non-Western philosophies, if acknowledged at all, are still not seriously considered "sufficiently philosophical." Philosophers grounded in Euro-American traditions feel no need to acknowledge their lack of knowledge regarding other traditions, yet philosophers specialized in any other tradition, if they are to be taken seriously at all, must also demonstrate knowledge of Euro-American philosophies.[1]

In our century, globalization has advanced to the point where transnationalism and global cultural exchange are ubiquitous. Nevertheless, and despite well-known critiques of Eurocentrism, the discipline of philosophy obstinately retains the center-margin paradigm, with its dominant markers and standards of measurement still firmly grounded in Euro-American contexts. As much as we would like to celebrate the cosmopolitan, global, egalitarian, multicultural, intercultural, progressive network of world citizenry and knowledge exchange today, the stark reality paints another picture: Our world still carries the weight and legacies of the 400-year history of European imperialism and colonialism that shaped (and reinforces) today's *neo-colonial* global geopolitics. And, unfortunately, philosophy has not, for the most part, moved beyond this neo-colonial state of affairs.

This is not only a politico-historical story. It has also shaped our current worldviews and consciousness in subtle yet destructive ways. Thomas McCarthy analyzes and critiques the metaphysical notion of "development"—the idea that human beings and civilizations "develop" from uncivilized to more civilized states over time, that there is a "progress" to be made in an imaginary linear development in human conditions, and that some cultures are ahead of others, an idea that has justified colonialism and long-standing global racism prevalent still today.[2] In the European tradition since the eighteenth century, it was taken for granted, by intellectuals such as Kant, that the most enlightened civilizational (and philosophical) center of truth and the most universal, advanced culture was that of Christian Europe.[3] Hegel asserted that History and Knowledge were only fully developed in Europe, and though Asia had some hopes (if they were able to imitate Europe), Africa had none at all. The heathen non-West (including Japan) was simply outside the realm of truth or "behind and backwards" in the timeline of civilizational development. Those that are "not yet enlightened" are still mired in feudalism/despotism, fundamentalism, cosmic

thinking, and the like. This way of understanding civilizations in the world was standard up until the twentieth century, and, even today, we still refer to some cultures as "barbaric" or "uncivilized," by which we mean they exhibit culturally specific practices that are either "no longer" observed in Europe or in the United States or simply foreign to Judeo-Christian cultural practices (some common targets today include the caricature of the status of women in Muslim cultures or the practice of polygamy in some African contexts). The civilizational "universal-particular" mapping still locates the "particulars" to be largely non-Western (and non-white). While European and American philosophies enjoy their taken-for-granted universality claims, Japanese philosophy still suffers from a legitimation process. Grim as it may seem, this is the current context in which we reflect on past and present debates regarding the identity of Japanese philosophy.

Origins and Contexts of Modern Japanese Philosophy

Let us turn the clock back to the nineteenth century and move to Japan. The birth of modern Japanese philosophy is particularly interesting because it could be seen as one of the first serious responses to the Western hegemony and self-appointed supremacy discussed in the previous section. From 1639 until the mid-1800s, Japan remained isolated from the rest of the world. In order to control the spread of Christianity, the Tokugawa Shōgunate closed all the ports in the mid-seventeenth century, except the port of Nagasaki in the southernmost island of Kyushu, and only China and Holland were allowed to continue trade under strictly controlled conditions. By the time the American "Black Ships" arrived in 1853 and demanded the opening of the country, Japan had missed out on the amazing industrial advancements and revolutions that had occurred in Europe and America during the eighteenth century, as well as on the developmental thinking discussed earlier that was by then taken for granted in Europe and America. Facing modern American weaponry and superior military power, Japan had two alternatives: either become a victim of Western expansionism or open itself up to modernization and protect itself. So began the period of rapid modernization with the official Meiji Restoration of 1868.

The daunting processes of change reached all aspects of life: social, political, economic, educational, technological, cultural, aesthetic, and, of course, intellectual.[4] It is not an exaggeration to say that the history of post-Meiji Japan is shaped by the cultural understanding of a *difference* between "Japanese versus Western," or more commonly, "East and West (*seiyō to tōyō* 西洋と東洋)," where the East (*tōyō*) represents what is traditional, spiritual, indigenous, cultural, backward, and particular (to Japan or Asia), and the West (*seiyō*) represents its contrast: namely, what is modern, materialistic, foreign, scientific, advanced, and universal (as science and technology, the chief markers of modernity, were said to be based on the principles of universal truth).[5]

Modern Japanese philosophy was born in this conflicted milieu of negotiating East and West, and it, too, was preoccupied with the theme of developing a philosophy based on Japanese culture yet embodying the systematic universality of the Western philosophical tradition.[6] In fact, the term "philosophy" (*tetsugaku* 哲学) had to be coined in Japanese as this particular form of systematized, scientific philosophy did not exist in the traditional Neo-Confucian or Buddhist traditions.[7] As the Meiji intellectuals became more aware of the differences between Western modes of rational thinking and "traditional Japanese values," philosophy became a site of intellectual negotiation among rationality, systematicity, and logic, on the one hand (universality), and spirituality, holistic thinking, artistic thinking, and cultural thinking (particularity), on the other. Japanese thinkers thought that there are also unique elements in their own tradition that must also be universal and that they, too, could be given philosophical expression.

In this mood of optimism, some thinkers and cultural leaders (such as the founder of "Japanese arts," Okakura Tenshin) began to critique Western developmentalism and its inherent Eurocentrism. Theoretically, philosophical universalism is supposed to apply to all human beings, yet practically all Western thinkers took it for granted that only Euro-American civilization represents universal truth. Meiji intellectuals were dissatisfied with such arrogance and aspired to develop a philosophy that is "Japanese yet universal"; *if* Japan could develop a culturally non-Western yet universal form of philosophy, then that would be proof that European civilization is not the only center of universal truth. If such a philosophy is indeed universal, then this would necessarily mean that European and American minds must be able to understand it as also applicable to the nature of the human mind, the self, or reality as such. If this could be achieved, then Japan could contribute to the creation of a more globally balanced world culture, offering the possibility of a counterbalance and a conception of an "alternative, non-Western modernity" to the Western-dominated world.

Note that the very way in which Japanese thinkers conceived of themselves as belonging to a particular culture (versus the universal West) itself reinforces the Western metaphysics of universality and particularity. As Sakai Naoki notes, Japan cannot possibly appear as a particular without reference to the universal which would define it as such; but this is just to reinstitute such a metaphysics—and thereby reinforce the West as the primary reference point.[8] Yet this issue did not concern Japanese thinkers at the time since they were not trying to *reject* Western metaphysics in search of an alternative. Rather, they were interested in making their own claims to universality in terms of what was perceived as their identity in particularity.

Such a search for self-identity and recognition of universal validity occurred in many anticolonial movements later in the century as well. Négritude movements in the 1930s, for example, developed a critique of racist European/French colonialism and tried to create, by way of adopting Marxism, a pan-African identity/movement as anticolonial resistance.[9] Civil rights movements could not have been possible without the notion of the

universality of human dignity; claiming rightful status for a neglected particular was also a common strategy among many variants of liberation politics and resistance.

Universalism of Japanese Philosophy: Nishida's Case

In what way, specifically, has Japanese philosophy succeeded in producing a particularly Japanese yet universal system of thought? In what way was it a critical response to the Western hegemonic world order? Let me briefly focus on Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), who is generally considered the father of modern Japanese philosophy. I will not review here his vast philosophical oeuvre; many of its elements are indeed universal in their philosophical scope, as chapters by Fujita Masakatsu and John Maraldo in this volume have shown. Beyond his metaphysics and epistemology, however, he also developed a political theory of globalization; this is the aspect of his philosophy that gets mired in controversies.

Up until the mid- to late 1930s, Nishida's theory was rather strictly metaphysical and epistemological—and apolitical.[10] However, as Japan expanded its empire in the late 1930s into the early '40s, Nishida began to lecture as well as write about the political application of his theory. In 1938, at Kyoto University, he delivered the lecture series *The Problem of Japanese Culture*, which was published in 1940. In 1943, at the request of the Tōjō Government and its Imperial Army, which was seeking a theoretical formulation for Japan's role in the construction of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai tōa kyōeiken* 大東亜共栄圏), Nishida (who by then was considered to be the most important philosopher in Japan) wrote his controversial essay, *The Principle of the New World Order* (*Sekai shinchitsujo no genri*).[11] That Nishida did not approve of the actions of the Imperial Army was known, but, as one might surmise, the contents (and especially the language) of the essay became a target of criticism in the postwar era.

In *The Principle of the New World Order*, the metaphysical-dialectical theory of Nishida's "Historical World," which posits that all entities are mediated through the process of historical action-creation-mediation, was applied to a theory of the "Age of the Self-Realization of the World" through nation-building. Every nation, in order to establish itself, would do so through a negation of itself (in the recognition of alterity/difference) as well as a negation of the other (to establish itself as the other of the other), and, through this dialectic, each nation would affirm itself in relation to others. In this process, the particularities of cultures would be preserved and the essential interdependence of nations would be recognized. Through this process taking place on a global scale, the "realization of the Global-World" (*sekaiteki sekai no jikaku* 世界的世界の自覚) would be achieved.

In his vision of the Global-World, Eurocentric hegemony is rejected, and the philosophically non-Western element that is added is the role of "absolute nothingness." The distinct cultures appear as such, dialectically negating and defining themselves against one another, but the whole interactive process occurs on a world scene which must itself be empty. Nishida understands this empty "place" (*basho* 場所) of the Global-World as "absolute nothingness" (*zettai mu* 絶対無).

The universalism of this theory should be clear enough. Before discussing the complications and controversies specific to this theory in its historical context, let me turn to some broader problems that contextualize the issues of distinctness, essentialism, and nationalism.

The "Problems" of Distinctness, Essentialism, Nationalism, and *Nihonjin-ron*

The complex of "problems with Japanese philosophy" is at least threefold. The first aspect consists of the contemporary philosophical issues surrounding notions of identity, distinctness, uniqueness, and "essentialism." The second aspect is a bad offshoot of the first: distinctness claims easily degenerate into the discourses of racial essentialism, cultural exclusionism, uniqueness, and superiority. The third aspect, the most problematic, is the political context; it has generated what I call the problem of "the double-edge of universalism" and expanded the second problem to produce a version of what might be taken as neo-nationalism and cultural essentialism.[12] Let me initially address the first problem.

The problems with essentialism are numerous, but the critiques known as deconstruction and poststructuralism have swept through American academia since the 1980s. Any expression that indicated some kind of an "identity" or a "grand narrative" became suspect—it was "essentialist." So an expression like "Japanese philosophy" is essentialist in that it assumes a purported identity, "Japan," to which some "philosophy" must belong; but this is all a metaphysical confusion. There is no ontologically coherent "entity with an essence" called "Japan" or "philosophy" (or anything else, for that matter); it is all a question of linguistic differences and historical narratives that produce a simulacrum of an identity. Identity claims are necessarily politico-cultural productions, with power driving the formation of discourses (and silencing practices); "Japan," and its history and culture, are just such constructions.[13] Essentialized identities are outdated grand substance ontology to be transcended. If one had to refer to Japan, the country, for example, it was safer to put it in quotes or write in lower case: "japan," to indicate that one is aware of the problems of essentializing discourse. Likewise for anything to do with "East and West," comparative philosophy, culture, history, universalism, and the like. Granted that many significant theoretical horizons opened up in the wake of deconstruction (such as deconstructive feminisms, queer theories, race theories), but, in

cases of the philosophies of other traditions, the philological policing became rather cumbersome and annoying, and at times even intellectually silly, as if one could debunk all traditional discourses merely by labeling them essentialistic. Philosophically speaking, one should know that by referring to a country or a tradition by name, one is using a metonomic device that does not usually indicate an essentialized, substantialized entity. Some cultural discourses were and are indeed essentialistic and politically problematic (see later discussion), but their contents need to be criticized in a historically coherent manner (and not as a target of false substance ontology—that is not their primary evil).

Some culturally specific reflections can be interesting, thought-provoking, or insightful, and they can be much loved as a part of getting to know the other's difference or oneself through the eyes of the other. For example, Lafcadio Hearn's *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life*, first published in 1896, is much appreciated by Japanese readers as well as by readership outside Japan. One could complain that the book is anachronistic, hopelessly essentialist, orientalist (sexist and racist), an embarrassing exoticization by a European—and it is, if one reads it through the deconstructionist-poststructuralist lens. But such a critique smacks of neo-colonial arrogance—as if only the most dominant European discourse to date may sit in judgment of other discourses. It seems to lack the intellectual generosity of appreciating other discourses that occupy ontologically and epistemologically different spaces.

As the antiessentialists would agree, *doing* philosophy is inevitably grounded in culture and history, no matter what the abstract claims are, no matter how "universal" it is in its philosophical aim and construction. Doing philosophy, in this sense, is always a historical particular being made by philosophers steeped in their worlds. The production of knowledge is a robust politico-historical process (ideologies included), and it is surely true that Eurocentrism carries with it the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, with its racial and cultural essentialisms, claims of supremacy, and hegemonic discourses, to which the notion of universalism contributed as a historical particular. The birth of Japanese philosophy is no exception. It was in the context of the Meiji negotiation with Western encroachment that the particularities of Japanese philosophy developed in the way they did. So, in this trivial sense, Japanese philosophy is distinctly Japanese, distinctly post-Meiji; one could also understand how Thoreau's philosophy is American in its distinctness, and Fanon's philosophy cannot be what it is without its postcolonial political context. This sort of historical contingency that produces a distinct identity should not be confused with the philosophical question of essentialism. But how should we understand this "distinctness?" Real historicity does produce uniqueness or singularity as a matter of historical contingency, but can such a contingency be called an "identity?"

The second problem is indeed the problem of cultural essentialism. Following the Shinto-inspired nativism that developed in the post-Meiji era as a reaction against foreign influences,[14] there has in fact been a populist tradition that tried to construct what is "essential" to the identity of Japaneseness. Historical and even geographical contingencies are "appropriated" in order to construct a representation of that which is

unique, and, in Japan's case, such endeavors produced what is known as *Nihonjin-ron* (日本人論; *Nihon*: Japan, and *ron*: theory), so theories of Japanese-ness.[15] Although there had long been such theorizing, it enjoyed a renewed surge during the postwar economic boom. Numerous scholars (from the natural sciences to sociology, politics, arts and humanities, cultural geography, literature) have been inspired to speculate on the uniqueness of being Japanese. Especially through the neo-nationalist sensibilities that prevail today, it has become nearly a matter of common sense for Japanese to think of their nation as unique, often superior even, among the nations in world. Needless to say, such theories of cultural essentialism have been severely criticized.[16]

Japanese philosophy, in its claim to be a unique hybrid of Japanese culture and European philosophy, became a target of criticisms against such *Nihonjin-ron* and cultural essentialism. To elaborate, let me turn to the third problem, the political story, in more detail. What propelled this problem was the rising nationalism of the post-Meiji Era. The victories of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and Russo-Japanese War (1905) had instilled confidence that Japan was a modern nation capable of nation-building and defending itself against the West. As Western expansions into Asia progressed in the late 1800s, Japan, too, began its expansion into the East-Asian continent. With the victory of the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the colonization of Formosa (Taiwan) started; the colonization of Korea began in 1910; the Manchurian government north of the Korean peninsula was established in 1931; and the invasion of China began in 1937.[17] During this time, the intellectual currents that favored the combination of modernity and Japanese culture became more dominant. By the time Nishida's political writings appeared, the nation was swept up in the general fervor of nationalism, equipped with a full-blown Japanese Imperial Army with its colonialization program. Since political philosophizing and historical context cannot be separated clearly, we need to return to Nishida's essay in the nationalist context of the time.

Nishida's Theory of Japan as Leader of Asia

At the abstract and universal level, Nishida's ontological theory of globalized cultures is not in itself politically problematic; it simply describes a dialectical process through which nations become what they are. What made it problematic was Japan's purported position in this dialectic at the time of Japanese colonialist expansion in Asia: it so happens that, according to Nishida, it was Japan that most fully expressed this universally applicable, globally significant, world-making dialectic, and, as such, it was the "historical mission of Japan" to bring this insight to the greater world ravaged by Euro-American imperialism and materialism (which Nishida criticized to be operating under the principle of the egoistic expansionism of the nineteenth century that merely dominates and subjugates others for one's own purposes). The creation of the Greater East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere was said to be a step toward consolidating the world-historical

expressions of the peoples of East Asia (against Euro-American domination), and Japan was to self-appoint itself as the leader of this mission.

Nishida uses the wartime slogans, such as the Greater East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, National Polity (*kokutai* 国体—literally "national body"), the Imperial House (*kōshitsu* 皇室), "Oneness of the Emperor and his people" (*kunmin ittai* 君民一体), and "All the people assisting the Emperor" (*banmin yokusan* 万民翼賛), but he gives a philosophical reinterpretation of these phrases in accord with his theory. The Imperial House of Japan is said to embody the universal principle of "world-formation," yet since it is an "empty" subject (referring to his theory of Place as Absolute Nothingness, in turn suggesting that the Japanese Polity should be seen as a Place of Nothingness in which all entities show themselves), metaphysically speaking, Japan itself could not be an oppressive force and a dominating particular, as England or America was.

The metaphysical placement of the universal of Absolute Nothingness in the particular nation of Japan is ingenious and to a certain extent made sense, given the fact that it was the only East-Asian nation that succeeded in modernizing at the time. However, the problem is that the presumed universality of "Absolute Nothingness" becomes identified with a historical particular, the Japanese National Polity, which was in fact the agent of atrocious colonial expansion in Asia during the Pacific War, and the formative principles of Nishida's dialectic are presented as Japan's "logic" for the establishment of the New World Order. This in effect supported standard imperialist discourses of the time.

Here is the "double-edge of universalism": just as Europe used its own universalist discourse to justify its imperialism and colonialism (by "liberating" and "enlightening" those who are merely stuck in their backward particularities, to lead them into modernity, a universal culture), Japan used an analogous discourse in its attempt to colonize Asia, with the language of "liberating East-Asia" through modernization. At this point, the philosophical universal collapses into a standard wartime imperialist narrative, regardless of its original metaphysical meaning or ethical intent.

Apart from whether it was practically possible to do so, theoretically Nishida could have used his world-historical dialectic in order to *oppose* the Imperial House (which cannot but be a historical particular). In fact, that would have been more consistent with his theory. This would be to produce an immanent critique.[18] If the concretization/self-determination of Absolute Nothingness occurs everywhere (as it in fact does, given the theory), then there is no logical or metaphysical necessity that *Japan* would have to embody the principle.[19] Every nation is theoretically an individual that affects others in the dialectic, and the particular "hierarchy" of powers comes from the particular power relations that are at work in the particular situation. In addition, the metaphysical connection which allowed the theory to work perniciously was precisely the notion of Absolute Nothingness, the most "universal" of all notions—in fact, it is strictly speaking no "notion" at all but a metaphysical postulate "in which" or "through which" all notions can appear: as such, it can only be negatively "postulated." The notion of "nothingness" or "emptiness" allowed Nishida to claim that his theory differs from the European

colonialist discourse; if the Japanese Polity, in essence, is absolutely empty, then it merely serves as a metaphysical "placeholder" and cannot be an aggressive force. But here the theory contradicts itself if one tries to make it a theory of historical development, with *one leading nation* as the ultimate Place through which the world realizes itself. The connection to Japan was made externally in that it was the most modern and most powerful nation in East Asia at the time, but the idea that the most advanced nation should lead and liberate the less advanced peoples belongs to the standard developmentalist European colonial thinking and procedure (which Japan adopted). It was not a *necessary* component of the theory.

The Controversy Surrounding the Kyoto School

However, the most infamous case from the postwar perspective came from the participation of Nishida's students in the *Chūōkōron* and Overcoming Modernity (*Kindai no chōkoku*) symposia in 1941–1942, which were published in major journals and then as books.[20] Some members of the Kyoto School (Nishitani Keiji, Kōsaka Masaaki, Suzuki Shigetaka, Shimomura Torataro, and Kōyama Iwao) actively defended the role the Japanese Imperial Army played in the Pacific War in order to "overcome" the Euro-American form of modernity and its domination across the globe. The hitherto dominant version of modernity was criticized as being mired in materialism, rationalism, individualism, selfishness, pursuit of profit, power, and the like; it lacked spiritual wholeness, community, progressive thinking, and ground. They had hoped that the newly emerging "non-Western modernity" and its emphasis on culture, as represented by Japan, could provide a positive alternative that is "modern yet spiritual." The ideas reflected the contents of Nishida's Principle of the New World Order essay, among others, with a much stronger language of cultural essentialism, Asian racial unity, and the legitimation of support for the Imperial Army.

After the war, most of the Kyoto School participants in the round table discussions were forced to resign from their academic posts. Once prominent, the Kyoto School thus acquired the notorious image of an ultranationalist enclave and gradually declined and became isolated after the late 1940s. Nishida never participated in the round table discussions, but since his students' ideas were heavily influenced by his philosophy, among left-leaning circles he is often held "guilty by association." During the postwar period, Japanese philosophy was thus forced into oblivion, and, just as at the beginning in the Meiji Period, "philosophy" in Japan became "Western philosophy" again, and Eurocentrism was even thought justified in the face of Japan's defeat.

Needless to say, it is this political alignment of the Kyoto School thinkers that became the target of postwar critique, primarily among US scholars of Japanese intellectual history, including H. D. Harootunian, Tetsuo Najita, John Dower, Robert Sharf, Ben-Ami Shillony, Peter Dale, Bernard Faure, and Pierre Lavelle who produced a most trenchant criticism of Nishida.[21] The critiques were often quite severe in their political charges and accusative language. For example, Faure writes that "Nishida eventually placed the formulas borrowed from Western philosophy and Buddhism in the service of nationalism, apparently [*sic*] espousing the *Kokutai* ideology."[22] Sharf says "Nishida was himself guilty of the most spurious forms of *nihonjinron* speculation."[23] And Najita and Harootunian go so far as to claim that "no group helped defend the state more consistently and enthusiastically than did the philosophers of the Kyoto faction, and none came closer than they did to defining the philosophic contours of Japanese fascism."[24]

Dower contends:

> {T]he Kyōto School also made it clear that the current conflict represented Japan's ascension as the leading "world-historical race." To them as to all other Japanese patriots, the war in Asia and the Pacific was a "holy war," and represented an unprecedented struggle for the attainment of a transcendent Great Harmony (*Taiwa*).[25]

Graham Parkes responds with a sharp corrective to these polemics, which were often published in highly visible venues. Parkes shows that they were mostly delivered without rigorous philosophical analyses and justification (or even understanding), and therefore they are even academically irresponsible.[26] Much more nuanced and philosophically cogent criticisms are in fact available, such as those by Andrew Feenberg and John Maraldo.[27]

From the Postwar Period to the Present

Let us now examine the historical context from the postwar period to the present. After the postwar recovery period of the 1960s into the 1980s, as Japan again emerged as a global economic success story, national confidence grew and leading elites again began to represent Japan as a unique center of non-Western modernity. This time, the kind of universalism Japan spread to the world was not via philosophy or cultural discourse but rather through consumer technology and pop culture; nevertheless, Japan finally succeeded in having a globally recognized presence and power. In this milieu of optimism, there was a renewed interest in the themes of the interwar Overcoming Modernity debates. The new interest was not so much in rekindling the old debate as such but rather in thinking anew the possibility of "overcoming" the West by studying some unique features of the "Japanese mind and behavior" which purportedly gave the Japanese a special cultural advantage. *Nihonjin-ron* flourished with renewed vigor. For instance, Umehara Takeshi, known as one of the "New Kyoto School" thinkers, developed his own theory of Japanese culture ("Umehara Japanology," *Umehara Nihongaku*) based on Buddhism and Shinto, set against the scientific culture of Europe that was seen as reaching an impasse.[28] Without much actual study of the old debate, the phrase "Overcoming Modernity" was resurrected and popularized again in the renewed atmosphere of cultural neo-nationalism.

After the growth period of the 1970s, interest in Japanese philosophy, including Nishida, was rekindled and a new generation of scholars appeared who wanted to develop original theories that reflected elements of Japanese culture. For example, Nakamura Yujirō's 1987 book, *Nishida tetsugaku no datsu-kōchiku* (*Deconstruction in Nishidian Philosophy*) opened up a new circle of Nishida scholarship, updating Nishida's antiessentialism to match poststructuralist thought.[29] Other notable developments include Kimura Bin's psychoanalyses that are inspired by Watsuji's theory of "in-between-ness" (*aidagara* 間柄)[30]; French geographer Augustin Berque's theory of "*milieu*" and "*écoumène,*" which expand on Watsuji's theory of *fūdo* (風土, which Berque translates as *milieu*)[31]; and Sakabe Megumi's phenomenological aesthetics,[32] which draws on Kuki Shūzo as well as on Watsuji. Since these developments did not specifically try to articulate Japanese *uniqueness*, but rather aimed for culturally informed yet universal philosophical articulations, they are not usually considered *Nihonjin-ron* theories (though this point might be disputed).

The tendency toward cultural nationalism continued to grow, particularly into the 1980s, this time with the idea that Japan is the genuine postmodern nation.[33] The underlying reverse-orientalist claim is still that Japan is somehow positively different (Buddhist-postmodern), the real Other of the West, and that this accounts for Japan's amazing civilizational recovery since World War II, an event unprecedented in world history.

According to this reasoning, what makes Japan so special culturally are the supposedly indigenous notions of "emptiness" and "harmony." As Karatani Kōjin notes:

> In the context of the economic development of the 1970s, the fact that a self did not exist was highly valued. It is precisely because of this fact that Japan was able to become a cutting-edge super-Western consumer and information society. Indeed, there was no self (subject) or identity, but there was a predicative identity with the capacity to assimilate anything without incurring any shock or giving rise to any confusion. This is what Nishida Kitaro read as "predicative logic" or "the logic of place," in which he identified the essence of the emperor system.[34]

Because of its emptiness, Japan is supposedly able to absorb advanced technologies readily, and it is also perfectly suited for the internationalized "information society" which is to prevail in the coming century vis-á-vis the material-industrial civilization of the past. As the "post-Western" world arrived in the late twentieth century, with its multiple global power centers, Japan would be able to offer a leading paradigm of world-civilization for the next millennium. Note the contemporary iterations of ideas expressed by Nishida in the New World Order essay in such a rhetoric. This sort of neo-nationalist discourse was consciously promoted by the Ohira and Nakasone cabinets during the early to mid-1980s, with their optimistic portrayal of Japan as the leader of the internationalization movement. Thus, as cultural critic Asada Akira notes, far from being an embarrassing memory, today the issues raised in the Overcoming Modernity debate are "ideologized and revived like ghosts" in contemporary Japan's "groundless self-confidence."[35] Influenced by poststructuralism and neo-Marxism, Karatani also criticizes the facile comparison of deconstruction and Japanese capitalist expansion in the postwar period.[36]

The cultural-nationalist sentiments continued to grow in the 1990s, and, as Japan commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Pacific War in 1995, the issue of how to account for its colonial activities in Asia attracted renewed interest in the public sphere. Although the stories of atrocities are no longer a secret, the once-sloganized justification, the "liberation of Asia from Western imperial powers," still enjoyed (and continues to enjoy) considerable support among the conservative sector of society. Although Prime Minister Murayama finally issued a formal apology on August 15, 1995, the event was shrouded in controversy and resistance; the preferred national discourse is that of being a victim (of the atom bombings), and in fear of humiliation there is considerable resistance to recognizing Japan as the *perpetrator* of violence. The official apologies by the Koizumi Cabinet followed well into the 2000s, yet Prime Minister Koizumi visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, regarded by Korea and China as the symbol of Japanese militarism, in 2005 and 2006, aggravating political relations with both of these countries.[37] As recently as the spring of 2016, the Japanese government still refuses to acknowledge the Imperial Army's coercion of "comfort women" in Korea and China. Apart from what the government officials do or do not do, the sentiments of the majority of Japanese still support the neo-nationalist line that Japan need not keep apologizing. The issue is far from settled.

There are three currents of thought underlying such resistance: (1) Japan's *intent* to liberate Asia from the encroachment of Western hegemony in the war is thought to have been in itself noble (and necessary). (2) War (and its associated atrocities) is simply a part of history, and, as Buddhist metaphysics would have it, there is no ultimate good and evil that can be judged—everything mirrors everything else in an ever-shifting process: war is one of these shifting moments, and what would be "evil," if anything at all, would be to make the mistake of fixing something as "evil" (e.g., war) when in fact there is ultimately no such fixed thing. (3) Japan should not be "singled out" for its violent actions; war crimes are part of war, lamentable as this might be. Retrospectively, one could read all of these ideas already expressed in the Overcoming of Modernity debates. Critics on the left continued to be wary of the use of depersonalizing historicism to evade responsibilities and worried about the reaffirmation of nationalist sentiments that its resurgence implies; nevertheless, the once-forgotten giants of Japanese philosophy and the cultural ideas they represented also became a focus of attention again.

After nearly fifty years of silence, in 1995, Kyoto University officially re-established "Japanese Philosophy" in the graduate curriculum. After the war, descendants of the Kyoto School, most notably students of Nishitani, had continued to work, primarily in religious philosophy in an academically isolated environment; now, they have gained a recognized institutional center again where they are continuing the tradition. Nishida scholarship has enjoyed a resurgence, although criticism from the left continues.[38] It is still the case that among certain circles the image of the "right" is attributed to those who study Japanese philosophy today, but it is no longer a shunned field in the academy. There is indeed excellent scholarship emerging from the new generation of Kyoto School scholars, as well as from scholars in the West who specialize in Kyoto School philosophies. The renewed focus is on intercultural or global modes of philosophizing, which takes up traditional themes of the Kyoto School in today's contexts, such as multiculturalism, global pluralism, intercultural exchange, and diversity, applying the antiessentialist, dialectic insights of the original thinkers of the Kyoto School to today's problems and concerns.[39] In addition to intercultural and global-multicultural philosophy, critiques of Eurocentrism and Western hegemony are still very relevant in our neo-colonial global context. In this regard, David Williams offers a new defense of the Kyoto School thinkers, aligning their thinking with the anticolonial critique of millennial white supremacy; he notes the significance of the "post-White thinking" of the Kyoto School thinkers in today's geopolitics:

> During the twenty-first century, White West hegemony, the racial imbalance that has defined our global society for half a millennium, seems almost certain to pass away. Tanabe, Kōyama, Suzuki, Nishitani and Kōsaka were among the earliest thinkers to sense the enormous opportunity but also the great test facing those who would seek to realize this change. American hegemony now stands in the way of this renaissance. For any society that would take up this challenge, the Kyoto

thinker's gift for metaphysical vision and historical realism has provided future generations with the philosophical tools to dream forward.[40]

Thus, according to Williams, the Kyoto School thinkers of the Overcoming Modernity notoriety "were right but fatally ahead of their times, and thus prophets without honour, at home or abroad."[41]

Beyond Global Multiculturalism: The Possibility of a Decolonized World Order

Having chronicled the turbulent history of modern Japanese philosophy, we now return to the contemporary global context discussed at the outset of this chapter, that is to say, the neo-colonial world order—the world ravaged by uncontrolled transnational neo-capitalism, continuing (or perhaps even worsening) global racism and sexism, the environmental crisis, and the gaping breach between those who control and those who are controlled. Not that we are ambitious enough to take on all these issues here, but what *would* be a constructive way to move forward with Japanese philosophy today, given that doing philosophy is a historical activity? Let me make three points to conclude the chapter. (1) For pragmatic reasons we *must* go beyond defending or attacking Nishida and the Kyoto School and move our assessments to the current context. (2) Japanese philosophy must go beyond the borders of Japan; it must participate in philosophizing globally. (3) Articulating the de-essentialized dialectic at play in the interactive mutual creations of different cultural groups (such as Nishida has done and as has been refreshed by Bret Davis, John Maraldo, Gereon Kopf, and others) has much contemporary significance in the contexts of liberal multicultural democratic politics and cosmopolitanism. Yet, given the global power inequities, the discourse of liberal multiculturalism can actually mask the recalcitrant problem of global racism.[42] Even though it is necessary to start with multiculturalism, what we need today is to move beyond multiculturalism to a *decolonized* world order. Can Nishida's theory, for example, offer a theoretical framework to go forward in this direction? Perhaps yes, but this will happen not merely through textual exegesis or application, but only through a reinterpretation and expansion.

To the first point: as stated earlier, from the global perspective, the current political mood in Japan still appears rather neo-nationalist and myopically Japanocentric and Japanosupremacist in that, when it comes to the issue of war crimes and moral demands for recognition, issues that come to the political fore (as well as the tendency among the citizens witnessed in countless blog entries) are the refusal to see Japan as a perpetrator, historical amnesia, playing the victim, blaming the victim, self-justification, self-pity, evasion of responsibility, criticizing the critics, and intra-Asian racism. Japan's political relations to Korea and China continue to be tense under such self-denial. What is taught at schools about the Pacific War, censored and approved by the Ministry of Education, is

woefully lacking in any non-Japanese perspectives. This is not just a "background scene" against which we, as philosophers and academics and citizens, theorize, teach, converse, and live; it *is* what makes up the very stuff of our historicity today. As citizens and educators, critics and evaluators, *we* are also not "above or below" history, as if we could assume a neutral ground in order to produce our critique. Our voices are themselves creators and interlocutors within and beyond the narratives of philosophy (politics, ethics, and life in general), and our words are not the final words.

In this sense, our reconstruction and interpretation of the politics of the Kyoto School, for example, are not really about the past but rather about the *present and the future*; they are part of our *current, continuous, ongoing creation* of an academic narrative today. Defending (or attacking) the Kyoto School, therefore, is not really about defending or attacking per se, but rather about participating in the current production of knowledge. We participate in writing history, and what we endorse and what we disregard, what we choose to discuss and what we ignore, what we communicate to our students and colleagues, what and how we discuss or do not discuss, what and how we teach, all become part of the process of knowledge production and have consequences in the long run, perhaps even making a moral difference.[43] We may actually not have as much choice as we think we do in this matter, for whatever narrative we produce, we are implicated in a *positioning*, a "realization" and the concretization of a moment (a "self-determination") within the dialectical universal, if one were to use the language of Nishida's theory.

For example, although philosophical universalism can legitimately buttress liberatory agendas (obvious cases are universal rights discourse or civil rights claims, but Nishida's New World Order essay also can certainly be read in this liberatory vein),[44] it ought not be used to *justify* the pernicious outcome of history *in retrospect*. Even though it was a standard narrative until the early twentieth century, Europe can no longer use the language of enlightenment and paternalistic liberation to justify European colonialism because we regard colonialism to be something that we ought not to attempt to justify at all today. (What would be the *point* of such a justification?) It hardly matters in this context that universalism can be theoretically used to liberate because that never happened in the history of colonialism, anywhere.

Let me make a pragmatic point. Justice demands recognition, retribution, and reconciliation; pragmatically speaking, *if* intra-Asian justice is important at all, then that is a *goal* toward which we ought to be theorizing, rather than theorizing in a direction that hinders it.[45] The self-appointed and supposed supremacy of Japan was a problem then and it still is now, not just diplomatically but also morally. How, then, would it help to repeat such a discourse from the past and claim today that it had its own merits? The retrospective, historical, or textual defense, even in the name of "truth," misses the point that such analyses are themselves *participating in the current production of power discourse* embedded in the current historical context.[46] This is why it does not suffice to say, "well, but the historical context back then was so different and everything must be read in that context"—because this statement is itself uttered now in our already

contentious *present* context. (Think of how impossible it would be today to make such a historicized defense of National Socialism in Germany and remain "neutral" in the current context.)

Following from the first is the second point. What is the *place* of Japanese philosophy today, and what should it be? Until now, Japanese philosophy has remained confined primarily to those who can read and write the Japanese language. Of course, knowing the language is extremely important, but I would argue that Japanese philosophy harbors a great many philosophical potentialities that could be meaningfully made available to the global scene of doing philosophy, such that it is a shame if Japanese philosophy remains a rather specialized and isolated, even "guarded," discourse in Japan just because of its linguistic inaccessibility. Indeed, this smacks of cultural protectionism and even, to some extent, academic chauvinism. Let me repeat the point James Heisig recently made:

> The future of Nishida's philosophy is not served by treating it like Shakespeare's tragedies or Dante's Divine Comedy. It has rather to be read like all great philosophers: diffused and adapted to as many questions of human life and to as many different historical and linguistic contexts as possible, stretching his ideas to the breaking point until they deliver on their full promise.[47]

Nishida (and the Kyoto School thinkers) aimed for an antiessentialist, dialectical concrete universal in the making, here and now. To remain stuck in historical analyses and exegesis in a narrow scholarly Japanese context would, in fact, belie his own theory. As Heisig notes, Nishida's thought is a kind of place that must be contextualized in the ever-broader place of thought today.[48] Following this suggestion, we must "update" Nishida's theory by testing it against the "questions of the day—questions like the maldistribution of wealth, the enslavement of the poor, the research into ever more powerful killing machines, the deliberate infection of the air and the water—and then try to set [these contemporary questions] in the context and vocabulary of Nishida's philosophy."[49]

In this vein, let me turn to the third point, my own attempt to tease out a theoretical strain in Nishida with the aim of becoming able to address such contemporary issues. Let me suggest two possible ways to reconstruct his theory as a whole: from a "third-person perspective" and from a "first-person-perspective."[50] In the third person, one describes the formal process of the dialectic, as if to see it from a bird's-eye view; for instance, nations determine one another through self-negation and appropriation, as Nishida describes in his New World Order essay. History develops as the process of such a concrete dialectic, and this process contains peaceful as well as contentious relations and developments, including war. As such, one cannot say that the dialectic and the resulting situation is "good" or "bad." Today, our global-geopolitical situation is obviously not what it was in the 1940s, but there are patterns of domination and exchange, claims for self-determination, shifting movements of capital, competition and alliance, and there is still war. Nishida's theory could certainly be used to describe and give us insight into how such patterns dialectically produce the development of global history. If one approaches

and interprets Nishida's political theory in this vein, then it could indeed appear that all the moral charges are overblown in that he simply produced an ontologically descriptive account. This is by far the most common reading of Nishida in the scholarship.

However, there is another interpretive strand which may be possible—that of the first-person perspective—which can be traced from his early theory of "pure experience" to his theory of "personality" and "action-intuition" (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直観) in the historical dialectic. From the standpoint of action-intuition, the subject is not simply "one of the actors" seen from above but the *self as the I*, with thoughts, body, will, and plans (a "personality"), in existential and *free* dialectical interactions with others and with itself, including self-negation-in-affirmation-of-the-other. What *I* choose or do not choose to do alters and influences and "forms" the environment/the Other, and, through this interaction, *I* am changed accordingly. I am, as a subject, not simply an object, an "event" in history, but an *acting co-creator* in the dialectical process of the historical world. What I choose or do not choose to do makes a difference in the environment/history in which I am involved; by concretizing a particular situation (among numerous possible realities), my choices "determine" a particular direction. Here, one cannot say "and this too is neither good nor bad," as I am not an automaton simply determined by the environment. I am rather an *agent* who deliberates and contemplates the actions (even though some of this deliberation and contemplation may not be at a conscious level). The historical world of such agents ("personalities") is full of responsibilities connected with decisions, and since we are always making-in-the-made-environment, the sense of our responsibilities is always relational, for the other, for the larger context.[51] The shift to the first-person perspective brings with itself an *ethical-moral* dimension which was not present in the third-person description of history.[52]

From the first-person perspective, since my decisions are situated and implicated in the concrete processes of history, my dialectical involvement with others and with the wider environment is *always already* moral-political. In this sense, history does not "just happen" but rather is dialectically created through its participants and their decisions, actions, projections, reflections, interpretations, moral sensibilities, compassion, understanding, will, and freedom. From the first-person perspective, Nishida's theory highlights this existential dimension in the dialectical-historical process and such a dimension includes *us today*: pure experience and action-intuition, the dialectical universal and its self-determination are not in "books" or in "Nishida's philosophy" but are still very much the articulations of the very processes in which we live, theorize, and communicate, here and now. We continue a living tradition, a concrete universal in the process of unfolding. It is a dialectic in the making, and not only our current geopolitics of radical power inequities and racism, but also, as Heisig and Krummel point out, our environmental crisis as a whole seems to demand that we develop a new discourse of a common future.[53]

We are, as Nishida reminds us, historical agents, material "personalities" that co-create the world, and what we do and think, or fail to do and think, matter in the long run. Literally as we speak, the global scene is changing. Perhaps Nishida's theory could still

be used to produce an embodied theory of resistance, an *existential critical theory*, to empower the subjects of history and action, to subvert and transcend the injustices that subjugate, to rethink and extend our sense of compassion and responsibility, and to imagine critically and create a common future, a new, *humane*, world order—this time, a globally decolonized one.

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Notes:

([1]) On questions surrounding the definitions of "philosophy" and "Japanese philosophy," see Bret W. Davis's introduction to this volume.

([2]) See McCarthy 2009.

([3]) Kant's anthropology, according to which Caucasian white Europeans were understood to be the most advanced race, is quite appallingly racist from today's standards, but, at the time, it was viewed as the most scientific theory of race. See his "Von der verschiedenen Rassen der Menschen," 1775, and *Observations of the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, 1764. Hegel's "Anthropology" (see section 393 of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) as well as his philosophy of history (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*) blatantly endorse the superiority of

the "Caucasian peoples" and denigrate "Africans and Mongols" for their utter lack of capacity for development.

(^{4}) For some fascinating accounts of the transformation processes, see Samson 1984, Jansen 1965, and Irowaka and Jansen 1985.

(^{5}) I shall use the contested terms "East and West" (or the expression "the West") here as they were used by Japanese intellectuals at the time.

(^{6}) See the chapter by John Maraldo, "The Japanese Encounter with and Appropriation of Western Philosophy," in this volume. For a brief introduction of Japanese philosophy in the post-Meiji context, see also Arisaka 2014*b*. For overviews of and translated essays by Japanese thinkers from the seventh to twentieth centuries, see Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011. This comprehensive 1,300-page volume is a *tour-de-force* on the major thinkers of Japan.

(^{7}) Nishi Amane (1829–1897), who traveled to Holland and brought back Comte's and Mill's philosophies, coined the term in 1862.

(^{8}) See Sakai 1989. He elaborates these reflections further in Sakai 1993, in the context of discussing Watsuji Tetsurō. Both are groundbreaking essays on the "production" of the East–West framework.

(^{9}) Césaire of Martinique, a Marxist poet and one of the key figures in the Négritude movements, wrote in 1955: "the so-called European civilization—'Western' civilization—as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of 'reason' or before the bar of 'conscience'; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive. *Europe is indefensible*" (9).

(^{10}) It was criticized by his Marxist student Tosaka Jun to be a bourgeois idealism, "merely phenomenological and historically insignificant." *Tosaka Jun zenshū* (1966, *Collected Works of Tosaka*, Tokyo: Keisō-Shobō, 3, 172–173).

(^{11}) See Arisaka 1996 for a translation of the essay as well as a summary of the debates surrounding it.

(^{12}) A detailed discussion of the double-edge of universalism can also be found in Arisaka 1997.

(^{13}) Interesting accounts of the constructivist production of "modern Japan" can be found in, among others, Gluck 1985, for the late Meiji Period, and Harootunian 2000, for the 1920s–1930s. See also Tanaka 1993, for an account of reverse-orientalist discourse used in Japan in order to construct its identity.

(¹⁴) For instance, Ōkuni Takamasa wrote in 1861: "The highest ambition of all among the different kinds of 'uprightness in adhering to the origin' is for those who are born in our land of Japan to adhere to the ancient facts concerning the age of the *kami*, handed down as the ancestral lineage of our emperor, and to preserve this land for all time. If all the people of Japan embrace this ambition, we will never be defeated even if we are attacked by foreign countries" (in Heisig, Kasulis, Maraldo 2011, 525).

(¹⁵) *Nihonjin-ron* theorists claim that the "facts" seem to prove the nation's purported singularity: the Japanese language is spoken only in Japan; Japan was the only country able to isolate itself deliberately from the rest of the world for 250 years; Japan was the only country onto which the atomic bombs were dropped; no other country in the world has an imperial lineage that goes back to the origin of the nation; Japan's unique "vertical" organizational and familial structures made the postwar economic miracle possible (see Nakane 1972); Japan's unique aesthetic sensibilities for smallness made the global technological breakthrough possible; Japanese psychoanalysis shows a unique pattern of mother–child relations which also functions to regulate social relations (see Doi 1973); and the list goes on. Two good treatments of *Nihonjin-ron* in English are Befu's anthropological account (2001) and Yoshino's sociological analyses (1992).

(¹⁶) Although perhaps idiosyncratic, a critique of *Nihonjin-ron* is found in Dale 2011.

(¹⁷) See Myers and Peattie 1984, for a detailed history.

(¹⁸) Davis also writes that it is possible to read Nishida "against Nishida" in order to develop such a self-criticism. See his discussion of immanent critique in Davis 2013*a*. See also Arisaka 2014*a* for a discussion of this point.

(¹⁹) Kopf 2009*b* makes a similar point: "Most of all, however, his arguments in support of nationalist beliefs belie the subversive potential of his non-dualist philosophy, which, if taken seriously, subverts rather than reifies conceptual tokens such as the nation state and the orientalist bifurcation of the world" (79).

(²⁰) Translations of the symposia are available in English: see Calichman 2008, Williams 2014, and Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 1059–1084. For various analyses on the topic of nationalism and the Kyoto School thinkers, see also Heisig and Maraldo 1995, Goto-Jones 2008, Williams 2004, 2014, and the chapter by Ōhashi Ryōsuke and Akitomi Katsuya in this volume.

(²¹) According to Lavelle 1994: "Nishida's political ideas belong to the common base of ultra-nationalism" (164).

(²²) Faure 1995, 249, 253.

(²³) Sharf 1993, 23.

(²⁴) Najita and Harootunian 1988, 741.

(²⁵) Dower 1986, 227.

(²⁶) See Parkes 1997: "Indeed, the scholarship behind these criticisms is, in general, poor —and in some cases even irresponsible, given how seriously accusations of fascism or ultranationalism need to be taken in the current global-political climate. And since most of the people attacking the Kyoto School thinkers are prominent in their fields, and in the relevant writings published by respectable university presses, their criticisms call all the more urgently for a response" (305).

(²⁷) See, for example, Feenberg 1995 and Maraldo 1995.

(²⁸) For example, Umehara argues for the superiority of Japanese culture and its pantheistic religious beliefs in contrast to European monotheism and scientism. In his *Nihon bunka ron* (1976, *Theory of Japanese Culture*), he criticizes nuclear power as a product of the European culture based on anger (in contrast to the Japanese culture of peace).

(²⁹) Nakamura Yujirō, *Nishida Tetsugaku no Datsu-kōchiku* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987). Unfortunately, there is no English translation of this work yet. See the chapter by Gereon Kopf in this volume.

(³⁰) See, for example, Kimura 1972. There is no translation of this work in English, but it is translated into German: see Kimura 1995.

(³¹) Berque has an extensive publication list in French and Japanese; in English, see Berque 1997*a*, 1997*b*. In French, Berque 2000. On Watsuji and Berque's work, see the chapter by Erin McCarthy in this volume.

(³²) On Sakabe, see the chapters by Toru Tani (Jp. Tani Tōru) and Yasuo Kobayashi (Jp. Kobayashi Yasuo) in this volume.

(³³) See, for example, Wei-hsun Fu and Heine 1995; for critical essays, see also Miyoshi and Harootunian 1989 and 1993.

(³⁴) Karatani 1993, 298.

(³⁵) Hiromatsu et al. 2004: 10. See also Miyoshi and Harootunian 1989, for essays in English by Asada, Karatani, and other critics of *Nihonjin-ron*. See also Miyoshi and Harootunian 1993 for a good collection of critical essays on Japanese identity formation, essentialism, postwar US–Japan relations, and so on.

(³⁶) Karatani, who studied with Paul de Man and Frederic Jameson at Yale, is one of the contemporary Japanese philosophers known outside Japan. His works have been recognized by thinkers like Derrida and Žižek, which has brought him international recognition. His 1985 work, *Hihyō to posutomodan* (Critique and Postmodernism), is perhaps among the best known of his works in Japan, but there are several translations of

his other works available in English, such as *Transcritique* (2003), another one of his well-known theories.

(^{37}) See Takahashi 2005, for the controversies surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine, as well as his critique.

(^{38}) See the interesting works by the "decendents" of the Kyoto School, such as Ueda Shizuteru, Ōhashi Ryōsuke, and Fujita Masakatsu. Critics in Japan include Hiromatsu Wataru and Takahashi Tetsuya, among others. See Hiromatsu 1989 and Takahashi 1995.

(^{39}) For collections of essays on the contemporary relevance of Japanese philosophy, see Fujita and Davis 2005 and Heisig 2006. On the topic of cross-cultural dialogue and philosophy in the contemporary global context, see Maraldo 1995; Kopf 2009*a*, 2009*b*, 2011, and 2014; Davis 2006, 2010, 2013*b*, and 2014*b*.

(^{40}) Williams 2004, 91.

(^{41}) Ibid.

(^{42}) For a discussion of this problem in a context of racism and multiculturalism, see Arisaka 2010.

(^{43}) In this sense, it is interesting to contrast the culture of postwar German national guilt to that of the relatively guilt-free Japanese national self-understanding. As Habermas once made clear in the "historians debate" in the 1980s in Germany (some right-leaning historians argued that Germany ought to get over its dark past of National Socialism to move forward), the ongoing narratives of guilt and the recognition of past wrongs are important, precisely because they recreate and reinstitute over and over in the current discourse a *continued* awareness. It is therefore for the *future*, not for the past. See McCarthy 2009, 99–105, for further analysis of this debate.

(^{44}) See Ueda 1995, Yusa 1995, and Krummel 2015, for good presentations of Nishida's universalism as a liberatory theory.

(^{45}) One could, of course, regard intra-Asian justice as unimportant; or be a right-leaning cultural essentialist or a Japanosupremacist; or be so embedded in the lineage of the Kyoto School that one must abstain from criticizing the forbearers out of respect; or decide to abstain from any political commentary. My particular take on this issue thus represents only one possible view.

(^{46}) The attacks would then have to be read in the current context of Japan-bashing, US neo-colonialism, Chinese domination, intra-Asian politics of power negotiations, and so on. The point remains the same—it is not about the past but the present/future.

(^{47}) Heisig 2016, 223.

(^{48}) Heisig 2016, 236: "Nishida's thought is not a self-enclosed universe nor can it be understood simply as a part of Japan's intellectual history. Only by seeing it as located in the wider *basho* of world philosophy are we able to understand it."

(^{49}) Heisig 2016, 238. In Heisig's view, the ultimate *basho*, which should be focused on rather urgently today, is the Earth.

(^{50}) More on the third-person versus first-person perspectives in Arisaka 2014*a*, Feenberg 1999, and Feenberg and Arisaka 1990.

(^{51}) See Takahashi and Lee 2007, for the importance of philosophizing with a sense of responsibility for the other (as a critique of neo-liberal–individualist elitism).

(^{52}) Krummel 2015 notes that Nishida's dialectic could accommodate an ethic of "mutual self-negation, an ethics calling for humility vis-á-vis one's others" (221).

(^{53}) See Heisig 2016, 237; Krummel 2015, 224.

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