

The Transcendental Path

Abhidharma Sources of Nishida's Logic of Place

Bernard STEVENS

Philosophical quest, although allegedly universal, is in fact always conditioned by the identity of the philosopher engaged in it. For my part, I am a male of European origin, educated in French but originally born in Java, Indonesia. The attempts I have made during my short life to think about our common humanity and the meaning or meaninglessness of the human adventure, collective and individual, on this planet have been nourished by Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian assumptions of universality that lie at the root of Western philosophy, by the French Enlightenment belief in universal equality and dignity of all humans, and also by the awareness that this human universality, in order to be effective, concrete, real, and true, must include the endeavors of non-European civilizations—among which are those that have been present, over the centuries, in my own native country: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and various types of animism.

On examining, as far as I have been able, the possibilities of a dialogue between Western philosophy and non-Western traditions, I have discovered that other scholars, more gifted than I, have already made considerable progress in this direction. Perhaps it is already obvious, but I am thinking here of the Kyoto School in general and of Nishida Kitarō in particular. By his own account “a miner of ore” who “never managed to

refine it,” Nishida engenders both great expectations and a certain sense of disappointment. His system of thought opens up to philosophy new horizons, new perspectives, and new possibilities, but it does not really manage to create a clear and satisfactory philosophical construct.

Some time ago I was speaking with Ueda Shizuteru about Nishida and remarked that I thought of Nishida’s philosophy as an academic bridge between East and West. Ueda agreed, but not without insisting that the bridge needed fortifying. I believe that today, after decades of Kyoto School philosophy and almost as many decades of commentaries on it, both in Japan and abroad, the bridge has by and large been built, to the point that we may now risk using it to cross over. As Westerners, it offers a way to discover for ourselves some of the Eastern horizons that Nishida has made it possible for us to glimpse.

If one sets out to cross this bridge with the ideal of philosophical universality in mind (universality being understood, briefly, as that which is common to all humans, valid for all, and of essential and foundational ontological significance), a number of observations come immediately to mind. I mention two of them, one negative and the other positive.

Obviously, studies in the intercultural regions of philosophy run into linguistic difficulties, not merely the occasional impossibility of translating a particular term or notion from one language to another, but also the oft-neglected fact that philosophical thought is conditioned by the very possibilities of the language through which it is being expressed. I have tried to show this elsewhere (STEVENS 2008) by taking up the rather basic case of Western-Aristotelian ontology which is directly conditioned by the vocabulary and the syntactic structure of the Greek language (a matter long ignored because of the relative ease, for linguistic and historical reasons, of rendering Greek into other European languages). Reality—whatever one may mean by that term—is always understood by way of the potential and limits of the language that is used to talk about it.

But then we have to ask: Is there anything common to all humans, not limited by linguistic, cultural, and historical conditions? Perhaps, and this brings me to my positive remark. The very act of thinking, of aiming at reality, of trying to express one’s thought and intentionality through language, is itself, as an act of consciousness, the most common dimension there is to philosophy.

This dimension of consciousness, in which all human thought is rooted, is the very locus that transcendental philosophy—in the sense Kant has given it—has taken to be the ground condition of all universality. It is precisely this transcendental dimension that Nishida’s philosophy has endeavoured to investigate through the stages of his adventure of ideas: pure experience (*junsui keiken* 純粹經驗), self-awareness (*jikaku* 自覚), and the logic of place (*basho no ronri* 場所の論理). When one goes on to examine the Asian sources of Nishida philosophy, one realizes that very likely (though admittedly Nishida is never very explicit about his Oriental sources) one of the main inspirations of his system is to be found in a tradition that has gone as far as any other in trying to understand this fundamental dimension of human consciousness, namely, Buddhist Abhidharma theory in India and, more precisely, its development as Yogācāra: the “doctrine of consciousness” (*vijñāna-vāda*) or the “mind-only-school” (*citta-mātra-vāda*). We know that Nishida was considerably well-read in the Indian sources of Buddhism (YUSA 2002), which makes it difficult to imagine that this tradition, given its obvious similarities to his own thought, would not have had an impact on his philosophy.

In what follows I would like to put this assertion to the test. I begin by explaining the terms chosen to entitle this essay.

THE TRANSCENDENTAL

The word “transcendental” does not always have exactly the same significance in British philosophical literature that it does in continental European philosophical literature. The American and Far-Eastern academic usage is generally closer to continental use than it is to more insular British conventions, where “transcendental” and “transcendent” are often used interchangeably. I do not have the linguistic confidence to comment on this matter. Indeed, I already have my hands full trying to express in English a philosophical position that belongs to the continental European tradition, where German idealism is dominant.

For German idealism, the “transcendental” is distinct from the merely “transcendent.” The quality of the “transcendent” is traditionally attrib-

uted to what pertains to “transcendence.” And “transcendence,” as opposed to “immanence,” is that which literally lies—in a metaphysical sense—beyond the material or sensual dimension of the phenomenal world. Transcendence is thus a place, or a dimension, beyond our world, which is either empty or, more generally, occupied by a supreme being, God or spirit, or else by an eidetic being, the so-called “realm of Ideas” (which constituted the *Überwelt* often criticized by Nietzsche).

Another sense of the word “transcendence,” that adopted by Kant and the phenomenologists (principally Husserl and Sartre), refers to the movement or act made by a conscious subject in order to reach its object. Whereas intentionality is the description of the act of consciousness “aiming” at an object, transcendence has to do with “reaching” the object in order to integrate it into an ever more synthetic system of thought. The Hegelian system is paradigmatic here.

The term “transcendental,” as a substantive, traces its origins to the scholastics who used it to refer to ontological attributes that go beyond the Aristotelian categories and that can be affirmed of all beings: the One, the Good, and the True are “transcendentals.”

With Immanuel Kant, however, the term took on a new meaning, loosing its ontological focus in order to refer to an analysis or inventory of our faculty to know. This was a consequence of what Kant called his “Copernican revolution,” after which it would be the object that revolves around the subject, and not the other way around. We cannot know the object in itself, but only its phenomenon, that is, the way it appears to the subject. Our knowledge is thus dependent on the a priori structure that constitutes the subject of knowledge, as Descartes had foreseen. The source of knowledge is therefore not the empirical world but the subjective structure of consciousness. In short, “transcendental” refers to the a priori condition of the possibility of knowledge of empirical objects. Our concepts or categories of thought, for example, are typically transcendental. At the basis of the transcendental structure of knowledge is the transcendental subject that unifies all theoretical activity within consciousness. Yet if the transcendental subject is presupposed by all acts of knowledge, it is not itself an object and, therefore, it cannot be truly known, only experienced (KANT 1781).

Phenomenology carried on the transcendental search for the root ori-

gins of knowledge. But Husserl was less concerned with a priori conditions than with “the things themselves” (*die Sachen selbst*)—which for Kant remained within the phenomenal dimension, not the transcendent dimension of an object as it is in itself and beyond its appearances. The transcendental orientation of thought requires a quest, a descriptive analysis of intentionality that endeavors to unveil the eidetic foundations of the cognition of objects. Phenomenology thus became the explicitly eidetic study of what is given, as phenomenon, to consciousness. Consciousness, being always a consciousness “of something,” is an intentionality of a noetic-noematic structure. That is, it is based on *noesis*, the act as *intentio*, and aiming at the *noema*, the object as the *intentum*, either an intuited essence or a perceived phenomenon (HUSSERL 1963). Husserl tried to relate the rather abstract Kantian subject to the empirical subject by analyzing consciousness through a description of its intentionality based on lived “experience” (*Erlebnis*) or even a “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) that needs to be described as thoroughly as possible in order to grasp what it is aiming at. Thus the radicalization of the transcendental dimension pushed Husserl to explore ever more deeply the structure of consciousness itself. This is where transcendental phenomenology has gone a step further than transcendental Kantianism (HUSSERL 1954). Still, for Husserl the priority of the perceptual and theoretical dimensions over against the practical or affective might give us a biased understanding of the actual life of consciousness. Here again Nishida’s philosophy proposes a new turn.

As I understand it, Nishida’s concept of place (場所 *basho*) enabled him to reshape the notion of transcendental consciousness. Already in *An Inquiry into the Good* Nishida took a lead from Schopenhauer in referring to will as a more concrete and fundamental act than reflexive thought for relating consciousness to reality (NISHIDA 1911). In *Art and Morality* he saw artistic intuition as a more encompassing approach to truth than cognitive or purely perceptual ones, in that it enables subjectivity to penetrate deeper into the roots of consciousness and to have a more unified access to its object. In that sense, aesthetic feeling as well as voluntary intentionality, in contrast to the cognitive, were considered an “a priori of the a priori” (NISHIDA 1923). The process of deepening consciousness from the abstractly cognitive to the concretely

volitional is a “self-awareness,” or perhaps better, a “self-awakening” (自覚 *jikaku*). This leads ultimately to the nothingness of the pre-ontic dimension that is at the source of consciousness.

In order to lend precision to all this, the concept of “place” (*basho*), partially inspired by the Platonic notion of *khōra* (“the receptacle of forms”), was combined with what Nishida called a new “logic” (*ronri* 論理), based not on the logical or grammatical subject of a judgement, but on its predicate. His explicit aim here was to develop a logic in which the predicate, understood as an encompassing place of universality, could particularize itself so that the concrete individual might appear as a self-determination of the universal. The place of universality can therefore be better understood through the image of a field—such as the abstract field of color, wherein a particular and concrete color can be identified; or the physical field of force or energy, wherein particular objects are the self-determination of that field (or space or *basho*); or again the field of consciousness as the dimension where phenomena appear as the *intentionum* of noetic acts (NISHIDA, 1930).

Now the development of this position—which is by itself a combination of transcendental philosophy, a theory of place, and a logic of predicate—would lead Nishida to a threefold topological description of consciousness in which, implicitly at least, a vast cultural synthesis between East and West could be effected. The main source here is his essay on “The Intelligible World” (included in NISHIDA, 1930).

The first place—the realm of being (*u no basho* 有の場所)—that can be grasped in awareness or realization is called the “universal of judgement. It allows the philosopher to know the objective realm of nature. Nishida identified this philosophical viewpoint with Greek-Aristotelian logic, the metaphysical position that he saw as the basis of Western thought. His standpoint is structured by the judgement of subsumption, whereby the grammatical subject, expressing the ontological substance of any individual ontic being, reaches universality through the attribution of a predicate. Thus the individual subject, although ontologically fundamental, needs the predicate to acquire universality.

On the Aristotelian model, the subject cannot itself become a predicate. This is why Nishida had recourse to another metaphysical position: a logic of the predicate that, without becoming the subject it determines,

encompasses the latter as its own self-particularization. Here the individual is understood as a self-determination of the more encompassing conceptual whole, namely, the universal realm of the predicate.

Such a logic is only possible within a transcendental position: the place of the relative or oppositional nothingness (*tairitsuteki mu no basho* 対立的無の場所), whose realm is that of consciousness as described by the Kantian and phenomenological approaches, Nishida refers to it as the “universal of self-awakening.”

The transcendental position gives the opportunity to see the universal predicative position as a structure of consciousness: it is the cognitive act of consciousness that predicates or attributes universal concepts to the phenomena it tries to know or simply identify. Here the grammatical subject (*shugo* 主語) is included within the predicate that is expressed by the knowing subject (*shukan* 主観) in its attempt to reach, or at least aim at, the ontic subject or substance (*shutai* 主体). It is thus within intentionality, within the noetic-noematic structure of the act of knowing, that the predicate is determined as an object of knowledge. This structure is precisely what Nishida calls the *basho* of oppositional nothingness. The latter is consciousness itself, understood here as the place where phenomena or beings appear, without itself being a being.

Now the analysis of the intentional structure of the knowing act of consciousness is not itself sufficient to overcome the subject-object dichotomy that Nishida wanted to achieve. Indeed, such a definition of the subjective structure tends to objectify it and hence to forfeit its purely dynamic and factual dimension.

For this reason, Nishida opened a third *basho*, the *basho* of absolute nothingness (*zettai mu no basho* 絶対無の場所), whose realm is the intelligible world. His goal was to display the original and ultimate roots of consciousness. Prior to cognitive and perceptual acts, he argued, consciousness is rooted in the lived reality of aesthetic feeling, moral will, and religious experience. The progression from cognition to feeling, will, and religious experience stems from a deepening of self-awakening from being to relative nothingness, and from relative nothingness to absolute nothingness. The movement is a transcendental “trans-descendence” towards an ever deeper interiorization of the bodily aspect of consciousness. That is, the outer relationship of the cognitive act to its object is

interiorized in the aesthetic act of creating beauty, in the ethical act of moral action undertaken in the world according to inner values, and in the religious experience of an self-negation that allows divine grace to blossom in the inner space left vacant by the deconstruction of the ego.

My hypothesis is that this third *basho* was largely inspired by the ancient Buddhist notion of the self-negation of the ego (*muga* 無我, S. *anātman*) understood not just as a cognitive process but as an ethical and bodily practice. As shown by the British Buddhist thinker Sangharakshita, it was the Abhidharma tradition, and within it, Yogācāra thought, that developed this approach most thoroughly (SANGHARAKSHITA, 1998). Indeed, under close scrutiny, Yogācāra may be seen as a Buddhist equivalent to the phenomenological transcendental dimension (see LUSTHAUS 2002).

Having turned our attention to Buddhism, which has always to do with a way to self-transformation, we may continue our analysis of the title and ask what is meant by the “path” of a “transcendental path.”

THE PATH

Since we are concerned here with the transcendental dimension of consciousness or mind, we will want to limit ourselves to the Buddhist study of the mind, which is precisely what the Abhidharma—and even more so, Yogācāra—is all about.

As Sangharakshita explains in his illuminating study, *Know Your Mind*, the intellectual ambitions of the Abhidharma can be traced back to the general Indian scholastic background within which early Buddhists strove to express their views. The Sāṃkhya school seems to have been influential in these early developments. Its aim was to enumerate the elements of existence—for example, the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space, with mind as a sixth dimension. This coincided with a strong Indian tendency to understand existence, in its broadest sense, by breaking it up into its constituent parts. Both Sāṃkhya and Buddhist thought shared this orientation, but while the Sāṃkhya analysis is more cosmological, the Buddhist Abhidharma tends toward the psychological. Its beginnings are to be found in a massive project to classify the wide-

reaching and manifold teachings of the Buddha in order to give them a more systematic appearance.

In time, the Abhidharma scholars were not satisfied with merely analyzing and classifying the Buddha's teachings. They began to comment on the teachings and to develop them to include metaphysical explanations. For example, the Sanskrit notion of *anātman* (P. *anatta*) was systematized by excluding expressions such as *sattva* (being), *puṅgala* (person) or *puruṣa* (individual), and also by analyzing experience into the irreducible elements of existence. These were called, in Sanskrit, *dharma* and they made up the basic elements of a sort of psycho-physical atomism that included the whole of existence, both physical and mental. The *dharma* were divided into two groups: *saṃskṛta* (compounded or conditioned) and *asaṃskṛta* (uncompounded or unconditioned). While the Theravāda Abhidharma (Pāli) identified only one unconditioned *dharma*, *nibbāna*, the Sarvāstivāda (Sanskrit) distinguished three of them: space and two kinds of *nirvāṇa*. In both cases, all other *dharma* were compounded, most of them being mental rather than physical.

The classification of phenomena goes back to the Buddha's teaching that the whole of conditioned existence can be divided into five "heaps" or *skandha*: form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedana*), perception (*saṃjñā*), volition (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*viññāna*). The purpose of the teaching was to contravene a substantialist and static view of selfhood and existence, to dissolve an apparently permanent and stable reality into a set of processes interacting with each other. The basic principle here is that of "interdependent origination" (*pratītya-samutpāda*).

Now while the sutras preserved the teaching of the five *skandha*, the Abhidharma divided conditioned *dharma* into quite different groups consisting of four main categories: (1) *rūpa* or form (the epistemological object grasped within the perceptual situation); (2) *citta* or mind (the conscious act of aiming at something); (3) *caitta* or mental events (functions associated with the mind); and (4), at least for the Sarvāstivādin, factors dissociated from the mind (for example, the principle of causal relationship).

On this more or less common basis, a vast literature developed over the centuries with a number of important scholars producing a considerable body of commentaries and interpretations. On the Theravāda side,

the fifth-century thinker Buddhaghōṣa stands out. On the Sarvāstivāda side, Aśaṅga and Vasubandhu, who flourished at the same time, laid the ground for the transition from Theravāda and Mahāyāna (in this case a Sautrāntika position) to Yogācāra. Their brand of Mahāyāna Abhidharma was motivated in great part by a reaction against simply transferring substantialism from the *ātman* to the *dharmā*, and against the tendency to eliminate things like poetry, myth, and narration in favor of the impersonal sphere of pure rationality.

Thus the Mahāyāna, while reintroducing elements of devotion and less exclusively rationalist attitudes, denied the reality of *dharmā* as ultimately existent entities, insisting that they were no less void of self-nature (*svabhāva*) than the self itself is. This came to be known as the doctrine of the “emptiness of all *dharmā*” (*sarva-dharmā-sūnyatā*). This doctrine led to two major schools within the Indian Mahāyāna tradition: the Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka. Yogācāra was more directly concerned with meditative experience and hence took a rather more psychological approach than the Madhyamaka, whose focus was more on abstract truth and whose methods were more logical, dialectical, and metaphysical, as the works of Nāgārjuna on *sūnyatā* attest.

The psychological or transcendental approach of the Yogācāra rested on the idea of *cittamātra* or “mind only.” This idea—present at the metaphysical ground of Nishida’s *An Inquiry into the Good*—denies the reality of matter as a separate category from mind. We do not perceive external objects as such but only “mental impressions,” which means that the notion of a subject (as opposed to the object) tends to disappear. The “mind-only” position aimed at describing the intentional relation of consciousness to the phenomenon of consciousness as such, without positing a transcendent object or a permanent subject. It is not hard to recognize the proximity to Husserl’s phenomenological position, but there are clear differences at which Nishida’s philosophies hints.

The Yogācāra study of the mind cannot be reduced simply to psychology as a distinct field of study. Buddhism is a fully integrated tradition in which every aspect presupposes all the others. It is within this overall tradition, which is concerned with spiritual life in general, that one has to understand Yogācāra teachings on the nature and functioning of the mind. Yogācāra psychology and transcendental philosophy set their

sights beyond mere description to include practice and to aid in discriminating valuable mental events from unhelpful ones. The teachings affirm that we play a part in creating the world we find ourselves in, so that beyond the cognitive attitude one assumed towards the world, one has to take responsibility for one's mental states. It teaches that our predicament arises out of our ignorance (*avidyā*), a state likened to drunkenness. Volitions (*saṃskāra*) are said to arise from intoxication. To make progress in removing ignorance, we need first to understand our patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior, and then take steps to replace them with new ones. We thus develop *vidyā*, which is not just an intellectual knowledge of reality, but includes an overall ethical attitude toward and aesthetic appreciation of what we understand (a fact later given the same stress by Schopenhauer and Nishida). *Vidyā* is meant to increase one's freedom of choice and action in existence. Our patterns of thought do not belong to a static mental reality. The mind is not a substantial being but consists of constant activity. We can react to novelty by merely repeating familiar patterns and hence going around in circles; or we can seek to rearrange them and create new and more positive conditions for spiritual growth. To embrace such a dynamics of growth is to enter the "path." In other words, to follow the Buddhist path means to assume responsibility for a more positive direction in life.

The metaphor of the path, of course, is a way of pointing to the fact that we have the potential to change and grow. The path is not an external and objectively given way to be followed. It takes shape by action carried out in a state of awareness. In an important sense, *we* are the path. At the same time, neither is the path some purely subjective existential option left to the arbitrary devices of each individual. It is a discipline with certain criteria of development that have to be learned, understood, and adapted practically to one's own situation. It is at the level of mental states that all of this begin to take shape, and this has been the overwhelming preoccupation of the scholars of the Abhidharma tradition down through the ages.

Even if such an intellectual effort often fell into scholasticism, its aim was to lay out a spiritual path. The transcendental dimension—here the study of mind and mental events—was always fixed on the path. One is tempted to say that the Yogācāra tradition is driven by a transcendent

quest, although spirituality is not necessarily a quest for transcendence. It can also be a quest for “trans-descendence,” as the Kyoto School philosophers have helped us see.

In an event, Yogācāra thought sought to be an exhaustive science of the mind, not as a mere object of study but as an introspective self-awareness to be achieved by the subject who studies the mind. (Nishida spoke here of *jikaku* 自覚: self-awakening.) This self-awakening did not remain at the same level of consciousness (for example the theoretical or perceptual, as in Husserlian phenomenology), but sought ever deeper states of consciousness—which the Sanskrit language refers to as *dhyāna*, the most ancient origins of Zen 禪 meditation.

The stages on the path have been expressed in various ways, among them the Noble Eightfold Path, the threefold analysis of Buddhist practice into ethics, meditation, and wisdom, and the path of the Five Stages. This latter comes from the Sarvāstivādin tradition and is commented upon by Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharmakośa* and *Trimśikā* (VASUBANDHU 2007). The five stages are accumulation, practice, insight, transformation, and the way of no-more-learning.

1. The stage of accumulation or preparation (*sambhāra-mārga*), is aimed at establishing a certain integration of personality by building up certain moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities. This first stage implies successively the practice of mindfulness (awareness of the body, feelings, thoughts, and general reality), the development of the four *siddhipāda*, which are the bases of psychic power (thrust, energy, heart, investigation), and a fundamental connection with spiritual insight.
2. With the second stage, the way of practice or application (*prayoga-mārga*), meditation becomes effective and one’s energy can be applied to penetrating certain elements of the doctrine. This activity produces what is called meditative “heat” (*tapas*), an inner warmth that has the effect of melting the rigidity of one’s mental structure and making it more pliable to spiritual faculties (faith, energy, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and wisdom), until one reaches the highest possible worldly realization.
3. This leads to a third stage, the way of insight or seeing (*darśana-mārga*), which consists of a flash of pure insight into some direct

vision of the truth of the Dharma (doctrine) and the nature of mind and mental events. This insight can then be gradually increased.

4. Next comes the way of transformation or cultivation (*bhāvanā-mārga*), a long process of self-development and growth in insight that progressively reorganizes the whole of one's existence.
5. The fifth and final stage, the fulfillment in “no-more-learning” (*niṣṭha-mārga*), is the goal itself: the achievement of enlightenment or full awakening that leads to a life rich in spontaneous compassion.

We will not enter here the discussion as to whether or not enlightenment frees one from rebirth. This is probably not essential to Buddhism and certainly not to the understanding of consciousness as mind and mental events. What is essential, however, is the principle of *karma*, which simply asserts that actions have consequences. Herein lies the proper motivation for studying the Abhidharma: mind and mental events, together with the law of *karma*, determine one's future life—in this present existence and, possibly, beyond. As it is with the mind is, so it is with *karma*. Hence the central concern of the Yogācāra Abhidharma: What is mind?

THE ABHIDHARMA SOURCES

To answer the question about mind, we may enlist the help of Yeshe Gyaltzen's interpretation of Abhidharma (GUENTHER 1975) and its commentary by Sangharakshita (1998).

Yogācāra, as noted earlier, is also called the “mind-only doctrine” (*citta-mātra-vāda*). On this view, the enlightened mind is free of the dualism of subject and object on which ordinary experience is based. This is very much in tune with Nishida's almost obsessional preoccupation with overcoming the subject-object dichotomy. Following the Yogācāra, to move along a spiritual path from ordinary consciousness to the enlightened state entails a complete reversal of our usual attitude: a true “great death and rebirth” or *parāvṛtti* (“revulsion” or “turning about”). We might speak of it as a new turn within the “Copernican

revolution” of transcendental philosophy, a turn whose clear expression can be seen in Nishida’s third *basho*.

Yogācāra denies the reality of matter as a separate category from mind. The objects of our perception are not external objects that stand opposed to us subjects. They are simple mental impressions and therefore “mind only.” There is no object separate from subject and no subject separate from the world. There is only mind.

Mind cannot therefore be understood as a “spirit” or consciousness opposed to matter. It is a “consciousness of object”—a rather close equivalent to phenomenological “intentionality” that is also evident in Nishida’s logic of place (the second level of *basho*). In its “mind-only” doctrine, Yogācāra goes so far as to say that there are not five *skandha*, as in the Buddha’s teaching, but only one: *viññāna* or consciousness. The other four are merely manifestations of *viññāna*. For this reason Yogācāra has also been referred to as a “doctrine of consciousness” (*viññānavāda*). The practical consequence of this metaphysical position of not thinking in terms of an objects is that one forsakes the desire to grasp at objects. Focused on the transformation of mind, the urge to attain a transcendent object through the unwholesome emotions of craving and delusion recedes.

Thus more basic than the subject-object dichotomy, we have, first of all, a mental impression or “perceptual situation” comprising two complementary poles: the conscious experience (precisely *viññāna*) and its content (*rūpa*: form). Phenomenology would speak of intentionality with an *intentio* (a *noesis*) and an *intentum* (a *noema*). In ordinary experience the polarity is emphasized, but in enlightenment, it is reduced in favor of an expansion of the perceptual situation as such that moves beyond the subject-object dichotomy. And as consciousness of reality expands, private will and subjectivity cease to be separate from the consciousness of others and one tends to identify with the will of others.

In the process of becoming enlightened, the various (eight) types of *viññāna* (consciousness, or better, “discriminatory awareness”) are eventually transformed into the five types of *jñāna* (awareness or wisdom). At the basis of the process, the eight *viññāna* collaborate to constitute the overall functioning of consciousness.

The first five *viññāna* are the “sense *viññāna*”: the modes of discrimi-

nating awareness that operate through the five senses. For example, the eye, in relation to form, gives a “visual perception.” The sixth type is mind itself, understood as a sixth sense that provides a “categorical perception” roughly comparable to Husserl’s “categorical intuition.” It is *mana-vijñāna*, mind as the mere mechanical process of perceiving mental objects. For Yogācāra, thoughts are perceived the same way as other objects are perceived, but there are two kinds of categorical perception. First, we have awareness of the impressions presented by the five senses. Second, there is an awareness of ideas that arise independently of sense perception (reflexive categories, impressions within meditation, products of imagination, and so forth).

The seventh consciousness is the *kliṣṭa-mano-vijñāna*. This is the “afflicted” or “suffering” awareness of oppositional dualities like subject and object, good and bad, true and false. It is the basis of ego-consciousness, of the subject separated from the objective world.

The eighth consciousness is the *ālaya-vijñāna*. *Ālaya*, meaning “repository” or “store” (*khōra*, in a sense), it is awareness of the impressions left in the mind by all previous experiences, thoughts, and deeds. These impressions are not purely passive but are like seeds that produce fruits when conditions are favorable. These seeds evolve eventually into the five sense perceptions, categorical perception, and ego-consciousness. All seven *vijñāna*, working together, comprise the evolving consciousness that produces the illusion of the world as we know it. The six perceptions, as interpreted by the ego-consciousness, represent the perceptual situation as an objectively existing external world in correlation with an objectively existing self, residing within the *ālaya-vijñāna* itself. This is referred to as the “relative” *ālaya*. In its “absolute” form, *ālaya* is none other than reality itself, a pure awareness beyond subject and object, a pure non-dimensional awareness in which there is neither any separate thing of which one is aware nor anyone who is aware. It is awareness without subject and without object—possibly the very thing that Nishida was referring to when he spoke of the absolute nothingness of the religious consciousness in the third *basho*, or when he referred to “seeing without a seer.”

The “revulsion” of *parāvṛtti*, is brought about by the gathering, through spiritual practice of pure seeds (positive impressions or emo-

tions) in the relative *ālaya*. As these pure seeds accumulate in the relative *ālaya*, putting pressure on the impure seeds (negative impressions or defiling emotions) until, in the end, they are forced out of the *ālaya*. The whole process constitutes the *parāvṛtti* of the mind. Along the way, the eight *viñāna* (discriminating awareness) are transformed into a fivefold *jñāna* (non-discriminating awareness or wisdom), whose distinctions we shall not enter here.

In all of this, it is important to maintain a distinction between mind (*citta*) and mental events (*caitta*). Mind is the general awareness of the fact that there is something. It is the direct apprehension of the object as being there, of its haecceity, its “this-ness” as a particular being. Much like the “pure experience” described by Nishida, it is a fleeting moment of pure awareness that takes place prior to distinguishing the perceptual qualities of a thing. When the mind begins to make distinctions, it gets involved with its object, becomes interested in it, likes or dislikes it, is aware of its qualities—in short, it turns into a “mental event.” Mental events arise the more specifically one engages the object, apprehending or cognizing its defining qualities. For mental events to arise, mind is presupposed, and mind is almost always accompanied by mental events. It is within this frame that *viñāna* can be transformed into *jñāna*.

The mind works on the impressions present in the relative *ālaya*. It does this through spiritual practice, in particular, through deepening the various *dhyāna* or higher states of consciousness achieved in meditation. This seems to be what is going on in Nishida’s deepening of self-awakening (*jikaku*) through the various levels or realms of “place” (*basho*). Mental events become purer and fewer, until at last one enters the realm of the *arūpa* (formless) *dhyāna* and is left with a singlemindedness free of all defilement. Although mental events do not drop away, they are absorbed and fully integrated into a rich whole reflected in the experience of *arūpa-dhyāna*: infinite space, infinite consciousness, no-thingness, neither perception nor non-perception, beyond the subject-object dichotomy.

Mind and mental events are in constant collaboration, aiming at a common object (formed or formless) in a common space-time, and within a common “mental attitude” or mood through which a perceptual situation takes place. (Such moods, as in the case of perceiving

something with anger, are made up of the residue from previous situations, remembered or forgotten.) These mental attitudes draw us into different spheres or realms, as described by the Tibetan Wheel of life (the human realm, the animal realm, the realm of gods, the realm of the warlike titans, the hell realm, and the realm of the hungry ghosts). These realms can be taken literally or seen to symbolize different temporary mental states. Most of them belong to *kāmaloka* (the world or place of desire and of physical senses within our ordinary experience of the natural world). Beyond *kāmaloka* lies *rūpaloka*, the world of archetypal or universal forms accessible through the subtle sense of a higher state of consciousness effected in meditation. And still further beyond lies *arūpaloka*, the formless realm in which there is no sense perception at all, culminating in absolute nothingness. The coincidence with Nishida's threefold division of place (*basho*) is too remarkable not to suppose a connection to ancient Buddhist thought.

Within the general context described above, whenever the mind experiences an object and moves towards it, a number of mental events are always present. Not that there is a subject and an object, but only a network of mental events constituting a perceptual situation with a subjective pole and an objective content. This is the case with mundane levels of perception, from the *kāma* realm to the *rūpa* realm.

Generally speaking, there is first an overall intentionality constituted by *rūpa* (form or the objective content of the perceptual situation) and *viññāna* (the subjective pole, or consciousness, corresponding to mind). The two poles are in constant correlation, one never existing without the other. Next comes a combination of cognitive, perceptive and, to some degree, voluntary acts of consciousness, all occurring within a mood influenced by the relative *ālaya*.

First comes *vedanā*, feeling-tone. It can be pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent, physical or mental, subjectivistic or transpersonal, linked or not to the sense organ it involves, disengaged from or clinging to mundane existence (both *kāmaloka* and *rūpaloka*).

Second is *saṃjñā*: recognition, conceptualization, apperception. This is a mental labeling, an act of cognition that arises within the process of perception. It is a judgemental apperception of an object and its characteristics, identifying what it is, uniting the sensual and the mental.

Third is *cetanā*: directionality of mind. Sometimes translated as “volition,” or “will,” *cetanā* refers to the whole of psychic energy available not just to the conscious subject but to the whole mind, conscious and unconscious. It is envisioned as a stream of psychic energy moving in a certain direction.

Fourth is *sparśa*: contact with the object. It represents a specific mode or transformation occurring in a sense faculty. *Sparśa* comes about through the convergence of three interrelated factors: the object, the sense faculty, and the consciousness that arises when the preceding two come together. Without this fusing function, there is only absentmindedness but no *sparśa*. When it is present, feeling (*vedanā*) arises and possibly also craving.

Fifth is *mānaskāra*: egocentric demanding. The word itself means “mind-making.” It effects a continuity in the sense that it persists in holding on to its object. Once directionality has been overlaid on an object, *mānaskāra* provides the final impetus as it were, insuring that it occurs again and again. All of this, then, represents the life of a mind attached to the *kāmaloka* and the *rūpaloka*.

Following on this explanation of the more perceptual and cognitive sides of attachment, Yogācāra’s description of mental activity turns to the more practical and dynamic dimension, aiming at detachment and, ultimately, *arūpaloka*. These are known as the “object-determining” mental events in which one applies oneself more deliberately to the object of attention. One determines, consciously and not emotionally, that a given object shall be this object and no other. These mental events are initiated above all meditative states where of attention to a particular object, perceptual or categorical.

This attentiveness passes through increasingly intense levels of engagement: (1) *chanda*: interest or “eagerness” (making a definite effort with regard to the particular object at hand); (2) *adhimokṣa*: intensified interest that remains with its object; (3) *smṛti*: inspection or mindfulness and recollection (not to let what one knows slip out of the mind); (4) *samādhi*: an intense concentration or exclusive focus of mind that remains with a mental object and whose its functions is to become the basis of awareness and insight; (5) *prajñā*: the appreciative discrimination that enables one to sort out the qualities of the compounded from those

of the uncompounded, and clearly to distinguish what is impermanent, insubstantial, painful, and uncomely from what is permanent, real, blissful, and beautiful. The appreciation sought here is not just intellectual but is value-toned and as such refers to the “positive” and “negative” mental events to be mentioned below. Its attainment requires the cultivation of an awareness of what must be done (because it is spiritually fitting), of relationships (between actions and their consequences), and of true (ultimate) validity. It guides one to an intuition of *śūnyatā*, the emptiness of all concepts and all things. As such, it is not a merely mental intuition but involves language and body as well.

Following on these “object-determining” mental events are other, more practical, events that touch on the ethical dimension. We may begin with a number of “positive” (*kuśala*) mental events and on that basis examine the “negative” ones.

Whereas negative mental events tend to disintegrate the personality, positive ones tend to unify and integrate it in virtue of having been inter-related among themselves. These positive mental events are aspects of the creative mind that allow it to make progress on the spiritual path. Generally speaking, the morally positive mental events are these: confidence, trust, or faith (deep conviction of what is real, clarity as to what has value, and longing for what is possible); self-respect or shame (setting oneself the highest standards of behavior); decorum or respect for wise views (with the help of spiritual friendship); non-attachment or non-greed; non-hatred; non-delusion (thoroughgoing knowledge that is the fruit of through maturation, instruction, reflecting on the teachings, and meditation); diligence or energy in pursuit of the good; alertness and tranquillity; mindful attentiveness to guard against unskilled action; equanimity; non-violence (abstention from harming any living being, akin to loving kindness and compassion).

Positive mental events are not merely a matter of theory. They may be innate and may be developed by a number of conditions (spiritual friendship, Dharma study, attention, mindfulness, watchfulness, and realization of what leads to the attainment of enlightenment). Positive mental events may arise in association with some kind of skilful action: through generosity, kindly speech, exhortation, and good example; through an attitude producing worldly merit; through overcoming negative men-

tal states; through the cessation of craving; and through dependence on other positive mental events once enlightenment has been attained.

As forces of disintegration, negative mental events have to be recognized before they can be countered by positive ones. They are unwholesome by their very nature and provide the basis for the development of further negative mental events. Among them are the “defiling passions” (*kleśas*) that bring mental anguish and lead one off the path. As the root of all other negative mental events and as linked to ego-centered restlessness, they constitute variants of the three poisons (greed, hatred, and delusion) and three wrong views (arrogance, indecision, and opinionatedness). They include cupidity, craving or passionate attachment, anger, the explosive release of furious energy aimed at breaking through an obstacle, arrogance, lack of intrinsic awareness, and indecision. Included, too, are clinging to one’s own, limited perspective, which is always related to one of the five *skandha* and is manifest in dogmatic attachment to ideologies, moral codes, and religious observances. Professional philosophy is nearly always an example of this opinionated obstinacy.

Further we are given a series of “negative emotions” (*upakleśa*) that each have a carefully appointed countermeasure. They serve as proximate functions of instability, as in the case of indignation or rage, whose countermeasure is the meditation of loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*). Or again, they include brooding over an injury and cultivating resentment, slyness and concealment, spite or defensiveness, jealousy or envy, avarice or acquisitiveness, deceit or pretence, dishonesty, mental inflation or self-intoxication with one’s own qualities, malice, shamelessness or lack of self-respect, lack of sense of propriety, gloominess or stagnation, ebullience, lack of trust or non-faith, laziness, indifference or carelessness, forgetfulness, lack of recollection or unmindfulness, inattentiveness or purposelessness, desultoriness or distraction, and so on.

CONCLUSION: NISHIDA’S LOGIC OF PLACE

Insofar as Nishida’s philosophy is an explicitly post-Kantian or neo-Kantian system of thought, it may be aligned with the transcenden-

tal position introduced to Western tradition through the efforts of Descartes, Kant, and Husserl. Nishida's *basho* is not simply an analysis of the a priori conditions of the subjective power to know. It is an attempt at an ever deeper exploration of the noetic sources of intentionality, first within the cognitive-logic, and then within the voluntary and affective, emotional and carnal, ethic, aesthetic, and religious dimensions of conscious life. This insistence on the embodied dimension of consciousness was not—as tends to be the case in the phenomenology of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Michel Henry—merely a way of reaching a more concrete perspective for knowing or perceiving the objective world. Nishida struck a new turn key in the transcendental. After arguing that voluntary and affective consciousness is more foundational than the cognitive and perceptive, he carried this novel “a priori of the a priori” to the point where the dichotomy between the conscious subject and the object of its consciousness falls away. Already in *An Inquiry into the Good* we find him advancing the idea that there are not individual having experiences of the objective world, but simply experience taking place prior to any individual differences. Here we have the core of a secular Buddhist view that beyond the ordinary dualistic mind lies the enlightened mind, the mind as it is in its original state. From there, consciousness is expanded to designate the self-expression of reality as such, at which point one reaches the no-thingness of an empty space, the “meontic” source of ontic self-particularization, and the individualization of the predicative universal. Hence the pure, pre-ontic “suchness” of reality unfolds itself at the locus of the self-emptying of the self.

Nishida's approach is completely attuned to the *vijñāna-vāda* and its aim of overcoming the dualism between subject and object by way of cultivating a “revulsion” that enables consciousness, through *samādhi*, to reach deeper levels of *dhyāna*: infinite space, infinite consciousness, no-thingness beyond perception, and the pure mirroring of reality as it is, in its suchness (*tathāta*).

When Kantian philosophy gives the priority to practical reason over theoretical reason, it establishes a code of moral rule (self-) imposed on a preexisting subject. What happens with Nishida's logic of place, in contrast, is that the priority of the voluntary and ethical is inscribed within the dynamically deepening structure of intentionality itself. This

approach, pursued through stages of an ever wider self-awakening, also finds a precedent in the *citta-mātra-vāda*, the “mind-only doctrine” of Yogācāra. From a Yogācāra perspective, there is no deepening of the mind towards its own self-awakening without an accompanying change in ethical attitude and aesthetic awareness along with the accompanying bodily practice of meditation. The need to foster wholesome mental events, to dispose of impure seeds into *ālaya* consciousness, and to deconstruct unwholesome mental events in order to deepen the stages of *dhyāna* through the three realms of *kāmaloka* (the place of the physical realm), *rūpaloka* (the place of forms), and *arūpaloka* (the place of the formless, where infinite space, infinite consciousness and nothingness can be experienced)—all of this belong to progress on the path.

Although Kyoto School scholars tend stubbornly to resist this line of thinking, fidelity to Nishida’s ideas seems to require that we at least acknowledge in his writings glimpses of an attempt to express an Abhidharma way of thinking by means of the terminology and conceptual apparatus of Western transcendental philosophy. Indeed, this helps account for his new turn within the Copernican revolution of philosophy: a revulsion that passes beyond the vestiges of a subjective transcendental position towards a position of “seeing without a seer” or, perhaps better, “just seeing” (*tada miru* ただ見る). Nishida did not simply dress an Oriental body of doctrine in Western clothes. He made it possible for transcendental philosophy as a whole to move beyond the merely theoretical and beyond its penchant for paradigmatic structures. As a result of his turn, *parāvṛtti*, acts of consciousness came, literally and deliberately, to take on a moral and bodily ground. To overlook this is to fail to appreciate the novelty of Nishida’s philosophical contribution.

Consistently rejecting the substantiality of the self and stressing its interactive nature in relation to its own constituents and to other selves, Nishida’s philosophy endorsed an ancient Buddhist mode of thought that reaches back beyond the doctrines of *śūnyatā* and *citta-mātra* to the very words of the Buddha: There is no *ātman*, only *pratītya-samutpāda* (“interdependent origination”). To become aware of this, existentially, is to awaken to the vision of reality in its suchness, as a formless form, as what is seen by a seeing without a seer.

In striving, as he put it, to give philosophical “form to the formless,”

Nishida was continuing the antique Abhidharma endeavor to speak of the unspeakable: the uncompounded *dharmā*, the fifth stage of the *mārga*, the realm of *arūpa*, within absolute *ālaya*—all different but converging ways Yogācāra tried to name the ultimately unnameable: the realm of absolute nothingness (*zettai mu no basho* 絶対無の場所).

The unnameable is empty of all determination. It is *śūnyāta* (*kū* 空), empty of independent substantial self-nature, since all things arise through “interdependent origination” (*engi* 縁起). This ultimate emptiness can only be reached by a self-emptying of the self, a deconstruction of the ego, a disclosure of the non-ego (*anātman*, J. *muga* 無我). Here again, the deconstruction is not a mere theoretical enterprise, else it would simply be one more construct. It must be guided by an ethical, aesthetic, and religious practice that takes place at a level deeper than the perceptive and the cognitive, including will and affect as well as the self-reduction of all mental acts in order to reach the “meontic” core of the self. This is the meaning of the Eastern logic of the “heart-mind” (*kokoro, shin* 心). To awaken to the unsubstantial, empty ground of the self, to enjoy freedom from the self-centered, hateful, and craving ego, one needs to practice detachment from beings, both self and other, to develop wholesome emotions, and to undo negative emotions and defiling passions. This is not just academic philosophy. It may even run contrary to academic philosophy insofar as the latter is ruled by the craving, possessive, deluded ego. What Nishida and the Buddhist tradition behind him offers is the whole complex of multi-layered spiritual attitudes surrounding the practice of *dhyāna*. When the self has thus deconstructed its own self-centered ego, when, from the viewpoint of emptiness, it has become a pure and undefiled mirror of reality as it is (*tathāta*), only then can it enjoy the freedom of the fifth *mārga* along the transcendental path: spontaneous creativity and unlimited compassion.

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