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Theory of Personhood in Nishida Kitarō and Mou Zongsan: Reflections on Critical Buddhism's View of the Kyoto School

西田幾多郎與牟宗三的人格論：關於批判佛教對京都學派批評的反思[§]

Tomomi ASAKURA
朝倉友海[*]

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關鍵詞：西田幾多郎、牟宗三、場所邏輯、圓教模式

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* Associate Professor, Hokkaido University of Education, Japan.
日本北海道教育大學副教授。

Abstract

This paper attempts to interpret the theory of personhood in the works of Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) in a way that refutes a certain type of Nishida interpretation that Critical Buddhism offers. According to this type of interpretation, the logic of *basho* is a modern version of the *Qixinlun* system. Based on this interpretation, Critical Buddhism denounces Kyoto School philosophy as "topical Buddhism." This paper shows how Nishida himself consciously differentiates his philosophy from the idealistic and monistic system with which the earlier version of the logic of *basho* can easily be confused. To show that his theory of personhood opposes the *Qixinlun*–like system, I argue that Mou Zongsan's (1909-1995) Tiantai theory of personhood is analogous to Nishida's and explore the common nature of their philosophies.

摘要

本論文試圖藉由探討西田幾多郎（1870-1945）的人格論，來反駁批判佛教對其哲學的批判性觀點。批判佛教認為京都學派為一種場所佛教，並將西田的場所邏輯解釋為現代版的「起信論」體系。其他與批判佛教無關的學者，亦支持此觀點並採用它，所以此種解釋極為重要。本文欲探求的是，後期西田排斥此種解釋的可能性。初期的場所邏輯雖然難免會被人誤認為唯心一元論，但後期西田透過自我與人格的探討後，卻轉而開始反對像「起信論」這種（批判佛教所批評的）形上學體系。為了突顯此思想脈絡，本文將比較後期西田哲學與牟宗三（1909-1995）的圓教論，藉以闡明兩人的人格概念如何不同於「起信論」式的形上學體系。

1. Introduction

Modern East Asian philosophy has a complicated relation with East Asian Buddhism. And if the Japanese intellectual movement Critical Buddhism can be seen as the contemporary version of the Chinese Inner Studies School, this *Buddhistic similarity* is certainly relevant to the *philosophical similarity* between each of their opponents: the Kyoto School and New Confucianism.[1] Recent research has considerably clarified this latter similarity, especially by comparing Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870-1945) and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995).[2] Yet, the nature of this antagonism between certain Buddhologists and modern philosophers has not sufficiently been studied so far.

The purpose of this paper is to show how Critical Buddhism's criticism of the Kyoto School is based on a certain type of interpretation of this philosophical system that is emphatically rejected by Nishida himself. However, the same type

1 Chen-kuo Lin 林鎮國, *Emptiness and Modernity* 空性與現代性 (Taipei: Lixu Chuban 立緒出版, 1999).

2 The similarities are found and studied in two directions: first, in the direction of philosophical themes such as the existential aspect of philosophy and the transcultural investigation of ethics (Lam Wing-kuang 林永強, "Philosophy as the Study of Life: Nishida Kitaro and Mou Zongsan 生命の学問としての哲学：西田幾多郎と牟宗三," *Risō* 理想, 681 [Tokyo: Risōsha 理想社, 2008], pp. 174-180; Lam Wing-kuang, "Nishida Kitaro and Mou Zongsan: The Possibility of Transcultural Ethical Discourses 西田幾多郎與牟宗三：跨文化倫理學說的可能性," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 臺灣東亞文明研究學刊, 18 [Taipei: Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University 國立臺灣大學人文社會高等研究院, 2012], pp. 73-100); second, in the direction of metaphysical framework that is influenced by the intellectual tradition of East Asia (Huang Wen-hong 黃文宏, "Nishida Kitarō and Xiong Shili 西田幾多郎與熊十力," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 清華學報, 37, 2 [Hsinchu: Tsing Hua University 清華大學, 2007], pp. 403-430; Fujita Masakatsu 藤田正勝, "The past one-hundred years and the future of Nishida's Zen no Kenkyu 『善の研究』をめぐる研究の百年とその將來, *Zen no Kenkyu: The Centennial Anniversary* 善の研究の百年, ed. by Fujita Masakatsu [Kyoto: Kyoto University Press 京都大學出版會, 2011]; Asakura Tomomi 朝倉友海, *The Question of East Asian Philosophy: The Kyoto School and New Confucianism* 「東アジアに哲学はない」のか：京都学派と新儒家 [Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 2014]).

of interpretation of Kyoto School philosophy is also given by other scholars who do not participate in this Buddhologist movement. As this view seems to be widely held, it is necessary to refute it for the sake of Nishida scholarship; and the key concept in this argument is that of *personhood*, which is not only developed by the late Nishida, but also explored by Mou Zongsan in relation to Tiantai Buddhism.

For this purpose, it is necessary to start with the explanation of the general character of Critical Buddhism, represented by Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭 (1943-) and Matsumoto Shirō 松本史朗 (1950-). Although there are several dimensions in Critical Buddhism, the most important Buddhological claim is: true Buddhism is nothing other than dependent-origination, *pratītya-samutpāda*.[3] Critical Buddhism regards such concepts as Buddha nature, *tathāgatagarba*, innate awakening, and the like "as the reimportation into Buddhism of non-Buddhist notions of *ātman* or substantial ground, contradicting the foundational standpoint of dependent origination."[4] With respect to Buddhology, Matsumoto's rejection of the theory of Buddha nature (*foxing* 佛性) and *tathāgatagarba* (*rulaizang* 如來藏) seems more influential than Hakamaya's critique of innate awakening, as the latter is only related to East Asian Buddhism.[5]

As far as the Kyoto School is concerned, however, the attack on the doctrine of innate awakening (*hongaku shishō* 本覺思想) is the most relevant aspect of Critical Buddhism. Hakamaya holds that the essence of this East Asian doctrine is found in a certain metaphysical framework—ontological substantialism—that

3 Paul L. Swanson, "The What and Why of Critical Buddhism," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, Jamie Hubbard and Paul Swanson (eds.) (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 13-14.

4 Jacqueline Stone, "Some Reflections on Critical Buddhism," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 26, 1-2 (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 1999), p. 161.

5 This paper attempts to consider Hakayama's critique of metaphysical monism (the *Qixinlun* system) from the viewpoint of East Asian philosophy. Concerning Matsumoto's critique of *tathāgatagarba*, see Chan's insightful argument (Chan Wing-cheuk 陳榮灼, "Two dogmas of critical Buddhism," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 37, 2 [Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], pp. 276-294).

is historically established by the Chinese Buddhist text *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (hereafter *Qixinlun* 起信論). Hakamaya persistently criticizes this metaphysical framework and finds its modern version in the philosophy of *basho*; according to him, Kyoto School philosophy is nothing but a modernized version of the *Qixinlun*.

To understand East Asian philosophy, we must address the critique that interprets Nishida as a modern form of the *Qixinlun* system. There are two major reasons. First, this view is held not only by Buddhologists but also by some Nishida scholars. The same type of Nishida interpretation is given by philosophers and researchers who are apparently not critical of the Kyoto School. Second, the characterization of philosophy as the modernized *Qixinlun* system is highly relevant to another East Asian philosophy: New Confucianism. It is well known that Mou Zongsan heavily utilized the *Qixinlun* system in terms of the "one-mind-opens-two-gates" system of metaphysics. From this viewpoint one may safely assert that Critical Buddhism is attacking modern East Asian philosophy in general, including both the Kyoto School and the New Confucians.[6] For these two reasons, Critical Buddhism's attack on the Kyoto School must be taken seriously and considered in detail.

Despite Hakamaya's denouncement, Kyoto School philosophy also seems to commit to the so-called "true Buddhism" that Critical Buddhism advocates. One notable example is the reference to the Japanese medieval Zen master Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253), whom Critical Buddhism regards as the quintessential advocator of "true Buddhism" along with the Chinese Tiantai founder Zhiyi 智顗

6 Critical Buddhism's attack on this metaphysical framework is applicable to Mou's argument insofar as the latter sticks to the scheme of two-tier metaphysics. Precisely at this point, Lin Chenkuo's claim is justified: Critical Buddhism is nothing but the modern repetition of the Inner Study School. It is well-known that New Confucianism since Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968) recognizes the Chinese contribution to Buddhism, which both the Inner Study School and Critical Buddhism regards as inauthentic and defective.

(538-597).[7] This prominent medieval Buddhist monk is, however, one of the most important sources of inspiration for the Kyoto School philosophers; contemporary Nishida scholarship also emphasizes the similarity between Nishida's later philosophy and Dōgen's Buddhist thought. For example, Gereon Kopf shows that Nishida is perfectly in accordance with Dōgen in terms of the theory of selfhood and personhood (Kopf 2001). Not only Nishida, but also Tanabe Hajime 田邊元 (1885-1962) and Nishitani Keiji 西谷啟治 (1900-1990) frequently mention Dōgen's thought, especially the expression "casting off body and mind" (*shinjin totsuraku* 身心脫落). The relation between these Japanese philosophers and Dōgen seems to stand in direct contradiction with Critical Buddhism's attitude toward the Kyoto School. There is much truth in this.

To further show that the "Nishida as the *Qixinlun* system" view is indeed untenable, I shall consider Nishida's later theory of personhood, which is apparently irrelevant to Buddhism. Following this consideration, I show that Mou Zongsan's interpretation of Buddhism also presents a similar argument, with respect to the transcendence of selfhood. In fact, without considering this philosophical similarity between Nishida and Mou, it is difficult to avoid the kind of interpretation that Critical Buddhism gives. But before turning to these discussions, a few remarks should be made concerning Critical Buddhism's view of the Kyoto School.

2. Critical Buddhism's View of the Kyoto School

I have mentioned above that Critical Buddhism criticizes the doctrine of innate awakening and the *Qixinlun* system. It is now necessary to look more

7 It is well-known that both Hakamaya and Matsumoto, affiliated with Komazawa University, belong to the Sōtō Zen sect that is formed by the followers of Dōgen.

closely at the nature of this Buddhist treatise, in order to see how it is indeed relevant to Kyoto School philosophy and especially to Nishida's philosophy.

As far as the philosophical nature of the *Qixinlun* system is concerned, it is helpful to see how Mou Zongsan uses this Buddhist treatise to describe the metaphysical framework common to Western (Kantian) and Chinese philosophies. According to him, the framework of the only possible metaphysics—called moral metaphysics—consists of the two regional ontologies: that of the sensible and that of the intelligible.[8] Mou describes this framework using a succinct phrase, "one mind opens the two gates 一心開二門," that follows the treatise's famous passage: "the manifestation of truth means that there are two kinds of gates depending on one mind." This phrase expresses the ultimate unity of these two regions or worlds; to put it simply, "one mind" is the transcendental—or transcendent—ground that gives foundation to the two-tier metaphysics of noumena and phenomena. The phrase therefore symbolizes the apparently idealistic and largely monistic system that, according to Mou, is common to Western and Chinese "philosophies."[9]

In respect to the characterization of this treatise, Hakamaya goes further in this direction. Although Mou is not so simplistic as to reject this Buddhist treatise itself as non-Buddhism, Critical Buddhism does. The latter emphatically claims that the *Qixinlun* indeed establishes the quintessentially *idealistic* and *monistic* system of metaphysics that reimports non-Buddhist notions of substantial ground into Buddhism as the transcendent "mind."[10]

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8 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Phenomenon and Thing-in-itself* 現象與物自身 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1975) , pp. 37-40.

9 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Fourteen Lectures on the Reconciliation of Western and Chinese Philosophies* 中西哲學之會通十四講 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1990) , p. 97.

10 Mou's treatment of the *Qixinlun* and Huayan Buddhism is cautious enough to reject any substantialist interpretation such as Hakamaya's (Mou Zongsan, *Buddha-nature and Prajñā-wisdom* 佛性與般若 [Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1977], p. 97). Although there is no space for an extended discussion, it is thus possible to refute Hakayama's interpretation of the *Qixinlun* by employing Mou's reading. Cf. Henry C.H. Shiu, "Nonsubstantialism of the

Hakamaya calls this simple metaphysical system "topical." The *Qixinlun* represents "topical Buddhism." The term "topical," which is claimed to be borrowed from Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), nonetheless suggests the famous notion of modern Japanese philosophy: topos or *basho* in the Kyoto School. Kyoto School philosophy is indeed denounced as topical in this sense because it reimports substantial ground—as topos or *basho*—into East Asian philosophy.[11] It is not surprising that Nishida is regarded as the prominent enemy of Critical Buddhism.

This identification of Nishida's philosophy with the *Qixinlun* system is, as we noted a little earlier, neither invented by—nor exclusive to—Critical Buddhism. Hakamaya admits that he owes this interpretation to two Japanese philosophers, Hisamatsu Shinichi 久松真一 (1889-1980) and Nishitani.[12] Although one cannot readily believe that this type of Nishida interpretation is supported by Nishitani, it is indeed attributable to Hisamatsu, who regards the system of the *Qixinlun* as one of the most important canons of Eastern philosophy.[13]

In addition, this type of interpretation seems to be supported by Nishida himself. Although he does not uses the *Qixinlun* in his argument, he indeed refers to Huayan Buddhism; and several contemporary scholars—including a prominent

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Awakening of Faith in Mou Zongsan," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 38, 2 [Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011], pp. 223-237).

11 Hakamaya Noriaki, "Scholarship as Criticism," trans. by Jamie Hubbard, in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, Jamie Hubbard and Paul Swanson (eds.) (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 115-117.

12 Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭, *Critical Buddhism* 批判佛教 (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan 大藏出版, 1990), pp. 47-92.

13 Although Hisamatsu is usually not counted as a Kyoto School philosopher, he can also be regarded as the representative of the Kyoto School, so that his thought is compared with New Confucianism. (Ng Yu-kwan 吳汝鈞, "Contemporary New Confucianism and the Kyoto School: Mou Zongsan and Hisamatsu Shinichi on Awakening 當代新儒家與京都學派：牟宗三與久松真一論覺悟," in *The Philosophy of Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi* 牟宗三哲學與唐君毅哲學論, ed. by Jiang Rixin 江日新 [Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe 文津出版社, 1997], pp. 243-266).

Japanese Buddhologist Takemura Makio 竹村牧男 (1948-) —believe that Nishida is fundamentally influenced by Huayan Buddhism.[14] And it is generally agreed that Huayan Buddhism is fundamentally defined by the theoretical framework of the *Qixinlun*.[15] Accordingly, the identification of Nishida's logic of *basho* with the *Qixinlun* system is not nonsense; among the historians of Japanese philosophy, for example, Watabe Kiyoshi argues that Nishida's philosophy is nothing but a modernized version of the idealistic system of the *Qixinlun*.[16]

For the reasons given above, Nishida scholarship must address Critical Buddhism's attack on Kyoto School philosophy. Furthermore, because a similar characterization is applicable to Mou Zongsan's philosophy, both the Kyoto School and the New Confucians must respond to this criticism.

3. Nishida's Theory of Personhood

To counter this type of interpretation, I argue that Nishida's philosophy cannot be understood as the idealistic and monistic system; instead of the *Qixinlun*, I argue for the strong influence from Tiantai Buddhism that radically differentiates itself from such a system of "topical Buddhism."[17] Before turning

14 Takemura Makio 竹村牧男, *Nishida Kitaro and Buddhism* 西田幾多郎と佛教 (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppannsha 大東出版社, 2002).

15 Cf. Mou Zongsan, *Buddha-nature and Prajñā-wisdom* 佛性與般若 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1977).

16 Watabe Kiyoshi 渡部清, "Japanese Philosophy as the synthesis of Eastern and Western Philosophies: an attempt to reconsider the originality of Nishida's philosopy 東西両哲學思想の綜合としての「日本哲學」:「西田哲學」の獨自性を檢證する試み." *Sophia University Philosophical Studies*, 37 (Tokyo: Sophia University, 2011). The author is indebted to Ching-yuen Cheung of Chinese University of Hong Kong for this part of argument.

17 The similarity between Nishida's philosophy and Tiantai Buddhism is first discovered by Koyama Iwao 高山岩男 (1905-1993); he situated Nishida's philosophy in the tradition of the Japanese Tendai School. It must be noted that Kōyama seems to be unaware, unlike Mou, of the philosophical meaning of the Tiantai-Huayan debate.

to this aspect of later Nishida thought, however, it is helpful to describe how Nishida introduced the notion of *basho* 場所 in the 1920s.

The philosophy of *basho* is established by the ontological turn from the standpoint of absolute will that can be described as the analysis of the *act of consciousness* (*sayō* 作用). Nishida's standpoint before introducing the notion of *basho* is a kind of amalgam that comprises not only Fichtean and Schellingian transcendental Idealism, but also the epistemological analysis of consciousness that is pursued in the phenomenological movement. The standpoint that analyzes the act of consciousness, however, cannot explore *that which sees* the act of consciousness, or the act of acts (*sayō no sayō* 作用の作用). Against this limitation, Nishida turns from the standpoint of act—also called *that which works* (*hataraku-mono* 働くもの)—to the *basho* of true nothingness, pursuing the concept of the "non-ground" (*Abgrund*) and the problem of moral contradiction.[18]

We are now ready to consider the meaning of Nishida's later change. It is well-known that Nishida initially formulated his logic of *basho* as the logic of predicate; the notion of *basho* is conceived as the transcendence in the direction of the predicate. This means that the logic of *basho* is the pursuit of subjectivity. It is because subjectivity is seen in the direction of the predicate; as Kant explained, transcendental apperception *accompanies* every representation. In the direction of the predicate, therefore, the ever-deeper type of *basho* will be discovered as profound subjectivity until the *basho* of true nothingness is disclosed as the "culmination of consciousness" that transcends mere subjectivity. Unlike transcendental subjectivity, the *basho* of true nothingness is characterized by an additional dimension:

18 Asakura Tomomi 朝倉友海, "The Principle of comparative East Asian philosophy: Nishida Kitarō and Mou Zongsan," *National Central University Journal of Humanities*, 54 (Jhongli: Research Center for Confucian Studies National Central University, 2013), pp. 8-15.

> Self-awareness serves as the predicate-plane of empirical judgments. Ordinarily we even think of the I to be a unity as a [grammatical] subject possessing various qualities like a thing. But the I is not a unity *qua* [grammatical] subject. It must instead be a predicating unity. It would have to be a circle rather than a point, a *basho* rather than a thing.[19]

The *basho* of true nothingness as the "culmination of consciousness" is not a "point" but a "circle" or "plane." It must be grasped as the *enveloping plane* (*hōyō-men* 包容面), rather than the *unifying point* that characterizes Kantian subjectivity.[20] It is also called the "predicate-plane." Based on this notion of subjectivity, different levels of *basho* are studied and systematized. The best exposition of this theory is seen in an essay "The World of the Intelligible 睿智的世界" (1928), which pursues the ever deepening transcendence in the direction of the predicate.[21]

As far as this stage is concerned, however, it is at least possible to consider the logic of *basho* as the modernized version of the *Qixinlun* system. The *basho* of true nothingness as the "culmination of consciousness" appears to be the transcendent ground of all the entities, seemingly presenting an idealistic and monistic system. One of the first important philosophers who recognized this possibility is Tanabe, who began to attack Nishida for the *emanative* mode of thought. Tanabe's criticism, published in 1930, is important for us because what he calls the "emanative character" is indeed the unmistakable nature of the *Qixinlun* system—at least in the interpretation of Critical Buddhism; in this sense,

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19 Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎, *Place and Dialectic*, trans. by John Krummel and Shigenori Nagatomo (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 95.

20 Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎, *Selected Essays of Nishida Kitarō* 田幾多郎哲學論集, Vol. I 西 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1987), p. 186.

21 Nishida Kitarō, "The Intelligible World 睿智的世界," trans. by Huang Wen-hong 黃文宏, *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 臺灣東亞文明研究學刊, 18 (Taipei: Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University 國立臺灣大學人文社會高等研究院, 2012), pp. 189-246.

he is the pioneer of a certain type of Nishida interpretation that is later assimilated by this Buddhologist movement.

Immediately after Tanabe's criticism, Nishida abandons this type of systematization. He no longer emphasizes subjectivity as the predicate-plane. Many scholars argue that this significant change must be seen as the response to Tanabe's objection although it is difficult to ascribe the cause of this grave transformation to only external reasons.[22] It is not necessary for the purpose of this essay, however, to enter into a detailed discussion of this; the point to observe is how this transformation occurs with the introduction of the theory of selfhood and personhood in Nishida's writings.

Nishida's change is expressed in his subsequent essays that explore the problem of temporality and personal identity.[23] These essays attempt to illuminate the dialectical aspect of the logic of *basho*, which is hereafter called the "dialectics of *basho*" (*bashoteki benshōhō* 場所的辯證法). This is indeed a major transformation of Nishida's philosophical position: it is often described as the transition from the standpoint of *basho* to that of the world, *sekai* 世界. Concerning this point, Noda Matao 野田又夫 (1910-2004), who witnessed this change as a young student of the Kyoto School, suggests that this transition signifies a "radical transformation of the worldview because the principles of these standpoints are not the same."[24] It must be explained how this change occurred.

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22 It is also claimed by many scholars that Nishida's change reflects his reaction to the general trend of Japanese thought at that time, especially to the Marxist thinkers. For example, Tosaka Jun 戸坂潤 (1900-1945), a Marxist philosopher, published his version of Nishida criticism in 1932.

23 These themes are discussed respectively in the essay "Self-determination of the eternal now 永遠の今の自己限定" (1931) and "I and Thou 私と汝" (1932), both included in the *Self-Aware Determination of Nothingness* 無の自覺的限定 (1932). However, to consider the problem of temporality would carry us too far away from the purpose of this paper.

24 Noda Matao 野田又夫, *Three Traditions of Philosophy* 哲學の三つの傳統 (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten 紀伊國屋書店, 1984), p. 181.

It is fairly easy, however, to see the reason why the notion of personhood comes to the forefront. This notion is necessary for the system of self-awareness that must contain—similar to the system of German Idealism—the element of the "other" that determines the self-qua-subject and the self-qua-object as a whole. In the history of philosophy, it is first seen in Kant's concept of the sensible (nature) and then developed in Fichte's notion of the Non-I (*Nicht-Ich*).[25] These various notions conceptualize the element of the "other" in a philosophical system that differentiates reality. Nishida's own version of this element—the "other"—is introduced as "thou."

Why is it called "thou"? The reason is as follows. That which determines our own existence is that which is different from us; it is the other. Yet, it cannot be identifiable either as mind or matter because these are part of us, therefore not different from us. It is something that is absolutely independent of us and determines us. It is not an object as such, but a free individual or *person* that is completely independent of my own existence. For this reason, it is something that has to be called "thou" as a person. This is not to say, Nishida underlines, that "thou" designates our mere neighbors; it can designate, for example, yesterday's or tomorrow's I.[26] Nishida's theory of personhood explores the element that determines our own Self. Therefore, it aims to show the transcendence of selfhood or disruption of subjectivity in a more radical manner than in his earlier version of the logic of *basho*.

It is for this reason that the *basho* of nothingness is no longer described as subjectivity. The *basho* of nothingness is now designated as the *socio-historical determination* of the I and Thou. Nishida abandons "the standpoint in which I see the world" in order to "give logical foundation to, supplement the insufficiency of the argument" by systematizing the ideas that are presented in the "I and Thou"

25 Nishida Kitarō, *Selected Essays of Nishida Kitarō* 西田幾多郎哲學論集, Vol. I (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1987), pp. 340-341.

26 *Ibid*., p. 343.

essay.[27] Abandoning the previous formulation with the emphasis on the direction of the predicate, he explores the theory of *basho* as the copula which signifies the self-contradictory identity of the subject and the predicate. The logic of *basho* is now described as the logic of copula, the principle of which is *absolutely contradictory identity*.

4. Nishida and Mou against the Monistic System

At this point, it is clear that the type of interpretation that sees Nishida's philosophy as subjective idealism and generative monism is emphatically rejected by Nishida himself. According to the later writings of Nishida, The *basho* of nothingness is not a mystical foundation for all the entities as the transcendental—or transcendent—mind, but the concrete socio-historical fact that is called the world, *sekai*. It must be noted, however, that Nishida never thematically considered the Buddhist treatise *Qixinlun*. It therefore remains to be clarified whether this later development of the logic of *basho* is indeed relevant to Buddhism.

For this purpose, Nishida's later philosophy must be compared with Mou Zongsan's interpretation of perfect teaching, which is essentially relevant to the question of the *Qixinlun*. Recent research has shown that Nishida's turn from the standpoint of act to that of *basho* is in parallel with Mou's discovery of Tiantai Buddhism. As space is limited, the results of previous studies can be mentioned only in summary as follows: first, the notion of *basho* signifies an ontological turn from the notion of *act*; second, Mou discovers the importance of perfect

27 This view is gradually established from the *Fundamental Problem of Philosophy* 哲學の根本問題 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1933) onward. Cf. Asakura Tomomi 朝倉友海, *The Question of East Asian Philosophy: The Kyoto School and New Confucianism* 「東アジアに哲学はない」のか：京都学派と新儒家 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 2014), pp. 76-80.

teaching just in the same manner, transcending the standpoint of act to that of Buddhistic ontology; third, Nishida and Mou pursue a type of metaphysics that is explained with such notions as "non-ground" and "contradictory identity," which is the result of the transcendence of selfhood. As the first point is already explained in the previous section, we shall confine our attention to the second point before exploring the third point in detail.

Mou emphasizes that Tiantai Buddhism or *perfect teaching* fundamentally deviates from the other schools of Buddhism that culminate in the *Qixinlun* and Huayan Buddhism.[28] If Mahāyāna Buddhism pursues the standpoint of act, perfect teaching explores the standpoint of being: whereas the former aims at actional perfection (*zuoyongde yuan* 作用的圓), the latter attains ontological perfection (*cunyoulunde yuan* 存有論的圓).[29] Using Mou's later ideas, perfect teaching explores the stratum of being (*cunyouceng* 存有層) rather than the stratum of act (*zuoyongceng* 作用層).[30] Focusing on this difference, Mou characterizes perfect teaching as an *ontological* vision that questions the being of the whole beings.

In this respect, Mou's enigmatic interpretation of Tiantai Buddhism parallels Nishida's notion of *basho*: it is explained in terms of the transition from the standpoint of act to that which envelops beings.[31] So far as the transcendence of

28 This point is most vividly described in *Buddha-nature and Prajñā-wisdom* 佛性與般若 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1977).

29 Mou Zongsan, *Phenomenon and Thing-in-itself* 現象與物自身 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1975), p. 404.

30 Mou Zongsan, *On the Perfect Good* 圓善論 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1985), p. 330. Mou follows Xiong Shili as to the usage of the term *zuoyong* 作用 (Xiong Shili 熊十力, *Xinweishilun* 新唯識論 [Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1999], pp. 114-115). They both use this term to signify the act of consciousness in the same manner as Nishida. For further detail of this notion, see Asakura Tomomi 朝倉友海, "The Principle of comparative East Asian philosophy: Nishida Kitarō and Mou Zongsan," *National Central University Journal of Humanities*, 54, pp. 1-25).

31 Following the above-described parallelism between Nishida's invention of the logic of *basho* and Mou's discovery of Buddhistic ontology, it is possible to call their common framework of philosophy as the *onto-topological constitution* of East Asian metaphysics, as I argued elsewhere.

selfhood is concerned, it is important to emphasize that Mou first explores perfect teaching through the consideration of the problem of self-awareness in *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy* 智的直覺與中國哲學.[32] Interpreting Kant's distinction between the self-qua-subject and the self-qua-object, Mou illuminates the significance of Tiantai's ontological question with respect to the transcendence of selfhood; transcendental subjectivity is disrupted to open the ontological horizon that questions the being of all beings. This already indicates a considerable similarity to Nishida's theory of personhood.

Beside the distinction between the stratum of act and that of being, Mou further distinguishes two types of logic that are used in perfect teaching and other schools of Buddhism. Whereas Huayan and the *Qixinlun* system is the culmination of the analytic or discriminatory manner of metaphysical thought, Tiantai is based on the non-analytic or *non-discriminatory* manner of ontological investigation or the logical procedure of paradox. Although Mou does not suffuciently develop this theory of non-discriminaroty logic, one of the descriptions of this type of logic that he offers is based on Kant's antinomy of practical reason. In short, Tiantai’s ontological vision must be described in terms of paradox and contradiction.[33]

Regarding this vision, Mou is fully aware that perfect teaching deviates from the "one-mind-opens-two-gates" framework, constituting a much unexplored ontological horizon that he names Buddhistic ontology. Although Mou also relies on the latter system to formulate the two-tier metaphysics common to Western and Chinese philosophies, his interpretation of perfect teaching attempts to establish another type of thought whose principle is paradox and contradiction. Contradictory identity is seen in such expressions as "evil

32 Mou Zongsan, *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy* 智的直覺與中國哲學 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Shuguan 臺灣商務印書館, 1971).

33 Asakura Tomomi, "On Buddhistic Ontology: A Comparative Study of Mou Zongsan and Kyoto School Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West*, 61, 4 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), pp. 647-678.

immediately is Buddha (*mojie ji fo* 魔界即佛)," which radically opposes Huayan Buddhism's so-called "adherence to the truth without the nine worlds (*yuanli duanjiu* 緣理斷九)."[34] In this sense, the relation between evil and Buddha corresponds to the "I-thou" relation in Nishida's discussion: I cannot be the "I" unless I face thee; at the bottom of my own Self, I find thee; furthermore, I and Thou are determined on and by the non-ground.

Following Mou's Tiantai interpretation, Chan Wing-cheuk attempts to clarify this complicated argument by employing Heidegger's "fundamental ontology" as a hermeneutical framework.[35] Tiantai Buddhism can be interpreted with the two Heideggerian notions: Being-in-the-World (*In-der-Welt-Sein*) or the transcendence of selfhood, and also the notion of non-ground (*Abgrund*) or the negation of substantial ground. According to this exegesis, Tiantai's expression "the mind of a single instance with three thousand worlds" (*yinian sanqian* 一念三千)" corresponds to the former notion, that is, the transcendence or disruption of selfhood; on the other hand, another important Buddhist expression "the emergence of all beings from the non-dwelling ground" (*cong wuzhuben li yiqiefa* 從無住本立一切法)—an expression taken from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*—corresponds to the notion of non-ground.[36]

Chan's Heideggerian interpretation of perfect teaching further clarifies how Mou's view of perfect teaching is similar to Nishida's philosophy. Although Nishida refers neither to Tiantai Buddhism nor to the phrase of *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, he frequently uses the Diamond Sutra's expression "the non-dwelling mind" (*wusuozhu er sheng qixin* 無所住而生其心) to show the notion of non-ground.

34 Mou Zongsan, *Buddha-nature and Prajñā-wisdom* 佛性與般若 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1977), p. 779.

35 Chan Wing-cheuk 陳榮灼, "Heidegger and Tiantai Buddhism 海德格與天台宗," *Ehu Monthly* 鵝湖月刊, 94 (Taipei: Ehu Yuekanshe 鵝湖月刊社, 1983), pp. 32-38; Chan Wing-cheuk, *Heidegger and Chinese Philosophy* (Taipei: Shuangye Shulang 雙葉書廊, 1986).

36 Chan Wing-cheuk, *Heidegger and Chinese Philosophy* (Taipei: Shuangye Shulang 雙葉書廊, 1986), p. 138.

As mentioned above, both Nishida and Mou pursue a type of metaphysics that is explained with such notions as "non-ground" and "contradictory identity."

If these notions are relevant to Buddhism, so is the transcendence and disruption of selfhood and personhood. As is also shown by Chan's explanation, the latter is at issue in Tiantai's meditation. The expression "the mind of a single instance with three thousand worlds," which appears to suggest that the mind comprehends the whole world, does not nevertheless signify subjective idealism because this same "instance" brings the disruption of the whole world. Gereon Kopf draws attention to Dōgen's expression in order to show this situation: "at the time when someone attains the mind, all of heaven collapses and the entire earth explodes."[37] It is not that the mind creates the world in the vertical direction, nor the world creates the mind in the horizontal direction, as explained in the *Mohe Zhiguan* 摩訶止觀: the actual world is "neither horizontal nor vertical," neither simply realistic nor idealistic. To put it simply, mind and matter are identical in absolute contradiction.[38] And this means the disruption of selfhood and personhood—reality that goes beyond the world of representation (*bukesiyi jing* 不可思議境). The meditation of "the mind of a single instance with three thousand worlds" means the meditation of the world of becoming in which hell and heaven are dependently arising—and in which both I and thou live.

Buddhistic ontology is therefore neither idealistic nor monistic, showing a metaphysical constitution based on the non-ground and contradictory identity that parallels Nishida's theory of selfhood and personhood. To put it another way, both Mou and Nishida distance themselves from emanative (generative) monism or idealistic substantialism through their theory of personhood that explores the disruption of selfhood and personhood. Reality beyond the world of

37 Gereon Kopf, *Beyond Personal Identity: Dogen, Nishida, and a phenomenology of No-self* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), p. 64.

38 Mou Zongsan, *Buddha-nature and Prajñā-wisdom* 佛性與般若 (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 學生書局, 1977), p. 785.

representation—the mind of a single instance with three thousand worlds—corresponds to the *basho* as the world in which I and Thou are dependently arising—and actually living.

From these remarks one general point becomes very clear: it is untenable to regard Nishida's philosophy as a modern version of the *Qixinlun* system. In this respect, Kyoto School philosophy can be allied with Critical Buddhism.[39] What is at issue is the difference between the monistic system represented by the *Qixinlun* on the one hand, and the onto-topological constitution of perfect teaching that comprises the notion of non-ground and the transcendence of selfhood. This aspect of East Asian philosophy deserves our attention not only because it is shared by Nishida and Mou but also because it helps us to avoid the unfair criticism that attacks philosophical thinking in the name of "true Buddhism." ♦

39 If this explanation is still unable to persuade Critical Buddhism, it is because not only the *Qixinlun*, but also the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is denounced as the enemy of true Buddhism. Hakamaya bluntly rejects the notion of non-ground as a kind of transcendental ground: "I think that we must admit that this phrase does not express any profound idea but merely a hollow content like a void. Even if it is called the non-ground, it obviously serves as the substratum for every entity…The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, which incorporates the notion of the non-ground as the core idea, can no longer be seen as a Buddhist canon." (Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭, *Critique of Innate Awakening Theory* 本覺思想批判 [Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan 大藏出版, 1989], pp. 231-232). Yet, Hakamaya seems to forget that he admires Zhiyi and Dōgen as the two historical figures that represent true Buddhism in East Asia. At least, one cannot readily believe that the same author is rejecting the sutra that is highly acclaimed by Zhiyi.

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