THE PROBLEMATIC OF CONTINUITY: NISHIDA KITARŌ AND ARISTOTLE

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As the founder of the Kyoto School, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945) was instrumental in bringing Japanese philosophy onto the world scene. However, the uniqueness of his philosophizing does not lie in its being Japanese. As James Heisig points out, in fact it would be against Nishida's own wish to regard his philosophy as purely Eastern and not philosophy proper.[1] In other words, he did not defend his philosophy by appealing to his own cultural background.[2] Rather he wanted to engage in the philosophical discourse as it had been practiced in the West.[3] What Nishida proposed was nothing less than a full-fledged challenge to the metaphysics of substance that had dominated mainstream Western philosophy throughout much of its history. Even though his effort to construct a non-substance philosophy was influenced by his own intellectual heritage, the most important aspect of which was Zen Buddhism, he wanted to prove that the validity of his way of philosophizing was not dependent on its Zen orientation. It was philosophy in every sense of the term as it had been used in the West.

At the center of his non-substance philosophical project is the postulation of the concept of *basho,* place, and in fact Nishida's later philosophy is to a great extent a philosophy of *basho*—a view widely shared by scholars of Nishida.[4] *Basho* refers to the contextual field or place out of which a judgment emerges. The central Mahāyāna Buddhist concept of *śūnyatā* (emptiness), or what Nishida calls the locus of absolute contradictories, looms large in his conceptualization of *basho.* However, the notion would be hardly accessible without a knowledge of what he calls the logic of the predicate, by which he proposes to distinguish himself from the traditional Aristotelian logic that he regards as the foundation of the metaphysics of substance. This predicate logic will be the focus of this essay.

Naturally, questions like the following would come to mind: Why does Nishida propose a logic of this kind? What does he find problematic with Aristotelian logic? What does he hope to achieve in putting forward this new logic—a task that he regards as impossible within the domain of formal logic? These are the issues we will be dealing with in this essay. We will argue that Nishida formulates his logic of the predicate in order to account for the possibility of continuity of change. Since Nishida's logic of the predicate is a direct challenge to Aristotelian formal logic, in our examination of Nishida's logic we will introduce pertinent arguments by Aristotle so as to have a clearer picture of Nishida's contention. Therefore, let us begin with Aristotle's argument.

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The Aristotelian Approach

For Nishida, Aristotelian logic is incapable of dealing with change,[5] which includes change of place, time, quality, quantity, and so on. Why so? To help us grapple with the limitation of his formal logic, let us take a look at an example. Anyone familiar with the history of Western philosophy knows the celebrated paradoxes presented by Zeno in arguing against the possibility of change. Here is one of them:

> Suppose a moving arrow. According to the Pythagorean theory the arrow should occupy a given position in space. But to occupy a given position in space is to be at rest. Therefore the flying arrow is at rest, which is a contradiction.[6]

To put this argument in plain language, at each indivisible moment, the arrow is supposed to stay at a certain position, otherwise the moment would be divisible. But if so, when is the arrow moving? Zeno uses this example to demonstrate that motion is simply a delusion. The argument seems valid, and in fact it continues to haunt logicians even to this day.[7] There are two possibilities in explaining this paradox: one is to admit that there is no motion in the external world and our perception of any motion is simply delusory, a position to which Zeno was trying to lead us; the other would rather point to some mistake in our way of reasoning about this case. The first possibility is untenable due to the universality of the experience of motion, unless the delusion in question is transcendental, in the Kantian sense, but, as such, it would not be provable for the simple reason that we cannot know that it is a delusion unless we already have the knowledge of what it really is. It is more likely that this is the result of faulty reasoning, as the second possibility suggests, since we do see a moving arrow. If we confine our effort to the latter possibility, our task is then to discover the defective reasoning involved.

In Jonathan Lear's interpretation, Zeno's paradox may be summarized in the following form:

> (1) Anything that is occupying a space just its own size is at rest.
> (2) A moving arrow, while it is moving, is moving in the present.
> (3) But in the present the arrow is occupying a space just its own size.
> (4) Therefore in the present the arrow is at rest.
> (5) Therefore a moving arrow, while it is moving, is at rest.[8]

Here Lear uses the neutral term "present" instead of "moment" so as to avoid the problem of divisibility associated with the concept of moment. Accordingly, since the arrow occupies a space just its own size at each "present," it is at rest at each "present." Nevertheless, since the moving arrow, by virtue of the fact that it is moving, is moving at each "present," the result is the contradiction that a moving arrow is at rest. Such a conclusion is not acceptable to Aristotle. In order to discredit the argument, Aristotle launches an attack on (2) and (4) so as to reach a different conclusion. To this effect, Aristotle contends:

> That no thing is in motion in a moment is evident from what follows. For if some thing is, the faster and the slower may be in motion in the same moment. So let M be that mo-

> ment, and let the faster traverse the length AC in the moment M. Then, in the same moment, the slower will traverse a length less than AC, let us say the length AB. Now since the slower has moved over AB in the whole moment M, the faster will move [over AB] in [a time] less than that moment. Hence, that moment will have been divided. But it is indivisible, as was shown.[9] No thing, then, can be in motion in a moment.[10]

The argument that no thing can be in motion in a moment is premised on the stipulation that a moment is indivisible, even though it seems to contradict his own position that time is infinitely divisible.[11]

> Nor can anything be at rest in a moment. For a thing was said to be at rest if it can by nature be in motion but is not in motion when, where, and in the manner in which it can be in motion; so since no thing can by nature be in motion in a moment, it is clear that no thing can be [by nature] at rest in a moment either.[12]

This argument, that rest is possible in a moment only when motion is equally so, is a bit odd, as David Bostock observes, since Aristotle is trying to apply the previous contention against the possibility of motion in an instant to the current one, which argues against the possibility of rest in an instant, and clearly the previous contention cannot directly apply to the current one.[13] Nevertheless, Aristotle has made his case that an object can be neither in motion nor at rest in a moment. Furthermore, an object cannot be both in motion and at rest in the same moment because it violates the law of noncontradiction, which dictates, in Aristotle's words, that "[i]t is impossible for the same attribute both to belong and not to belong to the same subject at the same time and in the same respect."[14]

The conclusion Aristotle draws is that at each moment a thing is neither in motion nor at rest. Such an explanation is made so as to keep in line with the law of noncontradiction in Aristotelian logic, which does not allow two contradictory statements to be true of a subject at the same time in the same way, but would allow both of them to be false. Therefore, at each moment, a thing cannot be in motion or at rest or both in motion and at rest, but should rather be neither in motion nor at rest. Obviously, the strategy Aristotle employs to undermine Zeno's argument is simply to render the status of the moving arrow at each moment unintelligible, and although it does not explain why anything can move at all if in any instant it is neither moving nor at rest, he still manages to save our faith in the validity of the empirical knowledge as well as in the logical system he creates to explain it.

Clearly, there is room for a reexamination of this paradox if we find Aristotle's answer unsatisfactory. A relevant issue seems to be: what do we mean by "at rest" and "moving"? Does premise (1) mean "at rest" as we normally understand it? Upon a closer examination, we will find some discrepancy in our understanding of "at rest" and what is given in (1). Normally we say something is at rest when it stays at the same place in consecutive moments. That is obviously not applicable to the case of a moving arrow. If it is in another place at the succeeding moment, it has certainly moved instead of being at rest.

Can we then declare a victory over Zeno? Not quite; otherwise the victory would seem too easy, as Lear cautions us.[15] As our initial explanation of the paradox

suggests, what Zeno is attacking is that at no time is the arrow *moving*. Even if he could admit that the arrow has moved, it would still be hard to demonstrate to him at what moment the arrow is actually moving. This is indeed an important question, and the failure to explain it would result in the sacrifice of the continuity of change, and of our experience as well. At this juncture, we need to bring in the Aristotelian argument on the issue of continuity. The issue of continuity is related to the issue of change, since it is rather taken for granted that change—and, in this case specifically, the locomotion of an arrow—is continuous in our normal understanding and that that which traverses space and time remains the same throughout the movement.

Aristotle says, "By 'continuous' I mean that which is divisible into parts which are always divisible."[16] Given such a definition, what would happen to the concept of continuity? As Aristotle himself argues, no two moments can be next to each other since there is always a lapse of time, however transient,[17] and consequently that lapse of time would again be divisible, and thus there is a danger of degenerating into infinite divisibility.[18] The result, then, would be what Zeno is trying to convey through the paradox, namely that a moving object is at a certain place at a certain moment although there is no time when it is actually moving. In other words, the moving object would be, at the preceding moment, at one place and, at the succeeding moment, at the next place without going through the process of actually moving; or, as Bostock puts it, the motion rather proceeds "cinematographically."[19] Aristotle certainly takes good notice of this consequence,[20] which he rejects based on his faith in common sense, despite the fact that it seems to be a natural inference from his definition of continuity; his argument against it is unconvincing and pale.[21]

The critical point in this connection is how to account for continuity in change. If the discussion above is of some validity, continuity and change would seem rather incompatible. Consequently, in order to save the possibility of change, the continuity of an object would be sacrificed, and with it its identity, too, due to the intrinsic relationship between the two. If there were no continuity in change, it would not make much sense to claim that there is actually something that is going *through* the phases of change, as Aristotle believes. Otherwise, we have to face the problem of in what sense the object of the succeeding "present" is the same as that of the preceding "present" if indeed the object of the previous moment does not continue into the next moment. On the other hand, if we hope to save continuity, then change does not seem to be a possibility, as demonstrated in Zeno's paradox, due to the observation that change must be cinematographic in nature. Clearly, neither conclusion is acceptable. Then the question is: is there a third way? This seems to be a good place for us to turn to Nishida.

Nishida's Approach

Had the dilemma been presented to Nishida, he would have answered that Aristotle cannot provide a convincing explanation of the continuity in change because Aristotle is stuck in the formal logic that always seeks the answer in the direction of the

subject. Nishida challenges Aristotelian logic precisely because the latter is a logic of the (grammatical) subject. Now the question is: what does Nishida have in mind in claiming that Aristotelian logic is merely a logic of the subject?

Nishida's major criticism against Aristotelian logic is that it is concerned solely with external objects, "the objective objects." Such a concern with objectivity is then translated into the prioritization of the grammatical subject in logic.[22] As we have seen previously, it is difficult for this logic to deal with the problematic of continuity. Hence, Nishida proposes a new logic, the logic of the predicate, believing that his logic offers a more credible explanation of continuity and hence reveals the true nature of things-events in the world.

What does he mean by the logic of the predicate?[23] We can find a sketchy explanation of his logic in "The Problem of Japanese Culture," where Nishida compares two kinds of logic, Occidental and Oriental: "Roughly speaking, we might say that Occidental logic is the logic that takes things as its object, while Oriental logic is the logic that takes mind as its object."[24] Clearly Nishida, in proposing a logic of the predicate, hopes to reveal the logic that is followed by our mind in its actual operation. This is to say that the logic of the predicate is designed to lay bare the fundamental operation of the mind itself in itself, so as to see the outside from the internal instead of "seeing the internal from the outside."[25]

What, then, does it mean to see the external from the internal? The issue concerning continuity and change provides a good example in this connection. For Aristotle, the key to the explanation of continuity is to resort to the identity in change; this identity then becomes the owner of change in order to guarantee "its" continuity in change, and the change becomes "its" change. In other words, Aristotelian logic attempts to account for continuity by seeking the identity in change in the direction of the subject. From Nishida's perspective, this is precisely the reason Aristotelian logic fails to offer a convincing explanation of continuity. On the other hand, Nishida suggests that if there is indeed an identity in change it has to be sought in the direction of the predicate, instead of in the subject.[26] As Robert Wargo points out, "Herein is the key to Nishida's move: whereas Aristotle defines 'truly real' as that which is subject, but never predicate, Nishida moves in the opposite direction considering that which is predicate, but never subject."[27] This distinction in defining what is truly real between Aristotle and Nishida lies at the heart of the different natures of the two logic theories.

Aristotle, in defining the real as that which is the subject that can never become a predicate, regards the individual as the primary substance that is the truly real:

> For primary substance is that kind of substance which is peculiar to an individual, which does not belong to anything else; but the universal is common, since that is called universal which naturally belongs to more than one thing. . . . Further, substance means that which is not predicable of a subject, but the universal is predicable of some subjects always.[28]

Accordingly, only the individual can be regarded as the primary substance, and as a subject it always transcends its predicates, predicates being universals.

However, to Nishida, such a definition of the individual does not capture the individual qua individual since the individual is defined through universals that predicate it.[29] In order to capture the individual as individual, we need to see it in action since "the true individual must be an acting individual."[30] Consequently, Nishida defines the real as that which is a predicate that can never become a subject. For him only the predicate, not the subject qua primary substance, can portray the dynamic nature of reality.[31] Aristotle's definition of the individual qua primary substance fails to do so since it deals only with the world of intellectual objects, namely a world of static, abstract objects and grammatical subjects, hence a world of dream.[32] In Aristotle's definition of the real, that is, the primary substance, as a subject that can never become a predicate, the subject transcends the predicate; by the same token, in Nishida's definition of the real a predicate that can never become a subject must transcend the subject. This is why Nishida calls the predicate the transcendent predicate *(chōetsu teki jutsugo).*[33] Furthermore, because predication is a function of the mind,[34] the logic of the predicate becomes the logic of the mind. Therefore, the world of transcendent predicates belongs to the realm of consciousness.[35]

Now the question is: how can the logic of the predicate solve the problem of continuity that the logic of the subject cannot? We may recall, from our earlier discussion of the relationship between continuity and change, that within the Aristotelian scheme continuity and change are incompatible with each other. With the logic of the predicate at his disposal, Nishida is ready to tackle the problematic of continuity. Let us pose the same question to Nishida here: what does he mean by continuity and how does he solve the problem regarding the incompatibility between continuity and change in the Aristotelian scheme?

In the case of Aristotelian logic, continuity is intricately connected with the idea of identity qua subject, the individual or primary substance. This is especially clear in the explanation of the moving arrow, which takes for granted the same identical arrow persisting throughout the motion. In other words, there is an implicit, or rather explicit, presupposition in Zeno's argument against the possibility of change, and since it is so obvious, we no longer take it as a presupposition any more; to wit, it is the same arrow that persists throughout the course of flying. Zeno makes use of this common sense, although unconsciously, to challenge the compatibility of continuity and change. Indeed, as we have discussed earlier, if we have to maintain the link between continuity and identity, continuity and change become incompatible.

However, if such a link is dropped, the incompatibility between continuity and change can be reversed. Put differently, if we do not have to hold the position that there is an "objective object" that persists through change, continuity and change can both be accommodated. In order to do so, the linkage between identity and continuity has to be broken apart in the course of change. As a result, the continuity is no longer the Aristotelian continuity since continuity de-linked from identity is not attributed to a persisting subject as "its" continuity. Rather it is "a continuity of discontinuity,"[36] as Nishida calls it, because, as we have seen, that which stands apart from the series of change, as the supposed unifier, does not exist in the external world; otherwise it cannot move. Nishida coins the term "the continuity of disconti-

nuity" to capture the movement of an individual as "a self-acting thing which contains its own negation within itself and moves by itself."[37] In other words, the continuity of discontinuity refers to the continuity that is not predicated on an identity in the subject. In Nishida's words, "That which contains self-negation in itself or is a self-contradiction in itself can never be conceived in terms of the subject."[38] Since continuity without identity is beyond the scope of the Aristotelian logic of the subject, a logic like Nishida's logic of the predicate is called for.

Only with the insight gained from the logic of the predicate can we realize that a persisting arrow throughout the course of flying as the subject of the movement is nothing but our presupposition. As such, it does not actually exist in the "objective" world but rather in one's mind, which alone has the power to differentiate subject from predicate and matter from form. This means that it is the demand of our consciousness that is responsible for positing a persisting object, in the external world, in the direction of the grammatical subject. In other words, it is our conscious activity that is at stake at this juncture instead of the "objective objects" in the external world. This is what Nishida means by seeing the external through the internal, the external referring to identity in change and the internal to mental activities. As Robert Carter rightly points out, "While Nishida does not explicitly say so, the background of continuity must now be the self-as-consciousness-in-time which always wherever and whenever is the 'privileged' place or center from which change is marked."[39] Accordingly, Nishida holds the mind responsible for the genesis of the identity in change in our experience of the dynamic world. That is, the mind is that which provides the ground or place—*basho*—for the identity in change.

To be fair to Aristotle, his logic is undoubtedly an effective tool for making a definite judgment about something, either in the form of "is or is-not" or "neither is nor is-not."[40] However, it cannot allow both "is" and "is-not" to predicate the same subject at the same time in the same way. However, both "is" and "is-not" would be required, from Nishida's perspective, in order to explain change; otherwise things are always in the state of possessing some properties. This renders change unaccountable because if at each moment it is always in a particular state of owning its properties, then when does the change take place? Only when it is both "is" and "is-not" can change become possible. And accounting for both "is" and "is-not" already steps outside the scope of Aristotelian logic since it violates the law of noncontradiction basic to the logic of the subject. Nishida's logic of the predicate accommodates exactly such a contradiction. In fact, in the logic of the predicate, the contradiction above becomes the norm. This is what Nishida calls "self-identity of absolute contradiction."[41]

In light of Nishida's logic of the predicate, the very possibility for the arrow to fly lies in the fact that at each moment it both is and is not at a certain place. The reason that Aristotelian logic is unable to provide a satisfying explanation for a phenomenon like the flying arrow is that it is only applicable in stating what something is, is not, or neither is nor is not—but not what both is and is not in the same way at the same time. For example, a flying arrow either is or is not at point A at a certain time, and within such a logic it does not make sense to say that it is both at point A and not at

point A at the same time. That is why Aristotle has to render the flying arrow's movement at each moment esoteric. But for Nishida, in order for the arrow to be flying at all, it would have to be both at A and not at A. This is what Nishida means by negation when he says, "The predicative determination which truly includes and determines the subject itself must possess absolute negation within itself."[42] It is the defining characteristic of the predicate that it possesses negation within itself, which renders possible both is and is not at the same time, and as such it cannot be conceived in terms of the subject.[43] If the real world is a world of constant change, the logic of the subject, despite its usefulness for practical everyday discourse, falls short of accounting for such a fundamental aspect of the world and human experience.

The logic of the predicate paints a radically different picture of the world and our engagement with it. The world of predicates, or, in Nishida's terminology, the realm of transcendent predicates, is a world of action without an agent—"seeing without a seer," to use a famous Zen expression. The predicate, which cannot become a subject, defies objectification since in being objectified it ceases to be a predicate and is merely an object that is "frozen," as it were, instead of being an activity. It is those frozen states that Aristotelian logic is primarily concerned with. Put differently, Nishida does not regard an activity as belonging to a thing that is engaging in that activity, but rather regards each moment of activity as an inseparable whole wherein both the subject and the predicate are its constitutive elements, and the continuity of the activity lies in the fact that these moments share the same series of that activity. Therefore, it is not the case that an unchanging arrow flies over from one spot to another in a period of time, but rather that there is a series of flying arrows.

If our analysis of Nishida's logic is of some validity, it should become clear to us that Nishida, in proposing a new logic, wants to challenge the substance-based ontology that is operative in the logic of the subject and has become the ground upon which our common sense is constructed. This explains the seemingly counterintuitive nature of his logic. However, if his intellectual maneuver were carried out without any experiential ground it would be a vacuous speculation. In any case, such an endeavor would not have interested Nishida.[44] The experiential ground upon which such speculations are carried out is what Nishida calls the "pure experience" wherein the conscious act is not yet differentiated from the content, nor the subject from the predicate. He calls upon us to return to this more primordial mode of experience, uncolored by substance-based ontology. In this mode, the experience itself has not yet been subjected to the objectification of thinking since objectification would involve discrimination, which disrupts that pure experience. Only through objectification does the separation between conscious act and its content, subject and predicate, take place. When there is no such separation, every moment becomes a creative moment. It is in this context that the following words of Nishida are to be interpreted:

> That which is both changing objectively and at the same time unchanging through change already contains self-contradiction within itself. Thus it may be defined as subject-qua-predicate.... True concrete reality is the self-identity of contradictories, and what is determined by it is both subjective and objective.[45]

What Nishida calls subject-qua-predicate demonstrates the oneness of subject and predicate in each and every experiential moment in pure experience, and pure experience, or what he terms "true concrete reality" at this juncture, negates itself in activity, revealing a fundamental contradiction within itself. Such a self-contradiction, which lies at the heart of any change, is inconceivable under the logic of the subject, as Nishida observes, but it is the basic premise in his logic of the predicate. This also means that Nishida does not necessarily reject the logic of the subject, but only wants to put it where it belongs, as the derivative of the more primordial logic of the predicate.

In this light, we can make sense of Nishida's well-known statement in the preface to *An Inquiry into the Good*: "Over time I came to realize that it is not that experience exists because there is an individual, but that an individual exists because there is experience."[46] Here Nishida is claiming that an individual is derived from the experience, not vice versa. The difficulty in appreciating such an observation is attributable to our acceptance of Aristotelian logic of the subject, which takes the subject to be more primary than the predicate. Aristotelian logic separates the subject from the predicate and then puts them together by making the former the "owner" of the latter. Only when the subject and the predicate are regarded as inseparable, as conceptualized in Nishida's logic of the predicate, can we appreciate the infinite possibility of creativity in our existence.

It is not difficult to discern, in Nishida's logic of the predicate, some trace of the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of *anātman,* no-self. The doctrine of no-self has traditionally been explained by reducing the self to its constituents, the five aggregates, namely body, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness. In light of the logic of the predicate, *anātman* can be reinterpreted as the inseparability of the subject and the predicate. The sense of self derives from the separation of the subject from the predicate out of what Nishida calls "pure experience." As a result of this separation, the subject turns into the self, who transcends "her" experiences. On the contrary, the inseparability between the subject and the predicate can be understood as a series of "I," within which is discerned continuity instead of identity. Therefore, Nishida says, this "I" "may be conceived as a transition from individual to individual, as a 'dynamic individual,' as it were."[47] Within each predicative state, there is a unity of experience, but between a preceding state and a succeeding one there is only continuity.

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, from Nishida's perspective, his logic of the predicate captures the dynamic aspect of the world and the continuity of discontinuity in our "pure experience" of the world, whereas the Aristotelian logic of the subject objectifies and freezes our experience. The logic of the predicate advocates the unity of predicate and subject, while the logic of the subject separates the two by extricating subject from predicate and regards the subject as the unifier of predicates. Consequently, to explain the continuity of change in the real world from the perspective of Nishida's

logic of the predicate is simply beyond the capacity of Aristotelian logic due to its inherent limitation, namely that it is only concerned with the subject that is in a state of possessing some predicates without realizing that the knowledge thus acquired is the result of objectification, which separates the subject from the predicate. As such, according to Nishida, Aristotelian logic is incapable of producing the knowledge of true reality, the reality of continuous change. Hence, in formulating a logic that prioritizes predicates, Nishida constructs a philosophy of non-substance and launches a powerful challenge to the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance that is operative in Aristotle's logic, which privileges the subject.

Mainstream Western philosophy, ever since its inception, has privileged rest over motion, stability over change, and permanence over impermanence.[48] Within such a tradition, change and motion need to be accounted for on the ground of rest, stability, permanence, and Being. Our comparative study of Aristotle and Nishida has revealed that Aristotle, in light of the primacy of the category of substance and the logic of the subject in his philosophical thinking, is very much in line with the tradition that privileges rest over change. This is in sharp contrast to the Buddhist and East Asian philosophical orientations, which privilege change over rest. If Aristotle's logic of the subject provides the foundation for a substance-based ontology, which has dominated much of mainstream Western philosophy throughout its history, Nishida successfully formulates a form of logic for the non-substance ontology of dynamic reality, which characterizes mainstream Buddhist and East Asian philosophical reasoning.

However, as we pointed out at the beginning of this essay, Nishida does not want his philosophy to be perceived as nothing but Eastern, despite the Buddhist and East Asian cultural heritage that informs his philosophical thinking. He wants to engage Western philosophical traditions on their terms, and hence hopes that his philosophy is accepted as philosophy proper. In order to accomplish this, Nishida does not resort to the traditional ways of philosophizing as it has been practiced in the East. Instead, he uses Western terminologies and ways of philosophical reasoning in his approach to philosophy. In formulating the logic of the predicate and constructing his non-substance ontology, Nishida calls upon us to rethink the very notion of the intelligibility of the world and the modes of our engagement with such a world. Any critique or defense of his philosophy that he would welcome will have to be conducted on a philosophical and not just a cultural basis.

Notes

1 – James Heisig makes the following observation when he is commenting on the Kyoto school as a whole: "the Kyoto philosophers are eastern and they are Buddhist. But their aim and context is neither eastern nor Buddhist. To see their non-Christian and non-western elements as a kind of oriental spice to enliven certain questions on the menu of western philosophy may be the simplest way to open one's mind to their writings and yet keep them at arm's reach" (James

Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001], p. 8).

2 – However, some of his followers did just that, as Heisig points out: "It almost looks as if they get the best of both worlds—to claim that they are being religiously Buddhist when a philosophical criticism hits close to the core, and that they are being philosophically western when a serious objection arises from the Buddhist side. On the whole, I find this objection applies more often to their commentators than it does to the three philosophers themselves" (Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness,* p. 17).

3 – Heisig even goes so far as to claim that philosophy's birth in Japan was due to the contribution of Nishida and his successors (Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness,* p. 12). Here philosophy should be understood in light of the way it has been practiced in the West.

4 – For example, Yoshitomo Takeuchi, *Nishida tetsugaku no "Koiteki chokkan"* (Tokyo: Nō-san Gyoson Bunka Kyōkai, 1992), pp. 30–31; Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness,* p. 72; Michiko Yusa, *Zen and Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitarō* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), p. 202; Robert E. Carter, *The Nothingness beyond God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō,* 2nd ed. (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1997), pp. 16–57. Robert Wargo's dissertation, "The Logic of Basho and the Concept of Nothingness in the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō" (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1972), is a pioneering work on Nishida's conceptualization of *basho* written in English.

5 – Nishida Kitarō, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy: The World of Action and the Dialectical World,* trans. David A. Dilworth (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1970), pp. 1–5. However, this does not mean to say that Aristotle has not explained the phenomenon of change, which he actually does take a lot of effort to elaborate. The point here is rather that the concept of change is not incorporated in his logical system. In other words, when Aristotle "creates" the formal logical system, change is not taken into consideration. The point will be further clarified in due course in this article.

6 – I am using Frederick Copleston's summary of Aristotle's presentation on Zeno, since Aristotle's account in *Physics* Z, 239b30, is not easily understood without citing the other relevant parts of his presentation on this topic, which then is too scattered and lengthy for our purpose here (see Copleston, *A History of Philosophy,* vol. 1, *Greece and Rome* [New York: Image Books, 1993], p. 57).

7 – See Bertrand Russell, "The Problem of Infinity Considered Historically," in *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), chap. 7, passim.

8 – Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 84.

9 – See endnote 18.

10 – Aristotle *Physics* 234a25–32.

11 – Aristotle tries to save the argument by qualifying what he means by the indivisibility of a moment in this connection as "a predicate not of something else but of something by itself and primary." David Konstan, in his translation of *Simplicius on Aristotle's Physics 6,* interprets this indivisible instant as a now: "A 'now' (instant, or present instant), in the primary sense of the term, is indivisible, and exists in every stretch of time; it is the extreme limit of the past and of the future, and if these two limits are one and the same, it must be indivisible. The two limits cannot be consecutive, since then a continuous thing (time) would be made up of partless limits" (David Konstan, trans., *Simplicius on Aristotle's Physics 6* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989], p. 49).

12 – Aristotle *Physics* 234a32–35.

13 – David Bostock, "Aristotle on Continuity in *Physics VI,*" in *Aristotle's Physics,* ed. Lindsay Judson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 192.

14 – This is quoted in Timothy Robinson's *Aristotle in Outline* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), p. 37.

15 – Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand,* p. 89.

16 – Aristotle *Physics* 232b25.

17 – Aristotle *Physics* 231b10.

18 – This is in spite of the point he makes that "the moment too (when the term 'moment' is a predicate not of something else but of something by itself and primary) must be indivisible, and as such it is present in every interval of time" (Aristotle *Physics* 233b33–35). In other words, a moment by itself should be indivisible, but when it is used to predicate something else it becomes divisible. It is rather unclear what Aristotle means by making such a distinction.

19 – Bostock, "Aristotle on Continuity in *Physics VI,*" p. 188.

20 – Aristotle *Physics* 231b19–232a18.

21 – See Aristotle's solution to Zeno's flying arrow in *Physics* 233a23–32.

22 – As Robert Carter points out, "the philosophic 'assurance' of many in the several Western philosophical traditions has been the desirability of *objectivity,* and the primacy of the *grammatical subject* in logic" (Carter, *The Nothingness beyond God,* p. 16).

23 – Please note that Nishida's logic of the predicate has nothing to do with the predicate logic known in the West. The latter, also called quantifier logic, refers to the branch of logic that deals with "the interior structure of both atomic and compound sentences," so as to give us "a way to prove the validity of many valid arguments which are invalid when symbolized in the notation of sentential logic" (Howard Kahane, *Logic and Philosophy: A Modern Introduction*

[Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1986], p. 107). We will see that this is not what Nishida means by the logic of the predicate as he formulates it.

24 – This is in *Sources of Japanese Tradition,* comp. Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), vol. 2, p. 356.

25 – Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy,* p. 1.

26 – Nishida Kitarō, *Hataraku mono kara miru mono e* (From that which acts to that which sees), vol. 4 of *Nishida Kitarō zenshū* (Complete works of Nishida Kitarō) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965–1988), p. 279.

27 – Wargo, "The Logic of Basho and the Concept of Nothingness in the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō," p. 253.

28 – Aristotle *Metaphysics* Z13, 1038b10–15, in *A New Aristotle Reader,* ed. J. L. Ackrill (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

29 – Aristotle is clearly aware of the dilemma he is in:

> On the one hand, it seems evident to him that substances must in some sense be *individual* items; a substance must be a 'this', a particular and individual object, rather than a 'such-and-such', a general or common item. On the other hand, it seems equally evident to him that substances must be knowable, and in particular *definable* items: it must be possible to say what a substance is—and it is only common items which are definable and of which you can say what they are. Hence a tension—or rather, the threat of a simple inconsistency. Substances are individuals: Mozart is a substance; man is not. Substances are definable: man is a substance; Mozart is not. A considerable part of Book Zeta is devoted to evading the inconsistency. (Jonathan Barnes, "Metaphysics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle,* ed. Jonathan Barnes [Cambridge University Press, 1995], pp. 90–91.

30 – Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy,* p. 4.

31 – Ibid., p. 2.

32 – Ibid.

33 – Nishida, *Hataraku mono kara miru mono e,* p. 5. The idea of the transcendent predicate would evolve into his seminal concept of *basho,* place or *topos.* In his letter to Mutai Risaku, Nishida explains the idea of *basho* as follows: "what I endeavored to do was to define consciousness logically as 'that which becomes the grammatical predicate and not the grammatical subject' over against Aristotle's definition of substance as 'that which becomes the grammatical subject and not the grammatical predicate'" (Michiko Yusa, *Zen and Philosophy: An Intellectual Biography of Nishida Kitarō* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002], p. 205).

34 – Nishida, *Hataraku mono kara miru mono e,* p. 279.

35 – Wargo, "The Logic of Basho and the Concept of Nothingness in the Philosophy of Nishida Kitarō," p. 298.

36 – Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy,* p. 6. The play of contradictory terms appears to be a signature Nishidian way of philosophizing. Another famous representative phrase in this connection is "self-identity of absolute contradiction" (Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy,* p. 23). Even though these terms are a source of constant struggle and frustration for us in our attempt to understand Nishida's philosophy, they are usually where Nishida's insights lie.

37 – Ibid., p. 4.

38 – Ibid.

39 – Carter, *The Nothingness beyond God,* p. 23.

40 – Robinson, *Aristotle in Outline,* p. 32.

41 – Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy,* p. 23.

42 – Ibid., p. 33.

43 – Ibid., p. 4.

44 – As Carter points out, Nishida is in many ways an Aristotelian realist (Carter, *The Nothingness Beyond God,* p. 29).

45 – Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy,* p. 34.

46 – Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good,* trans. Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), p. xxx.

47 – Nishida, *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy,* p. 10.

48 – David Hall and Roger Ames, in their *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) have made an illuminating account of the difference in philosophical thinking between the West and traditional Chinese with regard to the primacy of rest, permanence, and substance versus becoming, change, and process (pp. 12–40).