

# Philosophy for Emperors: Some Lessons to Learn from the Imperial New Year's Lectures

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***Abstract:** One of the rituals of the Japanese imperial family is *Kōsho Hajime no Gi*. Nowadays, it is a ceremony in which the Emperor listens to lecture on human, social and natural sciences by distinguished scholars. Since early Meiji, there have been some lectures on philosophy or delivered by philosophers. The purpose of this paper is not only to report what the Emperors might have learnt from the philosophers, but also to see what we can learn from these lectures. To be precise, I would like to transform “Philosophy for the Emperors” into “Philosophy for Everyone”.*

## 1. Introduction

According to Sakaguchi Ango, the emperor system is “extremely Japanese or even politically original”.<sup>1</sup> For example, Toyotomi Hideyoshi took advantage of inviting Emperor Goyōzei (後陽成) to Jurakudai (聚樂第) to gain respect from other *Daimyō*. Yet we can say that Chinese elements are also essential in the making of the so-called *Tennō* system. Until the 7th Century, the emperor in Japan were called *Daiō* (大王), but the name was changed to *Tennō* (天皇) in order to emphasize *Ten* (heaven), a status only shared by *Tensi* (天子) in China. From 1868 to 1945, emperors in Japan were not only regarded as the “Head of the State”, but also worshipped as a *Shintō* Deity. After the war, or precisely, on the January 1st 1946, Emperor Hirohito announced that he was and should only be regarded as a human being. Under the new Constitution, effective from 3rd May 1947, the Emperor is nothing more than “the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people” (Article 1).<sup>2</sup>

However, in November 2019 Japan was witness to *Daijōsai*, the “Great Thanksgiving Ceremony”, which involves the Emperor eating and sleeping with Gods. When it comes to rituals of the Japanese imperial family, there is an annual

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<sup>1</sup> Sakaguchi 2008, 217

<sup>2</sup> [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html)

ceremony of edification for the Emperor and Empress called *Kōsho Hajime no Gi*. The Imperial Household Agency, or *Kunaichō* explains the ceremony as follows:

The Ceremony of the *Kousho Hajime* (Imperial New Year's Lectures) takes place every January at the Imperial Palace in the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress. This is a ceremony in which Their Majesties listen to experts' explanations in the fields of human, social and natural sciences in their respective field.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this paper is not only to report what the Emperors might have learnt from the philosophers, but also to see what we can learn from these lectures. To be precise, I would like to transform “Philosophy for the Emperors” into “Philosophy for Everyone” (also known as “P4E”).

## 2. The Three Books

On the official website of *Kunaichō*, there is list of recent lectures to the Emperor, but the period is only limited to Heisei and Reiwa periods. I managed to request a full list from *Kunaichō*, and discovered that many lectures are related to philosophy. The lectures used to be categorized into three types: Chinese classics or *Kanjo* (漢書), Japanese classics or *Kokusho* (国書) and Foreign works or *Yōsho* (洋書). Here follows a report on philosophical lectures under these categories.

### 2.1 *Kanjo*

On the very first *Kōsho Hajime no Gi*, dated 23 January 1869, there were four lectures, of which two were on Chinese texts. These two *Kanjo* lectures are on *the Analects* delivered by two prominent scholars: Higashibōjō Tadanaga (東坊城任長) and Nakanuma Ryōzō (中沼了三). The *Analects* have always been one of the most important classical texts in Japan. Confucianism could be regarded as a moral philosophy, but it also discusses the political relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Idealistically, the ruler should be virtuous, and loyalty is regarded as a virtue for those who are being ruled, but what happens if the ruler was not virtuous? This is a topic that has never been covered in the *Kōsho Hajime no Gi*. Among the *Four*

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/e-culture/kosho.html>

*Books and Five Classics* (四書五經), we cannot find any lectures on *Mencius* (孟子) and *Chunqiu* (春秋 Also known as *Spring and Autumn*). Mencius was clearly a taboo for the Japanese emperor system, because he suggested that the people are the most important, with the state coming next and the ruler being the least important. As for *Chunqiu*, it is a book on history of China during the Spring and Autumn Period, which was mainly about how one dynasty was usurped by another, something which has ostensibly never occurred in Japan.

We should notice a lecture on the study of the *Analects* in Japan by Takeuchi Yoshio (武内義雄) in 1941, the same year when Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎) also delivered his lecture to the emperor. Even in 1945 when Japan was preparing for a *Gyokusai* (scorched earth) -styled war of defense, there was still a lecture entitled “On the characteristics of Chinese culture that respects *li*” by Yano Jinichi (矢野仁一). Since 1951, there has been no more *Analects* lecture for the Emperor. However, it does not mean a complete farewell to Chinese culture. In the post-war era, there have in fact been lectures on Lu Xun and Chinese Literature. For the recently abdicated Emperor Akihito, his first taste of *Kōsho Hajime no Gi* was in 1991, when he received a lecture on “Technological thought in Ancient China” by Yoshida Mitsukuni (吉田光邦).

## 2.2 *Kokusho*

As we all know, Japan has just entered the new Era of Reiwa. This *Nengō* was derived from *Manyōshū* (万葉集), a collection of ancient Japanese poems. However, *Reiwa* is actually from a text written in ancient Chinese (*Kanbun*). The first two *Kokusho* lectures in 1869 were delivered by Tamamatsu Mahiro (玉松員弘) and Hirata Kanetane (平田鎖胤 the son-in-law of the infamous *Kokugaku* master, Hirata Atsutane). Both lectures were on *Nihon Shoki* (日本書紀), which is not only written in ancient Chinese, but also in the style of *Shiki* (史記): from ancient mythology to the author’s contemporary regime. We should also note that Haga Yaichi (芳賀矢一), the author of *Kokuminsei Jūron* (国民性十論 1911), gave a lecture to the Emperor on *Manyōshū*, while Ueda Kazutoshi (上田萬年) delivered a lecture on the “Spirit of Japanese language and Native Studies” in 1924.

Shintoism can be seen as the “state religion” for modern Japan, but interestingly, Buddhist thought was once categorized under *Kokusho*. For instance, there was a lecture on Kūkai’s Calligraphy-theory and Art by Taki Seiichi (瀧精一) in 1945, the final year of WWII. After the war, Buddhism continues to be a rare

topic for the emperor's lectures. In this category we can only identify *The Middle Way Thought* by Miyamoto Shōson (宮本正尊) in 1963, *Indian Philosophy in Japan* by Kanakura Enshō (金倉園照) in 1972 and Nakamura Hajime (中村元)'s *Founding of Early Buddhism* in 1975.

### 2.3 *Yōsho*

The first lecture on *Yōsho* was in 1872 on National Law by Katō Hiroyuki (加藤弘之). Nishimura Shigeki (西村茂樹) also delivered talks on topics such as renaissance. Katō and Nishimura, as well as Nishi Amane (西周), were three important contributors to the *Meiroke Magazine*, an important journal for the promotion of new ideas set up in 1873. The first issue featured contributions by Nishi Amane and Nishimura Shigeki, and in the second issue, we can find Katō Hiroyuki's response to Fukuzawa Yukichi.

Fukuzawa was an advocate for practical knowledge or *jitsugaku*, but he suggested the *Meiroke Magazine* should be banned.<sup>4</sup> While he has never delivered a lecture to the Emperor, liberal thinkers were given the opportunity to deliver lectures. Many lectures were related to Western philosophy, for example Hozumi Yatsuka (穂積八束)'s 1912 Lecture on Aristotle's *Politics*, Tomii Masaakira (富井政章)'s 1918 lecture on Montesquieu's *L'esprit des Lois*, Hozumi Nobushige (穂積陳重)'s 1922 lecture on Kant and Bentham's theories on Perpetual Peace and the origin of the League of Nations, and Tajiima Kinji (田島錦治)'s 1925 Lecture on Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

### 3. Lectures by Japanese Philosophers

Up to now, we have yet to see any lectures related to Japanese philosophy. The first ever lecture by a Japanese philosopher was held in 1941 by Nishida Kitarō, followed by Watsuji Tetsurō (和辻哲郎) two years later. Other Japanese philosophers who delivered lectures to the emperor are Abe Yoshishige (安倍能成), Takahashi Satomi (高橋里美), Nishitani Keiji (西谷啓治), Shimomura Toratarō (下村寅太郎), Noda Matao (野田又夫) and Ueyama Shunpei (上山春平). Due to the word limit, I would like to focus on the lectures by Nishida, Watsuji and Takahashi.

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<sup>4</sup> Fukuzawa 2009, 439–445.

### 3.1 Nishida's Lecture on Philosophy of History

Nishida's lecture is relatively well known to the Western academic world, thanks to an English translation by Yusa Michiko.<sup>5</sup> Nishida's lecture can be divided in four sections. At the beginning of the lecture, Nishida focuses on the topic "philosophy as a unifying discipline". According to Nishida, philosophy can be defined as the discipline that unites specialized fields and connects them to our daily lives. This is Nishida's basic position: knowledge is for life.

Nishida continues to see this idea in Western and Eastern philosophies: He suggests that Greek philosophy can be seen as a philosophy of *the polis*, centering in the city life of the Greeks, medieval philosophy can be seen as a religious philosophy, centering in the European Christian life, while modern Western philosophy is a scientific philosophy, centering in the recent scientific culture. On Eastern philosophies, Nishida thinks tradition thoughts such as Confucianism and Buddhism can be regarded as philosophy, and that these philosophical traditions have greatly influenced Japanese thought.

How did Nishida make sure that the emperor understood his "philosophy in a nutshell"? Nishida's strategy is to explain philosophy from a biological perspective, as he knows the emperor had some knowledge of biology. Nishida argues that biological life is always in connection the environment. Similarly, human life is also in constant relation to the environment. We can also create things to change the environment. Things created in the past are continuously having an impact on people in the present and future. In Nishida's words, "This is why we always possess a commonly shared tradition, centered in which we continue to develop our human life. Human life is different from biological life in that it is historical".<sup>6</sup> This is the very position of Nishida's later philosophy of historical life. Nishida's own position is clearly influenced by the biology of J. S. Haldane. Indeed, Nishida admitted that Haldane's position is closest to his philosophical position.<sup>7</sup>

In this talk, he mentioned two aspects: namely: the path of history, and the historical mission of Japan. Here, one of Nishida's key concepts is "globalization". In other words, Japan has to understand its role in the "globalized world". This is indeed the role of nationalism in globalization. In Nishida's own words,

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<sup>5</sup> Yusa 2002, 314–318.

<sup>6</sup> NKZ 12: 269; Yusa 2002, 316.

<sup>7</sup> NKZ 11: 289.

Today, however, because of the development of a global transportation network, the whole earth has become one world. Consequently, today's nationalism (*kokkashugi*) has to take into account what it means to be a nation in the global world. What I mean by "nationalism" is not that every country should retreat to itself [to the isolated idea of nation]; rather, each nation should have a place of its own in this [global] world. In other words, by "nationalism" I mean that each country ought to develop its global perspective within itself.<sup>8</sup>

Nishida's view of nationalism has a strong political message: it should not be a kind of "Japan First" nationalism, but a more globalized view of seeing the mission of Japan in the globalized world. Nishida continues,

At the time when various ethnic groups enter into a global interaction, I suppose it is in the natural course of events that severe struggles among countries take place. I think, however, that the people who possess the most globally developed historical orientation will play the key role and lining stability to the epoch. What I mean by a nation-state that has a globally developed historical quality is a nation-state that, although subscribing to totalitarianism (*zentaishugi*), does not negate the [rights of] individuals, and whose collective life is mediated by the creative activities of individual persons.<sup>9</sup>

It is clear that Nishida is against the kind of totalitarianism that negates the creativity of individuals. Unlike propaganda emphasizing collective thinking during the war, Nishida emphasizes the importance of individuality. Nishida tried to use an analogical argument to link up biology and history. He writes, "Individuals are born of the historical society, to be sure, but as long as the historical society has the individual's creative activities as its medium [of development], that historical society has an eternal life in terms of its globally historical nature. It can be likened to how biological life continues to live on, being mediated by cellular activities".<sup>10</sup>

We can see a kind of coherence from Nishida's philosophical biology and philosophy of history. Nishida was trying his best to criticize a nation that does not

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<sup>8</sup> NKZ 12: 270–271; Yusa 2002, 317.

<sup>9</sup> NKZ 12: 271; Yusa 2002, 317–318.

<sup>10</sup> NKZ 12: 271; Yusa 2002, 318.

respect to individual creativity. However, this is not the end of this talk. Nishida concludes by emphasizing the role of the imperial family:

In the history of our country, the whole and the individual usually did not stand in opposition. Rather, [history] has unfolded with the imperial family (*kōshitsu*) as its center, while the individual and the whole mutually self-negated. Certainly, there were times when the power of the “whole” overshadowed that of the individual, but each time we returned to the founding spirit of Japan, and by maintaining the central presence of the imperial family, we took a step forward into the new era and created a new epoch.<sup>11</sup>

Nishida tried to justify his position in the notion of *Fukko Ishin*: “the restoration of the old ways” (*Fukko*) and “thoroughgoing renewal” (*Ishin*). Japan’s role in the new era is not to negate the old completely, as is the case for a radical political revolution in the case of Modern China. We can say that Nishida was trying to push the envelope to try to educate the emperor on the need to avoid the isolation of Japan, but Nishida was still playing safe, or even politically correct, to justify that the imperial family should play a central role in leading Japan into a new era. As a philosopher who received “Order of Culture” in 1940, Nishida had no clue that Japan was preparing to attack Pearl Harbour in the next year, but he should know that modern Japan had already expanded its territories to Taiwan, Manchuria and Korean Peninsula. The colonizer had to face the others, the colonized.

### 3.2 Watsuji’s Lecture on Shinkei’s *Renga* Poetics

Two years after Nishida’s lecture (under the *Yōsho* series), Watsuji was invited as the speaker to the Emperor (under the *Kokusho* series). At that time, Japan had already announced the idea of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, but militarily speaking, Japan was losing ground after the Battle of Midway. Some Kyoto School philosophers, such as Tanabe Hajime, Kōyama Iwao and Nishitani Keiji, began to imagine the possibility of Japan losing the war.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Nishida who was already retired when he gave the lecture to the emperor, Watsuji was a full professor at Tokyo Imperial University. He had just

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<sup>11</sup> NKZ 12: 271; Yusa 2002, 318.

<sup>12</sup> Ōhashi 2001.

published the second volume of *Rinrigaku* (倫理学 1937, 1942, 1949), in which he tried to justify the State as the highest social-organization. However, Watsuji in his younger age did criticize the State. For example, in *Koji Junrei* (古寺巡礼 1919), he showed his courage to publish a book on his pilgrimages to ancient temples in Nara, where a Cultural-Revolution-styled destruction of Buddhist temples was taking place due to the national policy of State Shintoism.<sup>13</sup>

Would Watsuji deliver a “political correct” lecture to the emperor? My reading is that Watsuji indeed tried to deliver a very subtle political message to the Emperor. In his lecture titled “On Shinkei’s *Renga* Poetics (心敬の連歌論に就いて)”, Watsuji gives us some details about Shinkei (心敬, 1406–1475), a monk who lived in Muromachi Period. This monk was familiar with Confucian thought, and was a famous *Renga* poet. *Renga* has two character: *Ren* (連) and *Ga* (歌), which means “linked-poems”. In *Renga*, we can see two poets writing poems, with the second poet tries to link his poem to the one written by the first poet. In other words, *Renga* is a “genre of Japanese linked-verse poetry in which two or more poets supplied alternating sections of a poem. The *Renga* form began as the composition of a single *Tanka* (Japanese poem of thirty-one syllables) by two people and was a popular pastime from ancient times, even in remote rural areas”.<sup>14</sup>

Here, Watsuji focuses on the essence of *Renga*. First of all, it is clear that *Renga* is a collective creation. Unlike Western art, *Renga* is unique in the sense that it is not to be reduced into one artist. Watsuji’s examples are architecture, sculpture, painting and music. In these cases, all individual efforts were ultimately concluded under the name of one leader or a designer, who a person takes up the sole responsibility of the artistic creation. In Watsuji’s words, these creations are by “one artist” who creates something with the hands of many others; they are not collection creation done by “many artists”.<sup>15</sup>

In the case of Western literature, Watsuji mentioned the case of Ancient Greek epic poems (E.g. Homer’s *Odyssey*). These poems were from various poets, but finally receive a single author. However, it is not the case in Japanese *Renga*. In *Renga*, it is crucial for the second poet to fully respect the poem written by the first poet. The second poet, for instance, cannot rewrite the poem by first. For example,

Frost falling. Dew vanishes from sight.

Ninzei

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<sup>13</sup> See my article, “In the Wake of 3.11 Earthquake: Philosophy of Disaster and Pilgrimage” in *Yusa* 2017, 133–149.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/art/renga>

<sup>15</sup> WTZ 23: 258.

Cold sea breeze blows and the moon appears. Shinkei<sup>16</sup>

Here, Ninzei's poem is called the "previous poem" (前句), and Shinkei's poem is "my poem" (我句). From Ninzei's poem, we have the hint of a cold weather from "frost", and Shinkei suggests the location would be somewhere along the coast. Now we can see Shinkei tried to understand the scenario of the first poem, and to develop the second poem based on the first. Watsuji further argues that while two poems are "linked" to each other, they are not dissolved into one. This is to link two persons together, without losing their individualities. Besides, when the two poems are linked, it is not merely a unity of two poems, but also the unity of two persons. It opens the possibility of understanding the experience and feeling of the other. In other words, a poet will respect, understand and sympathize with the other. It is not merely a poetic creation, but a realization of human relationship.

For Shinkei, the most important thing of *Renga* writing is to "dissolve your heart in the first poem" (前句に心をくたくべきこと). Watsuji would see this as "the primary position when facing the other" (これまさに他の人格との交わりの第一の心得なり).<sup>17</sup> Without this deep understanding of the other, a *Renga* has no value even it shows good technique in writing. On the contrary, a *Renga* without sophisticated techniques can still be an expression of ultimate beauty, as long as it tried to reach the heart of the first poem. Here, to dissolve, literally, is to break your heart or break your bone. In other words, you will have to empty yourself in order to face the other. To be a *Renga* poet, it is necessary to suppress the ego or self. Similarly, it is necessary to be selfless as a person. It requires a training, which is not on technique but on the personality or spirituality.

What does it mean to be selfless? Is it merely a self-negation and a total acceptance of the other? Watsuji notices one should not merely focus on his or her own poem, but it does not mean to just follow the first poem. "To throw away oneself is not to the negation of one's character, but the way to become unique" (己れを捨てて前句にのみ心を砕く者かえってよく独自の句を制作し得という。己れを捨つるは個性の没却にあらずしてかえって個性の円成なり).<sup>18</sup> In other words, one should not "blindly follow the other" (付和雷同). An example would be that if one associates flowers to plum or cherry blossom, it would be agreed by all

<sup>16</sup> My translation. Original poems in Japanese:

霜のふるまがひに露や消えぬらん 忍誓  
はま風さむしすみの江の月 心敬

<sup>17</sup> WTZ 23: 260.

<sup>18</sup> WTZ 23: 261–262.

(満座同心) but the meaning would be shallow (浅薄). In the case of Shinkei's *Renga*, we can see he did his best to understand the first poem, but did not just follow it without his own creativity.

Shinkei further develops his poetics with the theory of “close poems” and “distant poems” (親句疎句). Watsuji explains,

Close poems mean the first poem and the second poem are closely related. Their link to each other is apparent. In contrast to this, distant poems mean the first poem and the second poem are seemingly unrelated. They are isolated to each other, but their hearts are together and linked subtly. Shinkei calls distant poems are “connected by nothing (あらぬさまに継ぎたるもの);” they are more profound than the close poems. In *Sasamegoto* (1463), the two kinds of poems are compared as follows: “The close poems are [Confucian] teaching, the distant poems are *Zen*. The close poems are *sanimitta* (有相), the distant poems are *animitta* (無相)”. “The poetics of the *sanimitta* should apply the poetics of the *animitta*-darma-body distant poems”.<sup>19</sup>

What Watsuji actually trying to argue here, again, is to apply this poetics to how we deal with the other in a community. Shinkei's advice is that, we should not obsess with our own self and forget the unity with the other, but we cannot only agree with other and lose our own characters and creativity. To sum up, the philosophy of *renga* is to embrace the other. Indeed, Shinkei quotes the *Analects* in *Sasamegoto*: “The noble man is all-embracing and not partial. The inferior man is partial and not all-embracing (君子周而不比、小人比而不周)”.<sup>20</sup>

Now it is clear that Shinkei's way of *Renga* is nothing but the principle of human relationship in a community. The way of *Renga* is, in other words, the way of human relationship. This is a typical way of a unity of art and morality. This opens up new ways in three directions. First, it demonstrates a unique aspect of Japanese art. Second, it can develop new theory of art. Third, it can provide strong reasoning for research on human relationships. It may be said that to talk about poetics during the Pacific War is rather ridiculous. However, Watsuji has this idea when he delivered his lecture to the Emperor: Japan should not forget the way they used to deal with others.

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<sup>19</sup> WTZ 23: 262.

<sup>20</sup> WTZ 23: 263.

### 3.3 Takahashi's Lecture on Forms of Love

Takahashi Satomi is one of the pioneers of phenomenological research in Japan. “In 1921 he assumed a post in the science faculty of Tōhoku [Imperial] University in Sendai. He subsequently spent two years studying abroad in Germany with Rickert and Husserl”.<sup>21</sup> He is the author of *Husserl's Phenomenology*, which was published in 1931. Takahashi is also well known as a critic of Nishida's philosophy. Back in 1912, he wrote a paper titled “The Fact of Consciousness-phenomenon and its Meaning” to review Nishida's *An Inquiry into the Good*, published a year earlier. It was one of the earliest philosophical debates in the history of modern Japanese philosophy.

Takahashi's basic position can be summarized as below: “The totality of enveloping, both in terms of content and in terms of experience, must be regulated as a love that is a single unity embracing will and action along with knowledge. In this way, the ultimate consists of absolute love as empirically regulated absolute nothingness. Hence, all things, at bottom, can be wrapped together in an absolute love in which at once all is one and one is nothingness”.<sup>22</sup> According to Takahashi, Nishida's notion of love can be understood as a “dialectical love” (弁証法的愛). “Dialectical love is to see the self in self with the absolutely contradictory other, and to see the other in the other with the absolutely contradictory self”.<sup>23</sup> Takahashi criticizes Nishida's dialectical approach, and develops his own philosophy of “one-being-love” (一在愛).

In an article titled “A System Which Includes Dialectic” (written in English), Takahashi examines different types of dialectic: “dialectic of process”, “dialectic of field”, “dialectic with two poles”, “dialectic of pure negation or pure movement”, “dialectic of the middle”, “dialectic with three poles”, “dialectic with an infinite number of poles” and “dialectic of the whole and parts”, etc. Takahashi develops his own dialectic, which is a “wholeness which includes all the dialectic”. Takahashi argues that “Hegel insisted that his absolute idea contained as negative-and-preserved (*aufgehobene*) moments all the dialectic processes which have occurred before becoming itself... Hegel's ‘*aufheben*’ (sublation) implied in the idea of the Absolute means nothing more than the result, and so he did not succeed

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<sup>21</sup> Heisig 2011, 822.

<sup>22</sup> Heisig 2011, 827–828.

<sup>23</sup> TSZ 5:226.

in attaining the full idea of ‘*aufheben*’ which he had intended to realize. The realization of this includes all dialectics or ‘wholeness which includes and transcends’ all processes existing along the course of dialectic development”. Takahashi further develops his own dialectics in which love is the unifying principle. He writes,

Love unifies intellect, feeling and volition by including as well as transcending them, while enabling them to continue to exist. The author believes, moreover, that this all-inclusive whole itself should be included in “Absolute Nothingness” of which the ethical or religious counterpart is “Absolute Love”. That is why in the last analysis he maintains that all is included in absolute love.<sup>24</sup>

In 1956, Takahashi was invited to deliver a lecture to the emperor. His topic is “Forms of love as basic motivation of culture (文化の根本動機としての愛の諸形態)”. In the beginning of this lecture, Takahashi suggests that “Love is the fundamental feeling of human being. Without love, it is inconceivable to have nation, state or their co-existence. It is the principle that connects human beings, and unites them into a community. Therefore, love should be understood as the basic motivation of world culture”.<sup>25</sup>

For Takahashi, *eros* and *agape* are two classical philosophical concepts of love: the former is an upward movement and the latter a downward movement. To borrow Max Scheler’s words, “All ancient philosophers, poets, and moralists agree that love is a striving, an aspiration of the “lower” toward the “higher”... The Christian view boldly denies the Greek axiom that love is an aspiration of the lower towards the higher. On the contrary, now the criterion of love is that the nobler stoops to the vulgar, the healthy to the sick, the rich to the poor, the handsome to the ugly, the good and saintly to the bad and common, the Messiah to the sinners and publicans”.<sup>26</sup>

To overcome this “contradiction”, we can expect a kind of love that unites *eros* and *agape*. According to Takahashi, Nishida’s notion of love can be understood as a “dialectical love” (弁証法的愛). “Dialectical love is to see the self in self with the absolutely contradictory other, and to see the other in the other with the

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<sup>24</sup> TSZ 5: 316–317.

<sup>25</sup> TSZ 5:202

<sup>26</sup> Scheler 1961, 85.

absolutely contradictory self” (TSZ 5:226). Takahashi criticizes Nishida’s dialectical approach, and develops his own philosophy of “one-being-love” (一在愛).

It is noteworthy that Takahashi mentions the Schelerian notion of *Einsfühlung*: “What I called one-being-love (一在愛) is similar to what Scheler calls *Einsfühlung* (一体感). However, this love is not about the foundation of different forms of sympathy, as in the case of Scheler; rather, it includes all other things”. (TSZ 5:231-232). Elsewhere, Takahashi mentions Scheler’s *Nature of Sympathy* as “the most remarkable work on *Einsfühlung*. (TSZ 5: 197) Takahashi agrees with Scheler that “The ultimate love is consciousness-identification (*Einsbewusst*) and emotional-identification (*Einsfühlung*)” (TSZ 5:269). I believe Takahashi can be regarded as one of the earliest Schelerians in Japan, and his project is to interpret love as *Einsfühlung*. It is an important event in the history of modern Japanese philosophy.

Takahashi continues to argue that love is the very essence of Japanese culture, i.e. “harmony” (和). In postwar Japan, Japanese are facing “the suffering of the neighbours, nature disasters and the massive killing by nuclear bombs” (TSZ 5:42). As Scheler would emphasize the role of philosophical anthropology for providing a “unified” idea of man in the age of crisis, Takahashi suggests reflecting on a “unified” notion of love in a difficult postwar era. To borrow Takahashi’s own words,

One may be proud of the advantages of the Japanese notion of one-love, but she or he should also realize the drawbacks of this notion. In order to beware and avoid these shortcomings, sometimes we will have to emphasize on *eros*, while in other occasions it is necessary to emphasize on *agape*, *philia*, or even dialectic love. But eventually, we need to try to develop love as one-being-love, which encompasses all the other notions of love. (TSZ 5: 247).

In fact, Takahashi did mention *philia* as the fifth definition of love, followed by *eros*, *agape*, dialectical love and one-being-love. It comes to another difficult question: what is friendship? As discussed in Plato’s *Lysis*, what does it mean to be friends? Do friends have all things in common, or have nothing in common? Philosophy, or the love of wisdom, is about *philia*. Like the cases of man and love, one will have to search for a “unified” idea of friendship, in which all notions of friendships can be included in one.

Takahashi is unique for being a Japanese philosopher who uses *Einsfühlung* to explain love. This attempt is similar to Nishida's early philosophy which tried to "unite" the differences between knowledge and faith, philosophy and religion, religion and culture, etc. But Takahashi and Nishida are still different in many ways. While Nishida argues *agape* is the foundation of *eros*, Takahashi does not agree with this standpoint. Besides, Takahashi noticed a difference in the sense that Nishida is more influenced by *Zen* (禪), but Takahashi himself is rather influenced by *Jōdo Shinshū* (浄土真宗, the True Pure Land Sect of Buddhism).<sup>27</sup> Here, it is impossible to go into details of the two Buddhist sects, but it is clear that Nishida and Takahashi are not simply "Zen Buddhist" or "Pure Land Monk". They philosophize on various topics, including the problem of sympathy and love. Both philosophers tried to avoid a one-sided "nationalistic" approach to philosophical problems. For Takahashi, he understands Japanese philosophy as a "global Japanese philosophy" (世界的日本哲学).<sup>28</sup>

Takahashi's lecture could be understood as a development of the lectures by Nishida and Watsuji. These lectures provide some answers to the questions: What is the essence of Japanese culture? How can we (the self) deal with the other?

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

We have just mentioned three lectures by Japanese philosophers, but what can we learn from them? In my opinion, it is not only to understand what they said, but also what they did not, or could not, say. In other words, these talks are indeed examples of an entangled philosophy, between philosophy and politics, between philosophy and literature, and between philosophy and love. Precisely speaking, it is about the impossibility of having a philosophy without politics, a philosophy without literature, or a philosophy without love.

Another thing we should learn from these lectures, is about their failure to embrace "the other". We can notice the absence of influential (but perhaps politically incorrect) philosophers such as Tanabe Hajime and Miki Kiyoshi. Although there were speakers from Keijō and Taiwan Imperial Universities (京城帝国大学 / 台湾帝国大学), there was an absence of non-Japanese speakers. Also, there was an absence of women philosophers.

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<sup>27</sup> TSZ 5: 8.

<sup>28</sup> TSZ 5: 260.

Top scholars in Japan deliver lectures to the emperor, as well as other family members of the imperial family, but there has been no philosophical lecture for many years. It is time for a philosopher to deliver a talk including one of the above-mentioned neglected topics. We are also expecting a better gender balance in future lectures. Eventually, I hope philosophers can deliver lectures not only to the privileged, but also to everyone (including children). In this sense, I propose we should do not only *Tetsugaku* (the study of wisdom without love), but also *Kitetsu* (希哲 the love of wisdom),<sup>29</sup> for the very meaning of *kitetsu* is to provide a platform for more philosophical dialogue in our society.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> I am the editor of a philosophical magazine called *Kitetsu*. Details can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/希哲雜誌-1396694247267021/>

<sup>30</sup> Similar efforts have been done at Center for Philosophy University of Tokyo (UTCP): [https://utcp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/projects/uehiro/2012/13/index\\_en.php](https://utcp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/projects/uehiro/2012/13/index_en.php)