

A Wittgensteinian Approach to Reconsidering Nishida's Basho of True Nothing

Zhang Ligeng
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Abstract: In this paper, I aim to reconsider Nishida Kitarō's concept of the *Basho of True Nothing* from the viewpoint of Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of language games. First, I illustrate the necessity of introducing Wittgenstein to approach Nishida's theory, as well as the similarity between the two philosophers. On this basis, I argue that there is a crucial dilemma in Nishida's use of the *Basho of True Nothing*, which inevitably generates paradoxical formulations in his writings. The thrust of my argument is twofold: on the one hand, I advocate that the reason for such a dilemma lies in Nishida's potential confusion of the role of some essential words when he tries to describe something transcending language; on the other hand, in the contrast between Nishida's *Basho of True Nothing* and Wittgenstein's *Form of Life*, I argue that the special implication of the *Basho of True Nothing* reveals a fundamental discrepancy between the culture of East Asia and the so-called West. That said, this paper is a Wittgensteinian analysis rather than a comparative study, so Wittgenstein's methods and conceptions are used as a "microscope" with which to scrutinize Nishida's ideas. I make use of both Nishida's and Wittgenstein's ideas as building materials rather than simply seeing them as a maze in need of exploring. In summary, this paper is an introduction to a conceivable analytical reconstruction of Nishida's theory. Hopefully, this trial, the conclusion of which is still open, will contribute to the improvement of analytical philosophy in East Asia.

1. Introduction

Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎) is said to be the most representative Japanese philosopher. In his philosophy, the "Basho of True Nothing" (眞の無の場所) is one of the most significant concepts, and it is not only valuable in the history of thought but also of unique significance in contemporary philosophy. However, there are still some unsolved problems in clarifying the exact meaning of this terminology.

Generally, there seems to be three unavoidable and interrelated difficulties in the studies on Nishida: first, Nishida's writing is extremely obscure, and sometimes

it is even too hard to grasp the literal meanings of his expressions;¹ second, the source of his thoughts is so complicated that readers have to refer to many other philosophers, such as Neo-Kantianist Emil Lask and Heinrich Rickert, to appreciate his ideas; and third, his arguments are rarely expressed straightforwardly, making it even more difficult to evaluate the plausibility of his viewpoints. There is no doubt that Nishida provides numerous insights, but these difficulties thwart further exploration of his thoughts.

What are the roots of these difficulties? Apparently, Nishida's own obscure style of writing is responsible for them. However, as interpreters, we have responsibilities as well. There are already many interpretations of the Basho of True Nothing, but some blind spots still exist.

Among other things, this concept has seldom been considered in an analytical way, as it is an alien concept in the world of analytical philosophy. Nishida was greatly influenced by continental philosophy, so studies on him are naturally relevant to Kant, Hegel and Neo-Kantianists. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that continental philosophy is only "half" of Western philosophy, and sometimes we have to solve philosophical problems from the other "half" (i.e., analytic philosophy). Analytic philosophy emphasizes argumentative clarity and precision, often making use of conceptual or linguistic analysis. Such characteristics are conducive to reading Nishida to make his arguments clearer and easier to understand.

More specifically, in this paper I aim to reconsider the concept of the Basho of True Nothing from the perspective of Wittgenstein's theory of language games, identifying the reasons for Nishida's obscure and paradoxical articulations. Before moving on to further discussion, it is necessary to explain my approach. This approach may play an innovative role in clarifying Nishida's ideas.

2. Definition of a Wittgensteinian Approach

I am willing to call my approach Wittgensteinian, alluding to a method of scrutinizing the potential problems in other philosophers' thoughts from the perspective of language games. In other words, Wittgenstein's principles about how

¹ Many have noted that his articulations often seem quite paradoxical, with an idea often being accepted and denied at the same time. Not surprisingly, Botz-Bornstein criticized Nishida's Basho as being "closed and open at the same time" (Botz-Bornstein 2003, 53).

a word makes sense are used as a “hinge”² or criterion. It should be noted that, on the one hand, such an approach is not equivalent to a comparative study between two philosophers;³ on the other hand, the significant similarities between Nishida and Wittgenstein will facilitate this discussion.

There is a commonality in the fundamental positions of the two philosophers. In brief, first, the starting points of both Nishida and Wittgenstein are in opposition to psychologism and in favour of a logical position. Second, both of their theories are established on a philosophical analysis of language, such as the structure of predicate or the role of linguistic expressions in daily life. Third, both philosophers try to explore the role of the elements beyond language, which can be seen as the prerequisite or background of our use of language.

The first aspect is significant, and in it lies their basic shared tenet.⁴ A common enemy to both Nishida and Wittgenstein is psychologism, as neither philosopher is willing to base their theories on something psychological. For Nishida, in the period of Basho, even his earlier theory about “pure experience” was too psychological; for Wittgenstein, whether in the period of *Tractatus* or *Philosophical Investigations*, he never regarded psychology as a plausible starting point. Therefore, both of them attempted to start from logic instead of psychology, aiming to overcome stereotypes, such as the subject-object dichotomy in philosophy.

Even with their common ground, it is still not easy to find the point of penetration to read Nishida through Wittgenstein. As I see it, the point of penetration lies in the attainment of a transparent understanding of the Basho of True Nothing. This is not only because of the essential role of this concept in Nishida’s theory but also because of its relevance to the theory of meaning, which is one of the themes of Wittgenstein’s theory of language games.

Nishida does not provide a clear theory about the meaning of his theory of Basho, but it is obviously improper to construe the Basho of True Nothing as a lexical term denoting something that exists in the visible world.⁵ It follows that an

² This terminology is used by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*, see OC 341–343. In Japanese, it is translated as “蝶番”; see 冲永宣司 2009, 48.

³ Of course, some illuminating comparative studies between Nishida and Western philosophers such as Wittgenstein have been made. See Botz-Bornstein 2003, 冲永宣司 2009 and Krummel 2017.

⁴ The latter two aspects will be discussed in sections 3 and 4.

⁵ The reason will be illustrated in the next section. It is, nonetheless, unfair to say that Nishida has no theory of meaning, e.g. see 朝倉友海 2018, 177–78. I only mean that he does not provide a distinct formulation of such a theory in the “Basho” monograph.

interpreter could not explain this term with a simple ostensive definition. Rather, the term is used by Nishida in a variety of contexts, which allows us to become acquainted with its meaning by learning how Nishida uses it. At this point, we encounter Wittgenstein's slogan "meaning is use". Wittgenstein advocates in his later philosophy (especially in *Philosophical Investigations*) that the meaning of a word consists in its uses.⁶ In his view, language games should be construed as concrete examples of linguistic practice into which words are woven. Even though the Basho of True Nothing is not a castle in the air, the absence of its reference in the visible world requires us to consider its meaning with respect to its practical uses, which conforms to Wittgenstein's conception of language game.

In the following discussion, it should be borne in mind that Basho is by no means simply analogized to a language game. What I aim to deliver is a clarification of the Basho of True Nothing in terms of the language games in which it is involved. In other words, its meaning has to be interpreted within the network of concepts that contribute to its uses.

3. Nishida's Use of "Basho" and the "Basho of True Nothing"

First, we have to interpret the literal meaning of the word "Basho". Nishida explains this term in different ways, but there is something common across his statements. It is said that the original motivation for Nishida proposing this concept was as a response to the subject-object dualism. The introduction of Basho begins with a reflection on Aristotle's logic of the subject, initiating a reassessment of the structure of judgement. Nishida's approach is based on his unique understanding of predicate and judgement, focused on the predicate instead of the subject.

For Nishida, the predicate is the real foundation of knowledge claims or judgements. For example, in the proposition "red is a kind of colour", although the grammatical subject is "red", the real subject is "colour", because it is the universal "colour" mirroring itself as "red" (see NKZ3 428–429).⁷ Similarly, when we say "this desk is made of oak", the true real subject is "reality" rather than "desk" (see NKZ3 431). The uniqueness of the theory of Basho stems from Nishida's reinterpretation of the role of subject and predicate. According to Nishida, in a

⁶ This assertion will be illustrated in detail in sections 4 and 6, in which we will also be reminded that Wittgenstein's ideas are actually more complicated than this.

⁷ When citing Nishida's own words, I use Krummel's translation in *Place and Dialectic: Two Essays by Nishida Kitarō*, but the page numbers still refer to the Japanese edition.

judgement, the predicate (which should be regarded as universal) subsumes the subject (which should be regarded as particular). Therefore, our knowledge claims are always expressed in such form (see NKZ3 390). In terms of this reinterpretation, the predicate is a place for us to make a judgement, and it is only in this place that a subject or object is allowed to emerge and play its grammatical role. Here, Basho appears to be something that can encompass almost everything. This is Nishida's response to the subject-object dualism.

Although the literal meaning of the word "Basho" is "place", it should not be simply translated as "place". This word refers to something epistemological, but Basho is much more than that. Furthermore, its meanings are varied,⁸ and it does not denote any concrete "place" but rather alludes to the "placedness" or "implacement"⁹ of our experience. Thus, it is better to describe Basho as something like a **mirror** that can reflect everything. Here is a concise summary of the comprehensive characteristics of Basho:

(Basho) is the standpoint vis-à-vis reality, the most concrete entailing the non-distinction between experience and reality. . . At its most concrete level, presupposed by all other levels, basho envelops and encompasses all a priorities, mental acts, categories, contexts, and perspectival horizons that constitute the world of objects. . . The physical field of forces, the field of consciousness, and the sociohistorical world (I and thou), then, all are understood in terms of basho. (Krummel 2015, 25)

A summary in Nishida's own words is as follows: "I want to conceive, at the root of all things, a seeing without a seer" (NKZ3 255).

As it has been said, Nishida's use of the predicate is quite different from our ordinary understanding. Nishida's predicate is inclusive and "means something more than the grammatical predicate or a conceptual universal, and he reminds us on occasion that both universals and particulars...are implaced in that final transcendent predicate-plane he equates with the Basho of true nothing" (Krummel 2012, 18–19). Not surprisingly, such a peculiar conception of the predicate may lead

⁸ Nishida uses Basho to refer to all kinds of aspects, such as "place", "universe", "predicate", "nothing", and "self-determining act" (see Kummel 2012, 47). It should also be noted that Basho has two synonyms: one is "predicate-plane" (述語面), and the other is a term borrowed from Hegel, namely, "concrete universal" ("具体的一般者", see NKZ3 431).

⁹ I also learned these two words from Krummel.

us to an abyss that devours our ordinary cognition or thought (see NKZ3 458). Standing face to face with this abyss, the natural law governing our cognitions will collapse, just as physical laws are invalidated in a black hole.

In fact, this peculiarity of Basho is reflected at the very beginning of the monograph “Basho”:

But, in order for objects to relate to one another, constituting a single system and maintaining themselves, we ought to consider not only what maintains that system but also what establishes the system within itself and wherein the system is implanted. That which is must be implanted in something. Otherwise, the distinction between is and is not cannot be made. . . there must be that which envelops the opposition between I and non-I within itself and makes the establishment of the so-called phenomena of consciousness possible within itself. (NKZ3 415)

Proceeding along Nishida’s approach, we naturally reach the conclusion that there must be a predicate that cannot be a grammatical subject and thus inevitably leads to “Nothing” (無), even “absolute nothing” (絶対無, e.g., see NKZ3 432). According to Nishida, “The basho of true nothing must be that which transcends the opposition of being and nothing in every sense and enables them to be established within” (NKZ3 424). As a result, Basho, which can be seen as the concrete situation of our lived experience, has a hierarchy consisting of three levels or planes: “Basho of Being”, “Basho of Oppositional Nothing” and “Basho of True Nothing”.¹⁰

Nishida’s argument leads us to “True Nothing”, which entirely transcends language and can only be described in a paradoxical way, such as “seeing without a seer”, “a circle without periphery” or “self-mirroring mirror”. All of these articulations reveal the tension between “Being” (有) and “Nothing” (無) in the whole of his theory of Basho, which is more obviously presented in the concept of the Basho of True Nothing. Now, we arrive at the destination of Nishida’s exploration: “That the universal predicate reaches its extremity means that the particular [grammatical] subject reaches its extremity and becomes itself” (NKZ3 477). We might be surprised to encounter such incomprehensible formulations, as all of the descriptions of the Basho of True Nothing seem totally paradoxical, the reasons for which must be determined.

¹⁰ Please see the graphical representation in Krummel 2012, 27.

4. Nishida's Dilemma

Apparently, the paradoxical articulations are partly derived from the lack of exact definitions for the involved concepts. Nishida seldom provides such definitions, sometimes making use of concepts somewhat casually. For example, knowledge, volition and intuition are all concepts that contribute to the meaning of the Basho of True Nothing. Nishida defines them as:

To go on subsuming the particular into the universal is knowledge, to subsume the universal into the particular is volition, and the unity of both directions is intuition. Although it would appear contrary to reason to say that the universal is subsumed into the particular, this sense must already be included when substance is conceived as that which becomes the [grammatical] subject but not the predicate. (NKZ3 453)

Unfortunately, such clear definitions rarely arise in his writings; worse still, his uses of these words in other paragraphs often do not completely conform to such definitions. In contrast, the second half of the quotation may represent his ideas more straightforwardly: he is fully aware that his statements are problematic (“contrary to reason”), but he does not seem willing to regard the problems as fatal.

However, this is only a small part of the reason for his paradoxical articulations. The deeper reasons remain to be discovered and might be related to his attitude towards contradictions. Needless to say, Nishida never seems to be worried about expressing his thoughts via apparently contradictory expressions, which are usually regarded as meaningless. For example, he repeatedly uses the mirroring as a metaphor containing contradictions: “If such reception or mirroring signifies in some sense an activity, this must be an activity without what is at work, a mirroring without *what* mirrors” (NKZ3 451). Another example is as follows: “I would instead like to start from the idea of self-awareness wherein the self mirrors itself within. I think that the fundamental meaning of cognition is that the self mirrors itself within itself” (NKZ 420).

Neither “mirroring without what mirrors” nor “self mirrors itself within itself” makes sense in ordinary language. From a logical point of view, contradictions are definitely meaningless. Nishida, however, advocates that such contradictions are actually the foundation or prerequisite for every meaningful expression. Such a

conception seems to be inherited from Hegel, who shares a parallel understanding of logic and contradiction. However, it is undeniable that even a seemingly paradoxical expression has to make sense, which means that we cannot seriously reconsider the conceivable meanings of such expressions in ordinary language.

Let us turn our attention to the “Basho of True Nothing”, which is rife with paradoxical features. It is reasonable to construe such features as consisting of the following two aspects: first, Nishida makes use of this terminology in a quite different way than most Western philosophers; second, and more importantly, the role of the terminology in the framework of our language is very special.

Regarding the first aspect, True Nothing (or Absolute Nothing) does not simply mean “nothing” or “there is nothing”. Actually, it is something that transcends both being and nothing: this is an entirely different way of thinking that stands in contrast to the thinking of most Western philosophers. Philosophers are inclined to express the transcendent in terms of “being”, lacking a conception of “nothing” beyond being and not being. After all, “nothing” itself is derived from “thing”, just as “infinite” is constructed from “finite”. Therefore, the use of the Basho of True Nothing is entirely distinct.

Regarding the second aspect, the Basho of True Nothing does not take anything as its prerequisite; on the contrary, it is the precondition of every judgement. Considering his reference to Aristotle at the very beginning of his argument, Nishida seems to take for granted that there is an internal or intrinsic relation between language and reality. Nevertheless, when talking about True Nothing, such a relation seems to be neglected. It is said that the Basho of True Nothing plays an indispensable role in our language, but at the same time, it is also prevented from the framework of language due to lacking any reference.

These two aspects together create an apparent dilemma in Nishida's underlying thoughts, which can be seen as one of the deeper reasons for his paradoxical articulations: on the one hand, he is exploring the structure and nature of language, which means that he has to take a position outside of or beyond the language itself; on the other hand, he has to use words to articulate his ideas, which means the expressions of these ideas have to take root inside language so that all of the words involved make sense. It is no wonder that Nishida's status is similar to that of a physicist conducting research on black holes: both of them have to deal with something that transcends the limitations of their tools, but, of course, they can never abandon their tools. To manage this dilemma, resorting to a language game is a viable choice, for it provides a tool that is more functional.

5. How to Solve the Dilemma

In short, language games can be construed as concrete examples of linguistic uses into which the language is woven, and words have their meanings only in such games. For Wittgenstein, there are all kinds of language games (see PI 23). The games exist at different levels, because some games make sense only if other games are already given or accepted. Generally, however, non-linguistic elements become more essential in more fundamental games. Here, non-linguistic elements mainly refer to agreements on how to use words. In other words, before beginning to play a language game, we have already made some decisions that do not belong to the game itself, and to express or communicate successfully, we have to master the related rules in advance. Consequently, the propositions that are used to describe the acceptance of a rule and those that are used to describe something inside language games belong to different categories, which also means that we cannot construe the first propositions in an ordinary way.

Language games can be either very simple or very complex. For example, what Wittgenstein describes in the very beginning of *Philosophical Investigations* are “five red apples” and other primary games. Compared with these games, Nishida creates an extremely special language game for Basho and the Basho of True Nothing, which is much more complicated. It can be inferred that some potential problems in such a game have led to the aforesaid dilemma, and we have to identify them.

In general, when introducing a concept, we can either define it directly or describe its uses in certain contexts and explain its relation to other concepts that have been assigned exact definitions in advance. Nonetheless, if a concept completely alludes to something transcending language, lacking reference in the whole of our experience, the descriptions of its uses will become extremely difficult.

In fact, some of the concepts involved in Basho have actual references in our experience, while some do not. To be specific, the introduction of Basho starts from a reflection on Aristotle’s logic of the “subject”, apparently referring to the linguistic field. Some concepts involved in the process of Nishida’s argument are only partly non-linguistic, such as “self-awareness” and “intuition”. The end of the argument leads to True Nothing, which entirely transcends language. For the first and second kinds of concepts, it is possible to clarify their uses by means of a philosophical

analysis of language or their immediate definition. For example, we can analyse the structure of predicates or the roles of them in our lives. For the third kind of concepts, as they are “outside” (instead of “inside”) our language (or better said, our language games), it is not proper to describe their meanings in an ordinary way. It seems that Nishida, however, is not fully aware of the differences here, so he frequently describes the “outside” concepts in the same way as the “inside” concepts. This might be the fundamental reason for the aforementioned dilemma, leading to many puzzling expressions.

This reason reminds us of a remark from Wittgenstein that concerns the role of philosophy. According to Wittgenstein’s conception, philosophical problems are not empirical and have to be “solved through an insight into the workings of our language and in such a way that these workings are recognized despite an urge to misunderstand them” (PI 109). From the viewpoint of language games, most philosophical problems are caused by a variety of misunderstandings of the role of our language. Therefore, instead of finding something new to solve such a problem, we have to see how language actually works. Thus, Wittgenstein summarizes, “Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language” (PI 109).

Nishida struggles against the bewitchments of language as well. Unfortunately, sometimes he seems not to fully realize the situation and thus portrays something that cannot be portrayed. In summary, the problem does not lie in the introduction of a term as a prerequisite of everything but in the improper properties being attributed to it. This also means that Nishida has not realized that it is impossible to describe the Basho of True Nothing in a similar way as ordinary terms. Once seeing this clearly, we can solve the dilemma by not seeing the confusing or puzzling expressions as describing something but rather only as introducing special rules governing our logic and judgement. These rules stand outside our language and are not a part of it. Thus, their descriptions cannot be understood in an ordinary way. When we try to illustrate these rules, we assume that we are standing in a “superior” position in which we actually cannot stand: this is a paradox in and of itself. It is no wonder that so many paradoxical articulations arise. In this way, we may not completely resolve Nishida’s dilemma, but we may at least attain a more positive perspective for reconsidering his way of expressions.

In contrast, Wittgenstein deals with the preconditions of our use of language more ingeniously, appealing to the field of practice and deeds instead of becoming entangled in linguistic expressions. According to him, to use language is to follow

some rules, which naturally are directed at something beyond language, such as customs, usages or institutions (see PI 199). Thus, following a rule is something practical rather than purely intellectual, and “to think one is following a rule is not to follow a rule” (PI 202). We can think, express and communicate with each other in terms of language, but in order to do all of these, we have to accept something outside or beyond language in advance. That is, we “follow the rule blindly” (PI 219), and such following does not require any further interpretation. In this way, Wittgenstein eliminates the articulation of something paradoxical.

6. One of Nishida’s Insights: the “Basho of True Nothing” and “Form of Life”

I have thoroughly discussed the shortcomings of Nishida’s writings, but these shortcomings do not fundamentally affect the illuminating force of his insights. Nishida is trying to explore a realm for which there seems to be no roads at all, so it is fair to say that he is very courageous. The impulse of his exploration might be partly owing to Buddhism, in which “nothing” is by no means outright nonsense, nor does it refer to nihilism. By Nishida’s critical exposition, “nothing” even constitutes the background of being. For example, Nishida says,

But if what becomes the substance of relations is simply something like a point, force would have to disappear. That which truly envelops the relationship of force within must be something like a field of forces. . . The nothing that opposes being by negating it is not true nothing. Rather true nothing must be that which forms the background of being. (NKZ3 422)

Nishida’s background in Buddhism is certainly quite unfamiliar for most Western philosophers, including Wittgenstein.¹¹ From their viewpoints, it is odd or even unthinkable to derive “being” from “nothing”. This can be identified as one of the essential divergences between the fundamental conceptions of Wittgenstein and Nishida.

In contrast to the Basho of True Nothing, the bedrock of Wittgenstein’s system of language game is “form of life”. For Wittgenstein, not all language games

¹¹ It has been noted that there are some potential connections and similarities between Buddhism and Wittgenstein’s philosophy (see Gudmunsen 1977). Although it is illuminating to attempt to find out such connections, the essential difference between Buddhism and Western Philosophy should never be neglected.

are on the same logical level. Rather, they constitute a hierarchy: some language games might be more fundamental, and what lies at the bottom of the hierarchy is the “form of life”.¹² It is a significant concept, even though it is only mentioned in *Philosophical Investigations* 3 times:

... And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life. (PI 19)

The word “language-game” is used here to emphasize the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. (PI 24)

“So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?” What is true or false is what human beings say; and it is in their language that human beings agree. This is agreement not in opinions, but rather in form of life. (PI 241)

Wittgenstein realizes that the unsayable experience plays an essential role in the foundation of our sayable behaviours, and form of life is the precondition of all kinds of language games and even of meaning itself. I would go further by saying that, without form of life, we cannot reach any agreement in our daily communications or activities. In this sense, it seems parallel to the Basho of True Nothing. This is why Botz-Bornstein asserts, “For Nishida, a form of life emerges within the basho. For Wittgenstein, a *Lebensform*¹³ develops out of an ‘unsayable *Erlebnis*’”(Botz-Bornstein 2003, 55). In general, form of life is always related to something cultural or historical, which should be the “riverbed” of our daily life. However, from the point of view of Basho, form of life is still something in need of further investigation, because even the “riverbed” has to be based on something more fundamental, such as the earth. It can be concluded that the end of such investigations inevitably leads to True Nothing.

As mentioned earlier, for Nishida, who was influenced by Buddhism, “nothing” is something (this expression sounds paradoxical, in Nishida’s style) that can constitute a foundation of another thing. However, for Wittgenstein, and perhaps most Western philosophers, anything has to be placed on something, so it is unacceptable to regard “nothing” as a real foundation. Actually, the English word “nothing” itself is very interesting: literally, it alludes to a “thing” in the first place and then denies its existence, asserting that there is not anything, or “no thing”. In contrast, Nishida is able to use the Japanese word “mu” (無) straightforwardly

¹² In Japanese it is translated as “生活形式”.

¹³ “Lebensform” is the German word for “form of life”.

without admitting any “thing” in advance. This may be attributed to a difference in culture or way of thinking. Thus, the comparison between form of life and the Basho of True Nothing may reveal the limitation of Western thought as well.¹⁴

7. Summary and Supplementary Comments

It can be seen that both Wittgenstein and Nishida try to transcend certain inherent stereotypes in the traditional philosophy: Nishida wants to dispel the ingrained dichotomy of subject-object and propose a new style of logic, while Wittgenstein tries to reconstruct the framework of the theory of meaning. Subsequently, both of them provide something new to reassess our traditional way of thinking. It is not easy to assess whether they have gained an outright victory. However, from a positive perspective, both of their intellectual enlightenments stand out.

I prefer to see the discussions until now as an introduction or schema, leading to more in-depth research on Nishida’s other ideas. Currently, there are at least two approaches to carrying out further studies. One is derived from sections 4 and 5. The appropriate use of a concept in general requires two prerequisites: an exact definition of the concept and tenable arguments to justify the definition. Regarding the Basho of True Nothing, neither of the prerequisites are fully articulated in Nishida’s writings, but it is our duty to reconstruct his argument and clarify this concept. In this way, the theory of Basho will become more dynamic.

The other approach originates from section 6. Nishida’s conception of “True Nothing” has a background in Buddhism. For example, the “self-differentiating undifferentiatedness” of the Basho of True Nothing shows the most conspicuous Buddhist aspect of Nishida’s thinking (see Krummel 2012, 18). Nishida’s theory, under the influence of Buddhism, provides a possibility beyond the traditional philosophical ways of thinking, which is quite unfamiliar for Wittgenstein and most other Western philosophers. As we are allowed to talk about something transcending contradictions, Nishida’s idea can be used as a “mirror” to reflect the potential shortcomings or limitations in Western thought as a whole.

In fact, East Asian philosophers are in quite a similar situation, having to construct their own philosophy or system of thought inspired by Western philosophy.

¹⁴ Thanks to Prof. Hamauzu Shinni for his suggestion concerning the difference between Form or Life and Basho as well as that regarding taking Husserl into consideration.

I have attempted to reveal the possibility of reconsidering Nishida from an analytic perspective; hopefully, this work will inspire more innovative investigations.

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